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*From the Editor*

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In support of our mission, we provide assistance with writing and formatting in English to international writers who seek our assistance with preparing their manuscripts. There are no fees to submit or publish manuscripts so that cost will never be a barrier. Typeset and graphics are intentionally simple in order that the journal can be more easily accessed on a variety of devices worldwide to fulfill the mission of the journal.

I hope that the practices discussed in this journal will be helpful to you, our readers.

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**Literacy Teacher Education:  
Perceptions of Teacher Candidates and Teacher Educators**

**Joy Myers, Christy Howard, Claire Lambert, and Melissa Adams-Budde**

**Abstract**

This qualitative multiple-case study examines the cross connections between the perceptions of elementary teacher candidates and teacher educators from three different universities. The data analysis specifically focused on candidates' preparedness to teach literacy. The interview data derived from nineteen candidates and three of their teacher educators. The findings suggest various alignments and differences between teacher candidates' and university teacher educators' perceptions of challenges and strengths candidates anticipate facing during their first year of teaching. This study has implications for teacher educators and serves as a reminder for the need to reflect on the content and methods that are being taught in order to create and shape the best possible learning experiences for students.

*Keywords:* literacy, teacher education, elementary education, teacher candidates' perceptions

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Teacher education programs help create a “vision” for teacher candidates towards which they can begin to work (Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2000). While implementing this vision can be challenging, it often stays with new teachers and resurfaces in important ways later (Britton, Paine, & Raizen, 2003; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Grossman et al., 2000). This vision may translate into how candidates imagine themselves in their future classrooms and how they perceive themselves as future teachers. Thus, there is a need to understand what teacher candidates see as their strengths and challenges prior to beginning their careers (Baker, 2005; Hall, Hurst, Camp, & Laughlin, 2015). As these perceptions are explored, teacher candidates need support in reflecting not only on their visions, but also on their goals and expectations. While listening intently to candidates, it is also important to capture the voices of teacher educators and their understanding of candidates’ preparedness (Beck, Kosnick, & Roswell, 2007). This is especially true since existing studies show that teacher candidates and their teacher educators may have vastly different opinions of candidates’ preparedness to teach (Al-Bataineh, 2009; Copeland, Keefe, Calhoun, Tanner, & Park, 2011). These findings suggest there is much to be learned about what candidates are taught in their preparation programs as well as how they plan to enact their visions and reflect on their perceptions of their preparedness to teach (Bainbridge & Macy, 2008; Clark, Jones, Reutzler, & Andreasen, 2013).

This paper highlights the perceptions of preparedness of 19 elementary teacher candidates at the conclusion of their teacher education programs, and three of their teacher educators, from universities in the United States. This study adds to the limited literature on the cross connections between the perceptions of these two groups and focuses specifically on candidates’ preparedness for literacy instruction.

## **Related Literature**

### **Teacher Candidate Perceptions**

Research reveals various perceptions related to the degree to which teacher candidates feel prepared to begin teaching. Imbimbo and Silvernail (1999) used surveys to study 2,956 teachers, with fewer than five years of classroom experience, to determine how well prepared they felt for classroom instruction when they began teaching. The certified teachers, who completed an education degree, rated their preparation at an average of 2.14 on a 4.0 scale. Other longitudinal studies suggest that tools and techniques taught in teacher education programs such as pedagogical understanding (Levin, 2003) and how to bridge theory and practice (Beck et al., 2007) develop slowly and thus candidates do not feel prepared in these areas since it takes time and practice to acquire and use these skills effectively. Some teacher candidates felt unprepared to teach, according to the research, because they were not able to connect the large amounts of theory and research provided in their program to practice (Bainbridge & Macy, 2008; Beck et al., 2007).

In contrast, other studies highlight how well prepared candidates feel after graduation. For example, Bratlein and McGuire (2002) used survey research to examine the levels of satisfaction of 505 graduates from the same education program specific to preparation in: content areas, working with diverse students, developing professional communications and collaborative skills, instructional methodology, specific coursework, and the program over the course of four years. Overall, graduates reported positive levels of satisfaction with three facets of their program: content area preparation, instructional methodology, and ability to create a learner centered community. They also had strong perceptions of satisfaction with their preparation in elementary education, reading, special education, and early childhood coursework. Similarly, in

their study, Clark et al. (2013) found that beginning reading teachers expressed confidence in the training they had received, and felt that their experiences would help them succeed as teachers. The graduates recognized that they had a wide variety of strategies and techniques to employ in their daily reading instruction and they reported that they had received a research-based understanding of how to teach reading.

Risko and colleagues (2008) discuss strong evidence to suggest that the knowledge and beliefs of teachers are “most strongly affected in the context of methods courses” (p. 276). This finding could explain the differences within the findings of these studies in terms of candidates’ feelings of preparedness. However, there is a great deal of variability in the approach, timing, and content of methods courses, even within programs. In the United States, the types and lengths of programs range depending on each state’s licensure requirements. Not only do the programs differ, but Risko et al. (2008) found individual features within individual courses contributed to preservice teachers’ development of stronger belief systems or pedagogical knowledge bases. Since it appears there are discrepancies between the expectations of what should be included in education course content, Honan and Mitchell (2016) posed the question: how is it possible to prepare people to enter the teaching profession, to give them the skills, knowledge and understanding required to work within such a complex context? This sentiment is supported by Copeland et al. (2011) who stress the need for more research on the quality of particular components of teacher preparation programs in order to help education programs better serve teacher candidates.

### **Teacher Educator Perceptions**

Existing studies reveal that just as graduates of different universities have vastly different opinions of their own preparedness to teach, so too do the teacher educators that prepare them

(Al-Bataineh, 2009). In McFadden and Sheerer's (2008) study of eight public and eight private institutions within one state, 49% of professors thought their programs were doing an adequate job of preparing teachers in that they addressed: what motivates students to learn, adequate attention to assessment, and adequate attention to the real problems of practice. Their data suggests that within that focal state, less than half of the professors think they are meeting the needs of their candidates.

Carter and Cowan (2013) engaged in a study specific to their teacher education program. "Self-study has convinced us ... that listening closely to our student teachers, program graduates, supervising teachers and the principals who hire our graduates proves even richer input about the strength and viability of our program." (p. 48). Their teacher candidates rated themselves highest in preparedness in the areas of: treating all students in a caring manner, communicating respect, and following codes of professional conduct. Carter and Cowan found that in some areas the student teachers felt more prepared than was observed by their cooperating teacher and professors. These findings were used to plan and monitor future groups of teacher candidates.

In another study, Kosnik and Beck (2008) found that what teacher educators presume candidates are prepared to do and what candidates report in terms of preparedness can be different. For example, the new teachers in their study reported learning many things from their preservice program, including the importance of engaging learners, strategies for developing an inclusive class community, the names of high-quality works of children's literature, and a variety of general teaching strategies. However, there were gaps between what was taught and what the new teachers wanted to learn in terms of planning and developing their literacy instruction.

Although there is research related to teacher candidates' perceptions and other studies related to teacher educators' perceptions, few studies consider the groups together to investigate

the intersections and gaps between the perceptions of teacher candidates and those of their instructors.

### **Theoretical Framework**

In addition to the literature related to teacher candidates' and teacher educators' perceptions, a social cognitive perspective (Bandura, 1986) guided this study. The essence of this study is that interaction with others stimulates learning. In this study, the teacher educators served as the more knowledgeable other and their role was to support the teacher candidates in the development of their understanding of literacy methods. In addition to the support of teacher educators, teacher candidates interacted with others through their practicum experiences and learned from these social experiences as well.

This framework was used to explore the following research questions: 1) What are teacher candidates' perceptions of challenges they may face and the strengths they will bring to teaching literacy? 2) What are teacher educators' perceptions of challenges novice teachers face and the strengths they will bring to teaching literacy?

### **Methodology**

Over a two year period, teacher candidates were recruited for this qualitative multiple-case study. This article presents analyzed data from interviews with undergraduate teacher candidates prior to graduation.

### **Participants**

In this multiple case design, each participant represents a separate case. For the purpose of this paper, participant responses are shared that are representative of the themes developed across cases throughout the data analysis phase. All names used to discuss participants are pseudonyms. Convenience sampling was used because cases were, "accessible to us

geographically and immediately” (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 32). However, the researchers were also purposeful in their criteria for selecting cases because the candidates exhibited strong performance in literacy courses at the three universities, agreed to participate in the research after graduation, and taught in schools within the vicinity of the researchers’ institutions.

The teacher candidates who participated in this study identified as female and were predominantly Caucasian (95 %) which was representative of the teacher education programs they were enrolled in, but they differed in background, specifically in age. The candidates who completed the initial licensure program already had a degree in another area and were considered “career switchers.”

The teacher educators worked at different universities in three states, but were similar in that they were instructors in the participants’ courses, identified as Caucasian females in their thirties or forties, were former elementary and middle school teachers, had taught in higher education for less than 5 years, and agreed to be part of the study over a three year period.

The three teacher education programs differed primarily in length of time spent both in the university classroom and in the field working with K-6 students as well as with the final degree candidates obtained upon completion of their studies. While all graduates received their teaching license, some of the participants majored in education with a minor in literacy, others completed the initial licensure phase as they continued to work toward their Master's degree, and another group finished a five year Master's degree in education.

### **Data Sources**

Research related to perceptions is often conducted with survey instruments (Allen, Ambrosetti, Turner, 2013; Carter & Cowan, 2013; Helfrich & Bean, 2011). However, in order to

use a new lens to examine perceptions, the researchers chose interview methodology. The data from the 19 candidates was obtained through semi-structured interviews (Schensul, Schensul, & LeCompte, 1999), each approximately 60-minutes long, conducted at the time of program completion. The interview questions asked about their preparedness to teach literacy effectively and their beliefs regarding the knowledge and skills necessary for a successful transition into the classroom (see Appendix A). The data sources from the teacher educators included critical reflective responses to a series of questions related to the preparedness of graduating candidates from their programs in the areas of a) disciplinary literacy, b) writing, c) technology, and d) reading. The teacher educators were also asked to reflect on their confidence level and concerns regarding their instruction in any other areas as well (see Appendix B).

### **Data Analysis**

All interviews were transcribed. Data analysis of the interviews and teacher educators' written reflections occurred in three phases, following Miles' et al. (2014) recommendations of data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. During phase one, participants' responses were open-coded by the research team. The team met regularly through conference calls to discuss thoughts on coding and in order to organize codes in data displays. In phase two, initial codes were refined into common categories and a table was created. The three column data matrix's columns were labeled with the participants' pseudonym, challenges, and strengths. Next, the researchers combed through the data to populate the matrix. When perceptions were found to be highly similar (e.g., differentiating literacy instruction), they were combined in the same row and multiple participants were noted. Then comments were inserted to briefly summarize the essence of perceptions using quotes from the interviews. This led to discussions of themes the researchers noticed in the perceptions of the candidates and teacher

educators. Once data were organized, the researchers carefully read through the matrices and inserted additional comments for clarification. Finally, thematic codes were created by collapsing the categories into major themes (Merriam, 1988) across cases related to candidates' and teacher educators' perceptions of challenges novice teachers face and their strengths specific to literacy instruction.

### **Findings**

The focus of the findings is limited to the candidates' and teacher educators' perceptions of the challenges and strengths novice teachers face specific to literacy instruction. The data revealed trends showing clear alignment and at times differences between the the perceptions of the two groups when discussing challenges and strengths. Examples from the candidates' interviews and the educators' reflections specific to these themes are highlighted next.

#### **Perceived Challenges**

**Alignment.** When asked about challenges related to teaching literacy, teacher educators' and teacher candidates' responses aligned along three major themes across universities: differentiating literacy instruction, teaching writing, and using scripted literacy curriculum materials.

***Differentiating literacy instruction.*** During their initial interviews all of the candidates believed their ability to differentiate literacy instruction might be a challenge. Cate expressed concerns about differentiating instruction specific to small groups. She worried about grouping her students properly and ensuring that she could meet their individual needs. Cate recognized the importance of looking beyond student test scores to a more inclusive view of her students that also focused on getting to know her students as readers and writers. Jasmine shared similar thoughts in her interview, "The thing that worries me the most is grouping kids and making sure each group has appropriate books they're working on each week."

Rachel's concerns related to differentiated literacy instruction stemmed from hearing about techniques in her university class, but not seeing them in practicum. She said:

I haven't had too much practice with different reading groups. Especially in the upper grades...I mean all we've been talking about now is conferencing and I haven't seen that done. So I guess I have all of these ideas in my head, but I've never seen it done. That's what I'm scared for.

The teacher educators also recognized that differentiation was challenging for novice teachers. In fact, all three educators listed differentiating instruction for readers as a top concern for new teachers. Jenny wrote:

As new teachers, they are just trying to hold it together. I think classroom management is probably the biggest focus of all the first year. With time and experience novice teachers start to differentiate because they become more confident in what their students should be able to do at that grade level and can then better understand who needs more support and take action to give it to them.

Across these responses, teacher candidates recognized differentiation as an important piece of literacy instruction and, because they valued this aspect of teaching, were concerned with their ability to implement it. Candidates discussed their basic knowledge of this process, but believed they were lacking the hands-on experience they needed. This concern was shared by their teacher educators, not because this was not taught in their teacher education program, but because differentiating instruction is challenging and new teachers have so much to focus their attention on during their first years such as getting to know their students, their curriculum, and their context. This thought process was similar to other areas in which candidates perceived potential challenges related to their future teaching.

**Teaching writing.** Another area in which candidates' and educators' perceptions aligned related to challenges was teaching writing. In an interview, Jessie, a teacher candidate, shared, "One thing I'm concerned about is writing instruction. I've learned that reading and writing, that's like the core of everything. If you cannot read and write, you cannot go anywhere. But learning [writing] wasn't stressed as much in my classes." Candidates also expressed concerns about helping students understand the process of writing. Cathy said, "I have noticed that writing is tough for 2<sup>nd</sup> graders... they want to be perfect, spell everything correctly and you just want to stress, 'No it is just your thoughts that matter.'" Even with seeing writing workshop during 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade practicums, Rosie said, "So I have really gotten a better look at it over the past couple of years but I'm still kind of nervous about being thrown in and like teaching it."

Jenny, a teacher educator, recognized the importance of writing but felt constrained because her program did not offer a stand-alone writing methods course. She wrote, "Since writing does not have its own course, it is often embedded in reading-specific courses. Depending on who is teaching the course, writing may or may not be heavily emphasized." Similarly, Megan, a teacher educator in a program where all candidates take a methods courses related to teaching writing, wrote:

While our candidates take a methods course on writing and learn a great deal about teaching writing. I worry that what they learn in this class is not always happening in their field placements and in our local school districts where many of our graduates will be getting jobs. They learn about using writer's workshop, focusing on the process of writing, writing for authentic purposes, and giving students choice in their writing. Then they get out into schools and see little writing instruction or a scripted writing program they are expected to follow.

Both teacher candidates and teacher educators saw writing as a potential challenge because it was not a focus across programs or they did not see it enacted in actual classrooms. However, there was a heavy emphasis on reading instruction, both in teaching and in practice.

***Using scripted literacy curriculum materials.*** During student teaching, the candidates in all three states experienced scripted literacy programs. In some schools, they were given more leeway than others. However, in many instances the candidates were expected to follow the program. All of Ann's field placements, despite being in different districts, used the same literacy program. She said, "It was a script, I didn't really have to do any thinking ... what I'm worried about is if I'm going to be in that same situation [when she starts teaching], and have to do that scripted lessons and stuff." Ann was not alone in her feelings that using scripted literacy materials was challenging. Catherine admitted that during student teaching she appreciated the way the mandated literacy program was organized, so she could "just follow along." However, she added that it "didn't leave room for much interpretation. It was very scripted." Madeline, another teacher candidate, said:

I feel in many ways, very unprepared to teach reading. The only reason I feel like I was successful in student teaching is because it was a scripted curriculum. So, I had to follow what they said. I didn't have to design my own lessons or kind of come up with my own stuff. The city or the county picked the books. And then you did that.

Their experience using scripted literacy curriculum materials left Ann, Catherine and Madeline very concerned about how prepared they were to teach reading in an area that did not use these types of programs.

Megan, a teacher educator, addressed the topic of scripted literacy programs in her reflection, writing:

I think one of the biggest challenges I anticipate for students is making sense of their curriculum which may be drastically different from what they were exposed to in reading practicum and student teaching. I think that this can be learning to navigate a scripted program or learning how to take a broad scope and sequence and turn it into practice, not just for stand-alone lessons, but for overall development in reading. I think during first year it is difficult for them to get a sense of the big picture because so much is new and they are overwhelmed with the small details.

Although Megan described the potential challenge of teacher candidates making the adjustment from authentic teaching to using scripted programs, once in their practicum experiences the majority of candidates actually experienced more scripted programs than not.

Caroline, another teacher educator, shared the schools in which most candidates are placed from her university rely on a scripted reading program anchored in whole-class instruction using a reading anthology with vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension practice. She wrote:

Some schools, particularly those identified as low achieving, use the program exclusively and with fidelity. Therefore candidates placed in those schools never see reading and writing workshop, shared reading/writing, or student choice of literacy activities in their student teaching placements. In other schools the reading program is supplemented with additional literacy instruction and students see a wider range of practices.

These perceived challenges are representative of all teacher candidates in the study and provide insights into their experiences where they felt less confident throughout their program. Similarly, the teacher educators felt these concepts may prove to be a challenge for student participants. Across both groups, the concern of a perceived challenge was related to the lack of focused experiences, specifically related to grouping, writing, and creating authentic tasks

outside of scripted programs. While these similarities emerged, themes related to differing perceptions emerged as well.

**Differences.** Across candidate and teacher educator data, there were areas in which candidates' perceptions of their challenges with teaching literacy were not aligned with concerns of their teacher educators. These differences were prevalent in the discussion of logistics versus pedagogy and addressing foundational reading skills.

***Logistics versus pedagogy.*** Throughout the initial interviews, candidates seemed concerned with the logistical challenges of implementing literacy instruction, such as managing instructional time and making sense of their school's literacy programs, however, the teacher educators expressed concern with the depth of candidates' literacy pedagogical repertoire. For example, Shannon, a teacher candidate, admitted, "Teaching reading and writing is so complex and I am not sure how I will be able to fit it all in and not overwhelm my future students." Many candidates expressed similar concerns. For example, Jessie shared:

Learning about the different levels and where students are, that is important, but learning how to apply those things into simple lessons, how to apply what we know. How can I create a lesson that will cater to those students to get them to the next level?

Concerns about time and planning lessons plagued candidates from the moment they entered the teacher education program, yet even at the time of graduation, they still verbalized logistics as being a top challenge. Rosie shared, "I'm nervous to see how I set up my literacy centers, my reading workshop. I've seen a lot of examples of how they go [in practicum]." Despite seeing centers and the workshop model in practice, candidates like Rosie were still concerned about the logistics of organizing and running the centers versus the content that would be covered.

Although all three teacher educators believe their programs had a significant focus on literacy theory and pedagogy, the candidates did not mention in any interview how theory

informed their practice. Caroline, a teacher educator, wrote in her reflection, “Candidates are very focused on what to do, but I’m not always sure they connect to why they are implementing certain literacy practices.” This quote is representative of how the teacher educators perceived candidates ability to effectively explore and articulate the rationale behind their instructional decisions. This misalignment reveals a potential issue with “depth of knowledge” held by teacher candidates in that it is not enough to know what to do, but it is equally valuable to understand the importance and implications of engaging in specific literacy strategies and activities.

***Addressing foundational reading skills.*** Multiple candidates expressed concerns about helping young readers despite having experience during practicum in primary grades. Others did not feel confident to help struggling readers with reading skills. “If a student already knows how to read, I feel equipped to help them become a stronger reader. But, in that very foundational level of reading, I feel like I’m not as prepared as I could be, but I know it’s, like, a huge process,” said Catherine. Another example of these concerns was seen in Ellen’s interview. She student taught in 4th grade and said, “I feel very strong with teaching literacy for on-level and above-level students.” However, when asked about students who struggled she said, “I am kind of nervous.”

The teacher educators did not share the same concerns. In fact, they felt strongly that the candidates were prepared to teach foundational reading skills. Megan wrote, “I believe that most of our graduates are competent reading teachers when they leave and have a solid foundation on which to build their practice while in the profession.” Jenny addressed why candidates might not feel prepared, writing, “Reading is complex and despite having multiple classes on teaching reading, they may not feel ready because they have not actually done it enough yet, but I think they know more than they think they do.”

The differences between teacher candidates and teacher educators related to perceived challenges show a disconnect in how teacher candidates view their abilities to teach foundational skills and the logistics of literacy instruction. While teacher educators were confident in candidates' abilities to address these aspects of literacy instruction, candidates did not feel like they had been provided the necessary experiences to confidently embrace these challenges.

### **Perceived Strengths**

Similarly to perceived challenges, the data also revealed examples of clear alignment and at times differences between the perceptions of the two groups when discussing strengths candidates will bring to their first year of teaching.

**Alignment.** When asked about perceived strengths related to teaching literacy, there were several areas of alignment between candidates and teacher educators. All participants agreed that planning interesting and engaging literacy experiences and having opportunities to implement literacy practices during field experiences were strengths.

***Planning interesting and engaging literacy experiences.*** Across multiple teacher candidates, the theme of being able to successfully plan interesting and engaging literacy experiences was apparent. However, it was interesting to examine in what ways they thought this happened. For Ann, she believed in the importance of connecting students with engaging texts. She shared:

I feel strong knowing children's literature and knowing how to help students find books for themselves for independent reading. I did that a lot in my practicum ... there's a lot of students who are really below reading level. They just weren't finding books that were manufactured by companies and it's not exciting. So, I tried to find them books that they would actually want to read. So, I think that's one of my strengths when it comes to literacy is getting them interested in reading.

Similarly, during her practicum experience, Connie had the opportunity to engage her students in literacy activities by using read alouds to foster engagement. She shared:

I feel like we constantly heard about doing read alouds with the before, during, and after model. I have just seen it a million times in the field so that is just something that I will use...using a read aloud to introduce concepts, even if it is in a different subject like math or science, using that read aloud to kind of get them ready. It is so helpful because they start thinking about it, they start getting engaged with what we will be talking about.

Instead of just jumping in with hey, what do you know about this or something like that, I feel like they just connect better when there is a story involved in it.

In focusing on the importance of planning engaging activities for students, some candidates faced tensions in implementing their ideas. Margo anticipated the tension between school system demands and her commitment to research- and theory-based practices sharing, “I’ll meet those [curriculum] requirements, but I’m gonna be creative and ... make it fit my individual students’ needs.”

In Megan’s reflection as a teacher educator, she hinted at some of the constraints Margo mentioned about planning engaging lessons writing:

I would say that most of the lessons I observe do include fun and engaging activities (particularly those in K-2). At times students in 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade placements are given more restrictions around their lesson planning and need to stick more closely to what the teacher would regularly be doing. I would imagine this all comes back to testing.

Megan continued later in her writing to add:

I would say that my only area of caution related to this is that sometimes they find the cute activity, but it is not the best or most effective way to teach their lesson objective or is too simplistic for their students. I am all for engaging and interesting instruction, but I

want my students to always keep their lesson objective in mind when planning and make sure they are pushing their students.

Both teacher candidates and teacher educators viewed candidates' ability to plan engaging lessons as a strength. This was something candidates seemed to prioritize in their teaching and educators recognized as an asset.

***Implementing literacy practices during field experiences.*** Having opportunities to implement literacy practices during field experiences was a strength perceived by both candidates and educators. Reflecting on her field experiences, Ellen shared, "I feel really good with comprehension strategies because I feel that is mainly what I have been working on with my 4<sup>th</sup> graders... So I feel like I am very good at that [comprehension strategies]." Similarly, Jenny, a teacher educator wrote, "If they have lots of opportunities to teach various aspects of literacy, which they have read and heard about through classes, I believe there is a stronger chance they will try what we are teaching in their future classrooms."

During Jasmine's student teaching placement, she saw her cooperating teacher make changes to best meet students' needs. She said, "My teacher changed things around a lot. Something would work for a few weeks and then ok this isn't working anymore, we need to do this." During this time Jasmine also saw how the reading specialist collaborated with her cooperating teacher while reworking the reading groups in order to help the more advanced readers move onto more challenging texts. Although her teacher education program had stressed the importance of seeking support, Jasmine found it helpful to see her cooperating teacher actually do that.

Some candidates mentioned the role of particular courses impacting their preparedness. Cathy stated:

My reading minor courses have helped me. Not to say that my others didn't. Because I

wouldn't be who I am today without those other courses. But I think just having that extra knowledge on reading, especially on the assessments. Knowing how to use a running record and just analyze data and miscues.

Cathy learned these types reading assessments in a course and then was able to apply them once in the field working with K-4 students.

In Erin's 5th grade practicum, she saw students enjoy reading informational texts, something she doubted when she heard it preached in her university classes. However, when her students read articles about the inauguration past and present she said, "It [using magazines] is a really cool way to teach kids."

The amount of time each teacher candidate spent in the field really varied between the three institutions, however all teacher educators valued the importance of practicums and the time in schools during student teaching. Caroline, a teacher educator, described the gradual progression of these experiences:

They work in multiple classrooms observing and assisting. Prior to student teaching, most students have done a read aloud, taught one whole class or small group literacy lesson, and done minimal tutoring. They must rapidly expand their practice once they enter the student teaching semester.

While Megan, another teacher educator, also described a gradual release model used in her program, writing:

Students experience different levels of fields. The initial field experiences are about getting out in schools and mostly observing. But in later fields, students are expected to teach a lot. In our reading practicum, a course many students take prior to student teaching, most students teach at least one lesson every single day they are in the field.

This gradual release model transitions the candidates from just observing the teaching to

eventually doing most of the teaching and helps their confidence and skills grow at a steady rate over a period of time.

**Differences.** While findings revealed several differences between teacher candidates and teacher educators related to the perceived challenges candidates might face, there was only one difference between the candidates and teacher educators related to their strengths as they entered the classroom. Specifically, the data revealed differences related to the preparedness of teachers to effectively integrate technology in future classrooms. While teacher educators felt teacher candidates needed to deepen their knowledge and use of technology, teacher candidates felt confident in their abilities to integrate technology in their future classrooms.

**Technology.** Cate felt comfortable and confident with technology saying, “I have learned so many things here about using technology and from student teaching, so I think that is going to be a big strength of mine, not being afraid to try something new.” Samantha became more confident using technology during student teaching saying, “I was able to teach in a variety of ways and use technology. I got to experiment with it.” Jessie saw technology as a way for students to enjoy literacy in a new way when students in her practicum class used iPads to create book talks. Her school is part of an iPad pilot program, so Jessie had more experience than some candidates using technology on a regular basis. In contrast, Shannon did not see much technology used while in practicum, so she decided to choose that as a topic for her Inquiry project stating:

So, I do feel more familiar with the aspects that we focused on in our inquiry project.

We’ve looked at technology and different apps and things like that to use, which has been good knowledge to gain.

Through Shannon’s research, she also gained information about different websites that lists books, suggestions and strategies. Like Cate, Samantha, Jessie and Shannon, other candidates

said that one of the many strengths they would bring to their future teaching positions was related to the use of technology.

Although many candidates mentioned feeling strong in the area of technology and comfort using technology in the classroom, the teacher educators wanted to see a more nuanced instructional focus with technology use. Megan, a teacher educator, wrote:

I rarely see the teachers or the students utilize smartboards as more than a tool for projection. I think most of our candidates are proficient with technology for their personal and professional use, but I think an area that could be strengthened is how to use technology to enhance student learning.

Jenny, another teacher educator wrote:

I often think about the differences between students using the technology and teachers teaching with technology. I think that as faculty we often have candidates use technology to present or to annotate or something class specific so they are exposed to different tools. I don't think we give enough opportunity for students to play with the technology they could use with students. There just doesn't seem to be enough time.

Caroline also expressed concerns related to technology, "Candidates do have some experience with technology as instructional and assessment tools, but limited focus specifically on literacy."

So while candidates viewed technology as an area of strength in their practice, educators viewed it as a need for continued development, particularly in terms of candidates getting technology into the hands of their students and using it to enhance and transform their literacy teaching.

### **Discussion**

Examining the literature on candidates' perceptions of their preparedness to teach literacy, the voices of students are often heard (Baker, 2005; Beck et al., 2007; Hall et al., 2015).

However, this study provides insight into teacher educators' perceptions as well, which is needed since candidates construct professional knowledge alongside and with the support of teacher educators (Goodfellow & Sumsion, 2000). Furthermore, examining how teacher educators' and candidates' perceptions of preparedness align or do not align adds to a growing body of evidence connecting candidates' level of preparedness to how easily they manage challenges during their first years of teaching (Barber & Mourshed 2007; Clark, et al., 2013; Darling-Hammond, 2006) and to how they are able to work towards the "vision" of teaching crafted during their teacher education programs (Britton et al., 2003; Grossman et al., 2000). Thus, this study brings into sharper focus the need to examine teacher educators' and teacher candidates' perceptions in concert.

The findings of this study revealed close alignment between the candidates' and teacher educators' perceptions of what might be areas of strength and specific challenges for novice teachers. For example, both groups identified differentiating literacy instruction, teaching writing, and navigating prescribed, scripted literacy curriculum materials as challenges. The two groups also agreed that planning interesting and engaging literacy activities and having opportunities to implement literacy practices during field experiences were strengths novice teachers would bring to their first year of teaching. This finding revealed that candidates and teacher educators, when reflecting on their own experiences either teaching or participating in a teacher education program, felt confident and/or concerned about similar things. These areas of alignment may reflect the strengths and gaps within each institution's program of study and commonalities across programs. As teacher educators revise and shape course offerings and course content within their departments, they may use candidate perception data to help identify and address needs as well as to continue effective practices.

However, there were also several areas in which the candidates' and teacher educators' perceptions did not align. For example, candidates focused heavily on the logistics of literacy, rather than theory or pedagogy, which their teacher educators would prefer. This misalignment between teacher educators' and candidates' perceptions may reflect the disparate spaces they occupy along the continuum of learning to teach literacy. The teacher educators were themselves once novice teachers, but they have since gained expertise in K-12 classrooms and through advanced graduate work in literacy. Although teacher educators sometimes questioned candidates' focus on logistics and activities rather than on research and theory-driven pedagogy, they may need to acknowledge candidates' concerns as reflecting a more concrete point in their development as opposed to the teacher educators' more developed vantage point.

In the area of technology, the candidates felt more prepared than their teacher educators thought they were. Perhaps candidates are more skilled at using instructional technology than their instructors perceive. A second possibility is that teacher educators and teacher candidates perceived this question differently. Whereas teacher candidates seemed to focus on identifying websites, apps, or software and their comfort with navigating those tools, teacher educators appeared to consider the instructional purposes and learning outcomes for which technology might be deployed. Therefore, while teacher candidates' confidence related to technology use, teacher educators' concerns related to instructional design.

In contrast, specific to addressing foundational reading skills, the candidates felt underprepared. However, their teacher educators did not agree. It is unclear from the data if the candidates lack these skills or if they just have low confidence in their ability to support young learners or struggling readers and writers in the upper grades. Both teacher educators and candidates seemed to recognize that supporting novice and struggling readers with initial acquisition of reading skills is a complex task that may take extended time to perfect. Therefore,

the low confidence of teacher candidates may be related their developing understanding of this complexity.

Depending on the structure of the particular university, teacher educators may or may not have the opportunity to see candidates teach. Thus, their perceptions of candidates' strengths and challenges are framed only by their interactions with them in class. The data shows clearly what the candidates and teacher educators value, but it also reveals in some instances what the candidates do not feel comfortable teaching. Just as teacher candidates are often advised to "meet students where they are," teacher educators may need to solicit candidates' perceptions and attend more carefully to their responses in order to help them apply course content.

It is erroneous to assume that candidates leave teacher education programs ready to perform at the same level as experienced teachers (Clark et al., 2013), yet this begs the question, how prepared do candidates feel to teach literacy? Thus, LaBoskey's (2004) statement is relevant to this study: "Research in teacher education is attempting to answer questions about how best to prepare new teachers and facilitate ongoing teacher development. Typically, when teacher educators raise such questions, we are deriving them from our practice" (p. 818). At each of the institutions, the teacher educators in this study actively participate in program revision and improvement. Critically reflecting on their teacher education programs and on their own teaching revealed areas of instruction that may need to be adjusted to include more hands-on, real-world experiences. In addition, more time and value on certain topics such as differentiation and writing might prove to be beneficial across programs. Teacher candidates value these literacy concepts, but lack confidence in future implementation. While these reflections prompted plans for revisions, they also recognize that new teachers will still encounter challenges within different teaching situations (Korthagen 2010; Liston, Whitcomb, & Borko, 2006). In the

following sections, based on these findings, several implications for practice and research are discussed.

### **Implications**

Presumably all teacher educators want their courses and instructional practices to be meaningful and applicable for the teacher candidates in their classrooms. This study suggests that overall the teacher candidates and teacher educators agree that teacher candidates understand, embrace, and feel confident about applying the concepts they learn on campus in their K-12 classrooms. However, the study identified several other areas in which teacher educators' intentions or program content did not align with teacher candidates' perceived needs. When teacher education programs address the discrepancies in perceptions between candidates and instructors, thoughtful action can be taken. We draw two key recommendations that teacher educators should consider as they refine their practices and their programs.

First, taking time to engage candidates in conversations about how prepared they feel to teach should happen throughout their teacher education programs (Hsiung et al., 2003). This self-reflection is a skill that will be necessary in their future as a classroom teacher (Carter & Cowan, 2013). This can begin by allowing time for candidates to reflect throughout the process of designing and implementing lessons. Often, within methods courses, after a lesson has been taught, candidates are asked to reflect. This encourages candidates to focus on the logistics; how the content was taught, how the class was managed. Less time is typically devoted to reflection on how prepared they felt prior to teaching and then considering their growth and areas of continued need afterwards.

Second, teacher educators must realize that candidates consistently crave more real-world examples and experiences with pedagogical approaches. Concepts that seem straightforward to teacher educators often remain abstract or unfocused to teacher candidates. Although it may not

always be practical for teacher educators to spend extended time in the field with candidates, teacher educators should consider ways to bring real-world examples into the college classroom. Teachers might consider analyzing video of exemplary teaching and of less effective teaching alongside teacher candidates in order to guide them to notice the nuances in instructional approaches. Teacher educators might also bring in more artifacts from elementary classrooms such as lesson plans, teacher-created literacy materials, and student work samples in order to discuss the theory and research connections that support various practices. These practices might address teacher candidates' desire for more real-world examples while also supporting teacher educators' need to connect instructional practices to research and theory bases. While we do not want to suggest that these ideas can replace the need for experiences in real classroom, they may serve as a supplement to classroom experiences and can be used in educational courses that do not have a field component. In essence, real-world artifacts might bridge the distance between novice and experienced teachers' perceptions of what constitutes literacy instruction.

### **Future Research**

This paper highlights data from the initial interview with the teacher candidates, but the researchers' conversations did not stop there. They are continuing to follow the teachers into their first three years of teaching. Clark et al. (2013) found that beginning teachers expressed a desire for more interaction, feedback, and consultation with their teacher educators once they secured full-time employment.

The researchers recognize that perceptions are not always accurate portrayals of observed behaviors (Zimmerman et al., 1995). Thus, the data from this study offers beginning insights, which the researchers plan to build upon by the addition of observations during the teachers third year in the classroom. Interviews continue to provide insight into the teachers' perceptions of

their literacy teaching, and observations will allow further exploration of how closely their perceptions match the observed behaviors related to teaching literacy.

In addition, future research could use a wider variety of data sources, beyond teacher candidates and teacher educators, such as principals and cooperating teachers to further add to the findings of this study. This research would add to the work of Carter & Cowan (2013), who argue that cooperating teachers' perceptions should be specifically examined since they most closely with candidates during student teaching and have the most opportunities to observe their practice. Furthermore, the data in this study focuses on teacher candidates' and teacher educators' perceptions of novice teachers' preparedness to teach literacy, however, data related to their preparedness in other areas such as math or science could be another avenue for future research.

### **Conclusion**

Teacher preparation programs influence the perceptions, abilities, and understanding of literacy teachers at the very beginning of their teaching career in a myriad of ways (Clark et al., 2013). This study prompts educators to not only examine candidates' perceptions but also their own perceptions as teacher educators. Educators must be willing to critically reflect and answer questions about the purpose and impact of their work in order to determine how to best prepare teachers to effectively teach literacy skills. What better place to start that reflection than with the community they serve on a daily basis, teacher candidates?

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## Appendix A

### Undergraduate Teacher Candidate Interview Questions Prior to Graduation

1. Tell me about your teaching identity? Tell me about who you are as a teacher? How does this influence the instructional decisions you make?
2. Describe your ideal teaching situation?
3. What are your aspirations for yourself and your students?
4. What challenges do expect to encounter during your first years of teaching? (What about challenges related to teaching literacy?) How do you plan to overcome these challenges?
5. What do you think your strengths will be during your first years of teaching? (What about strengths related to teaching literacy?)
6. Describe what quality literacy instruction means to you.
7. How has your view of teaching reading changed now that you have completed practicum and you are almost finished student teaching?
8. How has your view of teaching writing changed now that you have completed practicum and you are almost finished student teaching?
9. What ideas, concepts, strategies, and specific tools from your teacher education program do you think will be useful to you in teaching literacy?

## Appendix B

### University Instructor Reflection Questions

1. How prepared are graduating PSTs in teaching
  - a. Disciplinary literacy
  - b. Writing
  - c. Technology (Student use and teacher use)
  - d. Reading
2. Describe your confidence level and any concerns related to 4 areas above.
3. What challenges do you expect PSTs to encounter during your first years of teaching (specific to literacy)?
4. What is the role of practicum in teacher education (specific to literacy)?
5. Which ideas, concepts, strategies, and specific tools related to literacy do you think PSTs find the most valuable and why?

**Are the Walls Really Down?  
Perceptions Regarding Minority Leadership Challenges and Opportunities**

**Dianbing Chen and Xinxiao Yang**

**Abstract**

In this qualitative study, we investigated the perceptions of 13 faculty members and leaders of color, from different nationalities, and at three universities in the United States of America regarding minority leadership challenges and opportunities. The aim of the research was to identify obstacles that lead to discouraging and isolating faculty and leaders of colors, and opportunities that enhance the working and life satisfaction of these faculty and leaders. Findings suggested that: (1) race still matters in the hiring, employment, and work environment for faculty and leaders of color; (2) the term ‘special opportunities’ are just some fancy/showy words that do not actually represent opportunities for faculty and leaders of color; and (3) more efforts are needed in embracing social justice in faculty hiring policies. Findings and implementations suggest ways that universities can break the racial walls and enhance diversity.

*Keywords:* Leaders of color, race, challenges, social justice, educational leadership

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*We know where light is coming from by looking at the shadows.*

-Humanities scholar Paul Woodruff

There is little doubt that many universities and colleges share an articulated mission for and a commitment to diversify their faculty and students. Mission statements of universities indicate that they value racial and ethnic diversity. However, rhetoric does not always match action (Stanley, 2006). Although there is a commitment to having diverse faculty and leaders in higher education, the numbers of faculty and leaders of color remains disproportionately low in comparison to white faculty in the United States (Synder & Hoffman, 2007). Therefore, minority leaders and faculty work to break the walls on their way to be successful leaders in the higher education field.

Furthermore, ongoing globalization and immigration bring diversity and rich cultural backgrounds to university students and faculty. Naisbitt and Aberdeen (1990) observed that, “as our lifestyles grow more similar, there are unmistakable signs of a powerful countertrend: a backlash against uniformity, a desire to assert the uniqueness of one’s culture and language.... outbreaks of cultural nationalism are happening in every corner of the globe” (p.119). Therefore, a multicultural education, which draws on the voices and perspectives of those who are “being studied” (p.117) and is grounded on the real experience and stories in the lives of students and faculty members is necessary.

More importantly, Rudenstine (1996) argued that a diversified society should remember that it has been shaped, from its beginning, by collective willingness to carry forward an unprecedented experiment in diversity. Therefore, knowing the challenges and opportunities of leaders of color can shed light on and affect the change needed in predominantly white colleges and universities because these experiences should not be considered as private problems for each

individual. Rather the problems should be addressed collectively by the overall campus policy and institutional strategies and willingness to take actions.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The overall objective of this qualitative study was to explore, describe, and analyze the perceptions of a sample of faculty and leaders from three universities in the United States regarding minority faculty and leadership challenges and opportunities. Throughout the study, the researchers sought to identify obstacles that might lead to discouraging and isolating faculty and leaders of color, and also opportunities that might enhance the working and life satisfaction of both in higher education.

This article, through understanding and sharing the work and life experience of faculty and leaders of minority groups, examines the challenges and opportunities that they have been going through in higher education. Knowledge of these features may be of great value as researchers and educators seek to provide supportive networks and connections for communities of color within and outside the academy. Also, the findings provide recommendations for how minority leaders can be more successful faculty and leaders, how policy-makers pay more attention to this special group of people in the potential employment pool, and how society as a whole can achieve social justice in education hiring systems.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following overarching question: What are the challenges and opportunities faced by faculty and leaders of color in higher education? Also, the following secondary questions were investigated:

1. What are the challenges of being faculty and leaders of colors, and how can they be overcome?

2. What needs to be done to correct the current situation of so few faculty and leaders of color?
3. What are the roles that faculty leaders of color play in multicultural education?

### **Literature Review**

Researchers, educators, and practitioners generally believe that faculty and leaders of color play critical roles in bridging achievement gaps among students from minority groups. Nieto and Bode (2008) reported that minority students in their case study talked at length about teachers who made a difference in their attitude about school and their engagement with learning because “these teachers are from the same racial or ethnic background as students themselves” (p.417). Also, an educational environment with faculty and leaders from people of colors will set a good example for all students, especially for students of color who are eager to explore ideas and arguments at a thoughtful level, to rethink their own education, and to reconsider their life promises. The life and career experience of leaders of color can pave the way for future faculty and leader of minority groups because as human beings, people tend to learn by doing and from experience (Dewey, 1997).

Moreover, Springer and Westerhaus (2006) pointed out that numerous studies and long standing research show that diversity in a faculty and student body will lead to great benefits in education for all students. More importantly, Jackson and O’Callaghan (2009) argued the importance of hiring for students’ success instead of hiring based on the color of the faculty by holding that “the process of hiring for students’ success is, indeed, as important as “hiring” a supreme court justice: college staff, faculty, and administrators affect the lives of students daily and help to determine their success in college and in life” (p.71).

While research about the opportunities and challenges of being a faculty/ leader of color has been conducted for years, these studies provide less practical strategies about how to reach a real

equity in higher education institutions. The experience of leaders of color still needs to be explored and of concern to all in higher education. The rights of leaders of color have been neglected for years and research on this population is virtually nonexistent which suggests that some areas need more attention (Stanley, 2006). The experience of people of color in administrative preparation is one of the most contentious and misunderstood areas of inquiry in research (Allen & Solórzano, 2001; Parker & Shapiro, 1992; Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2006; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). Also, Harvey's report (1994) showed evidence of drastic underrepresentation, hiring, and retention patterns among minority groups. This further illustrates that they are not gaining access to faculty positions and there are exclusionary practices that reflect the "value orientations of the larger society" and "overt and covert" (p.19) patterns of behavior from the historical legacy of racial discrimination. Essien (2003) illustrated that the "society of one" (p.64) and the "alone concept" (Stanley et al., 2003, p.166) are terms used by leaders and faculty from minority groups to describe their feelings of isolation and invisibility.

More importantly, increasing the number of full-time faculty and leaders of color remains an ongoing challenge for institutions of higher education (Stanley, 2006). Universities and colleges should not wait for the next generation, but rather need to do something now that will have immediate effect if they really committed to promoting equality among university faculty and administrators (Tapia, 2009).

### **Methods**

We utilized systematic in-depth face-to-face interviews and researcher-generated documents in this qualitative research. A qualitative approach was preferable over other research methods for this study because it enabled a comprehensive and in-depth examination of the issues through comprehension of personal experience and its interpretation as was lived,

understood, and portrayed by individuals (Merriam, 1998). Also, qualitative research methodology can better guide the researchers to investigate important issues such as marginalization and empowerment of special groups such as women and minority groups (Creswell, 2003). More importantly, as Merriam (2009) argued, interview and documents, used together, are two important forms of data in a qualitative investigation. While “in all forms of qualitative research, some and occasionally all of the data are collected through interview” (p.87), document data are more objective, stable, and can be used in the same manner as data from interview or observations. Therefore, more comprehensive data are garnered through the use of both interviews and document review.

The researchers reached saturation after roughly seven participants, but conducted a few more interviews to ensure saturation. Moreover, to capture the complexity of information available and to gain insights, multiple transcript checking, intercoder agreements, and multiple types of data collection (Creswell, 2009; Lincoln & Guba, 2000) were applied to safeguard the reliability and validity of the study. By collecting and analyzing 13 interview protocols, this study relied on inductive reasoning to document emerging themes.

### **Participants**

By sending out invitation e-mail and reminders, 13 educational leaders of color working in higher education from three universities in the United States agreed to participate in this research. Among them, six were males and seven were females.

The participants varied in race: three of them were Latino, two of them were scholars who have worked both in Asian and American universities, four of them had experience in working African and American universities, and one was Indian American. The remainder of the participants were leaders who work with students and faculties from minority groups and international students and did not identify as a particular race.

Most of the participants had been working in different universities in and out of America throughout their career lives, which made their experience and stories more representative. Pseudonym names were used for all participants. Although the researchers interviewed 13 leaders in the higher education, they chose to report the data from six participants for two reasons. The first one is that they shared more life experience that covered and reflected the themes merged from all the participants. The second reason is they represent and meet the purpose of this study since we intended to understand the challenges and opportunities of the minority leaders.

### **Procedures**

This research was conducted through in-depth interviews and documents mining after obtaining IRB approval. Initial interviews ranged from 45 minutes to over two hours in length and were conducted individually in an informal way under natural situations (either in the participants' offices or during the coffee hours) so that they felt comfortable. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed in their entirety. When the interview transcripts were completed, they were sent to the participants to check and clarify for accuracy and to seek additional responses. Once initial interviews were completed, follow-up interviews were conducted based on feedbacks from the interviewees. In this way, the data we collected were further validated.

The documents that were examined in this study were paper-printed as well as electronic materials from the institutions in which participants worked. First, the researchers examined the participants' institutional documents regarding the demographics of students enrolled and the faculty hired in the institutions. These documents provided clear pictures of current students, faculty, and staff who work in the higher education setting. Institutional documents such as mission and vision statements were examined as ways to identify the acceptance or use of culturally relevant andragogy or culturally responsive leadership tenets. Second, reviews of

university diversity plans, mission and vision statements, and course syllabus were conducted.

After collecting data from the interviews and documents, the researchers coded the data and selected the emerging categories according to prevalence and frequency (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Each interview was audio taped and then transcribed verbatim (Creswell, 2009).

### **Results**

Through analyzing the data, three categories emerged. The first category— race still matters— centers on the challenges experienced by leaders of colors. The second category— special opportunities are just ‘fancy/ showy’ words— calls for a real genuine commitment to diversity. The third theme — more efforts needed in embracing social justice in faculty hiring policies —emphasizes the urgency leaders of color expressed to address social justice and equity in American higher education.

#### **Race Still Matters**

While conversations on campuses had different emphases, issue of race still mattered, and discrimination walls were big concerns among faculty and leaders of colors. Leaders of color stress the need for white students, faculty and hiring committees to understand the premise of race as prevalent, permanent, and deep-seated within American society. Their overt and covert experiences from being students and leaders of color in the higher education field with racism were described.

Sam, an African American female who worked in different universities across the United States, emphasized how white students and faculty responded to her presence on the campus and in the classroom:

There are always faculty and students who will think I will have a predetermined agenda.

There was a class I used to teach when I was finishing my doctoral degree. I was teaching

a class for pre-business majors so those students had to pass my class with B or above to go to business major. I walked in and there were some kids in their first day, and they said ‘Oh, I think this is going to be business class for pre-business majors. I already filled my diversity credits’ and they gathered their books and walked out because the assumptions would always be that I presented to African American minorities and I am going to talk about that, not business.

Anthony, from a neighboring university, who started his new position as a college dean, recalled some perceptions from his white faculty and shared his interpretations of lived experience stating, “I also think I was also being watched by white students and faculty. Some, I think, were looking for me to make a mistake so that they could say, ‘See, this is what minority people are like’.”

The encountering of discrimination in school and working life shared by Sam and Anthony was echoed by other participants. Also, leaders of color showed concerns about race and racism in the hiring procedure, especially when the search committees are all white.

Anthony shared his vision based on his experience of working at two universities. He said, “Institutional policies that close their doors to certain groups of people are a great challenge. Some of these policies are deliberate but most are not but have that effect. They need to be changed.”

Emilia, a Latino female in a leader position, shared her experience in hiring:

People will hire people they like. People who look like them, not people who are different. Because of that, they are looking for that fit, you know someone who fits this culture. Someone can fit this society. I am open to talk about this because I talked about this as a human being. And sometimes people will say, ‘Oh, this is not true. This is not how it is, you know. Or we are looking for this skill; we are looking for the super star we are looking

for people.’ Really, to me, it is a human being thing. How you really want to look at the candidate in the pool who may have the experience ... so they do not give the chance to interview.

In addition, leaders of color shared concerns regarding their white counterparts’ tendency to believe in the predetermined perceptions. They shared concerns regarding their white counterpart’s tendency to adhere to a deficit-laden perspective about their academic ability. Being a leader of color, they need to work harder than their white colleagues because they are perceived as “less smart” than their counterparts and they are hired to present diversity on campus not because their ability and expertise in the fields. Sam “needs to work harder because I am the department chair now and still a 100% percent faculty member in another department.” Carlos, a Latino professor, also shared the experience of being coerced to serve on double positions when he applied the job:

I just applied for a job in the communication department, so the faculties are not pleased with the director of Chicano studies. It is an adjunct position offered. But originally I was just offered a tenured faculty position in the teaching communication department not Chicano studies and I accepted. And in May, I got a call from the dean and the dean made me to be the director of the program.

Newman, an African American male, working as a curriculum director, described his experience:

A lot of things happen in academia. You know we are sort of in the background as people with this idea; people who got what they got from their positions because they are helped by government. They are helped by others. They are not really as talented as the majority groups of faculties. Just because they are helped, they are not really qualified.

Minority faculty and leaders perceive that race can have negative effects on their relationships with both students and their white colleagues. As Andy mentioned, “Law enforcement officers’ preconceptions are that there tend to be more crimes in this area with some minority groups. So as the only one in the classroom or in the department from minority group, s/he will be profiled”. Additionally, there are white students who still labeled black people as criminals and believe they will kill white people. Sam shared some her experience in which white students feel terrified of the black people:

I once had a student who did not do well in the class and I could tell she was not comfortable in the class, and so I asked her to come to my office to meet with me to figure out how I could make the classroom a safer environment for her. She stood beside my office door and her whole body was shivering. I was thinking a trauma happening to her and I needed to call police or got her a counselor or take her to the hospital. I said would you feel comfortable if I had my department chair come and sit in the conversation. She said, yes I want to have someone else because I am not used to talk to people like you because black people murder people, black people like to kill white people.

Moreover, concepts of isolation and marginality in the academic and social life as they pertain to the experiences of faculty and leaders of color were expressed and illustrated by several participants due to the lack of life and academic supports. As Emilia noted:

Often times when a minority leader or faculty enters a system, they are not part of the culture, so they don’t know what the rules are, or what the expectations are, or what the unwritten rules are. So often times, they may make mistakes and they may not know what, you know, what the rules are, someone is not there to mentor them, how this place is, those are the values of culture, and they will find themselves alienated. You know I remember faculties share the fact that they would go to the meetings, they could find the meetings,

find the department but nobody would personally invite them to their homes. Nobody would invite them to go shopping. They would invite anybody else. You are their colleagues, they will respect you at work but other than that, they will feel isolated and unsupported.

In academic fields, there are tensions between pursuing their research interests such as “working with people of color in the community or the university as part of their first academic appointment, only to be told that what they would be doing would not lead to tenure.” Hiring is done only to give the impression that they are representing diversity, not to practice it. As Anthony described, “we do not have a plan in how to support the leaders and faculties academically, all the policies are just at the encouraging level”. Sometimes, as Emilia mentioned “their research and the research interest may be in non-Western areas, philosophies, and approaches that are not valued in tenure processes...”

The lack of support often times make leaders of color feel as Newman described:

They don't fit in places... like I don't really belong here, you know. This is for people who are probably smarter than me. I think one of the challenges for minority groups in academia is overcoming the feeling that they are really not supposed to be here and that it is a little beyond what they are able to do. So there are a lot of psychological obstacles you know. When I said supports, I mean those emotional support, there are also things like when I am going to teach a new course, maybe I want to get the syllabus. There are faculty members who will say that ‘Here, I have the syllabus for that course.’ Things like this will make your job easier. So I think that is a big way to do things, helping each other, reviewing each other's scholarship, those kinds of things.

Sam felt the same way in terms of being lonely and excluded from the academic field:

There is not a session where I can go to on campus and have an extolled moment like I was able to at the academic conferences. I would say mentorship is needed. Mentorship can be done differently...But I think the mentorship doesn't just focus on how to teach the class well. It is important how to be a good teacher in the classroom, but you also need someone to help guide you to go through the university system, as well as to guide you in your research. Someone who might see beyond your assistant professor years. I do not have someone who can have conversation and help me with my struggling. So, mentorship beyond you doing well in the classroom is needed.

Emily added to the conversation by mentioning "when you are in the group conversation and you are the only one, people will ignore you but they will bring the topic up after the break."

Moreover, the lack of role models in showing how to navigate in the two worlds through the written and unwritten rules brings challenges for minority leaders and faculties. Anthony, the dean of the college, shared his feeling:

I think there's always the lack of many role models, people who've blazed the trail ahead of me, who I can look to for advice and counsel. I also think I was also being watched by white students and faculty. Some, I think, were looking for me to make a mistake so that they could say, "see, this is what minority people are like." But I also think a smaller group were having to rethink what minority people could accomplish, challenging their preconceptions about people of color.

Leaders of colors assert limited communications and lack of safe and open communication channels, which in turn may lead to the fear of communications on both sides. Emilia argued the importance of building a communication channel that is open, safe, and maintains confidentiality:

So sometimes the environment, the fear of retaliation is very heavy if you speak up. You shut down which leads to silence voices from leaders of color. Let me give you an example. I was in a meeting a year ago. They were asking us, ‘What are the challenges you face here at this university as related to diversity?’ I spoke up and I said one of the challenges we face is really the challenge everybody is facing across the country... lack of money, resources. We lost positions. And that was all I said and in a very professional manner not directing it into the university, because we are not unique. There are other institutions that have the same problems. But within a short time after that meeting, my boss... because somebody in that meeting went to the administration to tell them what I had said. They had all wrong what I said but you know they went and said it to the administration: she did these ... so they talked to my boss and my boss talked to me.

Sam, who has been working in different institutions in the higher education field, shared the same experience:

I don’t feel safe. When I start to talk with individuals, then I can feel safe because I know they will maintain confidentiality and so I am not worried if I take initiative and seek out one or two people to talk to. But if it were a session that my boss told me I have to attend, it will have a very different feeling for me. OK I will be very quiet, and I will be quiet and just listen.

Obviously, the race walls built for years cannot be broken down easily. From the interview, the researchers understood that discrimination in the working field, the narrow definition of merits and ability used by the white people, and the ignorance of emerging areas of scholarship and appropriate venues for leaders of color research are all factors that built these insuperable walls. It might take generations of continued efforts to break the walls among all ethnicities.

### **Special Opportunities Are Just Fancy/Showy Words**

All of the participants were annoyed when the researchers asked them that if there were any special opportunities. All of them believed that they did not receive special opportunities or treatments for them as minorities. They believed that their leadership positions were earned.

Emily, an African American, shared her experience:

When I was in my Ph. D program, I was not offered a graduate assistantship opportunity, they offered the GA to those who had never taught in the classroom and they were white. When I asked why I was not receiving a GA, they said ‘you are the first black women in the program and we don’t think you are going to make it, so we don’t want to waste our GA on you.’

She then argued that, “the opportunities were not given but earned; you need to make more efforts to gain the same equity as the white people. If you want to be treated equally, you have to be as twice good as the white faculty.”

Sam responded in the same way:

I don’t think I received any special opportunities, particularly in the Ph. D program because I was judged based on the color of my skin not my potentials at all which shows that I am more qualified to receive a GA (Graduate Assistantship). So I don’t think that there is anything special.

Anthony, currently in a dean position, argued that:

I’m not sure I ever really see a real genuine commitment to diversity on most university campuses beyond some flowery words spoken from time to time. Sometimes, universities hire people from minority groups not because of what they can do but because they can somewhat be the evidence that the university values diversity.

Andy, a full professor who has been working on a search committee, indicated the following reasons why special or equal opportunities are just some fancy words:

People like to embrace folks like them. It is a little easier sometimes I suppose for some people to say, 'Well, this person has the similar background as mine, and I think I have been successful, so they are going to succeed...' Those people will be supported, promoted because the decision makers are in the position to support and promote those people... Recognize their success comes from the background that may be similar to the person... critical mask: you need enough people from minority background, so you can have the mask so you have enough people from the same background.

In addition, when it comes to financial opportunities, institutional budget policies may close the doors to certain groups of people, which may lead to a reduction of minority study programs. This will prevent students from seeing their cultural self-reflected in the curriculum on the college campus, especially in the current financial crisis. Emilia stated:

Now the challenges lie in that, while those programs have been successful, there are still those gaps with the fiscal resources tightening up and with the national pipeline programs. People will think that there is always special money, special opportunities and programs, but in reality, that is not true, you know. The minority scholarship program for example, costs about 2% of the national scholarship. So there is a mindset that minority students go to school for free and there is always scholarship, and there is always money. We are short money anyway, so let's cut the special programs.

Jelly, an American Indian professor, added to the point that, "I think a very good argument can be made that their population is at our university, that are not served to the full with financial resources, personnel and so on."

Anthony, the Latino professor, held that:

Shrink state budget like that and it does not look like it is getting better. We still need programs to have minority students' affair, multicultural students' affair to help students to go into larger university campuses. But we are seeing the first program; the shrinking budget will go to a program like Chicano study and multicultural students' affair. There are also other grant programs as well.

Sam and Li both commented that they wished there were more resources and budgets they could use to relieve the financial stress.

The participants experience showed that what the leaders of color need equal opportunities to develop, achieve, and lead in their own fields; not just some fancy statements such as the university is encouraging the involvement from leaders of color or the university is working really hard to embrace the diversity on campus.

### **More Efforts Needed in Embracing Social Justice in Faculty Hiring Policies**

Research shows that after all those years struggling with social justice issues in higher education, faculties of color are still strangers in higher education and campus life. The need for diversifying faculty is not new to leadership alone. It is a nationwide challenge that permeates throughout all levels of professorships. The percentage of white faculty on each campus is higher than the percentage of the white population in the respective counties they serve. The need for a new and critical thinking in hiring policies was asserted.

In addition, leaders of color called on higher education institutions for reconsidering their policies in an effort to eliminate oppressive hiring practices and promote humanity in higher education. Anthony, Emilia, Emily, and Sam shared the same opinions in the interviews, "Search committees need to change their perceptions towards the leaders of color; they need at least give them the chance to be interviewed...Universities need to work beyond the flowery words and really work hard on improving the diversity on campus, and the first thing they can do is to

change their hiring policy,” and “they should hire leaders of Color for their ability not just the minority group they presented.”

### **Discussion**

As Au (2009) argued, “Somehow, in the United States, we have managed to transform one of the most rewarding of all human activities into a painful, boring, dull, fragmenting mind-shrinking, soul-shrinking experience” (p. 20). For many committed educators, it is difficult to admit that our society and our institutions are still marginalizing and oppressing some individuals and communities. However, the evidences from this study such as the inequitable outcomes for students of color and harsh experience from faculty and leaders of color reflected that we still have much to do to achieve the equitable and socially just education environment for all that is our democratic birthright (Marshall & Oliva, 2010).

The results suggested that we have made some progress, but there is long way to go towards embracing cultural diversity in higher education. The legacy of race-conscious discrimination within the educational field has remained largely hidden under the discourse of color blindness and identity blindness (Au, 2009; Nieto, & Bode, 2008). People of European descent are still assuming the power to claim resources, claim the language, claim the right to relocate the resources, and they even claim the right to frame the culture, standards, and identity of who we are as Americans and to what extent we can be successful citizens (Sleeter, 2009). Since white people have kept reaping the benefits of these privileges, they would rather stay in the old pattern than change or reform the current unequal patterns.

The findings also indicated that society tends to have lower expectations for people from minority groups, and when leaders or experts emerge in academic fields, white faculty and students usually will question their successes instead of offering respect. These questionings have negative effects on students and leaders of color when they become the common

phenomenon in the educational field because people from minority groups will also doubt their own ability in the field even when they have great potential to success. All the participants implied that they once believed that they could not be as successful as those white faculty and leaders. If they did not see the roles played by their ancestors and peers in organizational work, in the discovery and dissemination of new knowledge, and in the creation of new programs, they would never believe they could make a difference and make it.

Moreover, the findings of this study indicated, “an outsider in academia usually receives little or no mentoring, inside information, or introductions to valuable connections and networks. Such deprivation will hamper professional growth and satisfaction” (Moody, 2004, p.18). Also, as Creamer (1995) noted, leaders of color tend to leave their positions before being tenured and promoted. It is often speculated that one reason for this is lack of mentoring from established faculty (Stanley, 2006). Therefore, mentor programs to help new faculty and leaders of color at all educational levels is a necessity.

More importantly, the results questioned the same doubts mentioned by Boler (2004), whether it is possible to create democratic space for marginalized voices. There is an urgent need for universities to build an open and trusting communication channel to encourage the conversation within and across races on two sides.

### **Implementations**

The findings of this study and recent events such as Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal church shooting in downtown Charleston, South Carolina are reflections that we need to find a way to educate all the citizens to understand the importance and necessity of continuing to advocate for a nation without race and hates. The efforts in fighting the race war need to increase not decrease starting from the education sector all the way to all the other sectors of the whole society.

### **Showing respect and appreciation to minority faculty and leaders**

To value the presence of leaders and faculties of color on university campuses and to recognize their contributions to the development and growth of the students and community, universities and society as a whole need to discover ways to encourage educational leadership faculty to reexamine how they address the complexity of race and racism (Allen, 2006). For example, one of the ways to show our gratitude to their contribution is to take their teaching loads and their services to promoting community diversity into consideration in the tenure track process. Another way is to really value their contributions to the academic field by inviting their insights of interpreting different cultures and social values.

### **Creating Equal, Safe, and Trusting Educational Communication Channels from Both Sides**

On the one hand, students, faculty and leaders of color need to feel comfortable with being the educator, with being the ambassador of their specific culture, and with being the person for others to follow. On the other hand, white students, faculty and leaders can contribute to the conversations by admitting the fact that there are still challenges for people from rich cultural backgrounds. One of the common ideas people hold today is that they are colorblind and identity-blind. They don't want to talk about race issues and don't want to recognize that those challenges and barriers do exist. There are specific challenges for minority students and faculty to maintain cultural identities in a dominant culture. To overcome the challenges, the first thing to do is being willing to talk about them, to overcome the fear, fear of being different, the fear of being involved with and interacting with on both sides. The second thing is to overcome these challenges through communication and education; that's why universities need to recruit minority students and faculty who can challenge traditional ideas and beliefs. In this way, faculty and students can become more open-minded, integrating and accepting those cultures brought in by minority groups.

## **Pipeline Program Development**

The society, as a whole, needs to continue to work on “pipeline programs” to offer equal opportunities to minority students. The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) data shows that it is still true today that the number of minority students who graduate with a doctoral or even a college degree or entering the college is still lower than the average. Although the Civil Right Movements and other movements in the earlier history of the country created some programs opened up for minority students and those programs have been successful, there are still gaps. With fiscal resources tightening up and with the national pipeline programs, people will think that there will always be special money, special opportunities and programs, but in reality, that is not true. The minority scholarship program, for example, costs about 2% of the national scholarship. So it is still a necessity to call for equal opportunities in accessing the educational resources and bridging the achievement gap.

The lower number of students of color graduating with higher degrees will lead to a lower number of representatives in faculty and leadership positions in the higher education field. Therefore, to recruit more faculty and leadership positions and to reach social justice and equity in higher education, much needs to be done to promote equal access to education and equal opportunities to resources at all education levels, starting from elementary school or the preschool level because if “we are not educating people, we don’t have the pipeline,” as one of the participants, Newman mentioned in his interview.

## **Develop Mentoring Programs**

Developing a mentoring program needs coordinated efforts from both white faculty and leaders of color. Combining experience and knowledge can help faculty and leaders of color to know the university and community culture and the skills to navigate among the different cultures present on campus. In this way, they can know how to navigate their daily academic life

in a new environment, and the celebration of diversity will not just be words in the air but actions for real. This mentoring program is called “cross-race mentoring” recommended by Singh and Stoloff (2003). They also offered six variables that mentors should be aware of so as to create meaningful cross-race mentoring relationships for leaders of color: be aware if their own basic beliefs, worldviews that might affect their perceptions; be aware of the cultural differences surrounding the perceptions of one’s power status; be aware of the cultural differences that can be interpreted along an individualism-collectivism construct; be aware of the differences in communication style across culture; be aware of the cultural differences in the importance played on relationships and work activities; and be aware of the different conflict management styles.

### **Making Resolutions to Lead for Social Justice Starting from Culturally Responsive leadership**

Aspiring university leaders, especially those who are sitting on hiring committees need to develop skill to deepen their empathic responses with issues of social justice and equity. The first step is to deepen their understandings concerning the importance of having faculty from different cultural backgrounds through culturally responsive program trainings (Caldwell, Davis, Du Bois, Echo-Hawk, & Goins, 2005). From the training, they will develop their culturally responsive leadership skills in cultural awareness, cultural knowledge, and cultural competency. The second step is to include leaders of color in the search committee since people tend to hire people like themselves. The third step is to make sure that people are not hired based on their race or gender, and for the “flowery” (described by one of the interviewees) visions of celebrating diversity, but on their knowledge, skills, and contributions to the society and community.

### **Conclusion**

From this current research, we found that issues on race are still main factors to hinder the development and growth of leaders and leaders of color in universities in the United States.

Although America as a whole has been making progress regarding racial issues, there still a long way to go to achieve social justice in higher education.

As Clawson (2012) mentioned, the three characteristics of being an effective leader are: knowing something needs to be done, knowing the underlying forces that will affect what need to be done, and initiating actions to change. This definition of leaders is especially true for leaders of color. But from the very beginning of this study, we have become aware of the tensions and fears of faculty and leaders of color. There are people who did not want to participate in this study because they think this study will not change anything or they are afraid of being recognized although we guaranteed confidentiality. From the interviews, we learned that there are people who are afraid of being ‘shut up’ if they spoke up. But we also learned the courage and spirit in its true nature; the importance and the benefits of speaking up through open and honest communication channels. As Emily summarized, to change the current situations, we need to take the initiatives. We need to speak up as cultural ambassadors, rather than feeling downtrodden, so it will not be so difficult for others. It is much easier to become tired wondering, “Why do they (minority leaders and students) always have to change? Why do they need to be the educator? Why do they have to explain because under many circumstances she or he is the only one in the particular culture?” Utilizing these very questions to create proactive responses to support these educators and leaders is essential.

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## **The Impact of Extracurriculars on Academic Performance and School Perception**

**Mark Furda and Michael Shuleski**

### **Abstract**

As a result of budget cuts, accessibility to school extracurricular activities has been hindered. Students in one high school were classified as participants in extracurricular activities or non-participants. The groups were surveyed about perceptions of school; student grade point averages were obtained. Four independent samples t-tests were conducted to compare differences in school perception and differences in grade point averages. The results of all three t-tests relating to school perception demonstrated significantly more positive perceptions among participants than non-participants. The results of the t-test comparing grade point averages show a significantly higher grade point average among participants when compared to non-participants.

*Keywords:* Extracurricular activities; school improvement; school funding; school perception

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With schools facing continual budget cuts, extracurricular activities such as athletics, arts, and clubs, are in ever increasing danger of being cut (Carter, 2011; DeNisco, 2013; Hoff, 2007; Kronholz, 2012; Statz and Lamote, 2001). The National Center for Educational Statistics (1999) reported that students who participated in extracurricular activities fared significantly better than those who did not. Students had fewer absences, higher grade-point averages and higher math and reading assessments among other indicators. Unfortunately, the number of activities for students to participate in does not seem to address the desires of all students. If schools were to find activities that reached the entire student body, research it seems, would point to higher achievement across the board. This study aims to add to the body of research that examines the impact of extracurricular activities on students. It also attempts to determine whether a sense of belonging to a school can be correlated to the activities in which a student participates.

More specifically, this study looks at the effect extracurricular activities have on grade-point average and student perception of school. A survey was administered to determine students' gender, grade point average, the activities in which students participated, and student sense of belonging in the school. The sample population consisted of all eleventh grade students attending a rural high school in Western Pennsylvania.

This purpose of this study is to determine if students involved in extracurricular activities such as athletics, clubs and the like, have higher academic performance as measured through grade point average when compared to peers who do not participate. In addition, the study seeks to determine if students who participate in these same extracurricular activities will show a more favorable perception of the school than their non-participating peers. The two research questions this study seeks to answer are listed below and are accompanied by their null hypothesis.

RQ1: Is there a difference between the grade point averages of students in this study who participate in at least one extracurricular activity versus students in this study who participate in zero extracurricular activities?

Ho1: There is no a difference between the grade point averages of students in this study who participate in at least one extracurricular activity versus students in this study who participate in zero extracurricular activities.

RQ2: Do students in this study who participate in at least one extracurricular activity have a more favorable perception of school than students in this study who participate in zero extracurricular activities?

Ho2: There is no difference among the perceptions of school between students in this study who participate in at least one extracurricular activity and students in this study who participate in zero extracurricular activities.

The author determined that the results supported the hypothesis that students who participated in extracurricular activities demonstrate higher academic success as well as greater connectedness to the school.

### **Review of Literature**

As schools look to tighten their budgets, programs that do not directly impact academic success are often the first to get cut. If the program does survive, the cost associated with it may get passed along to the families of the participants (Carter, 2011; DeNisco, 2013; Hoff, 2007; Kronholz, 2012; Statz and Lamote, 2001). This creates a burden and barrier for these families, ultimately having a negative impact on the number of participants. This literature review discusses why this is a grave error by school districts and demonstrates how extracurricular activities benefit students academically and socially.

The relationship between extracurricular participation by adolescents and their academic outcomes and school-related affect were examined in an action research study by Knifsend and Graham (2001). This study not only examined the number of extracurricular activities, but the domains (academic/leadership groups, arts activities, clubs, and sports) and breadth of participation. The population was a multi-ethnic sample of 864 eleventh grade students, predominantly from low-income backgrounds. The data collected were grade point average and the results of a questionnaire that measured the population's sense of belonging and academic engagement. The results seemed to indicate that the number of extracurriculars an adolescent is involved in does positively impact academic achievement and has an overall positive school effect. Moreover, the study indicates that moderate participation in multiple domains seemed to yield the desired outcome of both higher grade point average and an increased sense of belonging. However, too many activities could have a negative outcome by being too demanding on the students' time as well as not allowing them to truly gain a sense of belonging to one group. The results of this study suggest that schools should be persuaded to increase the scope and student involvement in extracurricular activities, especially in urban or low-income schools.

Vasudevan, Rodriguez Kerr, Hibbert, Fernandez and Park (2015) focused on recently arrested adolescents in New York City. Based on the amount of research showing that school dropouts have a greater chance of being incarcerated, New York has shifted funding away from juvenile facilities and incarceration for adolescents. Instead, money has been redirected towards after-school programs to try and facilitate a sense of belonging. Just as youths can form affiliation with a gang, the hope is that these students can form an affiliation and a sense of belonging to an institution that may provide a different path for their life to take. The program gave students a way to express themselves through various outlets such as art, photos, videos and

writing. The instructors were nurturing and attempted to make the participants feel accepted. While this longitudinal study is in its early stages, results suggest what the students thought about their school day and why so many of them chose to leave it behind. The students felt they were on the fringe of society and had little hope of making it through the day with any positive experiences. By giving them a voice and a way to express themselves, the participants developed a sense of belonging and hope. The study examined a group of students that many in society prefer to ignore. Rather than investing in programs that can help these adolescents down positive paths, those in the system often choose to deal with them via incarceration. It is a reactive, rather than proactive stance. At the root of the issue for these students is having no real identity. Their sense of belonging, which everyone strives for, gets misplaced and they become involved in risky behavior. It is these youngsters that schools and communities need to find extracurriculars for the most. Schools should work to increase the sense of student belonging in school, rather than stand by passively while these students find a place of belonging outside of school that is often unhealthy and destructive. Not only do the individuals involved benefit, but society as a whole benefits as well.

The National Center for Education Statistics (1995) issued a report on the findings from the National Longitudinal Study (NELS) of 1992 that surveyed public high school seniors. The article's focus was to show the results of students that participated in extracurricular activities and their school engagement in comparison to their peers. The data indicated that students who participated in extracurricular activities exhibited higher indicators of school success than those who did not. Unexcused absence rates were lower and student grade point averages were higher.

Girod, Martineau, and Zhao (2004) conducted an exploratory study to investigate the impact an after-school computer clubhouse named KCLICK! (Kids Learning In Computer

Clubhouses) would have on teens' disposition toward school, and whether it would help teens learn a breadth and depth of computer skills. The population consisted of students involved in the program as well as a control group that did not participate in KCLICK!. Pretest and posttest surveys were administered to 159 total students, 81 of which participated in the program. Seventy-eight students were part of the control group. All students involved were drawn from the same school and had similar ethnic backgrounds. The results were marginal except for those students who previously valued school the least, but participated in KCLICK!. The researchers speculate that this result can be attributed to the KCLICK! program, which provided teens an opportunity to participate in an alternative environment free from the normal control of a school. Furthermore, the researchers believe the students could rebuild their confidence which subsequently would increase their value of school. The second goal of the study, which was to have students self-report their experience with computer technology (CT) yielded unremarkable results. Students involved in the program increased their CT experience more than non-participants. However, the results for those who participated in the program was significant for students who previously had low GPA's.

Fredricks and Eccles (2005) hypothesized that "extracurricular participation leads to more favorable outcomes because it facilitates membership in a prosocial peer group" (p. 508). This study was broken into two parts. The first was to build upon previous studies by examining the positive and negative development across four extracurricular domains: team sports, school involvement activities, performing arts, and academically-oriented clubs. The second, and primary focus, was to see if there was a social aspect that played a role in the positive and negative development of students. The study population used was 498 students in grades nine, ten and twelve. The sample was drawn from three primarily middle class areas so that income would not be a factor in student participation or lack thereof. The results of the study were

consistent with prior research. There was evidence of participation in extracurricular activities relating positively to school engagement. Additionally, the results showed that students who were involved in extracurricular activities had more friends than nonparticipants. The results of the study demonstrated that the students had more academic and prosocial friends when they were involved with school extracurricular activities compared to those students not involved.

Other research reports the benefits extracurricular activities provide to high school students directly and indirectly (Kronholz, 2012). One particular report makes reference to numerous studies showing research that clearly illustrates the importance of these activities to student academic and social development while in high school and beyond. The article's other purpose was to bring to light an impending crisis that schools are facing. Schools are being asked to tighten their budgets, often at the expense of extracurricular activities deemed unnecessary. Faced with a decision of limiting money going directly towards education or indirectly to extracurriculars, administrators and school boards readily choose the latter. The consequences of limiting participation in extracurriculars not only impact the students directly, but the community as well. One school administrator made a profound statement regarding increasing class size versus cutting activities. He stated, "You can cope with an extra kid in your class, but at 2:10 when school lets out, what do they (the students) do?" (p. 9).

The article was meant to bring to light a disservice many districts are doing to their students and their community. The ramifications of decreased funding will be negatively experienced disproportionately by families who are already experiencing financial distress. With some schools having families pay hundreds to thousands of dollars, depending on the sport or number of sports in which a child participates, parents simply cannot afford for their children to play. When students fail to participate in an organized club or activity after school, they find other ways to spend their time which often provide little positive adult guidance and supervision.

Since students of low socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be negatively impacted by pay-to-play or fee based participation policies, these students fail to reap the academic and social benefits of participation. The end result is an increase in the achievement gap.

The impact of particular types of extracurricular activities for students was the focus of one notable longitudinal study (Eccles & Barber, 1999). The sample consisted of approximately 1,800 students. The study gathered initial data of the students in sixth grade and concluded when most of those same students were 25 or 26 years old. The two foci of the research were peer association due to involvement, and activity-based identity formation. The results supported what the researchers hypothesized: adolescents who participated in prosocial, non-academic activities during their school age years had the most consistent positive outcomes and the lowest rate of at-risk behavior.

Research has shown that transitioning to middle school is a tumultuous time for many students and can be associated with negative outcomes. The sample for this study was obtained from one southeastern middle school and consisted of 173 sixth-grade students. The genders were split nearly evenly, and 57% of the students were Caucasian. A relationship seems to exist between these transitioning students, and how participating in extracurricular activities can positively impact academic achievement and school connectedness (Akos, 2006). This critical phase in the lives of students, when physical, cognitive, social, and emotional changes occur, begins to determine the trajectory of their development later in life.

Graham, Taylor and Hudley (2015) designed an intervention to increase social and academic outcomes in African American boys in elementary school. The 64 participants in the study were randomly assigned to a treatment group or to a control group. The treatment consisted of a 12-week afterschool intervention that had a total of 32-lessons afterschool. The objective was to design an intervention that would positively impact third to fifth grade African

American students who were previously classified as aggressive. The researchers chose this particular sample for several reasons. The key motive was the knowledge that African American students who exhibit adjustment problems and aggressive behavior in elementary school are more likely than other racial/ethnic groups to become involved in the juvenile justice system at a later age. This intervention was unique because the researchers did not focus on improving academics. Rather the focus was on the student's intrinsic motivation to succeed. The results showed positive gains by the students, but the authors noted several limitations to their research which require further research. Nonetheless, the results hold promise.

Klesse (1994) suggests extracurricular activities motivate many students to perform at higher levels in the classroom. He also found a positive relationship between extracurriculars and success in high school. Additionally, the author posits that participation in co-curricular activities holds many non-cognitive benefits.

Another study (Barr, Birmingham, Fornal, Klein & Piha, 2006) discussed the impact three high school afterschool programs had on increasing student success. The three programs were located in different cities and focused on student interests and real world application for high school students. The authors cite a trend towards declining afterschool activity participation by this group. Additionally, the authors note that afterschool programs for high school students are in a dramatic shortage across the country, failing to give students the opportunities they desperately need. At the conclusion of multiyear evaluations, the study concluded there were several benefits directly and indirectly related to these programs. Indirect benefits indicated that students participating in these programs had significantly better attendance than their peers. In addition, graduation rates of participants were higher than nonparticipants, and standardized test success was higher as well for the participant group. Several students interviewed mentioned that they would come to school more frequently due to the desire of attending the afterschool

program. When the programs were run by teachers, the students also found themselves looking at the teachers with more respect than they had prior to participation in the program. These results suggest not only an academic benefit associated with extracurricular participation, but also a positive sense of school connectedness.

Hall and Charmaraman (2011) conducted a case study designed to discover how a boys' empowerment group could help participants avoid risk taking behaviors. The premise behind the study was described by the authors as "The process of establishing a healthy male identity can be difficult for many boys" (p. 49). This is especially true for those whose communities are already plagued by violence. The program lasted one year and was comprised of 15 mostly African American boys, whose ages were twelve to fifteen. The students met once per week and an emphasis was placed on group learning and team-building activities. The researchers gathered data through observations and interviews. They determined the program did have success in changing the students' attitudes in school as well as their relationships with peers.

Yancey cites a study by the Department of Health and Human Services that reports students who spend no time in extracurricular activities are 57% more likely to have dropped out of school (2007). In addition, the author reports that the study concluded students not participating in extracurriculars were considerably more likely to have been engaged in risky behaviors pertaining to health.

Some research suggests a positive relationship between extracurricular athletics and academic achievement at the middle school level (Stevens & Schaben, 2002). This age group is one that is often overlooked by researchers who study the impact of athletics on student achievement. The sample consisted of 136 eighth grade students. Seventy-three labeled themselves as athletes; 63 as non-athletes. There were slightly more male athletes than non-athletes, and slightly more female non-athletes than athletes. The overall number of males and

females was 68 for each gender. Information was obtained through a survey, and achievement data provided by the school district included the students' grade point averages and scores on standardized tests such as the California Achievement Test (CAT). Several comparisons were conducted. Athletes were compared to non-athletes, male athletes compared to male non-athletes, female athletes versus female non-athletes, and female athletes versus male athletes. The results suggest that the athletes academically outperformed non-athletes. In each of the first three aforementioned trials, the athletes had significantly higher GPA's/CAT scores than non-athletes. The fourth trial showed female athletes having significantly higher GPA's/CAT scores than male athletes.

One study (Sitkowski, 2008) focused on high school sophomores and seniors. The researcher found that those participating in athletics had lower dropout rates and were less likely to consume alcohol. Sitkowski also suggests the results indicate greater levels of confidence, self-discipline, and responsibility among the athletes in the study when compared to non-athletes. Additionally, the study revealed that male athletes performed better academically during their seasons when compared to achievement levels during the off-season. Finally, the same study found that athletes demonstrated higher scores on state achievement tests than their non-athlete counterparts.

Other studies have shown that students who participate in physical activity have greater academic achievement than their peers. Fox, Barr-Anderson, Neumark-Sztainer, and Wall (2010) performed research to determine whether it was physical activity, or the participation on a sports team that was the determining factor in increased academic achievement. The study surveyed 4,746 students. Students self-reported their weekly hours of physical activity, sport team participation, and academic letter grades. The results suggest that both athletic activity and sport team participation were independently associated with higher GPA for females. For males,

only athletic participation was independently associated with higher GPA. The results, while not conclusive, suggest a positive relationship between participation in physical activity and level of academic achievement.

Some research focuses specifically on the impact of student participation in interscholastic sports. Participants may have higher GPA's, better attendance, and greater connectedness to their school than peers not participating. Lumpkin and Stokowski (2011) authored an article that emphasizes the role that coaches have for students to obtain these gains, as well as the promotion of social growth of participants. A coach's role may seem to vary from sport-to-sport, but the authors suggest that they have one role that is more important than the rest. That role is to "emphasize the character development of their athletes by serving as positive role models" (p. 125). By behaving ethically themselves, coaches promote like behavior by their athletes. It is often said that the actions of a coach are more important than their words. This study illustrated the potential benefits of participating in extracurricular athletics when a child has a coach that demonstrates good moral behavior. Although not easily recognized, students can benefit by becoming well rounded members of society.

Academic eligibility is a necessary partner with athletics sponsored by school districts. However, this practice may have negative impacts on some students and schools (Hoch, 2008). The results of many studies, some of which have been referenced in this article, concluded that involvement in extracurricular activities, such as athletics, may have academic and social benefits. Students participating in athletics frequently tend to have higher rates of attendance, higher grades, and better behavior than their non-participating peers. The author claims that removing students from participating due to their grade point average removes them from the one incentive that they have for improving. In Baltimore County, schools determine eligibility of students based on the previous quarter's GPA. The author states, "This is the group of young

people who may need the carrot of athletics the most” (p. 13). This study challenges schools to look at athletics as a tool for improving academic achievement of their participants. Most, if not all schools, have eligibility standards in place. Are they designed with the best interests of students in mind? If schools simply lock students out of participating, the affected student will likely continue on in school without any of the benefits that participation can provide. In addition to changing eligibility practices, schools and individual athletic teams need to foster an environment that promotes academic growth. Tutoring sessions can be implemented by athletic directors or coaches prior to or after practice. Practice time would not be sacrificed, and students would get the additional instruction necessary.

A review of literature reveals a variety of studies that suggest extracurricular activity participation results in many academic and non-academic benefits. School officials that eliminate such activities, or require participation fees as a reaction to budget constraints, may be doing students and the community more harm than they realize. In contrast, schools should look for ways to increase participation in school sponsored after-school activities as a means to increase academic achievement and promote positive social and emotional development through school connectedness.

### **Methodology and Procedures**

In this basic research design, a non-experimental survey was used. Additionally, this study has a descriptive research design with the use of grade point average data. The questionnaire consisted of ten items that were either multiple choice or responses measured according to a Likert Scale.

All junior year (11<sup>th</sup> grade) students attending a Western Pennsylvania public high school were invited to participate in the study. Consent forms were given to each of the participants who then completed the survey during an extended homeroom at the beginning of the school

day. A total of 148 students completed the survey. One hundred sixteen participants were categorized as extracurricular participants; while 32 were identified as extracurricular non-participants. Once the surveys were completed, student grade point averages were obtained by the researcher from the high school administrative office. The data was analyzed and interpreted by the researcher. At the conclusion of the study, results of the research were made available to the high school and participants upon request.

### **Results**

The data, consisting of a survey and the students' grade point averages, were amassed for a total of 148 students out of a possible 169 (87.6%). The first two questions of the survey identified the students for the purpose of obtaining their grade point average, while the third separated the participants into the two main categories of the study. The categories were those who participated in one of over forty extracurricular activities sponsored and offered by the school, and those who chose not to participate. The two categories will be identified in the tables and charts as "Participants" and "Non-Participants". One hundred sixteen out of 148 students participated in at least one extracurricular activity (78.4%), while 32 did not (21.6%). The remaining results of the survey are included in this chapter. Only questions pertinent to the survey have been included.

Table 1 displays the results of the question "I enjoy going to school". The table indicates that 48.3% of those students participating in extracurricular activities agree with the statement, while 16.4% disagree, and 35.3% remained neutral. Of those students not participating in extracurricular activities, 34.4% indicate that they agree with the statement, while 34.4% disagree, and 31.3% had a neutral opinion.

Table 1

*I enjoy going to school.*

	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
Participant	3 (2.5%)	53 (45.7%)	41 (35.3%)	14 (12.1%)	5 (4.3%)
Non-Participant	2 (6.3%)	9 (28.1%)	10 (31.3%)	6 (18.8%)	5 (15.6%)

Table 2 displays the results of the question “I feel as though I fit in at school”. The table indicates that 76.7% of those students participating in extracurricular activities agree with the statement, while 6.9% disagree, and 16.4% remained neutral. Of those students not participating in extracurricular activities, 65.6% indicate that they agree with the statement, while 21.9% disagree, and 12.5% had a neutral opinion.

Table 2

*I feel as though I “fit in” at school.*

	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
Participant	16 (13.8%)	73 (62.9%)	19 (16.4%)	7 (6.0%)	1 (0.9%)
Non-Participant	2 (6.3%)	19 (59.4%)	4 (12.5%)	4 (12.5%)	3 (9.4%)

Table 3 below displays the results of the question “I have a positive opinion of this school”. The table indicates that 56.9% of those students participating in extracurricular activities agree with the statement, while 17.2% disagree, and 25.9% remained neutral. Of those students not participating in extracurricular activities, 37.5% indicate that they agree with the statement, while 31.3% disagree, and 31.3% had a neutral opinion.

Table 3

*I have a positive opinion of this school.*

	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
Participant	13 (11.2%)	53 (45.7%)	30 (25.9%)	18 (15.5%)	2 (1.7%)
Non-Participant	2 (6.3%)	10 (31.3%)	10 (31.3%)	8 (25.0%)	2 (6.3%)

Table 4 below displays the results of the question “I will miss this school when I graduate”. The table indicates that 38.8% of those students participating in extracurricular activities agree with the statement, while 21.6% disagree, and 39.7% remained neutral. Of those students not participating in extracurricular activities, 34.4% indicate that they agree with the statement, while 43.8% disagree, and 21.9% had a neutral opinion.

Table 4

*I will miss this school when I graduate.*

	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
Participant	9 (7.8%)	36 (31.0%)	46 (39.7%)	19 (16.4%)	6 (5.2%)
Non-Participant	2 (6.3%)	9 (28.1%)	7 (21.9%)	7 (21.9%)	7 (21.9%)

Table 5 below displays the results of the question “I enjoy going to school”. The table indicates that 82.8% of those students participating in extracurricular activities agree with the statement, while 0.0% disagree, and 17.2% remained neutral. Of those students not participating in extracurricular activities, 78.1% indicate that they agree with the statement, while 0.0% disagree, and 21.9% had a neutral opinion.

Table 5

*I want to see students in this school be successful compared to other schools.*

	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	D (2)	SD (1)
Participant	22 (19.0%)	74 (63.8%)	20 (17.2%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Non-Participant	6 (18.8%)	19 (59.4%)	7 (21.9%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)

The grade point averages of all students participating in the survey were retrieved. Although the grade point average is on a 4.0 scale, students are able to obtain GPA’s that are higher due to weighted classes. The average GPA for students who participated in extracurricular activities was 3.456 indicated. The average GPA for non-participants was 2.578.

Table 6 displays the results of an independent sample t-test. The purpose of the test is to determine if a significant relationship between the grade point averages of participants and non-participants exists. The data was tested with a two-tail, two-sample test where equal variances were assumed. The data was then tested a second time where equal variances were not assumed. In both cases, the trials resulted in a t-value less than .05 suggesting a significant difference between the grade point averages of extracurricular participants and non-participants.

Table 6

*Independent samples t-test*

	Levine's Test for Equality of Variance		t-test for Equality of Means						
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Dif.	Std. Error Dif.	95% Confidence Interval Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Equal Variance Assumed	11.649	.001	-7.380	146	.000	-.8776741	.1189277	-1.112716	-.642631
Equal Variance Not Assumed			-6.176	40.475	.000	-.87766741	.1421142	-1.164792	-.590555

The data collection process resulted in satisfactory participation by students in the junior class. Out of 169 possible participants, 148 students both completed the survey and were enrolled at their current high school for at least one year.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

The study sought to determine whether high school juniors who participated in at least one school sponsored extracurricular activity could be distinguished from their peers who did not participate in one. First, the study examined the two groups based on academic achievement using grade point averages. Second, the research compared the perceptions of school between members of each group.

For the purpose of comparing the academic achievement of the two groups, the researcher chose to use the most recent and complete data available, which was the students'

GPA from their previous academic year. Those students who participated in the survey but did not attend the school district during the previous academic year were omitted. The results shown in Figure 2 were that the 32 students who did not participate in an extracurricular activity had a mean GPA of 2.578. The range of this subgroup was a high of 3.978 and a low of 1.336. When compared to the scores of those who participated in extracurricular activities, the results in Figure 1 showed a significant increase in academic achievement which was verified with 99.995% confidence by way of a t-test. The 116 participants had a mean GPA of 3.456 with the range of scores falling between a high of 4.183 and a low of 1.544. When comparing the subgroups' mean GPAs as well as the range of scores, the data indicates that those who participate in at least one extracurricular activity show increased academic achievement compared to their peers who do not participate.

Table 1 displayed the results of the survey statement "I enjoy going to school" answered according to the Likert Scale. The results were used to determine whether students who participated in an extracurricular activity, had a more positive perception of their school than their counterparts who did not participate. The data was in agreement with the hypothesis in that 48.3% of participants agreed with the statement while only 34.4% of non-participants agreed. Furthermore, participants who disagreed with the statement was only 16.4% while non-participants disagreed at a rate of 34.4%.

The results displayed in Table 2 are Likert Scale results to the statement "I feel as though I fit in at school". As with Table 1, these results were gathered for the purpose of identifying which group had a more positive perception of their school. Participants answered having 76.7% in agreement with the statement, while disagreeing at a rate of 6.9%. This was more favorable than the results of non-participants who answered at a rate of 65.6% in agreement and 21.9% disagreeing with the statement.

Table 3 displayed results of the survey statement “I have a positive opinion of this school”. The results of this statement were more profound than the others when comparing participants to non-participants. Participants agreed with this statement at a rate of 56.9% compared to non-participants who agreed at a rate of 37.5%. Just as telling is the number in disagreement of the statement from each subgroup. Participants disagreed at 17.2% while nearly one-third (31.3%) of non-participants disagreed.

The results displayed in Table 4 seek to determine which group has a more favorable opinion of school by responding to the statement “I will miss this school when I graduate”. The results again supported the hypothesis, but at a less significant rate when comparing those in agreement. Participants agreed at a rate of 38.8% while non-participants agreed at a nearly equal rate of 34.4%. Those who disagreed with the statement show a much wider gap between participants and non-participants. While only 21.6% of participants disagreed with the statement, close to half (43.8%) of non-participants disagreed with the statement.

Table 5 displayed the final statement from the student survey which sought to support the hypothesis that students who are involved in extracurricular activities would have a more favorable perception of school than their peers who did not. The statement asked, “I want to see students in this school be successful compared to other schools” and focused on what can be classified as school pride. The data showed interesting results when comparing participants and non-participants. Both groups responded in agreement with the statement at high rates. Participants agreed at 82.8% while their non-participating peers agreed at a 78.1% rate, which again supported the hypothesis. What is interesting, however, is the number of each group that responded in disagreement. Both participants and non-participants had zero students answer the statement in disagreement.

An analysis of the data in this study indicates the grade point averages of students participating in at least one extracurricular activity are significantly higher than non-participants. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected. Additionally, the student survey results suggest that those who participate have a more favorable opinion of the school than those who do not participate in any extracurricular activities. The results in Tables 1 and 3 seem most notable. Table 1 indicates that 48.2% of students participating in extracurricular activities express some level of agreement when asked if they enjoy going to school, while 34.4% of non-participants indicated some agreement that they enjoy going to school. Table 3 shows that when asked about whether or not they have a positive opinion of the school, 56.9% of students participating in extracurricular activities indicated some level of agreement, while 37.6% of non-participants indicated some agreement. However, the analysis of data is too general to either accept or reject the null hypothesis. A more detailed statistical analysis is required to make a more robust determination. Students participating in extracurricular activities were lumped into a single group. Therefore, there is no data to indicate the impact of the number of extracurricular activities on student GPA and school perception. Future research may include an analysis to examine if a specific number of activity involvement relates to a higher GPA and most positive perception of school.

### **Limitations**

This study contains several limitations. First, an unequal sample size is apparent among survey respondents (extracurricular participants and non-participants). An imbalance of 116 to 32 exists, which may limit the statistical significance of the results. In addition, the study was limited to a total of 148 participants from one grade level in a single high school setting. This limited sample size makes it more difficult to generalize conclusions to a wider population. Another limitation is linked to the actual number of activities each extracurricular participant

reported. The study does not distinguish between those students participating in one activity with those participating in more than one. Therefore, the results do not provide data or insight pertaining to the actual number of extracurricular activities a student is involved in and student GPA or school perception. Finally, there is no effort in the study to distinguish between types of extracurricular activities.

### **Implications**

With budgets continually shrinking and schools focusing greater attention on high stakes testing, “non-essential” extracurricular activities offered to students are either being cut or students are required to pay out-of-pocket in many school districts. Policy makers are understating the impact extracurricular activities can have to student academic success. By focusing all of their monetary resources directly at improving high stakes testing, they may be overlooking other factors that lead to students being successful in school.

Students in public schools come from a wide breadth of socioeconomic backgrounds and have an even greater range of ideals and beliefs. The results of this study as well as other studies suggest that students who participate in at least one extracurricular activity perform academically higher than their peers. If funding for these extracurricular activities goes away, participation levels may drop. This is especially true for those students whose families live at or below the poverty level and can not afford pay-to-play or to enroll their children in similar activities outside of school.

Rather than trying to convince policy makers to avoid cuts to extracurricular activities, the results of the study suggest that there should be an emphasis on increasing the number of extracurriculars offered by schools. If schools can determine how to reach students who feel disenchanting or not accepted by the school through extracurricular activities, the research shows that the students may have a better perception of their school environment and subsequently

greater academic achievement. To do so, schools need to survey the student body to determine what interests non-participants have and whether offering an extracurricular activity would be feasible, both logistically and monetarily. Based on the research of this author and others, the data points emphatically at getting students involved in an extracurricular activity.

The greatest obstacle in maintaining the current extracurriculars while adding additional ones is two-fold. There is the obvious issue of money, especially when adding new extracurriculars. Depending on the type of activity, there will likely be an overhead cost similar to starting a new business. To solve this problem, school officials may attempt to utilize booster programs and corporate sponsors. Regardless of whether the activity is of the arts, athletics or any other variety, there is likely a business catering to that genre.

The second obstacle is finding qualified and motivated adults to act as coaches, sponsors, and the like. As veterans of the public school arena, the authors understand the difficulty of finding qualified, motivated adults to mentor students in an extracurricular activity. For some, the time spent compared to the money earned does not provide enough of an incentive. Furthermore, the school day does not coincide ideally with most professional's schedules excluding teachers. The financial issue can again be rectified by via booster programs or corporate sponsors, but that is a slippery slope. Instead, the authors look to greater tax incentives being given to the adult volunteers. Currently there are a few tax write-offs which help defray the costs but they come nowhere near equalling the expenses and time of the individual.

### **Recommendations**

A pressing question that needs answered is whether students who perform academically better than their peers were also doing so prior to participating in extracurriculars. Are extracurricular activities the cause of greater academic achievement or are they merely a by-product of a student already having success academically and emotionally in school? It is

possible that due to their success, these students could already have a favorable perception of school which then leads to their participation. This possibility needs to be noted as a factor in this study's results and could be the cause of error. A multiyear longitudinal study would be an ideal way to determine if this theory carries any weight.

Further research could also be done by taking a closer look at various subgroups. This could be race, sex, socioeconomic factors and which particular activity they participate in. In addition, this study merely looked at whether students participated or not. Some students spent less than one hour per week on their extracurricular while others responded in the survey that they spent over ten hours per week. It is possible that there may be a sweet spot for the time devoted to extracurricular activities and that by participating in too many, there may begin to be an adverse effect on their academic achievement.

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## **Student Perceptions of the Influence of Servant Leadership at Two Christian Denomination Campuses**

**Walter M. Jagela**

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this qualitative descriptive single-case study was to explore student perceptions of servant leadership, how servant leadership influences involvement within their campus community, and their definition of servant leadership. Student subjects were attending two private denominational Christian universities in a Mid-Atlantic Appalachian state. The theoretical foundation of this study was Greenleaf's theory of servant leadership. Purposive sampling included 20 participants pursuing an undergraduate degree and the three sources of data included semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and a researcher's journal. This study relied on six steps of thematic analysis for data analysis. Findings showed evidence that students were aware of servant leadership on their campuses and they were influenced by and responsive to servant leadership.

*Keywords:* Servant leadership, case study, student perceptions, Christian universities.

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Leadership is not simply the actions of the leader but the relationship and interactions between the leaders and the followers (Spears, 2010). While Greenleaf (1977) has been recognized as the founder of servant leadership, following exploration of human motivation to lead rather than be led, this form of leadership has been further developed and expanded upon over the last several decades (Bowman, 2005). According to Bowman (2005), servant leadership is as old as the scriptures; as the scriptures contain references to human motivation to care for and serve fellow human beings. This form of leadership emphasizes the necessity for servant leadership to include communication and collaboration amongst leaders and servants (van Dierendonck, 2011) and requires a person to make a conscious choice to lead and serve (Spears, 2010).

Servant leaders are self-motivated and internally driven to implement the behaviors and exhibit the characteristics of servant leadership (Spears, 2010). Robbins and Coulter (2005) studied servant leadership at the academic level and across organizational disciplines. Through their research, they concluded that specific situations dictate the leadership style necessary to address the needs of the followers. However, researchers continue to identify servant leadership as appropriate and effective in religious organizations including educational settings (Thompson, 2014).

Traditional leadership styles notoriously emphasize a top-down hierarchical structure and have been the mainstream style of leadership for centuries (Goldman Schuyler & Branigan, 2003). Contrary to hierarchical leadership models, servant leadership requires shared values, mutual trust, and an intrinsic desire to transition from self-serving to serving others (Greenleaf, 1977). Servant leadership has been identified as a shared leadership model that researchers advocate for use in organizations, including educational institutions (Thompson, 2014). Van Dierendonck (2011) cited a need for exploration on servant leadership, as perceived by

stakeholders through multiple forms of research and analysis. As such, this study was designed to implement the recommendation of Van Dierendonck (2011) through a qualitative single case study design exploring how servant leadership influences the perceptions of students at two private Christian denominational campuses.

While leadership has been well documented within the literature, further exploration of leadership resulted in the development of several leadership styles and models (Choi, 2014). Additionally, leadership emerged as a specific field of study in need of further exploration (Campbell, 1977; Northouse, 2007; Rost, 2000). Leadership affects individuals and groups directly and/or indirectly. In making the attempt to understand how ordinary people become great leaders, Bateman and Snell (2002) studied both good and bad managers in relation to leadership influence concerning work performance and job satisfaction. Results of their study concluded that the influence of a leader is central to followers in goal identification and attainment and that each leader influences his or her followers based on their individual management style (Bateman & Snell, 2002). Further, Robbins and Coulter (2005) found that leadership is situational within academic and organizational disciplines with the leadership style subject to change based on follower needs.

Transactional leadership is one model frequently used in organizations and relies on direct supervision, group performance, and the implementation of rewards and punishments (Northouse, 2007). The relationship of leader and follower in this model is compared to a business transaction in that tasks are delegated, and followers are expected to perform accordingly (Nazim, 2016). Additionally, relational leadership theories align with organizational driven practices (Northouse, 2007).

Servant leadership was found to be associated with transformational leadership with regards to the relationship and engagement between leaders and followers (Spears, 2004). In this

leadership model, the leader serves the follower directly and, instead of delegating tasks, the leader supports the followers to attain educational or organizational goals (Greenleaf, 1977). Northouse (2007), through exploring servant leadership, sought to identify specific, innate personality and behavior traits including intelligence, self-confidence, integrity, determination, and charisma. Additionally, Northouse (2007) concluded that visionary and charismatic leadership is a throwback to trait theory, as it relates to innate leadership traits that contribute to effective leadership. Through investigating the actions of leaders, behaviorists contended that these traits could be learned (Northouse, 2007), contrary to the findings of Greenleaf (1977). Kouzes and Posner (2002) suggested leadership traits are not restricted to select individuals but that anyone may elicit change and motivate people to better themselves and others. These contradictory findings led to further research and resulted in additional theories (Kouzes & Posner, 2002).

Further, Laub (1998) recommended studying the characteristics of servant leadership to measure an organization's effectiveness. Absent from the literature are studies involving Christian denominational colleges and universities and how servant leadership is exhibited therein (Lambert, 2015). Van Dierendonck (2001) recommended exploration of servant leadership, as perceived by multiple stakeholders, including but not limited to college and university students, using different research methodologies and designs. A stakeholder perspective not represented in the literature is that of students on Christian campuses. Since there is insufficient research currently addressing students as stakeholders, this study filled the gap relating to the impact of servant leadership, as perceived by students on private denominational campuses.

While this study is not an exhaustive review of the background of the study, it serves to document the necessity to proceed with this study on servant leadership. Leadership has been

proven to identify what elements are missing, how effective an organization is and could be, and measure the possible successes of organizations (Jones & Lioba, 2004). Leadership styles and the implementation of these varying styles continue to advance and evolve in accordance with the needs of organizations (Bashman, 2012).

### **Servant Leadership Defined**

Choi (2014) contended servant leadership emerged as a global phenomenon by the early 1970's. Greenleaf, as the theorist credited for introducing the concept of servant leadership to the mainstream thought of leadership theory, stated that great leaders result from leaders that see themselves as servants (Greenleaf, 1977). Therefore, the primary motive of a servant leader is to serve rather than lead. Greenleaf further suggested that the best test on the effectiveness of a servant leader is on whether they can build and maintain common good within an organization and society (Greenleaf, 1977). It should also be noted that it is not only the leader who has to serve but also the organization in order for servant leadership to be effective (Greenleaf, 1997). Through ongoing research into servant leadership and exploring its application in multiple settings including organizations and businesses, Gandolfi, Stone, and Deno (2017) contended that servant leadership is becoming more widely accepted in organizations.

### **Servant Leadership in Education**

Basham (2012) noted the growth consensus among various constituents in education that educational leadership and education in general must change dramatically in terms of leadership. A differing approach must be implemented to further education and allow its leaders (teachers) and followers (students) to be more innovative and work more collaboratively. Further, Basham (2012) found that the theory of a highly centralized management was ineffective and not relevant today, especially as modern world advances and becomes more inclusive and global. As such,

this section was dedicated to presenting research and findings specific to the implementation of servant leadership in the field of education.

Van Dierendonck (2011) suggested furthering the research into servant leadership through exploring the perceptions of multiple stakeholders. As servant leadership gains recognition in the field of leadership, Van Dierendonck (2011) acknowledged its limitations with respect to its place in businesses, organizations, and education. Additionally, at the time of Van Dierendonck's (2011) work, researchers were still determining the influence servant leadership has on performance and how servant leadership relates to other leadership styles and models.

Further, Basham (2012) acknowledged the growing consensus among a number of educators that educational leadership within academic institutions is in need of reform. Basham (2012) contended that centralized management leadership styles are ineffective and irrelevant in today's society considering ongoing societal evolution. Dyer and Dyer (2017) noted the significance of higher education on shaping and influencing the behaviors of leaders and professionals and suggested higher education also influences societal sustainability, which rationalizes the need to extend servant leadership research to higher educational institutions.

Extending the work by Van Dierendonck (2011), Satyaputra (2013) stipulated that higher education emphasizes the notion of "serving" and recommended institutes of higher education shift towards a servant model since it is considerably more viable. Further, Satyaputra (2013) suggested that servant leadership be incorporated into higher education due to its ability to promote, motivate, and positively influence students to become servants. Moreover, Saglam and Alpaydin (2017) emphasized the notion that servant leadership provides a modern approach to leadership within the educational sector. Research by Saglam and Alpaydin (2017) investigated the relationship between school administrators' personalities and their behavior

consistent with servant leadership, thus furthering the current literature about servant leadership in higher educational institutions.

Further, the implementation of servant leadership, as suggested by Satyaputra (2013), was found in a study by Lambert (2015). It was noted that the servant leader, or servant teacher, implements an alternative approach to teaching that emphasizes the needs of the learners through providing supports according to the needs of the students. Teachers, utilizing the servant leadership model and becoming servant teachers in educational settings were found to positively influence the academic performance of the students as well as foster personal and academic growth (Lambert, 2015). Additionally, these students were also found to serve their peers. This study also relied on Greenleaf's theory of servant leadership and utilized the qualitative methodology to explore how teachers incorporated servant leadership into their practices (Lambert, 2105).

### **Methodology**

While leadership has been well documented within the literature, research into servant leadership continues to emerge as researchers continue to identify the application of servant leadership across settings. While Dyer and Dyer (2017) acknowledged the influence that higher education has on students and developing leaders and, as such, recommended furthering the research on servant leadership in higher educational settings. Further, research by Lambert (2015) concluded that teachers utilizing the servant leadership model were effective at influencing the student performance and noted an increase in student engagement. However, Lambert's research was taken from the perspectives of the professors. Thus, student perceptions on servant leadership implemented within higher educational settings remain absent in the literature.

The theoretical foundation of this study relied upon work by Greenleaf (1977) in the development of the servant leadership model. Greenleaf (2002) asserted that the Christian church is potentially the best proponent of servant leadership considering servant leadership is founded on the principle that the servant leaders are responsible for serving, rather than just being served. Van Dierendonck (2011) documented the need for research on servant leadership from multiple stakeholder perspectives. Since the perceptions of students in higher educational settings remained unexplored, the researcher furthered the literature by exploring how the application of servant leadership on denominational campuses influenced students' understanding of servant leadership, involvement and behavior within their campus community. The subjects were 20 university undergraduate students from two private Christian denominational campuses in a mid-Atlantic Appalachian state with students ranging from freshman to seniors. Research on how students at two private Christian denominational campuses experience servant leadership filled the gap present in the literature and provided recommendations for implementing servant leadership in other organizations.

In this study, the central phenomenon was how the application of servant leadership on denominational campuses influenced students' understanding of servant leadership, involvement and behavior within their campus community. Therefore, this study explored the perceptions of students regarding how servant leadership leads to increased involvement and participation in their campus community. Additionally, this study investigated how servant leadership influences students at their respective campuses.

To conduct the single-case study design, the researcher relied upon the use of three sources of data including interviews, questionnaires, and a researcher's journal. The three sources of data were selected based on the purpose of this study, phenomenon, and the posed "how" research questions. Further, interviews, questionnaires, and a researcher's journal are

common when conducting single-case study designs and when answering “how” questions (Yin, 2014). Additionally, the phenomenon for this study aligns with the qualitative methodology in that this researcher explored the perceptions of individuals within the natural setting of the phenomenon (Stake, 1995).

### **Research Questions**

Three research questions were generated to understand and explore the phenomenon. In this study, the three research questions were “how” questions designed to explore the perceptions of students with regard to the influence of servant leadership on student involvement and behavior on campuses and how servant leadership leads students to become involved in activities and such on their campuses. Research questions included:

RQ1: How does servant leadership influence the perceptions of students at two private Christian denominational campuses?

RQ2: How does servant leadership lead students to be involved in their campus community?

RQ3: How does servant leadership influence student behaviors in campus life?

### **Research Design**

This qualitative descriptive single-case study sought to explore student perceptions of servant leadership, how servant leadership influences involvement on campuses, and the students’ definition of servant leadership based on students attending two private denominational Christian universities in a mid-Atlantic Appalachian state. Since this study explored a rare phenomenon absent from current available literature, the descriptive case study design was considered most appropriate (Yin, 2014). Further, the researcher examined how the implementation of servant leadership and behaviors was exhibited by servant leaders. These are consistent with the use of descriptive case studies, as Yin (2014) noted that investigating individual behaviors is one rationale for choosing the descriptive case

study over other options. While the other types of case studies were considered, including exploration, explanation, and evaluation studies, the descriptive case study best aligned with the purpose and phenomenon.

The case study design was utilized for its ability to explore a qualitative phenomenon that posed “how” questions in alignment with a qualitative methodology intended to gain in-depth knowledge of the phenomenon (Stake, 1995). The sample size for this study included 20 undergraduate students from two separate, private denominational universities. To research the phenomenon and answer the research questions, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and utilized questionnaires and a researcher’s journal to attain the data. The use of interviews, questionnaires, and a researcher’s journal are considered appropriate for conducting qualitative case studies (Yin, 2014).

This study relied on the single-case study research design since this study was holistic with no subunits identified (Yin, 2009). The study was bounded due to the exclusion of all other students by limiting the study to undergraduate students at two private denominational campuses. Additionally, Yin (2009) established that a case study should be utilized when the research questions are “how” or “why.” In the case of this study, only “how” questions were posed to explore this phenomenon. Moreover, according to Yin (2014), “the case study has been a common research method in psychology, sociology, ... business, education, nursing, and community planning ...[since] the distinctive need for cases study research arises out of the desire to understand complex social phenomenon” (p. 4). Further, this was a descriptive single-case study to present on a “rarely encountered situation or one not normally accessible to researchers” (Yin, 2014, p. 215). Therefore, this study used the descriptive single-case study research design.

## **Population and Sample Selection**

The sample for this descriptive single-case study was comprised of 20 participants from undergraduate students from each of two pre-selected private, denominational universities. This study included students ranging from freshman to seniors pursuing an undergraduate degree. Through the selection of only students attending two particular Christian universities, the unit of analysis was isolated to a specific group and within a certain time period distinguishable from other similar groups, which established and bounded the case (Yin, 2014). Yin (2009) contended that data saturation, the point in which the researcher would no longer glean further data exploring the phenomenon, would be reached through the participation of 12-15 individuals. Therefore, the researcher sought and attained data saturation through identifying 20 potential participants, using purposive sampling. By gathering 20 potential participants, the researcher was able to protect against attrition.

A case study conducted by DeMatthews (2015) relied upon one participant and was able to gather enough data to answer the research questions using only two sources of data. Additional qualitative researchers, including Watson et al. (2016) conducted case studies relying on fewer than 20 participants while Haber-Curran and Tillapaugh (2014) utilized a mixed-methods study by included 26 participants for the qualitative phase of the study. Therefore, based on similar research and the case study design, the researcher concluded 20 participants to be appropriate for this study. The 20 students who participated comprised the sample population enabled the research to ensure a bounded case, as participants were attending specific unique universities, as opposed to state and public universities.

Since this was a descriptive single-case study design, participants were requested to participate in semi-structured interviews and questionnaires. They were notified of this participation required in the Informed Consent document. These two sources of data were used

to answer the three posed “how” questions for the study while the researcher’s journal added valuable information to each research question as well. The researcher’s journal recorded additional information pertaining to the research questions and phenomenon with an emphasis on participant behaviors, mannerisms, intonation and inflection, and facial features during the interviews. The researcher also documented comparisons between and amongst the participants, common phrases and words used by participants, and similarities and differences in the ways in which participants answered the interview questions and questionnaire.

With regards to the interview questions, the researcher constructed the interview questions with the intention of ensuring interviews would last no less than 30 minutes in length but expected interviews to be completed in approximately one hour. The semi-structured interviews included a total of 15 questions while the questionnaire had 20 questions, primarily seeking demographic information but also contained questions designed to answer the posed research questions. The use of three sources of data enabled the research to conduct methodological triangulation (Denzin, 2009).

### **Sources of Data**

Three sources of data were selected to explore the phenomenon and address the “how” questions generated for this study. While case study research may involve a variety of data collection methods (Stake, 1995), the researcher committed to the use of semi-structured interviews, questionnaires, and a researcher’s journal. Since the research sought to explore how students perceived servant leadership and its influence on denominational university campuses, it was necessary to utilize three sources of data to reach data saturation and ensure thick descriptive data was obtained (Yin, 2014).

The research questions were all “how” questions designed to elicit the perceptions of participants to gain insight into the phenomenon. In qualitative studies, it is imperative that the

research examines the perceptions and lived-experiences of the participants (Stake, 1995). As such, the researcher wrote semi-structured interview questions to guide the interviews but also allow participants an opportunity to provide additional information into their experiences and perceptions regarding the phenomenon (Yin, 2014). Further, the researcher constructed a questionnaire for participants that also targeted the phenomenon (Yin, 2009). Through the creation of questions specific to the phenomenon and purpose of this study, the researcher increased the reliability and validity of the study (Yin, 2009).

While the semi-structured interviews included questions pertaining to the phenomenon and the perceptions of the participants, the questionnaires elicited additional insight into the phenomenon as well as demographic information. Questionnaires returned data on: (a) student perceptions of the application of Servant Leadership, (b) how servant leadership influences students, (c) how servant leadership makes a difference in leading students to be involved on their campus community, and (d) how students exhibit the qualities of servant leadership. The third source of data was the researcher's journal that was used to record notes during and after the interviews as well as report on biases, assumptions, observations, and thoughts pertaining to the phenomenon.

For this study, semi-structured interviews provided substantial detail while the questionnaires and researcher's journal contributed additional depth and data that was used to reference against the interview responses during method triangulation (Denzin, 2009). The researcher's journal recorded additional information pertaining to the research questions and phenomenon with an emphasis on participant behaviors, mannerisms, intonation and inflection, and facial features during the interviews. The researcher also documented comparisons between and amongst the participants, common phrases and words used by participants, and similarities and differences in the ways in which participants answered the interview questions and

questionnaire. Validity and reliability were also enhanced through the use of three sources of data, as the sources yielded a sufficient amount of data that aligned with the research questions and phenomenon of this study found after coding and analysis (Yin, 2014).

### **Results**

Literature showed that many have studied leadership and servant leadership from the perspective of academic advisors, faculty and staff (Bodia & Nawaz, 2010) but no studies, to date, have explored servant leadership from the perspective of the student on a private denominational college campus. Thus, research exploring the application of servant leadership on private Christian universities from the perspective of students remained absent from the literature prior to this study. Further, since students represent a different set of stakeholders within the university setting (Van Dierendonck, 2011; Lambert, 2015) and this study relied on students attending denominational universities, their perceptions should be considered unique (Spears, 2004). While Blanchard (2017) contended that role models for the concept of servant leadership can be found in various philosophies and persons throughout history, the perceptions of students attending Christian universities remains absent in the literature and requires exploration.

Participant subjects ranged, in age, from 18-21 years of age. There were 14 females and six males that chose to participate in this study, thus totaling 20 participants. Each participant had either graduated from high school or attained a GED and was pursuing an undergraduate degree. The results yielded by this study enabled the researcher to provide a comprehensive overview of the perceptions of servant leadership held by undergraduate students attending two denominational Christian universities.

*Servant Leadership Running in the Background* emerged as the theme from the data of this study. This theme was derived from keywords and phrase that comprised codes. Some of

those keywords and phrases included “opportunities,” “background,” “serving,” “influenced,” and campus community.” Students repeatedly shared how they were able to recognize opportunities to exhibit servant leadership on their respective campus communities. The participant responses regarding servant leadership and the frequency of the aforementioned codes, led to the creation of the theme *Servant Leadership Running in the Background*. This theme provided insight into each of the three research questions for the study. However, it primarily answered the first and second research questions regarding how servant leadership influences the perceptions of participants and how servant leadership leads students to be more involved on campus.

Participant 2 in the study perceived servant leadership to be “somewhat in the background and not in the forefront of this campus.” While Participant 2 acknowledged the presence of servant leadership, the participant also noted that it existed in the background and attributed this to be because the campus “is small where everyone knows each other.” This participant went on to explain how “you can make friends easily, therefore, you are not just a number.” The size of the campus influenced the perception of servant leadership and its influence on students and their involvement on campus since it was a small school and students knew one another.

Further, Participant 2 acknowledged that servant leadership was present on the campus and exhibited by faculty, staff, housekeeping and other students. Participant 2 shared, “When I think of servant leadership, I think of all the staff in the cafeteria because they are so open, warm, [and] they complement others and they brighten my day when I see them.” For this participant, the servant leadership was revealed to be present on campus amongst faculty and the presence of servant leadership, running in the background, elicited strong positive feelings for this participant.

Additionally, Participant 2 wanted to add, “no one calls it servant leadership, but it is what they are doing; serving others by being kind, open, warm and just wanting to know how your day is going.” She explained, “I see the workers in the cafeteria and actually everyone on campus in some way, shape, or form unselfishly serving others. Isn’t this what servant leadership is all about?” This participant shared how “students know that they are to be leaders and servants, but it is not in our vocabulary.” Participant 2 was able to identify characteristics of servant leaders and share experiences engaging with servant leaders on campus but also acknowledged that the term “servant leadership” was not used on commonplace. This may account for why the participant stated, “Servant leadership exists but, in the background, kind of like on the computer where one program is running in the background of the program, which you are working [on] at present. This was one participant that found servant leadership to be influential on campus but remarked that servant leadership was in the background despite the exhibited behaviors of campus faculty, staff, and students that implement servant leadership.

For Participant 10, it was apparent that servant leadership existed on campus and there were times that it was more prominently noted in the forefront of this participant’s mind and other times when it occurred in the background. This participant shared examples of when servant leadership was present based on their perception and eluded to the influence of servant leadership when the participant said, [it] would encourage servant leadership in front of me.” Further, Participant 10 shared, “It is only after you have been here on campus for a while that you discover that servant leadership is happening.” Based on the perceptions of this participant, servant leadership exists on campus, but it takes some time to see and appreciate it across the campus.

The perceptions provided by Participant 6 echoed Participant 10’s sentiment regarding servant leadership on campus. Participant 6, in fulfilling her role as a resident advisor on campus,

the participant reported seeing servant leadership but found it was not at the forefront of the campus but existed in the background. This participant stated, “I believe servant leadership on this campus is in the background and not the first thing students see when they entertain [the idea of] coming to the campus as a student.” Participant 6 shared, “This is not a bad thing; it is simply reality. The longer you are here on campus the more you’ll see servant leadership being played out [across campus].” Participant 2, Participant 10, and Participant 6 all found noted how servant leadership existed on their respective campuses but remained in the background. Further, Participant 10 and Participant 6 shared that it takes time and exposure to servant leadership on the campus before students begin to see servant leadership in action.

Further, the perceptions of Participant 9 were similar to the perceptions shared by the other participants. In the case of Participant 9, this participant described servant leadership being grounded on their respective campus. According to Participant 9, “Servant leadership works to bring the campus together, especially as it keeps us grounded in a good spirit on campus. I find this campus [and the people] very helpful [and] friendly and [I see] very successful people.” This participant reflected back to freshman year stating, “I also believe servant leadership is in the background of this campus, especially my freshman year, but it is growing through Christian leaders who put into action their faith in the community on campus and off campus.” The perceptions of this participant were similar to other participants in that servant leadership existed on campus but in the background becoming more apparent to students over time.

### **Implications**

This qualitative descriptive, single-case study explored the perceptions of the application of servant leadership at two private, Christian denominational universities. This particular exploration was developed to address a gap in the research literature identified by Van Dierendonck (2011) and Lambert (2015) and to further the current knowledge on this

phenomenon through exploring students attending private Christian denominational universities. The implications included theoretically, practically, and future implications based on the findings of this study.

### **Theoretical Implications**

Based on the findings of this study, the conceptual framework was proven appropriate based on this study's research questions, purpose and design, which was derived, in part, from Greenleaf's (1977) theory of servant leadership. The data collected resulted in theoretical implications including the appropriateness of servant leadership on university campuses.

Participants shared how servant leadership was influential in motivating and inspiring individuals to serve members of their campus community as well as members of their surrounding community off campus. Based on Greenleaf's (1977) theory of servant leadership, servant leadership inspires and motivates others to serve by the servant leaders serving others before themselves. Further, providing students with the opportunities to serve others became a theme and illustrated how giving student's opportunities to serve increased student involvement in campus resulting in additional students exhibiting the characteristics of servant leadership. Thus, this study has theoretical implications with regards to the necessity to implement and foster servant leadership in higher education.

### **Practical Implications**

The conclusions of this study revealed that servant leadership and the student perceptions of its application have the ability to impact students attending private Christian universities. The study found that students at both campuses recognized the underlying philosophy of Greenleaf's (1977) theory of servant leadership and the philosophical foundations of their respective institutions in regard to servant leadership. For universities, practical implications included providing students opportunities to serve. At universities that do not

currently implement or encourage servant leadership, encouraging students to become involved through creating programs and establishing outreach opportunities with groups or organizations within the community should yield servant leaders. From this study, participants reported opportunities to serve as a gateway to exhibiting servant leadership. Further, participants shared how servant leadership was a domino effect in that seeing others involved in the community inspired them to become more active. Therefore, practical implications emerged from participants reporting the benefits of servant leadership in their lives as well as how servant leaders impacted the communities.

### **Future Implications**

This study revealed that servant leadership, from the perspective of students attending two private Christian campuses, was much needed and beneficial to the participants and the community. Future implications should include an increased number of adults engaging in community service and volunteering their time and energy to serving others. The results of this potential implication include members of the community receiving ongoing supports that may yield to reduced homelessness and starving individuals. Further, for individuals volunteering at schools, there may be an increased interest and passion for volunteering or tutoring, free of charge, struggling students. The result would be higher academic achievement that may yield to more students attending colleges, gaining employment, and/or increased community involvement by school-aged students. Since it was found that observing and witnessing servant leaders providing services, more individuals became active in serving others, the application of servant on university campuses and within the community may result in greater outreach programs to serve those in need.

## **Conclusions**

This study showed several recommendations for future practice in the field of higher education, specifically in terms of student perceptions of the application of servant leadership at private, Christian denominational campuses. At a basic level, higher-educational institutions should provide their student bodies with opportunities to serve on and off campus, thus engaging students in their community while attending their respective universities and propel them to continue serving beyond their college years. Since servant leadership was found to be influential on motivating and inspiring others to serve (Greenleaf, 1977), colleges and universities should promote servant leadership. Further, McKenzie & Swords (2000) concluded the appropriateness of servant leadership in educational institutions since it contributes to the empowering of others.

Further, each institution should, according to the findings of this study, review its philosophical foundations in terms of servant leadership and consider integrating servant leadership into its school's philosophy and purpose. Additionally, each higher education institution should implement elements of servant leadership and encourage faculty and staff to exhibit servant leader characteristics to facilitate the emergence of servant leadership on campus. Servant leadership on campuses should also include opportunities for students to serve the community until students are motivated to expand the university's efforts to increase student involvement and create new opportunities independently.

Finally, each institution should explore if and how students serve other students on campus and if and how students are active members of the community. After assessing the current level of student involvement and levels of serving, the university should investigate opportunities to expand upon work already done and broaden opportunities. It is also suggested that faculty and staff work in unison with students to determine appropriate outreach programs and opportunities to serve based on student interests and community needs. Future clubs and

organizations may arise from university faculty working with students. Universities should also consider the possible impact that students may have on their communities and consider other ways to incorporate servant leadership on and off campuses.

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**Book Review:**

**Schunk, D., & Greene, J. (Eds.). (2017). *Handbook of Self-Regulation of Learning and Performance* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.**

**Natercia Valle**

**Abstract**

The theory of self-regulation has been widely discussed in past decades. Models of self-regulation are abundant in different fields including education, public health, and finance. As an acknowledgement of the ever-growing relevance of self-regulation in the field of education, this review discusses how Schunk and Greene presented this complex theory in the second edition of the *Handbook of Self-Regulation of Learning and Performance*. The book features 530 pages and 31 chapters contributed by 69 researchers. The concept of self-regulation is used as the backbone to discuss learning, performance, pedagogical approaches, and educational research. These discussions are organized into five sections to guide readers based on specific concepts and contexts. This review follows the structure of the book and offers some critiques on strengths and limitations of the themes presented.

*Keywords:* book review, self-regulation of learning and performance

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## **Book Overview**

The second edition of the *Handbook of Self-Regulation of Learning and Performance* (Schunk, D., & Greene, J., Eds., 2017) features a consistent structure around theory, research, and implications of self-regulation, which is organized into five major sections: 1) Basic domains of self-regulation of learning and performance; 2) Self-regulation of learning and performance in context; 3) Technology and self-regulation of learning and performance; 4) Methodology and assessment of self-regulation of learning and performance; and 5) Individual and group differences in self-regulation of learning and performance. This review discusses each of these sections, and offers some critiques on the strengths and limitations of the book as well as some final considerations.

### **Basic Domains of Self-Regulation of Learning and Performance**

In this section, some preeminent names behind the literature on self-regulation discuss different theoretical perspectives. For example, Schunk and Usher (2017) consider the social cognitive theory of self-regulation, where individual physical, cognitive, and emotional responses interact with the environment. The key element of this description is that individuals do not solely react to the environment, but rather are capable of implementing adjustments such as regulating emotions by focusing on positive thoughts or by taking an action in anticipation of desirable outcomes. This approach to self-regulation is based on the premise that self-regulation develops in a cyclical manner where forethoughts set the stage for performance, and reflection is used to guide adjustments based on the goals set in the forethought stage. In this model of self-regulation, observation, evaluation, and reflection all function as important regulatory sub-functions.

From a different standpoint, Winnie (2017), and Dent and Hoyle (2017) discuss self-regulation theory from an information processing perspective, giving emphasis to cognition and metacognition, examining how these can be connected to skills and strategies to support self-regulation. These authors also acknowledge the influence of emotions and motivation, which are further discussed in a subsequent chapter titled “Motivation and Affect in Self-Regulated Learning”.

Going a little deeper into the discussion of how affect and motivation influence self-regulation in learning, Brown, Schwartz, and Efklides (2017) describe the Metacognitive and Affective Model of Self-Regulated Learning as a twofold structure where task can be considered at a personal level or at a level that combines task and personal elements. At the personal level, motivation and metacognitive knowledge and skills influence and are influenced by self-concept and affect. In the task-personal level, cognition, metacognition and affect, and self-regulation of affect and effort interplay as the individual carries out the task. It is worth noting that even though motivation can set the stage for task performance, regulation in the task stage itself also influences motivation, depicting a two-way interaction between these two levels of task development.

The first section ends with the discussion on types of regulation (self-, co-, and shared regulation), where Miller, Järvelä, and Hadwin (2017) describe critical features of regulation to explain how it develops in collaborative learning environments. The authors define self-regulated learning as a necessary complement for shared regulation. Shared regulation, on the other hand, is described as a strategic approach where groups negotiate cognitive, behavioral, motivational, and emotional states towards the same goal even when task goal and goal alignment are not confirmed by members of the group. In fact, the authors point out that this awareness element is what differentiates shared regulation from co-regulation. In processes of co-regulation, prompts

can be used and awareness about goals, beliefs, and progress become a function of group interaction and exchanges.

### **Self-regulation of learning and performance in context**

Section II offers a more practical view of self-regulated learning situated into specific subjects such as mathematics, reading, writing, science, social studies, music, and sports. For practitioners with a limited amount of time who are interested in how the theory of self-regulated learning could be contextualized within their areas of expertise, this section of the book would be helpful. Different constructs such as scaffolding, mental imagery, feedback, and epistemic cognition are discussed based on specific models of self-regulation or theoretical approaches. The last two chapters of this section are somewhat distinct from the rest because they focus on broader topics (standards and teachers' training), which could benefit practitioners from different content-areas interested in how self-regulated learning is connected to standards and how instructors can both facilitate and implement self-regulation. The latter event is described as a model for students who may benefit from observing how their teachers self-regulate.

### **Technology and Self-Regulation of Learning and Performance**

In this section, a variety of pedagogical approaches (e.g. scaffolding, modeling) and learning technologies (e.g., simulations, intelligent tutoring systems) are mentioned to frame the importance of employing technology to support self-regulation of learning. The emphasis on the importance of learning technologies for self-regulation is partially based on the ubiquitous presence of technology in our daily lives as well as on their non-linear flow of information, which requires learners to be self-regulated. Although methodology was not the focus of this section, there is an interesting explanation of how some obtrusive and unobtrusive trace methodologies can be employed to investigate processes of self-regulation as learners use advanced learning technologies. (e.g., hypermedia, virtual reality). With the fewest number of

chapters, this section about technology is reflected in other sections of the book that address how strategies to promote self-regulated learning are implemented. From tools that support scaffolding of information to those that foster group collaboration, learning technologies can be found in virtually all descriptions of practical pedagogical approaches.

### **Methodology and Assessment of Self-Regulation of Learning and Performance**

This section offers an overview of methods that can be used to identify instances of self-regulation as well as the why and how of their enactment in learning contexts. It starts with the most traditional methods such as self-reports and think-aloud protocols, and finishes with more innovative approaches such as trace data and data mining. Validity issues are discussed as a crucial aspect for reliable data collection and analysis. The authors offer an historical perspective on the advantages of specific methods, while also discussing how they can be implemented and under which conditions they are appropriate. For example, case studies are presented as a suitable method to investigate pedagogical principles, frameworks to support professional learning and development, and how pedagogical approaches can enhance or hinder processes of self-regulation. Furthermore, case studies are described as an appropriate method to communicate research findings not only to the research community but also to practitioners who are familiar with the complexities of authentic learning experiences accounted for in this method.

### **Individual and Group Differences in Self-Regulation of Learning and Performance**

In these final chapters, researchers and practitioners will find a collection of important areas of investigation and practice that are academically and socially relevant. For example, calibration of performance and academic delay of gratification are discussed from a social cognitive perspective, while help-seeking is discussed under achievement goal theory, which considers contextual aspects such as social climate. This section also covers perspectives of cognitive development, epistemic thinking, cross-cultural contexts, and self-regulation regarding

individuals with special needs. By breaking down several concepts and theories into contextualized chunks of descriptions, this section provides readers with guidelines for research and practice to support learners' self-regulation in a variety of social and cultural contexts.

### **Strengths and Limitations**

The initial description of self-regulation and the research-based information provided in each chapter is a desirable feature of the book and helps to set up the stage for readers, especially those who are less familiar with the concept of self-regulation of learning and related constructs such as cognition, metacognition, affect, behavior, and motivation. The practical implications and "future research directions" offered at the end of each chapter provide invaluable resources to academics interested in the trends of particular areas (e.g., teacher training, learners with special needs). Finally, the fluid language and careful use of acronyms provide a smooth, enjoyable reading experience.

Regarding limitations, the book is somewhat repetitive for readers already familiar with the concept of self-regulation of learning and may not be easily fixed given that other groups of readers such as novice researchers may actually benefit from the different angles and perspectives presented throughout the book. Second, chapters that discuss trace data and data mining methods could include emphasis on how learners' data may be used to support learners' self-regulation. Moreover, these chapters could provide a broader picture of the nature of data collection and analysis by mentioning how some limitations may exist to identify learners' self-regulation processes.

### **Conclusion**

This book provides valuable resources for researchers and practitioners alike. For researchers, the more theoretical chapters put into perspective the relevance of self-regulation of learning and performance and how the theory of self-regulation continues to grow and gain

new shades based on the ever-increasing changes in technology and methodological approaches, as well as on the refinement of related paradigms on how humans learn and perceive learning (Boekaerts, Pintrich, & Zeidner, 2000). For practitioners, it provides a variety of examples on how to support learners' self-regulation with day-to-day pedagogical approaches. Thus, despite a few limitations, the *Handbook of Self-Regulation of Learning and Performance* offers a safe place for readers to challenge their beliefs, reflect on their practices, and self-evaluate their approaches when it comes to self-regulation of learning and performance.

### **Editors' Information**

Dale H. Schunk is a professor in the Department of Teacher Education and Higher Education at the University of North Carolina. He was an editor in the first edition of the *Handbook of Self-Regulation of Learning and Performance* (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2011) and is a prolific writer on the subject of self-regulation of learning and performance.

Jeffrey A. Greene is an associate professor in the Learning Sciences and Psychological Studies program at the University of North Carolina. He has published numerous articles and books about self-regulation.

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