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Bubble-Wrapped Student: Are Trigger Warnings Necessary in Higher Education?

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Abstract

Over the last year, trigger warnings have emerged in discussions on college campuses and within higher education professional literature; however, there has been little scholarly research on the topic. Trigger warnings are disclaimers added to course materials and syllabi to alert students of the potential for course materials to cause discomfort or be considered offensive. The purpose of this case study was to assess the use of trigger warnings within a state higher education system, including a community and technical college, a predominantly undergraduate institution, and a university. This study examined the extent to which trigger warnings are used in higher education courses; faculty perceptions on the effects of trigger warnings on students' learning; faculty perceptions on the effect of trigger warnings on students' perceptions of course material; and faculty perceptions on the effect of trigger warnings on academic freedom. Findings indicate a fairly high level of uncertainty among faculty on the subject.

The Bubble-Wrapped Student: Are Trigger Warnings Necessary in Higher Education?

Trigger warnings—disclaimers in course syllabi or materials that are supposed to notify students that an assigned reading, film, etc., may include language or scenes that have the potential to make them feel uncomfortable—have been controversial since their appearance on college campuses a year or so ago. Advocates argue that they protect students who have had traumatic experiences (sexual assault chief among them, although other forms of violence and racism in subject matter have been targeted as well) from having to recall or relive them through their coursework, while opponents take the position that trigger warning policies constitute an infringement on professors' academic freedom. Moreover, they argue, such policies "deny students one of the hallmarks of a college education: being made to feel intellectually uncomfortable" (Flaherty, 2014).

The Chronicle of Higher Education and the American Association of University Professors, among others, have been following the implementation of, and responses to, trigger warnings since their inception and have pointed out that their presence is becoming increasingly ubiquitous, infiltrating even the two-year institutions. A professor at a community college in California, for example, recently agreed to insert a disclaimer into the syllabus for his graphic novel course after a student and her parents objected to what she viewed as violent and pornographic content in some of the texts on the reading list. Emerson (2015) reported that the president of Crofton Hills College said in an email that she was attempting to head off future challenges:

> We are attempting to avoid this situation in the future and Professor Bartlett has agreed to include a disclaimer on the syllabus in the future so students have a better understanding of the course content. I know he appreciated the differing views presented by Ms. Shultz in his class. (para. 3)

Whether the professor in question may have actually "appreciated the differing views" on his course materials, it seems clear that what started out as an occasional cautionary note on articles in the feminist blogosphere has begun to spread to print media, film, art, music, and now campuses. In regard to the latter, however, attention to the phenomenon seems to be confined largely to the professional as opposed to the scholarly literature; that is, while professors seem to have much to say about the imposition of trigger warnings, few are writing about them in conventional academic journals. This project is a preliminary attempt to remedy that situation by conducting an examination of the subject in a three-site case study at different levels of the higher education enterprise—one community and technical college, one predominantly undergraduate institution, and one university.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to assess the use of trigger warnings at different levels within the higher education system. This study examined trigger warnings in higher education through four key areas: the extent to which trigger warnings are used in higher education courses; faculty perceptions on the effects of trigger warnings on students' learning; faculty perceptions on the effect of trigger warnings on students' perceptions of course material; and

faculty perceptions on the effect of trigger warnings on academic freedom. The following questions were used to guide the study.

1. To what extent are trigger warnings used in higher education courses?
2. What are the perceptions of faculty regarding the effect, if any, of trigger warnings on student learning?
3. What are the perceptions of faculty regarding the effect, if any, of trigger warnings on student perception of course materials?
4. What are the perceptions of faculty regarding the effect, if any, of trigger warnings on academic freedom?

Review of the Literature

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) has declared the use of trigger warnings as a "threat to academic freedom"; however, an initial search of the literature regarding the use of trigger warnings in higher education has resulted in very little research on the subject (2014, para. 1). Preliminary searches through Ebsco Host/Academic Search Premier returned only brief articles from periodicals such as *The Chronicle of Higher Education, The Republic* and *The Atlantic*. Thus, scarcely any scholarly research has been conducted on the perceptions of the use of trigger warnings in higher education.

In the September 2015 issue of *The Atlantic*, Lukianoff and Haidt explored the use of trigger warnings in classrooms of higher education. The widely read article discusses how students and parents are the driving force behind the movement to include trigger warnings in courses that use content that could potentially unleash strong emotions. Faculty at several colleges and universities including the University of California, Santa Barbara, Wellesley College, and Oberlin College in Ohio are currently reviewing policies focusing on the use of trigger warnings in syllabi (Flaherty, 2014).

DeWitt Godfrey, professor of art and art history at Colgate University and president of the College Art Association (CAA) Board of Directors stated in an address to the AAUP in June 2015, "I would be very wary of any policy that required instructors to provide trigger warnings, because essentially that would mean the University was regulating certain kinds of speech/imagery and denoting it as deviant or disturbing" (para. 16). Godfrey's organization and the Modern Language Association (MLA) conducted a survey and found that more than half of respondents had at least once voluntarily provided students with trigger warnings (Kingkade, 2015). Over 800 faculty members responded to the survey with less than one percent stating that their college or university had adopted a trigger warning policy. The findings suggest that trigger warning policies at institutions of higher education are not widespread. In fact, the survey data suggest that most trigger warnings are the product of the faculty's censoring themselves (Kingkade, 2015).

Still, organizations such as AAUP, the College Art Association and the Modern Language Association are releasing cautionary statements for academia. The fear is that trigger warnings may eventually harm academic freedom, as well as freedom of speech. Godfrey stated

in his address to the AAUP membership, "[T]he damage to freedom of speech—and simply to education, particularly feminist education—is incalculable" (2015, para. 16).

In a recent article in *The Republic,* written as a rebuttal to Lukianoff and Haidt (2015), Hanlon (2015), an English professor at Colby College, describes his evolution to the acceptance of trigger warnings:

> Rather than being the end of a difficult conversation, trigger warnings are actually the beginning of one: I use them in the classroom as a way of preparing students who may be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder, while also easing the entire class into a discussion of the material. (2015, para.8)

This concept of using trigger warnings to open the discussion of material that may illicit "microaggressions" among students is a central theme throughout the literature written from faculty members.

Largely, the recent push to include trigger warnings in course materials is coming directly from students. For example, in 2014 student government leaders from the University of California, Santa Barbara passed a resolution asking professors to develop an official trigger warning policy. The students asked for faculty to include a written warning to students when they might be exposed to graphic images or video depicting rape, sexual assault or abuse. The list of suggestions also included self-injurious behavior, suicide, graphic violence, pornography, kidnapping, and depictions of gore.

Angela Shaw-Thornburgj, an English faculty member at Livingstone College, is in agreement with students that trigger warnings should occupy a place in American education. Shaw-Thornburg describes her own experience after course material triggered flashbacks from a childhood rape. She states, "Telling students who come to our classes with severe traumas that often leave them with post-traumatic stress disorder to just suck it up is not a reasonable response to what trauma does to you" (2014, para. 12). Shaw-Thornburg asserts that failure to recognize the traumatic effect of the written language is dangerous:

> To blithely introduce powerful, rousing images of violence into your classroom, to tell your students that these words and images are worthy of thought and study, and then to deny that such stuff might at least bruise those students is the worst kind of hypocrisy for those whose stock in trade is the word. (2014, para. 15)

Conversely, McNally (2014) stresses that the trigger warnings movement is rooted in the growing number of feminist blogs addressing sexual assault and are not to be applied to all discussions regarding difficult subjects. In fact, McNally argues that applying trigger warnings is exactly the opposite of what academics should be doing when addressing controversial and highly sensitive subjects. He outlines several reasons that trigger warnings should not be applied to academic course material and, more specifically, to syllabi. The reasons include his assertion that most trauma survivors do not develop post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) and that confronting triggers, not avoiding them, is the best way to overcome PTSD (para. 8).

Study Design and Method

This was a non-experimental, descriptive multi-campus case study that examined trigger warnings through three different types of higher education institutions: one community and technical college, one four-year predominantly undergraduate institution, and one university. The mixed-method study used survey questions to assess faculty members' views on trigger warnings and performed a content analysis on syllabi from each institution. All three sites administered the survey, which collected information on faculty members' use of trigger warnings, perceptions of trigger warnings on student learning and academic freedom, and demographic information including teaching experience and subject area. All three sites also reviewed syllabi from the last academic year (fall 2014 – fall 2015).

The community and technical college selected syllabi from 10 different subject areas from a repository and solicited syllabi from faculty. The subject areas included English, fine arts, humanities, history, general education, music, psychology, political science, sociology, and education. The four-year college accessed syllabi through division offices in language and education, fine arts, humanities, and social science. The university syllabi were randomly selected from a campus repository, with one-third from the College of Liberal Arts (literature, psychology, history, and women's studies), one-third from the College of Education and Professional Development, and one-third from all other departments. The content analysis examined 46 syllabi from the community and technical college, 275 syllabi from the predominantly undergraduate institution, and 100 syllabi from the university. All personal information was removed prior to analysis. The analysis examined the presence of trigger warnings, the courses in which the warnings were present, the language used in crafting the warnings, the subjects of the warnings, whether specific media were mentioned, and the location of the warning in the syllabus.

The population for the survey consisted of all currently employed faculty and adjunct faculty from both the community and technical college and the university. Only faculty and adjunct faculty from education, fine arts, humanities, and social sciences were included from the predominantly undergraduate institution. Faculty, researchers, and EdD students in the College of Education and Professional Development at the university involved in the study reviewed the survey for clarity and purpose. The survey was administered to current faculty at the community and technical college and the university using SurveyMonkey and at the predominantly undergraduate institution using Qualtrics. Participation in the survey was voluntary and no identifying information or IP addresses were collected.

Findings

The findings will be reported in two sections, one for the qualitative data collected from the content analysis of the syllabi and another for the quantitative data collected through the online survey. A total of 421 syllabi were collected: 100 from the university, 275 from the predominantly undergraduate institution, and 46 from the community and technical college. The survey invitation was sent to current faculty: 789 at the university, 117 at the predominantly undergraduate institution, and 186 at the community and technical college.

Qualitative Findings

The syllabi were chosen for examination based on those academic disciplines which have been designated in the extant research to be those where trigger warnings are most likely to be found. Those fields included art, education, English, leadership, political science, psychology, sociology, among others. A content analysis was conducted on each syllabus for the following purposes: (a) to determine whether a trigger warning was present; (b) to examine the language that was used in crafting the warning; (c) to identify the subject matter to which the warning referred (e.g., racism, homophobia, violence, rape, religion, etc.); (d) to identify the media to which the warning referred (e.g., art, music, text, film, etc.); and (e) to see where the warning was placed (e.g., front page, back page, as a stand-alone item, etc.). Those findings were then examined to discern any potential themes or patterns that may have existed across the sample.

University findings.

There were 100 syllabi selected at random from two major areas—the College of Liberal Arts and the College of Education and Professional Development—and from 31 other areas. Tables 1 and 2 display the respective colleges' syllabi and the corresponding presence of trigger warnings from each.

Table 1
University Areas Sampled

College/School	*n*	Percent
Liberal Arts	35	35%
Education	34	34%
Other	31	31%

Table 2
University Area Trigger Warnings

College/School	*n*	Percent
Liberal Arts	4	67%
Education	2	33%
Other	-	-

Predominantly undergraduate institution findings.

There were 275 syllabi selected at random from four academic divisions at the predominantly undergraduate institution (PUI): education, fine arts; humanities, and social sciences. Tables 3 and 4 show the academic majors and the corresponding presence of trigger warnings.

Table 3
Predominantly Undergraduate Areas Sampled

School/Division	*n*	Percent
Education	29	11%
Fine Arts	61	22%
Humanities	38	14%
Social Sciences	147	53%

Table 4
Predominantly Undergraduate Areas Trigger Warnings

School/Division	*n*	Percent
Education	-	-
Fine Arts	2	34%
Humanities	-	-
Social Sciences	4	66%

Community and technical college findings.

There were 46 syllabi selected at random from 10 academic fields at the community and technical college: English, fine arts, humanities, history, general education, music, psychology, political science, sociology, and education. Tables 5 and 6 identify the academic fields and presence of trigger warnings from each.

Table 5
Community and Technical Areas Sampled

Department/Division	*n*	Percent
English	9	20%
Fine Arts	3	7%
Humanities	1	2%
History	4	9%
General Education	2	4%
Music	2	4%
Psychology	6	13%
Political Science	7	15%
Sociology	4	9%
Education	8	17%

Table 6
Community and Technical College Area Trigger Warnings

Department/Division	*n*	Percent
English	-	-
Fine Arts	-	-
Humanities	-	-
History	-	-
General Education	-	-
Music	-	-
Psychology	-	-
Political Science	6	75%
Sociology	2	25%
Education	-	-

Trigger language, subject area, media and placement.

While there was no uniform language for crafting the warnings in the six university syllabi that featured them, the sample most often acknowledged the potential for sensitive, offensive or uncomfortable issues, with the term "sensitive" used most often. The subjects most often mentioned were sex/sexuality, nudity and violence, with sexuality being mentioned most often. It was reading material which was most often cited as the locus for the sensitive material, and there were no common areas of placement in the syllabus. Neither the six syllabi from the predominantly undergraduate institution nor the eight from the community and technical college featured any common elements.

Quantitative Findings

The population for the study consisted of all currently employed faculty and adjunct faculty from the community and technical college and the university, but included faculty and adjunct faculty from only education, fine arts, humanities, and social sciences from the predominantly undergraduate institution. Faculty at the community and technical college and the university were emailed an invitation to participate in the survey through SurveyMonkey, while faculty at the predominately undergraduate college were emailed an invitation to participate in completing the survey through Qualtrics (Appendix A). The survey was available at all three institutions for approximately two weeks. At the community and technical college, a total of 20 surveys were completed for a response rate of 10.75%; the predominantly undergraduate college had a total of 25 surveys completed for a response rate of 21.37%; and the university had a total of 173 surveys completed for a response rate of 21.93%. The entire study included 218 completed surveys, for a response rate of 19.96%. Table 7 reflects these figures.

Table 7
Survey Responses by Institution Type

Type	*n*	Percent
University	173	79%
Predominantly Undergraduate	25	12%
Community and Technical	20	9%

Demographic findings.

Among the respondents, the following demographic trends were noted and are reported in the tables which follow. Respondents' sex and race/ethnicity (as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau), years of teaching experience, and disciplines represented were reported as follows in Tables 8 through 13.

Table 8
Sample by Sex

Sex	*n*	Percent
Female	109	53%
Male	80	39%
Rather Not Say	17	8%

Table 9
Sample by Race

Race	*n*	Percent
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	0.49%
Asian	3	1%
Black or African-American	3	1%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	1	0.49%
White	173	85%
Rather Not Say	24	12%

Table 10
Sample by Ethnicity

Ethnicity	*n*	Percent
Hispanic or Latino	3	53%
Not Hispanic or Latino	178	39%
Rather Not Say	24	8%

Years of teaching experience ranged from less than five years to more than 20, with a mean of 41.8.

Table 11
Sample by Teaching Experience in Years

Experience in Years	*n*	Percent
≤ 5 years	50	24%
6-10 years	56	27%
11-15 years	36	17%
16-20 years	23	11%
≥ 20 years	44	21%

Survey respondents' current ranks ranged from adjunct/part-time/visiting to full professor, with the majority at the assistant professor level.

Table 12
Sample by Faculty Rank

Faculty Rank	*n*	Percent
Adjunct/Part-Time/Visiting/Term	37	18%
Instructor/Lecturer	19	9%
Assistant Professor	58	28%
Associate Professor	43	21%
Professor	43	21%
Other (Faculty/Staff)	1	0.49%
Other (Program Director/Chairperson)	1	0.49%
Other (Staff)	1	0.49%
Other (First-Year Seminar Facilitator)	1	0.49%
Other (Volunteer)	1	0.49%

Respondents represented the following disciplines:

Table 13
Sample by Discipline

Discipline	*n*	Percent
Art	1	0.51%
Biological Science	11	6%
Business	10	5%
Communication Studies	4	2%
Counseling	4	2%
Criminal Justice	1	0.51%
Education	29	15%
English	28	15%
First-Year Seminar	9	5%
Forensic Science	2	1%

Table 13 Continued
Sample by Discipline

Discipline	*n*	Percent
History/Historical Studies	6	3%
Humanities	9	5%
Journalism/Mass Communication	3	2%
Law/Legal Studies	2	1%
Leadership Studies/Educational Administration	10	5%
Music	3	2%
Nursing	2	1%
Philosophy	3	2%
Political Science	10	5%
Psychology	14	7%
Social Studies	2	1%
Social Work	9	5%
Sociology	7	4%
Theater	1	0.51%
Women's Studies	6	3%
Other (Allied Health)	2	1%
Other (Clinical Lab Science)	1	0.51%
Other (Dance)	1	0.51%
Other (Mathematics)	3	2%
Other (Recreation & Tourism)	2	1%
Other (Welding Technology)	1	0.51%

Survey responses.

Survey findings are reported by institutional level and then discussed in the aggregate.

University findings.

Table 14
Survey Question 1: Have you ever voluntarily used trigger warning in a course syllabus to indicate the presence of potentially sensitive topics, readings, images, etc.?

Response	*n*	Percent
Yes	32	19%
No	140	81%

Table 15
Survey Question 2: Have students ever requested you provide trigger warnings?

Response	*n*	Percent
Yes	4	2%
No	168	98%

Table 16
Survey Question 3: Does your department, school, or college require the use of trigger warnings?

Response	n	Percent
Yes	1	0.6%
No	112	65%
Not sure	59	34%

Table 17
Survey Question 4: Do you think trigger warnings are necessary?

Response	n	Percent
Yes	31	18%
No	64	38%
Not sure	75	44%

Table 18
Survey Question 5: What effect, if any, do you think trigger warnings have on student learning?

Response	n	Percent
Positive Effect	25	15%
Negative Effect	40	24%
No Effect	21	12%
Not sure	84	49%

Table 19
Survey Question 6: What effect, if any, do you feel the use of trigger warnings may have on student perceptions of course materials?

Response	n	Percent
Positive Effect	19	11%
Negative Effect	68	40%
No Effect	16	9%
Not sure	68	40%

Table 20
Survey Question 7: What effect, if any, do you feel the use of trigger warnings may have on faculty embers' academic freedom?

Response	n	Percent
Positive Effect	7	4%
Negative Effect	78	46%
No Effect	44	26%
Not sure	41	24%

University correlations.

A strong negative relationship was identified between faculty rank and the perception of the necessity for trigger warnings. As can be seen in Table 21, the higher the academic rank of the faculty member, the less likely the individual is to feel warnings are necessary.

Table 21
Bivariate Correlation Between Faculty Rank and Whether Trigger Warnings Are Necessary

	Faculty Rank	Warning Necessary
Faculty Rank	--	-.263**
Warning Necessary	-.263**	--

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

A strong negative relationship was also identified between faculty rank and whether students have requested the inclusion of trigger warnings in syllabi. Table 22 demonstrates that the higher the academic rank of the faculty member, the less likely it is that the individual's students have posed such requests.

Table 22
Bivariate Correlation Between Faculty Rank and Whether Students Have Requested Trigger Warnings

	Faculty Rank	Warning Necessary
Faculty Rank	--	-.155**
Warning Necessary	-.155**	--

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

A third strong negative correlation appeared between years of teaching experience and whether the faculty respondent felt trigger warnings are necessary in syllabi. As is shown in Table 23, the higher the number of years of teaching experience, the lower the perceived necessity for trigger warnings.

Table 23
Bivariate Correlation Between Years of Teaching and Whether Trigger Warnings Are Necessary

	Years of Teaching Experience	Warning Necessary
Years of Teaching Experience	--	-.254**
Warning Necessary	-.254**	--

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.01$ level (two-tailed)

Predominantly undergraduate institution (PUI) findings.

Table 24
Survey Question 1: Have you ever voluntarily used trigger warning in a course syllabus to indicate the presence of potentially sensitive topics, readings, images, etc.?

Response	*n*	Percent
Yes	7	29%
No	17	71%

Table 25
Survey Question 2: Have students ever requested you provide trigger warnings?

Response	*n*	Percent
Yes	1	4%
No	23	96%

Table 26
Survey Question 3: Does your department, school, or college require the use of trigger warnings?

Response	*n*	Percent
Yes	-	-
No	15	63%
Not sure	9	37%

Table 27
Survey Question 4: Do you think trigger warnings are necessary?

Response	*n*	Percent
Yes	7	30%
No	7	30%
Not sure	7	40%

Table 28
Survey Question 5: What effect, if any, do you think trigger warnings have on student learning?

Response	*n*	Percent
Positive Effect	5	22%
Negative Effect	3	13%
No Effect	2	9%
Not sure	13	56%

Table 29
Survey Question 6: What effect, if any, do you feel the use of trigger warnings may have on student perceptions of course materials?

Response	*n*	Percent
Positive Effect	6	26%
Negative Effect	9	39%
No Effect	1	4%
Not sure	7	31%

Table 30
Survey Question 7: What effect, if any, do you feel the use of trigger warnings may have on faculty embers' academic freedom?

Response	*n*	Percent
Positive Effect	2	9%
Negative Effect	9	39%
No Effect	6	26%
Not sure	6	26%

PUI correlations.

A negative relationship was identified between a departmental or school requirement for the use of trigger warnings and the effect of such warnings on students' perceptions of course materials. As can be seen in Table 31, the less likely the requirement is to exist, the more likely it is that faculty feel trigger warnings can affect students' perceptions of course materials in a positive fashion.

Table 31
Bivariate Correlation Between Departmental Requirements and Student Perceptions of Course Materials

	Department/School Requirement	Student Perceptions of Course Materials
Department/School Requirements	--	-.420**
Student Perceptions of Course Materials	-.420**	--

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the $p < 0.05$ level (two-tailed)

A positive relationship was identified between perceptions of the necessity for trigger warnings and the effect of such warnings on student learning. Table 32 demonstrates that faculty members who believe trigger warnings are necessary also believe they have a positive effect of student learning.

Table 32
Bivariate Correlation Between Necessity for Trigger Warnings and Effect on Student Learning

	Necessity of Trigger Warnings	Effect Warnings on Student Learning
Necessity of Trigger Warnings	--	-.419**
Effect of Warnings on Student Learning	-.419**	--

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the *p* < 0.05 level (two-tailed)

A strong and understandable correlation appeared between the effect of trigger warnings on student learning and their effect on student perceptions of course materials. As is shown in Table 33, faculty who believe trigger warnings have a positive effect on student learning also believe they favorably affect students' perceptions of course materials.

Table 33
Bivariate Correlation Between Effect of Trigger Warnings on Student Learning and Student Perception of Course Materials

	Effect of Trigger Warnings on Student Learning	Effect of Trigger Warnings on Student Perceptions of Course Materials
Effect of Trigger Warnings on Student Learning	--	-.683**
Effect of Trigger Warnings on Student Perceptions of Course Materials	-.683**	--

Note. ** Correlation is significant at the *p* < 0.01 level (two-tailed)

Community and technical college (CTC) findings.

Table 34
Survey Question 1: Have you ever voluntarily used trigger warning in a course syllabus to indicate the presence of potentially sensitive topics, readings, images, etc.?

Response	*n*	Percent
Yes	1	5%
No	19	95%

Table 35
Survey Question 2: Have students ever requested you provide trigger warnings?

Response	*n*	Percent
Yes	-	-
No	20	100%

Table 36
Survey Question 3: Does your department, school, or college require the use of trigger warnings?

Response	n	Percent
Yes	-	-
No	13	65%
Not sure	7	35%

Table 37
Survey Question 4: Do you think trigger warnings are necessary?

Response	n	Percent
Yes	4	22%
No	9	50%
Not sure	5	28%

Table 38
Survey Question 5: What effect, if any, do you think trigger warnings have on student learning?

Response	n	Percent
Positive Effect	3	19%
Negative Effect	5	28%
No Effect	4	20%
Not sure	6	33%

Table 39
Survey Question 6: What effect, if any, do you feel the use of trigger warnings may have on student perceptions of course materials?

Response	n	Percent
Positive Effect	2	11%
Negative Effect	8	44%
No Effect	3	17%
Not sure	5	28%

Table 40
Survey Question 7: What effect, if any, do you feel the use of trigger warnings may have on faculty embers' academic freedom?

Response	n	Percent
Positive Effect	1	6%
Negative Effect	9	50%
No Effect	5	27%
Not sure	2	17%

CTC correlations.

There are no correlations to report from analyses of the CTC data. This is likely due to the small sample size.

Discussion

Any findings resulting from this preliminary study should be regarded as suggestive rather than conclusive. In an overall sample of 421 syllabi, only 20 featured trigger warnings (4.7%). Those figures by institutional level, however, show some clear differences. Of the 100 university-level syllabi examined, 32 (32%) included trigger warnings. At the predominantly undergraduate institution (PUI), that figure was seven of 275 (2.5%), and at the community and technical college (CTC), only one of the 20 syllabi analyzed included a warning (5%). It is perhaps understandable that the university, with its broader number of course offerings and majors, would report a higher number of warnings.

There are some consistencies, however, among the responses to questions regarding the perceived necessity for trigger warnings, whether those warnings affect student learning, and whether they impinge on faculty members' academic freedom. On the subject of whether such warnings are viewed as necessary, there was some uncertainly expressed, with 44% of the university faculty saying they were unsure and 39% of the predominantly undergraduate faculty agreeing. Only the CTC faculty were sure about whether warnings are necessary with 50% saying no. Majorities on all three campuses were also unsure about the potential effects of warnings on students' learnings: 49% at the university, 57% at the PUI, and 49% at the CTC.

The majority of faculty were quite clear, however, on the subject of whether trigger warnings are likely to intrude on their academic freedom. Forty-six percent of university faculty responded that they'd find a requirement for such warnings intrusive, 39% of the PUI faculty agreed, and 50% of the CTC faculty expressed the same perspective.

While there were two significant relationships that surfaced in the university faculty data between demographic data and independent variables (i.e., the higher the faculty rank, the less likely faculty were to see warnings as necessary; the higher the number of years of teaching experience, the less likely faculty were to see warnings as necessary), the only significant relationships to emerge at the PUI level occurred between the independent variables themselves (i.e., the need for warnings and their potential effect on student learning, whether there is a departmental/school requirement for warnings and how students may perceive course materials, and warnings' effect on student learning and student perception of course materials). There were no significant relationships to emerge from the CTC data.

Overall, it would appear that the most that can be said about this preliminary analysis is that trigger warnings are not yet common enough in the state for faculty to have established any reasonably stable perspectives on them. Recent events, however, like the heated debate at Yale University over a memo regarding sensitivity in choosing Halloween costumes and the confrontations that occurred at the University of Missouri-Columbia concerning perceptions of racism on campus may bring the issue to the forefront. In both instances, groups of students have

demanded that their campuses be "safe spaces" where they can be protected from what they view as hurtful expression, both verbal and non-verbal. As Friedersdorf cautions, "What happens at Yale does not stay at Yale" (2015, para. 9).

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Appendix A: Research Study
The Use of Trigger Warnings in Higher Education

1. Have you ever voluntarily used trigger warnings in a course syllabus to indicate the presence of potentially sensitive topics, readings, images, etc.?
___No
___Yes

2. Have students ever requested that you provide trigger warnings?
___No
___Yes

3. Do you feel that trigger warnings are necessary?
___No
___Yes
___Not sure

4. Does your department or college require the use of trigger warnings?
___No
___Yes
___Not sure

5. What effect, if any, do you feel the use of trigger warnings may have on a student's learning?
___Positive effect
___Negative effect
___No effect
___I don't know

6. What effect, if any, do you feel the use of trigger warnings may have on student perceptions of course materials?
___Positive effect
___Negative effect
___No effect
___I don't know

7. What effect, if any, do you feel the use of trigger warnings may have on faculty members' academic freedom?
___Positive effect
___Negative effect
___No effect
___I don't know

8. How many years of teaching experience do you have in higher education?
   ___<5 years
   ___6-10 years
   ___11-15 years
   ___16-20 years
   ___>20 years

9. What is your current position?
   ___Adjunct/Part-time/Visiting/Term Faculty
   ___Instructor/Lecturer
   ___Assistant Professor
   ___Associate Professor
   ___Professor
   ___Other (Please specify) _____

10. In which subject area(s) do you currently teach? *Please check all that apply.*
   ___Anthropology
   ___Art
   ___Biological Science
   ___Business
   ___Communication Studies
   ___Criminal Justice
   ___Communication Studies
   ___Counseling
   ___Education
   ___English
   ___First Year Seminar
   ___Forensic Science
   ___Geography
   ___Historical Studies
   ___Humanities
   ___Greek
   ___Journalism and Mass Communication
   ___Law/Legal Studies
   ___Leadership Studies
   ___Music
   ___Nursing
   ___Philosophy
   ___Political Science
   ___Public Health

___Psychology
___Religious Studies
___Social Studies
___Social Work
___Sociology
___Theatre
___Women's Studies
___Other (please specify) _____

11. At what education levels do you teach? *Please check all that apply.*
___2-year
___4-year
___Graduate
___Other (Please Specify) _____

12. Sex:
___Female
___Male

13. Race/Ethnicity:
___Hispanics of any race
___Black or African American
___American Indian or Alaska Native
___Asian
___Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
___White
___Two or more races
___Race and Ethnicity Unknown

Collaborative Principal Preparation Cohorts: The Perceptions of Graduates from Two Similar Graduate Programs in Two Adjoining States

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Abstract

This study looks at the creation and development of cohort models in principal preparation programs at two midwestern universities. The similarities and differences of these models are reviewed as well as the opportunities and challenges their graduates face as they serve in administrative positions and reflect on their cohort experience in preparing them for these experiences.

Collaborative Principal Preparation Cohorts

Nearly 30 years ago the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration, sponsored by the University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA), issued its report and recommendations highlighting concerns about perceived deficiencies in principal preparation programs which included a lack of leader recruitment programs in schools, a lack of collaboration between school districts and universities, a lack of quality candidates for preparation programs, and a lack of a national sense of cooperation in preparing school leaders (Jackson & Kelley, 2002). UCEA convened the National Commission for the Advancement of Educational Leadership Preparation in 2002 to identify needs related to strengthening school and district leadership. Since that time several innovative programs have emerged which utilize structures and systems that, up to that time, had been missing. They include the use of cohorts and collaborative partnerships between school districts and universities, areas explored in greater detail in this paper.

The cohort model of delivery in which students enter, move through, and complete the program at the same time has become quite popular over the past 20 years and many have reported positive outcomes for participants, both in the area of professional leadership competency and capacity and in leading and contributing to a positive learning community. McCarthy (1999) found that half of the UCEA units at that time used cohorts at the master's level and 80% used them at the doctoral level. Advantages include the development of stronger social and interpersonal relationships, increased contact with faculty members, better integration into the university, clearer program structure and course sequencing, higher program completion rates, greater cohesiveness, and the development of professional networks (Barnett, Basom, Yerkes, & Norris, 200; Scribner & Donaldson, 2001). Disadvantages include tension and adversarial relationships that can develop, shifts in power relationships between students and faculty members, and the influence of a few dominant members (Barnett et al., 2000; Scribner & Donaldson, 2001; Teitel, 1997). The cohort model can lend itself to a focus on leaders' wellness through the network of support that can be created by students and their faculty members (both university faculty members and school district leaders serving in adjunct roles) in this model of delivery for school leadership preparation, in addition to addressing the challenge of school leader succession planning for school districts.

Theoretical Framework

Bruffee (1999) suggested colleges and universities should reacculturate students into the knowledge communities they strive to join. To best do this, Bruffee maintains students and professors should learn collaboratively. The cohort model provides an excellent way for students to feel a sense of community in which to learn and grow collaboratively. In the programs considered in this study, the professors guide the students through their educational experience using conversation and collaboration with the ultimate goal of helping them become members of the community of school leaders.

Overview of Programs

In this study the authors provide an account of the development and delivery of two university-based principal preparation cohort programs that have been in operation for many years. One program was first delivered in 2002 and cohorts have been developed in partnership with 14 separate school districts in a metropolitan area (population = 2 million) in Missouri. The other program was first delivered in 2007 and cohorts have been developed in partnership with eight separate school districts in a metropolitan area (population = 1.3 million) in Oklahoma. The unique characteristic of these programs is the intentionality of both universities to partner with area school districts, utilizing key K-12 personnel to identify potential students, serve on an advisory board, occasionally teach a class, and assign an exemplary administrator mentor to each student for the duration of the course of study. Opportunities gained and challenges faced by graduates currently in leadership positions are detailed.

In the sections that follow, information pertaining to the two universities and principal preparation programs, the purpose of the study, participants, methods, results, and a discussion of the findings are included. The two programs and the universities in which they are housed that are included in this study, the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) and the University of Central Missouri (UCM), have much in common.

UCM and UCO were both founded in the late 19th Century (UCM in 1871 & UCO in 1890). Both began as Normal Schools, focused on educator preparation. Both continue that tradition, serving as outstanding educator preparation institutions in their respective states.

UCM is located in Warrensburg, MO, approximately 40 miles from metropolitan Kansas City, with a campus also located in Lee's Summit, MO, a suburb of Kansas City. UCO is located in Edmond, OK, a suburban community 15 miles from downtown Oklahoma City. Both UCM and UCO are accredited through the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) and the Council for the Accreditation of Educator Preparation (CAEP). Graduate programs in school administration at both institutions are recognized by the Educational Leadership Constituent Council (ELCC).

The cohort model followed at UCO involves working with school district leaders to solicit applications and make selection decisions collaboratively. Many area district leaders have embraced this approach to succession planning through "growing their own" principals in light of anticipating many retirements in both the teaching and administrative ranks in coming years. School districts sign a Memorandum of Understanding with UCO which outlines expectations including a designated school district liaison to coordinate course planning and delivery and other logistics with program faculty members.

The program, a Master of Education in Educational Leadership, is recognized by the ELCC and coordinated within the Teacher Preparation Unit as part of the overall accreditation progress with NCATE and CAEP. The only difference in the actual curriculum delivered in the cohort model is an emphasis on merging learning outcomes with district culture and systems, with an emphasis on helping participants learn how to apply knowledge, skills, and competencies within the administrative and operations systems within that particular school district. This is

enhanced by the fact that each cohort (with only two exceptions) has included only one school district. Each cohort is made up of participants including those preparing for leadership positions at all (elementary, middle school, high school) levels. Since 2007, 209 students have entered the program (not including those currently in the program) and 197 of these individuals graduated. Of those completing the program, there are currently 37 serving in leadership positions.

The cohort model followed at UCM's Collaborative Principal Preparation Program (CPPP) involves working with school district leaders from 14 metropolitan Kansas City, Missouri school districts to solicit applications and make selections of those candidates who have the potential to lead in their respective districts. District liaisons are appointed by their superintendents (usually assistant superintendents either primarily responsible for human resources or academic achievement) to work with the coordinator of the CPPP to review the program and to offer insights and recommendations on the curriculum that will enable graduates to enter into administration in their districts prepared to lead. These administrators also approve each candidate's participation from their district. Additionally, the district liaisons work with the program coordinator to assure that each candidate is paired with an appropriate building level school leader who will serve as the candidate's mentor throughout the program.

Teaching responsibilities are primarily the responsibility of full-time faculty, but each semester at least one course is taught by a current, district-level leader in one of the CPPP school districts. All courses are offered at the Lee's Summit, MO campus to allow students to complete their program close to their home districts. Students enter, progress through, and complete the program together as a cohort over the course of two years (six consecutive semesters). For the last decade, there have been enough students to have an elementary and a secondary cohort move through separately. No students are admitted after the cohort has begun the first semester. The UCM principal preparation program is state approved and aligned with both national standards (ELCC) and the Missouri Standards for Professional Educators (MOSPE). State requirements also set the curriculum and practicum requirements of 300 hours of administrative observations and/or activities. CPPP students, with a mentor assigned at the beginning of the program, are able to start logging administrative experiences from the onset of the preparation program.

Since its inception in 2002, 385 students have participated in UCM's Collaborative Principal Preparation Program. Since 2009, 184 students have entered the program (not counting those currently in the program) and 181 of these individual graduated. Of those completing the program there are currently 125 serving in leadership positions.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the perspectives of program graduates currently employed in school leadership positions in the areas of opportunities provided and challenges experienced. Additional studies will be conducted to explore more fully the areas related to ways to improve the cohort experience. That aspect of the ongoing study and those data will be part of the ongoing program improvement efforts at UCO and UCM.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:
1. What opportunities have graduates of a collaborative leadership preparation cohort who are serving in a leadership position experienced?
2. What challenges have graduates of a collaborative leadership preparation cohort who are serving in a leadership position experienced?

Methods

Participants

Participants included 76 program graduates currently employed in school leadership positions, including 36 from UCO and 40 from UCM. Of the 36 UCO participants, 17 returned completed surveys. Of these, eight were from the large, urban metropolitan school district which is the largest in the state. UCO participants also included nine individuals from five area suburban school districts. All of these districts are somewhat similar and typical of suburban districts, having higher overall property values and tax bases, student populations which are considerably less diverse with respect to race, ethnicity, and levels of socioeconomic disadvantage, and considerably higher levels of success in the area of student academic performance. UCO participants included five principals, eight assistant principals, one district director of fine and performing arts, and one President/CEO of an independent education software and consulting business focused on managing performance and records of English learning students. These participants all have five to 10 years of prior teaching experience and between one and eight years of administrative experience.

Of the 40 UCM graduates in administrative positions who were asked to participate, 25 returned completed surveys. They all were in school districts surrounding Kansas City, MO. A total of 60% of the respondents serve in suburban districts with higher overall tax bases, student populations which are less diverse with respect to race, ethnicity, and levels of socioeconomic disadvantage, and considerably higher levels of success in the area of student academic performance. Seven of the administrators serve in three districts that would be considered urban and more closely aligned with the demographics and achievement challenges of the Kansas City School District. These districts range from having 60-85% of their students living in poverty, minority majority populations, and academic achievement in one of the districts not meeting state standards. Three administrators taking part serve in rural school districts outside of the suburban rings surrounding Kansas City. They have student populations with 50% living in poverty, little racial diversity, and meet the academic standards set by the state.

Data Collection and Analysis

A principal investigator at each site sent emails to their respective program graduates who were in leadership positions. Those emails included a request for participation, informed consents, and surveys. The principal investigators removed identifying information, and organized the survey data. The principal investigator and research team members independently analyzed the survey data according to emerging themes (Thomas, 2006). Research team

members met and came to consensus on identified themes upon which the following results are based.

<div align="center">

Results

</div>

Results are reported according to participants' perceptions of opportunities that resulted from their cohort experience, as well as the challenges encountered and how they managed them. Results from both UCO and UCM are very similar and are combined under each section.

Opportunities Realized

The common themes that emerged from this question were (a) the network of professionals who became lifelong colleagues and friends because of their cohort experience, and (b) moving into leadership positions more quickly because of the strength of the program. As outlined in the sections that follow, the perceived value of the cohort network was directly related to how many participants believed they had managed challenges and the stress associated with their administrative positions. One participant, who served as an assistant principal for one year and was in the sixth year of the principal-ship in an urban district, noted, "It provided an amazing network of colleagues and friends from across the district that I now work on a daily basis with as an administrator. Also feel I have a network with UCO professors." Most of the participants expressed the value of the cohort experience with respect to forming a professional network/community and how they came to rely on one another. One noted, "The best experience I had was in meeting and bonding with my cohort classmates. We still get together every couple of months and will forever be lifelong friends." This response from an elementary principal was typical of many received:

> I feel that the cohort model provided me with instant colleagues in the field of educational leadership. Because we were part of the same program, we shared the desire to continue our careers in school leadership roles, and learning alongside like-minded people is incredible. Now that I am in an administrator position, I often reach out to cohort colleagues to collaborate and share ideas. This is directly related to the relationships we built during the experience. We became comfortable with each other and, because we developed trust within the group, we were willing to share our own experiences and take risks when asking questions.

Additionally, because the cohort experience allows students to have certain professors multiple times, a closer connection can be made as relationships grow over the course of the program. A typical example shared by one administrator was, "…the professors demonstrated so much care for each person in the cohort and they took the time to really get to know us. That attention and care from instructors is one of my favorite things about the cohort model. It is truly like a family."

Many reported their transition into leadership positions had occurred quickly (within the first year of having completed the program). The first administrative opportunity most commonly reported was assuming the role of assistant principal. One participant explained, "I started working as an assistant principal in January the following year after graduation and the completion of summer classes. I feel my cohort experience prepared me for interviews in this

field." Another noted how the cohort experience had provided a keener sense of the culture of the district and hiring practices, saying "My cohort experience gave me insight into how things truly operate within my district. Because I participated in the cohort I had an advantage in my interview process because I knew how (the district) operated."

There was a strong perception that the reputation of the programs was helpful in giving graduates an advantage when interviewing for administrative positions. A typical response came from this secondary administrator, "I believe that having administrators in my district that had been through the CPPP program, or were aware of the program, helped me jump ahead of the pack. They knew what type of graduates came from this experience." Responses from other CPPP graduates that supported this recognition included this comment from an assistant high school principal, "I was able to get an administrative position while I was still in the program. The district knew the program I was in the process of completing. It is well respected and highly regarded in my district." Another response from an elementary principal in another school district stated, "I can say with utmost and absolute certainty that opportunities would have passed me by had I not participated in the CPPP cohort experience. It allowed me to begin my administrative career much earlier than even I had anticipated."

Challenges and How They Are Managed

Two common themes emerged related to participants' perceptions of their challenges and how they managed them. They were: (a) managing time, and (b) finding good teachers.   Time management and keeping up with the many demands placed on school leaders were mentioned by most participants. One noted:

> Currently, managing time is my greatest challenge. As simple as it sounds, I think it is really true. As it true for many leadership positions, I feel that I'm doing the work of at least two people. I think the cohort taught me to consider what is most important, put my greatest efforts there and streamline the rest. In hindsight, I'm glad to have gone through the cohort during a busy time in life—my children were younger and my personal life was definitely busier. I had no choice but to maximize learning time by using technology more efficiently and finding ways to streamline my classwork and teaching prep. This definitely prepared me for the demands of my very busy but rewarding position as arts director.

Another, an elementary assistant principal, explained, "The biggest challenge is meeting all the deadlines and pushing forward all the initiatives. Having deadlines in a fast-paced program helped me deal with deadlines now." Another elementary assistant principal shared, "My greatest challenge has been prioritizing my time to meet the always increasing demands of school administration. I have been prepared to handle this challenge by learning to prioritize, delegate and always keep an open ear for more efficient methods and best practices used by others." A secondary administrator responded:

> Toughest challenge would be time management. The day will be over before you know it. Prioritizing your time, and juggling the myriad of responsibilities you have on a day-today bases is paramount. I prepare for each day with a couple of items in mind, first and foremost, the students we serve. Every decision I make or am a part of, I try and keep, 'what's best for them,' at the focal point of the decision. Lastly, the 'systems effect' is

> something I attempt to have in mind. I feel it is key to think about all effects of any decision that is made. Every decision could possibly have a ripple effect for your entire school, and maybe the district.

An elementary administrator shared:

> I believe the greatest challenge is time management and organization. Just like a teacher, I spend many hours and nights preparing and creating to make all of the above items happen. I have many organizational documents and a well-structured calendar that helps me make sure I am making deadlines and completing tasks. At the end of the day, none of the responsibilities I have are successful unless I am maintaining positive relationships with staff, families and students. So I try to do the paperwork at home in order to be present and available in my building.

Finding, retaining and supporting good teachers was another major theme noted by many participants. This challenge was clearly expressed by one participant this way:

> My greatest challenge was finding, interviewing and hiring teachers to fill vacant positions. When I was hired as an assistant principal, the administrator that hired me left due to health issues. I had to hire approximately 19 out of 24 positions. With the challenges of not having enough people and good quality candidates it was very challenging. In addition, I had a couple of weeks left to ensure each class had a teacher. I felt very much unprepared for this. I used the past experiences and relied on specific individuals to either guide me through the process or help me look for teachers. We also had a climate and culture problem at our school. I knew there were some problems, but didn't know how deeply they ran. I felt like I was always "reacting" rather than being "proactive" which I don't like.

The human element is always a challenge as new administrators arrive on the scene. Much depends on the groundwork of trust and instructional leadership that the previous principal put in place. If that has not been done, challenges can occur. One elementary principal stated: The previous administrator was more of a manager and didn't offer much insight into curriculum or being an instructional leader. I come from an instructional coach position so it's natural for me to be knowledgeable about curriculum, classroom management and instructional practice. While my teachers are appreciative of this, they are not used to this style of leadership. It is, however, one of the main reasons I was hired.

Discussion

The findings presented in the previous section provide insights into how participants perceive the opportunities, challenges, and stress associated with their roles as school leaders and, in some cases, how the cohort experience prepared them for these. To better understand and place these findings in context this section outlines factors related to the state economy, recent trends in educational policy, and begins to address some of the questions raised in terms of how cohort programs can and might be crafted.

Oklahoma's economy remains highly dependent upon the energy sector. In recent years the price of oil and gas has dropped considerably. In fiscal year 2016 this led to a $1.3 billion shortfall in the state's budget. The result was drastic cuts to the budgets of schools, school

districts, and agencies throughout the state. The most drastic example of the impact of these cuts was on the major urban school district where many of this study's participants serve as school leaders. This district had $30 million cut from the budget which resulted in the elimination of 200 teaching positions and 100 administrative positions. This, in turn, led to the closure of some school buildings, the elimination of some programs, increased class sizes, and reductions of instructional budgets. Support for teacher and administrators, including professional development, was negatively affected. Other area schools staffed by other participants in this study were similarly affected. The negative impact of these budget reductions on the climate in many schools was evident as related in many of the participants' responses.

Missouri's educational landscape was also negatively impacted by the recent economic recession and subsequent years of lower state revenues for both PK-12 and higher education. CPPP districts, as most districts across the state, cut programs, increased class sizes, and reduced their professional development budgets. A pattern that particularly impacted the CPPP program was the reduction of many intermediate positions such as instructional coaches and administrative interns, often providing the first step into future leadership positions.

Like many states, Oklahoma's and Missouri's education policy trends have been heavily influenced by a reform ideology. State legislation, influenced by recommendations from their respective State Boards of Education, has caused constant changes in academic standards for students in PK-12 schools over the past several years.

As a result of the Common Core State Standards (and associated assessment systems including the Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers—PARCC) controversy, recent Oklahoma legislation has eliminated those standards and caused the creation of an independent set of Oklahoma Academic Standards in English/Language Arts and Mathematics. Work toward the development of standards in other subject disciplines is underway, as are associated assessments. Similar legislative mandates have impacted the educational landscape of Missouri, with the creation of new standards to replace the Common Core and the development of new, more rigorous, state assessments for students.

Both states have also been impacted by recent trends to make the evaluation of individual educators and school systems a priority within their public education accountability systems. The past several years have seen the development and deployment of the A-F School Grade system in Oklahoma, and the use of the Annual Performance Report as a numerical system of rating and ranking public schools in Missouri. Both states have implemented new systems for evaluating teachers and principals. Both of these initiatives are still works in progress in Oklahoma, and it appears that value-added measures as a component of the evaluation system may not be included and that the formula used for the A-F system will be revised to eliminate what has been a high relationship between grade and concentrations of minority and economically disadvantaged students. Recent changes have been made to reduce the number of required tests for students. Oklahoma currently faces a teacher shortage in most disciplines and grade levels. While a shortage has existed for many years in the areas of special education, mathematics, science, and foreign languages, the shortage now also includes other subject areas, elementary education and early childhood education. This has led to an increasingly large number of teachers being certified alternatively and for the past two years a record number of emergency certificates

having been issued. The vast majority of teachers practicing with an emergency certificate are in the two large, urban districts in the state including the one described earlier where many UCO participant administrators are serving.

These reform measures have not been limited to PK-12 schools. Missouri's educator preparation programs are now being held accountable by the State Board of Education via a published Annual Performance Report. The AOR includes admission-completion rates, student grade point averages, pass rates on the state assessments for certification, and first year principal survey results. As institutions react to these new mandates, a perceived value to the cohort system is the ability to coordinate and reinforce efforts to improve these data sets. For example, the CPPP has incorporated the State's Performance Tasks within a number of its courses, providing students with a system of seamless support as students' progress from one semester to the next, culminating with the submission of the tasks during the students' internship course. While the initial results are not yet public, CPPP students have reported successful pass rates on both the performance tasks and the new content test.

The leadership preparation models at UCM and UCO explored in this study utilize a cohort model that is highly collaborative and heavily involves administrators and mentors form participating school districts. The opportunities and challenges faced by graduates of the programs are aided by the cohort model and the collaboration between fellow students, administrators and professors.

The results of this study have shed light on some of the practices being employed with respect to the cohort program. However, they raise other questions that will be explored in the future. Much of what has been found in other cohort studies was found in the current study, but more remains to be learned in order to best know how to design and deliver this type of delivery model for prospective school leaders.

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Perceptions of Teacher Motivation in Public Schools: From NCLB to Common Core

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Abstract

This study examined how educational accountability reforms (NCLB & CCSSI) impact teacher work motivation in public schools. Participants included public school teachers from both urban and rural schools. Descriptive statistics determined the motivation levels of teachers and qualitative thematic analysis addressed the perceived impact of education accountability reforms on work motivation. Commonly identified factors perceived as positive impacts were receiving support of more highly qualified teachers and being mandated to place more emphasis on preparing students for the workforce. Commonly identified factors perceived as negative impacts were the pressure of achieving Adequate Yearly Progress, increase in student testing, universality of standards, and public view of teacher effectiveness.

Study and Purpose

School districts across America have responded to the movement of increasing school effectiveness. With budget cuts and compulsory high-stakes testing becoming ever-increasing issues in public education, teacher motivation can be difficult to sustain. With the external pressures and demands to meet the expectations and accountability standards set forth by federal and state governments, teachers must be motivated in order to uphold their professional duties and responsibilities as educators. Even dating back to the early 1980s, the National Commission on Excellence in Education (1983) purported that in order for educational organizations to arrive at their goals, educational excellence requires high motivation from teachers. In spite of the recognition that teacher motivation is and has always been important, can meeting the demanding accountability expectations of school districts and systems pose major challenges for teachers? The purpose of this study was to examine positive and/or negative impacts educational accountability reforms have on work motivation of teachers in public schools.

Review of Literature

Teacher Motivation

Work motivation of teachers is an important concept. The strength of an educational system largely depends upon attracting and maintaining high quality teachers. Defining motivation is a major issue due to the fact that the term itself has no specific meaning in contemporary psychology. Motives are sometimes defined as needs, wants, drives, or impulses within the individual. The same levels of motives may be directed either toward goals that may be conscious or subconscious to an individual. The definition of motivation may include other concepts, such as drive, need, incentive, reward, reinforcement, goal setting, and expectancy (Kocabas, 2009).

Teacher motivation has always been the focus of many investigations dating back decades ago. Sergiovanni (1967) interviewed 71 elementary and secondary teachers to identify the causes of work satisfaction and dissatisfaction. The study indicated that achievement, recognition, and responsibility contributed most to their satisfaction and motivation. Even in 1986, Scott (1986) studied the relationship of motivation factors of 40 elementary teachers from rural and urban Tennessee through the use of in-depth interviews and a modified critical incident technique. Scott (1986) found that achievement, interpersonal relations with peers, parents and other adults, interpersonal relations with administration and the school district, and recognition significantly affected the motivation levels of teachers. In more recent studies, Bareket (2008) compared teachers' perception of the importance of the elements to their job motivation and satisfaction in schools in high-SES (Socio-Economic Status) and low-SES schools in Santa Clara County, California. This study proves significant when making correlations between a school's socio-economic status and the ease or challenge of teachers meeting the educational accountability expectations. Bareket (2008) found that although several challenges existed in low-SES schools, there was not a significant correlation between the motivation and satisfaction levels of teachers and the socioeconomic status of schools. Bareket (2008) did find that the teachers in the low-SES schools were driven by growth opportunities and relationships with principals, colleagues, and students. Although Bareket's (2008) study occurred many years later

than those studies conducted by Sergiovanni (1967) and Scott (1986), the results reveal similar characteristics of teachers' perception of motivation and satisfaction in schools.

Bogler and Nir (2012) indicates that the best teachers cite intrinsic rewards as the factors that make teaching rewarding for them. Only when these intrinsic factors are diminished do extrinsic concerns like salary and working conditions become truly significant. Studies have indicated that although financial incentives can promote specific behaviors and direct teachers' efforts toward measurable goals, they are less promising as tools to improve general teaching performance (Bogler & Nir, 2012). There is extensive evidence that teachers regard professional efficacy, not money, as the primary motivator in their work, and some evidence that the prospect of extrinsic rewards may diminish the potency of intrinsic rewards for them (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). Bearing in mind that the importance of "efficacy" contributes to the motivation and satisfaction of teachers, the expectations and demands of educational accountability will continue to be factors that influence the self-perceptions of teachers' effectiveness and desire to teach.

No Child Left Behind Act (2001)

Accountability laws have been established to ensure the improvement of public education. The No Child Left Behind Act (2001) (*NCLB*) embodied, and even elevated, America's longstanding commitment to public education and the central role it played in maintaining the nation's economic competitiveness, the strength of its institutions, the vitality of its communities, and the well-being of its citizens (Education Commission of the States, 2004). *NCLB* clearly established the improvement of public education as a vital and urgent national priority. Its goals included: (a) eliminating gaps in achievement between students who have traditionally performed well in school and those who have not, (b) ensuring that all students are proficient in reading and mathematics by the 2013-2014 school year, (c) guaranteeing that every classroom in the nation is staffed by a highly qualified teacher, and (d) making all schools safer and more productive learning environments (Education Commission of the States, 2004). According to the United States Department of Education (2003), in amending the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (*ESEA*)*, NCLB* represented a sweeping overhaul of federal efforts to support elementary and secondary education in the United States. It was built on four pillars of reform: (a) accountability for results; (b) an emphasis on doing what works, based on scientific research; (c) expanded parental options; and (d) expanded local control and flexibility. *NCLB* was viewed as well-intended, but far beyond the capacity of states, districts, and schools to carry out. To some, the law was seen as a burdensome and unwarranted intrusion on state and local prerogatives and responsibilities (U.S. Department of Education, 2003).

No Child Left Behind Act (2001) Challenges

The *NCLB* presented challenges for schools and districts to ensure that *all* students met state standards for proficiency by 2014 and that all teachers were *highly qualified*. This "one size fits all" model was a difficult demand, especially for school districts with schools located in areas concentrated with high poverty levels. Also, the demands and requirements of *NCLB* were uniquely problematic for rural schools and districts that have small student populations and are geographically isolated (Masumoto & Brown-Welty, 2009). Information retrieved from the 2013-2014 Local Education Agency Universe Survey of the Common Core of Data report

indicated that there were 13,491 public school districts in the United States, of which 9,642 (71%) were located in rural areas and/or small towns (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, n.d.). Characteristics unique to rural areas include geographic isolation, small populations, and declining enrollments. Particularly with the decline of student enrollment in rural areas, federal funding will also decline. It was very evident the demands of *NCLB* could not be adequately met without sufficient funding. These characteristics of rural schools and districts affect the availability of funding and access to programs, services, and training opportunities. This lack of access played a large role in the ability of rural districts to build local capacity to comply with *NCLB*.

In conjunction with rural areas, urban schools and school districts faced issues with attempting to meet the demands of *NCLB*. Ninety-five percent of all children of immigrants and 91% of students who are limited-English proficient attend urban schools (Clewell, 2007). In 2013–14, the percentage of students in English Language Learner (ELL) programs was generally higher for school districts in more urbanized areas than for those in areas that were less urbanized (U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Educational Statistics, 2016). With this being the case, student achievement of all students in all subgroups posed a serious concern for these schools and school districts. Sadly, the lack of "adequate" progress suggests students have not been well served by its schools and teachers.

In regard to teachers under *NCLB*, every classroom, including those with limited-English proficient students, was required to have a *highly qualified* teacher in place. Many schools and school districts (specifically rural) already had difficulty recruiting and retaining teachers, particularly teachers with credentials in several subject areas, special education teachers, foreign language teachers, and teachers for limited-English proficiency (LEP) and bilingual programs (Selwyn, 2007). In order for teachers to be successful in improving the achievement levels of their students, especially students with academic difficulties, they must have expertise in: (a) constructing and implementing relevant assessments, (b) gathering information using these assessments, (c) interpreting these assessments, and (d) matching instruction programs and strategies to the assessment results. The role of scientifically based, data-driven research on instructional practices will not impact students' academic achievement unless such practices are actually utilized in classrooms (Yell & Dragow, 2005). Unfortunately, teachers may be placed in situations in which they are forced to adopt unproven practices by well-intentioned, but ill-informed, school district officials, or principals.

Common Core States Standards Initiative

The Common Core State Standards Initiative (*CCSSI*) is a 2010 initiative to create and implement a national education standard in language arts and math. Common Core State Standards Initiative provides schools with a detailed guideline of the knowledge and abilities that students should possess upon completion of each grade. The ultimate goal is to ensure that students across the country are prepared to enter college programs or the workforce after high school (Common Core State Standards Initiative, 2012).

In 2009, in efforts to reshape public school education, governors and state commissioners of education from across the United States formed *CCSSI*. The goal of this initiative was to

develop a shared set of national standards to ensure that students in every state would be held to the same level of expectations that students in other countries were, and they would gain knowledge and skills to prepare them for global competition (Kober, Rentner, Jennings, & Haslam, 2011). In continuing to understand the development of the common core standards themselves, it is noted that the common core state standards were not birthed from state legislators throughout the country. Instead, the standards were born out of two Washington, D.C. based organizations, the National Governors Association for Best Practices (*NGA*) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (*CCSSO*). These two organizations coordinated the *CCSSI* to establish voluntary national elementary and secondary school education standards in mathematics and language arts, and student testing began in the 2014-2015 academic school year. Although *CCSSI* is not a federal law, the federal government supports it by providing grants that are only available to those states that have adopted its guidelines and standards (Eitel & Talbert, 2012).

Common Core States Standards Initiative Challenges

The *CCSSI* has faced many controversial concerns and challenges since its inception. According to Stotsky and Wurman (2010), the common core state standards undermine the decentralized, federalist principles on which education had been governed since America's founding. The "one-size-fits-all, centrally controlled curriculum," does not make sense given that only weak evidence supports the push for national standards. International test data are not significant enough evidence since most countries have national standards. The few countries that do not have national standards, including Canada and Germany, have both impressive and nonimpressive test scores (Stotsky & Wurman, 2010). Conzemius (2010) purports the common core state standards are overloaded and perplexing, and the level of incoherence typify the plight of educators and society in general. Over the years, previous accountability reforms have inundated educators in school districts across the nation with possible sanctions that can be enforced if students are not performing at desired levels (Conzemius, 2010). The same goes for the *CCSSI*. With the idea of punishments for low student performance and rewards and/or recognitions for high student performance in schools and school districts driving the success or failure of teacher efficacy, it is not surprising to find there have been instances where teachers and schools participated in cheating on high-stakes tests (Henningfeld, 2008). Although such occurrences have not surfaced in the literature regarding the CCSSI, this could also very easily become a reality for many teachers implementing the *CCSSI* curriculum. Cala (2008) stated that teachers are cheating for the desperate purpose of raising test scores, maintaining their jobs, and preventing children from being labeled as failures. As a result of teacher effectiveness being solely based on testing and test results, fraud and cheating to meet mandated standards will continue to be a concern. One final concern, according to Tienken (2011), is that some critics site that there is no empirical evidence to support the common core state standards will improve student achievement. The *NGA* and the *CCSSO* stated that the common core state standards are standards founded on evidence derived from scientific experiments and discoveries as written in two documents: *Myths v. Facts About the Common Core Standards* and *Benchmarking for Success* (Tienken, 2011). After examining these documents provided by the *NGA* and *CCSSO* to prove that common core state standards will increase student achievement, Tienken (2001) found that there was no large body of evidence to support this claim. Tienken (2001) also purported that the claim of the two organizations originated from only one document, *Benchmarking for*

Success. Based solely on Tienken's (2001) findings, the evidence gathered from the scientific experiments is unethical and uninformed.

From No Child Left Behind Act (2001) to Common Core States Standards Initiative

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 can be considered a predecessor to the Common Core States Standards Initiative. *NCLB* established a new approach to education policy by the federal government. *NCLB* required the establishment of high achievement standards in math and reading/language arts in every state. Math and reading/language arts were identified as the foundation for success in all other subjects. *NCLB* required every child in grades three through eight to be tested in math, reading, and language usage (Education Commission of the States, 2004). In 2010, the Obama administration addressed the reauthorization of ESEA and amended *NCLB*. The Obama-Biden Education Plan includes four target areas: (a) early childhood education, (b) K-12, (c) higher education, (d) supports students with disabilities, and (e) lists of 18 goals. In accordance, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan and President Obama have pledged federal money to three central areas of reform that they believe will drive school improvement. The three central areas include (a) adopting internationally benchmarked standards and assessments that prepare students for success in college and the workplace, (b) recruiting, developing, retaining, and rewarding effective teachers and principals, and (c) turning around the lower-performing schools (Obama, 2009).

As reported by FindLaw (n.d.), supporters of the *CCSSI* believe that it refines *NCLB* by providing clearer, more specific education guidelines for states to adopt. From this perspective, the *CCSSI* is a more refined extension of *NCLB*. Rather than using standardized exams that could possibly encourage "teaching to the test," the CCSSI tests involve short answer and essay questions to measure students' logic and reasoning skills. Many critics dislike the use of testing to measure school performance and are not appeased by the *CCSSI's* focus away from standardized exams. Others believe that *NCLB* and the *CCSSI* fail to take into consideration the difficulties faced by schools with large numbers of English-learning or low-income students (FindLaw, n.d.). Although both educational accountability reforms share many similarities, it is evident from the goals of each, the seemingly inflexible *CCSSI* shifts accountability for student performance from the schools and school districts to the teachers.

Methodology

The participants for this case study included 20 veteran teachers with at least ten years of teaching experience from a purposeful sample of three schools in an urban school district and three schools in a rural school district containing grades K-12. Three or more of the 20 participants selected were represented from each school. The locality of the schools was chosen for this purposeful design in efforts to find out how, or if, geographic location plays a part in self-perceptions of teacher work motivation. Also, participants with at least ten years of teaching experience were chosen because they have experienced working under both *NCLB* and the *CCSSI*.

The research design chosen for this study was a mixed-method case study design. A researcher-designed questionnaire that included open-ended questions was utilized to collect data

on perceived factors that influence teacher work motivation. The questionnaire consisted of 12 question items derived from theories and research on teacher motivation. A four-point Likert scale was used to determine the frequency of scores of the 12 items when examining questionnaire responses. The open-ended portion of the questionnaire contained four open-ended questions seeking patterns that exist among participants that are related to the perceived impact of education accountability reforms on work motivation. Qualitative thematic analysis was used to address the influential factors perceived to have an impact on teacher motivation.

Findings

Questionnaire responses revealed that 100% of the participants were *very satisfied* with the way they got along with their co-workers/colleagues and the respect they received from their students; 100% were also *satisfied* with the freedom to use their own judgment when necessary and being able to empathize with, encourage, and assist co-workers. One-hundred percent of the participants were *very* s*atisfied* and/or *satisfied* with seven out of 12 perceived motivational items presented on the questionnaire. However, 75% of the participants were *very dissatisfied* with the opportunities to use their abilities to lead/direct co-workers and 50% were *very dissatisfied* with being included on important matters. In addition, 50% of the participants were *very dissatisfied* and/or *dissatisfied* with the opportunities to grow and advance and the sense of accomplishment they received from the job. Fifty-five percent were *very dissatisfied* and/or *dissatisfied* with the support they received from their principal when needed.

Overall, it is important to note that the majority of the participants were *very satisfied* and/or *satisfied* with the motivational aspects of their jobs. Also, an overwhelming 85% of the participants were *satisfied* with their inner happiness from job achievements and recognitions, while the other 15% were *very satisfied*. On the contrary, it should also be noted that only 20% of the participants were *satisfied* with the opportunities to use their abilities to lead/direct coworkers, while the remaining 80% were *very dissatisfied* and/or *dissatisfied*. It is also interesting to acknowledge that 100% of the participants that were *very dissatisfied* with (a) the sense of accomplishment they received from the job and (b) the support they received from their principal when needed were all teachers in the rural schools (see Table 1).

Table 1

Teachers' Questionnaire: Frequencies and Percentages of Teachers' Perceptions of Work Motivation (n=20)

Items	Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied
1. The opportunities to grow and advance	$f=2$ 10%	$f=8$ 40%	$f=7$ 35%	$f=3$ 15%
2. The sense of accomplishment I received from the job	$f=9$ 45%	$f=1$ 5%	$f=10$ 50%	$f=0$ 0%
3. The praise and appreciation I received for doing a good job	$f=0$ 0%	$f=0$ 0%	$f=15$ 75%	$f=5$ 25%
4. Being included on important matters	$f=10$ 50%	$f=0$ 0%	$f=8$ 40%	$f=2$ 10%
5. The freedom to use my own judgment when necessary	$f=0$ 0%	$f=0$ 0%	$f=20$ 100%	$f=0$ 0%
6. The way I got along with my coworkers/colleagues	$f=0$ 0%	$f=0$ 0%	$f=0$ 0%	$f=20$ 100%
7. The support I received from my principal when needed	$f=9$ 45%	$f=2$ 10%	$f=3$ 15%	$f=6$ 30%
8. The respect I received from my students	$f=0$ 0%	$f=0$ 0%	$f=0$ 0%	$f=20$ 100%
9. The relationships established with my students' parents	$f=0$ 0%	$f=0$ 0%	$f=5$ 25%	$f=15$ 75%
10. The opportunities to use my abilities to lead/direct coworkers	$f=15$ 75%	$f=1$ 5%	$f=4$ 20%	$f=0$ 0%
11. My inner happiness from job achievements and recognition	$f=0$ 0%	$f=0$ 0%	$f=17$ 85%	$f=3$ 15%
12. Being able to empathize with, encourage, and assist coworkers	$f=0$ 0%	$f=0$ 0%	$f=20$ 100%	$f=0$ 0%

To address the qualitative portion of the study, an interview was conducted. The four open-ended interview questions were the following:

1. What are your perceptions of the positive impact(s) *NCLB* had on your work motivation?
2. What are your perceptions of the negative impact(s) *NCLB* had on your work motivation?
3. What are your perceptions of the positive impact(s) the *CCSSI* has had on your work motivation?
4. What are your perceptions of the negative impact(s) the *CCSSI* has had on your work motivation?

The most commonly identified factor of *NCLB* that had a positive impact on the motivation levels of teachers was having the support needed to achieve improved test scores. Teachers at both the rural and urban schools felt more highly qualified teachers were needed in their schools in order to make Adequate Yearly Progress (*AYP*). According to responses from the teachers of the rural schools, one stated:

Our school was in desperate need of not only qualified teachers, but also more teachers, period. It seemed no one ever listened to our cries about needing additional help. Our classes were overcrowded until NCLB mandated our school receive more teachers.

The most commonly identified factors of *NCLB* that had a negative impact on the motivation levels of teachers included student achievement and too much testing. It was very obvious that the pressure of student achievement (making *AYP*) and increased student testing were common factors perceived to have negative impacts on teacher motivation for all the teachers. When reviewing the comments, all of the teachers felt the goals of *NCLB*, as the Act relates to student achievement, were unreachable and unrealistic. Also, all of the teachers expressed their disdain for the amount of required student testing. According to responses from the teachers of the urban schools, one stated:

We spent a lot of time testing our students. It seemed we tested more than we taught! I am guilty of teaching what will be tested to ensure student success. I did not want to be the only teacher that did not show an improvement in test scores. I probably experienced more stress than the students during test times.

The most commonly identified factor of the *CCSSI* perceived as a positive impact on the motivation levels of teachers was the focus on preparing students for the workforce, as well as college. A teacher stated, "It's great to see we are moving back toward preparing our students for vocations and job skills that can lead to careers. All students are not college material." Another teacher stated, "I am all for teaching our young people skills and information relevant to the real world."

The most commonly identified factors of the *CCSSI* perceived as negative impacts on the motivation levels of teachers were the universality of standards and the public view of teacher effectiveness. Despite the fact that the *CCSSI* standards are consistent and clear, the teachers still expressed concerns with the robust curriculum. One teacher stated, "The idea of holding all students accountable for the same content, regardless of social, economic, or academic background is absurd." According to responses from the teachers of the rural schools, one stated:

Not all students learn the same way or at the same speed. I have to teach them where they are when I receive them. If they are not on grade level, how in the world they expect me to move them to grade level and still keep up with the pace of students all over the nation? Common core is no better than No Child Left Behind. They are still expecting a miracle. There are some students in my school more worried about having power (electricity) in their homes than mastering a test at school! These students have real-life issues and challenges that need attention, and to expect teachers to overlook these problems and focus on "common core standards" is inhumane.

In addition to having concerns over the universality of standards, the teachers also have issues with being viewed by the public as ineffective. One of the teachers from the urban schools stated:

I chose to teach because I have a passion for helping children. It is heartbreaking to hear people in the community say the students are not passing because the teachers are not teaching. We go through a lot of scrutiny in this profession. Not only are students tested to death, we are too. Before becoming a teacher, numerous tests must be passed in order

to even be considered highly qualified. No one sees that. No one takes in consideration how hard we work for so little. Yet when test scores drop, we're the first on the chopping block. Policymakers seem to not care how No Child Left Behind and this Common Core have led to demoralization of teachers.

Summary of Findings and Conclusion

It was evident that 100% of the participants were *very satisfied* and/or *satisfied* with their work motivational levels (the way they got along with their co-workers/colleagues, the respect they received from their students, the freedom to use their own judgment when necessary, & being able to empathize with, encourage, and assist co-workers). Teachers who are self-efficacious are able to create and maintain situations whereby they derive both recognition from others and intrinsic rewards. Research suggests that teachers' self-efficacy influences their motivation, performance, and commitment to teaching (Klassen & Chiu, 2010). In relation to how educational accountability reforms impact work motivation of teachers in public schools, it was found through the open-ended responses that both the *CCSSI* and *NCLB* affected teacher motivation positively and negatively. Commonly identified factors perceived as positive impacts were receiving support of more highly qualified teachers (*NCLB*) and being mandated to place more emphasis on preparing students for the workforce (*CCSSI*). Commonly identified factors perceived as negative impacts were the pressure of achieving Adequate Yearly Progress (*NCLB*), increase in student testing (*NCLB & CCSSI*), universality of standards (*CCSSI*), and public view of teacher effectiveness (*NCLB & CCSSI*). However, the *CCSSI* and *NCLB* both had more negative impacts on teacher motivation than positive impacts. Interestingly enough, it is important to note that sufficient evidence gathered from the teacher questionnaire and the open-ended interview questions indicated teachers from the rural schools faced more challenges, as it relates to meeting the demands of *NCLB* and *CCSSI*.

America's educational system today is faced with many challenges; one of these challenges is meeting the accountability standards of federal and state governments. Although these challenges seem daunting, they are not insurmountable. However, the challenges and expectations are inescapable. Teachers play vital roles in ensuring accountability demands are met and student success is achievement. Therefore, teachers' perceived work motivation is key. In order to attract and maintain a highly motivated teaching force, student achievement and realistic expectations must outweigh the challenges. Effective education is dependent upon competent, cognizant, and motivated participants in all parts of the educational process, including policymakers. It is essential that policymakers become aware of the unique challenges faced by all schools (urban & rural) and the importance of developing policies that address those unique challenges.

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When and How Far Will Potential Participants Travel to Participate in Educational Leadership Programs

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Abstract

Online education and virtual distance learning programs have increased in popularity and enrollment since their inception. With this increase of popularity, where does this leave the traditional educational leadership programs? This study examined the preferences of potential participants, K-12 instructional staff, for when they were willing to travel and what distances they were willing to travel to participate in educational leadership programs. The method used to collect data for this study was a survey instrument. The survey outcomes focused on obtaining information that may be useful in the redesign of an educational leadership program.

Keywords: educational leadership program, travel preferences for educational leadership programs, days of the week preferences for educational leadership programs, time preferences for educational leadership programs, online educational leadership programs

When and How Far Will Potential Participants Travel to Participate in Educational Leadership Programs?

Distance learning has been practiced in a multitude of forms since the early 1990s (Beqiri, Chase, & Bishka, 2010; Campbell, Floyd, & Sheridan, 2002). The traditional classroom has been long considered the standard for educational quality, but recent technological advances have brought dramatic growth in the delivery of educational content using the internet (Bramorski & Madan, 2016; American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2014; Hopewell, T. M., 2012; Kearns, Shoaf, & Summey, 2004). The number of graduate students participating in online education has annually increased (Gauvreau, Hurst, Cleveland-Innes, & Hawranki, 2016).

There are mixed perspectives on the quality of online degrees. Although the number of online business courses offered at many universities has increased, the perception of the value of online degrees has remained somewhat negative and the traditional full-time degree still rules with corporate recruiters (Beqiri, Chase, & Bishka, 2010; Alsop, 2004, p. 2).

Bramorski and Madan (2016, p. 33) suggested that the course delivery mode did not significantly affect the perception of learning. Face-to-Face course delivery incorporates human connections and interactions that may be limited or nonexistent in an online course delivery platform (Tseng & Walsh, 2016; Woo & Reeves, 2007; Bonk & Graham, 2006). Students may harbor conflicted feelings when they really do not want to learn through distance education, but they need to because of challenges related to time and distance (Parkinson, Greene, Kim & Marioni, 2003).

Purpose

The increase in popularity of distance learning has stimulated conversation about traditional educational leadership programs. There continues to be the issue in higher education of maintaining or increasing student enrollment in educational programs. Colleges and universities are increasing online offerings in an attempt to address economic and enrollment decline (Wagner, Garippo, & Lovaas, 2011). In addressing enrollment numbers, should program planners consider the preferences of the potential applicants in reviewing and revising current traditional educational leadership programs? This study seeks to identify time and travel preferences of potential educators regarding participation in educational leadership programs.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the preferences for specific days of the week to participate in Face-to-Face or On-line Synchronous Educational Leadership Master's Programs?
2. What are the preferences for travel distances to participate in Face-to-Face Educational Leadership Master's Programs?

Methodology

This study targeted public school instructional staff located in the northern region of a state in southeastern, United States. This study examined the preferences of public school instructional staff in terms of their preferences for when they were willing to travel to participate in educational leaderships programs and for what distances they were willing to travel to participate in educational leadership programs. Public school district superintendents were contacted to share information about the research study and the consent information, as well as to invite superintendents to approve participation of his or her school district in the study.

After obtaining approval from the district school superintendents, potential participants were contacted via email for voluntary participation in the study. Email addresses were obtained from the public use school websites. Paper surveys were provided for some participants with email issues. Potential participants were asked to participate in a study designed to obtain information on preferences for which days of the week potential applicants prefer to participate in educational leadership programs, and to obtain preferences regarding the distances potential applicants were willing to travel to participate in educational leadership programs.

The population for the study was those instructional staff whose superintendent approved district participation and those individuals who voluntarily consented to participate in the study. The targeted instructional staff were teachers, instructional coaches, and guidance counselors. The survey included one rank order question related to days of the week preferences, one rank order question on travel distance preferences, one current position question, and two voluntary demographic questions related to sex and age ranges. The survey included open-end comment response opportunities. The survey was deployed via SurveyMonkey. The research design was a descriptive study.

Limitations

Some limitations of the study included:

1. District superintendent must approve district participation in the study before school instructional staff could be contacted for voluntary participation.
2. Email addresses obtained from public school or district websites may or may not contain accurate information which could result in emails not being delivered.
3. Potential participant's email box may be full and email invitations may not be deliverable.
4. Instructional staff position title must be indicated on the website to identify the appropriate potential participant.
5. There may be human error in online data entry.

Conceptual Underpinnings

This study was situated in the context of the preferences of adult learners' participation in face-to-face or on-line learning that may determine enrollment in an educational leadership program. Rogers (2002), identified three modes of education that adults experience: vocational

(occupation driven), social transformation, and personal growth. These three modes could also be defined as the "needs" of education.

On-line learning for adult students brings a new paradigm to what motivates adult students to participate in a synchronous environment. A student's competence includes their readiness, study skills, and for online students their technological skills. According to researchers, improving competence increases motivation and persistence (Deci & Ryan, 1985; Hall 2009; Tsui, 2008).

Context

Currently, many colleges of education are experiencing low student enrollments. There are private organizations offering various programs that prepare educators and leaders for today's schools. Educational leadership programs are under attack and the question is being asked if these traditional programs are still needed. Higher education programs are being urged to move to some type of online or hybrid/blended delivery model, in spite of infrastructure, professional development, and support issues. Allen and Seaman (2013) indicated that a major change has occurred in online offerings and that there has been an increase in not just online courses but an increase from 34.5% in 2002 to 62.4% in 2012 in universities offering complete online programs.

New state and program standards are being implemented as the level of accountability increases. Across the country educational leadership faculty have and are continuing to review, revise, and/or redesign current educational leadership programs to address current expectations. Best practices for program review and redesign include involving stakeholders in the process. In addition, best practices encourage the utilization of data-driven decision-making. Adult students provide a myriad of reasons for choosing to further their education, such as economic, physical health, divorce, occupational changes and adjustment, dissatisfaction with current employment, and seeking fulfillment of life goals (Plimmer & Schmidt, 2007; Hayes & Flannery, 2000). The preferences of adult learners have motivated colleges and universities to consider changes in program delivery modalities (Singleton, Bowser, Hux, & Neal, 2013). Surveying school districts' instructional staff regarding time and travel preferences supports the best practices of stakeholder involvement and utilizing data to make decisions for program review and redesign. Seeking stakeholder preferences may help to increase the understanding of the educational leadership market needs.

Results

A total of 155 participants responded to some or all of the survey questions. The demographics for survey participants included 127 (81.9%) teachers, 11 (7.1%) instructional coaches, and 12 (7.7%) guidance counselors, and 5 (3.2%) of survey participants did not respond to this question. Of the 155 survey participants, 125 (80.6%) were female and 25 (16.1% were males, and 5 (3.2%) did not respond to the question. The age ranges of the 155 survey participants included 19 (12.3%) with ages under 30 years of age, 46 (29.7%) between the ages of 30 and 39, 38 (24.5%) between the ages of 40 and 49, 31 (20.0%) between the ages of 50 and 59, 16 (10.3%) age 60 or higher, and 5 (3.2%) did not respond to the question.

Participants were asked "If you were to participate in a Face-to-Face or Online Synchronous (occurring in real time) Educational Leadership Program, which day of the week would you prefer to participate?" In addition, the participant was asked to rank each day of the week on a scale from 1-7, with "1" being the first choice and "7" being the least preferred day. Findings in Table 1 indicate that Tuesday was the most preferred day for participation in an educational leadership program for 25.2% of respondents. Saturday ranked second in terms of day preference for 21.9% of respondents. Monday ranked third with 20.6 % of respondents, Wednesday ranked fourth with 11.6% of respondents, and Thursday ranked fifth with 9.0% of respondents. The least preferred day was Friday with 1.9% of respondents. Of the respondents, 3.2% had no preference for day of the week, and 6.5% did not respond to the question.

Table 1
First Choice Preferences for Days of the Week Participation in Educational Leadership Programs

Day of the Week	First Choice *n*	First Choice %
Monday	32	20.6
Tuesday	39	25.2
Wednesday	18	11.6
Thursday	14	9.0
Friday	3	1.9
Saturday	34	21.9
No Preference	5	3.2
No Response	10	6.5

Findings in Tables 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 indicate the distribution of days of the week preferences across age ranges.

Table 2
Monday Preferences Across Age Ranges for Participation in Educational Leadership Programs

Day of the Week	Age Ranges
Monday	<30 years of age (*n* = 5) 15.6%
(*n* = 32)	30 to 39 years of age (*n* = 9) 28.1%
	40 to 49 years of age (*n* = 10) 31.3%
	50 to 59 years of age (*n* = 4) 12.5%
	60+ years of age (*n* = 4) 12.5%

Table 3
Tuesday Preferences Across Age Ranges for Participation in Educational Leadership Programs

Day of the Week	Age Ranges
Tuesday	<30 years of age (*n* = 5) 12.8%
(*n* = 39)	30 to 39 years of age (*n* = 6) 15.4%
	40 to 49 years of age (*n* = 12) 30.8%
	50 to 59 years of age (*n* = 11) 28.2%
	60+ years of age (*n* = 5) 12.8%

Table 4
Wednesday Preferences Across Age Ranges for Participation in Educational Leadership Programs

Day of the Week	Age Ranges
Wednesday ($n = 18$)	<30 years of age ($n = 2$) 11.1%
	30 to 39 years of age ($n = 12$) 66.7%
	40 to 49 years of age ($n = 2$) 11.1%
	50 to 59 years of age ($n = 2$) 11.1%
	60+ years of age ($n = 0$) 0.0%

Table 5
Thursday Preferences Across Age Ranges for Participation in Educational Leadership Programs

Day of the Week	Age Ranges
Thursday ($n = 14$)	<30 years of age ($n = 2$) 14.3%
	30 to 39 years of age ($n = 7$) 50.0%
	40 to 49 years of age ($n = 3$) 21.4%
	50 to 59 years of age ($n = 0$) 0.0%
	60+ years of age ($n = 2$) 14.3%

Table 6
Friday Preferences Across Age Ranges for Participation in Educational Leadership Programs

Day of the Week	Age Ranges
Friday ($n = 3$)	<30 years of age ($n = 0$) 0.0%
	30 to 39 years of age ($n = 2$) 66.7%
	40 to 49 years of age ($n = 1$) 33.3%
	50 to 59 years of age ($n = 0$) 0.0%
	60+ years of age ($n = 0$) 0.0%

Table 7
Saturday Preferences Across Age Ranges for Participation in Educational Leadership Programs

Day of the Week	Age Ranges
Saturday ($n = 34$)	<30 years of age ($n = 4$) 11.8%
	30 to 39 years of age ($n = 8$) 23.5%
	40 to 49 years of age ($n = 6$) 17.6%
	50 to 59 years of age ($n = 13$) 38.2%
	60+ years of age ($n = 3$) 8.8%

The results of the days of the week question were reviewed and the distribution of respondents across age ranges indicated that the most preferred day was Tuesday. The second rank preferred day was Saturday. The third preferred day was Monday. The fourth rank preferred day was Wednesday. The fifth ranked day of the week was Thursday. The least preferred day of the week was Friday. The no preference respondents included 1 (20%) <30 years of age, 1 (20%) 30-39 years of age, 1 (20%) 40-49 years of age, 0 (0.0%) 50-59 years of age, and 2 (40%) 60+ years of age. The no response participants included 0 (0.0%) <30 years of age, 1 (10%) 30-39 years of age , 3 (30%) 40-49 years of age, 1 (10%) 50-59 years of age, 0 (0.0%) 60+ years of age, and 5 (50%) with no response on age range.

Participants were also provided an open-ended "Comments" section on the survey. Sample comment responses for days of the week were as follows:

Participant 33:   Starting after 4 p.m. and ending before 9 p.m.
Participant 39:   Saturday is most ideal if the student is a full-time worker.
Participant 57:   Since weekends are usually family time and often involve travel, Friday, Saturday, and Monday are no go.
Participant 95:   No weekends.
Participant 105:   Face to face is really not an option for me.
Participant 144:   I would prefer Saturday.

Participants were asked "What distances would you be willing to travel to participate in a Face-to-Face Educational Leadership Program?" In addition, the participant was asked to rank each distance option on a scale from 1-6, with "1" being the first choice and "6" being the least preferred distance. Findings in Table 8 indicate 86.5% of respondents preferred to travel distances less than or equal to 30 miles to participate in an educational leadership program. The second ranked travel distance was from 31-60 miles as indicated by 5.8% of the respondents. Distances of greater than 60 miles received 0.0% of respondents indicating first choice. The results revealed that 1.3% of the respondents did not have a preference to travel distances, and 6.5% did not respond to the question.

Table 8
First Choice Preferences for Travel Distances to Participate in Educational Leadership Programs

Travel Distances	First Choice *n*	First Choice %
</=30 Miles	134	86.5
31 – 60 Miles	9	5.8
61 – 100 Miles	0	0.0
101 – 150 Miles	0	0.0
151+ Miles	0	0.0
No Preference	2	1.3
No Response	10	6.5

Findings in Tables 9 and 10 indicate the distribution of travel distances preferences across age ranges.

Table 9
Travel Distances Less Than or Equal To 30 Miles Preferences Across Age Ranges to Participate in Educational Leadership Programs

Day of the Week	Age Ranges
</=30 Miles	<30 years of age (*n* = 19) 14.2%
(*n* = 34)	30 to 39 years of age (*n* = 44) 32.8%
	40 to 49 years of age (*n* = 34) 25.4%
	50 to 59 years of age (*n* = 24) 17.9%
	60+ years of age (*n* = 13) 9.7%

Table 10
Travel Distances of 31 to 60 Miles Preferences Across Age Ranges to Participate in Educational Leadership Programs

Day of the Week	Age Ranges
31 – 60 Miles	<30 years of age ($n = 0$) 0.0%
($n = 9$)	30 to 39 years of age ($n = 1$) 11.1%
	40 to 49 years of age ($n = 3$) 33.3%
	50 to 59 years of age ($n = 3$) 33.3%
	60+ years of age ($n = 2$) 22.2%

The results of the travel distance question were reviewed and the distribution of respondents across age ranges indicated that the most preferred travel distance was less than or equal to 30 miles. The second rank preferred travel distance was 31-60 miles. There were 0 (0.0%) respondents for 61-100 miles, 101-150 miles, and 151+ miles. The no preference respondents included 1 (50%) 50-59 years of age, and 1 (50%) 60+ years of age. The no response participants included 0 (0.0%) <30 years of age, 1 (10%) 30-39 years of age, 1 (10%) 40-49 years of age, 3 (30%) 50-59 years of age, 0 (0.0%) 60+ years of age, and 5 (50%) with no response on age range.

Participants were provided an open-ended "Comments" section on the survey. Sample comment responses for distances were as follows:

Participant 32:	For face-to-face course delivery modality, I would not attend if over 30 miles. I would opt to take the course on line.
Participant 33:	Only 1 day per week. 61 miles or more won't happen.
Participant 39:	Face to Face needs to be convenient.
Participant 57:	I would not be willing to travel any distance out of town.
Participant 91:	We have plenty of locations to have classes close to us, I would never DRIVE over 100 miles to go to class!
Participant 93:	Travel is time.
Participant 105:	I would not travel, as face to face is not an option I could participate in.
Participant 139:	If traveling is required, I would not want to meet during the week. I would also like advanced notice if I had to travel on the weekend.

Discussion/Recommendations/Conclusions

The purpose of this study was to obtain stakeholder input regarding preferences for day of the week and travel distances regarding participation in an educational leadership program at the master's level. In terms of days of the week, survey respondents did not prefer to have Friday classes. However, there was some support for Saturday classes which seemed to be more convenient for some of those employed full-time during the week. On the other side of the coin, there were respondents that were strongly opposed to weekend classes. Scheduling classes during the first of the week, Monday and Tuesday, were ranked most favorably. Wednesday and Thursday were ranked as positive days for participation in classes. Overwhelmingly, survey respondents do not prefer to travel beyond 30 miles to participate in an educational leadership program. A very small number of respondents indicated that they would be willing to travel up to

60 miles to attend classes. Horspool and Yang (2010) found that students tended to take online classes instead of face-to-face classes because of scheduling issues and to reduce the commute to campuses.

Although the survey results were mixed, program educational leaders should consider the results when scheduling classes each semester if student preferences are valued. This is not to say that student preferences will totally dictate the schedule. Since the target audience for participation in an educational leadership program is practicing educators who are usually working during the day in a school, face-to-face classes will need to be offered in the evenings or on Saturdays. Another option is to offer some types of online courses which would be more convenient to the targeted students for the program. Some of the issues adult learners have today include their financial situation, family responsibilities, travel limitations, employment responsibilities, finding time to continue their education, and other commitments and obligations. Society has undergone changes due to demographic, economic, technological, and sociocultural issues that have shifted us from a "supply-driven" to a "demand-driven" educational marketplace (Fahlman, 2012; Keller, 2008).

These results may have implications to educational leadership programs. Survey respondents indicated preferences for limited student travel time. This suggests that if a program remains in the traditional face-to-face format, programs currently struggling with low student enrollment may continue to struggle with this issue especially if it relies on students who have to travel more than 30 minutes to get to campus. The educational leadership administration and faculty might need to revisit if the goal is to provide a program for the 30- to 60-mile radius or if the boundaries need to be extended via different course delivery modalities. Cole, Shelley, & Swartz (2014) found that convenience was the greatest factor influencing students' satisfaction with online courses.

"The more strongly the person feels the need, the greater the chances the person will feel an accompanying pressure to attain the related goal" (Wlodkowski, 1993, p. 48). The results of this study could be considered in the program review or redesign process to better meet the demands of professionals seeking admission into educational leadership programs.

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Women's Educational Leadership Programs: Shatter the Glass Ceiling

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Abstract

The construct of leadership conveys a variety of images in one's mind. Depending on the area in which the leader is imagined, these visualizations may vary. Militaristic leaders one imagines in uniform, following prescribed policy and a strict chain of command. The individual's gender or ethnicity rarely dominates the position as the entity itself is the central image, with the underlying support of the strengths associated with the organization. Leadership within the political realm in the United States, as the 2016 election has shown, has begun to evolve to a position whereby both ethnic and gender variance have been embraced in such a manner that the sole political voice is no longer exclusively that of a Caucasian male. While these changes signal a clear change in the thought pattern of millions of Americans, one realm of leadership still struggles to emerge with an equal voice in leadership. Ironically, this area is known as Educational Leadership, which purports to educate and train educators to become educational administrators and lead public P-12 schools throughout the country. This paper reveals the existing gaps in administrative leadership for women in educational settings and seeks to help reveal the apparent altered response men and women find in attempting to reach a pinnacle in their career as leaders only to encounter what is often seen as a glass cliff in terms of "pernicious processes such as a lack of alternative opportunities, sexism, or men's in-group favoritism" (Ryan, Haslam, & Postmes, 1988). Clearly, it is time to disenfranchise such antiquated mindsets, empowering women's educational leadership to rise at all levels, forever shattering the glass ceiling and leaving in its wake an environment of opportunity for all who are willing to respond to the call to lead.

Women's Educational Leadership Programs: Shatter the Glass Ceiling

Educational Leadership programs in higher education have evolved dramatically, but further evolution is desperately needed to effectively confront the differentiation of challenges faced by administrators today. Not since the inception of the single room schoolhouse where the teacher was required to compete every task from floor cleaning to teaching to disciplining, has educator diversity expanded with such intensity that imagining it through a single lens is both antiquated as well as ineffective. Administration programs are no longer about managerial tasks and compliance; they are missioned to lead by example, using best practices and transformational leadership approaches. They must employ the most relevant methods and tactics to ensure that effective faculty are maintained and successful, well rounded students are graduated. This cannot happen without recognizing that the glass ceiling must be shattered, irreparably and permanently. The days of late where women leaders realized lower pay and less impactful positions based on their gender must be actively amended. In order to work toward realizing this goal, it is paramount that leadership programs recognize the evident space existing in leadership programs where exploration of the women's leadership initiatives and strategies can be fully addressed in order for impactful change to be realized.

According to the 2012, "Benchmarking Women's Leadership in the United States" a number of dramatic findings were revealed which limit the effectiveness of and progression of the society that is represented by the populations in the United States. For example, the study found the following, (Lennon, 2013).

- While women are outperforming men, they are not earning salaries or titles to support the elevated performance.
- Women's underrepresentation in leadership roles is not due to a preference for less demanding positions.
- Lack of women in leadership positions is due to a gender bias.
- Abandoning strategies to promote and advance women will result in organizations continuing to fall behind their global competitors.

In response to the evident discrepancies found in both academia as well as the world at large,
Harvard University's Kennedy School created the Women and Public Policy Program tasked to "Increase Women's Agency and Impact," (Women and Public Policy Program, 2016). The program focuses on empowering women within the existing gendered systems in the following ways:

- Establish Quotas
- Modeling Female Leadership
- Women's Legal and Social Control Over Assets
- Industry Negotiation Standards
- Negotiation Strategies for Women

While contemporary 21st Century thought may lead one to presume that women have equal access and opportunities, especially when compared to the oppression of years past when

women could not vote, hold office, or own property, the data and research counter this pop cultural myth. Published by the Association of American Colleges & Universities, *The Women's Leadership Program: A Case Study*, succinctly addresses the fact that "the many facets of academic culture make it difficult to address gender equity in academic leadership" (Berryman-Fink, LeMaster, & Nelson, 2003).

It is in these more contemporary university settings where one finds the first evolutionary footprint for women's leadership programs in the United States. While profound steps toward progression in the areas of both awareness of women's leadership and the uniqueness of women's leadership studies are advancing, there are abundant evidences of areas outside of these social changes where an opportunity for women's leadership is vast and unchartered. In public university settings in the Southeastern United States, for example, minimal exposure to women's leadership is accessible within those geographical confines. Admirable in their initial efforts to chip away at the glass ceiling, institutions like Clemson University, with a Bachelor of Arts in Women's Leadership (Clemson University, 2016) and Mississippi University for Women with a newly minted Master of Arts in Women's Studies, offer some of the few programs in women's leadership in the Southeast.

In exploring some of the most well-rounded and all-encompassing degree programs offered on Women's Leadership platform can be found at Columbia University's Barnard College where they have developed an innovative, full-spectrum program. Labeled the Athena Center for Leadership Studies, the center is missioned "to explore how women lead and how gender affects leadership styles and strategies…to help students prepare to assume positions of leadership at the highest levels of achievement" (Columbia University, 2016). The Athena Scholars Program seeks to create leaders who are "visionary, courageous, bold, globally aware, culturally sensitive, and determined to make the world a better place." Specific to the Columbia program is its use of the developmental goals which not only seek to "communicate women's leadership to a global world" but to also "apply and analyze gendered leadership styles and strategies."

Even in the social construct of women's leadership as a priori for university dialog, in K-12 school settings, for example, a common misinterpretation is that, given the prevalence of women working in these academic settings that the majority of women leaders are, therefore, women. In reality, only 44% of public-school principals with the percentages declining sharply as the positions and power rise (Berryman-Fink, LeMaster, & Nelson, 2003). Furthermore, that same research provides evidence of women's low stereotypical salary placement by providing evidence that women represent nearly 100% of the teacher assistants, preschool and Kindergarten assignments, which concomitantly represent the weakest salary commiserate. They also represent the lowest percentage, as a gender subgroup, in educational administration, the highest salary commiserate.

In higher education arenas, the insight delivered by women leaders welcomes a heterogeneity of thought that cannot be delivered within the social constraints of a homogenous pool. Furthermore, the heterogeneity in both style thought and presentation have allowed women in higher education to achieve 56% in national research awards and grants to men's 44% (Lennon, 2013). Unfortunately, however, the data from this source also acknowledge that this

accelerated participation does not equate to an expanded role in leadership in academia with women constituting only 28% of the full-time professorships. The complexity of academic culture creates a live challenge for the indoctrination of women's leadership programs with fidelity to ensure that such programs gain both the support and celebration needed. In order to become recognized as both critical as well as essential components of effective leadership programs, especially in the realm of K-12 Educational Leadership where children first witness and model their social constructs for leadership, one must address this key component with both the tenacity and dedication to ensure that the unique facets are realized and preserved for the benefit and the advancement of humanity. Fortunately, the glass ceiling is beginning to crack and splinter. Empowered women's leadership programs focused on educational leadership strands, in particular, are gaining notice and recognition. Continuing to explore, expand, and appreciate the multidimensional tone garnered by the addition of women's leadership programs will allow society to realize the positive impact possible when one's paradigm is adjusted to allow views from alternative perspectives. Ideally, the combination of ideas from traditional leadership practices and innovations from women's leadership strategies can be harmonized in such a manner that the synergy creates maximal effectiveness, efficiency and creativity for the betterment of society, today, tomorrow, and for a future yet to be imagined.

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