



## **42<sup>nd</sup> Annual Conference Proceedings**

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## **What is AHEA?**

The purpose of the Adult and Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) is to help institutions of higher education develop and sustain learning environments and programs suitable for adults.

AHEA does this by:

- Providing a forum for professional educators to share resources and information about alternative degree programs on a national and international level.
- Stimulating practitioner research, thereby contributing to the integration of theory and practice and promoting the improved quality of our efforts.
- Serving as a vehicle for cooperative consultation and collaboration among professionals in the field.
- Integrating the interests and concerns from a variety of areas within adult higher education including distance, international, and liberal education.
- Promoting rights of adult students.
- Influencing institutional and public policies concerning the principles of quality practice applied to adult education.
- Promoting cultural diversity and multicultural perspectives and maintaining that commitment through the incorporation of such perspectives into the policies, procedures, and practices of alternative degree programs for adults.

## Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

We are pleased to present to you the Proceedings of the 42nd annual conference of the Adult and Higher Education Alliance (AHEA), held at the University of Central Florida in March 2018. We wish to extend special thanks to the AHEA Board of Directors, members, and contributors. Without your support, this publication would not be possible.

To the AHEA Board of Directors, thank you for your continuous efforts to support mission of AHEA through your outreach, service, and perseverance.

To the members of the Adult and Higher Education Alliance, you are the reason we do what we do, and you are the backbone of AHEA's growth, networking, and collaboration. Thank you for your membership and participation in our organization and at our conference each year.

To those who contributed papers for these Proceedings, thank you for contributing your research, theory, and practice to our collective knowledge. Through your work, collected in this document, we can strengthen our efforts to educate and serve adult learners in a variety of contexts. We appreciate your service to the larger community of professors, educators, and practitioners.

As AHEA continues to grow, we are always seeking new ways to contribute our shared endeavor of educating adults. Your feedback and ideas for expanding our impact matters; we look forward to hearing from you. Enjoy your read of the variety of engaging topics related to Adult and Higher Education.

Thank You,

Kemi, Joann, and Kayon

## **Letter from AHEA President**

Thank you for your interest in the Proceedings of the 42nd annual conference of the Adult and Higher Education Alliance. We met at the University of Central Florida and the Morgridge International Reading Center to explore this year's theme: "Quality of Life in Adult Learning."

Our time together allowed us to explore this theme as graduate students, faculty, administrators, and practitioners. During the conference, we had the opportunity to hear about widely varying approaches to the best practices related to the role of adult learning in enhancing quality of life. In addition—as you'll notice in these proceedings—we also discussed the factors that may contribute to improved quality of life for you, the adult educator. Through these proceedings, you can join this conversation!

Make plans to join us for next year's conference, which is held every year in March. Find more information at [www.ahea.org](http://www.ahea.org)

Thank you!

Kathy Peno, AHEA President, 2017-2019

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## **Woman in the Mirror: Making the Change, Professional Identity Development in K-20 Teachers**

*Amy L. Sedivy-Benton, Katrina M. Leland, and Lundon A. Pinneo*

### **Abstract**

Teacher education is a field that is often under scrutiny as a field whose professionals are underqualified or being staffed by individuals who do not care. This work explores the experiences of three teacher educators, how they came to their profession, and how they found both their communities of practice and their professional identities. Their notions of self and their professional identities are far from solidified and still unfolding, suggesting that professional identity is a cyclical process, rather than linear. Key themes that emerged in their trajectories include critical incidents, resiliency, and transformational learning.

Keywords: Professional Identity, Teacher Education, Higher Education

## **Woman in the Mirror: Making the Change, Professional Identity Development in K-20 Teachers**

Learning to teach is quite difficult. It is also a very personal process. Teacher educators (those who teach in pre-service, pre-teacher-licensure programs) have gone through this experience and do their best to guide new candidates through the process. This process of becoming an educator is something they have experienced. The development of their professional identity comes from not only their own assumptions about the profession, but also how they worked through these assumptions. Such a transformational process included critical incidents, mentoring, experiences and beliefs, all of which helped to establish their professional identity. This work explores three case studies and discusses the implications of participants' choices and how their professional identities shifted and changed when presented with a critical incident.

### **Literature Review**

Several aspects of a professional's experiences shape their career trajectory as well as their identity. Some of these aspects are planned and anticipated, such as enrolling in an institution to obtain a specific degree or participating in an internship with the hope that they will be able to secure a professional position within an organization of their choice. However, there are also experiences that they do not have control over that also come into play when developing a professional identity. These experiences often produce transformative learning and develop resiliency for teachers to continue to forge ahead in their chosen profession. These experiences include professional identity, transformational learning, and professional resiliency, as expanded on below.

### ***The Professional Identity of Educators***

The professional identity of an educator can be a bit complex beyond the eye of the observer. To the casual observer, it may seem that the educator's responsibilities are solely to transfer knowledge and manage an educational environment, but an educator's professional identity extends beyond teaching and classroom management. The educator's professional identity also

entails a significant amount of customer service to students, colleagues, the community, and the organization. Regardless of the position that an educator has in the K-20 field, most serve in roles beyond teaching. This service is comprised of student advocacy, community advocacy, as the educator serves as guidance counselor, role model, and institution booster.

Educators routinely provoke their students to excel in every area of their lives (Teach.com, 2017), and they serve as role models. Unlike the celebrities, students may also admire and aspire to become, educators are the role models that students can see, touch, and hear each day. To establish rapport with students, educators share stories about their lives with their students. This transparency can help students see the educator's humanity and inevitably provide a model of inspiration (Jones, 2016). As professionals, these educators must work to strike the fine balance between being human and retaining a professional persona; they do not want to share too much of their own personal life and can find themselves in a struggle to balance the two.

The educator's professional identity will undergo a trajectory of growth throughout their tenure in the profession. During their initial years in the profession, opportunities to serve are always accessible in the profession of education. This profession needs selfless educators who are willing to serve others unconditionally, learn from the transformative process, and develop resiliency. This can be a challenge, but it reaps many benefits.

### ***Transformative Learning in Education***

As novice teachers enter the field, they move into their first positions with the assumptions of what their classrooms and experiences will be like. They will take the time to tend to every student and make sure that their needs are met. They will differentiate and accommodate, and each student will succeed in their classroom. This narrative plays over and over—until the narrative no longer holds true, which presents the novice teacher with the dilemma that their assumptions about the profession were inaccurate. Based on the narrative, novice teachers have two paths they can take: leave the profession (Guha, Hyler, & Darling-Hammond, 2017) or revise their assumptions about the profession (Cranton, 2016).

Mezirow (2012) noted that transformational learning allows the individual to move past previously held beliefs and create a new system that allows them to have perspective from their experiences that further shapes professional growth and identity. No longer does the teacher fully believe that each student will be reached, and they no longer feel that all will succeed in the same manner. This learning process also feeds into the idea of who these educators are as professionals (Cranton, 2013). Until something disrupts the educator's experiences and transforms them, the narrative for their profession will continue. When this disruption does occur, the self-reflective component that these educators once learned about in their prior curricula presents itself. This reflective component is where these assumptions will begin to be challenged. Boden-McGill and Kippers (2012) indicated that this is not merely a simple reflection of what might need to be changed, but rather a critical self-reflection. This reflection can include relationships in the workplace, interactions with learners, and considering how their emotional state of mind is relevant in their transformation.

As teachers begin to develop their professional identity, their experiences in the classroom and their assumptions of what it would be like can become challenged when the two do not align.



The self-reflection and adaptation all occur in a variety of fashions. These experiences challenge the educator's assumptions, and as a result, transformative learning occurs.

To revise these assumptions, these educators must first decide who they will be as a professional. Consider the rates for teachers leaving the profession within the first three to five years: More than half elect to leave the profession completely (Robertson-Kraft & Duckworth, 2014). Analyses of these teachers indicated that those who chose to stay in the profession had more focus on long-term goals and were able to adjust their expectations within the classroom as well as develop "grit" in the profession. They were able to self-reflect in their profession and develop a resiliency to their surroundings. The combination of the passion to their professional identity, transformational learning, and resiliency led them to continue down their career path.

### ***Professional Resiliency***

Transitioning into a new and challenging career requires a change in professional identity. Without this, personal and professional identities may be at odds, leaving the person with an internal conflict. If this conflict is not resolved, professional identity transformation does not occur, leaving the person in turmoil. Some with this experience may leave the profession to resolve this turmoil. Yet others power through, transforming their professional identity in order to reconcile any conflict with their personal identity. Resiliency is imperative for transformative learning and reconciliation of personal and professional identities to occur.

One's personal and professional experiences merge to form the narrative of the individual (Unrath, Anderson, & Franco, 2013). Identities are not set in stone. Instead, a transformative process happens when changes in the person's personal or professional experiences occur. Novice teachers, whose expectation of the teaching professional is not realized, illustrate identity conflicts and the need for resiliency. Education is notorious for its low novice teacher retention. Fifty percent of new teachers leave the profession within five years (Beiler, 2013). While there are many factors contributing to this phenomenon, identity conflict and its mitigation will be the focus of this paper. The three main mitigations are teacher mentorships, reflection of practice, and shared core values. Each factor contributes positively to transformative learning and thus teacher retention.

## **Case Studies in Education**

### ***From Classroom Teacher to University Professor (Katina's Story)***

**Chasing my dream.** Ever since I was a timid fourth grader, I aspired to become an educator. My fourth and sixth grade teachers ignited the flame in my heart to teach. I remember these teachers vividly because they emulated the qualities of an effective teacher in my immature eyes. They also established rapport with all of us as well as our families. They were honest, loyal, and smart. Upon graduating from high school, I enrolled in a four-year institution of higher education and began my journey in an educator preparation program. My excitement increased when I applied the acquired knowledge in clinical experiences. Feelings of trepidation entered upon graduation and certification. The time had come for me to manage my own classroom without the guidance of a clinical teacher or university supervisor.

***Classroom teacher.*** Teaching first grade became a passion for me. I taught first grade for four consecutive years. I enjoyed teaching the curriculum, the developmental stages of the students, and the confidence that I gained. During this time of my career, I was confident enough to mentor teacher candidates during their clinical experiences. During this time, I also decided to pursue a graduate degree to enhance my knowledge of teaching on a profound level. I was unsure of my next move, but one day a peer of mine asked me if I was ready to leave the classroom and try a different task in education. This decision led to a significantly different opportunity in my career.

***Teacher educator.*** When I was hired to be a teacher educator, I experienced mixed emotions. I never aspired to teach adults, but I planned to attack the challenge with tenacity. I soon discovered that my structure for teaching elementary students was also effective with adult learners. Teaching adult learners has become a joy for me. In addition to teaching aspiring teacher candidates in my new role, I was expected to complete service in the community, institution, and profession. As a teacher educator, I have advocated for literacy by reading to students in the local schools, judging reading and science fair projects, and sharing literacy strategies with other educators at professional development sessions. Serving in these various capacities has allowed me to grow significantly in my profession.

***From Surgical Technologist to Classroom Teacher to University Professor (Lundon's Story)***

There is one unifying theme within my unique career path: education. It began with my pursuit of a medical degree and led me to my current position as a visiting instructor in the College of Education. Having taught in the medical and grades 7-12 education fields, my professional identity has undergone continual shifts. Applying what I had learned from my past experiences and my relationships with valued mentors helped guide my transformative learning (process).

My professional career began as a surgical technologist, where I was employed at a teaching hospital. I often had students of surgical technology, nursing students, and surgical residents under my instruction. I enjoyed every minute of teaching. Through this process, I found that adult learners need to feel autonomous, responsible for their actions but given the proper information. When possible, I would have my students watch me do a case followed by an opportunity for the student to then lead the same procedure with the same surgeon for another patient: see one, do one. Little did I know, I was beginning to build my teacher identity through these experiences.

Teaching the surgical tech and medical students offered a new challenge and provided an opportunity to share my passion with others. Thus, I enrolled in the Master of Education program later that week. The education courses were a natural fit. I had always enjoyed all things science but teaching, I found, was my calling. My peers and I fervently discussed everything from pedagogy to policy. In this group, I had found my colleagues. More importantly, I had found the profession that aligned with my personal identity.

Brenda and Lorie (both pseudonyms) had more than 30 years of teaching experience combined. Brenda was a math teacher, assigned to me by my district to meet novice-teacher state requirements. Lorie was the head of our science department and fellow biology teacher. Daily, I would plan lessons, labs, and activities with Lorie. My novice-teacher ideas were sharpened by

her experience and wisdom. As student engagement increased, so did productivity and rapport. This transformation would not have occurred without my relationships with my mentors. Through their support and my purposeful reflection, I remained resilient and redefined my professional identity.

Another piece of a teacher educator's professional identity exists through navigation of campus politics, research, and publications. Armed with the realization that mentors greatly contribute to resiliency, I have again reached out to respected colleagues. Thankfully, one colleague in particular took on the role of mentoring. Through my discussions and collaborations with her (such as this publication), I find much-needed support. Having survived the first year, I have begun to reflect upon my experiences. Through these reflections and her support, my professional identity is being redefined.

***From Research Methodologist to University Professor in Education (Amy's Story)***

My career as an educator started out as well...I wasn't one! I didn't have the dream where I wanted to be a teacher; I didn't have a calling to work with kids. In fact, I didn't even know what I wanted to do when I started college. Business seemed like a good fit. After a few days of sitting at work, I fell back to what I liked about graduate school and realized that it was the experience of writing my master's thesis and the process of conducting research. That is what I wanted to be as a professional—a researcher. I knew what I wanted and set the goal to get there.

The program I chose was a wonderful fit for me. At the time it was housed in the School of Education, and the crux of the work that I was doing regarding coursework, research, and analysis was around the world of K-12 education, both at the student level as well as the teacher level. By chance, I was placed with a mentor who was also in the public schools conducting research; the urban locale of Chicago allowed me to become part of classrooms that I never once considered. Through this research, my focus shifted from just being a researcher to being an educator. This project soon led to others, and I was traveling all over the United States working with teachers and teaching kids. It was the perfect mix of everything I wanted professionally. As I became more entrenched both within a university setting, while still having a foot in the schools, I began to fully realize who I was professionally and where I still wanted to go.

This transformation for me came from a critical incident that happened with children in the classroom in Detroit. It was here that I knew I could make a difference, and a shift happened as I attempted to ensure that all children had the same access to schools and resources. The conditions of the school, as well as the training of the teachers, were unlike anything I had ever seen before. The daily interactions with these teachers and kids, as well as how grateful they were for these small exchanges and different views in the classroom, had an impact on me as much as it did them.

These experiences in these schools allowed me to reflect and consider where I wanted to go and who I wanted to be as a researcher and an educator. As my tenure as an educator has continued, it has been a constant process of self-reflection and realization. I aspire to navigate the professional world both within the community of practice in K-12 and within in higher education as well. Even now, my professional identity is a cyclical process and continues to adjust as I reflect. I can fully say that I'm no longer just a "research methodologist" but now part of

something that is much bigger. The community I work within academically provides support and direction to further my professional growth.

### **Common Themes Related to Professional Practice**

***Critical incidents.*** The particular incident will vary by individual, however in each of these stories it is clearly identifiable where these incidents happened, from being in surgery and the desire to being someplace else, to being in a classroom with children who are in need, to assuming a new educational path. These critical incidents began to push these three individuals toward their transformational learning. They began to self-reflect and adjust their belief systems when it came to who they were professionally.

***Transformational learning (challenging of beliefs).*** In each of these cases there was a shift where the belief systems of the educators were challenged through this reflective process. As they experienced their critical incidents, their belief systems were challenged and adjusted. They began to see themselves professionally in a different light than they had before. This caused a shift in their professional identity as they began to assume these new roles.

***Resiliency and self-efficacy.*** Without resiliency or self-efficacy to reconcile personal and professional identities, teachers often leave the profession. One major contributor to resiliency, as demonstrated in the three case studies above, is mentorship. Each of the teachers, who are now teacher educators, underwent transformative learning with the guidance of a mentor. These mentors bolstered self-efficacy and encouraged a positive transformative learning experience that lead to an altered professional identity. This resiliency can also be associated with the term “grit” that suggests that this innate characteristic contributes the most to an educator’s success and ability to adjust and react to situations. As noted by Robertson and Duckworth (2014), these individuals have the passion and focus on their long-term goals and are able to deal with adverse and changing situations.

### **Conclusion**

Critical incidents, transformative learning, and resilience all contributed to the teacher educators’ professional identity. Each case presented the individual with a situation where professional identity was challenged, requiring reflection on who they were professionally, to decide the next step to take. These situations were often not within the control of the educator and often conflicted with personal identities. Critical incidents are unique to each educator, but they seemed to trigger the transformative learning process and create a fork in the proverbial career road.

This process of navigating the formation of one’s professional identity is often comprised of many factors, such as critical incidents, mentors, grit and self-reflection. Successfully navigating critical incidents helps to create a professional identity for teacher educators. Each woman has seen herself in the mirror during each stage of her career path in education. It is imperative that the woman educator does not become hindered by failures but perseveres to accomplish something greater in her career. The professional identity for each woman is a reflection of how she sees her worth in her career.

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## **Protective Factors to Foster Resiliency in Healthcare Professional Trainees**

*Carrie Boden, Wendy L. Ward, and Lindsey Wilson*

### **Abstract**

High stress levels and burnout are common in the healthcare field today. Healthcare professionals (HCP) can protect themselves by remaining cognizant of preventive and intervention strategies to utilize when stress levels are threatening burnout. Within one's professional identity, developing resiliency skills and actively practicing self-care are some strategies that are helpful in maintaining effective work performance and patient care. To develop and recognize these skills, HCPs undergoing transformational learning (TL) can develop new ways of thinking, acting, and feeling in their work and everyday life to help prevent burnout (Transformative Learning Centre, 2004).

Keywords: Transformative Learning, Healthcare Professional, Community of Practice, Adult, Resilience

### **Burnout Among Healthcare Professionals**

Within the healthcare field, managing patients and having medical knowledge are not the only conditions that a healthcare professional (HCP) deals with. The administration, paperwork, changing technologies, long and strenuous work hours, frantic medical environments, and personal lives all contribute to the HCP's workload. The requirement for healthcare professionals to cope with the environmental stressors of the clinical field as well as prioritize patients' health has led to increased amounts of worker burnout. This burnout is seen among nurses (Branch & Klinkenberg, 2015), physician assistants (Benson et al., 2016), pharmacists (Mott et al., 2004), audiologists (Severn, Searchfield, & Huaggard, 2012), respiratory care practitioners (Shelledy et al., 1992), and many more healthcare specialties (Shanafelt et al., 2012).

Leaders in medical education in recent years identified this burnout in health professions as a public health crisis (Rappley et al., 2016). Once this burnout happens, an HCP's ability to work with patients thoroughly, manage the workload, and practice self-care diminishes. During the academic and instruction periods, HCP trainees must push through, promoting resilient professional identities since developing coping strategies to combat burnout is essential to promote healthy work environments and positive experiences for professionals and patients. To foster a healthcare workforce with professional identities that value and incorporate resilience skills into everyday worklife is needed. We propose that trainees in the healthcare field must go through a process of transformational learning (TL) that will foster resiliency in their professional identity formation (PIF) (Irby & Hamstra, 2016).

### **Background of Transformative Learning Theory and Process**

In one's work, times of severe stress or overwhelming circumstances may occur. For some, these stressful events may be intense and uncomfortable—what Mezirow (1991, 2012) called a “disorienting dilemma.” After studying women's experiences returning to work and school during the feminist movements of that time, Mezirow (1978) saw how disrupting events caused

the women to alter their knowledge within their experience to finding meaning and create positive change. He called this process transformational learning (TL), or the act of revising underlying assumptions, altering dysfunctional belief systems, and becoming more reflective and open to different perspectives on thinking and acting in the world (Cranton, 2016; Taylor, 2008). Events or circumstances that create this “disorienting dilemma” either force the individual to adjust professional identity or to stay in the current state and become burned out. If the individual decides to alter the current state and transformative learning occurs, three changes can be produced: changes in one’s belief system, changes in understanding oneself, and changes in behavior (Cranton, 2002).

Transformative learning theory emphasizes that knowledge is socially constructed and can be changed by altering one’s experience and the meaning of it. Mezirow (1991, 2012) expanded on this and explained that knowledge can be developed under instrumental or communicative domains. Instrumental knowledge encompasses cause-effect or task-oriented learning, whereas communicative knowledge is one’s ability to express feelings, emotions, and intentions of his or her actions. The assumption is that an individual has preconceived ideas and notions when entering an environment. These ideas have been learned through social interactions and can be transformed into different forms of knowledge more congruent with the individual’s environment over time (Baumgartner, 2012). The TL process is dependent on the individual, and each person will have a different experience.

For TL to transpire in an individual, Mezirow (1997) emphasized utilizing the communicative domain. He concluded that being able to reflect on one’s values and beliefs will lead an individual to be able to revise these assumptions. An individual’s reflection upon the situation is key to this theory. Along with this, expressing these thoughts with others or through various outlets, or reflective discourse, is dynamic and central to TL theory. Expressing these thoughts leads to what MacKeracher (2012) referred to as “naming the change,” the point when an individual can identify new behaviors to implement that will promote a healthy lifestyle (Cranton, 2002).

### **Transformative Learning Theory and Communities of Practice**

People entering their professional fields bring personal identities that will inevitably affect their experience in the workplace. In the work environment, or the community of practice (CoP), socially constructed, unwritten ideas and values have often been established. These values dictate the dynamics and structures within the workplace. New professionals must adapt to these work culture narratives and adjust to develop a professional identity more aligned with the CoP (Cruess et al., 2015; Goldie, 2012; Trede et al., 2012; Wald, 2015). A professional will be able to be more aware, comfortable, and effective in the job if his or her professional identity is more aligned with the CoP. This leads to resilience to stress in the workplace. Occasionally, an HCP will enter a CoP where managing the self is neither important nor acknowledged. It is important that HCPs enter knowing how to practice resiliency skills and encourage the work environment to emphasize self-care.

Going further, it is important to recognize how PIF develops within the CoP, but before that, the TL process must take place within the professional’s current identity (Cruess et al., 2015;

Mezirow, 1990, 1991, 2012). If TL does not occur, then the professional identity also may not be altered within the CoP. Therefore, when the individual is confronted with “disorienting dilemmas” or cognitive dissonances, resilient mindsets and behaviors may not carry through the situation, leading to burnout or dissatisfaction in the job.

Sending people into professional careers without TL experiences can set individuals up for failure. In educational programs, taking time to teach TL theory and having trainees identify spaces and events in their program where utilizing this process is critical can help them implement it into their professional practice. Many scholars do not see resiliency as a trait that some people possess and others do not; it is viewed, rather, as a skill that can be intentionally developed over time (Epstein & Krasner, 2013; McAllister & Lowe, 2011; Stephens, 2013). Practicing stress management, self-reflection, and self-care are all actions trainees and working professional can participate in to develop resiliency skills (Fares et al., 2016).

### **Creating Healthy Change in the Individual**

It is important to consider how TL could practically have an effect on an HCP trainee’s educational experience. To explore this phenomenon, we assembled case examples from our experiences of trainees experiencing cognitive dissonance due to the stressors they were facing during their professional training. These cases spanned several healthcare subfields, and a recent book chapter (Ward, Castleberry, & Boden, in press) were written as a compilation of experiences that have been altered slightly to eliminate details that might identify an individual. The vignettes included a diverse range of stressors the HCP trainees were dealing with, such as increasing clinical and school work, struggles with finances, long work hours, and emotional fatigue. Due to these stressors, we saw how the individuals would reach a point when they had to decide between discontinuing their training due to burnout or find a way to change. At the point of burnout, four central emotions are most commonly seen: fear, anger, sadness, and shock or surprise (Roberts & Roberts, 2006). Between the emotional reactions and the cognitive dissonance in the trainees’ work, HCPs are forced to evaluate their desires and goals in the field and must make sense of what is happening (Taylor, 1998).

The students’ experiences consisted of several components that matched the TL process. Once the students recognized that burnout was occurring in their training, they went through the basic steps of reflection, expressing their thoughts and feelings, then identifying and implementing a change in behavior that would be beneficial for them. Each of the students interacted with an advisor, instructor, or administrator to discuss what stressors they were experiencing. Together they then developed a plan together to get the student back on track. Having another person’s input allowed the students to explore the meaning of their situation on deeper levels and have another individual to understand and support the student’s new behaviors and goals. These changes often included shifts in frames of reference and points of view (Mezirow, 1991). This is the process of reflective discourse. The more mentors are aware and involved with supporting the students through their stressors, the more they are able to incorporate instruction and activities that facilitate TL and a resilient PIF (Boyd & Myers, 1998).

Transformative learning is not a process that happens after an individual makes one effort toward change. Once reflection upon a situation and identifying a new behavior are completed,



following through with the new behaviors and seeing the repercussions of this change takes time. If a student finds that spending more time on self-care—by running, for example—would be helpful for resiliency skill development, it would not be wise for the student to spend several hours every day immediately practicing this. Rather, taking small steps toward the new behaviors (e.g., running one hour a day) makes change and reduced stress more readily recognizable for the student. As he or she recognizes progress due to the newly incorporated change, the student will have more motivation to continue this behavior.

### **Future Research and Education Goals**

Moving forward, it is imperative that educators make efforts to facilitate TL processes and have open and professional relationships with students that are supportive and foster growth. In classroom settings, there is a unique opportunity for educators to create scenarios in which the students must endure stressful, but not harmful, situations where they may experience a disorienting dilemma. Educators can then encourage students to self-reflect and undergo reflective discourse to find meaning in the situation as well as recognize how they feel in it. Through this process, class discussion can revolve around how recognizing high stress levels and taking time to process through it will help the students in their profession, as this fosters TL and the development of resilient professional identities. Different kinds of learning styles and problem-based learning should be implemented to reach all kinds of students (Apte, 2009).

The more healthcare training programs can implement this kind of training, the more HCPs will enter the field better prepared to handle emotional stress, manage caseloads, and maintain self-care. All of this will ultimately lead to better patient care and more efficient and effective healthcare facilities. Future research assessing HCPs entering the workforce who have undergone TL training versus those who have not will be helpful in determining further how effective this process is. As impacts from TL process trainings are seen in the healthcare field, more discussions about appropriate education methods and models can be developed and used over time.

### **Conclusion**

Resiliency skills are a critical part of professional identity within the healthcare field; they protect HCPs from experiencing burnout and emotional fatigue. Developing professionals who practice self-care and who are aware of the physical, emotional, and mental toll produced by the high stress levels of the field is important to emphasize in healthcare training. This will promote healthier and more effective healthcare facilities and practices. As HCPs acknowledge the high stress and are encouraged to develop resilient mindsets and behaviors, a TL process can occur that will help produce resilient professional identities and combat burnout. Training programs for HCPs have the opportunity to educate and promote TL theory and resiliency skills to send the most prepared professionals out into the workforce.

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## **Florida Virtual School Impact on the Graduation Rate of a Higher Education Honors Program**

*Michael T. Callahan and Kathleen P. King*

### **Abstract**

While higher education institutions seek to increase college admissions' predictions of student success, they have largely overlooked examining possible impacts of online distance education classes completed in high school. Using information from an undergraduate honors program, this study analyzed whether an indicator of undergraduate student success can be influenced by such courses. The results suggest that high-achieving Florida Virtual School students admitted to an honors program do not graduate at a higher rate than students who have not completed online distance education classes. However, the study provides a method that can address the sample limitation and guide future research to determine how postsecondary non-honors student applicants are affected by online distance education courses completed in high school.

**Keywords:** Distance Education, Undergraduate Admissions, Honors Program

### **Reviewing the Literature**

In considering what it means to be a successful undergraduate student, quality of life is certainly an important consideration. One way of attempting to ensure students may have a positive college experience, and quality of life, is to re-examine admissions metrics and assumptions. There has been a substantial amount of research on what criteria may be used effectively to forecast success in undergraduate college admissions. For instance, based on research efforts in the 1950s and 1960s, GPA and SAT scores are used by admission offices as a means of admission today. By examining data from the 1980s to the 1990s, these data points (commonly used as predictors) were also confirmed by Burton and Ramist (2001) as predictors of success. Furthermore, when Rohr (2012) analyzed data regarding 803 first-time-in-college (FTIC) students at small liberal arts colleges admitted from 1992 to 1998, he found that as GPA and SAT increased, there was a direct correlation in the retention of students in STEM fields. Specifically, if GPA increased one point, the chance of graduating doubled (Rohr, 2012). A similar result was found with SAT. Rohr's (2012) research revealed that as SAT scores increased, the retention rate would increase by 0.3%. Additional researchers who have demonstrated that GPA and SAT scores were reliable metrics include Oseguera (2005) and Burton and Ramist (2001).

A study by Kretchmar and Farmer (2013) verified how Advanced Placement (AP) courses, International Baccalaureate (IB), and Dual Enrollment (DE) have altered how college admissions officers assess students applying for college. This study evaluated the number of advanced coursework courses to discover the impact on graduation rates across data from 3,626 students at University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill (Kretchmar & Farmer, 2013). It was discovered that students' first-year GPA would increase for each AP course they completed up until a student reached five courses. After five courses, there was no significant change in first-year GPA. Geiser and Santelices (2006) also discovered that the norm in the undergraduate admission process has become to examine the number of AP and honors courses an applicant completes.

AP and IB courses are viewed as more rigorous, and admission offices are weighing evidence of mastery of this material more heavily than traditional high school courses.

Regarding the growth and adoption of online distance education, Volery and Lord (2000) identified four contributing factors: alleviating capacity constraint, expanding access, capitalizing on emerging market opportunities, and catalyzing institutional transformation. The U. S. Department of Education (2014) reported that 25.8% of postsecondary students were enrolled in an online distance education course. An independent report by Watson, Pape, Murin, Gemin, and Vashaw (2014) estimated that 16% of K-12 students were enrolled in online distance education courses with a higher percentage of high school students compared to elementary students. Meanwhile, in some states (e.g., Florida), students must complete at least one online high school course to earn their diploma (Watson et al., 2014). Even with a large percentage of high school students enrolled in online distance education courses, and with this number growing (Watson et al., 2014), there remains a gap in the research concerning the impact of high school online distance education classes on the graduation and course completion rates of college students.

### **Methodology**

Due to the nature of the data and the research questions, a quantitative research study was conducted during the summer of 2017. The director of the honors program at a large, metropolitan university in Florida provided the needed data regarding students admitted in the years 2010, 2011, and 2012. This large, public, research university in Florida had a student population greater than 30,000 students. It offers more than 100 different degree programs at all three higher education levels. For more than 10 years, the institution has incorporated distance education in its curricula. For many of the high school students included in this study, completion of a Florida Virtual School course was encouraged because it was a graduation requirement in the State of Florida (Watson et al., 2014).

A logistic regression model was used to determine if the distance education variables had any statistical significance in predicting graduation. These variables included: if any online distance education classes were completed (Yes or No), the number of online distance education classes completed (number), and the online distance education GPA for the student (number). The theoretical framework used in this study was general system theory (Bertalanffy, 1968). The input used in this study was the honors program sample. The logistic regression was the process that included variables detailing the distance education courses. The output was the graduation of the students. The last item examined was the correlation matrix. This analysis determined whether a correlation existed between the distance education variable and the academic success variables used by admission offices.

### **Findings**

Kretchmar and Farmer's (2013) work was the foundation for the first research question that examined how online distance education classes in high school affected the graduation rate in four or six years. Kretchmar and Farmer (2013) concluded that as the number of AP classes increased (up to five), the first-year freshman GPA increased as well. In the current study, the

same logic was used except it was applied to online distance education classes and examined its relationship to graduation rates.

### ***Research Question One***

The logistic regression analysis evaluated whether there was significance among the online distance education variables. In following the required procedures of this test, first, a casewise test was used in SPSS to remove the outliers, and then a Hosmer and Lemeshow test confirmed that the model was a good fit (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). This test passed and allowed the online distance education variable to be evaluated in both the four- and six-year models. The four-year regression found the  $p$ -value for Florida Virtual School (Yes/No) to be  $p = .976$ ,  $df = 1$ , and  $n = 1359$ . In the six-year regression, the  $p$ -value for Florida Virtual School (Yes/No) was  $p = .546$ ,  $df = 1$ , and  $n = 409$ . In both models, this variable was not found to be significant in the graduation rate of four to six years. These findings are described in Callahan (2017) in greater detail. These results suggest that, when framed in the context of general system theory, an honors population admission office would not benefit from evaluating online distance education classes when the main outcome focus for the office is to determine whether a student will graduate in four or six years.

The general system theory framework allows for the admission process (the process) to change the variables used for admission (the input) and examine them for changes in the graduation rate (the output). This framework allows for the many systems of higher education to be isolated. With the isolation, each of the subsystems can be tested and improved (Moore & Kearsley, as cited in Rovai, 2003; Potts & Hagan, 2000; Saba, 1999). In this study, the admission system is being tested and improved. The logistic regression model allows for a change in the input variables; therefore, online distance education variables can be tested, and how these variables affect the output can be learned about.

### ***Research Question Two***

Building on research question one, research question two examined if the number of online distance education classes had an effect on the graduation rate in four or six years. This question was grounded in logic that this finding could produce similar results to the study conducted by Kretchmar and Famer (2013). SPSS and logistic regression were used to examine the potential impact. As before, the required procedures for this test were performed: a casewise test and a Hosmer and Lemeshow test (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). The latter test confirmed that the model was a good fit and online distance education course data could be evaluated in both the four- and six-year models. The four-year regression model produced a  $p$ -value for high school online distance education credits variable  $p = .587$ ,  $df = 1$ , and  $n = 1359$ . The four-year model was not found to be significant. The six-year model, however, was found to be significant. This model found the  $p$ -value was  $p = .000$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $n = 409$ , and a  $B = -.902$ . As was also found in the study by Callahan (2017), the negative coefficient suggests that with more high school online distance education classes completed, it is less likely that an honors student will graduate from a post-secondary institution compared to a student who took no high school distance education classes.

### ***Research Question Three***

Research question three built on Rohr's (2012) findings that high school GPA had an impact on graduation. This question examined whether the high school online distance education GPA could assist in determining if a student would graduate postsecondary school in four or six years. To determine whether the high school online distance education variables were significant, the statistical test used for this question was logistic regression. By following the same steps as in the first two questions, the casewise test removed the outliers, and the Hosmer and Lemeshow (2000) test provided the evidence that the model had a good fit. These analyses allowed for the model to test the online distance education GPA variable in both the four and six-year models. In the four-year regression model, the  $p$ -value for high school online distance education GPA was  $p = .525$ ,  $df = 1$ , and  $n = 364$ . The last thing examined was the six-year regression model. The  $p$ -value for the high school online distance education GPA was  $.089$ ,  $df = 1$ , and  $n = 111$ . In this question, as in question one, this variable was not found to be significant in the graduation rate of four to six years. Therefore, when framed in the context of general system theory, an honors population admission office would not benefit from evaluating high school online distance education GPA when the main outcome for the office is whether a student will graduate in four or six years.

### ***Limitations***

In reviewing and interpreting these data, it is critical to recognize that the honors college sample analyzed in this study does not represent that average institution's entire student body or application pool. As honors program data, this sample is comprised of high-achieving students with a six-year graduation rate of greater than 76%. The students in this program tend to graduate at a rate more than five percentage points higher than the entire study body, based on the "online facts page" of the participating institution. If research were to examine the institution's entire student body, it is safe to assume that the results would be different, and because of that, it is suggested that this research is conducted when such data is available.

## **Discussion and Conclusion**

This study explored online distance education information and the implications that it might have on admission decision models. We proposed that one way of attempting to ensure students may have a positive college experience and quality of life was to re-examine admissions metrics and assumptions. Rohr (2012), along with Kretchmar and Farmer (2013), provided the foundational research for this study. By evaluating online distance education classes completed in high school, the number of those distance education classes completed, and the distance education GPA of the classes, this study attempted to provide information to improve undergraduate admission models. Findings suggest that of the three high school online distance education variables studied, only the total number of distance education credits provided insight into the possibility of graduation. While distance education GPA and a yes/no variable for distance education were not found to be significant, admission offices now have confirmation that they are not missing valuable insight on the future performance by not evaluating these variables in the undergraduate honors program admission application.

The goal of the study was to provide a way to select students more likely to graduate from a higher education institution in a four- or six-year time frame. The admission data collected from



an honors program at a Research 1 institution in the state of Florida were challenging to find as very few admission offices stored high school online distance education information in a database. The results of this study were intended to either confirm that this information is not needed or to (1) reveal the need for additional data to be retained by admission offices and (2) provide evidence for them to consider adding online distance education information to students' application files.

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## **Gender Differences Within Academic Burnout**

*Jennifer Castellanos*

### **Abstract**

Within college, students deal with a multitude of stressors. More than 19 million students are enrolled in college in the United States (US Census, 2015). College stress has been linked to negatively affecting a student's life in a variety of ways causing burnout syndrome, a prevalent issue concerning students within higher education. Burnout syndrome can cause students to encounter course stress, loneliness, negative learning emotion, and others. The purpose of this review is to examine the literature on academic burnout to understand the relationship between gender differences and academic burnout in higher education. Specifically, it explores an understanding of burnout among college students, lists the different effects, and explains several different coping strategies.

Keywords: Academic Burnout, College, Higher Education, Gender

### **Gender Differences Within Academic Burnout**

A significant moment in a young adult's life can be marked by their time at the university, a time when university students can "acquire more independence, experience changes in social systems, gain important life skills, and of course, pursue a degree for a chance at a brighter future" (Stoliker & Lafreniere, 2015, p. 146). Many students' university years can be pivotal moments in their lives; however, this time can also be a recipe for disaster due to the amount of stress and pressure college students endure with college education (Stoliker & Lafrenier, 2015). College stress can include anything from school demands to feelings of inadequacy due to one's performance or perception. For many students, stress is a major issue as they juggle a variety of other challenges such as academic, social, and personal challenges (Lin & Huang, 2014).

Excessive amounts of stress related to academic sources or other stressors can cause burnout syndrome, the state in which a person has emotional exhaustion, tendency toward depersonalization, and a feeling of lower personal accomplishment (Skodova, Lajciakova, & Banovcinova, 2017). Studies related to burnout mainly concern those individuals enduring workplace stressors and demands, such as those professionals who help others or whose work requires them to have close interaction with others (e.g., healthcare, education, and social work; Lin & Huang, 2014). However, attention has not been paid to students' stressors and coursework load that may lead to burnout among college students. A number of multi-institutional studies have estimated that at least half of all medical students may be affected with burnout during their education (IsHak et al., 2013; Skodova, Lajciakova & Banovcinova, 2017). Student burnout has been linked to dropping out of school, could lead to a decrease in personal health and well-being, and has been found to negatively impact students' overall academic experience (Stoliker & Lafreniere, 2015).

## Purpose

The purpose of this review is to examine the literature on academic burnout using an integrative method to understand the relationship between gender differences and academic burnout in higher education. Specifically, we seek to understand academic burnout, highlight the effects of academic burnout, and discover known strategies for working through burnout within higher education.

## Method

To support the research purpose, an integrative literature review method was used to identify and synthesize several streams of literature on the topic of gender and academic burnout. An integrative review method is a “form of research that reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated” (Torraco, 2005, p. 356; see also Callahan, 2010). The process included assessment of the literature using specific keywords within three databases, initial review of the abstracts generated to locate relevant articles, and analysis of these articles to identify major themes within the literature.

### *Selection of Articles*

The review started with an assessment of gender differences and academic burnout across two disciplines: education and psychology. Articles were collected using three different databases: Education Full Text, PsychInfo, and ERIC (Education Resources Information Center). The selected databases were searched using the following keywords: gender, gender differences, academic burnout, student burnout, and learning burnout. The keyword *gender and gender differences* was paired with different wording for academic burnout such as *academic burnout*, *student burnout*, and *learning burnout*. Some of the same results appeared in multiple databases.

For example, when the keywords *gender differences* and *academic burnout* were used, there were 18 results; of those 18 results, many articles were repeats of the articles searched previously, producing no new selections. When searching with the same keyword (*academic burnout*) within the database Education Full Text, most of the results appeared to be associated with adolescent burnout, which was outside the scope of this review. Finally, a third database was searched: ERIC. The same keywords were used within this database, and several different articles emerged. However, certain articles did repeat within this database as well (See Table 1). The search was conducted in August 2017.

Table 1

*Literature Review: Number of Articles Selected by Database Source*

<u>Database</u>	<u>Keywords</u>	<u>Results</u>	<u>Selected</u>
Education Full Text	academic burnout AND gender	18	1
Education Full Text	academic burnout AND gender differences	9	0
Education Full Text	student burnout AND gender differences	17	0
Education Full Text	learning burnout AND gender differences	5	0
PsychInfo	academic burnout AND gender	9	1
PsychInfo	academic burnout AND gender differences	5	1

<u>Database</u>	<u>Keywords</u>	<u>Results</u>	<u>Selected</u>
PsychInfo	student burnout AND gender differences	4	0
PsychInfo	learning burnout AND gender differences	1	0
ERIC	academic burnout AND gender	38	2
ERIC	academic burnout AND gender differences	32	1
ERIC	student burnout AND gender differences	54	1
ERIC	learning burnout AND gender differences	10	1
Total		202	8

### ***Content Analysis***

Article abstracts were screened to identify relevant articles that matched the initial topic. Relevance was determined by analyzing each abstract to verify that each publication was about some aspect of gender differences or academic burnout. For example, an abstract that read “this study investigated the relationship between university faculty's gender, age, academic position, and working environment with their burnout levels” (Tümekaya, 2006, p. 911) would not be deemed relevant. This article focused on the aspects of teacher burnout. For example, a sentence along the lines of “this study surveys academic burnout and life stresses among college students and further assesses whether reports of life stresses can serve as a predictor of academic burnout” (Lin & Huang, 2014, p. 77) clearly encompasses the topic of academic burnout in higher education.

## **Results**

After review of the abstracts, a final set of literature was produced (N=8), and articles were analyzed. Based on the review, only eight articles were published on the topic of academic burnout. Other articles within these databases revolved around job burnout or some variance of burnout in other terms (e.g., employee burnout, teacher burnout, adolescent burnout, international burnout). There was little research around gender and burnout among college students in general. After the review, three themes emerged from the literature: (a) what academic burnout looks like, (b) the effects of academic burnout among students, and (c) some coping strategies for academic burnout.

### ***Understanding What Academic Burnout Looks Like***

There are four predictors determined by Lin and Huang (2012) that can predict the onset of academic burnout: self-identity stress, future development stress, interpersonal stress, academic stress. These types of stresses will lead students to feel exhausted or to have a cynical and detached attitude toward their program of study, or they may feel unsuccessful with their progress (Lin & Huang, 2014). Self-identity stress is the stress that is associated with negative perceptions of one's self in appearance, lack of career direction, lack of self-knowledge, lack of confidence, and other negative feelings toward one's self (Lin & Huang, 2014). Future development stress is the stress that comes with finding a job (or lack thereof) because of competitiveness or insecurities about one's worth. It can also be associated with pursuing higher education. Interpersonal stress relates to the lack of friendships and poor communication with others. Academic stress “refers to the stress of academic work, exams, grades, reports, instructor's requirement, and so on” (Lin & Huang, 2014, p. 80).

Academic burnout plagues many students in college. It can be compared to career burnout, because students can experience some of the same types of stressors from courses, course load, or other psychological factors (Lin & Huang, 2014). Just like career burnout, academic burnout can lead to students having higher absenteeism, lower motivation to do work, and a high percentage in dropout (Meier & Schmeck, 1985). Students become burned out by their learning because of academic pressure, homework overload, or other psychological factors like emotional exhaustion, negative attitudes, and low personal accomplishment (Stoliker & Lafreniere, 2015). Academic burnout can be categorized with three factors in mind: low sense of achievement, depersonalization, and emotional exhaustion (Lin & Huang, 2014).

**Low Sense of Achievement.** The first factor of academic burnout consists of a low sense of achievement. This includes having a decline in feelings of competence and successful achievement in academic learning (Lin & Huang, 2012). In other words, students do not necessarily see their achievements and continually see themselves as unsuccessful.

**Depersonalization.** The second factor of academic burnout involves depersonalization. Students tend to harbor negative, callous, or an excessively detached response to other people around them (Lin & Huang, 2012). Communication weakens and slowly social interactions become non-existent.

**Emotional Exhaustion.** The last factor of academic burnout is emotional exhaustion. This factor is described with feelings of being emotionally overextended and depleted (Lin & Huang, 2012). Contingent upon stressors associated with college, students can become exhausted with coursework and feel physically worn out.

### ***Effects of Academic Burnout Among Students***

Academic burnout affects students in a variety of negative ways. The amount of stress thrust on a student can cause interpersonal alienation, decreased academic performance, increased dropout of academic studies, as well as loneliness, negative learning emotion, and emotional exhaustion. These stressors can negatively impact a student's life. Academic burnout has been linked to decreased personal health and well-being. It can also negatively affect a student's academic experience and their perceptions of stress (Skodova, Lajciakova, & Banovcinova, 2017). Burnout has also been known to influence relationships in a negative manner.

Within the research related to academic burnout, there are not many differences between females and males. Both genders have the same feelings about their program of study. Loneliness was reported in males to be higher than those reports of females; however, both genders reported some form of loneliness alongside academic burnout (Lin & Huang, 2014). Females also reported higher stress levels (Backović, Živojinović, Maksimović, & Maksimović, 2012) than males in different forms (e.g., general stress levels, exams, communication, etc.). Gender differences were scarcely researched within the small number of burnout articles concerning college students.

### ***Coping Strategies for Academic Burnout***

Many college students deal with stressors in all different kinds of ways, and there are several coping strategies. Finding personal meaning in everyday tasks, having a strong support system,

obtaining treatment when necessary from counselors, building relationships with peers, faculty, and mentors, engaging regularly in different hobbies, exercising, avoiding an attitude of delayed gratification, and mindfulness training are all simple ways to avoid or cope with academic burnout. There are also many skills that can be taught to students to use to gauge their stress levels and alert them to seek additional help when necessary (Dubac-Charbonneau, Durand-Bush, & Forneris, 2014).

### **Implications for Adult Education Practice**

Being increasingly aware of the negative effects of burnout on students, faculty, counselors, and others who interact with students daily could give more guidance to students facing these college stressors and could potentially encourage them to find effective coping strategies. Stress management classes could be incorporated with orientation and encouraged by faculty and college staff. Resources available for students should be made apparent to allow students to be able to seek resources when necessary.

### **Future Directions**

There has been much research on stress within college students; however, literature and research on academic stress in general is scarce (Lin & Huang, 2014). Further research should follow students longitudinally to understand the effects of burnout over extended periods of time. Other future research could be aimed at understanding different categories of studies, such as graduate students in master and doctoral programs. After understanding burnout in different kinds of college student, interventions can be created and evaluated to treat and prevent burnout among college students.

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## **Sexual Assault in Higher Education**

*Jennifer Castellanos and Debaro Huyler*

### **Abstract**

Sexual assault involves any behavior where one individual makes sexual contact with another without explicit consent (Department of Justice, 2017). More than 20% of females and 11% of males in undergraduate programs are victims of sexual assault annually. Sexual assault can significantly impact survivors' academic performance and progress and may result in a survivor dropping out of school. Despite the many support services available on most campus, more than 90% of sexual assault incidents are left unreported. Sexual assault can have devastating and long-term effects on its victims. Even with proper policies and practices (e.g., Title IX), students within colleges and universities do not report or seek support services. This integrative literature review explores literature on how sexual assault impacts victims.

Keywords: Sexual assault, Higher education, Disclosure

### **Sexual Assault in Higher Education**

Sexual assault involves any behavior where one individual makes contact with another without explicit consent (Department of Justice, 2017). Sexual assault can include forced sexual intercourse, touching, fondling, forcible sodomy, molestation, and attempted rape (Department of Justice, 2017). At least 20% of college women have been sexually assaulted since they enrolled in college (Hossain, Memiah, & Adeyinka, 2014; Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2007; Voth Schrag, 2017). The consequences for these victims include depression, post-traumatic stress, suicidality, low GPA, withdrawal from school, and an increased risk for potential victimization (Jordan, Combs & Smith, 2014; Walsh, DiLillo & Messman-Moore, 2012). The negative outcomes of being a victim may intensify over time if the victim does not receive adequate support and assistance (Holland & Cotina, 2017, p. 50).

In 2008, Title IX legislation was ratified, resulting in many American universities enacting or reevaluating their administrative policies to improve their responses to and assistance for victims of sexual assault (Richards, Branch, Fleury-Steiner & Kafonek, 2017, p. 104). However, evidence of university compliance with federal policies is scarce (Gregory & Janosik, 2007). The Department of Education Office for Civil Rights, also known as OCR, provides guidance around sexual assault, mandating that universities appoint a Title IX coordinator to assume the responsibility of compliance with Title IX, handle complaints, train employees, and provide additional services to victims (Ali, 2011; Holland & Cortina, 2017).

### **Background and Problem**

In 2018, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* published a special collection of articles focusing on sexual assault in higher education, asserting that colleges' and universities' management of sexual assault allegations produce significant emotional disadvantages for students. The overarching commentary suggests that the treatment of and intervention for victims unfortunately depends largely on the organization and requires understanding the interrelated

factors that are a part of sexual assault allegations. Such factors include the university enforcement of Title IX, laws applicable to sexual violence, best practices for evaluating incidents, and university personnel training.

The U. S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights reported more than 458 investigations on cases of colleges and universities mishandling of sexual assault between 2011 and 2018 (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2018). Oregon State University, Baylor University, and the University of Alaska Fairbanks are among a few universities that have offered public apologies to victims of sexual assault for their mishandling of cases. For victims of sexual assault, an acknowledgment of colleges' and universities' mishandling can take decades, as in the case of the University of Oregon's apology 20 years after a woman reported being gang raped by members of its football team (New, 2016).

The mishandling of sexual assault cases and mistreatment of victims has created a culture barrier in colleges and universities that discourage students from disclosing sexual assault incidents (Harper, Maskaly, Kirkner, & Lorenz, 2017), which can result in long-term victimization (Gidycz, Hanson, & Layman, 1995). The long-term effects of sexual victimization are manifested in high rates of psychological and physical health concerns of victims (Palm & Follette, 2008). As a result, there is also a residual effect of sexual assault cases that inevitably negatively impacts the collegiate community which creates a cultural feedback loop at colleges and universities on sexual assault (Jones, 2014).

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this integrative literature review is to examine the literature on sexual assault in higher education and the effects on the victim. The following research questions will be discussed:

1. What influences a victim's decision to report the incident of sexual assault?
2. What are the consequences on the students' wellbeing after disclosure of sexual assault?

### **Method**

An integrative method was used to identify and synthesize numerous streams of literature on the topic of sexual assault in higher education. An integrative literature review is a "form of research that reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature on a topic in an integrated way such that new frameworks and perspectives on the topic are generated" (Torraco, 2005, p. 356; see also Callahan, 2010). This approach included assessment of the literature using specific keywords within three databases, review of the abstracts generated to select relevant articles, and finally, analysis of articles generated to identify major themes within the literature.

### ***Selection of Articles***

This literature review started with an assessment of literature across two disciplines: education and psychology. Articles for analysis were collected across two different databases: PsychInfo, and ERIC (Proquest). The selected databases were searched using the following keywords: *sexual assault* and *higher education*. The keyword *sexual assault* was paired with the keyword *higher education* to narrow the scope. To avoid irrelevant articles, quotations were used around

the keywords when searching for relevant articles to eliminate those outside the research scope. The search was conducted in October 2017.

Table 1

*Literature Review: Number of Articles Selected by Database Source*

<u>Database</u>	<u>Keywords</u>	<u>Results</u>	<u>Selected</u>
PsychInfo	“sexual assault” AND “higher education”	20	9
ERIC (Proquest)	“sexual assault” AND “higher education”	162	24
Total		182	33

### ***Content Analysis***

After the search was conducted, article abstracts were screened to identify relevance. Relevance was determined by analyzing each abstract to verify that each publication was about some aspect of disclosure of sexual assault in higher education. For example, an abstract that read “the purpose of this study was to assess predictors of college students' perceptions of the importance of sexual assault prevention education for themselves and for college students in general” (Jozkowski, Henry, & Sturm, 2015, p. 46) would not be relevant. This article revolves around student perceptions of sexual assault and measures for prevention. However, an abstract that read “experiencing sexual assault can have devastating consequences on survivors’ psychological and educational well-being, which may intensify if survivors do not receive adequate care” (Holland & Cortina, 2017, p. 50) clearly resonates with victims of sexual assault in higher education and would be considered relevant.

## **Methods and Results**

After reviewing all abstracts, a final set of literature was produced (N= 33). The two authors then analyzed the articles for emerging themes. Thematic analysis (Boyatzis, 1998) was used to understand the similarities across the literature collected. Based on the analysis, several themes emerged, and the research questions were answered. After the review, two themes emerged from the literature: (a) advantages and disadvantages of Title IX, and (b) sexual assault effects on the victim before and after disclosure.

### ***Advantages and Disadvantages of Title IX***

Many colleges have revisited administrative policies and codes of conduct concerning sexual assault victims in an effort to comply with federal legislation (Richards, Branch, Fleury-Steiner, & Kafonek, 2017). Even though colleges and universities have “adopted policies and procedure related to campus sexual assault, results also show that the focus often remains on official reporting and bureaucratic structures” (Richards et al., 2017, p. 112), shifting focus away from the victim and his or her healing process.

**Advantages.** Title IX serves the purpose of “prohibiting sex discrimination in higher education, requiring institutions of higher education to take prompt and effective steps to eliminate the hostile environment sexual assault creates” (Harper et al., 2017, p. 302). The policy has several categories. The policy guarantees parents and students the right to maintain privacy in educational records and documents (Harper et al., 2017). The policy also recommends all

institutions of higher education investigate all allegations of sexual assault, and take appropriate action (Harper et al., 2017).

**Disadvantages.** While Title IX and other policies were created to prevent sex discrimination on college campuses, the process is usually harmful to its victims, leaving them to feel shamed most often and feeling as though their experiences are false and their safety is unimportant (Harper et al., 2017; Sulkowicz, 2014). Title IX allows certain practices regarding evidence and questioning victims that may damage the victim's mental health and well-being (Harper et al., 2017). Many victims feel degraded, and others feel as though the outcomes of the process are harmful (Harper et al., 2017). The policies also discourage the reporting for reasons such as extent of confidentiality and victim's fear of retaliation from the perpetrator (McMahon, 2008).

### ***Disclosure of Sexual Assault***

Even with all the support systems in place, many college students do not seek help and support after sexual assault (McMahon, 2008). Survivors who do not seek support show that they have greater psychological distress and systems of depression and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) (Holland & Cortina, 2017; Stansell & Jennings, 2010). Some students who have received support and help from formal or informal sources report having better mental health (Holland & Cortina, 2017; Ullman, 1999).

**Why not disclose?** Seeking support after sexual assault is not always easy, feasible, available, or even beneficial to the victim (Holland & Cortina, 2017). Some women do not label their assault as rape because it involved a boyfriend, they were under the influence of alcohol or drugs, or the act was oral or digital (Kahn, Jackson, Kully, Badger, & Halvorsen, 2003). The following six categories were identified by Holland and Cortina (2017) as the reasons why college students who have experienced sexual assault do not seek support on campus after the incident.

**Availability.** A lack of resources on college campuses can be to blame for victims not finding appropriate sources of support after sexual assault.

**Affordability.** Affordability issues can stem from the costs of receiving care.

**Acceptability.** Acceptability stems from concerns from victims associating thoughts, beliefs, and affective responses related to the assault that deemed it unacceptable (Holland & Cortina, 2017). In other words, members of the community—or the victim themselves—would not accept the incident and find it unacceptable to disclose. There were five sub-categories that further explained the reasons behind lack of acceptance: negative emotions regarding the assault, consequences of what would happen after disclosure, contextual characteristics like who or what was involved, minimizing impact to the degree where the victim feels as though it did not impact their life, and minimizing behaviors, believing that this type of incident happens all the time.

**Accessibility.** Lacking the knowledge of available support systems in place on college campuses can cause victims to stay away from receiving help. Accessibility refers the awareness of these support systems by victims and whether the victim perceives constraints like work or school that do not allow them to seek support.

***Appropriateness.*** Perceptions of whether support systems are useful or helpful may shift victims away from disclosing. Many of the procedures behind support systems make it uncomfortable for victims to disclose, for example, the requirement to report the incident to authorities.

***Alternative coping.*** Some students chose to vent to their peers or coped in other ways, making it less intriguing to report the incident. This form of coping made it unnecessary to seek formal supports from the college or university.

***Consequences of disclosure.*** Victims of sexual assault have reported receiving negative responses following disclosure (Best & Jun, 2017). The consequence followed by reporting a sexual assault can cause other victims to shy away from disclosing to formal supports.

***Victim blaming.*** About 73-83% of victims of sexual assault have received negative reactions to disclosure of an assault (Ahrens, 2006; Best & Jun, 2017). Negative responses more often than not put blame on the victim instead of the perpetrator; these negative responses can come from all sources of support like family, friends, police officers, clergy, or even rape crisis centers (Best & Jun, 2017).

***Prioritizing process over student care.*** There is tension over conducting a legally defensible process and keeping into account the care of the victim (Best & Jun, 2017). In spite of feelings of tension, many investigators spoke about the “need to set aside their feelings and move ahead with the process” (Best & Jun, 2017, p. 131). In other words, what the victim needs and what procedures must be followed may not be the same. One study conducted by Munro-Kramer, Dulin, and Gaither (2017) identified the needs of sexual assault survivors. Some needs included confidentiality and a commitment to handling the reporting of the investigation in a discrete manner, respectful of the survivor’s privacy (Munro-Kramer et al., 2017).

### **Implications for Higher Education Practice and Theory**

Despite policies and practices in place for sexual assault victims, more than 90% of sexual assault victims in college do not report the assault because of a number of factors (accessibility, acceptability, appropriateness, and alternative coping) (Holland & Cortina, 2017). For starters, all students should be made aware of resources for victims present on college campuses. Many times, a victim may not come forward because of the lack of awareness of these services or the level of confidentiality (Gialopsos, 2017). Other institutions struggle with a lack of these services on college campuses. Secondly, Title IX should be reexamined for its faults; it may not be working to protect victims after disclosure (Harper et al., 2017). For example, requirements made from Title IX to report may discourage victims of sexual assault to come forward. These requirements and procedures after disclosure usually do not meet the needs of the victim (Holland & Cortina, 2017).

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## **The Life and Death of Adult Higher Education**

*Xenia Coulter and Alan Mandell*

### **Abstract**

Should unique adult higher education programs be preserved and even championed, or should such programs succumb to the pressures of the day and get folded into more conventional higher education? This essay argues that, in addressing such vital questions, we need to become more aware of the relationship between human development and college study, specifically, whether new research in and theories of adult development suggest that college experiences designed particularly for adults can provoke more mature thinking in older students.

Keywords: Adult Development, Developmental Stages, Adult Higher Education, US Higher Education Today

### **The Life and Death of Adult Higher Education**

Many of our college programs for adult learners are booming. Many more, however, are struggling to survive as competition among institutions, financial pressures, and the demands of state and accrediting agencies reshape so much of what we originally set out to do. So here are our questions: Given the situation in which we find ourselves, should we continue trying to sustain unique programs for adults seeking college degrees in the spirit of the long and rich history of adult education that sought to make higher education meaningful for those who were so often denied entry? Or, would we be better off succumbing to external pressures for standardization, abandoning our unique programs for adult learners, and joining the ranks of conventional higher education?

Before we examine this issue in greater depth, we need to identify the distinctive features of these college programs for adults. Clearly the most notable feature is an institutional delivery system that allows busy adults with jobs, families, and community obligations access to credit-bearing classes that lead to accredited degrees. Programs offered at night, credits earned through “correspondence schools” (now referred to as “distance learning” programs), and, today, internet-based courses, are all explicitly designed as alternatives to the insular campus-based programs designed for full-time traditional-aged students. Secondly, in order to cater to the purported pragmatic nature of adult learners, adult-focused courses are designed to make the relevance of the subject matter to current social, economic, political, and individual concerns more explicit. Thirdly, in recognition of adult maturity and experience, many adult college programs allow learners considerable latitude in deciding what they want to learn, selecting the materials and resources they find interesting, and pursuing their preferred ways of learning.

As long as traditional colleges continue to emphasize day-time, face-to-face social contacts among students and faculty, clubs and other social organizations, sports and access to athletic equipment, to say nothing of study abroad, most adults are forced to look elsewhere for educational access. However, when some of these same traditional colleges find it necessary to increase their enrollments, adult students are suddenly transformed into a highly desirable potential new market (sometimes referred to as “low-hanging fruit”). To the extent that they are



able to expand their offerings—and in particular to make available convenient and readily accessible forms of study (e.g., online courses or classes that meet no more than once a week or at night) these colleges directly compete with and thus negatively impact the enrollments of stand-alone adult programs. The high status of the traditional college—the idea of a physical campus that represents an “ivory tower” of fervent intellectual activity—also has drawing power. If a co-existing adult program appears to offer the same resources available to full-time younger students, many adult learners would consider this as a very attractive opportunity.

Moreover, there is another side of the picture. Ironically, educational theory posits that the two distinguishing *educational* features of adult college programs are equally valuable for traditional-aged students too. Indeed, college-level subject matter that has relevance to real life and allows student agency in determining what to learn are both arguably important for creating greater motivation and deeper understanding for *all* learners. John Dewey, for example, pointed out that student agency and self-direction is critical to learning at any age (Dewey, 1916; Mayhew & Edwards, 2007/1965). And most teachers of traditional-aged students are just as concerned to show their younger students the relevance of their courses of study as are adult educators. It is also more and more the case today that many traditional-aged students have jobs, are parents, and have no time for institutionalized leisure. Thus, even the situational features that distinguish adult programs are increasingly attractive to many younger students too. Put another way, an institution that can offer a traditional program for younger students along with a program that caters to adults—assuming adequate resources for both—has a decided advantage over singular and less diverse programs.

Given this likely outcome, why not give up on trying to sustain unique adult programs? The “elephant in the room” here, the unspoken issue, is the question of “developmental stage.” The model of education in which young (“emerging”) adults (Arnett, 2004) are sequestered away from home but in a relatively safe environment is predicated upon the relative immaturity of these traditional-aged students. As compared to older adults, they not only lack key human experiences (e.g., parenting, careers), but recent studies have found that the “adolescent brain” is not fully developed until well beyond the college years (Jensen, 2015). Consistent with these findings, cognitive researchers report that intellectual and meaning-making perspectives of traditional-aged college students are relatively undeveloped (e.g., Perry, 1970; Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, & Tarule, 1986). In the safe environment provided by traditional colleges, these younger students have the opportunity to grow up or mature as they are encouraged to communicate thoughts and opinions, experiment with novel experiences, acquire more sophisticated understandings, and tolerate uncertainty. Theoretically, at least, older adults returning to school have already passed through these early stages of cognitive development in response to various personal, social, and work experiences.

To the extent that traditional-aged students are significantly less mature than older adults, the sequestering model of education and a college experience that encourages student to mature remains highly attractive to many parents. The fact that most college faculty know very little about human development (unless they are psychologists) does not seem to be of particular concern. Humans obviously “develop” whether they go to college or not—growth seems to be a process that results from exposure to any new or disruptive experience that stimulates reflection and/or behavior changes. Of course, if the intellectual skills promoted in college increase the

likelihood and even the quality of reflective thought, then college-level disciplinary study may, even if indirectly, promote a deeper kind of thinking that is important for any kind of human growth. Thus, even if college attendance is not necessary for personal development, it could still add extra value to the maturation process.

In sum, highly regarded traditional colleges today are considered well worth attending, not only for their scholarly resources but as places where young people are expected to acquire more mature habits of behavior, more adult-like attitudes and values, and broader and more worldly perspectives. However, whatever the developmental advantages college offers for these emerging adults, it is generally true that the older adults who also seek a college education do *not* do so for reasons of personal growth (e.g., Stevens, 2014). The vast majority of these adults come in order to acquire new information and to earn a degree that certifies that knowledge and offers economic advantages. While they might enjoy the intellectual advantage of being associated with a well-known high-status university, they are not enthusiastic about or do not see the relevance of the developmental concerns that take up a considerable amount of non-scholarly attention by traditional university administrators and staff.

However, most people would agree that personal growth does not stop when people reach the mid-twenties. With age, people become (by definition) more experienced or proficient, sometimes wiser, more tolerant, and happier. During the past 50 years or so, beginning with Erik Erikson's theorizing in the 1970s (Erikson, 1980; 1998), understanding the ways adults change in positive ways across the lifespan has become a discipline in its own right and an area of serious scholarly research. It is now generally agreed that there are a number of definable stages in the life-course associated with marriage, parenting, community involvement, professional work and so forth, that can and do stimulate further measurable changes in the individual that are recognized as personal growth (e.g., Kegan, 1994). Theorists may differ in the number of stages, the nature of the changes, and their focus. Some emphasize personality change; some focus upon the development of ethical thought or religious belief; still others upon happiness or tolerance or perspective. Table 1 briefly describes some of the theories of adult development that appear in a recent edition of *The Journey of Adulthood* (Bjorklund, 2015). What they all have in common is that they represent changes in how adults make meaning out of life or in their ways of thinking.

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Table 1

*Various Development Theories*

**Five factor theory of personality** (p. 243): The 5 factors = Neuroticism, Extraversion, Openness to experience, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness. Data: e.g., with age, we become more agreeable and conscientious, less neurotic and open

**Erikson's theory of psychosocial development** (p. 255): 8 stages, each one a conflict that requires resolution – 4 or 5 stages occurring in adulthood. (9th stage in Erikson, 1982/97). Data: e.g., generativity (stage 7) higher at midlife than earlier or later.

**Loevinger's theory of ego development** (p. 259): 7 stages (4 occurring in adulthood). Data (e.g., development) is correlated with education (self-awareness decreases; conscientiousness and individualism increase).

**Valliant's theory** (p. 261): based upon Erikson – looks at changes in defense mechanisms. Data, e.g., mechanisms employed become more mature with age (i.e., more consonant with reality).

**Super's theory of career development** (p. 207): 5 stages of life-span career, 4 in adulthood (exploration, establishment, maintenance, disengagement)

**Gutmann's gender cross-over effects** (p. 263): More fluidity in gender with age. Data, e.g., increased openness to expression of previously unexpressed parts of the self with age.

**Positive psychology** (e.g., Maslow, Seligman, Csikszentmihalyi): One example: Ryan & Deci's self-determination theory (p. 265). 4 stages of personal growth: happiness, competence, autonomy, relatedness). Data, e.g., graduates with personal (intrinsic) growth goals happier than those with only extrinsic goals.

**Perry's theory of cognitive/emotional development (1981)**: 3 main stages (12 levels in all) positing change from thinking in dualities to acquiring tolerance of uncertainty during 4 years of college education. Further developed by Belenky et al. (1986) with women and finding 6 progressive stages of "ways of knowing" quite different from Perry's (with men).

**Kohlberg's theory of the development of moral reasoning** (p. 283): 3 major stages with levels somewhat akin to Perry's theory. Further developed by Gilligan (p. 286) for women.

**Fowler's theory of faith development** (p. 287): 6 stages, 4 in adulthood (synthetic, individuating, conjunctive, universalizing).

**Kegan's synthesizing theory** (p. 291): Development as a spiral between connectedness and independence; then a later theory of perspectival change (1994), with 5 stages, 3 in adulthood with 3 progressive levels of consciousness.

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From Bjorklund, (2015)

In essence, it is noteworthy that human development seems to represent gradual changes in perspective, quality of thought, critical reasoning, understanding tolerance of uncertainty, conflict, diversity, and meaning-making. What is interesting to us, however, is that for a significant number of teachers, particularly progressive educators (e.g., Jelly & Mandell, 2017), the main purpose of education is to promote exactly those same cognitive changes except that for us, they are directed toward the outer world rather than—as in developmental theories—toward one's inner self. It's hard not to conclude that college study should promote human development. To the extent that college seems to help young adults in that regard, it seems almost inevitable that appropriate college experiences should promote the development of older adults as well.

If we are to test this claim, the question of whether special programs for adult learners should be preserved needs to be considered in another light entirely. Clearly, we need many more scholarly investigations about the relationship between a college education and human development than we currently have available. The most directly relevant research question pertaining to the future of adult college programs is whether the intermingling of adult learners with younger students helps or hinders the development process. If young students benefit from studying together as a single group, might it not be the case that adults at common points in their lives might similarly benefit from studying together? In terms of intermingling, young people do tend typically to learn from adults, but the reverse—speaking developmentally—may not be true for adults.

Another set of questions that needs to be investigated relates to the question of intentionality. Should faculty remain relatively ignorant of the many different theories of human development and allow the process of development to occur as a byproduct of subject matter study? Even if they are unaware of the potentially maturing effect of higher learning skill development, should

these teachers be encouraged to focus more upon critical thinking and other intellectual skills rather than upon the delivery of specific information? Would such a change in focus make a difference in promoting more advanced ways of “meaning-making” and reflection?

Until we have a better understanding of the impact of college on adult development, it seems to us that we should do whatever we can to preserve special college programs for adults, if for no other reason than it would allow us to better pursue some of the questions raised above. Indeed, one reason we sought to present these ideas to the AHEA audience was to stimulate current adult educators to think more intentionally about the interaction between college study and human development. Perhaps they might even stimulate their own (adult) graduate students to take up such questions. And with undergraduates, perhaps teachers could find ways of measuring both developmental levels and ways of learning in college to better understand their relationship.

In today’s difficult political climate, we need to provide college experiences for adults that encourage them to pay closer attention to how they think, not just about a particular subject matter, but about the many contentious political, social, and personal issues we are all grappling with today. Until we have more information about whether college experiences designed for adults can provoke more complex, critical, and mature thinking in older adults, and whether that development is more likely in adult-only or stage-appropriate groups, we should continue to support and fight for our unique adult college programs.

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## **Transforming First-Year Students into Life-Long Learners Through First-Year Seminar Practices**

*Jamil D. Johnson and Masha Krsmanovic*

### **Abstract**

This mixed-method study assessed the effectiveness of a First-Year Seminar (FYS) course on students' successful accomplishment of learning outcomes that can be used beyond graduation: motivation, time-management, and decision-making. Students' quantitative responses indicated that the course had the highest impact on their motivation ( $M = 4.43$ ,  $SD = .74$ ), followed by the impact on effective decision making ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = .83$ ), and the effect on time-management skills ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = .90$ ). These findings were further expanded by students' qualitative responses identifying the biggest barriers to successful development and implementation of these three competences. Limitations and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Life-long Learning, First-year Seminar

## **Transforming First-Year Students into Life-Long Learners Through First-Year Seminar Practices**

Historically, educational research assessed students' learning and academic success mainly in terms of their grade point average, retention, and graduation rates. Twenty-first century metrics of student success, however, require a different approach. Consequently, modern educators are becoming increasingly committed to not only ensuring that students earn a degree, but that those graduates are equipped with skills, competences, knowledge, and personal qualities needed in diverse, complex, and demanding globalized world (Kuh, 2008).

Among the efforts directed toward helping students acquire the skills and competences to be used beyond graduation, High Impact Practices (HIPs) have been identified as the most effective tools leading to positive educational outcomes for students from many backgrounds. Consequently, many higher education institutions are redesigning their educational strategies toward incorporating at least some of the HIPs in their course curricula, with First-Year Seminar (FYS) courses remaining one of the most widely used intervention tools. The significance of FYS courses in modern higher education is best evidenced by the data that 89.7% of colleges and universities reported offering a seminar of this kind in the academic year 2012-2013 (NRCFYEST, 2013).

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact that an academic FYS course has on participants' development of the following three competences: understanding the connection between academic success and motivation, understanding the elements pertaining to good decision-making, and analyzing the use of time in relation to one's goals.

We specifically investigated the following three research questions:

1. What are the biggest motivational challenges that first-year students encounter, and how effective are FYS courses in alleviating those challenges?
2. What are the biggest decision-making challenges that first-year students encounter, and how effective are FYS courses in alleviating those challenges?
3. What are the biggest time-management challenges that first-year students face, and how effective are FYS courses in alleviating those challenges?

### **Literature Review**

The positive impacts of FYS courses have been well-documented in the literature but are mainly limited to students' academic performance (GPA), second semester or second year retention rates and four-, five-, or six-year graduation rates (IES, 2016). The scarcity of research, however, is reflected in measuring the effects that these courses have on the development of skills and competences that students can utilize beyond their academic setting. The need for additional scholarly efforts in this field is supported by the fact that the few studies that addressed the effectiveness of FYS on lifelong skills revealed overwhelmingly positive findings.

For example, FYS courses were documented to have a positive impact on increasing students' self-efficacy and transforming them into self-regulated learners (Cambridge-Williams, Winsler, Kitsantas, & Bernard, 2013), as well as on increasing their motivation to learn (Jessup-Anger, 2011). Similarly, the enrollment in FYS can lead to students becoming more intellectually curious (Kolb, Longest, & Barnett, 2014).

Additionally, there is a strong correlation between engagement in this HIP and students' personal and social development. For example, intentional assignments in FYS courses can lead to participants' increased development of grit, tenacity, and perseverance (Olson, 2017), while reflective journaling can improve the overall quality of their undergraduate experience, well-being, self-discovery, and social engagement (Everett, 2013).

In terms of FYS long-lasting effects, the most pronounced impacts were reflected in students' changing perception of the value of college education (Pittendrigh, Borkowski, Swinford, & Plumb, 2016), the establishment of long-lasting relationships with faculty and peers (Enke, 2011; Keup & Barefoot, 2005), and the formation of life-long learning orientations (Padgett, Keup, & Pascarella, 2013). Building on all these findings, this study sought to provide a unique contribution to the research on both FYS courses and the development of students' lifelong skills and competences by exploring the three less frequently assessed course outcomes: students' motivation, time-management, and decision-making.

### **Method**

The purpose of this study was to assess the impact of an academic FYS course on students' life-long learning and competences. To measure this outcome, the study utilized a mixed-method research design. The quantitative data measured students' self-reported competencies in regards to the three identified learning outcomes, while the qualitative data explored the main challenges to the course participants' successful accomplishment of these outcomes.

Our study took place at a large, public university in the southeast United States with a total enrollment of 66,000 students. At the time of our study, approximately 46% of students came from populations underrepresented in higher education and the university was awaiting a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) classification. Our first-year student population approximated 6,900 at the time this study was conducted (see Table 1).

Table 1  
*Site Characteristics*

<u>Total enrollment</u>	<u>Minority students</u>	<u>Freshman enrollment</u>	<u>Average high school GPA</u>	<u>Average SAT score</u>	<u>Second year retention</u>
66,183	45.8%	6,964	4.06	1316	86.6%

*Note.* All data are from Fall 2017.

The FYS course offered at our institution is a three-credit hour seminar meeting the classification of an academic-themed course with uniform content across all sections. For all first-time in college (FTIC) students, the course is offered as an elective, while all special student populations are required to enroll (summer bridge program, international students, teacher pre-professionals, student-athletes, and out-of-state students). In a small classroom setting of 25-30 students, course participants learn and apply critical thinking skills toward diversity and social justice issues, career-readiness, undergraduate research, and other topics that promote student success and persistence through the first year and beyond.

Our study included all students enrolled in the FYS course during spring, summer, and fall 2017 (N = 1,572). This study utilized the survey data collected as a part of an ongoing end-of-semester FYS course evaluation and was distributed to all students enrolled in the FYS course during spring, summer, and fall 2017. The survey was completed by 1,284 students, a response rate of 81.7%.

The survey was distributed to all students during their last class asking them to evaluate the skills and competences they perceived as having gained in the course (Appendix 1). The self-reported questionnaire involved seven Likert-type scale questions measuring different course learning outcomes. The responses ranged from 1 = *not at all confident* to 5 = *mastery level of confidence*. The survey also included open-ended questions focusing on students' challenges during their first year and their experience with FYS peer mentors. This study, however, utilized only the responses pertaining to the impact of our FYS course on the skills and competences (course learning outcomes) identified in our three research questions.

All instructors teaching FYS courses in spring, summer, and fall 2017 terms distributed hard copies of end-of-semester survey to their students along with the final exam. Missing data or data from students who did not answer any of the four survey questions used for this study were not included in the data analysis. Included in the survey packet was the informed consent form. Prior to implementation, the study was reviewed and approved by the university's Institutional Review Board.



We analyzed our quantitative data using the statistical software package SPSS and ran descriptive statistics for each of the questions pertaining to students' evaluation of course outcomes. Next, we determined numeric means and standard deviations for each of the four Likert scale questions. We analyzed our open-ended questions and qualitative data using thematic coding and developed a set of codes to assign to each open-ended response. Upon assigning codes to all qualitative data, we grouped the codes into six major themes and ensured the coding validity by having both researchers code the dataset individually.

## Findings

The four Likert scale questions allowed the students to report the extent to which FYS course improved their skills and competences in the areas of motivation, time-managing, and decision-making. Even though students' responses showed some variations, the course participants were overall fairly satisfied with the impact that the FYS course had on the development of these competences (see Table 2). Students generally reported feeling more knowledgeable in these three areas after completing the FYS course.

Table 2  
*Students' Evaluation of Course Outcomes*

<u>Learning Outcome</u>	<u>Mean</u> (N = 1,284)	<u>SD</u>
Understanding the connection between academic success and motivation	4.43	.74
Understanding the elements pertaining to good decision-making.	4.18	.83
Analyzing the use of time in relation to one's goals.	4.08	.90

*Note.* N = number of participants, SD = standard deviation

As presented in Table 2, the highest-rated learning outcome was understanding the connection between academic success and motivation ( $M = 4.43$ ,  $SD = .74$ ), followed by the impact that the FYS course had on students' effective decision-making ( $M = 4.18$ ,  $SD = .83$ ), and the perceived course effectiveness on students' development of time-management skills ( $M = 4.08$ ,  $SD = .90$ ).

In regards to our first research question, student responses to open-ended questions revealed that their motivation was predominantly affected by six main factors: decline or absence of motivation, lack of resilience, anxiety and depression, lack of confidence, stress, and sleep and nutrition. Table 3 provides a detailed overview of the leading challenges affecting students' motivation to learn and succeed academically.

Table 3  
*Main Barriers to Students' Motivation*

<u>Challenge Category</u>	<u>Students' Responses</u>
Motivation (general)	Disinterest in school, not having motivation to go to class, initial joy passing away, having no motivation to do anything, being lazy academically.
Resilience	Getting back on track after a low grade; recovering from failing a course, overcoming negative setbacks, not dropping a class after getting bad grades.

Anxiety and depression	Having panic attacks due to anxiety, depression made it hard to focus on academics, dealing with latent mental health issues and learning disabilities.
Confidence	Thinking I was not cut out for college, feeling confident in myself that I have the skills to do well, self-doubt and misidentifying pessimism for realism
Stress	Stress management, being stressed because of the relationships with my friends.
Sleep and nutrition	Knowing what I will be eating each day and making food accommodations, change from eating regularly to barely eating, oversleeping and missing exam, not getting enough sleep, finding time to sleep.

In terms of our second research question pertaining to the barriers that prevented incoming students from making good decisions, our findings revealed that course participants faced most challenges in the following four areas: financial decisions, intended major, choosing friends, and making “real life” or adult decisions. Specific students’ responses illustrating each of these categories are presented in Table 4.

Table 4  
*Main Barriers to Students’ Decision-Making*

<u>Challenge Category</u>	<u>Students’ Responses</u>
Finances	Navigating budgeting and financial decisions, handling my finances by myself, having to deal with things my parents used to take care of like financial aid and money.
Major	Better aligning my career choice with what I am as a person, choosing my major, realizing my major classes were not going well and exploring other options.
Friends	Making good relationship choices, trying to understand others' values, not knowing anyone and having to make friends, finding a good group of friends I fit into, learning to choose who to spend time with that wasn't going to endanger my future.
Adulthood	Juggling academics and real-life adult issues, learning how to be on my own, learning how to be responsible for the first time, adjusting to changing my normal routine that I had back home, dealing with such a tremendous change and doing that by myself.

The thematic analysis of students’ responses to open-ended questions displayed a very strong prevalence of barriers related to our third research question. Approximately 31% of survey respondents (400 students) indicated that managing their time was the biggest obstacle they faced during their first year of college. These obstacles were categorized into five areas in order of their frequency: general time-management issues, balancing school and work, procrastination, balancing school and social life, and planning or scheduling. Table 5 displays the most prevalent instances of students’ challenges in each of these five areas.

Table 5

*Main Barriers to Students' Time-Management*

<u>Challenge Category</u>	<u>Students' Responses</u>
Managing time	Learning how to manage my time wisely, not knowing how I actually spend my free time, realizing that time-management is completely different from high school, inefficient use of my time led me to feeling lack of purpose and worth.
Balancing school and social life	Balancing the need to experience the world without giving up my success, learning to balance partying and school, choosing between friends and studying, saying no to peer pressure to go out, balancing my academics with Greek life and pledging.
Procrastination	Learning that I cannot procrastinate as much as I did in high school, finishing the tasks on time, losing my chance of getting an A because I procrastinated, my work not being presentable due to being completed at the last minute, realizing that my procrastination is actually a very big problem.
Balancing school and work	Missing classes because of my work schedule, working and commuting, being too tired to study after a full-time working day, studying and work - sacrificing one or the other.
Planning/scheduling	Creating a timetable and following it because I was not used to it in high school, planning my schedule and sticking to it, not having an organized plan to complete my assignments in a timely manner, developing a good study schedule.

**Discussion and Implications**

In addition to the student self-reported learning outcomes pertaining to motivation, time management, and decision making, our study identified the main barriers to first-year students' development of lifelong skills in these three areas. Even though our qualitative data illustrated that participants faced numerous and multifold challenges, especially regarding effective use of time, our quantitative findings revealed that students perceived that enrollment in the FYS alleviated these difficulties to a relatively high and consistent extent across all three areas. Students' perceptions that the FYS had the highest impact on better understanding and increasing motivation does not constitute a new finding. Our findings corroborated some prior studies documenting that first-year students face significant motivational barriers at the beginning of their college journey that can be successfully overcome by effective pedagogical strategies in FYS courses (Jessup-Anger, 2011). In addressing the students' specific motivational challenges listed in this study, we can draw a direct parallel with the research that documented positive impacts of FYS courses in all these direct areas, primarily students' feelings of personal success (Keup & Barefoot, 2005) and the development of grit, tenacity, and perseverance (Olson, 2017).

We attribute our findings in this area to several practices. First, our FYS curriculum and instructional materials include in-class discussions of motivational theories, resilience, self-efficacy, stress management, and health and well-being. Additionally, the FYS program serves a liaison with institutional support services, primarily Counseling and Psychological Services, the Wellness and Health Promotion Center, and the Recreation and Wellness Center. Through the long-standing and ongoing collaboration between the FYS program and campus services, course participants become more familiarized with available resources that can support them in overcoming many of the motivational challenges identified in this study.

Our findings pertaining to the second-rated learning outcome—effective time management—substantiated the existing research evidencing the positive effect of FYS on transforming the participants into more self-regulated learners (Cambridge-Williams et al., 2013). As almost one third of our incoming students experience difficulties in managing their time effectively, our FYS curriculum places substantial emphasis on this learning outcome. Over the course of the entire semester, our students are presented with a number of effective time-management strategies, with particular focus on fighting procrastination, prioritizing tasks, identifying time traps, organizing and scheduling one's time, balancing school and work, and balancing school and social life. Our program also promotes additional support services available to students at the institutional level, such as time-management workshops facilitated by the Student Success Resource Center as well as Student Development and Enrollment Services.

Lastly, students' ratings of the FYS course as a fairly useful intervention for making informed and good decisions corroborated the rich literature on the positive effects of seminars on students overall well-being, personal and social development, and adjustment to college (Andrade, 2006, 2009; Dunn, Hains & Epps, 2013; Everett, 2013; Fidler & Gowin, 1994). As the greatest proportion of our students reported struggling with making good financial decisions, our course curriculum includes extensive discussion on financial literacy and making good financial decisions, while all students are encouraged to visit one of our campus partners (e.g., financial aid office) or to attend one of the campus literacy workshops.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The main limitation of this study is that the measured outcomes of our FYS course were self-reported. Therefore, the obtained data pose a number of validity and reliability issues that can be resolved by future research including objective measurements of the three competences assessed in this study. Second, the sample population was limited to one institution only and cannot be generalizable to all institutions offering FYS courses. Future studies could remedy this limitation by assessing the effectiveness of FYS in different institutional settings (e.g., teaching-intensive institutions or two-year institutions). The third limitation is reflected in the short duration of this study (one semester per group of participants). Given that sampled students will be demonstrating the evaluated skills years later, the obtained results should be viewed as preliminary only. Revisiting our research questions and course outcomes prior to participants' graduation or beyond may lead to different findings. The fourth limitation is that we assessed the impact of an academic-themed FYS with a uniform curriculum across all sections. The assessment of other types of FYS, such as pre-professional, discipline related, or transitional, may reveal more pronounced effects on some of the measured learning outcomes. Lastly, our

research was mainly descriptive and exploratory. As such, it needs to be supported by employing a more rigorous quantitative approach that would allow for the between-group comparison of different student populations enrolled in FYS courses, as well as the overall comparison between course takers and non-takers.

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## Appendix 1: Survey Instrument

### Survey: 2 extra points

Please choose from the rating system below and check ( ) the one you feel best describes your confidence level to complete the 6 course goals as outlined in your SLS 1501 syllabus (1 being the lowest level of confidence and 5 being the highest level of confidence).

	Not at all confident (1)	Somewhat confident (2)	Moderate confidence (3)	High level of confidence (4)	Mastery level of confidence (5)
Be able to describe research-proven student success strategies and skills and how to apply them to your daily practices as a college student.					
Have an increased sense of confidence and skills in performing college-level tasks.					
Understand the connection between academic success and your motivation.					
Set effective goals contributing to academic and/or personal success and make concrete plans for achieving your goals.					
Understand the elements pertaining to good decisions with the focus on academic, financial, and career related decisions, along with the importance of managing stress in effective ways.					

	Not at all confident (1)	Somewhat confident (2)	Moderate confidence (3)	High level of confidence (4)	Mastery level of confidence (5)
Analyze your use of time in relation to your goals and success strategies and either: i) develop a plan to align your use of time more closely with your goals; or ii) defend your use of time as appropriate for achieving your goals.					

1. How well did SLS 1501 prepare you to learn more about your career/career interests? 1 2 3 4 5 (1 being the lowest level and 5 being the highest)
2. As you self-reflect upon this academic year: List one word that describes your freshman year:
3. What was the most challenging event/problem that you encountered this academic year (only share what you feel comfortable)?
4. How well did your SLS 1501 Peer Mentor support you in your academic, professional, social and/or personal development? 1 2 3 4 5 (1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest)
5. As a student, are there any suggestions for how the SLS 1501 Peer Mentor can better support you?

**If you choose not to complete the survey, you can earn 2 extra points by answering the following question:**

What campus event, service, or resource has marked your first semester and transition to UCF and why?

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## **Promoting Self-Care and Work-Life Balance Among Practitioners in Higher Education**

*Dakota King-White and Elice E. Rogers*

### **Abstract**

Given the changing landscape in higher education, education practitioners are faced with increasing workloads, which in turn is causing an increase in stress-related factors that impede health and wellness, and thus productivity. In response, practitioners in modern higher education settings must adopt a commitment to self-care that focuses on the body, mind, and emotions, along with a healthy work-life balance, in order to not succumb to the negative impacts of stress in the workplace. In this article, we define various types of stress and related impacts; identify common stressors in the workplace; suggest strategies to enhance self-care and work-life balance; and summarize implications for practitioners in higher education.

Keywords: stress, self-care, work-life balance, higher education practitioner

### **Promoting Self-Care and Work-Life Balance Among Practitioners in Higher Education**

Occupations in higher education have historically been regarded as low-stress jobs (Gillespie, Walsh, Winefield, Dua, & Stough, 2001). However, due to recent shifts in the educational landscape—which include more emphasis being put on productivity, greater barriers to promotion, and an increase in workload due to budget cuts (Paduraru, 2014)—more demands are being placed on practitioners in higher education. These increased demands result in what Gillespie et al. (2001) called task overload, which can lead to a work-life imbalance and practitioners feeling fatigued (Paduraru, 2014).

Various factors contribute to task overload, such as introduction to new technology, inability to take breaks, unrealistic deadlines, difficulty meeting research goals, and additional administrative duties (Gillespie et al., 2001). These demands can be overwhelming and can cause practitioners to sacrifice their well-being as they attempt to meet increasing expectations. The purpose of this paper is to explore (a) various types of stress and related impacts, (b) common stressors in the workplace, (c) strategies to enhance self-care and work-life balance, and (d) implications for practitioners in higher education.

### **Types of Stress and Related Impacts**

According to Lazarus (1966), people experience stress when they perceive that they are unable to cope with the pressures of life and their well-being is threatened. Unfortunately, as Bachkirova (2012) noted, “work-related stress continues to be a serious issue worldwide in spite of an expanding body of research into this issue” (p. 49). More emphasis needs to be placed on helping employees deal with stress. However, it is important to understand the types of stress in order to develop strategies for dealing with it.



According to the American Psychological Association (n.d.), and based on the work of Miller and Smith (1994), there are three common types of stress:

- Acute stress:
  - Is the most common type and experienced by everyone.
  - Resolves itself within a day or two.
  - Is typically manageable and requires no intervention.
- Episodic acute stress:
  - Is frequent and builds up in the body.
  - May consist of a constant sense of worrying.
  - Causes physical, mental, and emotional symptoms that are difficult to alleviate.
- Chronic stress:
  - Produces considerable physical, psychological, and emotional distress.
  - Is a normal reaction to abnormal events.
  - Is created when a person does not see a way out of a horrible situation.

The different types of stress impact a person's mind, body, emotions, and behavior. To illustrate the impact of stress on the body, in 1936 Hans Selye created the stress model, called the general adaptation syndrome (Nursing Theories, 2011). The model consists of three stages of stress response. Stage one is alarm reaction, which is the fight or flight response that causes the body to be ready for physical activity. When the body is under this type of stress, the effectiveness of the immune system decreases, which makes the body susceptible to illness. The second stage is resistance. Within this stage, the body adapts to the stressors to which it is being exposed. The body remains in an alert state, and a person may notice an increase in heart rate, blood pressure, and heavy breathing. Stage three is the exhaustion stage, in which the body's resistance may be reduced or collapsed quickly due to prolonged stress. People who experience long-term stress may be more prone to heart attacks, severe infections, and chronic pain or illness (Nursing Theories, 2011).

Visotskaya, Cherkashina, Katcin, and Lisina (2015) discussed the various symptoms related to stress. Cognitive symptoms include problems with memory, inability to concentrate, poor judgement, seeing only the negative in situations, racing thoughts, and a constant sense of worry. Behavioral symptoms involve being accident prone, forgetfulness, neglect in appearance, and increasing absenteeism. Finally, emotional symptoms include loss of confidence, depression, apprehension, moodiness, and feeling overwhelmed. All of these symptoms can have a negative impact on work performance.

### **Common Workplace Stressors in Higher Education**

The literature reveals common stressors found in the workplace, including a lack of funding to support projects, work overload, poor management, lack of recognition and acknowledgement of work, and low wages related to discrepancies between income and workload or between income and quality of professional training (Bachkirova, 2012; Gillespie et al., 2001; Paduraru, 2014; Shin & Jung, 2014). In a study by Gillespie et al. (2001), higher education practitioners, both faculty and staff, reported increased work-related responsibilities as a major source of stress. Moreover, feedback on performance, especially related to additional responsibilities, may be limited, causing an additional stressor for adult practitioners in higher education. In a more

recent study, Paduraru (2014) focused on higher education professors and found that the highest-rated sources of work-related stress were low wages, work-life imbalance due to lack of free time outside of work, fatigue, extreme emphasis on productivity at the expense of teaching, and challenges with being promoted. Although more research is needed to better understand the major causes of stress among practitioners in higher education, as well as available resources to support those dealing with too much stress (Gillespie et al., 2001), some research has focused on developing recommendations for promoting self-care and work-life balance, as discussed in the next section.

### **Strategies to Promote Self-Care and Work-Life Balance**

Due to the increasing demands that practitioners are facing in higher education, institutions need to promote self-care and work-life balance for educators to thrive. According to the literature, best practices for promoting self-care in the higher education workplace include:

- Acknowledging the stressors in the workplace that are impacting practitioners (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994).
- Identifying a healthy support system and utilizing the system (Anitha & Sritharan, 2014; Gillespie et al., 2001).
- Setting healthy boundaries in all areas of life and saying no when needed (Anitha & Sritharan, 2014).
- Giving oneself permission to make mistakes and ask what was learned from the mistakes (Anitha & Sritharan, 2014).
- Seeking mental health support when needed (Anitha & Sritharan, 2014).
- Learning healthy strategies to let go of things that are out of one's control (Gillespie et al., 2001).
- Prioritizing items that must be completed and tackling one thing at a time (Anitha & Sritharan, 2014).

### **Implications for Higher Education Practitioners**

Practitioners in modern higher education settings must adopt a commitment to self-care that focuses on the body, mind, and emotions, along with a healthy work-life balance. Concurrently, organizational leaders must support that commitment in the workplace by implementing preventative interventions that support practitioners through an individual and/or organizational approach (Cooper & Cartwright, 1994). As Quick and Henderson (2016) noted, "Defense against the adverse outcomes of occupational stress begins at the organizational level" (p. 5), and the organization must identify the stressors and risk factors that are keeping practitioners from thriving in the workplace. Organizational leaders should focus on three components to support everyone in the system: (a) facilitating collaboration among stakeholders to ensure that the well-being of employees is being addressed, (b) having systems in place to identify the warning signs of stress, and (c) offering preventative programs to support everyone in the organization (Quick & Henderson, 2016). Examples of stress-reducing resources that may be available to practitioners in higher education settings are fitness centers and physical fitness incentives and programs (Quick & Henderson, 2016).

Preventative stress management at the individual level is also crucial. Quick and Henderson (2016) discussed the importance of primary prevention versus secondary prevention for managing stress at the individual level. Primary prevention involves practitioners having a good support system in place to nurture and support them during critical times. Secondary prevention involves practitioners employing strategies to decrease general stress-induced feelings and emotions related to demanding situations (e.g., exercising regularly).

### Conclusion

As adult practitioners in higher education, we should promote awareness of the importance of self-care and recognize that it is essential in our journey to wellness, wholeness, and operating with a sense of grounded purpose in the world (Shelton, 2011; Murphy, 2011; Trudeau, 2011). This can happen by dealing with stress using a preventative approach that includes having coping strategies in place to encourage overall wellness (Anitha & Sritharan, 2014; Cooper & Cartwright, 1994). It is vital that we advocate for ourselves as practitioners and promote the importance of self-care and work-life balance in the stressful landscape of the 21st-century higher education workplace.

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## **Factors Related to Recruiting and Retaining OLLI Students**

*Jung Min Lee*

### **Abstract**

This study was designed to assess continuing and potential students' perceptions regarding factors affecting the overall quality of one Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) program in the southeastern United States. The study also sought to assess program participants' perceptions of the impact of hypothesized situational, institutional, and dispositional deterrents to program participation. The resulting data indicated that factors such as program location, availability of parking, and variety of course topics and events influenced the attractiveness of the program to both potential and continuing students. The results also indicated that institutional barriers such as course scheduling were among the most influential perceived barriers affecting program participation from continuing students and from potential students.

Keywords: Adult Education, Adult Learners, Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes, Participation Barriers

### **Factors Related to Recruiting and Retaining OLLI Students**

The mission of the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) is to provide a curriculum of intellectually stimulating learning opportunities and special activities for people 50 years of age or older (Lamb & Brady, 2005). There are 119 individual OLLIs in the United States (Lee, 2016). The OLLI in this study is one of six Florida OLLI programs; it began in 1993 as Elderhostel and SeniorNet. It emerged in its current form in 2005 as a result of combining two institutes: Learning in Retirement (LIR) and SeniorNet Tampa (A. Rogers, personal communication, October 3, 2014). The goals for the OLLI programs under study were to: value all members; provide opportunities for participants to pursue intellectual stimulation, social interaction, and aging successfully; encourage sharing life experiences, provide convenience of program costs and easy location; serve as an agent of change against forms of discrimination such as ageism, and provide structure and purpose in life (The OLLI-USF website, 2014).

This study was designed to gather information that could be used to improve program structure and operations by soliciting opinions regarding the program's strategic direction for the next five years from continuing and potential students. It also sought to determine ways to increase OLLI name recognition among non-members in order to promote student recruiting and retention. In addition, this study represented the program's first systematic attempt to help to examine the impact of perceived barriers to program participation among continuing and potential students during the course of a program evaluation.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Program Evaluation***

Program evaluation is a systematic form of inquiry used to inform program administrators and staff members regarding the effectiveness of program policies and procedures in achieving program goals and objectives. Formative or process-oriented approaches allow program

administrators great flexibility in achieving program goals by providing feedback on program effectiveness at predetermined points in the program's operation. They also allow programs to quickly investigate the feasibility and potential effectiveness of new directions in program operations or structure. Regardless of the format or when they are conducted, all forms of program evaluation share the common goal of program improvement.

### ***Barriers to Program Participation***

Identifying and understanding deterrents to program participation in adult, lifelong and continuing education programs has been an area of special interest to researchers and policymakers in adult education. Early researchers (e.g., Carp, Peterson, & Roelfs, 1974; Cross, 1981; Darkenwald & Merriam, 1982; Johnstone & Rivera, 1965) all proposed from two to four different barriers to program participation among adult learners. Scanlan and Darkenwald (1984) reviewed the literature on deterrents to participation and concluded that there were six categories that emerged in most settings and with most populations: individual, family, and home-related problems; cost concerns; questionable worth or relevance of educational opportunities; negative perceptions of the value of education; lack of motivation or indifference to learning; and lack of self-confidence. Subsequently, they developed the Deterrents to Participation Scale (DPS)—the first systematic means of assessing barriers.

More recent studies conducted by Hayes (1988) and Manning and Vickery (2000) have supported the existence of up to six deterring factors including personal disengagement, lack of program quality, work and family constraints, and professional disengagement. Although there are relatively few international studies regarding this topic, Villa and Celdrán (2014) completed a study with 4,559 individuals between the ages of 60-74 years old who were Hispanic men and women. Participants completed a survey on adult's involvement in learning activities in non-degree educational program settings, which revealed that situational barriers (40%) and institutional barriers (20%) had the greatest impact on their ability to participate. Different studies have addressed deterrents and barriers related to student participation in adult education programs through a variety of research methods and have yielded different results. Yet, there seems to be a general consensus that quantifiable situational, institutional, and dispositional barriers do exist and that they do have an impact on student participation (Cross, 1981).

## **Methods**

### ***Setting***

The program under study was located on the campus of a large metropolitan research-extensive university serving over 46, 000 students. There were approximately 1,200 OLLI program participants at the time of the study. Among the participants, 73% identified as female, 93% were White, and 38% indicated that their highest education level was graduate school (OLLI-USF 2016 annual survey).

### ***Participants***

There were 57 participants recruited as volunteers for the study at the program's open house. There were two focus groups of volunteer participants: 13 non-OLLI members (potential participants) and 44 currently enrolled, continuing students. The study also identified program improvement and future direction suggestions from both groups.

### ***Data Collection***

Annual program survey data were made available through the Survey Monkey account of the OLLI under study. Interviews were conducted during January and February in 2017, allotting two hours for each session. Four retention groups and two recruiting groups participated in the study. Four separate sessions were held for each group, and the interview questions were created by the program's committee for strategic planning. The data were collected by an OLLI program staff member who volunteered for this study. She did not receive any training for interviewing before this study and did not have a background in adult education. Participation was anonymous, voluntary, and uncompensated.

This study employed two sets of interview questions. The first four questions were for potential students (new recruits) not currently enrolled in OLLI classes. Questions 5-8 were for continuing students (retention groups) currently enrolled in OLLI classes. These questions were as follows:

1. What program factors should we consider in order to attract people such as you?
2. What are some reasons you might hesitate to attend OLLI classes and programs?
3. What could OLLI do to alleviate these obstacles?
4. What else do you think is important to know as we tailor classes or programs for people like you?
5. What do you like most about OLLI?
6. What improvements would you like to see in OLLI?
7. What are the barriers to your attending OLLI classes or programs?
8. What classes, programs, or services would you like to see OLLI focusing on for the future?

The interview questions also represented four program elements: attraction, deterrence, solutions, and future directions. *Attraction* (Questions 1 and 5) includes program elements that attract participants to OLLI program and also helps to retain those already enrolled. *Deterrents* (Questions 2 and 7) includes institutional, situational, and dispositional barriers that prevent new participants from enrolling in OLLI programs and also discourage or prevent continuing students from participating fully. *Improvements* (Questions 3 and 6) presents comments from continuing students on how to improve OLLI programs and comments from potential students on what OLLI programs could do to remove barriers to their participation. *Future directions* (Questions 4 and 8) includes suggestions from continuing and potential students related to new courses, procedures, and events that would enhance OLLI programs.

The results from the interviews of both continuing currently enrolled OLLI students and prospective OLLI students who were being recruited revealed a number of themes or factors that were common to both groups and some that were more characteristic of one group than the other. The resulting factors as well as their alignment with program elements are presented in Table 1.

Table 1  
Focus Group Interview Results

Elements	Potential/Recruiting		Participant Groups			
	1	2	1	2	3	4
			Factors	Continuing/Retention		
Attraction	Parking Location C. times C. variety F. aid	Parking Location C. times C. variety	Social asp C. variety S. enrich	Parking Location Social asp C. variety S. enrich	Social asp C. variety S. enrich	Location Social asp C. variety S. enrich
Deterrence	Location C. times P. info.	Location C. times P. info. Low drive Committing	Location C. times C. mode Parking Instructor P. access & mobility P. web Marketing	Location C. times C. mode Parking Instructor P. access & mobility P. web Marketing	Location C. times C. mode Parking Instructor P. web	Location C. times C. mode Parking Instructor P. access & mobility P. web
Improvements	Marketing C. variety Online R. P. info Personal Cnt	Marketing C. times Online R. P. info. Sports Personal Cnt	Location C. times C. mode Parking P. fees	Location C. times C. mode Parking P. fees	Location C. times C. mode Diversity Feedback Instructor	Location P. fees
Future Directions	Marketing P. variety Social asp	F. aid Adjust fees	Instructor P. travel Day trips Parking	Instructor P. travel Day trips parking	Instructor P. travel Day trips Parking Social asp C. variety F. aid Location Marketing	Instructor P. travel Day trips Parking Social asp

C. = Class, F. = Financial, S. = Self, asp = aspect, P. = program, R. = Registration, Cnt = contact

**Attraction.** As indicated in Table 1, both groups found program location and availability of parking to be important factors in terms of deciding whether to enroll in OLLI courses or to continue in the OLLI program. Both groups also considered joining or continuing an OLLI program based upon the variety of courses (C. variety) and events that OLLI offers. This finding was one of several that were expected. Notably, prospective students did not emphasize the importance of the social aspects of the program or the opportunities for self-enrichment (S. enrichment) that the program affords, while continuing OLLI students found these to be



important. This finding illustrates how different the perceptions of an OLLI program may be between those who are currently participating in the program and those who are considering joining.

**Deterrents.** Table 1 indicates that program location and course scheduling (C. times), also known as institutional barriers, were significant factors in determining whether to join or to continue to participate in an OLLI program. Beyond these two factors, however, the reasons that potential students identify for not joining an OLLI program are relatively few when compared to the program participation barriers described by the current students, which tended to be consistent across all groups. Parking remained important, as did course modality (C. mode), instructor quality, the quality of the program, web services and presence (P. web) and program accessibility and mobility (P. access and mobility). Although these factors may also have been important to potential students, they may not have voiced them due to limited exposure to the actual OLLI program. Another factor that was particularly important to potential students in determining whether they would join an OLLI program was the availability and quality of information about the program (P. info.). This suggests that widely dispersed information about OLLI programs is an essential aspect of any OLLI recruitment strategy.

It is notable that only prospective students indicated any personal or dispositional barriers to program participation. They indicated that their own motivation to attend classes or events, as well as their unwillingness to commit to attend courses scheduled for eight weeks were potential barriers to their participation. In contrast, the continuing students were much more influenced by the quality of the instructors as well as by having the opportunity to evaluate them.

**Improvements.** As indicated in Table 1, the continuing students consistently indicated that program location, course scheduling (C. times), course format and modalities (C. mode), as well as membership fees and other program costs were all areas in need of improvement. Potential students, on the other hand, indicated the importance of direct marketing, which also included high quality program information as well as more personal contact elements (Personal Cnt) such as phone calls from OLLI staff members encouraging them to join the program. The importance of personal contact was also demonstrated among the majority (54%) of continuing students who indicated that they learned about OLLI from a friend or family member (OLLI annual survey 2016).

The prospective students also indicated that online registration would be an important factor in increasing program participation. This is somewhat consistent with the current continuing students' noting that the current status of the program's web services was a barrier to program participation. Finally, it was interesting to note that only one group among the continuing students indicated that student diversity needed to be improved. The type of diversity was not indicated. Accordingly, this seems to be an area that should be revisited.

**Future directions.** The data in Table 1 related to future directions reflects primarily the responses of continuing students who indicate their preference for more day trips and other program travel added to the OLLI calendar of events. This interest in the social aspects (social asp.) of the program is shared by both potential and continuing students. Potential students retain their concerns regarding program fees, fee schedules, and financial aid. The issue of financial aid

was also indicated by one group of continuing students. The most consistent theme for continuing students seemed to be finding more high-quality instructors who could present interesting topics in a variety of modalities including hybrid classes.

### **Discussion**

One of the assumptions of this program evaluation study was that in addition to answering questions about the overall quality of the program, the focus groups would be able to reveal the presence of one or more of the three barriers (e.g., institutional, situational, and dispositional) to program participation first delineated by Cross (1981). The results of this study suggest that the majority of obstacles facing potential and continuing students were institutional barriers such as program location, course scheduling, course topics, and program fees. The only situational or dispositional barriers represented among the data came from prospective students who were not certain they possessed the personal motivation and commitment required to complete a course that lasted more than a few weeks.

One reason that the other types of barriers may not have been reported is that the OLLI student population is comprised of students who have already experienced academic success and are not intimidated by the prospect of learning something new. In fact, they report feeling invigorated by the opportunity for new learning. Also, the majority of OLLI members are retired or only work part-time, which likely enhances their ability to manage their time. Accordingly, one would not expect to find dispositional barriers among OLLI students and would seldom expect to find situational barriers.

### **Conclusion**

Program evaluation plays a significant role in the daily operation and strategic planning functions of the OLLI program. It represents an effective and cost-effective method of acquiring the information program directors need to maintain the high quality of their programs while also increasing the sense of community and ownership among program participants. The findings from this study suggest a few conclusions. First, OLLI directors and administrators should consider increasing accessibility for members with physical disabilities that broaden the range of course disciplines offered. Second, they should experiment with course scheduling, including length of classes and the frequency of class meetings to ascertain member preferences at the local levels.

Furthermore, findings suggest that OLLI curriculum committees should increase annual social/intellectual events that meet at least twice each academic year and plan a minimum of one discussion class in order for students to have the opportunity to get to know more of their classmates. Discussion can be a tool not only to allow students to learn more about each other's thoughts, but also may increase one of the social aspects of OLLI that both continuing and potential students seem to desire. Finally, OLLI directors and administrators should encourage community partnerships as well as cultivate new and broader collaborations with programs and departments within the university, given that every OLLI program is already affiliated with a university.

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## **Impact of Faculty Development on Quality of Life**

*Marilyn S. Lockhart*

### **Abstract**

This paper presents the results of a survey asking about the impact of attending professional development on 12 quality of life (QOL) factors and given during a collaborative session at the Adult Higher Education Alliance (AHEA) Annual Conference. Results showed that participants reported positive outcomes on the factors of increases in network of colleagues and confidence, satisfaction with career, job motivation, willingness to take on new challenges, sense of belonging, and feelings of health and well-being. During discussion, participants described the very positive impact of attending AHEA conferences over the years. Recommendations are made to create an AHEA mentoring program and provide more formally designed activities and opportunities during the conference to connect new and experienced conference attendees.

**Keywords:** Faculty Development, Higher Education, Quality of Life

### **Impact of Faculty Development on Quality of Life**

The numbers of adults taking classes in the past 20 years has risen significantly (U. S. Department of Education, 2007). A study of adult learners conducted by the University of Oxford revealed that classes improved overall physical and mental health and that individuals were more satisfied with their careers and lives. In addition, students reported benefits including increases in self-confidence, a greater feeling of self-control, and more willingness to take on challenges. Some said classes made them motivated to be more active even though the classes did not involve physical activity (Oxford News, 2016). Other researchers have found similar results with adults who attend a variety of types of classes with them reporting positive impacts on health, well-being, and social bonding (Launay, Machin, & Dunbar, 2016; Pearce, 2016). Quality of life (QOL) factors such as these are increasingly viewed as important to the mental and physical health of individuals and has led to increased research on how outcomes of different activities make people feel, function, and evaluate their lives (Pearce, 2016).

Faculty who teach in colleges and universities are experts in their discipline and often have no training in how to teach. As a result, many colleges and universities have created teaching and learning centers to build and enhance faculty teaching skills, and some offer training to help faculty develop their scholarship abilities. For many years, the primary way of assessing these programs has been participation numbers and satisfaction feedback (Chism & Sazabo, 1997; Fink, 2013). While a limited number of assessments have been conducted on the job-related outcomes of initiatives (Taylor, 2017), I did not find studies evaluating the outcomes of faculty development workshops on QOL factors such confidence, feelings of well-being, job satisfaction, motivation, and recreational activities.

## Methodology

Because of this lack of information, I developed a self-report survey based on QOL categories presented in the literature. Research in the literature commonly used surveys as a way to gather information about quality of life. The survey asked faculty about the impact of teaching workshops on 12 QOL factors: satisfaction with career, level of confidence in job, feeling of control of work tasks, job motivation, willingness to take on new challenges at work, network of colleagues, sense of belonging, efficiency in doing work, time with family and friends, time spent in recreational activities, physically active, and feelings of health and well-being. I administered the survey to a pilot group of 13 faculty at my institution.

Findings revealed that faculty in the pilot group reported increases in QOL factors as a result of taking teaching professional development workshops. The majority believed they have experienced increases in their network of colleagues and confidence, willingness to take on new challenges, satisfaction with career, job motivation, and feelings of well-being. To expand the data on this topic to individuals outside of my institution and to gather qualitative data, I administered the survey to the seven individuals who attended my session at the 2018 Adult and Higher Education Alliance National Conference. A variety of people attended the session, ranging from active faculty, to an instructional designer, to retired faculty.

The survey asked about the impact of taking professional development workshops and programs on the same 12 quality of life factors. Because of the variety of the jobs of people attending, professional development was expanded from sessions just on teaching to any type of workshop that was job related. All individuals were either working in higher education or had worked in higher education and retired. Additionally, the survey given at the AHEA conference asked how many workshops they had attended in the past two years and if they were early, middle, or late stage in their career. The questions used a five-point Likert evaluation scale of positively impacted to a great extent, positively impacted to some extent, no impact, negatively impacted to some extent, negatively impacted to a great extent. The survey received Institutional Review Board approval.

After individuals completed the survey, we spent the remainder of the session discussing their responses. I asked people to report their responses by a show of hands during the session and everyone turned their surveys into me at the end of the session. The small size of the group enabled everyone to share and discuss their reactions in more depth than the pilot group.

## Results and Discussion

For analysis during the session and in this paper, I combined the two categories of *positively impacted to a great extent* and *positively impacted to some extent*, and the two categories of *negatively impacted to some extent* and *negatively impacted to a great extent*. Combining the two positive and two negative categories allowed for ease of analysis during the session when time was limited. The same strategy was used for this report. All participants evaluated the factors of satisfaction with career, sense of belonging, and confidence in job as positive outcomes of attending professional development sessions. Other factors rated as having a positive impact by six participants and no impact by one individual were feelings of health and well-being, control

of work tasks, network of colleagues, and willingness to take on new challenges. The remaining factors were evaluated as positive by fewer participants. Table 1 displays the complete results and QOL factors are displayed in descending order of impact beginning with the ones receiving the most scores of positively impacting their quality of life.

Table 1

*Impact of Professional Development on Quality of Life Factors*

<u>QOL Factors</u>	<u>Positive Impact</u>	<u>No Impact</u>	<u>Negative Impact</u>
Satisfaction with career	7		
Sense of belonging	7		
Confidence in job	7		
Feelings of health and well-being	6		
Control of work tasks	6	1	
Network of colleagues	6	1	
Willingness to take on new challenges	6	1	
Job motivation	4	3	
Efficiency in work	2	5	
Time in recreation	2	5	1
Physically active	1	5	1
Time with family and friends	1	4	2

During conversation with participants, they said that while the results were not surprising, they had previously not thought about most of these as outcomes. Instead, they had always viewed the primary outcomes of professional development workshops as being increases in specific job skills. The importance of a sense of belonging and creating a network of colleagues was discussed and subsequently linked by all attendees to feelings of health and well-being and time with friends. This connection constituted much of the discussion time. Participants especially wanted to share what it was like for them to attend the AHEA conference. Examples of comments are “I feel like I can be who I am at sessions and this makes me feel good,” “I feel like I am with ‘my people’ at this conference,” and “I have developed a wide network of colleagues that I can call on during the year.”

Other factors participants talked about where time spent doing recreational activities and being physically active. While the majority of individuals evaluated these factors as not having positive or negative outcomes, the ones who did see them as positive outcomes stated that professional development activities helped them to establish connections with others that they were then able to carry on afterwards. Conversations around this outcome resulted in three individuals stating that had not looked at it in this manner and they would change their response to “positively impacted to some extent,” as they sometimes established relationships that resulted in meals and other activities together that could be called recreational activities and, in some instances, physical activities.

Stage of career was related to their responses. Four individuals reported themselves as being in late career, two in early career, and one in mid-career. In discussion, participants reported that when they were early in their career they saw more increases in factors such as level of confidence, job motivation, and feeling of control of work tasks. Later and mid-career

participants said that a sense of belonging and network of colleagues became more important as they moved through their career. Some said that attending AHEA conferences over the years had become very important to them in fulfilling this desire on a continuing basis. Individuals later in their career also reported attending fewer (1-5) developmental sessions in the past two years than early and mid-career participants who had all attended more than five sessions in the past two years.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The results of the survey administered at AHEA were similar to those in the pilot study and in the literature. The ability to discuss the results in some length during the AHEA provided additional meaning to the numerical results. The pilot study at my institution and the presentation at the AHEA conference revealed that asking individuals who have participated in professional development about the impact of their attendance on their quality of life can yield valuable insights. This type of survey is a more in-depth method of determining outcomes of attendance as compared to satisfaction surveys. The results provide a holistic perspective on the impact of programs and give an additional incentive for administrators to offer programs. Quality of life assessments would be most useful when asking people about attendance at numerous sessions rather than at the end of an individual session.

Noteworthy results of this study and for this paper was the value people saw in attending AHEA conferences. Building and maintaining connections over the years was viewed as being very important to attendees of the session. Based on the results of my session, I recommend that the formal mentoring program among AHEA members under consideration by the board be established. A second recommendation is that the conference planning committee schedule a formalized time during the conference that new conference attendees and seasoned conference attendees meet and talk. While there are several times during the conference that informal conversations can occur such as lunches and the scholarship reception, human behavior is such that people often have a tendency to talk with people they already know. Designing specific activities for seasoned and new members to become acquainted could help foster the development of these important relationships that can continue throughout the years. Examples might be asking people to sit at lunch with someone they do not know and discussing things such as their backgrounds, their career path, and why they are attending the conference. Immediately before the keynote speakers could be an alternate time for having a “get-to-know you” formal activity as these presentations are usually attended by many people. Organizing dinners for people who would be interested in eating together and who could then sign-up for them could be another method of creating relationships. In conclusion, my work to date has shown that attending professional development workshops and the AHEA conference can have a very positive impact on individual’s lives. Individuals who have these types of opportunities would be well served to take advantage of them and conference planners can take heart at the positive outcomes of their work and look for additional ways for attendees to create relationships.

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## **Intergenerational Undergraduate Gerontological Research Suggested Increased Commitment and Reduced Apprehensions to Learning**

*Elyse D'nn Lovell, Kristine Jordan, Ravyn Scott, Shelley Booth, Joshua Ericson, Raymond Strutzel, and Mary Catherine Hamm*

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper was to share an intergenerational approach for learning as undergraduate students became researchers. Student-researchers selected one topic as a team that was anchored in gerontological theory and then interviewed and taught elder participants using a qualitative approach. The richness of this qualitative research process suggested heightened engagement in learning. Students expressed increased connectedness to their academics and interest toward working with elders. Additionally, elder participants enjoyed both hands-on learning activities and interviews. For the presentation, various intergenerational research projects were described including: technology, reminiscing, life meaning, journaling and entertainment. For this synopsis, one project about technology will be interwoven as an example that was written by six student-researchers in one Psychology of Aging course.

Keywords: Gerontology, Undergraduate Research, Service Learning, Intergenerational, Real World

### **Introduction**

Aging is a certainty. Yet with the perplexities of ageism there is much that people do to avoid interactions with or deny that aging is taking place. This can contribute to students' disinterest in enrolling in gerontology coursework. Higher education enrollment advisors and educators have described students' enrollment in gerontology coursework as challenging (Reynolds, Haley, & Hyer, 2007). Increasing numbers of aging baby boomers will certainly require increased gerontological services (Arai et al., 2012). Researchers have surveyed students to understand what piques their interests in careers related to gerontology in an effort to meet future employment needs, and ageism surfaces in their comments as a detriment to career pursuits (Eshbaugh, Gross, Hillebrand, Davie, & Henninger, 2013; Lun, 2012). The learning quest was to engage undergraduate gerontology students in a way that they discussed their learning of gerontology with fervor and their feelings of ageism would hopefully dissipate.

Engaging students in collaborative research environments has shown to improve connectedness between the understanding of research concepts and curricula in varied sociological and psychological science disciplines including gerontology (Anagnopoulos, 2006; Black & Ziemba, 2014; Dowse, van der Riet & Keatinge, 2014; Henkel, 2006; Lovell & Karr, 2013; Luederitz et al., 2016; Singelis, 2006; Szuchman, 2006). Educators working with undergraduate students suggested that students' participation in parts of the research process, combined with consistent faculty support, assured a positive learning experience. Welikala and Atkin (2014) described students interviewing research participants as "co-inquirers"; students were given a glimpse into research practices while being guided by their instructors through the interview process rather than being responsible for all aspects of the study. Six undergraduate social science student-researchers utilized community-based participatory research (CBPR); faculty described this

teaching medium as a positive learning experience and productive in making contributions to research and community (Bulmer et al., 2016).

A team of six student-researchers found sources and wrote the literature review about seniors' engagement in technology. Students used a team discussion to write the literature review. The team interviewed participants and then used a hermeneutic approach to identify themes from their quotes. To complete the study, two students from the team pursued work-study positions and continued to work on the themes, write the methods, and identify conclusions.

### **Literature Review**

Perceptions vary among older adults about the use of technology. These may be reflected by extreme enthusiasm and crashing despair; happiness is often expressed in what the technology can do; exasperation is frequently expressed with the actual usage and inevitable glitches that can be encountered (Mitzner et al., 2010). The joy of intergenerational communication is rich, “linked not only to each other, but to something bigger, to the past and to the future, to the flow of life” (Langer, 2017, p. 1). Perspectives on time and the communication of time have shown positive correlations to well-being and acceptance (Zambianchi, 2015). Despite these positive accolades, technology appears under-utilized by older adults; this may in part be due to ergonomic needs including sizes of fonts, glare of screens, and rapid clicking/double click (Calvo, Elorriaga, Arruarte, Larranaga, & Gutierrez, 2017). Maintaining social connections is a prominent interest when using technology despite feelings of anxiety and intimidation; this appears to be a primary source of motivation to use technology (Gould et al., 2017; Vroman, Arthanat, & Lysack, 2014).

### **Method**

#### ***Design***

In a “Fundamentals of Aging” class, six student-researchers selected the subject of technology in order to explore technology use among older adults. Institutional Review Board approval was received. Motivations to pursue this study originated from an observation of the potential generational gap between college students and older adults. Frequent updates in technology were perceived as an overall intimidation for older adults. For this reason, student-researchers felt it was beneficial to detect the general knowledge towards technology for this group, and what generational barriers they may face. Following interviews, a secondary goal was to assist and teach older adults with technology they expressed interest in. A phenomenological qualitative approach with a hermeneutic design was used to discover common themes from (N=16) elder participants.

#### ***Data Analysis***

Transcribed interviews were used to generate themes, reading through transcripts as an entire class, and then a more extensive analysis was completed by two student-researchers with “HyperResearch” software which aided in the interpretation of results. Trustworthiness and validation was established through: (1) Institutional Review Board approval; (2) consent forms for authorization to be audio-recorded; (3) using pseudonyms for all volunteers to maintain their

privacy; (4) use of direct quotes from transcribed interviews to establish themes; (5) careful analysis of interpreted results.

## Results

Four themes were identified as student-researchers reviewed transcripts. Descriptors for themes came from initial interviews as elders shared their feelings about technology, and then as they shared their perceptions while learning about technology. Student-researchers were both interviewers and teachers.

### *Theme One: Aggravation – prefer existing habits – limitations*

Elders speak their minds sharing their frustrations about technology related to computer games, cell phones, and being placed on hold in an automated answering service. A preference for familiarity was evidenced. When elders expressed interest to learn about new technology, they referenced physical limitations. Several examples of the responses that gave us these insights are as follows:

B: No, I don't care for them video games or playing them... I don't care for that kind of stuff. No I'm not interested, those things don't interest me. I like playing baseball in person or basketball but I've never been into playing Nintendo...

AJ: Yes [own a cell phone], it's just an ordinary flip-phone ...just like this. [Takes phone out of her pocket to show]. Serves its purpose.

Student Researcher: Okay. Right, so, you don't have one that has a touch screen on it quite like this one? [Pointing to the one recording the conversation].

AJ: No, I had one and I didn't like it... No, I couldn't get used to using it. There was so much, and you touch it and I have to come out here and tell the girl [employee at assisted living], 'Hey it did this, what do I do? I can't get out of this' and I'd bug her and I got used to using it and then I finally decided, no I'm going back to my old flip-phone. And I did. I had to have a new phone and I went back out to Wal-Mart and I said 'I want an ordinary plain old flip phone.'

Student Researcher: Customer service to try and get a hold of somebody but you keep having to press buttons to get a hold of the person... have you ever dealt with that?

S: Oh, yeah, like when you're calling to make a Dr's. appointment or something? Oh, yeah

Student-Researcher: Yeah, does that frustrate you?

S: Oh, absolutely! I always press zero.

Student-Researcher: Yeah, I know. I found that out recently, too [ha-ha]. Instead of listening to the whole thing!

S: Yeah, forget this crap!

W: I don't like to text. No, I don't! ... My daughter does it *all* the time... Yeah, I can't do that... it's too damn dangerous.

S: Or a CALL... I mean, to me, it's kind of crazy to text for half an hour when you could have finished the call in three minutes...

Student Researcher: Okay now, which of the following activities would you like to learn about if you had to choose? Cell phone, Computer, Social Networking, Internet, Computer Games, Exercise, Kindles, or Tablets?

A: Umm... Tablet... Bigger screen than what the phone has, you know.

R: And I have trouble spreading my fingers like you did to get that.

Student Researcher: Okay, chicken peck with just one finger, there's no shame in that.

R: Well I can't do it ...

***Theme Two: Learning - computers, websites, social networking, tablets***

Elders were asked if they would like to learn about new technology, and they selected computers, websites, social networking, and tablets. Although different levels of expertise were described, there was a preference for learning more:

Student Researcher: Is there anything you wish you knew how to do on the computer, anything at all?

B: How to turn it on!

C: Yeah! I would like to learn, you know... I come from a generation... where they didn't have ... well they did have computers, but they were so big and awkward back then, they used them in the Army when I was in there and they would calculate how far the shells would go and all that stuff.

B: It's amazing what they can do now, like that skype and email and Facebook... and all that, that's what I want to find out more, Facebook is where you type on the computer and send them messages and stuff like that about maybe where you live or what you're doing and things like that and then email is where they send you like a piece of paper over the mail no, that's faxing right?

C: You know, I'm... I hate to tell you, but I've never used one [computer]... Yeah! I would like to learn.

Student Researcher: Yep. [teaching on her computer] Then to the blue arrow. This is back and then you can go forward again too if you want. See and then you can go back, back to where we were at the Google search.

R: Well, would you want to on mine [computer]? To do some of that messing around and let me watch you?

### ***Theme Three: Positive perceptions about technology – mixed feelings***

Mixed messages were heard about technology. While there were comments about the positives of technology, there were hints that communicating in person, before the days of texting and Facebook, were preferable:

MC: It's kind of like a depends kind of thing, where it's nice to shoot someone a text but it's also nice to have a conversation.

P: You know, frankly, I like communicating... I have friends all over the world, and way before I ever got on Facebook, I had friends from all over the world from another website, and it would be lovely to be face to face with these people... but that's just not going to happen, so ... I think I'm going to go neutral on that, because it could go... either way.

### ***Theme Four: Computers for knowledge and games***

Participants described varied uses for their computers. Here is an example of using the computer for knowledge and games:

Student Researcher: So, you haven't been using the computer then, since you've had that?

B: Umm... My husband used to play solitaire on it for about 6 hours every day... at least 6 hours every day, but I would just use it for...um... I like to go into Dr. Oz's... and I like ... I have a program on there called learning bridge and I've been into that... but that was up until I had my surgery, last March. I had only been on the internet maybe a couple of times.

## **Conclusion**

Many barriers exist concerning older adults' adaptation to technology updates. Common themes related to such barriers are evident, but the results also indicate a profound desire to overcome the obstacles. Older adults as well as student-researchers seemed very enthusiastic about the intergenerational communication and socialization that these learning experiences provided. Both elders and student-researchers wanted to use technology to socialize with friends and family, which established a common ground for sharing similar interests. Upon reflection, physical limitations for elders were evidenced by arthritic hands and visual imparities that added frustration to the use of technology devices. Furthermore, findings suggest the need for adaptive devices for elders' needs, thereby enhancing opportunities to achieve their goals. Intergenerational learning through the lens of research appeared to be a benefit to both older adults and undergraduate students in their commitment to learning and overcoming senses of intimidation about learning--whether the topics were technology, gerontology, or research.

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## **Transformational Learning and the Role of Shadow in Quality of Life**

*Robin Gregory McLaughlin*

### **Abstract**

Shadow work may result in increased awareness and emotional and behavioral changes that influence the quality of life in the adult student. Using a semi-clinical, semi-structured, qualitative interview with 20 adult learners, this study investigated the role of shadow work following Kegan and Lahey's (2009) Immunity to Change (ITC) process in support of the adult developmental journey. Shadow work refers to one or more processes that a person may use to uncover, or bring to awareness, repressed aspects of Self. This dimension of wholeness (less fragmentation) compliments the concept of horizontal learning and vertical development.

Keywords: Adult learning, Adult development, Shadow, Transformational learning, Transformative learning.

### **Transformational Learning and the Role of Shadow in Quality of Life**

Selective results are presented from a qualitative study exploring the role of Jung's notion of shadow in relationship to adult learning and development with implication to student quality of life. Shadow may contribute to psychological distress that influence experiences. As part of one's subconscious, by definition, shadow is outside of our awareness. Jung (1958) described shadow as the part of the "Self" that is separated from the conscious ego through repression. Those aspects of Self remain repressed as shadow that impact us in ways that we struggle to see and understand. A person's shadow is mostly created during the formative years of childhood. Bly (1988) used the metaphor of a long, heavy, invisible bag we drag behind us as a metaphor for Shadow. He explained that "we spend our life until we're twenty" filling the bag with our shadows. Then, "we spend the rest of our lives trying to get them out again" (p. 18).

Although our bag of shadows is subconscious, we feel the burden of carrying it. Bly (1988) said that as a one or two-year-old child we have a "360-degree" personality; "energy radiated out from all parts of our body and all parts of our psyche...we had a ball of energy." However, by the time a person is 20, all that remains of the 360-degree personality is a "thin slice" of our former wholeness; the rest is now in the bag (p. 17-18). As a result, "the bigger the bag, the less energy...we can think of our personal bag as containing energy now unavailable to us" (p. 25). This implies that the meaning one made (the understanding she constructed) about what belongs in or out of her bag continues to inform her epistemology in adulthood. Most often, this is without her awareness. I suggest that the energy that is consumed by shadow and potentially liberated through shadow work can influence the adult learning and developmental journey in important ways.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***Shadow***

Jung (1958) suggested that as an individual, one is conscious of one's ego and, perhaps, of one's persona, used to represent oneself to others. However, the ego knows only its own content and,

therefore, self-knowledge requires shadow (which by definition is subconscious) to be brought to consciousness and integrated (Jung, 1958). That is to say, to be complete (to be whole), one must bridge the subconscious and the conscious.

**Repression.** Shadows are the aspects of our Self that were repressed and denied while we were children in order to create and maintain the persona that others—those we look to as authority figures and for love—told us we should display. Shadow is not created by whether a repressed aspect is judged to be dark *or* light. Rather, it is created when dark *and* light aspects are judged to be socially unacceptable within our initial holding environments, such as our family of origin. This requires physical and psychological energy. This consumption of energy limits us; we cannot contribute fully to others and the world (Bly, 1988). Given this understanding of shadow, we may question the impact on learning and development of using energy to repress shadow instead of having that energy available for developmental growth.

### ***Adult Development***

Kegan's (1982) Constructive-Developmental Theory includes the influence of outer dimensions on one's development, such as the environment and one's social and emotional competency. Kegan's notion that the outer dimensions influence development throughout the lifespan is distinct from other theorists, such as Piaget, who suggested that development is an inner cognitive function limited to childhood and adolescence. In Kegan's model, developmental growth is identified using stages and sub-stages that mark the evolution in the complexity of one's organization of information and meaning-making.

Kegan (1994) has indicated that psychic functions "drain off energy" (p. 373). This is energy that could be redirected to support developmental growth. Although Kegan does not specifically address shadow, one might extend the concept of energy consumption and release to shadow. How might the energy one uses to keep aspects of Self repressed (shadow) be released and redirected to augment the energy one needs for vertical growth?

### ***Transformational Learning***

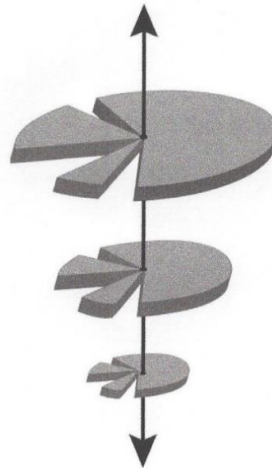
Mezirow (2000) defined a habit of mind as "a set of assumptions—broad, generalized, orienting predisposition that act as a filter for interpreting the meaning of experience" (p. 6). One's habit of mind combines with one's point of view, "sets of immediate, specific beliefs, feelings, attitudes, and values judgments," resulting in a frame of reference, which is a "meaning perspective" (p. 18). An individual is usually aware of his or her point of view, but unaware of his or her habit of mind. This makes a habit of mind more difficult to change and more difficult to negotiate. Mezirow indicated that a change in one's point of view or habit of mind represents *transformative* learning. Mezirow's theory differs from Kegan's in terminology and corresponding understanding of the learning process. In Kegan's (2000) terms, *transformational* learning changes the complexity of the form or structures of meaning-making: "We do not only form meaning, and we do not only change our meanings; we change the very form by which we are making our meanings. We change our epistemologies" (p. 52).

Mezirow's concept of transformative learning shifts the understanding of learning away from an emphasis on just the addition of content (horizontal development) toward the meaning that one makes of the content. But Kegan's concept of transformational learning shifts this understanding

even further by establishing a connection between the meaning that one makes of the content and the structural complexity of one's meaning-making. That is, to Mezirow an individual's premises, values, and beliefs are the learning lenses through which meaning is made; to Kegan, premises, values, and beliefs are themselves understood through an individual's structural developmental lens of meaning-making. Kegan emphasizes the influence of vertical development on horizontal development and understands this as adult learning. Vertical development and keeping shadow repressed both require energy that may influence the student quality of life.

### ***Horizontal Learning and Vertical Development***

Cook-Greuter (2004, 2007) has described two dimensions of development, respectively, using the terms vertical development, or increasing complexity, and horizontal development, or expanding content. Figure 1 visually represents the stages of complexity (vertical development) using the position of discs on a bi-directional line. A specific stage of complexity is indicated by that disc's location (disc height). A higher disc location represents greater complexity. Horizontal development is represented by the disc width. A wider disc indicates a greater amount of content—i.e., information, knowledge, and skills.



*Figure 1. Horizontal Learning and Vertical Development*  
(adapted from Cook-Greuter & Soulen, 2007, p. 183)

### ***Influence of Shadow on Horizontal Learning and Vertical Development***

Becoming whole—by learning about one's shadow and projection through shadow work—is a form of horizontal learning. The missing slices from each disk in Figure 1 illustrate the repressed aspects of the Self. They represent what we have hidden in the long heavy bag we drag behind us, which restricts our being a 360-degree whole Self. Shadow work, including self-reflection and dialogue, is horizontal learning that may catalyze vertical development. Becoming more whole may release energy that, in turn, would then be available to augment one's climb toward increasing complexity.

There is scant literature on how adult learning theories, Constructive-Developmental Theory, and shadow intersect and interact with one another. The role of shadow in adult learning and adult development needs to be further explored. This qualitative study used a semi-structured semi-

clinical interview with twenty adult graduate students. The findings illustrate quality of life elements participant experienced in becoming aware of shadow

## **Methodology**

### ***Population and Sample***

This research study was guided by a constructivist orientation and a qualitative inductive approach (Creswell, 2009). Twenty participants were adult learners enrolled in a Master of Arts program. These participants engaged in an Immunity to Change (ITC) workshop (Kegan & Lahey, 2009) followed by shadow work. The average age of participants was approximately 40 years old. To ensure anonymity, no additional descriptive statistics are provided, and all gender references to participants have been eliminated from the interview excerpts.

### ***Data Collection***

Private, individual, face-to-face or telephone interviews were conducted with each participant and digitally recorded. Interview space was mutually selected and agreed upon in order to optimize the participant's comfort and anonymity. After reviewing the informed consent, addressing participant questions, and obtaining the participant's authorization to participate, a semi-structured, semi-clinical, qualitative interview was conducted. Open-ended questions were asked to elicit the participant's experience and insight during an ITC and shadow work workshop, including questions about their awareness of strong energy (Kvale, 1996).

Interviews ranged from 21 to 61 minutes and averaged 43 minutes. A digital record of each interview, stripped of all identifiers and labeled by participant number, was professionally transcribed. After random checks identified several significant errors, each transcription was checked word-for-word against the audio recording for accuracy.

### ***Analysis of Data***

Data analysis was completed through inductive reflection and by following Moustakas's (1994) outline for empirical phenomenological methods. As a first step in the analysis, the verbatim transcripts were read to obtain a general sense of the data and to make memos in the transcript margin (Creswell, 2009). The transcripts were then read a second time for statements that seemed significant. During this open coding, each statement was considered as potentially meaningful to the original inquiry and of equal importance (Creswell, 2009; Patton, 2002).

During the third reading, each relevant statement was labeled for meaning and clustered into temporary and flexible themes and categories of similar concepts (axial coding). As the themes emerged, labels were changed or added using language from the participants themselves to reflect emergent differences and distinctions. This resulted in a more in-depth analysis of labeling (Creswell, 2009). Finally, a fourth reading was used to explore the emergent themes for textural and structural descriptions. These themes were then supported with examples from participant interviews. This process enabled the essence and meaning of phenomena to emerge through the integration of textural and structural descriptions.

### ***Credibility and Quality***

Strategies to ensure credibility and quality included paraphrasing responses during the interview to verify understanding and to qualify scope and context of the participant response. This enabled the participant to confirm, refute, clarify, or expand their expressions, ensuring shared understanding and functioning as a real-time participant verification check. In addition, transparency and clarity of the researcher bias was maintained and negative or discrepant information were presented (Creswell, 2009). Lastly, the researcher remained open to new understanding and changes in thinking, which served as reflexive validity and discussed the research process, raw data, analysis and interpretation with selected colleagues to serve as peer reviewers (Merriam & Tisdell, 1998).

## **Findings**

### ***The Self and Shadow***

Table 1 presents the various ways participants described what they had learned about themselves and their shadow. Pat (the pseudonym for an exemplar participant) realized how people were pushed away in personal and professional settings by behavior that “provided some chaos, a wake behind me. People have all said, ‘there’s no middle ground with Pat you either love Pat, or you hate Pat. It’s all black, or it’s all white.’” Participant 12, who assumed “one must never question or speak truth to authority,” linked associated shadow to the participant’s father indicating that “even if he says the sky is purple, and its blue, it’s purple because he said so because he is the boss.”

Table 1

#### ***Learned About Self and Shadow***

<b>Categories</b>	<b>Participant</b>	<b>Number</b>
I tried to control outcomes because of the influence of shadow	p6, p8, p9, p10, p17, p20	6
My behavior pushed people away	p1, p3, p4, p7, p12, p13	6
Shadow made me feel insecure, bad, angry	p2, p5, p11	3
I don’t have to react, opportunity to understand self better	p15, p19	2
Clueless what real shadows are	p14	1
Shadow is obstacle to forward progress	p16	1
Everyone doing best they can	p18	1

As presented in Table 2, when the participants were asked to describe what they noticed about themselves following the ITC process and shadow work Pat noted the change in energy that had been bound up in the father-child relationship. Pat stated:

When I would pass his car, it would cause physical energy. I mean I’d go home, and my blood pressure’s up. My heart rate’s up, and my [partner] would say, “You saw your father”... looking at that shadow, allowed me to arrive at a place where the energy has dissipated. Yes, the feelings are there. I don’t like my 20 years of living with him. I don’t like all the things that happened – that didn’t happen – but I don’t have that elevated energy level when someone brings up his name.

Participant six experienced self-forgiveness: “it just made me be more forgiving of myself and not beat myself up over things that I’m really probably just creating in my head.”

Table 2

*ITC Shadow Work Experience*

<u>Categories</u>	<u>Participant</u>	<u>Number</u>
Release, affirmation or self-forgiveness	p2, p3, p6, p8, p14, p16, p18	7
New awareness or differentiation	p4, p6, p7, p13, p17	5
Openness in thinking or understanding	p1, p9, p10, p12, p20	5
More in control, empowered	p5, p15, p19	3

***Shadow and Adult Development***

In describing how change has influenced their interaction with others, Pat expressed, "I'm more relaxed, more patient, [a] better listener, and those three things together have obviously made me, I think, a better person, in all situations, conflict and otherwise." Participant eight indicated, "I'm so much more willing to forgive, so much more willing to ignore and not make things so significant, so big a deal."

Table 3

*Interactions with Others*

<u>Categories</u>	<u>Participant</u>	<u>Number</u>
More tolerant of others	p8, p11, p12, p13, p15, p17, p18, p20	8
More willing to engage	p1, p5, p7, p8, p10, p13	6
More confident; comfortable	p2, p4, p6, p9, p14, p16	6
More Patient; relaxed, calm	p1, p4, p6, p19	4
Better Listener	p1, p3, p4	3
Better use of time	p5, p8	2

***Shadow and Adult Learning***

Participants were asked how they had been influenced as adult learners by the experience, insight, or understanding gained through the shadow work. Pat indicated "I feel more confident that what I have to say has some value. I'm learning how to say it better depending on the environment." Participant eight stated, "I now find myself having less of a clear demarcation between academic work and real life or the application to living on a daily basis."

Table 4

*Influenced as Adult Learner*

<u>Categories</u>	<u>Participant</u>	<u>Number</u>
Daily application not future oriented	p2, p4, p8, p10, p11, p12, p13, p15	8
Invested and engaged - empowered, confident, passion	p4, p6, p9, p16, p17, p18	6
Intrinsic rather than extrinsic motivation	p1, p7, p8, p10, p17	5
Bigger, deeper, more open,	p1, p2, p9, p20	4
More accountable less procrastination	p5, p13	2
More integrated mind, body, spirit	p14, p17	2
more insight learning from others	p2	1
Continuous does not stop	p3	1
Unlearning	p19	1

## **Discussion**

Though Kegan (1982, 2000, 2001) had already linked disruptive learning and energy to development, his focus was not on shadow. This study illuminates the role of shadow work in increasing horizontal learning and releasing energy in support of vertical development. This study did not measure vertical development, but it does provide a context for its discussion. By creating new insight, and releasing energy, the horizontal learning of shadow work may support vertical development by serving as or initiating disruption to equilibrium. With shadow work, an individual may be able to use the new perception of wholeness and the new insight and information gained to create new choices when she experiences a challenge. In experiencing a wider range of available choices, she may become less defensive in her approach. Instead of engaging the challenge in a way familiar to her, she may pause, and—informed by new insight and choice—engage in a new and different manner. With persistence over time, she may begin to relate to challenges differently, with greater complexity. The capacity to take in and create greater complexity is vertical development. Based on the participants' reports, shadow work may thus act as a catalyst of horizontal learning that supports increasing complexity.

## **Conclusion**

Adult learners face challenges to academic entry, persistence and completion and they may hold critical scripts regarding the ability to succeed. A student's perceived quality of life and experiences may be negatively influenced. Providing a resource for students to understand and reintegrate shadow may help to improve quality of life by directly addressing and balancing emotions, thinking and behavior or by enabling the students to better balance challenges. Quality of life elements that emerged from this study include increased capacity to engage without trying to control outcomes, being more open and forgiving with self and others, increased confidence, and being intrinsically motivated. These categories reflect changes in awareness, emotions, and behaviors that influence meaning making and the quality of life experiences of the adult student.

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## **Zen and the Art of Adult Learning**

*David San Filippo*

### **Abstract**

Many adult learners are spouses, significant others, parents, and/or employees with conflicting priorities while they pursue a higher education degree. The attainment of a higher education degree can be difficult for any learner regardless of age and education experience. To find balance in life, one must inventory his or her life activities and accord the activities a balance of one's finite time. This paper explores approaches that bring a balance and quality of life to adult learners through a Zen attitude as they pursue their education. A Zen attitude can have a positive impact in the quality of the education experience for the adult learner. It can help to maintain a balance and quality of life for the adult learner.

Keywords: Adult Education, Quality of Life, Balance, Zen, Stress

### **Zen and the Art of Adult Learning**

The attainment of a higher education degree can be difficult for any learner regardless of age and education experience. However, the quality of life for an adult learner can be compromised due to their need to balance their multiple of responsibilities beyond those required by their education.

#### ***Balance and Quality of Life***

What brings a sense of balance and quality to a life? To find a balance in life, one must inventory life activities and accord a balance on in a days, weeks, months, and years. Gyanchandani (2017), when writing about work-life balance, stated:

Work-life balance is characterized by a condition of balance in which the demands of both a [an individual's] occupation and individual life are equivalent. It involves contributing equivalent measures of time and vitality between work and individual life.

The transformation of information and communication technologies and its usage has affected individuals work and family lives positively or negatively. (p. 53)

Academic pursuits have similar demands as work settings. Both work and academics require uncompromised focus of attention and disregard for personal needs (while conducting the work requiring the focused attention). Adding an academic pursuit to an adult learner requires balancing life from three perspectives, work, academic, and personal.

Academic pursuits have similar demands as work settings. Both work and academics require uncompromised focus of attention and disregard for personal needs. I began my doctoral studies while working at an executive level for a national company. I was also married with young children. In order to find quality of life, I attempted to set boundaries with my work, and when I was home, I was home. I intertwined my education and personal/family time by doing my reading when I had time, either early in the morning or while the kids were playing; I used to carry my books with me everywhere I went and read whenever I had time. I made time for family a priority, so that I could maintain the balance in my life. Although, I attest that I was

successful and balancing a quality life, my wife and kids may provide a different perspective, but I believe we all believe we have a full, quality life.

I have a colleague who was asked once how he had stayed with our university for more than 30 years. Without a blink of an eye he stated, “Long ago, I set my priorities: God first, family second, work third.” As long as those priorities were maintained, his life was in balance and he would stay on the job. He’s still here. To find a balance and a quality life requires setting priorities and staying honest to them. We need to strive to keep the sectors of our lives balanced and when we become aware that we are wobbling out of balance, take action to regain our equilibrium.

### ***Adult Learner and Learning Theory***

An adult learner in higher education is defined by chronological age (25 years old or older), delayed higher education enrollment, part-time work, full-time work while enrolled, financial independence, parenthood, military services, and possibly the lack of a standard high school degree (Schreyer, 2007). According to Fairchild (2003), adult learners are employed full-time, are care-givers to children and perhaps aging relatives, community leaders, and volunteer workers. They are also usually married or are involved with a significant relationship. These multiple responsibilities can lead to barriers in educational pursuits. Mercer (1993) uses Cross’s model, dividing barriers to persistence into three classes: situational, dispositional, and institutional. These barriers can impact the quality of education for the adult learner in many ways. Malcolm Knowles (1984) cited five assumptions concerning the characteristics of an adult learner. He professed that adult learners were generally self-directed, had the resources of experiences to draw upon to apply to their learning, they were ready to learn, they oriented to learning by moving from a subject-centeredness to learning to a problem-centeredness of learning, and finally, were motivated to learn.

### ***Finding a Zen Attitude***

Finding a Zen attitude is guided by practicing mindfulness. Thich Nhat Hanh stated, “I define mindfulness as the practice of being fully present and alive, body and mind united. Mindfulness is the energy that helps us to know what is going on in the present moment” (as cited in Maunu, n.d., p. 5). The philosopher Ram Dass (2010) taught: “Be here now” (p. 90). A Zen attitude can have a positive impact in the quality of the education experience for the adult learner. Zen brings peace by the practitioner sensing oneness beyond self and experiencing reality fully. A sense and/or attitude of Zen brings a balance into one’s life (Lin, n.d.). Finding a Zen attitude requires a decision to change how you look at yourself and the world around you. It also requires an alteration in how you think of yourself and others. Finally, finding and maintaining a Zen attitude requires practice.

### ***The Practice of Zen***

There are a few steps you can take to bring more balance into your life and maintain a Zen attitude. One action is to find a way to find some calmness in the busyness around you. One application might be to take a break and go for a walk. Another action is to practice being in the moment. An application to being in the moment is that when you go out for a walk, do not think of what you left behind or what you are returning to but see what you are passing by, feel the air,

feel the sun, and smell the air. Practicing awareness is another action to bring balance to your life. Practicing awareness helps you to stay in the moment.

Watch a bird fly or a caterpillar cross a sidewalk. Developing good relationships also brings us balance in our life. Relationships help us live lives outside of ourselves and engage with other people, to take a break. As a spiritual teacher once shared with a group I was in, “It’s not all about you.” Finally, it is important to allow some self-time. You carve out time for others and your work; you should also honor yourself by finding some self-time. It is not all about you, but it is important to have self-time to maintain balance. These steps can help bring more balance into your life and maintain a Zen attitude.

In addition to the steps discussed above for finding a Zen attitude, incorporating some changes in thinking and feelings is useful. Some of these changes include finding peace in your life by letting go of what you cannot control, working to see the big picture not what is currently being experienced, changing or controlling what is within your control, focusing on the positives, practicing positive visualization, and appreciating the journey of life.

Another practice to bring balance is to own your feelings by being cognizant of your temper and keeping it in check or getting help to do so. Also, pay attention to your stress levels, be aware of your response to negative events, work not to take things personally, smile, and when you think negative thoughts look for the positives. Finally, give yourself space by starting the day right by finding a good routine. As mentioned above, take self-time, slow down your normal pace, take time to meditate by practicing mindfulness, get refreshing rest, and unplug from our digital world. Bringing balance into your life takes practice. As with anything that takes practice, there are successes and failures, but in most cases, you get better the more you practice. Be mindful of the world around you and in yourself and bring a balance and quality to life.

### ***Reflections on Living and Learning with a Zen Attitude***

To maintain a balanced life, it is important to find balance in our three spheres of existence. We must care for our body, our mind, and our spirit. We must find time to acknowledge them, listen to them, and care for them. Finding moments to be in the moment and prioritizing responsibilities can lead to a quality of life and education. One should balance his or her time with spirituality, family, work, and school. Adult learners should share their educational pursuits with others. Supportive families and co-workers encourage the adult learner to be successful. Quality time in a balanced life leads to a fulfilled person who is a good worker, family member, and student. By practicing the art of being in the moment and being aware in our three spheres of existence. We must care for our body, our mind, and our spirit. We must find time to enjoy the moment, whether it is at work, home or school. Quality of life in adult learning comes from a balance in our education, vocation, and family. Adult learners should strive to apply their experiences to their learning and their learning to their experiences. This can bring a completeness to the educational experience of an adult learner.

As you choose to live and learn with a Zen attitude, be sure to engage in a relationship that will sustain you through your journey of finding balance, peace, and a quality of life. As Proverbs 27:17 states, “Iron sharpens iron, and one [person] sharpens another.” You need others to converse with and travel with you on different parts of your journey of life. As you progress

through your education and life, find people who will tell you what you need to hear, not what you want to hear and will hold you accountable to your actions.

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## **Strategies to Develop Skills for Positive Training Transfer**

*Jane Northup*

### **Abstract**

Baldwin and Ford's (1988) Model of the Transfer Process highlights training input and output factors as affecting conditions of training. Training inputs, such as trainee characteristics (personality and motivation), training design (principles of learning and training content), and work environment (support and opportunity to use skill) effect training outputs (learning and retention). Using adult learning principles in the classroom helps facilitate positive transfer of training and includes learning that takes place in the context of realistic settings, called authentic tasks (Brown, Collins, & Duguid, 1989). Additionally, an instructor/trainer of adults must understand that the adult learner is self-directed, has experiences to share, needs motivation to learn, and has the need for problem-centered learning for learning and retention to take place (Knowles, Holton III, & Swanson, 2005). Therefore, when the trainer understands what helps to motivate the adult learner, this enables the trainer to help students make meaning from what is learned, transfer their knowledge, and gain control from the instructor (Knowles et al., 2005). The purpose of this review is to take a closer look at examples of training inputs that maximize the transfer of training for positive learning and retention.

Keywords: Training Inputs, Training Outputs, Learning, Retention, Adult Learner

## **Strategies to Develop Skills for Positive Training Transfer**

The law enforcement profession has seen many technological advancements in the last 100 years. Many are taken for granted, such as electronic tickets, video surveillance, and the simple advent of the latex glove. However, a persistent challenge for the field of law enforcement is keeping up with ever-changing technology and science (Byrne & Marx, 2011; Schiro, 2000). For example, modern technology has significantly impacted how law enforcement officers (LEOs), who are crime scene investigators, collect, document, and analyze evidence. Therefore, the need for additional training in law enforcement has increased with the advancement of technologies (Kerr, 2005). Koper, Taylor, and Kabu (2009), on behalf of the Police Executive Research Forum, conducted a study on the effectiveness of technology, the prioritization of technologies, and the barriers the law enforcement community faces when implementing advanced technologies. Law enforcement agencies spend millions of dollars each year training officers. However, there has been little research on the training programs and their effectiveness for positive transfer of training to on-the-job performance (Community Oriented Policing Services, 2014; Williams, Ward, Knowles, & Smeeton, 2002).

Studies suggest there are several elements in a training program that will enhance learning and retention and lead to improved skill development (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Klausmeier, 1985). Baldwin and Ford (1988) created a training transfer model (see Figure 1), that identifies training inputs as (1) trainee characteristics (ability, motivation), (2) training design (realistic training environments, using adult learning principles), and (3) work environment (such as transfer climate and support) which assist in positive training outputs. Training outputs (learning and retention) are affected by the conditions of transfer which affect how a trainee's skills are

ultimately transferred to the job. In their work, Baldwin and Ford (1988) found that the conditions of transfer (1) generalization (how close the training context is to the real world of practice) and (2) maintenance (the timing of the training and its use in practice) are intricately linked to trainee characteristics and the work environment for positive training outcomes. Given the significance of training inputs in formal training programs for positive training outputs (learning and retention), it is imperative that training inputs utilize best practices in adult learning theory. The purpose of this review is to take a closer look at training inputs and what can be done for positive learning and retention.

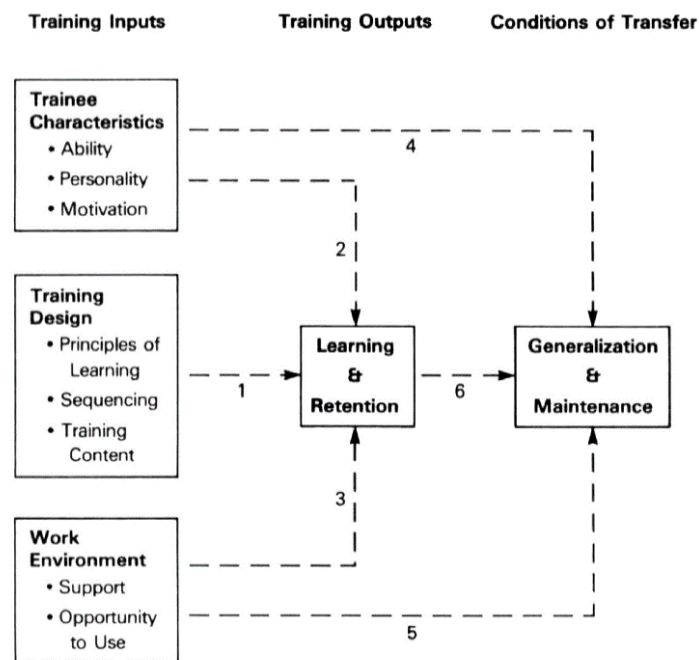


Figure 1. Training Transfer Model (Baldwin & Ford, 1988)

### Trainee Characteristics

Trainee characteristics include the trainee's intellectual ability, self-efficacy regarding their training, motivation level, and personality traits (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Trainee intellectual ability may be the most influential predictor of training success and performance; it accounts for 16% of the variance in training effectiveness (Kanfer & Ackerman, 1989; Ree & Earles, 1991; Robertson & Downs, 1979) though research has found trainee motivation is also influential in learned skills transferring to the work environment (Noe, 1986; Tziner, Haccoun, & Kadish, 1991). Organizations may not be able to change the intellectual abilities of their trainees, but some variables within trainee characteristics can be modified. For example, in their research, Lim and Morris (2006) added job function, job position, years of related job experience, and immediate training needs to the list of trainee characteristics. They found that a trainee's job function was a significant indication of their overall perceived learning application (Lim & Morris, 2006). For example, different positions held within an organization will affect the trainees' perceived ability to apply their learning to the workplace.

This is supported by Baldwin and Ford's (1988) statement that "training research cannot continue to ignore the job relevance of the training content as a critical factor affecting what is learned, retained, and transferred to the work setting" (p. 99). Lim and Morris (2006) reported the most influential trainee characteristic in their study was the need for trainees to use the learned knowledge within six months of training. For example, if an employee's job function does not allow them to use their newly acquired skills, transfer will be limited or may not occur at all. Knowles et al. (2005) found that adult learners need to connect learning to their existing knowledge and experience base. Therefore, an employee with limited work experience may not have the same conditions for positive transfer as a trainee with more experience in the skill being learned.

### **Training Design**

Including stakeholders (the trainee, trainer, and manager) in training design, one that aligns with organizational goals, will help identify obstacles to positive transfer (Broad & Newstrom, 1992). Also, for effective positive transfer, the training design should include achievable learning goals, the use of relevant content, a program that gives practice and feedback, the use of over-learning as a strategy for retention (continuing to repeat practice even when performance has been established), and a design that includes active learning with behavioral modeling (Burke & Hutchins, 2007). Knowles et al. (2005) suggested that for adult learners to develop, learn, and retain their skill, training should be focused on their needs. Knowles et al. identified six assumptions about adult learners. Adults learn best when they need to know the material, have self-concept, have prior experience, exhibit a readiness to learn, are oriented to learn, and are motivated to learn (Knowles et al., 2005). Adult learners will be more successful in their learning if they see a direct correlation between what they are asked to learn and their job performance.

Knowles's work adds to Morstain and Smart's (1974) study on six motivational factors for adult learners. Morstain and Smart found motivational factors that influence how adults transfer training. They are (1) the need for social networks to exist, (2) the need to meet external expectations, (3) the need to improve the social welfare of others, (4) the benefits of career and professional advancement, (5) feeling stimulated with learning, and (6) having a cognitive interest throughout pre-, during, and post-training for positive transfer (Morstain & Smart, 1974). Therefore, a trainer must make connections so that training is aligned with what the trainee will be doing in the "real world" for a positive influence on training effectiveness (Broad & Newstrom, 1992).

### ***Near and Far Transfer***

Transfer of training can be near or far. Near transfer is when learning is applied to situations similar to those in which initial learning has taken place, and far transfer is when learning is applied to situations dissimilar to those of the original learning (Lim & Johnson, 2002). For example, the more the training content and programs reflect workplace practices, when learning takes place in realistic settings with authentic tasks and over-learning the task is used, near transfer will occur (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Brown et al., 1989; Noe, 1986). Far transfer occurs when trainees practice in different contexts that include unique practice exercises, and they receive encouragement during training which stresses the application of what they are learning in situations they are familiar with (Baldwin & Ford, 1988; Noe, 1986).

## **Work Environment**

As stated earlier, adult learners need early opportunities to apply what they have learned for training outputs (learning and retention) to be positive. Burke and Hutchins (2008) reported supervisory support that provides coaching and opportunities to practice new knowledge and skills as best practice in training transfer. Linking training design and delivery with the work environment, Burke and Hutchins (2007) found that a precursor to training is a needs assessment. Trainers should first assess the cause of performance issues to ensure that the work environment does not preclude learning and retention from unclear performance objectives and inadequate resources and support (Burke & Hutchins, 2007).

Additionally, peer and supervisory support were found to boost training transfer once the trainee is back on the job (Burke & Hutchins, 2008; Fecteau, Dobbins, Russell, Ladd, & Kudisch, 1995). Burke and Hutchins's (2008) research with trainers found supervisory support as an essential function of transfer. Supervisory support includes supervisory reinforcement, coaching and opportunities to practice, the use of interactive activities to encourage participation, post-training evaluation of skills, and making content relevant to actual job duties. Broad and Newstrom (1992) included management support and prior- and post-training as enhancements to transfer of training. As far as the role of supervisors is concerned, research has found that few supervisors discuss training programs with the trainees other than to authorize time to attend the courses, which leads to a lack of understanding by the trainee in how to implement training in the workplace (Clarke, 2002). Therefore, when the trainee, trainer, and manager—what Broad and Newstrom (1992) called a transfer partnership—are all involved in the training design and delivery, they can each support one another for positive application of training by the trainee to the workplace.

## **Conclusions**

Building on Broad and Newstrom's work, Lim and Morris (2006) conducted research that integrates all three training inputs. Their resulting model (see Figure 2) shows a relationship between the different types of variables: trainee characteristics, instructional factors, and organizational factors and how they relate to one another for positive learning and transfer outcomes.

Trainers must understand that the entire training and performance improvement process should be comprehensive and focused on how to help trainees transfer their learning to the job (Baldwin, Ford, & Blume, 2009). Trainer knowledge (expertise in their fields) and their use of teaching principles (adult learning principles) have also been reported as assisting in positive learning and retention (Burke & Hutchins, 2008). Burke and Hutchins's (2008) review of existing research found that other major transfer influences go beyond the traditional training inputs. These researchers reported sub-categories that emerged as influences beyond Baldwin and Ford's traditional training inputs that help support transfer. They include trainer knowledge (the trainer's knowledge of subject matter and teaching principles), peer support (co-workers, colleagues, and peers as the most heavily invested), and organizational support (organizational culture supports transfer through a commitment to training transfer). As an example, they found that support from peers more consistently influenced trainee transfer than supervisory support;



this was supported by Facticeau et al. (1995) who found that trainees' support from peers had a more significant positive effect in transfer than supervisory support (Burke & Hutchins, 2008).

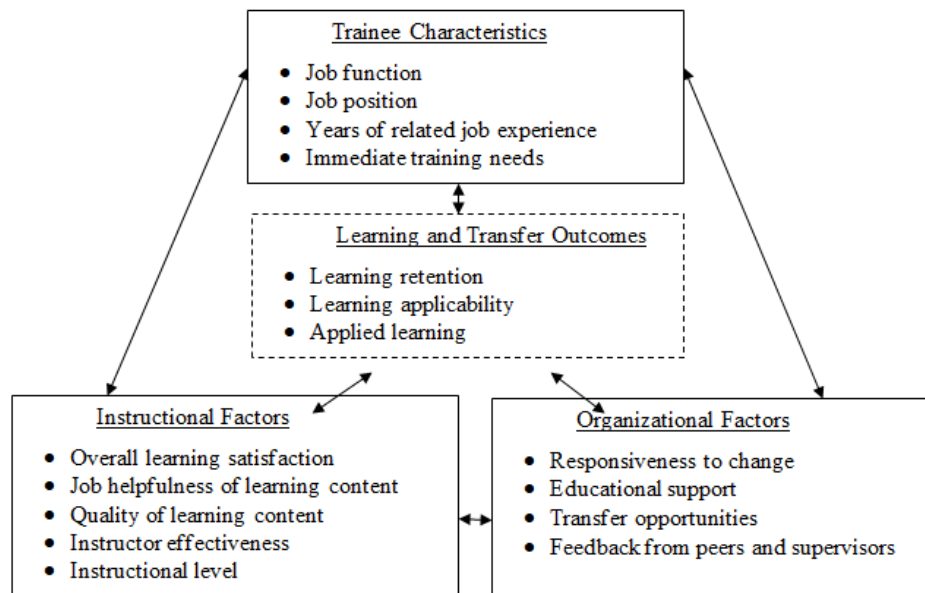


Figure 2. Integrated Research Framework (Lim and Morris, 2006)

Mentorship, as part of training inputs, has been found to improve on-the-job performance. Studies with pre-service teachers found mentoring activities between a trainer and trainee that include scaffolding, feedback, and reflection, help trainees develop their skill to higher levels (Silva Mangiante & Peno, 2016). Scaffolding is used to help a learner reach a higher level of performance through modeling and observation (Peno & Silva Mangiante, 2012). Providing feedback to the trainee allows for acknowledgment of strengths and weakness relative to their performance (Baldwin & Ford, 1988) and provides an opportunity for them to examine their actions and consider alternatives, with the assistance of a mentor (Peno & Silva Mangiante, 2012).

Training designs that incorporate Morstain and Smart's (1974) six motivational factors for adult learners may expect positive training transfer. Trainers who understand Knowles et al.'s (2005) six assumptions of the adult learner and include activities such as mentorship and the use of the motivational factors will help propel the learner from one who is learning to one who retains learning. Moreover, a work environment that includes supervisory and peer support, transfer partnerships between the trainee, trainer, and manager, and the opportunity for the trainee to use their skills are all critical to enhancing transfer of training. Therefore, trainees that are motivated to learn, a training design that accommodates trainees' needs and helps make connections with "real world" activities, and a work environment that enables the learner to use new skills promptly are essential training inputs for positive learning and retention.

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## **Quality of Life of Minority Students Impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**

*Wytrese Richardson, Claudia Pitts, Suzette Fromm Reed, and Judith Kent*

### **Abstract**

Adults with unresolved Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) present a unique opportunity for universities to support students as they strive toward positive change. As marginalized students seek to improve their lives, they often utilize higher education as their means. Traditionally, this path has not been easy for students to navigate, nor have institutions been tolerant or sensitive to the challenges they face. All students bring diverse issues, but those of the adult, minority student associated with ACEs, present a greater barrier to academic success. A strengths-based, ACEs-informed system within institutions to help students buffer the often-daunting higher education environment creates a more beneficial educational experience.

*Keywords:* Adverse Childhood Experiences, ACEs, Adults, Higher Education, Minority Students

## **Quality of Life of Minority Students Impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)**

Colleges and universities are filled with marginalized students who seek to change the narratives that have been set for them and their families. Upon entry, students may face significant obstacles, lack voice, and routinely encounter intolerance, insensitivity, and bias—even within institutions that have a clear responsibility to establish inclusive, supportive environments. While some may dismiss these student experiences—and the students' reactions to them—as isolated or intermittent, we maintain that there is a systemic bias within higher education that reflects societal prejudices and compounds the oppression of students of color. More specifically, a large percentage of these students, particularly those who are non-traditional in terms of age, have been impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). These students have established techniques for survival and persistence that may not always serve them well in a higher education environment. Honoring students' resilience while helping them function effectively in the higher education environment can contribute to positive synergy for change. Then, helping both students and institutions to respond differently can lead to systemic change.

Our work is based on ACEs—potentially traumatic events that can have negative, lasting effects on health and well-being. These experiences may range from physical, emotional, or sexual abuse to parental divorce to the incarceration of a parent or guardian. We focus on shifting the mindset of educators by allowing them to reach adult students who have these emotional and performance-based sequelae from ACEs, which may include: inability to effectively manage emotions, difficulty identifying situation-appropriate coping mechanisms, understanding professionalism and professional culture, and identifying and implementing strategies for advancing their careers. Most college and university faculty receive little training, much less specific training on teaching non-traditional, minority students who have unresolved trauma.

### **Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs): Background and Research**

Within higher education, it is especially important to understand Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and how those affected by trauma present within higher education. In the mid 1990s, the

Kaiser Permanente Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) study revealed three major areas identified as relating to premature death in adults: abuse, neglect, and household challenges.

Later, Felitti et al. (1998) identified 10 types of negative childhood events: physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional abuse, physical neglect, emotional neglect, violent treatment of the mother, household substance abuse, household mental illness, parental separation or divorce, incarceration of a household member; we strongly believe that this list should also include immigration and deportation fears issues. As previously noted, many non-traditional minority students may present with one or more of these ACEs.

Individuals experience events idiosyncratically, with respect to particular circumstances and frequency. Furthermore, each person makes meaning of each event, often influenced by his or her development and culture, and experiences individual, physical, mental, emotional, cognitive, behavioral, social, and spiritual effects. In other words, “Trauma is completely relative to each individual” (SAMHSA, 2014), while ACEs are shared and objectively measurable.

Initially, the relationship was viewed as a clear linear progression, as in the first pyramid (see Figure 1). Adverse childhood experiences lead to social, emotional, and cognitive impairment. These lead to adoption of health-risk behaviors, which increase disease, disability, and social problems and, ultimately, early death. Later research suggested a more complex progression.

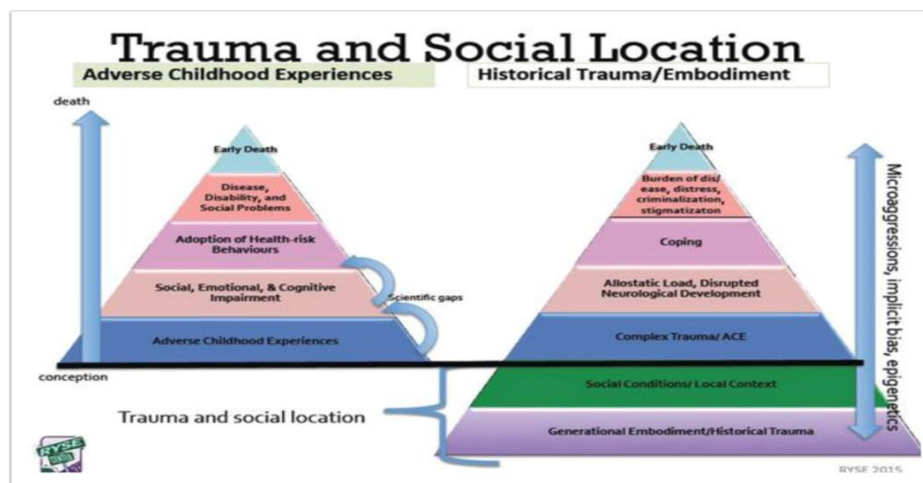


Figure 2. Initial conceptualization of ACE Effects (Dhilawal, 2015)

### ACEs and the Brain

Adverse Childhood Experiences can alter the structural development of neural networks and the biochemistry of neuroendocrine systems. These changes have long-term effects on the body that including speeding up the processes of disease and aging and compromising immune systems. There are multiple stages that predate the individual with ACEs, including historical trauma leading into local context. These stages include disrupted neurological development, pathological coping skill development, the burden of disease, criminalization, distress, and even premature death.

Although our focus is primarily on ACEs and resilience, it is important to note that the long-lasting neurobiological effects of early trauma are increasingly well documented, including alterations in brain structure and function (Duncan et al., 2015). Subsequently, childhood trauma is “programmed” into the brain with lifelong implications, and without healing, these brain and hormonal changes may be lifelong. We refer to the changes using the acronym NEAR, which includes Neurological, Epigenetic, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) and Resilience that denotes the strengths-based healing, as mentioned above.

Increased levels of ACEs have been indicated as factors in numerous studies of behavioral dysfunction. Factors as disparate as the occurrence of anxiety disorders to the level of sexual dissatisfaction have been shown to have a corresponding neurobiological defect associated with early trauma. Figure 2 summarizes findings from multiple studies (see Anda et al., 2006) that have found a correlation between the ACE score to mental and physical illnesses.

Area of function or dysfunction studied	Demonstrated neurobiological defects from early trauma	ACE study findings
Anxiety, panic, depressed affect, hallucinations, and substance abuse	Repeated stress & childhood trauma → hippocampus, amygdala & medial prefrontal cortex atrophy and dysfunction that mediate anxiety & mood problems	Unexplained panic, depression, anxiety, hallucinations & alcohol & other drug problems
Smoking, alcoholism, illicit drug use, injected drug use	Repeated stress & childhood trauma → Increased locuscoeruleus & norepinephrine activity, decreased by heroin & alcohol	Increased smoking, alcohol and other drug use
Early intercourse, promiscuity, sexual dissatisfaction, perpetration of intimate partner violence	Repeated stress & childhood trauma → amygdala defects; role in sexual & aggressive behavior and deficits in oxytocin with impaired pair bonding	Risky sexual behavior, anger control, risk for aggression against intimate partners
Memory storage and retrieval	Hippocampus role in memory storage and retrieval; hippocampal & amygdala size reduction in childhood trauma; deficits in memory function	Impaired memory of childhood and number age periods affected increases as the ACE score increase
Body weight and obesity	Repeated stress & distress, via glucocorticoid pathways, leads to increased intra-abdominal & other fat deposits	Increased obesity
Sleep, multiple somatic symptoms, high perceived stress	Repeated stress & distress, via several pathways, leads to increase in other physical problems	Increased somatic symptoms and disorders, including sleep problems
Co-morbidity/Trauma spectrum disorders	Multiple brain and nervous system structure and function defects, including monoamine neurotransmitter systems	The graded relationship of the ACE score to psychiatric and physical symptoms or disorders, including multiple co-occurring problems (comorbidity)

*Figure 2.* Summary of the convergence between neurobiological effects of childhood maltreatment with ACE study epidemiological findings

### Students in Higher Education Affected by ACEs

Minority students may face intolerance, insensitivity, and systemic bias within institutions of higher education. It is the institution’s responsibility to establish inclusive and supportive environments. These students can experience a sense of powerlessness and a lack of true voice at their institutions. Additionally, when they do speak, their voices can be perceived—correctly or not—as angry.

These students seek higher education to change the trajectory set for them and their families. However, institutions were not designed with these students in mind. As mentioned previously,

most faculty members lack any teacher training, and specifically, they lack training in teaching non-traditional, minority students who have unresolved trauma from ACEs. And yet, these are precisely the students these professors find themselves teaching.

For students affected by ACEs, there are certainly roadblocks to be removed from institutions of higher education before they can look to necessary systemic change. First, for faculty members, there is the responsibility to create an environment of inclusion in their classrooms and institutions. Students, having survived the challenges of their ACEs, have developed coping skills, but those skills may not be conducive to higher education settings. These coping skills have been developed in the context of traumatic neurochemical and structural brain changes related to trauma exposure. Students affected in this way often have difficulty managing their emotional expression effectively, feel challenged in identifying and implementing situation-appropriate coping mechanisms, are unfamiliar with professionalism and professional culture, and struggle to implement strategies for advancing their careers.

In an inclusive classroom setting, faculty can help their students understand their own ACEs, resulting behavior, and maladaptive coping skills. Faculty can then work with their students to develop adaptive coping skills. Faculty who have explored and are aware of their own ACEs can more effectively work with their students. However, how do they move from a trauma-informed approach in individual classrooms to systemic change? This requires additional strategies. Faculty need to advocate for their students, serving as advocates of and activists for institution-wide ACEs education—for every administrator and staff person who interacts with students. Moreover, they need to convince administrations of the need for a trauma-informed approach to ACEs with a focus on student strengths and resilience.

### **Student Strengths**

Minority students typically come into higher education with a disproportionately higher number of Adverse Childhood Experiences (Longhi, 2015). The higher the ACEs score, the more poorly equipped these students are for the structure of higher education. Despite these challenges, as the brain's plasticity continues until the mid to late 20s, there can be real benefit through adapting higher education to the needs of our most challenged students. Adult and minority students entering higher education seem to have a strong determination to break maladaptive cycles. Many of them possess strong techniques for survival, for example, they have been able to manage the impact of their ACE(s), they possess techniques for survival and persistence, moreover, they are eager to serve and will likely pursue careers in the helping professions. It is with these hard-won skills that they move toward maximizing their success in higher education.

### **Systemic Change Within Higher Education**

With knowledge of ACEs, student issues associated with childhood trauma can be identified and recognized. Strengths-based processes help students buffer the impact of those issues within the context of their higher education experience. This can be accomplished with a focus on embedding new, successful coping mechanisms that will positively affect persistence and graduation rates. It is essential to analyze the possibilities for advocating institutional changes



that support both faculty and students. As a result, students will persist, graduate and thrive with engagement from institutional stakeholders that will build true systemic change.

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**Student Perception of the Showcase Assignment:  
Treating Public Speaking Anxiety Through the Use of Self-disclosure**  
*Amelia Young Sanders*

**Abstract**

This study focuses on a new classroom assignment known as the Showcase Assignment created by the researcher to reduce public speaking anxiety. This paper focuses on a qualitative study. College students enrolled in public speaking courses identified what about the course gave cause for anxiety and asked them to give their opinions on the assignment upon hearing its description. The findings indicated that students are most afraid of peer/instructor judgment. Students agree that the Showcase Assignment is an excellent example of a creative assignment, will aid in creating a supportive classroom environment, and predict it to be an effective and enjoyable assignment. This study was conducted with the intent of learning information to tailor the assignment to student needs before implementing it in a quantitative experiment study. The preliminary results of this quantitative study are also briefly discussed in this presentation.

Keywords: Public Speaking Anxiety; Self-disclosure; Assignments

**Introduction**

Think of your greatest fear. Is it spiders? Death? Heights? I am personally terrified of heights to the point that thinking too much about heights makes my chest tighten with anxiety. This is how the majority of students feel every day in their public speaking classrooms. This paper discusses Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) as it relates to students in public speaking courses and will present a new classroom assignment created the researcher to help reduce student PSA in a one-time treatment. This presentation focuses mainly on a qualitative study used to gain a better understanding on the challenges facing public speaking students and their opinions of the new classroom assignment before it is implemented. I also briefly discussed the quantitative study that focuses more on the effectiveness of the assignment itself, and how these results can be applied across disciplines.

**Brief Review of the Literature**

Public Speaking Anxiety (PSA) is a type of communication anxiety where students experience physiological arousal or negative self-doubts and/or negative behavior as a response to an anticipated or actual presentation (Daly, McCroskey, Ayres, Hopf, & Ayres, 1997). Unfortunately, PSA often creates a vicious cycle with high levels of PSA resulting in poor speech preparation and performance that in turn increase the student's PSA levels (Daly, Vangelisti, & Weber, 1995). When students were reporting their most common fears, public speaking was selected more often as a common fear than any other fear, including death (Dwyer & Davidson, 2012).

Learning to cope with public speaking anxiety is essential as presentations are a necessary part of both college and work responsibilities. It is vital that students gain competence in public speaking early to ensure success in academia and the workforce (Johnson & Szczupakiewicz,

1987). It is for these reasons and more that public speaking is often considered a mandatory or core course by many higher education institutions (Emanuel, 2005). The role of a public speaking course is to provide hands on guidance teaching students how to prepare for a presentation, communicate effectively, and alleviate public speaking anxiety (Ford & Wolvin, 1993; Gibson, Hanna, & Huddleston, 1985).

The issue that most speech courses face is the order in which the goals listed above are achieved. In a math course, a student is asked to learn the basics before they can be expected to do more advanced formulas. This same thinking should be applied to public speaking courses. How can we expect students to learn how to outline, give proper citations, make eye contact, have enthusiastic tone, and so on, if all of their thoughts are consumed with their fear? When the student is afraid, that is the only thing on their mind when giving a presentation. Just as I mentioned in the introduction, I am terrified of heights. Therefore, you could tell the proper procedures for a successful and even fun skydiving experience all day long, but I would not be able to process that information because of my fear. This means that overcoming PSA is not only an important objective that communication instructors should cover, it should be the very first objective covered.

### **The Showcase Assignment**

I saw both from previous studies and from personal teaching experiences, that there was a need to address communication apprehension in the speech classroom early, and reviewing the literature confirmed this. I wanted to focus solely on apprehension—not on format or delivery—all while making the assignment as enjoyable for students as possible. As a result, the showcase assignment was created. The Showcase Assignment is a classroom tool I designed to aid in alleviating communication apprehension by using self-disclosure and subjecting students to high levels of communication apprehension early through experiential learning theory. It consists of a one to three minute in-class presentation in which the student can entertain the class in any appropriate way they wish as long as they choose something with personal meaning. The students will give a brief introduction of their talent and provide an explanation to the importance of the talent selected. The talent must have the instructor's approval prior to the presentation being given to ensure it is appropriate and fulfills the self-disclosure need.

The assignment was not graded, to reduce the anxiety associated with it. It was simply deemed a participation activity. In order to increase its effectiveness for lowering situation anxiety, it must be the first oral presentation assigned. Examples of talents include but are not limited to singing, dancing, playing an instrument, reading a poem, or baton twirling. I always have students that claim they do not have a talent, but everyone does, it just may be unconventional. I have had students who are talented at math solve difficult equations, a student once solved a Rubik's Cube in front of the class in seconds, and I have also had a single mother of five describe how she juggles her more difficult days. The goal of this assignment is not a successful performance but a successful effort.

The premise is that by engaging in the Showcase Assignment, students would have the opportunity to understand their level of apprehension and practice overcoming their communication apprehension by giving a presentation before the class, which will have them

self-disclose their personal experiences and opinions in front of others. They would be able to learn what it really feels like to stand in front of the class and speak, if they speak slower or faster than they imagined they would and learn if they have any nervous ticks they need to overcome such as swaying or pausing too often. They can learn all of these things without the fear of a grade since this is for participation points only and the least amount of pressure or judgment possible. This was an opportunity that students would not normally have as typically their first time speaking in front of the class is well into the semester and for a grade. When it comes to learning a presentation based on art form the only way to learn is by physically engaging in the material and in this case through experiential learning theory.

### **Methodology**

Before implementing this new classroom tool for quantitative testing, I wanted to first like to gain a deeper understanding of what specifically causes student PSA and how the Showcase Assignment can be fine-tuned to better fit the needs of the students before it is implemented. Therefore, this qualitative study gathered student opinions on PSA, classroom environment, creative classroom assignments, and the Showcase Assignment through 15 semi-structured interviews. The participants of this study were full-time undergraduate students from a small, two-year, southern community college currently enrolled in a basic public speaking course. Data was obtained through scheduling and conducting face to face structured interviews.

The following research questions were explored:

- (1) What about public speaking courses causes communication anxiety?
- (2) How do students feel about the showcase assignment?
- (3) Is the showcase assignment viewed as a balanced creative learning opportunity by students?
- (4) How does the showcase assignment help build a supportive classroom environment?

I began coding data after the first two interviews to begin the theoretical sampling technique. Theoretical sampling occurs when participants are selected according to criteria specified by the researcher and based on initial findings. For this study the researcher alternated analysis and data collection between every two interviews conducted to determine when saturation was met. This method of coding was chosen so that comparisons could be made without restricting the researchers to interpret participants' words within a framework of properties and dimensions. This is done to add depth and structure to the existing categories. These categories can then be interlinked to build the basis for a theory.

### **Results**

#### ***(1) What About Public Speaking Courses Causes Communication Anxiety?***

After interviewing 15 students the researcher learned there are three main causes for student anxiety in a speech course: judgement from peers, judgement from the instructor, and drawing a blank. Students discuss the feeling of having everyone's eyes on them, the thought of messing up in front of everyone, and the fear of judgement.

Students not only worry about being judged by their peers, but by the instructor as well, “the biggest fear of all is the teacher. She is used to speeches, she knows what to look for and it is all new to you. It’s not so much eyes on me, but the judging and what the audience and teacher are thinking.”

Finally, some students have the fear of getting in front of the class and completely forgetting what they had planned to say. No matter how well one plans for their first presentation, they never know what it feels like to be in front of that crowd until they are up there. One student described her experience, “the first speech we gave I had it down pat, but then I got up there, and I was like ‘oh wait maybe I don’t have this’ and it was because stage fright got the best of me.”

## ***(2) How Do Students Feel About the Showcase Assignment upon Hearing the Description?***

To answer this research question, I asked students their overall opinion of the Showcase Assignment, if they believe it is applicable to all public speaking courses, how their anxiety levels would be toward this assignment, how their anxiety levels would change in their future changes after completing this assignment, and how they feel about the grading process of this assignment.

First, students gave their overall opinion toward the Showcase Assignment. It was very well received by all. All students agreed that it was a good idea that could be used by any speech instructor. One student said, “I think that if they were to start out with something like that it would give a positive boost to the class.”

Secondly, I asked how students would rate their anxiety levels in based on this one assignment. I was expecting students to say they would have high anxiety toward this assignment as it is set around the idea that facing a large amount of apprehension first thing in a public speaking class will reduce anxiety through the life of the class. I wanted to ensure that the assignment was not deemed too high of an anxiety risk by students. Three students reported that they would have very high anxiety toward the assignment, but not so much that they would be unwilling to participate in it.

To the researcher’s surprise most students reported that while a level of anxiety will still be present, the creativity of the assignment and the grading scale for the assignment would make this assignment more enjoyable and less anxiety producing than traditional speech presentations. Students also believe that this assignment will help reduce anxiety because it is a pass or fail assignment.

When looking at this in the quantitative study the results indicated that students in the experiment groups who participated in the Showcase Assignment, confirmed the results above. Students found it to be enjoyable, creative, and a great way to increase supportive classroom environment. While students who in the experiment groups did not self-report lower levels of PSA, they did appear more confident and less anxious than students who did not experience the Showcase Assignment when giving presentations. Student’s in the experiment group also scored higher on speaking assignments than students in the control group.

### ***(3) Is the Showcase Assignment Viewed as a Balanced Creative Learning Opportunity by Students?***

When asked why some students enjoy creative based assignments the researcher received one of three basic answers: “I like to reveal personal information about myself,” “I like to practice my creative skills,” or “I like the feeling of control.” By far the answer the researcher received most, from 10 students, was students like the feeling of being in control of the assignment or their grade. When asked why that feeling of control is a comfort to students in a speech class one student responded, “I don’t have to worry about that judgement that I am so afraid of; I cannot be graded on that part.”

### ***(4) How does the Showcase Assignment Help Build a Supportive Classroom Environment?***

Students were asked what could be done to create a more supportive speech classroom environment. Students believe that the Showcase Assignment will help build a supportive environment by creating a less formal environment: “I think it definitely would improve the classroom environment. It’s always good to laugh and have a good time, performing a skill or talent would be something fun to show case and make it easier to get to know one another.” Having a more relaxed environment puts students at ease by reducing the pressure for perfection. This was confirmed in the quantitative study as well when students agree that the Showcase Assignment would create a level playing field and reduce student comparison. Students also feel that engaging in greater amounts of self-disclosure activities like the assignment will help them bond with their peers as well as serve as a form of audience analysis for the class. As one student said, “It will work because you will see relatability and varying degrees of passion towards similar topics. I believe it will help with our audience analysis activities that we do in class.”

While the assignment can go a long way in helping build a supportive environment, it can only go so far without the instructor’s guidance. Students suggested ways a speech instructor could enhance a supportive classroom environment and overwhelmingly mentioned the importance of the instructor explaining the no pressure or no judgement aspect of the Showcase Assignment. They mentioned that delivering this assignment in a laid-back and less stressful tone of voice is key to making students feel at ease. This would go a long way to increasing student and instructor bonding at the first of the course. This was also confirmed in the quantitative study. These results lead me to say that handling this assignment in a delicate empathetic manner will lead to success; however, handling this in a stressful or callous way could possibly have the opposite effect.

## **Discussion**

While it is important to conduct quantitative studies on new assignments like this to see if they are effective, I chose to begin with the qualitative approach because if students do not find it enjoyable or worthwhile the assignment is an automatic failure in my opinion. This is especially true learning that students want to feel that they are in control of some aspect of their education and their assignments, as this study pointed out in the creativity section of the findings. Adult education research shows that adults tend to be motivated intrinsically meaning that it is not the grade or gold stars that motivate adult learners the most at the end of the day but rather the internal desire to do well and enjoy the task at hand (Gom, 2009; Kasworm, 1993). When discussing these results at the AHEA conference many instructors mentioned that this

assignment could be transferable across disciplines such as changing the assignment to an essay instead of a speech for an English class. The experiential learning opportunities could be tailored to the course while the objectives and goals of boosting a supportive classroom environment and lowering anxiety still apply. One instructor mentioned that it can take up to six weeks into the semester before her students are comfortable with each other and with her, and we all discussed the negative effects of teaching in a tension filled awkward classroom.

This assignment forces bonding, which can skyrocket classroom bonding from six weeks to as little as three days. During the conference discussion it was agreed that when a supportive classroom environment is established teachers are able to give better lecture performances, class discussions are more impactful, and students feel more comfortable asking questions or making relevant comments. While building assignments and alleviating PSA is not a new idea, the ability to accomplish these goals within the first two weeks of the semester is impressive

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## **What about Us? The Quality of Work-Life of Adult Educators**

*Jeremy S. Schwehm and Jennifer L. Saxton*

### **Abstract**

Adult educators are often concerned with the well-being of our students, but how often do we consider our own quality of work-life? The purpose of the discussion session this paper is based on was to provide a safe space for participants to “Gripe and Grow.” Participants were invited to share issues (gripe) that negatively affect their quality of work-life with the intent to, as a collective group, identify strategies to address the issue (grow).

Keywords: Work-Life, Quality of Life, Adult Educators

## **What about Us? The Quality of Work-Life of Adult Educators**

The pressure to perform to a degree of excellence is common across most career fields. As expectations to accomplish more with less (and to do it faster) increase, so too does the burden to find a healthy balance between personal and professional responsibilities. Work-life balance, defined as one’s ability to meet the demands of work and family (Delecta, 2011), has become a fundamental issue in organizations over the past three decades. The concept of work-life became prominent in the United States during the 1970s as manufacturing companies opened up to the idea of addressing worker involvement in decision making and worker satisfaction and as more women entered the workforce (Guest, 1979; Latz & Rediger, 2015). According to Lockwood (2003), three major factors led to an increased focus on work-life balance in organizations: global competition, renewed interest in family values, and an aging workforce (p. 2). How one balances job/career expectations with other obligations, both work- and non-work related, may have positive or negative implications on job performance, job satisfaction, emotional well-being, and a sense of contentment (Baral & Bhargava, 2010; Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007). This has forced both employers and employees alike to address work-life balance as part of improved organizational practice.

The purpose of this paper was to use collective wisdom to address adult education faculty work-life balance in three primary areas: teaching, scholarship, and service. To do this, the presenters developed a presentation method called “Gripe and Grow.” In a Gripe and Grow session, participants are asked to share specific issues (gripe). After sharing the issue, participants work together to develop strategies (grow) to address the concern. In the following paper, a brief review of the literature on faculty work-life is presented. Then, the results of the Grip and Grow session on faculty work-life balance are discussed. Finally, suggestions are offered on how faculty might support each other in defining and reaching work-life balance.

### **Faculty Work-Life**

Faculty are commonly evaluated using three categories: teaching, scholarship, and service. Each category affects work-life balance, and work-life balance can affect faculty effectiveness in each category. Although studies show that in general, faculty adore students and love their work (Latz & Rediger, 2015; Levin et al., 2013; Levin, Kater, & Wagoner, 2011), interactions with students



can negatively influence faculty quality of work-life. Similarly, an incongruence between expectations in productivity/scholarship and instructional/research support negatively affects the quality of faculty work-life. Lastly, faculty are required to provide service to the institution (e.g., committee work) and the profession, which can create time demands that strain the work-life balance.

Research on faculty work-life has become more prevalent, although the body of literature is not as robust as it is in other professions. According to Enders et al. (2015), faculty who are considered “burned out” are more likely to report a poor quality of work-life, a feeling that work is done in crisis mode, a belief that quantity of work is valued over quality, and a lower sense of job satisfaction. Welch, Wiehe, Palmer-Smith, and Dankoski (2011) found dissatisfaction with workload, availability of support, and low salary affected quality of work-life and undermined faculty teaching capacity. Institutional support in ensuring compatibility between personal/family responsibilities and an academic career is a positive predictor of faculty work-life balance (Denson, Szelenyi, & Bresonis, 2017), yet institutional policies to ensure faculty work-life balance are not always used in practice (Lester, 2015).

### **Issues in Faculty Work-Life Balance for Adult Educators**

During the AHEA conference session, participants were encouraged to reflect on the session information and provide their own ideas on how faculty in the field of Adult Education can work to balance out the pressure to meet all professional expectations. Participants were invited to discuss an issue related to work-life balance, expressing what they would change about the issue if they could, indicating what was learned from it, and determining how to move forward with a plan to fix it. Following is information on teaching, scholarship, and service that was discussed in the “Gripe and Grow” session.

Two factors identified as contributing to an imbalance in work-life relating to teaching were student expectations and teaching load. Participants characterized issues with student expectations in multiple ways. A common disrupter of work-life balance stemmed from an incongruence between the time students felt it should take faculty to complete grading of assignments compared to the time it actually takes to provide appropriate and relevant feedback. Additionally, expectations for responding to questions and inquiries outside of stated office hours, at any time of the day or night, on weekdays or weekends, put increased pressure on faculty to be available to students at all times. It was discussed that, with regard to teaching load, faculty are carrying heavier course loads than ever, while still maintaining scholarship and service requirements, resulting in a loss of down-time and an increase in teaching duties encroaching on social or family time.

With the ever-present push to do more with fewer resources, scholarship requirements for faculty—on top of their teaching load—placed an additional strain on work-life balance. Expectations for scholarship were associated with feelings of work-life imbalance for session participants who did not receive adequate institutional support to meet those expectations. This included faculty teaching a four-course load per semester, sometimes with a one-course overload, and yet being required to meet scholarship expectations of one or more peer-reviewed

publications per year. Moreover, faculty at teaching institutions were beginning to feel pressure to undertake grant writing in addition to their publication requirements.

One participant gave an example of securing a nine-month teaching contract, but then using the elusive “summer vacation” to catch up on research, grant writing, and course preparation duties that were limited during the regular academic term. The result is that the faculty member works longer days than they would during the nine-month contracted period, most of the time for no additional pay, to meet institutional expectations. What is the answer? It can vary from faculty member to faculty member, but institutional awareness of the imbalance occurring is important, and then an effort to rectify the issue is key. If the institution ignores it, attrition among faculty occurs and the resulting financial consequences of replacing quality faculty affect an already-strained budget. One solution presented was to utilize the institution’s tenured faculty to advocate for their non-tenured peers, as tenured faculty likely have more power and influence to make institutional changes.

Session participants’ issues with service in relation to work-life balance also reflected the general theme of high expectations and limited time. With the majority of work hours (and personal time) being dedicated to teaching and scholarship, some participants struggled to provide service to the institution through committee involvement, service to the discipline through involvement in professional organizations, and in most cases, involvement in the community in which the institution is located through volunteer hours in civic organizations. In general, participants enjoyed the various forms of service, but lacked the time necessary to find balance while also focusing on teaching and scholarship.

### **Strategies for Work-Life Balance**

Participants in this session identified work-life balance issues in three broad categories: teaching, scholarship, and service. Latz and Rediger (2015) found that faculty develop strategies to reach and maintain balance, and many participants had suggestions to address work-life balance. For teaching, participants suggested the value of setting fair expectations for student contact, including timelines for feedback, availability, and response time, in the syllabus. Some participants also found that it helped to have self-discipline and schedule personal time during which nothing work-related was done. Additionally, participants felt it was important to have support from more senior faculty, in the form of mentoring and coaching, to guide junior faculty in reaching work-life balance.

The increased focus on scholarship, particularly at teaching institutions, and the need to apply for external funding created stress regarding work-life balance. Participants identified the need for institutional support as paramount in having the ability to effectively teach and produce scholarly work. In addition to institutional support, some participants suggested working with institutional colleagues and/or peers within one’s discipline to produce scholarship. Institutional support was also identified as important in the grant-writing process. One participant suggested working with college/university departments with grant-writing functions, such as sponsored programs or advancement. Lastly, some participants stressed the importance of redefining scholarship to include activity outside of peer-reviewed publications. This included the development of

manuals, course development, workshops, and other products that demonstrate academic work. Scholarship expectations appeared to have the greatest impact on work-life balance.

### Conclusion

Similar to other professions, adult educators struggle to attain work-life balance. Work-life balance can be difficult to attain and address as it is dependent upon the individual faculty member. However, there are some strategies adult education faculty can utilize to reach work-life balance. Through a Gripe and Grow session, participants identified teaching load and student expectations to influence work-life balance but suggested setting clear guidelines for students and themselves could positively affect work-life balance. Scholarship was identified as a primary issue in reaching balance, especially in situations of increased requirements with a lack of institutional support. Participants suggested working in teams and redefining scholarship as strategies to increase scholarly production and reach work-life balance. Balancing work and personal responsibilities can be difficult, but by relying on the support of peers and advocating for increased institutional support, the delicate balance of work and personal life can be a realistic goal for faculty in adult education.

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# **Connecting the Challenges Faced by Foreign-born Students in Higher Education**

*Modupe Soremi, Shalander Samuels, and Thomas Cox*

## **Abstract**

The unprecedented increase in the foreign-born population in the United States since the 1970s, low post secondary graduation rates, combined with the requirement of a higher education degree in the U.S. labor market precipitated this study. Since foreign-born students are an integral part of the U.S. population, understanding the challenges faced by foreign-born students in higher educational institutions will create an avenue for recommending solutions to many of these challenges, thereby increasing their educational attainment and economic productivity and ultimately preparing more Americans for the competitive 21st century global market. This study investigates the challenges faced by foreign-born students in a state college and solicited suggestions for improvement in foreign-born student achievement.

Keywords: Foreign-born, State College, Success, Challenges

## **Background**

As the American foreign-born population grows and becomes more diverse, so does the proportion of foreign-born students in American higher education institutions. According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2014), the enrollment of the foreign-born and their children in the United States higher education system was 34.7% in 2003, compared to 39.6% in 2013. Additionally, the world economy is increasingly more competitive; therefore, America's comparative advantage in the global market depends on the education and skills of its workers. The job opportunities requiring at least an Associate degree are projected to grow twice as fast as those requiring no college experience in the next decade (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2007). Foreign-born students (FBS), although increasing in numbers in the United States, especially in academia, have faced many challenges in their educational journeys. These challenges have had an impact on their academic success, sometimes deterring their opportunities for graduation. Boosting the success rate of all students should be a national necessity, not only for individuals but for the nation.

In 2014, the United States foreign-born population was more than 42.4 million, representing 13.3% of the total U.S. population of 318.9 million (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). Today, U.S. foreign-born and their U.S. born children number approximately 81 million, representing 26% of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2016). That is, one out of every four Americans is foreign-born or is a child of at least one foreign-born parent. Further, the Pew Research Institute estimated that by 2065 that number will rise to one in three (Cohn, 2015), representing about 33% of United States total population.

Since foreign-born students are an integral part of the United States, it is imperative to educate them for the nation to remain globally competitive. Not only did the researchers in the current study investigate the challenges faced by foreign-born students in higher education, they sought recommendations to remedy these challenges. Therefore, understanding the challenges faced by the foreign-born students at state colleges will create an avenue for recommending solutions to

some or all the challenges. Furthermore, not only will this increase the educational attainment and economic productivity of foreign-born students, but it will prepare more Americans for the competitive 21st century global market.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this study was to explore the essence of, interpret, and describe the challenges faced by foreign-born students (FBS) in a state college that may be preventing and/or prolonging their graduation. In addition, the study solicited recommendations for improvement from the participants.

### ***Definition***

In order to emphasize who is considered foreign-born, it will be useful to define who is not. Those who are not foreign-born are considered native born: “The Census Bureau uses the terms native and native born to refer to anyone born in the United States, Puerto Rico, a U.S. Island Area (American Samoa, Guam, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, or the U.S. Virgin Islands), or abroad of a U.S. citizen parent or parents” (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.). After conducting research on the definition of foreign-born, the simplest definition is the one by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). They defined the foreign-born population of a country as “persons who have that country as the country of usual residence and whose place of birth is located in another country” (OECD, p. 301), excluding those born abroad to a U.S. citizen parent.

### **Methodology**

The researchers conducted a pilot study to help gain insight into the condition of higher education as it pertains to foreign-born students’ success. The pilot study was a pivotal component of the current action research. The study was intentionally conducted by the researchers to improve their practice. According to Herr and Anderson (2014), action research is conducted by an individual or individuals within an organization to study a phenomenon, with the intention to improve outcomes for the organization. An action research approach was appropriate for this study because it directly impacted the researchers’ students and each researcher sought to seek ways to resolve foreign-born students concerns and aid in their overall achievement.

Using a qualitative approach, the challenges faced by foreign-born students (FBS) in a state college (which could prevent or prolong their graduation) were investigated seeking recommendations for improvement. A Qualtrics survey was utilized to gather preliminary demographic information from each student and to solicit participants for focus group discussions. Data collected from focus groups and the survey were analyzed using Moustakas’s (1994) and Creswell’s (2003) methods. The focus group and survey questions were developed using Pascarella and Terenzini’s (2005) College Impact model and Vygotsky’s (1978) Socio-cultural theory as the foundational framework to guide this study. A thematic approach was used to analyze the information retrieved from the participants in the study, which provided objectivity throughout the process.

### ***Site Selection***

The data was collected at Victory State College of Florida (VSC) in Central Florida. During the 2016/2017 academic year, VSC had a total of 29,014 students enrolled, 1,528 faculty and staff, and awarded 5,813 degrees and certificates. The college had no specific data of the FBS population enrolled at the college. However, the Institutional Review and Effectiveness department at the college reported that 1,000 international students from 82 countries were enrolled during the same 2016/2017 academic year (“Victory State College”, 2016).

### ***Participant Selection***

According to Hycner (1999), “the phenomenon dictates the method (not vice-versa) including even the type of participants” (p. 156). A “purposive” or “convenience” sampling approach was used because it allowed the researchers to select individuals who were qualified to provide the information most necessary to assist with the study. The researchers purposively chose foreign-born students for this study, which was supported by Kruger and Stones (1981) as the most important kind of non-probability sampling to identify those who “have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched” (p. 150).

The participants in this pilot study were foreign-born students intending to complete a certificate, an Associate degree, and/or with an end goal to transfer to a four-year college or to earn a bachelor’s degree. These criteria were selected to focus on individual student goals, rather than institutional goals, and to intentionally exclude students who attended college to learn English only or for recreational purposes. Therefore, this study assumes graduation as the goal to which the students were striving. Hence, any factor which impeded the achievement of this goal was considered a challenge. The participants selected for this study were members of the foreign-born student population of the college. These were “individuals who had no U.S. citizenship at birth” (U.S. Census Bureau, n.d.).

### ***Data Collection***

Pilot study data were collected from two sources including focus group discussions and survey. A preliminary demographic survey was administered by the Institutional Research and Effectiveness department of the college using Qualtrics software to reach all students enrolled in college credit classes in the Spring of 2017. The survey included a brief description of this study, a questionnaire requesting demographic information, and a request to participate in a focus group. This format was utilized intentionally to collect preliminary data on the FBS at the college and to solicit participants for the focus group discussions.

## **Discussion**

### ***Data Analysis***

The survey and focus group discussions were used to explore both the academic and social experiences of FBS at the college, as well as to solicit recommendations for improvement. Once the surveys were returned, the data were retrieved from Qualtrics and exported into an Excel spreadsheet. Then, the researchers grouped similar statements into categories and each category was labelled with the most thematic codes from the group. These categories were formulated based on the most frequently repeated significant statements from each group. These statements later guided the focus group questions.

Two focus groups of three students each were conducted, using open-ended questions as a guide for discussion. The focus groups were recorded using the Audio Note software; recordings were transcribed verbatim to ensure an accurate systematic analysis of the discussion and for the researchers to become familiar with the data. Then the researchers focused on identifying significant statements regarding participants' academic and social challenges as they described their lived experiences at the state college. These significant statements were initially sorted for each of the focus group questions. The action of identifying core themes was repeated throughout the transcription process. Finally, the researchers synthesized the meaning and essence of the identified academic and social challenges.

This pilot study revealed the following student challenges: language barriers and insecurities (formal and informal English), erroneous and inaccurate advising/counseling provided by the institution, financial issues, insufficient information, time management issues, deficiency in the knowledge of the education system and requirements, lack of support, cultural differences and unfamiliarity from both natives and FBS, personal characteristics, engagement deficiencies (with both faculty and peers), feelings of isolation, necessity to make new friends, and navigating the system for resources and information (alone). Table 1 lists the challenges and their connection to emergent themes from the pilot study.

Table 1  
*Emergent themes and sub-themes*

<u>Emergent Themes</u>	<u>Sub-themes</u>
Academic Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language Barriers and Insecurities</li> <li>• Lack of Faculty Engagement</li> <li>• Cultural Difficulties and Unfamiliarity</li> <li>• Lack of Technology Knowledge Requirements</li> </ul>
Social Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Peer Engagement</li> <li>• Cultural Differences</li> <li>• Language Barriers</li> </ul>
Organizational Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Erroneous &amp; Inaccurate Advising/Counseling</li> <li>• Insufficient Information</li> <li>• Financial Issues</li> <li>• Deficiencies in the Knowledge of the Education System/Requirements</li> <li>• Navigating the System Alone for Resources and Information</li> </ul>
Mentorship Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of Support</li> <li>• Lack of Extracurricular Activities</li> <li>• Lack of Diverse Student Organizations</li> </ul>
Personal Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feeling of Isolation</li> <li>• Time Management Issues</li> <li>• Setting High Goals</li> </ul>



The exploratory question regarding how the college can improve the support offered to FBS was specifically asked of the participants, to understand type of support they feel the college could provide to foster their success. The information gathered was utilized as a standard or benchmark, with which all parties were familiar with the end goal and what might be done to help achieve said goal. Throughout the study, the students involved had shared much input and provided many suggestions. Some of those suggestions included: the college providing more opportunities to engage with both faculty, staff, native students, and other FBS; providing proper advising; providing avenues for cultural engagement for all; providing financial advising; consolidating and publicizing all resources available to support students at the college (such as information regarding the honors society, volunteer society, etc.); offer formal and informal English classes to FBS; hire qualified staff with proper training in each department (for example, placement services, advisors); and hiring bi/tri-lingual staff.

### **Implications and Conclusions**

To effectively serve foreign-born students at the college, professionals may find it helpful to understand and be aware of the challenges these students face. Awareness of their challenges could aid administrators in creating strategic opportunities to solve these challenges. Because “individual effort and engagement are the critical determinants of the impact of college, then it is important to focus on the ways in which an institution can shape its academic, interpersonal, and extracurricular offerings to encourage student engagement” (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980, p. 602).

Specifically, the researchers believe the following measures should be considered by Victory State College leaders, administrators, students, faculty, and staff to address the challenges of foreign-born students and help them in their social and academic pursuits. The College Board of Governors and administrators should recognize the significant increase of foreign-born students in the community that the college serves; there are challenges faced by foreign-born students and benefits associated with accelerating their academic and social success. Acknowledging these points are critical before administrators can introduce opportunities for improvement which uniquely address each identified challenge faced by FBS. When students’ challenges are addressed, students feel connected to the college, which leads to student persistence, retention, and eventually graduation (Astin, 1984; Mallette & Cabrera, 1991; Nora, 1987; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1980; Terenzini & Pascarella, 1977).

The results of the pilot study indicated that FBS feel uncomfortable communicating because of language barriers and insecurities. It is beneficial to reach out to FBS and provide them with opportunities to engage with faculty, native students, and staff. FBS should also take advantage of college events (structured or unstructured) to increase interaction with other students. Several researchers suggested that when students get help and support, and when they are engaged in the college activities provided, their chances of succeeding will increase (Kuh, 2008; Pascarella & Terenzini 1977, 1980, 1991, 2005; Tinto, 1975). The college should facilitate events and opportunities for such interactions and engagements to occur.

Further, the effort to engage FBS could affect the way students, faculty, and staff at Victory State College view cultural diversity. By promoting cultural awareness through activities and events at

the college, mutual tolerance between foreign-born students and natives (Americans) could be inspired. The college's activities should encourage new perspectives and open the eyes of all students which allows for unique bonds among students, faculty, and staff in the college. Ultimately, stereotypes should be reduced while allowing individuality and diversity which leads to peace and a civic community at the college and beyond while allowing for student academic success.

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## **Evolutionary and Neurobiological Underpinnings of Adult Learning. What Can Veterans Teach Us?**

*Jeremy R. Young*

### **Abstract**

The role of various neurological structures and their functions play a key role in determining risk versus reward and pleasure versus pain. This neurobiological evolutionary development ultimately drives our motivation or avoidance based exclusively on our desire to survive. Following 16 years of prolonged combat in Iraq and Afghanistan, the military veteran is an exceptional example into how being emotionally distant (Post-traumatic Stress Disorder) can produce unintended barriers to learning. According to Pessoa (2017), the key to adult learning is unlocking the emotional pathways that are interwoven between perception, cognition, motivation, and action.

Keywords: Neurobiology, Veterans, Adult Learning

## **Evolutionary and Neurobiological Underpinnings of Adult Learning. What Can Veterans Teach Us?**

The first common ancestors began appearing in Africa 200,000 years ago. According to Passingham and Wise (2014), the primate brain expanded rapidly during this time to include the prefrontal cortex (PFC). The PFC makes up nearly 25% of the brain and is involved with problem solving, reasoning, insight, and imagination. Today's human brain consumes nearly 20% of total blood flow (oxygen supply and energy) from the heart and represents a mere 2% of our total body weight.

The main component of the brain discussed here is the PFC and the limbic system. The limbic system consists of multiple structures, three of which are: the thalamus, the hippocampus, and the amygdala. The thalamus is solely responsible for relaying sensory information to the larger part of the brain. Four (hearing, sight, touch, taste) of the five senses are processed and relayed to the cortex of our brains through this structure. (Sherman, 2006). According to Gluck et al. (2014), the role of the hippocampus is to move short-term memories to long-term memories by encoding them with emotions derived from the amygdala.

The movement from short-term memory to long term is further solidified by the strength of the emotional experience. In 2006, researchers at UC-Irvine demonstrated that the strength of the emotion on a learned event/thing plays a critical role in the strength of that memory. This finding supports the idea that war time experiences that are highly emotional have long lasting effects on future behavior. The role of stress and its impact on the quality of life for the student and military veteran can be deleterious to their success. Ritt (2008) demonstrated that these barriers (stressors) can be personal, professional, or institutional in nature. Personal hurdles can include financial, family or personal illness and commitments, sleep cycle disruption, legal issues, or general fear. Professional barriers can include inconsistent work schedule, inadequate time off, the employer's value structure (e.g., a degree is nice, but not necessary).

Institutional hurdles are far outside of the student's control and can contribute to added stress and diminishing quality of life/experience. This includes limited access to degree options, rigid institutional policies and procedures, and rising costs that result in diminishing affordability. The common neurobiological thread that connects students to the military veteran is living in a state of constant stress. Continued autonomic nervous system (fight versus flight) activation results in prolonged circulation of the hormone cortisol. According to McAuley et al. (2009), circulating cortisol works with adrenaline to produce strong instant memories of things to avoid. Prolonged exposure to these hormones results in damage and atrophy to the hippocampus resulting in poor creation of long-term memories.

Based on this understanding of neurophysiological operation we can extrapolate how the returning veteran can struggle. While not every veteran suffered physical trauma, many suffered emotional trauma, and those injuries are not easily appreciated by society. Moral injuries are some of the strongest emotional injuries sustained by veterans. A study by Litz et al. (2009) articulated that a moral injury is one that violates intimately held beliefs about right/wrong, the value of life, ethics, and so on. These morals can be in place as a result of the broad culture, organizational culture, and group-based culture. As one soldier described it:

Emotions are not a good thing in combat. You have to just react and not think about how you feel about it. See, you are doing bad things to bad people and good people get hurt in the process. If you stopped because of emotions, you will be the next hero to be carried home on your shield. The hard part is once you have a chance to reflect on what you did, once you begin to grasp the gravity and finality of your actions, that you have no way to undo mistakes. You speak of this to no one because then you are marked as weak and unreliable. (Anonymous, personal communication, April 4, 2018)

Once home, the veteran must reform prior relationships, which becomes increasingly difficult in the face of emotional distance as a form of survival. People, places, and things can be a source of triggers for those survival behaviors and causes the veteran to feel more out of place. In the setting of the classroom, this becomes a tremendously difficult situation to overcome to allow quality learning and retention to happen in a meaningful way. These situational hurdles are that much more impactful as the veteran is not within their "band of brothers," which leads to a sense that they don't fit in. This can lead to avoidance as a means of coping and attendance in class suffers, leading to falling grades and additional self and institutional reinforcement that this is not where the veteran belongs. Simply stated, the veteran lacks a foundational need being met of being part of the learning group.

The wider application of the veteran's experiences and path home can be appreciated in all students. Consider individuals with a history of physical/emotional/sexual abuse not in the context of war (e.g., the student with a history of substance abuse and how the classroom and society views that such that a social valuation is created within the student or students with a past college failure due to an overly stressful life style related to current vocation and childcare needs). Two distinct prongs of solution are (1) re-establishing self-authorship and (2) learning in an environment that is within a "wrap-around" support structure.

Evans et al. (2010) described self-authorship as having four main components: following formulas [bestowed by parents and mentors], crossroads, becoming the author, internal

foundation. Self-authorship, according to Evans et al., is a way humans organize new experiences rather than replacing old experiences as life is lived. These new experiences are woven together with prior experiences to create a more complex understanding for the individual.

Students and veterans come to the classroom in various stages of self-authorship. Students and veterans who have relapsed to the crossroads stage may be dissatisfied with self and need support to re-craft a path towards becoming the author of their life. As Evans et al. (2010) state: “Students who worked with advisors who encouraged reflection in goal setting and intentional planning and discussed with students their nonacademic life experiences were more likely to develop abilities and perspectives associated with self-authorship” (p. 190).

Wrap-around support structure is a series of services designed by institutions to meet the complex and varied needs of the students and veterans (see Figure 1). Examples of these could be: financial support, career services, spiritual services, academic support, legal services, physical health access, curriculum advising, mental health, and social services. A key difference in this as pointed out by the Positive Behavioral Interventions & Support (2018) is that the student or veteran is at the leadership position rather than being forced/dragged through a process. It becomes a system of “I need” rather than “you must.” The key to success with this is to foster a system that is both student- and veteran-centric but also one that promotes and allows interdependent relationships when appropriate. Students and veterans may be more successful if they connect with the easily accessible services and each other in a way that will promote personal worth, character, growth, and self-authorship.

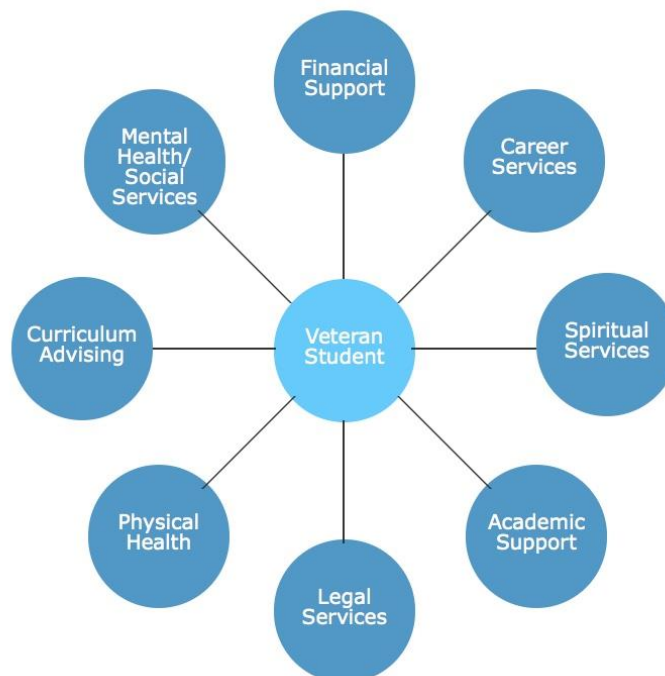


Figure 3. Diagram of National Louis University's wrap-around support. Reprinted from *National Louis University Veterans and Military Program*, retrieved from <https://www.nl.edu/veteransandmilitaryprogram/> © 2018, National Louis University.

One of the greatest tragedies thrust upon our students and veterans by society is of apathy, misunderstanding, and mistrust towards emotional trauma. It is more salient to appreciate that the student and veteran possess deep emotional connectedness to survival behavior crafted through experience forged in the fires of war. That the student and veteran are not unwilling to advance gradually into new and potentially uncomfortable areas of growth, but that they are incapable of deriving new behaviors from a cemented prior emotional/behavioral response. Stone (2017) demonstrated that the key to self-authorship in the military population is contingent on drive, initiative, and supportive and interdependent relationships. This path of personal growth all students follow can be positively supported using a “Wrap-Around” support at the university level. This provides a unique opportunity for the professors and university to become a place of personal growth, professional success, and safety that will pay dividends for the individual for a life time.

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## **Five Strategies to Enhance the Transfer of Learning from Classroom to Clinical Setting**

*Katie V. Santos*

### **Abstract**

In pursuit of enhancing the transfer of learning from the classroom to a clinical setting, we revisit five proven strategies in education. These strategies are not at all novel, but when viewed through a different elevated lens, the perspective is reborn and very enticing to the adult learner. With a multisensory spin, new life breathes into these tried and true, yet tired, teaching techniques. The strategies appeal to all learning styles and are modifiable to fit any educational setting and subject matter. We are going to direct our teaching techniques towards Generation Y, aka “The Millennials.” The new information conveyed will be a “game changer” when it comes to teaching these contemporary, technology-reliant learners. Even the most seasoned instructor will find it easy to adapt these new methods into lesson plans.

Keywords: Transfer of Learning, Healthcare, Multisensory

### **The Millennials**

Who are these so-called “Millennials” anyway? A Millennial is anyone born between 1981 and 1999. Yet, there is so much more than meets the eye when it comes to Millennials. According to the Huffington Post, “After years of being told that they’re lazy, entitled narcissists, the most high-maintenance workforce in the history of the world and just generally unlikeable ... they seem to have internalized the message” (Edwards-Levy, 2015). While baby boomers and members of the “Silent Generation” describe themselves as patriotic, responsible, hardworking and self-reliant, the only thing most millennial-aged adults describe themselves as is “self-absorbed.” But are they really that bad, or just misunderstood? Didn’t every generation before, claim that the newer generation was going to be “the end of us all”? While there are many negative attributes attached to this generation—like their desire for information on-demand, less self-reliant and “connected fluidly to devices” (McGee, 2016)—there are many positive characteristics associated with this generation too. For example, Millennials are open to change, team orientated and generally, enthusiastically optimistic. So, don’t judge a book by its cover. As their educator, you can be the impetus for a revolution among the Millennial generation.

### **The Starting Line**

When developing a program or curriculum, it is important to plan for the transfer of learning in an organized manner. Within education, there are sponsoring organizations and participants requesting outcomes that are applicable and practical, that make a difference (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). Therefore, in order to create a fruitful instructional design, one must successfully transition through the “before, during and after goals.” When we effectively progress through these goals we know if the design has been binding. The recommendation is to use transfer strategies before the program begins, because strategies employed after the program ends, are usually the most difficult for planners to influence (Daffron & North, 2011).

“Before goals” clear a pathway for learning, uncovering “many issues and concerns related to the lives of adult learners” (Caffarella & Daffron, 2013). This is the time to remove obstacles and address the problems and anxieties of our adult learners. The “during” goals “support the student

in their education and meet them at their level of learning” (Response to Intervention, 2016). It is important to establish “during goals” that are realistic to the audience you are teaching. In this phase, we help the student by scaffolding the learning. Lastly, “after” goals aim to solidify the transfer of learning. It is here we ascertain that a comprehensive transfer of learning has occurred. The “after goals” include consideration of the students’ future, by setting up opportunities for continuing education, in order to enhance what they have learned. Transition through the goals is not bound by time. In fact, it is better to be flexible throughout because it offers the opportunity for fluidity and adaptability. This transfer is not rooted in a specific time phase, and it’s not cookie-cutter. In education, we work with humans ... humans who are all extremely different. The goals should adapt to the needs of the students. The transfer is stronger if the events are not separate, but rather interconnected.

### ***#1 Personalized and Collaborative Learning Environment***

The first method to strengthen the transfer of learning is to create a personalized and collaborative learning environment. “The primary responsibility of an educator is to assure that no [student] ever feels like they are not worthy contributors in their classroom” (Nosal, 2012). Each student should feel a sense of belonging within the classroom. Learning is not only the absorption of information by a student, but a combination of many factors. A student thrives on a sense of mutual trust within a safe learning environment that lacks bias and has cultural sensitivity. This type of atmosphere draws the student out and allows them to feel like a valuable contributor. Fostering a positive setting in the classroom produces a sense of security. The atmosphere should be encouraging as it pertains to taking safe challenges without fear of ridicule. A supportive environment is the building block to developing a student with positive self-efficacy, who will engage within the classroom. If a student fears shame and ridicule from peers and educators, they will protect themselves and avoid taking risks for fear of embarrassment.

Achieving this type of environment is simple with the integration of some small changes within the classroom. Start by rearranging the class in a circle and hold interactive discussions, rather than just having the instructor lead a lecture. A collaborative culture encourages active learning from others. In a healthcare learning environment, the students absorb a lot from other people’s experiences. By applying this strategy, the students will begin teaching each other the material, while the instructor becomes more of a facilitator (as opposed to a traditional teacher). Open dialog allows the class to hear all personal experiences and draw from them. Making these modifications eliminates the old way of teaching (with the lecturer regurgitating the material to a classroom of bored zombies looking at the back of each other’s heads). With a personalized, collaborative learning environment, the student can see their peers’ faces, witness their emotions, and humanize the learning experience. It leads a student to be accountable and gives them autonomy.

### ***#2 Light a Fire, Create a Desire***

As educators, it is our wish that students would be thirsting for knowledge and be on the edge of their seats with every word we utter. But that is not the case. How do we establish that longing, that craving, to learn in our students? How do we form that connection to why they should want to learn? It happens when you give a student a reason. Everything the educator says and does, becomes the lens through which their students experience the content. So, would you say that you’re passionate about what you teach or should I say ... are you passionate *when* you teach?

Great educators create anticipation and invite reflection that deepens the students' learning experience.

In the classroom, when assigning reading for homework, have the students use an anticipation guide. "The Anticipation Guides strategy asks students to express their opinions about ideas before they encounter them in a text or unit of study. Completing anticipation guides helps students recognize and connect to themes that surface in their learning" (Staff, 2017). If an educator is passionate, they create that desire by lighting the fire within their students. A teacher may not be super eloquent or even be a total expert on the subject matter, but if they are passionate and have a love for the subject, that passion will transmit to the students.

### **WIIFM**

Every generation of teaching is different because we're teaching to an ever-changing population ... right? In higher education right now, we are primarily teaching Millennials. Before this generation engages in anything, they first want to know "what's in it for me" (WIIFM)? This question drives almost every decision they make, from the moment they wake up and intuitively check their devices, to when they finally switch off at bedtime.

So, with all the competing priorities of modern life, it's imperative our teaching answers the student's #1 question long before it even crosses their minds. We need to make the answer glaringly obvious! It's time to make educational benefits irresistible! "They need to experience change in delivery formats to maintain interest. Their attention spans are shorter – they quickly move on to other forms of learning. Their ideal learning environment involves less lecture and more collaboration with peers. Group-based projects that emulate the work environment (authentic assessments) are ideal for these learners" (Laskaris, 2016).

Whatever the student's ideal answer is to WIIFM, we need to remember that it might not always be what they are going to *get* out of doing something, but perhaps how they are going to *feel* by doing something. As humans, it is natural that what draws us in is also what makes us feel good and automatically gets our reward receptors buzzing. The answer to WIIFM is to teach *for* the student, not *to* the student. Meaning, the student needs to instantaneously feel the benefit of the information you are teaching.

To entice this generation, one must always keep in mind that "Millennials prefer a broad spectrum of learning strategies. The concept of learner-style is more pronounced in this generation. They prefer learning materials, that when delivered, it caters to their visual, auditory and even kinesthetic needs" (Laskaris, 2016). Therefore, at the beginning of the class, either via discussion or a written assignment, ask your students ... what drives them. Also ask yourself what can you do to help "light their fire"? This gives you an immediate inside-look into your students' thought process. Then you have a better chance at isolating the key to what drives them.

### ***#3 Repetition by Stimulating the Senses***

Research has confirmed that for information to move from short-term memory into long-term memory, a person must be exposed to the information approximately 7-10 times. For one piece

of material, that exposure seems easy to accomplish. But when you're learning an entire chapter, book, vocation or degree program, that information multiplies exponentially.

Here's how it works. When information comes in, it is routed through either the quick road—the amygdala—or the slow road—the hippocampus-cortex. Once information comes in, it needs encoding. In other words, a translation must occur so the brain understands where to put the information for storage and remembering. When students learn through stimulating the senses, information (that memory) is sent down the slow road to the long-term memory, the main memory storage center. This is our goal as educators. Applying methods of teaching that are multisensory enhances the learning experience and increases the likelihood of transference from the short-term to the long-term memory.

We stimulate the senses through multisensory learning, by appealing to the students' different learning styles (visual, auditory, tactile/kinesthetic). So, when creating the curriculum, look for varying methods to deliver the information, rather than just reading, lecturing, and answering questions. Look to integrate videos or pictures that explain the material. This will introduce visual and auditory stimuli. When teaching a lesson, see if you can include an experiment or a hands-on demonstration. This will help deliver the concept on a deeper level. By teaching the material in a multitude of ways, students witness "spaced repetition." The information they learn is chunked-out and delivered in intervals (i.e. the 7-10 times). When the student experiences the material in varying intervals the concept then gains a deeper level of reinforcement.

Multisensory learning environments enhance brain function. Each sensory system has targets in the brain that stimulate cognitive function. Because of this, when students hear information that connects to another sense, they can conceptualize and later apply that information better than the students who just watched and listened. It is through these multisensory teaching techniques that each sensory system becomes even more developed and higher functioning. This improves essential brain functions, such as listening skills, movement, vision, tactile recognition and conceptualization.

It's very easy for a student to zone out. In higher education, especially, students have multiple responsibilities outside of school; therefore, it's difficult to pay attention to every piece of information. Especially when it comes to them the same way, class after class, day after day. Students are attentive when educators use multisensory teaching techniques, because in one time frame the brain uses many senses. If a student is doing something tactically or physically, while listening to instructions and seeing information, there's not an opportunity for the student's attention to stray. Teaching in a way that forces several senses to work together, not only allows students to make stronger connections to the information, but it demands more focus in an enjoyable way. It's like candy for the brain.

#### ***#4 Teach-Back***

In healthcare, we use a "teach back" method between clinician and patient. But educators have found that the use of this method is effective in the classroom setting as well. This strategy is a valuable component helping adult learners process information into long term memory. The teach-back process used in a kinesthetic, auditory or visual format—or a combination of all three—promotes enhanced learning. The process begins when the instructor asks "Show me how you would do ABC ... Walk me through the steps of the ABC procedure," and then the student

demonstrates or verbally repeats while demonstrating the task. The teach-back method is a communication confirmation method used by healthcare providers to confirm whether a patient (or caretaker) understands the explanation or instructions given to them. If a patient understands, they can “teach back” the information accurately. One of the most promising and successful evidence-based techniques for delivering patient education is the teach-back method. Patient understanding is verified if they can restate the information in their own words. Teach-back is a proven way to confirm that the health care professional has explained the necessary information in a manner that the patients can understand.

### ***#5 Reflection***

“Most of us go through life viewing our experiences as isolated, unrelated events. We also view these happenings simply as the experiences they are, not as opportunities for learning” (Costa & Kallick, 2008). Reflection involves linking a current experience to something previous learned. Reflection also involves drawing forth cognitive and emotional information from several sources: visual, auditory, kinesthetic, and tactile. To reflect, we must act upon and process the information, by producing and assessing the data. In the end, reflecting also means applying what we've learned to frameworks beyond the original circumstances in which we learned something.

To be reflective means to mentally stroll through where we have been and to try to make some sense out of it. Most classrooms align themselves more with the present and the future and not really with the past. In this kind of setting, the students (and educators) find it easier to abandon what has happened and to move forward, without taking stock and applying consideration to the experiences they have just gone through. What current application is proving now is that by actively engaging in remembering and connecting experiences to information learned, the student gains a deeper level of the material. This thoughtfulness penetrates their surroundings into their inner self. Then the student can see themselves in the setting and the experiences transfer to visual recalls and memories.

These days there are many fun, relevant, options for reflective learning—options that will even appeal to Millennials. For one, there are options for voice and video recordings. The students can create an audio and visual testimonial (reflection) of their experiences. They can keep an electronic blog that's stored on cloud sites such as google docs, Dropbox, Wordpress, PebblePad or other easily accessible apps.

The students enjoy creating mind maps. A mind map is an electronic brainstorm, where the students make connections between different aspects. This holds a benefit over paper-based ones, because they are straightforward and attach other resources, such as examples of work, multimedia files or even other mind maps. These types of tools have built-in ways to promote and support structured reflection that enhance the benefit of the process and encourage deeper learning.

The main objective in education is to equip students for life. In the information age, our knowledge-sharing world drives the power of connectivity. It changes the very essence of learning, as education and technology go hand in hand. It creates new opportunities for students to collaborate, network and spread ideas. The blueprint for education during the industrial era felt

a “one-size-fits-all” approach was best. This was where the students’ requirement was to listen and not question, and to memorize and repeat in preparation for a totally different working environment than the one we have today. As times have changed, so has the way we teach. Our focus is to nurture an in-depth understanding and a passion for transformation. It is my desire that current educators seek to evolve and maximize their own learning opportunities, so students can develop the skills needed to navigate a rapidly evolving world.

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**Katie Santos BA, AS, RDH** is a mother, wife, student, dental hygienist and a dental hygiene clinical instructor at three colleges. As an educator, she finds it imperative to stay abreast of all the latest research, trends and treatments within her profession. Therefore, Katie is continually conducting and reviewing the newest evidence-based research surrounding healthcare. In December 2018, she will graduate with a Master’s degree in Adult Education from the University of Rhode Island. Her career goal is to obtain a full-time teaching position in higher education. In her free time, Katie enjoys spending quality time with her husband and two children, going to concerts, exercise and nutrition and traveling the world.

## Save the Date—AHEA Conference 2019

Make plans now to join us next year. We'll be in the same location, but our focus will shift. The next installment in the AHEA Book Series is titled *Leaps of Faith: Stories from Working-Class Scholars*, and this will be the theme of the 2019 conference.

In a period of intensifying discourses and programming to support diversity and inclusion across higher education, this collection seeks to highlight the “on-the ground” experiences of negotiation, transition, and challenge of working-class students and scholars. *Leaps of Faith* seeks to present the strengths and gifts of the scholars and the opportunity to “turn the stories” through accessible and meaningful reflective telling. The stories contained within this book are sure cause reflection on the salient implications for working class students and scholars, those who support their learning and development, and higher education institutions and programs.

The 2019 AHEA conference will create space for this reflection and these conversations. What does it mean to navigate a career in adult and higher education as a working-class scholar? What supports do our working-class students need? What challenges are unique to this population? What strengths do they bring to our institutions and programs? How can we best support their journey and their voices? Join us as we explore these issues.

*Begin thinking now about how your ideas might add to this discussion. The call for presentation proposals and details regarding the conference dates and location will be sent early in the fall.*