

## ***The Researcher: An Interdisciplinary Journal***

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# *The Researcher: An Interdisciplinary Journal*

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**EXAMINING WHAT WE THINK WE KNOW  
ABOUT RACE:  
TEACHING RACIAL FORMATION THEORY and  
*HEART OF DARKNESS* AT AN HBCU**

by  
Deidre L. Wheaton Ph.D<sup>1</sup>

*Should we read Heart of Darkness? May we read it? Must we read it? Or, on the contrary, ought we not read it or allow our students and the public in general to read it? Who is this “we” in whose name I speak? What community forms that “we”?*

*(J. Hillis Miller)<sup>2</sup>*

**Abstract**

Scholarship on the importance of teaching students about race, ethnicity, and diversity is by now quite common. Perhaps most prevalent in the body of literature are articles and books that emphasize the challenge of teaching race and ethnicity in predominantly white institutions. In this article, the author shines light on a gap in the literature, and posits that there is not enough available research on the necessity and challenges of teaching race in a predominantly African American university. Using anecdotal and teaching experiences as a point of departure, the author contends that one way to engage African American students at Historically Black Colleges and Universities in critical conversations about race and racism is to introduce them to the language of racial formation theory in their required literature courses.

**Introduction**

During the past three years of teaching undergraduate courses and taking graduate courses at a Historically Black College or University (HBCU) in Mississippi, it has become quite clear that some students (even those at HBCUs) are not necessarily open to thinking critically about issues of race and racism. In classes filled with African American students, at an institution with a rich racial heritage, in a state with a complex racial past (and present),

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Wheaton is an Assistant Professor of Interdisciplinary Studies at Jackson State University.

<sup>2</sup> From “Should We Read *Heart of Darkness*?” in *Heart of Darkness: A Norton Critical Edition*, ed. Paul B. Armstrong. New York: Norton, 2006, 463-74.

there remains a resistance and therefore a desperate need to re-examine what we think we know about race. Two learning and teaching exchanges highlight this need for racial re-examination. One incident occurred in an undergraduate Advanced Composition course that included a unit on the Myth of the Melting Pot. After reading several articles from the required text and viewing the documentary “The Story We Tell,” students were asked to compose an argumentative essay in which they took a stance on whether or not administrators at HBCUs should emphasize the study of race and racism in college curricula. The other incident transpired in a graduate Literary Criticism course, in which a mixed group of upper level undergraduates and graduate students studied the different schools of literary theory and criticism and used them to shed light on Joseph Conrad’s novella *Heart of Darkness*.

In both cases, the students responded with unexpected and somewhat disturbing levels of resistance to discussing race and racism. All of the Advanced Composition students argued that HBCUs have emphasized race and the past for far too long; therefore, they contended that the institutions should not integrate more courses that address issues of race and racism. Other issues—poverty, the economy, health care, and education—were more important than continuing to have the same conversations about race and racism. Perhaps the most surprising, however, were the reactions of the students in the graduate level literary criticism course. When the Literary Criticism professor quoted from J. Hillis Miller’s list of questions and asked the class: “Should we read *Heart of Darkness*. . . . Is there an obligation to do so?” a hush fell over the room, and it became clear, that most of the students were not accustomed to using the social construction of race as a lens through which a work of fiction may be read (463, 474). Despite the fact that the professor had assigned not only the novella but also countless articles and documents from the Norton Critical Edition (edited by Paul B. Armstrong), which helped to set the context for racial thinking during Conrad’s time, most students could not get past the unsavory representations of Africans and Africa in the novella.<sup>3</sup> Many seemed content to rather uncritically

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<sup>3</sup> The fourth edition of the Norton Critical Edition of *Heart of Darkness* contains the text of the novella, biographical information on the author, and numerous supplementary readings that help to set the historical and social context for the events that transpire in the novella. The background articles cover such topics

resign themselves to the fact that the text was racist and therefore not something that students should have to read. Despite in-class discussions and assigned readings, neither group of students seemed comfortable or motivated to think about how race influences social problems such as poverty and economics or how dominant racial ideologies often inform the works of literature that are produced during a particular historical moment.

These two incidents suggest that students' resistance to interrogating race in a meaningful way stems less from an absence of concern about race and more from a lack of knowledge of the racial formation theories that help frame conversations on race. A lack of knowledge such as this is dangerous because it means that a generation of HBCU graduates—English majors in particular, many of whom are training to become educators in secondary schools—may be leaving college without an adequate understanding of race as a powerful category of critical and social analysis. This is without a doubt a problem that warrants attention. One way to address the problem of limited knowledge of racial formation theories without adding new courses to the existing curriculum is for instructors to consider integrating more analysis of race theory into their courses as a means of increasing students' level of racial awareness.

### **Literature Review**

#### ***A Growing Trend: Teaching Race Theory across the Curriculum***

A cursory examination of recent articles published in academic journals over the past ten years signals that scholars, across disciplinary lines, are concerned about what undergraduates are learning about race as well as about how new theories of race are impacting (or not impacting) college curricula. Perhaps one of the most insightful articles is a 2009 piece published in *English Language Notes* in which Marlon B. Ross calls faculty to task for

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as “Imperialism in the Congo,” “Nineteenth-Century Attitudes Toward Race,” and “Conrad in the Congo.” Other materials that would be useful for establishing the historical and social context would include the following: *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (Episode II: The Story We Tell)—a documentary series that explores the development of race as a social concept and the role of race in nation building and colonization; Marlon Rigg’s *Ethnic Notions* (1987)—a documentary that documents a long history of anti-black stereotypes and cultural representations; Thomas Pakenham, *The Scramble for Africa* (1991); Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (1973); Henk Wesseling *Divide and Rule: The Partition of Africa, 1880-1914* (1996).

the limited inroads cultural studies theories have had in English Departments. In this aptly titled article—“What Can Race Theory and Queer Theory Teach us about the State of Literary Studies?”—Ross, who is a scholar of both African American cultural studies and British literature, argues that although “recent cultural theory [specifically race and queer theory] has infiltrated our lingo, our scholarship, and to some extent our curriculum and hiring...the impact of cultural theory still remains marginal and negligible” (37). Race theory, with its emphasis on intersectionality, according to Ross, has not significantly penetrated the depths of what faculty in English Departments value or how they organize the curriculum. The problem Ross identifies is one in which faculty members seek to police the boundaries of literary studies from too much influence from other – “unequal” elements (namely race theory or queer theory). This sort of policing Ross fears has created a situation in which literary studies scholars have “[erected] a barrier to the full intellectual impact of these particular theories” – a move which will not lead to a promising future for literary studies.

Ross’s insights shed light on the situation described in the aforementioned literary criticism course, and his insights reinforce the contention that more needs to be done to ensure that students leave HBCUs with knowledge of racial theories. The fact that students, many of whom matriculated through undergraduate at the same institution, were not equipped to talk about the novella in terms of its participation in a larger cultural, historical, and literary dialogue on race might suggest that somewhere along the line (in their studies) they missed the lessons about race theory. Fortunately, all is not lost; there is hope.

A look at publications in other academic fields suggests that the students in the Advanced Composition and Literary Criticism courses are not alone. Scholars in psychology, education, and English (just to name a few) seem convinced that there is a dire need to educate students about race and racism. For example, in 2008, Professor of Psychology Christopher C. Sonn examined the challenges of “teaching about race, culture, and ethnicity in a psychology program” in an article titled “Educating for Anti-Racism: Producing and Reproducing Race and Power in a University Classroom” (155). Sonn discussed the importance of preparing psychology students to have an increased “awareness

about racialised oppression and exclusion” so that they are equipped to develop “ways of researching and practicing psychology that are transformative and culturally sensitive” (155). In a slightly different vein, Larry McClain explored the challenges of teaching “classes in composition, literature, and cultural studies at...a small [predominately white] liberal arts college in the Midwest” (245). In an intriguing article titled, “A Whiter Shade of Pale: Teaching Race in the Midwest,” McClain tells a familiar story of white students who were not only reluctant to talk about race but also convinced that their whiteness did not provide them with any unearned privileges. Perhaps most revealing in McClain’s article was his students’ unwillingness to acknowledge that they even had a race (or a culture) for that matter. Chris Gaine and H. Richard Milner both explore the issue of teaching future teachers about race in their respective publications. Milner’s “Reflection, Racial Competence, and Critical Pedagogy: How Do We Prepare Pre-service Teachers to Pose Tough Questions?” published in the journal of *Race, Ethnicity, and Education* and Gaine’s “‘If It’s Not Hurting It’s Not Working’: Teaching Teachers about ‘Race,’” published in *Research Papers in Education* both grapple with the necessity of and perhaps most significantly the best practices for preparing teachers to educate students about the complexities of race. As this very limited list of titles indicates, concerns over how to teach students about race and ethnicity are prevalent, and the conversations cross disciplinary lines, which signals that professors in English Departments—especially those at HBCUs—also need to be engaged in the work of teaching students about theories of race and writing about those teaching and learning experiences.

That scholars in so many different fields are addressing the issue of race and race theories is certainly a welcomed sight; however, these recent publications reveal a troubling gap in the scholarship on teaching race theory in higher education. None of the aforementioned articles examine the issue of teaching race theory or critical race pedagogy at an HBCU (or minority serving institution of higher learning). An overwhelming majority of the articles mentioned previously are representative of a host of other publications that address white undergraduate students’ resistance to discussions of race and ethnicity, white professors’ challenges with teaching race and anti-racism, or minority professors’

challenges with teaching race in predominantly white institutions. This gap in the literature prompts pertinent questions: Are African American students perceived to know more about race? Are they somehow expected to be naturally equipped, willing, able, and receptive to thinking critically about issues of race, culture, ethnicity, identity, and diversity? Are students at HBCUs being challenged to learn about race as a category of critical (literary or cultural) analysis? Based on the responses shared in the aforementioned class, they are not. Consequently, students miss valuable opportunity to enhance their understanding of social problems. English majors, in particular, miss out on the productive insights that may be gained by reading works of literature such as *Heart of Darkness* (and other works of literature that engage race, racism, and identity) through an interdisciplinary lens that is fine tuned to the nuances of racial formation theory.

***An Enduring Debate: Should We Teach Heart of Darkness? If So, How Should We Teach It?***

Taking an interdisciplinary—specifically race theory based—approach to reading *Heart of Darkness* is not something that many Conrad scholars would support. In fact, recent applications of new theories to this and other works of great literature have raised the ire of some scholars who contend that critiquing the racism, sexism, or Eurocentrism in this lauded text is often a sign of wrong-headed literary analysis. It has been argued that these approaches to reading divert attention away from what matters most—the literariness of the text. What should be the focus when reading, studying, and teaching *Heart of Darkness*—a Conradian might suggest—is the author’s ability to create a text that is at once “extravagantly allusive, multivocal, discontinuous, self-conscious, and suggestive” (Chilton 276). To be distracted by race or racism in the text is to miss the larger point or purpose of the novella; to over emphasize race is to misread the novella altogether. On a somewhat extreme end of the spectrum, Hugh Mercer Curtler, contends that contemporary critiques of race and racism in *Heart of Darkness* is merely a sign of an unfortunate “trend to sift brilliant literature through the narrow, constricting sieve of political correctness” (272). In Curtler’s opinion, the shift away from a New Critical approach to reading literature is unfortunate because it means that with the emergence of

“structuralist, deconstructionist, feminist, black feminist, Marxist, Freudian, and New Historicist” theories (ways of reading) scholars now have a “determination to bring to the novel ideological preconceptions and not-so-hidden political agenda[s],” which inhibit them from doing what New Criticism suggests good readers do—“open one’s mind, to listen carefully to what the novelist has to say” (272).

Despite Curtler’s very narrow and one-sided view of what the new approaches to reading literature have contributed to the field of literary studies, there are those who have thoroughly given attention to how one’s understanding of *Heart of Darkness* may be enhanced by reading the novel through a lens other than New Criticism. Michael Lackey’s review essay “Conrad Scholarship Under New-Millennium Western Eyes” (2004) presents a view of the positive ways in which feminist, post-colonial, and Marxism studies have impacted the study of Conrad’s fiction. Lackey evaluates Peter Firchow’s *Envisioning Africa: Racism and Imperialism in Conrad’s Heart of Darkness* (2000), Andrew Roberts’ *Conrad and Masculinity* (2000) as well as John G. Peters’ *Conrad and Impressionism* (2001) in an effort to demonstrate how the new approaches to literary study that have emerged have made “Conrad and Conrad scholars...more instead of less relevant with each new intellectual development” (143). What Lackey describes as the common thread connecting each of the “recent studies is a focus on epistemology”—the study of knowledge—which according to Lackey “is to be expected given Conrad’s preoccupation with unreliable knowledge and untrustworthy perception” (147). These studies according to Lackey are important because although they “do not resolve the all-important epistemological dilemmas in Conrad’s texts, they do carry on the Conradian tradition of perpetual questioning and honest inquiry in the name of social justice” (147).

That each new approach to reading *Heart of Darkness* brings to the forefront of intellectual conversations Conrad’s interests in ways of knowing—epistemology—stands as an essential feature in this analysis, because when introducing the novella to students at an HBCU it is vitally important to frame it as a text that at once invites readers to explore what the characters thought they knew to be true about race and to question and reflect on what the reader believes to be true about race. One useful

approach to reading the text with these concerns in mind is to employ the insights of racial formation theory as a guide to decoding racial knowledge in the text.

### **Theoretical and Critical Framework**

#### ***What is Racial Formation Theory?***

Michael Omi and Howard Winant's *Racial Formation in the United States From the 1960s to the 1990s* (1994), is a key text for professors interested in helping their students think through complex questions of race. Although this text does not speak to the particular historical period or geographical place in which Conrad's narrative is set, Omi and Winant offer a very instructive explanation of how race as a category of analysis is constructed, which should help students draw parallels between the formation of race in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries and the formation of race in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when Conrad's novella was published. Perhaps the most compelling and important part of Omi and Winant's theory of racial formation is the fact that it is historically grounded. In the opening chapter of their manuscript, the authors indicate their basic premise of what a theory of race is. They begin their definition as follows:

Race theory is shaped by actually existing race relations in any given historical period. Within any given historical period, a particular racial theory is dominant—despite often high levels of contestation. The dominant racial theory provides society with “common sense” about race, and with categories for the identification of individuals and groups in racial terms. (11)

Stated as such, theories of race and therefore the ways that groups of people understand and discuss race are not static. For instance, at the turn of the twentieth century, when Conrad published *Heart of Darkness*, the common sense epistemology (theory of race) was rooted in a biological view of race. This “biologistic (and at least implicitly racist) view of race was dominant” until an “insurgent approach,” which emphasizes the centrality of the “ethnic group view” in the pre-1930s began to emerge (Omi 14). According to Omi and Winant, these shifts in what race means directly impact how people in different historical and social moments converse

about race, how they define racism, and how they seek to attain racial equality.

This understanding of what race theories are connects seamlessly to Omi and Winant's definitions of race and racial formation. Race, they contend is not "an *essence*;" it is not "something fixed, concrete, and objective" (54). Nor is race "a mere *illusion*, a purely ideological construct which some ideal non-racist social order would eliminate" (54). Instead, they define race as "an unstable and 'decentered' complex of social meanings constantly being transformed by political struggle. . . . Race is a concept which signifies and symbolizes social conflicts and interests by referring to different types of human bodies" (55).

This definition of race is often challenging for students to embrace, because they think that they know what race is. They think that race has everything to do with how one looks. What is often ignored or omitted from their racial mis-education is the reality that historian Robin G. D. Kelley affirms in an episode of the PBS documentary *Race: The Power of an Illusion* when he states that "race was never just a matter of how you looked. It was a matter of how people assigned meaning to how you look." Omi and Winant take this statement further and posit that the meanings of race and racial categories are always contested terrain—constantly being negotiated and redefined.

Racial formation, in fact, is the term Omi and Winant give to this process of redefinition. Racial formation is "the sociohistorical process by which racial categories are created, inhabited, transformed, and destroyed" (55). They contend that this sociohistorical process is best understood as occurring in two ways—through racial projects "interpretation[s], representation[s], or explanation[s] of racial dynamics" and through hegemony "the way in which society is organized and ruled" (56). What becomes apparent in Omi and Winant's theory of racial formation is that everyone is subjected to a particular (historically situated) epistemology or rather ideology of race. "We are," the authors profess, "inserted in a comprehensively racialized social structure. . . . A vast web of racial projects mediates between the discursive or representational means in which race is identified and signified on one hand, and the institutional and organizational forms in which it is routinized and standardized on the other" (60). These racial projects fuel cultural and racial stereotypes which become

the ideological foundation for (or rather justification for) racial hegemony and hierarchies.

Understood in this way, readers of *Heart of Darkness* are challenged to see the racial language and stereotypes of Africans in the text as part and parcel of a larger network of racial projects that participate in the negotiation of the meanings of race and racial categories at the turn of the twentieth century, but helping students see the novel through this particular critical lens requires that they are first equipped with a basic knowledge of how race and racial categories are formed through cultural representations, laws, science, language, and literature.<sup>4</sup> Often the best approach to take is to begin by examining contemporary racial projects and forms of hegemony with which the students are familiar. For instance, an instructor might ask students to bring in examples of cultural texts that in some way define, identify, characterize, or stereotype a group of people. As students share their findings, the instructor might lead the class in a discussion of how those cultural texts and the definitions or identities that they construct are reinforced by public policies, laws, or the media.

An equally effective approach is to apply the theoretical framework (insights) offered by racial formation as a scaffold upon which students may examine a cultural or literary texts such as *Heart of Darkness* using interdisciplinary methods of analysis. Using a New Historical approach to read any racially charged text with the insight provided from critical racial formation theory should lead students to pose questions such as the following—some of which are borrowed from Charles Bressler's text *Literary Criticism*:

1. What knowledge or beliefs do the characters have regarding race? Is the racial knowledge challenged and/or reinforced in the text?
2. What types of racial projects or hegemony are at work in the text? Who benefits from the hegemony? Who is harmed by the hegemony? Is the hegemony ever challenged or subverted?

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<sup>4</sup> Omi and Winant's theory of racial formation is certainly not the only one available to students or instructors interested in understanding the complexities of race theory. Refer to the following texts for additional theories of racial formation and/or other articulations of critical race theory: Wahneema Lubiano, ed., *The House that Race Built* (New York: Vintage, 1998); W.E.B. DuBois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Penguin, 1989); Patricia Hill Collins, *Black Feminist Thought* (Routledge, 2000).

3. What literary techniques does the author employ to convey the racial common sense, racial knowledge, or racial ideologies that are dominant among his/her central characters?
4. Why might this text be compelling and/or relevant to contemporary readers (particularly college students at an HBCU)? “Why might readers at [the turn of the twentieth century have found] this work compelling?”
5. “Are there differences between your values and the values implicit in the work you are reading?” If so, what are some of the racial, social, or political projects that may have contributed to challenging the racial common sense that was dominant at the turn of the twentieth century?
6. “What authorial biographical facts are relevant to the text?”
7. “What other cultural events occurred surrounding the original production of the text? How may these events be relevant to the text under investigation?”
8. “To what extent does the novella participate in the sociohistorical process of negotiating the meanings of race that were taking place at the turn of the twentieth century?” (Bressler 195)

These questions, which guide the following analysis of *Heart of Darkness*, will help guide students through a nuanced exploration of the literary and social function of racial stereotypes and racist language in Conrad’s novella. The questions will position students to enter into the very weighty intellectual conversations that have emerged surrounding race in the novella. Additionally, the questions will equip students to re-examine what they think they know about race, and thereby prepare them to think reflectively and critically about how the racial categories they inhabit are constructed and how those prescribed racial categories may be contested, challenged, negotiated, or redefined.

**Literary Analysis: An Examination of Racial Knowledge in *Heart of Darkness***

The first step in examining racial knowledge in *Heart of Darkness* involves taking Hugh M. Curtler’s advice and “listen[ing] carefully to what the novelist has to say” (272). Throughout the novella, Conrad uses dialogue—what the characters say to each other, what the main narrator Marlow says to the men on the *Nellie*, and what the frame narrator reports back

to the reader—to provide signals to the reader of those points in the novella when important racial (or race based) knowledge is revealed. The signals come in the form of very intentional—though seemingly insignificant—repetitions of the phrase “you know.” This phrase appears approximately twenty-five times in the novella, and the repetition of the phrase serves as notice to the careful reader that Conrad is interested in adding emphasis to what his characters and his turn of the twentieth century readers thought they knew about race in general and about Africans in particular.<sup>5</sup>

In the opening pages of the novella, Conrad speaks of this racial knowledge (racial common sense) in a rather muted voice when he reveals how Charlie Marlow—the primary narrator—attains his coveted appointment with the Company. Conrad uses Marlow’s words to divulge the change that takes place in Fresleven, which has led to his death. In a conversation with the other men on the *Nellie*, Marlow says,

“Oh, it didn’t surprise me in the least to hear this [that Fresleven had beaten the chief] and at the same time to be told that Fresleven was the gentlest, quietest creature that ever walked on two legs. No doubt he was, but he had been a couple of years already out there engaged in the noble cause, *you know*, and he probably felt the need at last of asserting his self-respect in some way.” (9)<sup>6</sup>

Here Conrad uses Marlow’s words specifically “you know” to signal that those listening to this tale and those reading it know something about what happens to people out there in Africa. They change! They are transformed from men who are gentle and quiet into men who beat others in an effort to exert or demand some semblance of respect. In this case “you know” is positioned in the

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<sup>5</sup> It is imperative in an examination of *Heart of Darkness* and in any examination of race as a category of analysis that instructors caution students to avoid the temptation of conflating “race” and “blackness.” The two, of course, are not synonymous. For students interested in exploring the social construction of whiteness or whiteness as a category of analysis the following texts offer an excellent entrance into the field of whiteness studies: Richard Dyer, *White* (1997); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and The Alchemy of Race* (1998); George Lipsitz, *Possessive Investment in Whiteness* (1998); David Roediger, *The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class* (1999); Paula S. Rothenberg, *White Privilege: The Other Side of Racism* (2004).

<sup>6</sup> Italics are not used in the original text; however, I have included them here to highlight the key repeated phrase—“you know.”

sentence to refer back to Fresleven's two years of working at the noble cause, which is obviously so familiar to the listeners on the *Nellie* and to Conrad's nineteenth and early twentieth century readers that it did not warrant immediate explanation. Marlow's listeners and Conrad's readers (past and present) are expected to already know about the noble cause and about Africa's propensity to change a man into someone who would depart from his normal or natural civilized tendencies and lash out violently against others.

Conrad builds upon this part of the narrative to offer a very clear statement on the dominant racial ideologies of the time, when he allows Marlow to share his experience of a pre-departure visit to the doctor with the men on the *Nellie*. The doctor asks Marlow for permission to measure his "crania" before he goes "out there" (11). Rather suspicious, Marlow asks the doctor if he measures the heads when the men return. The doctor informs Marlow that the reason he never measures heads when people return from out there rest in the simple fact that he never sees them. "Moreover," the doctor says, "the changes take place inside, you know" (11). Here the doctor rather than Marlow uses the phrase "you know" to indicate some knowledge about what happens to Europeans when they spend too much time in Africa. The doctor assumes that Marlow knows what he means when he refers to this internal change, and readers are by extension implicated in this shared knowledge—this unspoken belief about Africa's impact on Europeans.

Helping students hear or rather read what Conrad is doing with the repeated "you know," requires that race conscious instructors move to the second step in the process of examining racial knowledge in *Heart of Darkness*. This second step involves going beyond Curtler's advice to listen to the novel; the second step requires instructors to take an honest assessment of their students' literary analysis skills and knowledge of historical context, and then prepare to partner with the students in the process of learning what they need to know to interpret and respond to rather than merely react to the racial common sense (racial knowledge) that is embedded in the novella.<sup>7</sup> Instructors who

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<sup>7</sup>The most straightforward method of assessment is a simple in-class or WebCT based survey given at the beginning of the term in which students respond to a series of questions which test their knowledge of basic literary terminology and historical events that are related to the text they will have to study—in this case, *Heart of Darkness*. For instance the survey might ask students whether or not

desire to prepare students to identify instances of racial common sense (dominant racial ideologies) should consider exposing students to knowledge of late nineteenth century beliefs about race and the nature of man prior to assign students to read the novella. The Public Broadcasting Station's series of documentaries on race offers an excellent introduction into nineteenth century thinking about race and civilization. The documentary also draws connections between the racial projects and expansion (colonization), which should powerfully display for students the interconnectedness of racial ideologies. Central to the second episode of the PBS series—The Story We Tell—is an emphasis on scientific racism that was so prevalent at the turn of the century.

In this way, the documentary, coupled with selections by G.W.F. Hegel and Charles Darwin in the Norton Critical Edition will give students a frame of reference for understanding and interpreting what Conrad is saying when his characters share their common sense knowledge about race. With this information or knowledge in hand prior to reading, students will see the pseudo-scientific knowledge that the doctor shares with Marlow for what it is, a direct reflection of what nineteenth century scientists and scholars such as Hegel and Darwin thought about the nature of Africa and Africans. In "The African Character," Hegel illustrates the social knowledge about Africa and the nature of Africans when he writes that "there is nothing harmonious with humanity to be found in this type of character [the African character]" (208). "The Negro," Hegel contends, "exhibits the natural man in his completely wild and untamed state" (208). This wild and untamed state, scientists believed, was a threat to civilization and therefore needed to be avoided. These wild and untamed people were from a still rather wild, virtually untamed, dangerous and often deadly place—Africa. This supposedly primitive space presented a major challenge for European men, many of whom have very limited restraint when they find themselves in a place that lacks built-in moral checks and balances.

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they are familiar with authors using a frame narrator, or if they know why rubber and ivory were such precious resources during the era of colonization. How students respond to questions such as these can provide the instructor with insights on what he or she needs to teach before sending students off to read and digest Conrad's novella.

The realization that European men rather easily succumb to the absence of restraint, invites an exploration not only of Conrad's use of irony to challenge or debunk the dominant racial ideology but also of the ways in which the novella itself becomes evidence of the social construction (or rather deconstruction) of whiteness as the epitome of innate (inherent) civilization. Perhaps one of the most telling or explicit examples of this occurs when Conrad once again uses the repetition of the "you know" phrase to expose the religious rationale for the colonization of Africa. When Marlow stops to say his farewell to his aunt they begin to talk and Marlow tells the men on the *Nellie* that

"It appears however I was also one of the Workers, with a capital—you know. Something like an emissary of light, something like a lower sort of apostle. There had been a lot of such rot let loose in print and talk just about that time, and the excellent woman living right in the rush of all that humbug got carried off her feet." (12)

Here Marlow is speaking of his listeners' knowing that there was some belief that the objective of exploration, imperialism, and colonization in Africa was to civilize or spread the Christian gospel to the "ignorant millions" who needed to be weaned from their "horrid ways" (12). He makes this statement in a rather comical and overtly cynical way to suggest that it is absurd to think that religious benevolence, rather than aggressive profit and greed, is behind the colonization efforts. Despite the fact that it was a commonly held belief among nineteenth century Europeans that "the native populations [of Africa] are pagans, fetish worshippers, and on a very low plane of civilization," Conrad makes it clear in this scene that what people like Marlow's aunt believe about colonization was rot and humbug (*Congo Free State* 106). What they thought they knew about the civilizing missions was erroneous and misguided because the Africans were being treated brutally and enslaved by abusive and restraint-less Europeans. In this example, Conrad demonstrates the irony of the situation, which is that the very people who professed to bring civilization to the heathens are behaving in a repugnantly un-civilized manner.

Unfortunately Conrad's critiques of the religion based civilizing missions are rather easily overshadowed by what his central narrator—Marlow—thinks he knows about the Africans.

These thoughts are presented as *a priori* truth about the African character, and Conrad again makes use of the “you know” phrase as Marlow reaches the dark continent. The following examples highlight the various ways in which “you know” is used to indicate different types of knowledge about Africans. Upon seeing a group of emaciated Africans, Marlow describes one of the men as follows: “The black bones reclined at full length with one shoulder against the tree.... The man seemed young—almost a boy—but you know with them it’s hard to tell” (17). Here Conrad shows us Marlow’s reliance on nineteenth century stereotypes that constructed Africans as childlike and not fully evolved men. Unable to do anything substantial to help the man, he gives him food, which he takes but is apparently too weak to eat. In another example Marlow describes his experience of seeing Africans—who he compares to “conquered monsters”—in their “monstrous and free” state (36). “The men were... No they were not inhuman. Well, you know that was the worst of it—this suspicion of their not being inhuman. It would come slowly to one” (36). In each of these textual examples we see something different happening with the use of “you know.” The second example moves beyond stereotype to challenge perceptions that Africans were inhuman; however, even this example is troubling because it still traffics in the nineteenth century notion that there are levels of civilization along racial lines.

Perhaps the most disturbing repetition of the “you know” and the most frightful statement on what happens when people are mis-educated about race occurs near the end of the novella when Marlow recounts his reading of Kurtz’s report to the International Society for the Suppression of Savage Customs. In this piece of writing, Marlow explains that Kurtz begins by saying that the whites appear to be supernatural to the savages. As such, Kurtz concludes that “By the simple exercise of our will we can exert a power for good practically unbounded,.... The peroration was magnificent,” Marlow explains, “though difficult to remember, you know.... There were no practical hints to interrupt the magic current of phrases, unless a kind of note at the foot of the last page...may be regarded as the exposition of a method.... ‘Exterminate all the brutes’” (50). The final example signals that the characters do not know how (or are not interested in) understanding how to live peaceably with the Africans. With so

much power, greed, and the darkness within the individual colonialists' hearts, it is understandable that Kurtz would only think of eliminating those people who are racially different. The type of racial knowledge that is circulated in the novella does not leave much room for mutual understanding or equality—only racial hierarchies.

These examples represent only six of over twenty-five different repetitions of the phrase “you know” in *Heart of Darkness*. As these examples indicate the phrase is most often used when characters are sharing some information (or knowledge) or experience about Africans' difference from Europeans or Africa's supposedly corrupting impact on Europeans. The contexts of the various sentences provide evidence of what the author wants to suggest in each example. The repetitions of “you know” signal that Conrad does seek to both tap into some supposed shared knowledge (facts or beliefs) about Africa and to do so without having to tell too much. Interestingly it is not only the characters who share in this knowledge. The readers are expected to know about some of these things as well. Although Conrad may have been reporting on the atrocities of the Congo, he did not have to go into great details telling his European readers what they already suspected was true regarding the absence of civilization, morality, and intelligence among Africans. The repetition of “you know” allows Conrad to engage his readers in his tale and in some ways make them complicit in the action because of their share in (or rather awareness of) the beliefs about Africa and Africans which lead to the horrible treatment of the natives.

Racial knowledge in the text helps to explain not only what the characters think they know to be true about race but also why some contemporary readers interpret the text as racist. Conrad's late nineteenth century audience would have found the text compelling because it tapped into current dialogues on colonization, civilization, and the nature of humanity. Unfortunately what was considered intelligent debate on the races of man in the nineteenth century strikes the ears of twenty-first century readers as overtly and unapologetically racist. The knowledge about race exemplified in the text will likely upset contemporary college students' sensibilities of racial tolerance and justice. The text leaves much to be desired among undergraduates

who have been taught to disdain even the appearance of racism, racist language, or racial hierarchies. The differences in values between late nineteenth century readers and twenty-first century readers signal that neither racial knowledge nor definitions of race are static. They are historically situated and socially determined. Without this understanding it is apparent that some students would have a difficult time digesting a text such as *Heart of Darkness*.

However, being challenged to read something that circulates unsettling images of Africans should not mean that contemporary readers simply react to the racial constructions without analyzing them for what they reveal about race and racial ideologies. Consider, for instance, the example in which Marlow refers to the common humanity of the Africans and the Europeans. It would be rather easy to get lost in the offensive language used to describe the Africans as wild and untamed and ugly. It would be easy to describe this as blatant racism, but these charges would be made with little attention to historical or biographical context. In Conrad's personal letters and journals he presents a different view of Africans. In a letter written to Roger Casement, Conrad compares the situation in Leopold's Congo to the slave trade:

It is an extraordinary thing that the conscience of Europe which seventy years ago has put down the slave trade on humanitarian grounds tolerates the Congo state today. It is as if the moral clock has been put back many hours.... It seems to me that the black man—say of Upoto—is deserving of as much humanitarian regard as any animal....[even] greater regard.... Barbarism *per se* is no crime deserving of a heavy visitation.... The amenities of the “middle passage” in the old days were as nothing to it [the Belgians' treatment of the Africans]. The slave trade has been abolished—and the Congo State exists to-day. This is very remarkable. (Conrad 271)

Despite the images that appear in the text and despite the language used to describe the Africans, it would appear from his personal letters that Conrad was not the “bloody racist” Achebe accuses him of being. Conrad in fact seems to recognize that Africans are human beings; nevertheless, he does traffic in the pseudo-scientific language and social stereotypes of his day which constructed

Africans as uncivilized barbarians. Rather than a racist, Peter Ederly Firchow explains in “Race, Ethnicity, Nationality, Empire” that “Conrad is undoubtedly a ‘racialist,’ for his fiction deals from the very outset with the complex interrelations confrontations, and conflicts between and among representatives of various racial and ethnic groups” (235). Firchow’s use of the word racialist is defined with more clarity by Kwame Anthony Appiah when he explains the word as follows:

Racialists believed that the racial essence accounted for more than the obvious visible characteristics—skin-color, hair—on the basis of which we decide whether people are, say, Asian-Americans or Afro-American. For a racialist, then, to say someone is “Negro” is not just to say that they have inherited a black skin or curly hair: it is to say that their skin color goes along with other important inherited characteristics. By the end of the nineteenth century most Western scientists (indeed, most educated Westerners) believed that racialism was correct and theorists sought to explain many characteristics—including, for example, literary “genius,” intelligence, and honesty—by supposing that they were inherited along with (or were in fact part of) a person’s racial essence. (276)

Taken together, Conrad’s letter to Casement, Firchow’s sense that Conrad was a racialist, and Appiah’s definition of what racialists believed by the end of the nineteenth century speak volumes regarding the socio-historical and scientific context in which Conrad lived and wrote *Heart of Darkness*. Appiah’s definition in particular clarifies how people thought about race during this historical moment, which is an essential component of any examination of race and racism in this novella.

Debates regarding how to make sense of the troubling racial images in *Heart of Darkness* abound. In his edited collection, Paul B. Armstrong, in fact includes several selections which grapple with this issue of race, racism, and colonialism in the novella. The selections by Chinua Achebe, “An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness*,” Hunt Hawkins, “*Heart of Darkness* and Racism,” Paul B. Armstrong, “Reading, Race, and Representing Others,” Anthony Fothergill,

“Cannibalising Traditions: Representation and Critique in *Heart of Darkness*,” and of course J. Hillis Miller “Should We Read *Heart of Darkness*?” each help to articulate some of the general approaches that have been taken to understanding how race and racism operate in *Heart of Darkness*. In his very controversial and often referenced 1977 essay, Achebe at once recognizes that *Heart of Darkness* is an example of “permanent literature” while also positing that the “Joseph Conrad was a thoroughgoing [bloody] racist” (343). Using more nuanced language later in the essay, Achebe suggests that in *Heart of Darkness* readers should be able to see “the desire—one might indeed say the need—in Western psychology to set Africa up as a foil to Europe, as a place of negation at once remote and vaguely familiar, in comparison with which Europe’s own state of spiritual grace will be manifest” (337). Achebe presents an unapologetic critique of literary representations of the *Other* and of literary critics’ reluctance to address what he perceives as overt racism in works of great literature.

Prompted by Achebe’s accusations, scholars responded in differing ways. One of the contributors, Hunt Hawkins, acknowledges that Achebe is correct in his assertion that Conrad’s novella “dehumanizes Africans” by situating them in some pre-evolutionary (i.e. sub-human) state. Despite this acknowledgement, Hawkins is convinced that Achebe misreads Conrad’s use of the “evolutionary trope” (369). Hawkins posits that “rather than using this trope to support imperialism, Conrad uses it to do the opposite. . . . He points out that Europeans did not live up to their own ideals as civilizers” (369). As such, Hawkins contends that readers view *Heart of Darkness* as a text that was written during a time in which racism “was endemic” and as a text written by an author whose “sensitivity to racism came from his being subject to it himself” (373). Hawkins points out that “While Conrad may have expressed some racist attitudes himself, he acridly attacked white racism in his works. . . and shows nothing but contempt for white men who claim superiority solely on the basis of their skin color” (373). With these along with other references to Conrad’s background and other works of literature, Hawkins seeks to systematically chip away at Achebe’s argument even as he acknowledges that the debate stirred by Achebe “shows no sign of abating” (365).

Whereas Hawkins presents an argument set on completely undermining Achebe's accusation of Conrad's racism, Armstrong takes a different approach. Like Hawkins, Armstrong also acknowledges that Achebe is "right to fault the text" but he is "[wrong] to assume that *Heart of Darkness* offers a finished representation of the colonial Other to the metropolitan reader" (430). Unlike Hawkins however, Armstrong bases his argument on what he perceives to be one of Conrad's overarching themes in the novella. "Conrad," Armstrong contends, "is neither a racist nor an exemplary anthropologist but a skeptical dramatist of epistemological processes. *Heart of Darkness* is a calculated failure to depict achieved cross-cultural understanding.... Truly reciprocal, dialogical understanding of the Other is the unrealized horizon which this text points to but does not reach" (431). As such, the text "consequently abounds in representations of the Other which are one-sided and prejudicial" (430). Armstrong's interpretation of the failure of Conrad's novella to articulate cross-cultural understanding seems especially relevant when one considers that contemporary cultural theories (race theory, queer theory, feminist theory, and others) are also focused on cross-cultural understanding. Nevertheless his assessment of *Heart of Darkness* leaves something to be desired because it seems out of place in a conversation on a novella that achieves so much in terms of literary technique to then argue that this accomplished author somewhat failed to use his craft to represent cross-cultural understanding.

Fothergill offers one of the most insightful assessments of *Heart of Darkness* and a rather astute response to Achebe's charges of racism in "Cannibalising Tradition: Representation and Critique in *Heart of Darkness*." Rather than contending that Conrad fails to demonstrate cross-cultural understanding, Fothergill suggests that "the power of [Conrad's] writing lies in the contradictions existing between this complicity and his critique of these practices" (445). The complicity Fothergill refers to is Conrad's complicity in "articulating persistent and widely circulating cultural stereotypes" of Africans which he certainly does in *Heart of Darkness*. The critique, according to Fothergill's interpretation of the novella, is equally important because in his estimation Conrad "did not simply absorb and unproblematically reiterate the ideological predispositions of his time. He

represented their forms of representation to ‘make us see’ their hidden terms” and to offer a “radical critique” of “the entrenched European literary/political way of seeing the non-European Other” (445). Throughout the essay Fothergill presents a nuanced assessment of the tension between complicity and critique, which is a useful way to approach *Heart of Darkness* when one is considering how to read race as an important social construction as well as a useful category of literary analysis. What each of these scholars agrees upon is that *Heart of Darkness* is indeed infused with racial and/or racist overtones. It is a text that is a product of and a response to a historical moment during which racism “was endemic” to borrow from Hawkins’ words.

Despite these rather well-argued responses to Achebe, many students in the literary analysis course remained unswayed in their position that the novella was not especially valuable enough to “have” to be read. The students’ opinions, even in the context of the rich critical debates regarding race and racism in *Heart of Darkness*, signal that without an epistemology, a language, or a theory for thinking about and discussing race, students will continue to be limited to an unsophisticated and narrow construction of racism and racist attitudes as overt, violent or prejudicial acts by individuals or groups against individuals or groups that are perceived to be inherently inferior. Though this view is accurate in some situations, the scope of what race is, how it is constructed, and how it functions in society is much more complex than the aforementioned description reveals. With only a very narrow understanding of what racism is to work with and without an adequate language or lens to discuss or read racial constructions, it is not surprising that students (yes, even African American students) reared in a supposedly “color-blind” or “post-race” generation would reject a text like *Heart of Darkness*. It is even understandable, especially for students familiar with Mississippi’s often turbulent racial and racist past to interpret scholars who disagree with Achebe’s position on Conrad as individuals who are engaged in a form of apology (or attempts to explain away) Conrad’s apparent racism.

As such, although Armstrong’s book is a superb resource, in the hands of students with limited understanding of how to use race theory to discern the social, scientific, political, religious, cultural, and literary constructions of race, the novella and the

supplementary resources lose much of their power. Without being taught the theories that undergird racial ideologies and without a clear understanding of how racial hegemony contributes to racial hierarchies, it is not surprising that students would not be especially engaged or invested in exploring how the issues that Conrad examines in *Heart of Darkness* are very much so akin to the racial and cultural (and multicultural) issues that we are yet grappling with in the twenty-first century. Consequently, English instructors who would venture to teach *Heart of Darkness* should consider how the learning and teaching experience might be enhanced by placing the novella in a critical dialogue with theories of racial formation, which as has been shown in the previous analysis, provides students with a frame of reference for interpreting the novel from a race conscious critical perspective.

#### **Discussion: Strategies for Teaching *Heart of Darkness* and Race**

There are several strategies instructors may take to integrate an understanding of racial formation theory into literature courses that grapple with racially complex texts. In the case of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, perhaps the most useful strategy is to assign structured and intensive previewing (or rather pre-reading) activities, which provide students with knowledge of the literary, social, and historical context before they are asked to read the novella. For example, at the upper level undergraduate or introductory graduate level, students ought to be prepared to engage in small group mini-research projects or presentations in which they work with their peers and, of course, in collaboration with their instructor to prepare a meaningful overview of a topic that will help inform their peers' reading of the novel. Colonization, scientific racism, imperialism, religion and expansion, civilization, slavery and anti-slavery movements, perceptions of Africans, nineteenth century popular culture and racial stereotypes, are just a few examples of topics that would serve as points of departure for student research. The assignment would serve as an excellent opportunity to teach students about gathering, documenting, synthesizing, and presenting information.

An additional teaching strategy (which is both a previewing as well as an in process reading technique) is to emphasize the importance of reading comprehension through an understanding of

key terms. Providing students with a list of key literary terms they should familiarize themselves with prior to reading the text, prepares them to be active rather than passive readers. This strategy also helps them to discern when the author is manipulating language to convey a particular theme or set forth a particular impression in the reader's mind. Beyond this previewing strategy is a reading comprehension assignment, which requires that each student submit a list of any unfamiliar vocabulary words that they encounter while reading the text. This exercise is particularly useful for instructors who are interested in helping their students learn about word choice and the impact it has on an author's ability to convey a message to his or her readers.

Assigning excerpts from either Jacobson, Omi and Winant, *Race: The Power of an Illusion* (Episode One: The Story We Tell), or *Playing in the Dark*, will provide students with an general sense of how race is constructed and how it may be manifested in a work of literature. Discussing race as it is presented in these texts will give students a very general sense of how race and racial ideologies differ during different historical moments and in different geographical places. Providing space for candid discussions of these texts is crucial. These texts as well as the aforementioned teaching strategies will provide students with a tool kit of resources that should enable them to read Conrad's novella through a critical rather than a strictly emotional or reactionary lens.

After going through the aforementioned critical reading process the final tip is to give students choices regarding how they will document and reflect on what they have read. Reading journals are superb spaces for such documentation. A reading log—set up in a course management system—is another alternative for those more technologically minded students. The journals could function as spaces in which student respond to the research presentations or the resources on race, but mainly it should be a space where students document their reflections on the text and their observations of when or where the author is using various literary techniques. The journals might also serve as a space for students to make connections between what they read in the novella and something they read in the pre-viewing and research materials. Formal writing assignments should be the space where students are encouraged to use all that they have learned to

synthesize their reading of the text, their research materials, and any other relevant criticism to make an informed argument about the text. Perhaps most significantly, this state of the reading and writing and thinking process should provide an opportunity for students to reflect on how the constructions of race and identity presented in the novella are similar to the constructions of race taking place in the twenty-first century.

### **Conclusion: The Relevance of Race Theory to HBCUs**

Reflecting on the connections between racial formation and racial ideologies of the past and those at work in the present positions students at HBCUs to respond with nuance to questions such as the one the English professor posed to her class—should we read *Heart of Darkness*? Even if students do not change their minds about whether or not this novella should be read really is not the issue. The issue is whether or not instructors are adequately preparing their students to meaningfully engage with a complex text such as Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

After much thought and personal reflection on the two teaching and learning scenarios mentioned at the opening of this essay, it appears quite obvious that new approaches must be taken when attempting to expose students attending HBCUs to texts or topics that deal with race, racism, and racial ideologies. Traditional undergraduate students are several generations removed from the Civil Rights Movement. Many of those same students have been bored to death by the same Black History Programs at their churches, the same Founders' Day Celebrations at the HBCUs that they attend, and to make matters worse, the rhetoric of a colorblind society is still very much alive and well. Students, whether they attend an HBCU or a predominately white institution of higher learning, are nevertheless exposed to the same socio-cultural context which too often depicts racist acts and social inequality as isolated incidents or the result of personal choices rather than as a system of injustice. With these forces in place, it falls to the instructor to make efforts to raise students' level of consciousness about how race has functioned in history, how it functions in society, and of course how it functions in fiction.

Perhaps asking English Professors to be literary scholars, rhetoric and composition experts, and well versed in the language of race theory is asking too much. Perhaps as students and

professors at HBCUs in the South we take for granted the subtleties of race. Perhaps we think that we need not study race or racism because we already know all about it. Nothing could be further from the truth. Without the language to converse about race intelligently and without the knowledge to read (to see) how race and racism are constantly being constructed and reinvented, then we commit ourselves to being fettered to the definitions that others make for us rather than creators of the identities and futures that we construct for ourselves. With a potential outcome such as this, those charged with the task of educating students who attend HBCUs should be motivated to learn new ways of using texts that grapple with race in creative ways to stimulate students' critical thinking.

Is Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* the best text to choose when selecting required readings for students attending an HBCU? Is it a text that explicitly undermines the dominant racial stereotypes? Not necessarily. However, because the text has such a stronghold in the imaginations of English professors and because it has been deemed a staple in the college reading experience, it is worthwhile to examine it with attention to theories of racial formation. A focus on the literariness of the novella as well as the critical conversations on race that the novella has generated opens up space for a much needed assessment of what we think we know about race. Although it will definitely be a challenge to add another component to existing courses, English instructors in particular have some excellent opportunities to engage in critical race pedagogy because literary texts invite exploration of times, places, and identities in ways that initiate self-reflection and critical thinking. As such, I contend that "we"—speaking specifically of English instructors and students at HBCUs—absolutely should read racially complex and ambiguous texts like Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Texts like Conrad's should be read not so much because they have been hailed as great works of literature, but more so because they provide opportunities to learn about the theories that can illuminate an understanding of how race is constructed and how those constructions inform the way that we live, work, and advocate for social justice in an increasingly multi-racial, multi-ethnic, and multi-cultural society.

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## CULTURAL SOURCES OF INSPIRATION FOR ANA CASTILLO AND OTHER LATINA WRITERS

by

Ruben E. Gonzalez, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup> and Delilah Dotremon, Ph.D., J.D.<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

Nowadays, many great works of literature are being produced by Latina women. These are individuals that not long ago were just trying to escape from a world of poverty. Ana Castillo is one of these new writers who has created expressive works of literature by just imagining the type of life that she would have lived in Mexico if her mother had lacked the courage to take her to the United States to live in Chicago. The source of inspiration for Castillo and other Latina writers emerges from the world that they have left behind as well as the world that they have had to carve out for themselves in this country. This atmosphere of strife and hardship surround these Latina writers as they struggle against the odds. Cultures from two separate worlds have influenced their writing. Latina writers are influenced by their culture, their music, their food, and most importantly their life struggles to create a type of literature that speaks to us from the heart.

**Key Words:** Ana Castillo, Latina writers, cultural writing inspiration

### Introduction

It is a well known fact that many literary works derive from the life experiences of the writer. Aspiring writers should understand that sources for inspiration that surround them as everyday life experiences can be rich veins of material for literary works. The anthology entitled *Latina: Women's Voices from the Borderlands*, edited by Lillian Castillo-Speed and published by Simon and Schuster in 1995, is a good representation of woman writers who were born in Latin America as well as in the United States. The "Biographical Summary" about Castillo-Speed states

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Gonzalez is an Associate Professor of Spanish in the Department of Languages and Literatures at Alabama State University

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Dotremon is an Associate Professor of Criminal Justice in the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at Alabama State University

that this editor is from East Los Angeles and that she is the Director of the Chicano Studies and the Head of the Ethnic Studies Library at the University of California, Berkeley (4). This book contains works by thirty-one women who have much in common as these female writers exposed their personal experiences. This literary compilation is composed of writers such as Ana Castillo, Sandra Cisneros, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Esmeralda Santiago, among others. These writers saw the need to create a new kind of literary genre, one which goes beyond political boundaries and encompasses the spirit of the new woman who embraces personal experiences, however painful. The writings of these women can be a model of inspiration to any young person who has had a hard life and wishes to overcome barriers to become a productive individual. The Latina writers in this anthology wrote because they needed to express their voices; they saw the need to envision a new generation that lives in two vastly different worlds, so they wrote for the benefit of future generations. The majority of these writers lived in two worlds with the dominant one being that of American society while their private home life was dominated by their Spanish culture. This paper emphasizes the work of Castillo, especially her short story entitled, "My Mother's Mexico," in which she presents a concise genealogy of her family, weaving in her own life story along with examples of the courage of other strong women such as her own mother.

In this short story, Castillo describes a world which was very similar to the one seen in the 1950s movie, *Los Olvidados/ The Young and the Damned* directed by Luis Buñel in which he visualized a world of disparity full of poverty where children do not have a childhood as they are forced to grow up quickly and take care of themselves by any means, even if it is stealing, killing, or getting into prostitution (45). "My Mother's Mexico" opens by describing the type of environment that her mother escaped from as Castillo describes her Mexican roots by stating:

My mother's Mexico was the brutal urban reality of Luis Bruñel, *Los Olvidados*. Children screaming and hustling: fire-eaters, hubcaps stealers, Chiclets sellers, miniature accordion players with duty hands stretched out before passerby for a coin or a piece of bread--Please señor for my mother that is very sick.

This was the Mexico City of my family. This was the Mexico my mother spared me. (26)

### **Childhood Hardships as a Source of Writing Inspiration**

Castillo's work can provide inspiration for all Mexican-Americans as she describes her life in the United States and contrasts it with the life she would have led if she had remained in Mexico. Her work "My Mother's Mexico" is not only a source of inspiration, but it can help an individual to understand his or her own culture, and at the same time the reader can experience first hand the difficulties that some individuals have passed through. In this story, the narrator describes the physical appearance of her mother by stating that, "Mami was a street urchin--not yet--with one ragged dress. Because of an unnamed disease that covered her whole tiny body with scabs, her head was shaved" (26). The reader might also come to realize that the hard times Castillo experienced are similar to those suffered by other Latinas who also pen tales of childhood hardships. One final aspect, which is noteworthy, is that by urging others to put into writing their life experiences Castillo is encouraging everyone to write as she believes everyone has a story to tell.

In the anthology put together by Castillo-Speed, thirty-one women wrote their own stories about their lives. A story which is similar to "My Mother's Mexico" was written by Gloria Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, in which she wrote in different languages including English, Spanish, and the indigenous Nahuatl language. Her topics are diverse, but one favorite is the way of life in the border region of the United States and Mexico (125). If some students fail to enhance their creative writing, it cannot be due to a lack of material to write about, as we are all surrounded by a wide variety of topics to develop. Some people insist that they are not writers and that they do not know what to write about. What most people do not realize is that time after time, writers simply utilize their personal experiences to create literary works.

In the book *The Home We Shared*, Lund Nelson wrote about her own life experiences, focusing on her childhood when she lived in an orphanage. That kind of situation is not uncommon, especially in the border regions where young males impregnate more than one young girl and then do not take responsibility for

the children. Growing up without a father or without parents is therefore a topic or a source of inspiration for any person with a desire to write. Judith Guardin has commented that child abandonment and neglect is most common in large families with few socioeconomic resources and the Borderland region is characterized by this type of poverty. Many writers focus on childhood issues like Sandra Cisneros who wrote *The House on Mango Street*, in which she details her harsh experiences. The book by Cisneros was about her personal struggles, and it gained great popularity. Adversity can then be turned into a literary work. One's daily struggles and those of an entire people can be a gold mine ready to be tapped. Reading about how someone coped with adversity is always a page-turner.

### **Events of Everyday Life as a Source of Writing Inspiration**

Finding writing inspiration in one's personal experiences is a common technique used by authors. In the magazine *The Writer*, Tom Bailey wrote an article entitled, "Where Do Short-Story Ideas Come From?" in which he pointed out that ideas can come from any place, at any time, and usually when one least expects it. A story came to him as he was listening to the radio. He heard of an accidental death where a father had shot his son on a winter day while hunting, then the father, in his grief, turned the gun onto himself. In this writer's hands, the real life event became a story he entitled "Snow Dreams." This writer concluded that "ideas for stories are everywhere" (76). Delia Lanza in her article noted that back in the nineteenth century it was the work of Louisa May Alcott in *Little Women* which made subjects out of objects as her four main characters narrated their lives from childhood to womanhood. The author based her story on her three sisters that had served as source of inspiration for *Little Women* as well as her next novel, *Good Wives*, and many other novels (65). In the case of the Mexican-American author Juan Antonio González, his source of inspiration was derived from life experiences, from the relationships that he cultivated with his students, and even from his students' lives. Another good example of this phenomenon is Ricardo Garrido, who wrote a very funny short story entitled, "La vida no es azúcar." His story tells of two diabetics, a priest and a teacher, who go to heaven to enjoy a life filled with all kinds of sweets for them to enjoy without having to worry about getting

high blood sugar. The author is a diabetic himself and in a very humorous way he created a work of fiction using his own health experiences. Garrido is a man who can barely see due to diabetic complications yet he finds humor even in his disease. Ordinary life events and even health issues can then become sources of inspiration for writers.

### **The Border Region as a Source of Writing Inspiration**

The huge geographic piece of land that we call the Borderlands extends from Texas to California and from Puerto Rico to New York. It is well-known that Puerto Rico serves as the port of entry for many of the individuals that come from the Caribbean area. The United States Customs and Border Patrol Office ensures that any foreigner coming into the United States' mainland has to pass through inspections at a port of entry such as San Juan, Puerto Rico (27).

The article by Celeste Headlee indicates that port entries in Puerto Rico and the border area between Mexico and the United States are places where we find unique life experiences as illegal immigrants defy death in search of a better life (14). Similarly, Suarez Orozco presented an interesting article regarding the struggle that people from the Caribbean islands experience in order to enter into the United States while federal authorities struggle to prevent the flow of illegal immigration into the continental United States (2-5). In the valley region, particularly in the South Texas area, we find a population that is constantly at work laboring day and night just to meet their basic needs. The struggle that these individuals endure is what has served as a source of inspiration for many writers who have needed to express their sentiments and past experiences. This desire of expression can be better understood after reading the anthology, *Latina: Women's Voices from the Borderlands*, as this book highlights life experiences on both sides of the border and the common struggles all people share.

The Borderlands continue to be a source of inspiration for Hispanic writers. The stories of daily life inspire writers on both sides of the border to share their slice of reality with their readers. It can be said that the Borderlands is all that is left of the Old West, and the people in this environment have unique stories to tell. For instance, when a Mexican or a Mexican-American individual desires to get drunk, he/she drinks tequila or mescal and listens to

Mexican music, such as *corridos y rancheras*. Likewise, when a woman wants to express the feelings that her heart holds, she sings *a ranchera*. In his book *Music in Mexico*, Alejandro Madrid defined the term “*ranchera*” as being the traditional music of Mexico. This music is typically sung by one individual with a guitar. It dates back to the era of the Mexican Revolution in the early twentieth century. This music derives from the word *rancho* because these songs used to be sung on the ranches. It represents the country music of Mexico and the heart of its people (36). A song that goes to the soul of every Mexican individual is “*México lindo y querido*,” so to return to one’s roots he or she sings and listens to this song or to another *ranchera*. The nostalgic feelings combined with a shot of tequila or a cheap Mexican beer transports one’s spirit to the homeland, the place where this person was born. This is not a stereotype, but rather it is reality for many Mexican individuals, especially for those homesick illegal aliens in the United States. The following verses from the song “*México lindo y querido*” by Vicente Fernández. demonstrate the passion that these individuals feel for their homeland:

*Yo le canto a tus volcanes / I sing to your volcanos*  
*A tus praderas y flores / To your prairie and flowers*  
*Que son como talismans / They are like talismans*  
*Del amor de mis amores. / They are the love of my love.*  
*México y lindo y querido / Mexico beautiful and dear*  
*Si muero lejos de ti / If I die far away from you*  
*Que digan que estoy dormido / Tell them that I am asleep*  
*Y que me traigan aquí. / And bring me here (to Mexico).*

In this song natural elements such as volcanos, prairie land, and the flowers are seen as precious magnets that attract the homesick back to his or her native homeland. No matter where the person dies, the only wish that he or she has is to be brought back to his or her hometown in México where his soul will be at peace. This is what inspires these Latina authors to write from their hearts, as their writings tell stories that Hispanics and people in general can relate to. In the article by Yarbrow-Bejarano, she indicates that the way of life in the Borderlands provides a vibrant source of inspiration to many writers and that Castillo used this element to create literature in publications such as *So Far from God* and *Otro Canto* and many other publications (28).

It is necessary to clarify that the Borderlands may at times not refer to a particular geographical area of land as it has to do more with a heritage rather than with the physical location of where an individual was born. The women writers of the Borderlands are set apart due to their life experiences and their unique voice in expressing their reality. For example in the short story "My Mother's Mexico," Castillo introduces her narration cleanly and directly. She stated that she owes the American way of life to her mother for having had the courage to leave the impoverished area of Mexico City, where she lived as a child. She imagines what her life would have been like if she had spent it in a poor barrio of the Mexican capital, selling Chiclets on the streets or perhaps begging for a piece of bread to bring back to her sick mother. This type of narration depicts a Mexico City that is far from the postcard glamour of the big industrialized city of more than twenty million inhabitants which has high rise buildings and many beautiful *colonias* where the rich live. Her story does not depict the cosmopolitan life, the atmosphere of the country club, but instead we get a vivid glimpse of her mother as a seven-year-old child running around the streets in ragged clothes and without shoes begging for a meager handout to bring back to her mother. This way of life was revealed to her by her own mother and Castillo draws the reader into that world of poverty and desperation. In the article by Heiner Bus, he points out that Castillo sees the role of the Mexican woman as constantly changing depending on which side of the border she exists, how she is perceived by herself and her own people, both in Mexico and in the United States (128).

### **English Language Dominance Silences Native Spanish Speakers**

Richard Garrido writes his short stories in Spanish, but many writers of the Borderlands choose to write their fiction in English. It is a well known fact that the language of the Borderlands encompasses two tongues. A writer who has written on the topic of the dominance of the English language is Candelaria Cordelia who seen the effect that the English language has on the Hispanic population and on its culture. Young children in particular have to learn proper English as most of the standardized tests at school are given in the English language (89).

In the book entitled *The New Americans: The Mexican-Americans*, Alma Garcia points out the fact that the Mexican-American child is placed in an awkward position, where he or she is supposed to differentiate the language of the parents from the outside world at the same time. There is an attachment like an umbilical cord to the subculture of the head of the house. Garcia mentions that the Mexican-American family and especially the children speak and watch TV programs in English, but when they really want to feel loved they go to *abuelita's* house to speak Spanish and to eat a good Mexican dish (189). The writings of Ana Castillo have illustrated the dominance that the English language has over new immigrants. Being a Mexican-American woman born in Chicago, who has lived in California and in New Mexico, Castillo was very cautious about the use of the English and Spanish in writings such as *So Far From God* and "My Mother's Mexico." She decided to write these compositions in English, but she added the cultural tones of the Southwest and the Spanish language by introducing a few expressions in Spanish. For instance, as a child in Chicago, Castillo was known as *la hija de Raquel* (18). Castillo has indicated that if she had elected to write her work entirely in English, then according to her, "what I am doing is nothing more than writing a white standard novel with an ethnic motif" (24). For children of immigrant Hispanics, it is extremely important to learn the English language if a person wants to be successful in this society. The work of Julia Alvarez, "How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accent," illustrates this point of view, as the title of her essay clearly defines the importance of speaking the English language without a Hispanic intonation or accent (45). In the article "And so Close to the United States," Stavans sees the work of Castillo as being one of the most daring among experimental Latino writers due to her constant search of new materials for her stories despite choosing to write in the English language in most of her work (37). Yet Castillo remains true to her roots as she introduces Hispanic elements in all of her writings.

When asked about the future form of communication of the new Mexican-American generation, Castillo in her interview, *Ana Castillo: The Unheard Voice of the Poet*, said that she sees language as a utilitarian tool, where either language, Spanish or English, ought to be used to communicate the inner thinking of the individual. In talking about her writing, Castillo indicated that

there are differences in her own writings; for instance, when she talks about poverty she does it from a non-fictional point of view. When dealing with poverty, she is very careful with the selection of words, paying particular attention to the utilization of the language so that she does not exaggerate reality (170). Dunizet Martinez teaches the work of Castillo in her literature course, using *So Far From God* to highlight the culture of the Southwest; this book also serves to introduce the students to traditional elements in today's contemporary literature (211). Discussing language components in her poetic works, Castillo does not seem to have many words to waste as she goes as far as comparing words with the value of gold. Castillo is not a puritan when it comes to the use of the language, as in her book *My Father Was a Toltec*, she opens one of her poems in the following way, "Well, shit/ sometimes it gets/ pretty damn difficult/ trying to understand/ the human race, don't it?" (3). A Latina writer should use both English and Spanish and flavor whichever language she is using with words and expressions from the other language.

### **Physical and Sociocultural Environment as a Source of Writing Inspiration**

The physical surrounding environment is a source of inspiration for writers. Bib Martin indicated that Ted Kooser, Laureate Poet of the United States for the years 2004-2006, has been distinguished by his poetic descriptions of the landscape of his native state of Nebraska (v). In Texas, it is easy to get inspired by seeing a beautiful place like the southern area of the Texas Valley during a Spring day. Yet it is quite difficult for a young child that has to cross the border and go back to live in Mexico City in a one-room shack to even appreciate the beauty of a spring day. Castillo has created literature by presenting the physical and sociocultural environment which she experienced growing up and which produced her ancestors, and she has managed to capitalize on emotions in order to bring her characters to life.

It is interesting to note though that Castillo has capitalized on negative life experiences by writing about the dark aspects of society. In the opening pages of the novel *So Far from God*, the writer opens the narration by describing the sexual activity of two boys who are in a corner of a bar as she observes:

Two boys are making out in the booth across from me. I ain't got nothing else to do, so I watch them. I drink the not-so-aged house brandy and I watch two boys make out. It's more like that they're in throes of passion as they say. (12)

It is not a positive aspect of society to see two young men engaged in sexual acts in a public place. When Simon Romero from the *New York Times* interviewed Castillo about the stereotypical roles that Hollywood usually uses to portray Hispanics, she mentioned that the movie machine is only interested in portraying the negative aspects of the Hispanic culture as a means of propaganda. Yet the negative aspects of one's culture and of larger society can be fodder for writing inspiration. In many cases, individuals capitalize on these negative forces for their own gain; as in the case of Tony Castro, who followed the turbulent Chicano movement. He gathered information about this historical event, and the result was a book that he published entitled *Chicano Power: The Emergence of the Mexican-American*.

Similarly, the childhood experiences of Castillo served as her source of inspiration for the diverse books that she has published. John Sacher gave this advice on what to do when opportunity knocks at your door, "Seize the day and make the most of every opportunity. Be proactive and make a difference today" (2). A writer must use the cards that life has dealt him or her in order to draw inspiration. Sometimes a historical event can be a source of inspiration while at other times life's struggles can make a fascinating story. It can be said that the work of Castillo is important, not only because it was written by a first generation Mexican-American woman, but because it serves to demonstrate that the sacrifices a family makes can pave the way for future generations. At the present time there is a boom in Borderland literature due to the fact that many women are busy writing about their experiences or in describing their subculture. Raymond Rodriguez has pointed out that the typical description given in a textbook of a Mexican individual is that of a peon, who emigrated from Mexico to the United States, yet this is a false perception as not all Mexicans have the same level of education nor do they all hold menial jobs (123).

### **The Popularity of the Female Borderland Writers**

Americans are fascinated with the idea of the underdog, and with someone who can bring something new to the table to share with jaded readers. In the book published by Gabriella de Beer, she notes that there are reasons why so recently Latina writers have been experiencing such great success. Such opulence is due to the fact that more Hispanic writers are being educated about their own culture and in turn they put putting their life stories on paper both as fiction and as autobiographical pieces (123). These writers have the added allure of being able to include a motherly touch in their writing that attracts the reader, believes de Beer. Literary works have traditionally been an area that was dominated by male writers, but it is the reader who actually sets new trends in literature. Those individuals that buy the books are the ones who have of late been attracted to Latina writers.

The female writers of the Borderlands are unique in their life situations, yet they have lived in the trenches of life where with their bare hands they have cultivated the fertile land of experience and have made it yield fruit. According to Campos Carr, a clear example of the success of Latina writers is Castillo herself, as in her work she describes Castillo's childhood in a Chicago neighborhood, where she rose from poverty to become a college professor (19). Each one of these Latinas has cultivated a new type of crop and now they are bringing it to market. Simón Bolívar, in his speech *The Angostura Address*, sought to identify the people of the new republics as individuals of a new culture, who do not conform to the established norms, but who encompass a new spirit, and who are bright individuals that are the product of a new society (5). Something similar can be said of the spirit of the Borderland's Latina writers.

These writers needed to find an outlet for their creative expression that was born of their hard life experiences. Some of these women have gone to hell, and yet they have come back to tell the reader what they experienced first hand. These women do not write many romantic stories, because they have not had time for romance. Yet these women writers have gotten married, they have obtained an education, and they have raised a family. Romantic notions were erased as they struggled with the daily task of survival. The women writers of the Borderlands describe life events that go beyond the experience of a Doña Bárbara, the

character described by the male writer Romulo Gallegos in which he presented the struggles of the women of the prairie lands of Venezuela (45). These women write from a different perspective as the narrator is in the first person--I was there, I lived the experience. In her analysis of the book, *Chicana History: A Review of the Literature*, Judith Sweeny reflects on the factors that have had an effect on the literary production of Chicana women. A central element that has shaped the writings of the women of the Borderlands has been solving the obstacles imposed by poverty and being able to emerge triumphant (176). In *Massacre of the Dreamers*, Castillo notes that the works of Chicanas have not been appreciated due to the erroneous perception that some members of our society have had about these writers, saying “because we have been historically barred from the writing profession, that we have nothing of interest, much less of value to contribute” (231). Following the same line of thought, Beatriz Pesquera has commented that it is important to inform young persons that they must write without hesitation, putting out a product without questioning the process and that unique life experiences are not limited to gender or class (235). Latin writers have become popular due to their unique voices and their ability to unveil their Mexican roots and their family struggles in creating a life in the United States.

### **The Struggle with Identity as a Source of Writing Inspiration**

The issue of identity is another predominant feature in the writings of Ana Castillo. She believes that women must find their identity and the freedom to express themselves. In her book, *Massacre of the Dreamers*, Castillo discusses this dilemma in portraying herself as a woman that does not fit into any particular ethnic group. This is a very important issue that affects all of us: how we see ourselves and how the rest of the society sees us. Castillo points out that, other than in her home in the United States, she was perceived as a foreigner yet when she was in Mexico she was not viewed as a Mexican to her countrymen. Yet, in the United States, Castillo’s physical features did not allow her to be considered a “white” member of society. Even though her hair is very straight, Castillo has said that she cannot claim to be a Native American or an African American in spite of having very dark hair. Her physical characteristics identify her as a *mestiza* or a

being of mixed heritage, and so she writes books about Mestizo society. Interestingly enough, the book *Sapagonia* emerges from this conflict of identity. On top of that, the author has to wrestle with the issue of her socioeconomic status. It is common knowledge that she came from a very humble home, and this has played a key role in literary work.

In the process of writing, one factor is clear, according to Rosaura Sanchez, in her book *Chicano and Chicana Literature: Otra Voz del Pueblo*, she notes that women's writings began to show up once they started to break away from the traditional stereotype of homemaker and sought other identities (25). In the introduction to her book of poems, *I Ask the Impossible and Poems*, Castillo clearly identifies her Latina identity when she writes, "Spanish belongs as much to my daily life as the frijoles and tortillas that can always be found in my kitchen. I once heard that the language you count with is your true language or the language you argue in is the one you really command" (xvi). Finding one's identity can be especially challenging for those who come from two distinct cultures. For Latina writers this means struggling with what may be two distinct voices, one from their native Mexico and the other from their adopted country.

### **Conclusion**

The writing skills of Ana Castillo allowed her to use a narration technique to describe past events that mirrored her own life experiences. This is not a new technique in narration but the innovation lies in the personal approach that this particular author employs. For example, each race or ethnic group has commonly employed works of fiction to depict the struggles of a people, or in a particular society, and writers about that culture then become spokespersons for that particular group. For example, Coleman Broussard, in *Giving a Voice to the Voiceless*, presented the struggle of four black women in the South which she narrated in the third person. Yet it is her personal experience which served to validate the truth of the story. The relationship that such intense personal writing creates is built upon shared emotions between the writer and reader. Such writers often choose to present images that are so vivid that the reader becomes lost in the pages. That is one of the purposes of the writer, to transcend reality. In Castillo's story entitled "My Mother's Mexico," the narration is built upon

the genealogy of her family and the hardships that each member suffered. This is a vibrant story that can serve as a source of inspiration for young readers and especially for young writers who desire to imitate life by portraying it as either a work of fiction or as an autobiographical piece. The cultural sources of writing inspiration for Ana Castillo and a host of Latina writers has centered on the themes of poverty, childhood hardships, the struggle with identity, love of music, and other Hispanic elements. Ordinary life events can inspire a story as the childhood hardships of many Latina writers have been fountains of writing inspirations. Certainly the unique lifestyle of the borderland region has served to inspire short stories, novels, autobiographies, and poems. The harshness of the physical environment and socioeconomic struggle of those who live on the border or who frequently transgress this no man's land has been used as fodder for many compelling works. Whether a Latina uses English or Spanish to tell her compelling tales, this popular genre has found willing audiences due to their unique voices. *Adelante* (go forward), female writers of the borderlands!

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**WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE'S *TIMON OF ATHENS*: GIFT-GIVING AND RECIPROCITY AMONG JACKSON STATE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS--A PILOT STUDY**

by

Everett G. Neasman, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup> and Taunjah P. Bell, Ph. D.<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract**

The value of reciprocity in social exchange comprises conflict in Shakespearian drama and in undergraduate society and its culture. Reciprocity in *Timon of Athens* confronts the idea of social equilibrium bolstered by gift-giving. As with *Timon*, university students experience a society of money, credit, and exchange that highlight reciprocity as moral obligation. While value is indicative of all forms of exchange, the authors propose a significant correlation between reciprocity (gift-giving) in *Timon of Athens* and reciprocity (gift-giving) among Jackson State University students that prioritizes both the value of the exchange and the importance of the reciprocal act in and of itself. The authors experimentally tested the value students place on peers' voluntary acts of reciprocity—by taking into account both utilitarian value (the worth of the actual benefits received from the exchange) and symbolic value (the worth of the reciprocal act in and of itself, the instrumental value of the benefits provided). The results show significant behavioral correlation between Shakespeare's *Timon* and undergraduate students that illustrates preference for equal utilitarian value of exchange, while sentiments of friendship, positive interaction, and group cohesion are positively reinforced by symbolic value of constant reciprocity, resulting in implications for social exchange in Shakespeare's drama and in the undergraduate society and its culture.

**Introduction**

Reciprocity, the giving of benefits to another in return for benefits received, is a key to social exchange (Molm, Schaefer, & Collett, 2007). American college campuses have offered primary introduction into a culture of exchange reflective of larger national

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Neasman is an Assistant Professor in the Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages at Jackson State University.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Bell is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Psychology at Jackson State University.

and international communities (Hartshorne 1946). As Ritzer (1995) noted, “Money is important, especially to college students who are members of a generation that has been raised in a credit card society. They have grown up with debt and use it freely.” Gift giving money, credit, and goods enter both gift-giver and recipient into non-verbal agreements of exchange with pre- and post-conceived expectations of social equilibrium. Hill and Stull (1982) noted that equal value of exchanged gifts is “important because imbalances in rewards exchanged are predicated to lead to imbalances in power and possible dissolution of the exchange relationship. Since rationality and self-preservation influence exchanges of money and goods, the idea of “a gift” is non-existent (Derrida 1991; Mauss 1925). More recently for Sobel (2005), much of economic analysis on social reciprocity stems from the joint assumption of rationality and individual preservation. However, goods are not only exchanged for economic benefit, but are also, in the words of Lévi-Strauss (1996), “vehicles and instruments for realities of another order: influence, power, sympathy, status, emotion; and the skillful game of exchange consists of a complex totality of maneuvers, conscious or unconscious, in order to gain security and to fortify oneself against risks incurred through alliances and rivalry.” The value of reciprocity lies not only in the goods and services that people exchange (utilitarian value) but also in the social worth of the reciprocal act in and of itself (symbolic value) exchange (Ekeh 1974; Hass & Deseran 1981; Lévi-Strauss 1969; Macneil 1986; Molm, Schaefer, & Collett 2007; Offer 1997). Hence, reciprocity denotes the human experience.

While evident is the presence of reciprocity in the human experience, reciprocal relationships in literature often reflect aspects of human behavior (Collings 2009; Derek 2001; Novitz 1987). Literary fiction, often illustrative of reality, by no means is reality but representative art that offers a semblance of life (Iser 1975; Polhemus & Henkle 1994; Vivas 1970). Not only is literary fiction an important resource for understanding the real world, but more so it provides knowledge that “is richer and more varied than that afforded by empirical science” (Novitz 1987). In *The Art Of Fiction*, Henry James (1888) alludes to the novel’s “large, free character of immense and exquisite correspondence with life.” Undergraduates majoring in English conceptualized this study

from observations that Shakespeare's fictional character, Timon, in a fictional ancient Athens parallels their own real life experiences in college society. In Timon and his Athenian, students examine aspects of what Fiske (1991) calls "community sharing," reciprocity on the basis of affable cohesion among peers.

Shakespeare uses the term "reciprocity" only twice in his works. Once in *King Lear* in a letter from Goneril to Edmond, the term "reciprocally" refers to vows of conspiracy to kill Lear: "Let our reciprocal vows be remembered / You have many opportunities to cut him off: if your will want not / time and place will be fruitfully offered" (4.5. 266-68). The term again appears in *Henry VIII*, when Buckingham speculates the untrustworthiness of the Cardinal Wolsey: "his mind and place / Infecting one another, yea, reciprocally" (1.1. 161-62).

Shakespeare studies treat reciprocity as a theoretical view to peoples and societies. Shakespeare's plays often illustrate benefits of *utilitarian value* within reciprocal social relationships. For Titus, in *Titus Andronicus*, reciprocity functions as a type of currency between him and the tribunes who agree "To gratify the good Andronicus / And gratulate his safe return to Rome (2. 223-24). A mutual ethos of reciprocity that governs Titus's politics dissolves into inequitable ingratitude under the empery of Saturninus (Crosbie 2007; Waith 1995). Crosbie (2007) sees in the Rome of *Titus Andronicus* evidence of Aristotle's (1984) "justice of exchange" that bonds men in civil piety, "reciprocity in accordance with proportion [rather than] on precisely equal return." In *Two Gentleman of Verona*, "reciprocity" between Valentine and Proteus points to "a syntagmatic doubling of subject and antisubject (Girard 1991; Greimas 1987; Simmons 1993). Simmons (1993) argues that violence compromises a reciprocal "doubling" whose reconciliation promotes the homoerotic mutuality. When Valentine proclaims, "I must never trust thee more," he signals a break down in reciprocity with Proetus (5.4. 69). He abruptly reconciles with Proetus and restores reciprocity: "[O]nce again, I do receive thee honest," shifting his romantic love for Julia back to male bonds of friendship with Proetus (5.4. 78).

In *The Tempest*, it is reciprocity between Miranda and Ferdinand that is the linchpin of romantic love and service; Shalkwyk points out that she "reciprocates [his] feeling totally . . . and each pledges their freely given love to each other precisely in

terms of a willing slavery or service which, given the circumstances, renders materially concrete the literary vows of servile devotion in [courtly love]” (qtd. in McConnell 2001). Ferdinand begins: Hear my soul speak / The very instant that I saw you did / My heart fly to your service / there resides To make me slave to it. And for your sake / Am I this patient log-man” (3.1.63-67). Miranda replies: “I am your wife, if you will marry me / If not, I’ll die your maid / To be your fellow / You may deny me, but I’ll be your servant / Whether you will or no” (3.1.63-67, 83-86). Schalkwyk (2005) further observes in *The Tempest*, reciprocity extending from the “pleasures of intimacy” to such “unerotic” relationships as those between master and servant (Prospero/Caliban).

Egalitarian reciprocity in *Twelfth Night* threatens to attenuate master-servant bonds through class leveling and power sharing (Correll 2007). For members of the servant class in the play, seasonal carnivalesque ensures that civil, economic, and cultural reciprocity with the nobility sustains the feudal household (Bristol 1985). Malvolio, a steward, seeks egalitarian reciprocity through class-climbing rather than reciprocal festivity and provokes a cycle of retribution for verbal insults levied at other servants. Feste, a clown-servant, tags this cycle the “whirligig of time” (5. 1. 366). Hartwig (1973) notes that it is the wills of the other servant and their collective sense of payback, not cosmic forces that orchestrate Malvolio’s castigation. That reciprocity is a social construct of human control in need of cosmic validation shows *Twelfth Night’s* whirligig of time” to bear more relation to *Measure for Measure* another of Shakespeare’s plays on reciprocity. Spencer (2012) sees in *Measure for Measure*, that “in human law, augments from equity must evoke a higher natural or divine law that compels equitable adjustment, without at the same time eroding the authority of law.” Civil law uses equity both to regulate itself and to acknowledge an authoritative extralegal standard (Fortier 2005; Selden 1927; Spencer 2005). Biblical exegesis and *Measure for Measure* suggests that the Golden Rule (“Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophet” Matt. 7-12), an extralegal standard, infuses reciprocity with a kind of “just reciprocity” (Spencer 2005). Jesus’ justice asks that a person define what he gives by what he desires to receive, justice

that amends the cycle of reciprocating in Old Testament law (“an eye for an eye” Exod. 21-24) (Mansell 1966; Rappaport 1987).

*Timon of Athens* is a play about reciprocity (Bailey 2011; Jackson 2001; Kahn 1987; Schrover 1997; Scott 1984). Economic readings dominate evaluations of Timon’s acts of altruism early in the play and suggest *symbolic value* that gives social worth to reciprocal acts. Draper (1957) suggests that Timon’s generosity is intended to foster the “supreme virtue of friendship” among his countrymen. Virtue depends on the exchange of money and goods among friends to promote what Draper calls “an ideal of benevolent communism” rather than what at first appears as credit consumerism. Burke (1963) finds Timon as well to be a play “almost wholly concerned with relations among men (as though the world were a kind of secular monastery devoted perversely to a universal god of gold).

Scott (1984) remarks that Timon’s ideology of giving “forces his superiority on others both by accepting no repayment and by more than reciprocating any gifts he receives.” Kahn (1987) reasons that gold is the economic catalyst to Timon’s fall: gold that Timon gave as a friend and, now, expects to borrow as a friend. On the contrary, his friends treat his indebtedness and its *utilitarian value* as an investment banker weighing risks and gains. Timon’s rant on gold late in the play casts a Marxist foreshadow that not only criticizes gold, but also rejects its circular economy of exchange (Scott 1984). Timon seeks to replace the financial arrangements of credit and debt with idealized friendship, an understanding of friendship that is cooperative rather than competitive (Mowat & Werstine 2001).

Jackson (2001) argues that in *Timon of Athens* the social worth of the reciprocal act is tied to a philosophical structure in humans, moving from religious tradition to social obligation. Derrida (1994) aligns himself with Nietzsche to suggest that the Christian divine is vested in the circular economy of exchange. Knight (1949) sees Timon as something of a Nietzschean superman pushing past the Christian nonetheless. Thus, Timon-like insistence on reciprocity contaminates altruistic or “genuine gifts” such as forgiveness, love, respect, dignity, and compassion with an economic ethic of generosity (Schrift 1997). Timon seeks to establish a utopian Athens, an economy of benevolent exchange among all nobles that for Derrida (1991) is an economy that is not

“present anywhere.” His friends would be “the most needless creatures living” who command “one another’s fortune” (1.2.104-05).

The aim of this study is to prove a clear answer to the question: Does reciprocity in Shakespeare’s *Timon of Athens* provide significant correlation to reciprocity among university undergraduates as both *utilitarian value* and *symbolic value*? The researchers address this question by examining, in a pilot survey, how patterns of exchange affect social bonds.

## **Method**

### ***Participants***

Three-hundred, thirty-five college students over the age of 18 were recruited to participate voluntarily in the present study. However, signed informed consent forms and complete data packets were collected from 96 percent of the participants. Thus, data from 13 of the 335 participants could not be included in the statistical analyses. Therefore, data obtained from 322 (135 males and 187 females) participants were analyzed and reported in the results section. The sample is approximately 42 percent male and 58 percent female. Of the total sample, approximately 300 (93.16%) endorsed being African Americans. Two (.62%) were Asian; 3 (.93%) were Hispanic or Latino; 1 (.31%) was American Indian or Alaska Native; 6 (1.88%) were White or Caucasian American; 10 (3.10%) endorsed the category labeled “Other.” The students attended Jackson State University (JSU, an urban historically black university). They were recruited from classrooms in the Department of English and Modern Foreign Languages at JSU and offered extra credit by their instructors to participate. To be included in this study, participants had to be age 18 or older and be able to read and answer questions on the data collection instruments. Prior to data collection, the research protocol and supporting documents were submitted to the JSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval. Following approval, participants were recruited and research was conducted according to the IRB standards and guidelines for studies involving human participants. This research also was conducted in adherence to the legal requirements of studies completed in the United States.

### ***Materials and Procedure***

When participants agreed to volunteer for this study, they were asked to read and sign a consent form. During this time, individuals were permitted to ask any questions pertaining to the purpose and procedures of the study. All questions were answered by the researchers. This takes approximately five minutes. Then each participant was given a copy of the consent form to keep for his or her records, and the researchers kept a signed copy of each participant's consent form for our records. All data collection instruments including the consent form, demographic questionnaire and survey are stored securely in a locked filing cabinet in the research laboratory. The participants included in this research will remain anonymous, and all data collection materials will remain confidential and be kept private for a minimum of three years according to the IRB guidelines and federal regulations. After receiving their copy of the consent form, participants were given a demographic questionnaire to complete. This a 10-item self-designed instrument used to collect background data (gender, race or ethnicity, age, highest education level completed, marital status, employment status, political views, religious affiliation, and others) on our participants. The demographic questionnaire takes about five minutes to complete. Next, participants were given the Shakespeare-*Timon of Athens* Survey (called the Reciprocity Survey, or RS) to complete. This self-designed, self-report measure contains 24 questions divided into two domains reflecting pro-reciprocity (considered prosocial behavior) and anti-reciprocity (considered non-prosocial behavior). The responses are on a Likert-style scale from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." The survey takes approximately 20 minutes to complete. Thus, it takes about 30 minutes to participate in this research project. At the end of the study, data were analyzed by the researchers.

### **Results**

A 4 (age) x 5 (marital status) x 5 (political views) between-groups factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted using the IBM® Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 21.0) to explore the impact of age, marital status, and political views on levels (high or low) of reciprocity, as measured by the Reciprocity Scale (RS). The RS scores were compared for

participants who endorsed a particular age (18-29 years, 30-49 years, 50-64 years, or 65 years and over), who specified a certain marital status (now married, widowed, divorced, separated, or never married), and who described their political views as very conservative, conservative, moderate, liberal, or very liberal. The interaction effect between age, marital status, and political views was not statistically significant,  $F(2, 320) = .886, p = .449$ . There was a statistically significant main effect for age,  $F(2, 320) = 5.350, p = .005$ , with a large effect size (partial eta squared = .164). On average, participants who were widowed scored lower on the RS than the others individuals. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) test indicated that the mean RS scores for the 18-29 years age group ( $M = 22.10, SD = 3.15$ ) was significantly higher than the 30-49 years age group ( $M = 22.10, SD = 3.15$ ). The RS scores for the 50-64 years group ( $M = 19.267, SD = 6.797$ ) and the 65 years and over group ( $M = 22.536, SD = 6.406$ ) did not differ significantly from any of the other groups. A significant main effect for whether someone was married, widowed, divorced, separated or never married was found,  $F(4, 318) = 4.840, p = .003$ , with the majority of participants indicating they were never married. There was a medium effect size (partial eta squared = .108). On average, participants who never married scored higher on the RS than the other individuals in the study. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test showed that students who were divorced scored significantly different from those now married ( $M = 18.052, SD = 5.081$ ) and those never married ( $M = 25.236, SD = 6.406$ ). There was a statistically significant main effect for political views ( $F(4, 318) = 4.166, p = .003$ ); however, the effect size was small (partial eta squared = .05). The results revealed that most participants endorsed moderately political views that are considered neither conservative nor liberal. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test showed that students who endorsed moderate political views scored significantly different from those who endorsed conservative ( $M = 3.761, SD = 1.415$ ) and from those who endorsed liberal ( $M = 3.365, SD = 1.286$ ) political views. A multiple linear regression analysis was performed on the data to predict students' RS scores based on age, marital status, and political views. A significant regression equation was found ( $F(3, 319) = 3.545, p = .015$ ), with  $R^2 = .033, R = .183$ , and Adjusted  $R^2$

= .024. Participants' predicted RS scores are equal to  $89.793 - 7.500 (\text{AGE}) + .317 (\text{MARITAL STATUS}) - .088 (\text{POLITICAL VIEWS})$ , where AGE is coded as 1 = 18-29 years old, 2 = 30-49 years old, 3 = 50-64 years old, 4 = 65 years and over; MARITAL STATUS is coded as 1 = now married, 2 = widowed, 3 = divorced, 4 = separated, 5 = never married; POLITICAL VIEWS are coded as 1 = very conservative, 2 = conservative, 3 = moderate, 4 = liberal, 5 = very liberal. Students' response options on the RS are presented using a continuous scale with choices ranging from "Strongly Agree" to "Strongly Disagree." Although the model is considered weak, it is significant perhaps due to the large sample size of 322 participants. Age is the only significant predictor in the model, with a unique contribution of .020 or 2 percent (the Part correlation also referred to as semipartial correlation coefficient, or  $sr^2 = -.143$ ) to the total variance of RS scores explained by this particular set of independent variables. The unique contribution of 2 percent was calculated by squaring the value of  $sr^2$  ( $-.143^2 = .020$  or 2%). This approach to calculating  $sr^2$  is recommended by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007, p. 145). The remaining unique variance found in RS scores can be attributed to marital status ( $sr^2 = .026^2 = .0006$  or .06%) and political views ( $sr^2 = -.009^2 = .00008$  or .008%). The overall model only accounted for 3.3 percent ( $R^2 = .033$ ) of the variance found in RS scores; age alone accounted for 2 percent of this value. Thus, 96.7 percent of the overall variance in RS scores remains unexplained by the model and can be attributed to other factors.

### Discussion

These results provided evidence to support the hypothesis tested that college students between 18 and 29 years of age, close to the age Timon is in Shakespeare's play, would endorse behaviors similar to those demonstrated by Timon. Our findings suggested that participants in the 18 to 29 years age group scored higher on the RS indicating higher levels of reciprocity (or pro-reciprocity behavior similar to that demonstrated by Timon in Shakespeare's play *Timon of Athens*) than their older counterparts. Thus, individuals in the older age groups scored lower on the RS than their relatively younger counterparts, indicating a lower level of reciprocity (or anti-reciprocity behavior unlike that demonstrated by Shakespeare's character Timon). The results also

implied that perhaps relatively younger students with moderate political views who have never married may tend to engage in more prosocial behavior such as positive reciprocity compared to their relatively older counterparts with more conservative or liberal political views, especially those who have experienced a divorce. Therefore, the results of the multiple linear regression analysis revealed that the combination of independent variables (age, marital status, and political views) used in our model serve as weak predictors of positive reciprocity, with age being the strongest predictor. Consideration can be given to the selection of better predictors (e.g., students' classification status, nationality, number of siblings, and birth order) of reciprocity in future research. Results of the regression analysis also suggested that as age increases from young adulthood (18-29 years old) to middle age (30-49 years old), reciprocity tends to decrease to a certain degree. However, this trend is not demonstrated by individuals who endorsed being in the oldest age ranges (50-64 years old and 65 years and over). Their responses were consistent with participants 18 to 29 years of age.

### ***Pedagogical Discussion of the Results***

The use of Shakespeare's drama for empirical study created an unlikely interdisciplinary crossroad between the arts and sciences. The ideas that the arts may bolster scientific inquiry and that the sciences may center analyses on literature are even less common. Nonetheless, we found in Shakespeare catalysts of empirical research. Interestingly, students completed the interdisciplinary survey with few queries and much ease. Collected surveys showed a four percent rate of incompleteness that we feel demonstrates students' readiness for multi-disciplined content in college English courses. The interdisciplinarity of our survey module suggested that reciprocity studies incorporate economic literature, social psychology, and personality and behavioral studies. Survey content and student response also confirmed Shakespeare's drama as a vehicle to critical thinking. Students' promptness to address complex questions about reciprocity illustrated their ability to position single course content to solve problems beyond the scope of any one discipline.

Indicative to the college classroom, our results suggested that students who reciprocate in general aspects of campus life may

exhibit similar reciprocity in the classroom. Research on learning in the college classroom suggests that students who actively participate in the learning process both inside and outside the classroom learn more than those who do not (James & Taylor 2002; Tinto 1997; Weaver & Qi 2005). Our research suggested that reciprocal academic acts between and among college students may positively affect student success. In addition, research on peer-group reciprocity indicates that students often rely on the ascribed and achieved characteristics of reciprocity that increase their trustworthiness and strengthens their friendship, making students more vulnerable to influence (Hallinan & Williams 1990). Since teacher influence facilitates peer-group learning, reciprocity strengthens learning communities and thus increases learning. We found that in both college prosocial settings and Timon's Athens, friendship remains an integral part of academic give-and-take among students. Interestingly, criticism on peer-group learning asserts bias that hinges upon friendships and social interactions that accompany group task activities (Martin 2010). As with Timon, our study shows that breakdown in prosocial reciprocity among students also suggests breakdown in collaborative efforts. Thus, reciprocity that we find to be keys to friendships and social interactions among college may be prime considerations in pedagogy inclusive of peer-group learning.

In addition, we found the ages of students to be significant factors of prosocial reciprocity. In the college classroom, age may also affect peer-group reciprocity among students. Our survey demographics revealed that traditional students (ages 18-25) scored significantly higher on the RS indicating of reciprocity (or pro-reciprocity behavior similar to Timon in) than nontraditional undergraduates (ages 25 +). Research shows that nontraditional students maintain higher grade point averages than their traditional counterparts (Dupeyrat & Marine 2005; Hoyert & O'Dell 2009; Morris, Brooks, & May 2003). Significant to these findings is goal orientation (or goal setting), which energizes academic behaviors (Elliot & Dwerk 2005). Reciprocity as academic behavior falls within the parameters of peer group expectations. Students often participate in peer groups in exchange for learning and for preferable grades (Becker, Gecr, & Hughes 1995; Lui & Carless 2006). Our findings suggest that pedagogical consideration may be given to more clearly defined grading rubrics to raise peer group

reciprocity. We posit that when peer grouping traditional students who possess high propensities for prosocial reciprocal behavior with nontraditional students who exhibit higher academic achievement in addition to more clearly defined goals, grading criteria that reciprocates for both individual and group efforts may raise learning outcomes. Reciprocity not only functions as an aspect of the academic contract between teacher and student but also as a social cohesive among traditional and nontraditional students.

### **Limitations of the Present Study**

One possible limitation of the present study is the use of a self-designed instrument for the collection of data. The participants were given the Shakespeare-*Timon of Athens* Survey (called the Reciprocity Survey, or RS) to complete during data collection sessions. The psychometric properties of this instrument have not been tested; thus, the reliability and validity of this survey has not been established. The psychometric properties of a test relate to the data that has been collected on the instrument to determine how well it measures the construct (in this case, reciprocity) of interest. In order to develop a psychometrically sound measure, the data collected by administering the instrument to a normative (representative) sample of participants are subjected to statistical analyses to ensure that the instrument has established psychometric properties (Salkind, 2013). The two broad types of psychometric properties that determine whether an instrument is a good measure of a particular construct are reliability and validity. Reliability refers to an instrument's capacity to consistently measure the same construct across multiple administrations, usually yielding the same or similar results each time. Validity refers to the capacity of an instrument to accurately measure the construct of interest (Kantowitz, Roediger, & Elmes 2009). Perhaps another limitation is the lack of diversity in the sample. The participants were recruited from a historically black university in the Deep South. Therefore, the results may not be generalizable (transferrable) to other undergraduate students from predominantly white institutions, undergraduates in other areas of the country, or even individuals in other countries. The potential lack of generalizability of the results relates to the external validity of the present findings (Salkind 2013).

### **Directions for Future Research**

Directions for future research may involve using a psychometrically sound instrument that is administered to a diverse sample of participants recruited from multiple races, various ethnicities, or different cultures. Further, as a part of the pedagogical process, this survey focused solely on students enrolled at JSU. Recent academic efforts with Nantong University in Shanghai, China as well as other non-Western universities afford a second phase of our study with global emphasis. Of interest to future study of Shakespeare and reciprocity is a complex range of social, economic, and cultural aspects that vary with region and nationality. The extent to which the notion of reciprocity is affected by non-Western culture remains central to global awareness in the postmodern classroom. It is our goal that future demographics represent reciprocity among students with diverse college campus experiences. We foresee comparisons and contrasts that factor significantly into the pedagogical process.

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## Appendix

# Shakespeare-Timon of Athens Survey

Directions: This instrument is composed of twenty-four statements concerning feelings about reciprocity (give and take). Please indicate the degree to which each statement applies to you by marking whether you

(1) strongly agree (2) agree (3) are undecided (4) disagree (5) strongly disagree

Read the plot summary; work quickly; record your first impressions.

### **Summary of the plot or story**

Timon of Athens is a man who enjoys pleasing his friends and he does this by lavishing gifts on them. His 'friends', many notable people in the City of Athens, rush to gain his favor. They buy him small gifts - he repays them with big gifts. He then gives his friends an enormous banquet with entertainment, gives them gold coins, pays some of their debts, and bails others out of jail. Timon hopes that he and his friends will always give lavishly to each other so that they all always enjoy the best of times. He ignores the warnings about false friends from the philosopher Apemantus, and Timon's extravagance catches up with him in the end when he is faced with unpaid bills. When Timon asks his 'friends' for help, they ignore him. He sends banquet invitations to these false friends and uses the occasion to berate them for being false. Then Timon leaves Athens a poor but wiser man. While living in the wilderness, Timon finds gold, becomes rich once again, and befriends General Alcibiades who has also been treated badly by the Athenians. Timon provides the money for the General to wage war against the Athenians and seek revenge for their falseness. The story continues as various people with differing motives visit Timon. The Athenians beg General Alcibiades for mercy. Timon then dies in a lonely cave, and a soldier brings the General a copy of the inscription on his gravestone.

1. I expect to be my friends to spend money on me if I spend money on them.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

2. Timon spends money on his friends in the same way that college students spend money on their friends.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

3. Some college students feel that sharing possessions maintains friendships.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

4. When I spend money on my friends, they do not have to spend money on me.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

5. If "Student A" charges goods or services to her/his credit card for "Student B," repayment is expected in the form of a cash or credit reimbursement.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Undecided	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Disagree
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6. Timon shares his possessions with his friends in the same way that college students share possessions with each other.

<input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Undecided	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree
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7. College friendships often end because one friend fails to repay the other.

<input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Undecided	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree
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8. If I pay a bill for a college friend, that friend should pay a bill for me.

<input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Undecided	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree
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9. If a student gives a portion of his/her financial aid money to a college friend," then the student who gives the money expects the college friend to make his/her financial aid money available when received.

<input type="radio"/> Strongly Agree	<input type="radio"/> Agree	<input type="radio"/> Undecided	<input type="radio"/> Disagree	<input type="radio"/> Strongly Disagree
-----------------------------------------	-----------------------------	---------------------------------	--------------------------------	--------------------------------------------

10. Timon's friends do not repay his kindnesses like college students who do not repay the kindness of their college friends.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

11. Timon's friends do not have to repay his kindnesses.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

12. If I pay money to get my college friend out of trouble, I expect him/her to do the same for me.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

13. Like Timon, some college students try to *buy* their friends.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

14. Like Timon's friends, college students often find reasons not to repay their friends.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

15. College friends should never repay their friends.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

16. If I pay for fun events for my college friend and she/he never pays for my fun events, then we can remain friends.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

17. Like Timon, some college students feel that all friends in a group should contribute financially to the groups' fun.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

18. If college friends in a group pay equally for their fun, then the group will have many fun times.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

19. Unlike Timon, some college students feel that not all friends in a group should have to contribute financially to the groups' fun.

Strongly Agree    Agree    Undecided    Disagree    Strongly Disagree

20. College friends in a group should not pay equally for their fun.

Strongly Agree     Agree     Undecided     Disagree     Strongly Disagree

21. If a student gives a portion of his/her financial aid money to a college friend," then the college friend does not have to make his/her financial aid money available when received.

Strongly Agree     Agree     Undecided     Disagree     Strongly Disagree

22. If I pay for a fun event for my college friend and she/he never pays for my fun events, then we cannot remain friends.

Strongly Agree     Agree     Undecided     Disagree     Strongly Disagree

23. Unlike Timon, college students never try to *buy* their friends.

Strongly Agree     Agree     Undecided     Disagree     Strongly Disagree

24. College friends should exchange financial support.

Strongly Agree     Agree     Undecided     Disagree     Strongly Disagree



# **A PILOT STUDY OF TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND AND COMMON CORE STANDARDS**

by

Elisabeth D. Ward, M.A.T.,<sup>1</sup> Lakitta D. Johnson, Ph.D.,<sup>2</sup> and Ronica Arnold Branson, Ph.D.<sup>3</sup>

## **Abstract**

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLBA) has been highly criticized due to the perceived negative impact it has had on teachers, students, and education reform. In an attempt to remedy some of the problems caused by NCLBA's unpopular efforts to reform education, in 2014, all but three states plan to implement Common Core Standards and Assessments, a national curricula designed by teachers to help improve some of the shortfalls as evidenced as a result of NCLBA. The purpose of this pilot study was to examine teachers' perceptions of NCLBA and the Common Core Standards. Using qualitative research methodology, this pilot study attempted to shed some light on teachers' perceptions, predictions, and preparedness for Common Core Standards. This study also reflects the views of a very limited subset of teachers in Mississippi. It is hoped that findings from this study will help to provide some insight into teacher morale in regards to education reform plans and execution as well as be used to inform, evaluate, and reform educational policy. Participants in the pilot study included seven teachers in one of the largest public school districts in Mississippi. Results indicate that participating teachers are ambivalent about Common Core Standards and favor them slightly more because they offer relief from the NCLBA. The study suggests that teachers do not predict significant educational changes with Common Core Standards and that many of their ideologies and thinking patterns from NCLBA have tainted their views and expectations for Common Core Standards. In essence,

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<sup>1</sup> Elisabeth D. Ward is a graduate of the Department of School, Community, and Rehabilitation Counseling at Jackson State University and teaches at Brinkley Middle School in Jackson, Mississippi.

<sup>2</sup> Lakitta D. Johnson is an Assistant Professor in the Department of School, Community and Rehabilitation Counseling, Jackson State University.

<sup>3</sup> Ronica Arnold Branson is an Associate Professor in the Department of School, Community, and Rehabilitation Counseling, Jackson State University.

these participants believe they are not prepared for Common Core because states, districts, and schools have insufficiently prepared teachers, students, and parents for the upcoming academic changes. Recommendations and further directions for research are discussed.

### **Introduction**

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) was passed by congress in 2001, and on January 8, 2002, United States President George Bush signed the No Child Left Behind Act into legislation. The purpose of the passage of the act was in an effort to close the achievement gap between economically advantaged students and economically disadvantaged students. Initially, the act required that schools reach 100 percent proficiency in math and reading by 2014 and at that time, many educators agreed that an educational discrepancy existed, so no immediate criticism was given. However, shortly thereafter a better understanding of the detailed requirements came into play and strong criticism of the NCLBA quickly rose not because of its existence, but because of its exactness and misunderstanding of details. As the act became more thoroughly understood, the NCLBA's accountability deadline, achievement ratings, and extensive measures caused educators, parents, students, and stakeholders to quickly express their disdain for the act. Although the act's aim was to improve educational equality, research suggests that it achieved quite the opposite. The effects of the act were felt by many stakeholders involved from staff to students and parents. This was highly visible because of the results of accountability and also because test results determined whether schools would reap monetary benefits or detriments (Fortune, Padgett, & Fickel 2005). As a result, many became uneasy with the contents of this act. In fact it was made known that "teachers and administrators can receive bonuses for high student scores, or, as is more typically the case, they can be reassigned or fired because of low student scores and poor student gains" (Nichols & Berliner 2007, p. 8). This did not set well with many proponents in these educational systems.

After a wealth of research including case studies and surveys, excessive parental complaints, and record breaking teacher employment turnovers, politicians realized that some parts of the NCLBA were flawed, particularly with regards to

guidelines, requirements, and implementation (Hill & Barth 2004). Specifically in the state of Mississippi, statewide assessment data is used to officially assess the state, schools, subgroups, and students. Students are individually categorized as “below basic, basic, proficient, or advanced” while schools are ranked from a successful “distinguished Level 5 school to unsuccessful restructuring level 1” (Mississippi Department of Education, 2003). Though teachers are not ranked categorically, much is implied about the classroom teacher when test scores are made public and the data is analyzed. Research has also supported the notion that as a result of the incompatibility between measurement principles and the NCBLA’s regulatory classification guidelines, students and teachers are more likely to receive direct and indirect labels that do not accurately represent their ability or individual commitment to education. Dufour’s (2004) research found that teachers assess, enrich, remediate, and reassess on a daily basis and continually dedicate thousands of hours of personal time to student improvement, yet there are no categories or labels for that. It is also documented through research that the NCLBA has caused other problems for schools over the course of its existence (Hill & Barth 2004).

The purpose of this pilot study was to examine teachers’ perceptions of NCLBA and the Common Core Standards. Specifically, this study explored teachers’ perceptions, predictions, and preparedness for Common Core Standards and their views about NCLBA. Findings from this study will help to provide more insight regarding the morale of teachers in regards to educational form plans and execution as well as give suggestions that could be used to inform educational policy.

### **High Stakes Testing**

It has been widely reported that high stakes testing not only affects students and systems, but it also significantly impacts the lives of individual teachers. Regardless of the outcome of statewide tests, teachers are still expected to duplicate similar or better results with differing groups of students all with unique abilities, and these differently-abled students are expected to perform on grade level each year. However, when scores are low, students are often labeled and suffer embarrassment and ridicule. No Child Left Behind testing has also been reported to affect

teachers' ability to teach academic content comprehensively. Some argue that the act has forced educators to narrow the curriculum, ignore principles of measurement, and relax ethical standards. As a result of stringent requirements, it has also prompted veteran, novice, and future teachers to consider and pursue other professions (Hill & Barth 2004).

Unfortunately, controversy behind this legislation is debated on a regular if not daily basis. Individuals supporting or opposing testing often use test scores to persuade others to see its benefits or detriments. Supporters of accountability testing argue that the annual standardized tests ensure that schools are effective and that appropriate changes are made to enhance student achievement by encouraging teachers to make use of instructional time and adopt best practices (Stecher 2002). Proponents argue that assessments reduce gate-keeping processes such as tracking and low teacher expectations that harm disadvantaged students (Diamond & Spillane 2004).

#### **NCLBA and Electives**

Alongside the negative connotation of teachers becoming guides for test prep; teacher morale also seems to also be affected by the NCLBA in that courses such as science, social studies and electives have almost been excluded from the curriculum. Hargrove, Jones, Jones, Hardin, Chapman, and Davis, (2000) point out that the “greatest concern is the enormous amount of time that is being spent on reading, writing, and mathematics at the cost of instruction in science, social studies, physical education, and the arts” (p. 23). A Phi Delta Kappa poll indicated that teachers were concerned that their school's rating would be based on English and math scores at the loss of important subjects like science, social studies, and the arts, but they also were mindful that failing scores have a significant bearing on “public support and funding” (Cawelti 2006, p.65).

#### **NCLBA and Teacher Effects**

The perpetual negative effects of the No Child Left Behind Act have also affected teacher retention. Since its enactment several teachers have lost jobs because of the “highly qualified” requirement. According to NCLB legislation, “Highly Qualified teachers must have: 1) a bachelor's degree, 2) full state certification

or licensure, and 3) prove that they know each subject they teach” (Department of Education, 2004). Many agree that the highly qualified requirement for teachers was not an unrealistic request, because students deserve the best instruction. On the other hand, it has prompted an issue with staffing in rural areas due to the remoteness of the locations and has forced out teachers with more experience and replaced them with teachers with little or no experience but who meet the qualifications on paper. Lewis (2003) proclaims the act ensured that those good at test-taking will be hired, but these personnel might not be the best fit for the jobs. Abrams, Pedulla, and Madaus (2003) further argue that “placing a premium on student test performance impacts instruction, limits the range of educational experiences to which students are exposed, and minimizes the skill that teachers bring to their craft” (p. 20). Furthermore, the NCLBA tests have forced many districts to terminate teachers who were deemed ineffective because of low test scores as well as to lose teachers who were successful in terms of testing but burned out because of it (Brownell, Sindelar, Bishop, Langley, & Seo 2002).

### **The Effect of Common Core Standards**

Common Core Standards are state initiated standards that were drafted by states as a guide for public school curriculums. The standards were proposed in an effort to better prepare students for college and work: “English-language arts and math were the first subjects chosen for the common core state standards because these two subjects are skills upon which students build skill sets in other subject areas” (National Governors Association Center 2010). As for assessments, the National Governors Association Center (2010) leaves the responsibility up to individual states. Additionally, the standards indicate that teachers will gain more creative control over their classrooms and see the worth in teaching lessons that will train students to be successful in college and at work. Common Core Standards also have indicated that the federal government will not have such a heavy influence in establishing the standards nor will they be as actively involved in the implementation process in schools in individual states. As a result, the new guidelines have been either adopted individually by school boards or through state legislation. Further, the standards claim that they have included measures to mend broken relationships and

restore public opinion and faith in education (National Governors Association Center 2010).

## **Method**

### ***Research Design***

This research study uses the qualitative research design. The researchers chose this method to gather intimate accounts on education from the educators who implement these standards. The researchers sought to examine teacher perceptions about education after ten years of NCLBA from teachers employed by one of the largest districts in Mississippi. It ultimately seeks to gather teachers' perspectives about the educational plans used and enforced by state policies. The research uncovers factors teachers believe caused the demise of the NCLBA and its effects on education, specifically, the Common Core Standards. The researchers sought to answer the following questions:

1. How confident are teachers that the Common Core Standards will restore education?
2. What measures have been implemented to prepare teachers for Common Core Standards?
3. What comparisons and contrasts do teachers make about Common Core Standards and NCLBA?
4. How does NCLBA positively or negatively influence teachers' attitudes about Common Core Standards?

### ***Participants***

Seven participants responded to the call for interviews, consisting of one male and six females. The participants for this study were solicited through advertisements and interest letters placed in teachers' lounges at several schools; however, only participants from three schools responded. Each of the participants was employed by one of the largest public school districts in Mississippi whose statewide tests scores are marginal and whose student population consists primarily of ethnic minorities. Participants worked in settings that were considered high stakes. The term high stakes tests, as used in this research, pertains to assessments in which results are used to make critical decisions and carry major consequences. The teachers follow plans associated with teaching in an area where the majority of the students are economically disadvantaged and receive free or reduced lunch as well as supplemental services. The years of experience of the participants span between two and 20 years, and

all of them hold a master's degree in education. All were teachers of math, math and science, or English language arts at the sixth grade or above. Four of the teachers entered education via the traditional route and three via alternative route educational programs.

### ***Data Collection***

The interviews were recorded and transcribed immediately after the interviews. The instruments contained eight open-ended questions; some questions had several parts, for which thoughts on specific subject matter was needed. The questions were developed based on common motifs found in literature about the NCBLA and the Common Core Standards. The researchers sought to discover whether the participants shared the same opinions about the act that prior research reported, what they felt was important, and their thoughts about education due to the NCLBA.

### ***Data Analysis***

Analysis of data consisted of identifying themes and separating them into inductive categories. Zhang and Wildemuth (2009) explain, "This process uses inductive reasoning, by which themes and categories emerge from the data through the researcher's careful examination and constant comparison" (p.309). Within the inductive codes, sub-themes were identified and explored by comparing the participant responses with both the literature and other participants.

## **Results**

### ***Teachers' Confidence in Common Core Standards***

Based on the responses received, one would conclude that the teachers in this study are marginally confident that the Common Core Standards will restore education. Although they are eager to see the end of NCLBA's legislation, in their opinion, many of them have taken a mediocre approach to Common Core for fear that it too will damage education. Some teachers welcome the new standards and others view them as an opportunity to unify education. One teacher sees the budding standards as the sequel to NCLBA. Correspondingly, a middle-grades reading teacher's initial response was the most positive; she believes the new standards will prepare students for the "globally competitive

workforce and better prepare them for the rapidly changing employment arena.” This response is in agreement with the goals of the Common Core Standards to prepare students for future success in college and the workforce (National Governors Association, 2010). All other participants believe that the standards will offer some change but are not confident that they will accomplish its educational goals before they too are replaced. While teachers praised the upcoming standards, they admitted that they are fearful that many of the same problems that existed with NCLBA will plague the classroom. The research participants also expressed concern about past behaviors like cheating, social promotion, competitiveness, and teaching the test. A middle-grade math teacher reported she is positive that Common Core Standards will be “mishandled.” In a statement she says:

Schools across the nation have had to revamp their programs in both negative and positive ways. There are more and more teachers having to teach to the test. The problems will reenter when teachers who believe they cannot meet standards have their jobs taken away. When the first teacher is fired, all others will start project No Child Left Behind. (Personal Interview, 01/30/2012)

On another note, an ELA teacher welcomes Common Core Standards because she believes the standards will prove that “Mississippi is not as behind as the media makes it appear.” She further states that compared to other states, “Mississippi’s tests are harder than most state tests”, and Common Core Standards will expose the weaknesses in other states.”

Overall, the teachers did not report confidence that the Common Core Standards will restore education. They believe that the standards will offer fewer positive aspects to education. Relatively, teachers reported that it will increase or stimulate the already existing negative outcomes. Participating teachers also revealed that they are not as optimistic about the Common Core Standards as they had expected to be about a new national curriculum. The responses provided by teachers indicated that they were apprehensive about the standards, and the bulk of the training they have received thus far has provided minimum information and was more like an informational session than a training session. In fact, all of the teachers interviewed indicated that they didn’t know

much about the standards and had not followed up, read, or researched any of the information they have received thus far from administration. One teacher reported knowing how the standards would impact the classroom, stating that it had required individual initiative to find out more information. Not encouraged by what was found, the teacher added:

After doing my own research on the standards, I attempted to ask questions for clarity. The person I contacted was the school's math coach; she told me not to worry about the standards because she had not been trained and was not worried because schools have some time before they are penalized for poor or non-compliance (Personal interview-1/31/2012).

In order to make anything in education a success, it is extremely important that teachers, parents, and everyone believe in the importance of education, be familiar with the knowledge being presented, and then maybe the Common Core Standards can restore public opinion and faith in education (National Governors Association Center, 2010).

### ***Teacher Preparation for Common Core Standards***

An unfortunate finding was that the teachers in the study affirmed they have not been properly prepared for the Common Core Standards just as they were poorly prepared for the No Child Left Behind legislation. The overwhelming majority went on to say that professional development, teacher core training, and guidance throughout the initial shift and implementation are greatly needed as teachers feel that many teachers in their buildings did and still do not receive adequate core training from their teacher education programs or content area courses.

An ELA teacher indicated that she did not know a “great deal” about the standards. She went on to reveal that although she knew of websites that would explain the standards in detail, she would not “devote a great deal of time to them until they are the new standard.” Correspondingly, the participants predict that the teachers in their buildings would not implement the new standards well because they are unlikely to understand the standards as written, lack academic skill, and are most likely to be poorly trained or rushed into action without any training.

After reviewing emerging themes in the interviews it was noted that participants reported that it is rather apparent that they are not prepared to implement new standards for several reasons: (a) Teachers are not actively seeking training; (b) The district has not started in-depth training; (c) Many of the current teachers lack enthusiasm and initiative, so the new standards are likely to confuse them further as many of them do not possess a strong knowledge of the subjects they teach; and (d) The coaches have not been properly trained and are not encouraging teachers to be proactive. The views expressed in this research were similar to 48 percent of teachers who participated in an online public inquiry on the standards on March 10, 2010. The participants in that survey stated that they did not believe that the current education system was prepared to meaningfully implement the Common Core Standards due to needed resources, guidance, and support (“Common Core State Standards Initiative,” 2010).

### ***Common Core Standards versus NCLBA***

The ending of the No Child Left Behind Act has been met with much controversy and great discourse and has reportedly provided little room for positive thoughts towards adopting a national curriculum. As teachers compare the negative outcomes and trends in education that were spawned from the failed NCLBA, some attempts have been made to galvanize their coworkers despite feeling like many of them have given up on what true teaching really is. The participants revealed that the idea of common standards is both good and bad as similar standards have existed before.

Many of the teachers shared similar sentiments that like NCLBA, CCS will cause students to be taught a limited amount of content because the standards will dictate which parts of disciplines are important instead of allowing teachers to just teach. Believing that the two education plans are more alike than they are different, one teacher said that, like NCLBA, the new standards will apply the same testing pressure and present the same task on a larger scale since the new policy dictates that students nationwide should be on the same level. That teacher further stated:

The influence of high stakes testing is far too high and too much pressure on both the teacher and the students. The No Child Left Behind Act presented

an impossible task--all students cannot possibly be at the same levels because they are people. Some students will always be smarter, some better at math, some better at language, some better at creative expressions, so when you set a goal that is not possible, you create way too much stress for everyone trying to reach that goal. (Personal interview, 2/1/2012)

The majority of the participants also indicated that like Common Core Standards, the NCLBA was the new idea in education that everyone lauded until stakeholders realized that it did not serve the needs of the students and in essence commented that it made education worse. Correspondingly, one teacher referred to the new standards as a “gimmick” and believes that education is more about “politics than it is about education.” Ideally, the comparisons made between the Common Core Standards and the No Child Left Behind Act were quite negative in that teachers stated that it will do little to aid education just as the NCLBA legislation did. On the contrary, the single contrast made between the two is that with Common Core Standards, all states that adopt the standards will have the same or similar achievement goals, which are geared toward student success. Research on the Common Core Standards also reveals that respondents believe that the standards compromise the development of individual students and do little to improve education but take away money from the classroom and feed bureaucracy (National Governors Association 2010).

### ***NCLB's Influence on Teachers' Attitudes***

The answer to the question of whether the No Child Left Behind Act negatively or positively affects the attitudes of teachers about Common Core Standards was evident in that the participating teachers had very few positive details and predictions about the new standards. It was reported from many participants that they are becoming disinterested in education and are simply going through the motions of teaching because they do not believe anyone expects students to gain much from education. One teacher's opinion, expressed earlier in the manuscript, indicates that the cycle of education has come full circle as the many of the first students of NCLB legislation are beginner teachers and,

according to the opinions of several participants, lack the skill to be efficient educators. Several of the teachers indicated that they have decided to pursue other occupations if and when Common Core Standards causes too much stress, but this measurement of stress was not discussed further in this study. Many of the teachers cited the like curriculum as being a positive aspect for teachers and students if they chose or must transfer to another state. Participants also expressed hope for and agreed with the Common Core Standards' main promise to prepare students for the real world both academically and functionally (National Governors Association 2010). Additionally, the more seasoned teachers revealed that newer professionals in their buildings needed to adopt positive attitudes about teaching and give the new policies a chance before declaring defeat. One math teacher supports the belief that teachers' attitudes are negative because the information that they have received about Common Core Standards has not been substantial and the poor planning now will result in stress later because districts will rush to appear compliant with and ready for standards. However, another teacher said, "Common Core Standards are just what we need." Though she did not elaborate why she felt the way she did, she followed that remark with, "I guess if I say that enough, I'll start to believe it." Ultimately, it appeared as though teachers were neither positive nor negative about Common Core Standards. From the responses given, most appear to be going with the flow of things and have either resolved to do whatever is asked or are planning an escape outside of the educational sector.

### ***Ideas on Implementation***

Additionally, participants expressed a common belief that Common Core Standards will pose similar or worse problems for education for which students, teachers, schools, districts, and states will suffer. The argument is presented that education has experienced huge losses as a result of No Child Left Behind legislation. Teachers for one reason or another have left the profession, students are reported to be inadequately educated, and districts are continuing to lose money, students, and schools, all of which have an impact on the state and our future. Educators participating in the study fear that, if the warnings provided by the NCLB act are not taken seriously and actively avoided, Common

Core Standards will also fail. In relation to faulty implementation, participants expressed concern with training or the lack thereof, and with the expected emergency tactics districts are likely to employ because teachers and students have not been properly prepared. According to the National Governors Association (2010) in their research, respondents reiterated the need for professional development to better equip and prepare teachers.

Participants also disclosed fears about the pressure schools as a whole would experience because of the new standards. As many are hopeful, one middle school teacher believes that the new standards will only drive state to state competitions since the only thing upholding accurate comparisons were varied curriculums. She stated,

I worry whether the innate competitive spirit that exists in all humans will interfere and turn something that is meant to be a method to mend education into another contest for teachers, students, and states. I think schools collectively suffered because of the competitions within the districts and even buildings impeded collaboration; now no one will want to be the last state because the excuse that the curriculum is different will no longer work.  
(Personal interview, 2/1/2012)

Participants reported that their colleagues in their buildings have accepted the pressure point tactics as norms and will automatically use the education faux pas adopted during the NCLBA while implementing Common Core Standards.

### ***NCLBA versus CCS***

Collectively it seems that the participants do not believe that the newly adopted state curriculum will do much for education. For many teachers, the emergence of new standards means one thing--the end of the No Child Left Behind Act is drawing near. Although the teachers expressed positive thoughts about Common Core Standards, later comments exposed their ambivalence. As a result of self-actualization, some teachers reported that specifics of the standards were unknown and questioned whether the concept of having Common Core Standards is a good idea.

Unlike their stances on Common Core Standards, teachers were clear about their positions regarding education and students. Teachers expressed a belief that NCLBA egregiously had a harmful impact on students and their performance. The participants' concern for education stretches from their personal classroom experiences to the classrooms on college campuses. Furthermore, participating teachers alluded that novice teachers educated under the NCLBA may be seen as inadequate professionals as a result of the failures and that current students will have significant difficulties meeting the standards of Common Core Standards. This belief is shared by others who advocate for teacher preparation programs to recruit the best students, prepare them appropriately, and continue to support them as they begin teaching (National Governors Association Center, 2010).

### **Discussion**

This research set out to convey the perceptions, predictions, and preparedness for Common Core Standards as well as current teachers' view of NCLBA from the point of view of teaching professionals. This study reveals that participants in this study may not be fully committed, convinced, or confident that Common Core Standards will restore education, nor are they prepared for its arrival. The inferences drawn based on the findings suggest that teachers welcome Common Core Standards because they represent the end of the current form of high stakes testing, but not for what they propose to do for education. In fact, these teachers predict positive progression with Common Core will be hard to achieve because of the huge educational deficiencies that students incurred while attending school within the ten years of the NCLBA. Also, these participants have negative views because they feel that teachers are not as heavily involved in the policy decision making as they should be. According to the National Governors Association (2010), they received complaints that too few teachers were involved in the drafting of the standards. These opinions could help make the recommendation for more teacher involvement when developing these policies and standards.

Many participants are of the opinion that schools have not done enough to prepare teachers or students for the new standards. As for teachers' predictions for Common Core Standards, teachers in this study predict that they, as educators, will experience a high

level of discomfort even though they are uncertain whether the accountability measures will have the same consequences as the NCLBA and have made no efforts to find out. Because of what they do not know, teachers are hesitant to predict a fully faulty outcome but are even more hesitant to give positive praise. During the interviews, when some teachers outwardly spoke negatively about Common Core, their adverse predictions were based largely on how administrators, districts, and states handled past acts. Just as research has shown, these teachers reported being berated, fired, and forced to teach at a pace that did not allow students to learn naturally (Cawleti 2006). These participants, too worried about their future freedom to teach subject matter, as well expressed insecurities about future job stability.

Teachers in this study revealed that they worry about the type of assessments that will be utilized with Common Core Standards because, unlike previous education legislation each state will have the same competencies which will permit greater accuracy when attempting to compare educational systems nationally. According to the National Governors Association Center (2010), the standards are not national measures of accountability but are “state led” and can lead to even more changes and continue to negatively reflect performance and give a negative account of district and state achievement. Overall this research suggests teachers feel that Common Core will fail in efforts to positively affect education and may get too hung up on accountability testing. The realization that teachers refer to Common Core as national standards indicates that little has changed in positive thoughts about yet another measure of proposed reform.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

This study set out to gauge teachers’ perceived notions and expected outcomes before the onset of Common Core Standards based on past behaviors and education trends, specifically NCLBA. As a pilot study, a major limitation was that the data collected was limited to teachers in selected schools in Mississippi and does not represent the complete diversity of teachers in Mississippi school districts. Additionally, only the perceptions of math and English language arts teachers were recorded, as these are the teachers the researchers perceived as the ones who would

endure most of the stress from test scores and data. Future research should include a larger sample of schools as well as involvement of more diverse teacher populations. Researchers might also compare and contrast teachers' perceptions across various states. Lastly, future inquiry could also include teachers' perceptions of the Common Core Standards before and after its implementation.

### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

Based on findings from this study, recommendations are made for districts to do more to educate all parties about the new standards and to include teachers in policy making decisions. One example might be to offer more comprehensive and easy to understand workshops and more frequent professional development on the standards. It also might be helpful that states act immediately and utilize updated materials, terminology, and measures so that everyone can truly understand the overall function of Common Core Standards as a new or neutral component to the curriculum. It is cautioned that if these standards are merged into another educational plan that resembles NCLBA, it might impede positive progress and prevent stakeholders from seeing its true value. It is also recommended that states should make a good faith effort to illustrate that the task of educating is not solely on the shoulders of teachers, but should include students, parents, and other community stakeholders. Education must be seen as a collaborative effort that is meant to strengthen student success and build stronger families and communities. Districts should also begin to prepare parents and students for the standards by informing parents about the changes and expected student outcomes early. Mini-workshops, open houses, and open forums can be essential to success for higher student outcomes. Research shows that parental involvement is a key element in successful schools and students. It might also be helpful that schools find stronger, proven techniques to galvanize teachers about the new beginning in education and use this time to re-teach its teachers.

It is also important to note that leadership sets the standard. Administrators might want to start by having open forums to specifically discuss what the goals of each standard is and demonstrate to teachers the best research based methods to convey that information to students. Principals can also use this time to

develop and strengthen staff morale by lowering any tension or insecurities. It also may be helpful to allow opportunities for staff and teachers to collaborate and make suggestions for the school beforehand so that the transition for the whole school is a smooth one. There may also be a need to improve professional bonds between the administration and the staff by resolving old issues so that there can be opportunities for renewal and growth. Teachers should also be given more training in their content area, be provided with mentors, and have a voice in school systems policies through continual visibility and involvement. Finally, it will also be beneficial to adequately train pre-service teachers about the Common Core standards so they will be prepared when they began teaching.

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# **ROBOTICS-BASED EDUCATIONAL TOOL--AN INTERACTIVE LEARNING PLATFORM TO ENHANCE UNDERSTANDING BEHAVIOR OF PHYSICAL SYSTEMS**

by

Francis Tuluri Ph. D;<sup>1</sup> John S Colonias Ph.D;<sup>2</sup> Desmond S.Vance,  
Donnie Dixon, Maurice White, Antonio Edwards, Deremy  
Campbell, and George Moore<sup>3</sup>

## **Abstract**

Most undergraduate students of Science and Engineering disciplines show lack of interest in passive traditional teaching methods. The consequence of losing interest in learning eventually leads to failure to keep up with the grades expected of them or even can lead to changing their majors. The traditional methods of science and engineering has more emphasis on the delivery of instruction rather than engaging students on linking theory and real time applications as required in these disciplines of study. To engage and inspire students to pursue higher education in STEM disciplines, we present an interactive, novel, and inexpensive learning and research lab platform utilizing the capabilities of Robotic Educational Module that can be used to study behavior of physical systems. We describe the method of the Robotics-based educational tool with reference to a case study—a moving cart rolling down an inclined plane under the influence of acceleration due to gravity. The details of the tool to integrate various stages of study—designing and building a robo-based physical system, programming the robo for data collection, analyzing data, calculating and interpreting results are given. The Robotics-based educational tool can be used as an undergraduate research lab platform and can be extended to several other areas of science and engineering.

## **Introduction**

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. Tuluri is Associate Professor in the Department of Technology at Jackson State University.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Colonias is Professor and Interim Chair of the Department of Technology, Jackson State University.

<sup>3</sup> Mssrs. Vance, Dixon, White, Edwards, Campbell, and Moore are undergraduate students in the Department of Technology, Jackson State University.

The United States of America has been at the forefront as a world leader in scientific and engineering innovation. However, presently it is not producing a sufficient number of Science, Technology, Engineering, and Technology (STEM) students. In fact the United States has one of the lowest rates of STEM to non-STEM degree productions in the world (NSF 2002). During the same period, many other nations have seen rapid growth in postsecondary education, mainly because of their government policies to integrate science and engineering education into the global economy (NSF 2012).

Out of 7.4 million students worldwide who earned a first university degree in science and engineering, 1.2 million degrees were from Asia, with 830,000 from Europe, and 500,000 from North America (NSF 2004). In spite of national emphasis on STEM disciplines to guide the country's future, there is great concern about student enrollments in science, engineering and technology throughout the United States (CRS 2009; Holdren et al. 2010; NCES 2010a; NCES 2010b). In particular, African Americans, Hispanics, and American Indians pursuing college education in the STEM fields appear to be far below expectations. Similarly, the decreasing trend in the number of women choosing STEM also presents a challenge to mitigate. Among other factors, lack of interest and undergraduate research experience among students in STEM learning appears to be adding to the decline in student enrollment. A study by the National Science Foundation (NSF) on this issue emphasizes using novel and innovative methods to make students think like scientists (Eagan et al. 2010) which will prepare them to apply scientific investigative approaches in performing their research activities. Further, the President's council of advisors on science and technology recommends "Engage to Excel" as a theme for increasing STEM graduates (Holdren 2012).

Fortunately, the recent advances and innovations in Electronics and Computer Technologies are bringing Robotics Educational Modules (REM) to class-room instruction at a very modest and affordable price with excellent experiences of interactive student learning and research (Fox 2007; Dias 2005; Hall 2008; Krivickas 2007; Ekundayo 2010). But the methodology adopted by earlier authors does not fully utilize the power of REM for studying the dynamical behavior of physical systems through

system approach. In fact NXT REM comes with immense power for using as a research lab platform. They come with computing and smart decision-making capabilities and interact with the physical system through sensors. The electronics system facilitates collecting the physical data which is an index of the properties of the physical system of interest. In particular, Lego Mindstorm NXT has become a popular way of inspiring STEM education, mainly because it can be used as a mobile object as well as a datalogger to collect the surrounding data through its on-board sensors. Further, NXT REM is easy to build, design, and program and all at an affordable price.

In the present work, the authors describe a NXT Robotics-based educational tool as an interactive learning and undergraduate research platform to inspire and engage STEM students to excel towards gaining undergraduate research experience and to studying the behavior of physical systems. The NXT learning approach will empower the students with critical thinking and problem solving skills and reinforce the underlying principles and concepts taught in the traditional teaching method. Students will learn additional skills such as a) designing and interfacing a cyber-physical system; b) using sensors to couple REM and physical systems; c) data logging: data collection and analysis, and establishing inter-relationships between the physical variables of the cyber-physical system; and d) integrating multiple functions of a system—principle, theory, application. We will demonstrate the power of Lego Mindstorm NXT as a learning and research lab platform with respect to a case study—a moving cart rolling down an inclined plane under the influence of acceleration due to gravity as a typical example of the technique. The tool can be extended to similar investigations in several areas of science and engineering.

## **Materials and Methods**

### ***Methodology***

The methodology used in the Robotics-based educational tool is to couple REM to a physical system of interest, through REM on-board sensors is shown on Figure 1. The method consists of four stages in coupling the physical system with the REM: 1) building REM; 2) using on-board sensors; 3) programming REM; and 4) collecting sensors data as index of the properties of the physical system of interest. The novelty of the method is that the

tool will impart multiple skills of learning such as 1) Designing and building a system of interest, 2) interactive hands-on experiences, 3) datalogging and data analysis, 4) analytical reasoning of interpreting the data and results, and 5) correlating the principle to application. The approach is transparent, and the learner is able to see the physical principles in action to a real time situation and will develop interest towards learning. The methodology thus provides the academic skills needed for student success in a college of engineering.

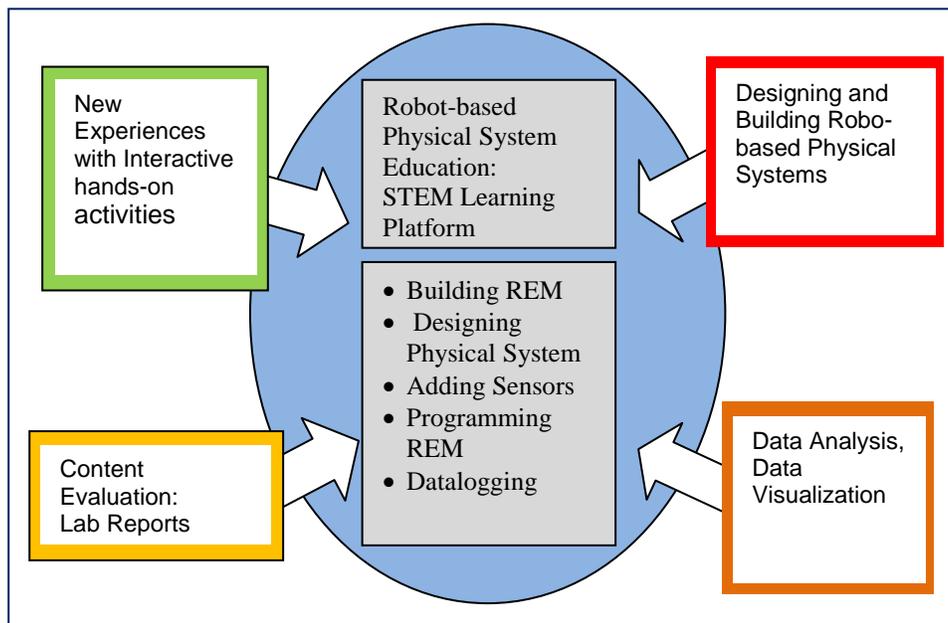


Figure 1: Schematic view of the Robotics-based Physical System Education

### ***Configuring NXT REM-based Physical System***

Lego Mindstorms NXT is a kit that contains a microcomputer, lego elements (axles, connectors, wheels, and gears), sensors, and servo motors required for students to assemble and program a variety of robots (Lego 2012a). The key component of the kit is a sealed unit called NXT intelligent brick consisting of a 32-bit ARM microcontroller (Atmel AT91SAM256) and memory (64 K static and 256K Flash), which can be programmed using a software package called graphical programming (NXT G) or high level c-programming (Robot C). The NXT is powered by a built-in

rechargeable battery pack, or six AA battery compartments. See Figure 2 for an outlay of the NXT brick.

The configuration of NXT REM-based physical system consists of five stages namely 1) building the NXT Robo; 2) connecting the NXT Robo with sensors—touch sensor, light sensor, sound sensor, and ultrasonic sensor; 3) designing the physical system of interest; 4) programming the NXT; and 5) data collection and analysis.

1) Building the NXT Robo: The Lego NXT Robo is built (see Figure 2) using the standard instructions available at their resource center (Lego, 2012 B). Figure 2 shows the outlay of Lego NXT and the NXT Robo with sensors.

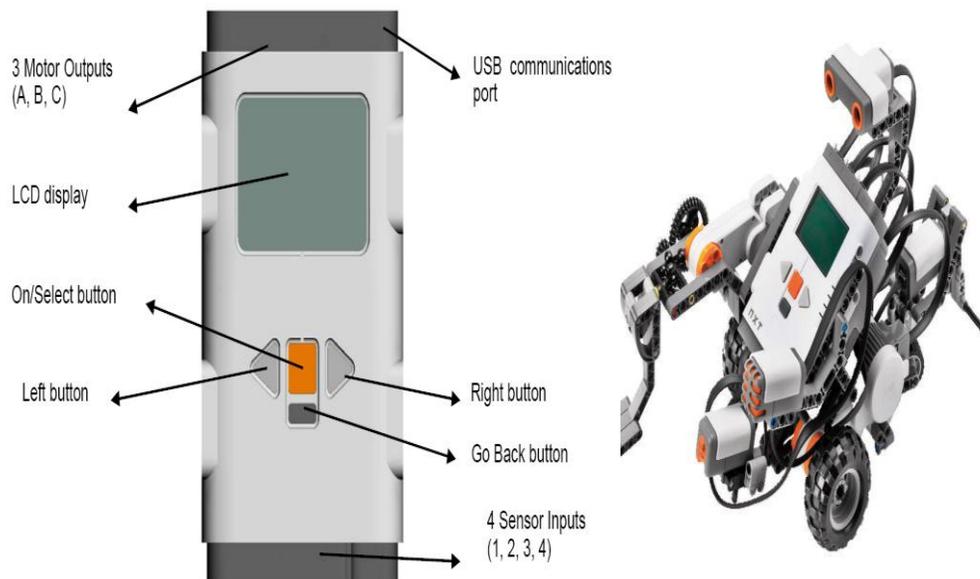


Figure 2: Lego NXT Intelligent Brick outlay and the NXT Robo with sensors and servo motors

2) Connecting the NXT Robo with sensors: The Lego Mindstorms kit comes with four input sensors – touch sensor, light sensor, sound sensor, ultrasonic sensor, and three output sensors - servo motors. The touch sensor enables the NXT brick to respond to ON/OFF states depending whether on the sensor is touched or not. The light sensor can be used to detect the reflectivity of an object, the sound sensor gives a measure of loudness, and the ultrasonic sensor can be used to measure distance of an intercepted object.

The two servo motors are used to provide mobility to the robot, and the third one can be used as an external arm control. The input sensors are connected to the input ports of the NXT using snap-in cables. Similarly the servo motors are connected to the output of the NXT. The assembled NXT robo with the sensors is shown in Figure 2.

3) *Designing the NXT Robo-based physical system* : An NXT Robo-based physical system is a combination of NXT Robo and the subject of interest. The onboard NXT sensors couple the subject and the Robo to form an integral and intelligent physical system. The sensors help to measure physical variables such as time of flight, light reflectivity, and loudness which reflect the physical properties of the subject. For example if we are interested in studying the one-dimensional motion of an object under constant acceleration, then we can design a physical system consisting of a moving trolley with NXT attached to it. The trolley can be made to move on a flat surface with strips of dark paper equally spaced apart. The light sensor of the NXT can be arranged to move over the strips of dark paper. Then NXT can record the time intervals the trolley has taken to move across the strips of paper. By studying the time versus distance plots, one can determine the speed and acceleration of the moving trolley. Therefore, the design of a Robo-based physical system depends on the principle or concept of interest. Specific details have been given for the case study of the present work. Similar methods can be extended to other situations of interest.

4) *Programming the NXT*: Once the Robo-based physical system is designed, then the NXT intelligent brick is to be programmed using a software package to perform the tasks decided in the design stage. In the present work, we program NXT using a graphical software package namely NXT-G v2.1 provided by the vendor (NXT-G 2012). The graphical programming of NXT is simple for the students to program and provides visibility of each of the instructions in the programming code.

The NXT-G programming language consists of an Integrated Developing Environment to facilitate programming through a palette menu of programming blocks as shown in Figure 3. Each programming block is a sequence of instructions for the NXT and has a set of options for the user to choose from. The graphical program consists of combining the program blocks that

are configured to perform specific tasks on the NXT Robo. The details of programming are available from the NXT–G user guide (Kelly 2010). The program is downloaded to NXT through USB cable as shown in Figure 3.

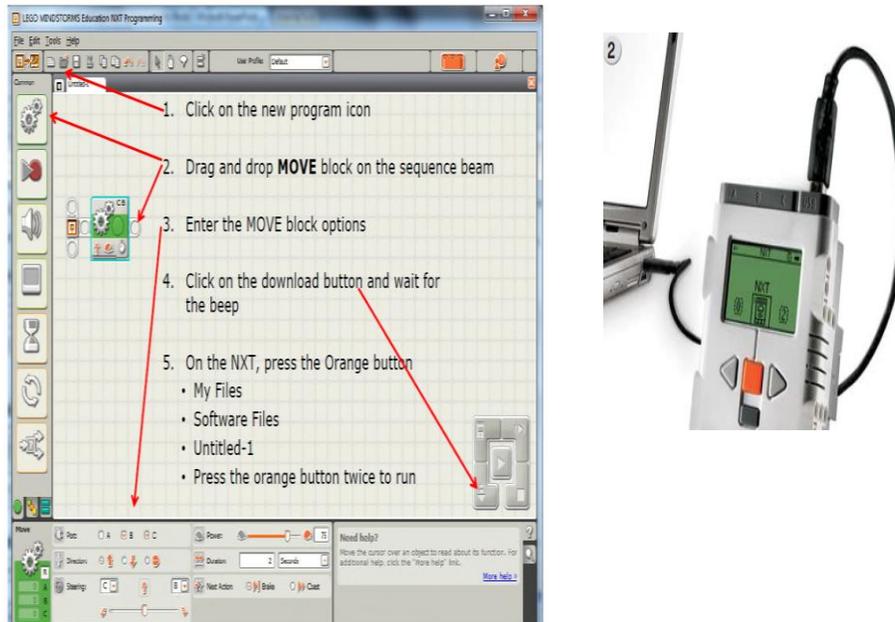


Figure 3: NXT–G programming environment and downloading the program to NXT

**5) Data collection and analysis:** The data collection stage consists of the data read by the NXT sensors (light, sound, rotations, touch, and ultrasonic distance) and storing in the memory section of the NXT microcomputer. At the end of data collection, the NXT must be connected to the laptop/PC for data retrieval. The data stored in the NXT memory is transferred to the laptop as a log file consisting of the data in text format. The measured data will be imported to standard spreadsheet programs such as Microsoft Excel for plotting graphs, data visualization, and data analysis.

### Experiment and Results

Using the methodology of robotics-based educational and research lab platform, the students have studied a variety of physical systems that operate on a set of physical principles and concepts. In this section, we present the results of a study on the motion of a moving cart rolling down an incline plane under the

influence of acceleration due to gravity. We also describe the various stages of scientific investigation—data collection, data retrieval, data visualization, and data interpretation in light of the underlying physical principle of the system of study.

Based on the theory (Halliday 2010), we present the experimental details of our NXT Robo-based physical system (see Figure 4) to study the acceleration due to gravity of a cart rolling down an inclined track. If a cart moves down a plane that is inclined at an angle  $\theta$ , the component of the gravitational force acting on the cart in a direction that is parallel to the surface of the plane is  $m g \sin\theta$ , where  $m$  is the mass of the cart and  $g$  is the acceleration due to gravity. The acceleration of the cart, in the absence of friction, should be  $a = g \sin\theta$ , both up and down the inclined plane. The acceleration is not expected to depend on the mass of the cart.  $g$  is the acceleration due to gravity and the standard value in CGS system is  $980 \text{ cm}/^2$ .

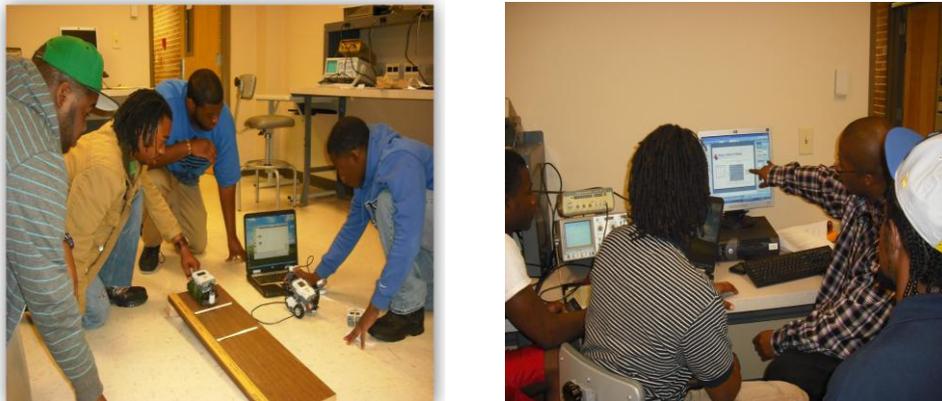


Figure 4: Students performing an interactive experiment to study the motion of a Robo down the inclined plane, and retrieving the NXT data onto a computer for data analysis

Algebraically, the relationship between the position ( $s$ ) and elapsed time ( $t$ ) for the cart is quadratic expressed as  $s = v_0 t + (1/2) a t^2$ , where  $v_0$  is the initial velocity of the cart moving under constant acceleration of ‘ $a$ ’ (Halliday 2010). Mathematically, it is in the form of a general equation of a parabola as  $y = a x^2 + b x + c$ , where  $y$  represents the position of the cart on the ramp and  $x$  represents the elapsed time. The quantities  $a$ ,  $b$ , and  $c$  are parameters which depend on such things as the inclination angle of the ramp ( $\theta$ ) and the cart’s initial speed ( $v_0$ ). Although the cart

moves back and forth in a straight-line path, a plot of its position along the ramp graphed as a function of time is parabolic.

For initial velocity as zero, the distance (s) and time (t) relation on the ramp becomes as  $s = [(1/2) (g \sin \theta)] t^2$ . A plot of s versus  $t^2$  represents a straight line of slope (g Sin  $\theta/2$ ). By measuring the slope of the graph experimentally, the angle of the incline can be verified from the formula,  $\sin \theta = 2 * \text{slope} / g$ , where g is the acceleration due to gravity.

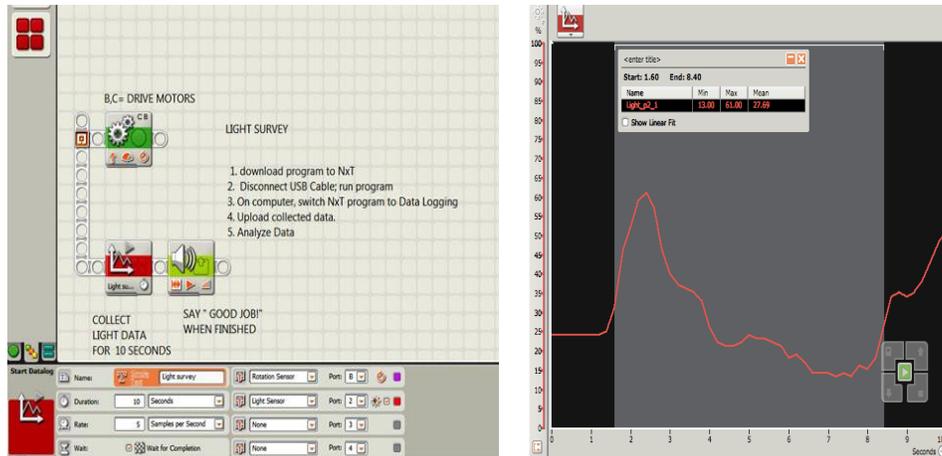


Figure 5: The NXT Robo programming for datalogging and the sensor light interruptions display

In the experiment, the NXT is docked onto a freely rolling cart. The NXT Robo cart is made to roll down on a flat wooden board set at an inclined angle of 1.2 degrees or 0.026 radians (see Figure 5). On the wooden board are taped two strips of paper separated by a distance of 5 cm, 10 cm, 15 cm, 20 cm, and 25 cm. The NXT is attached with a light sensor to detect the changes in light intensity of the sensor as it moves over a strip of paper as it interrupts moving over it. For each of the five instances of settings, the NXT Robo cart is made to roll down the inclined plane and is programmed to record the light sensor profile on the board. Whenever the light sensor interrupts the strip of paper, two peaks are observed, corresponding to the changes in the reflected light intensity of the sensor moving over the two strips of paper on the board. The time interval between the interruptions will be measured as a function of time and will be plotted for us by the NXT Data Logging software. The NXT-G software programming is shown in Figure 6.

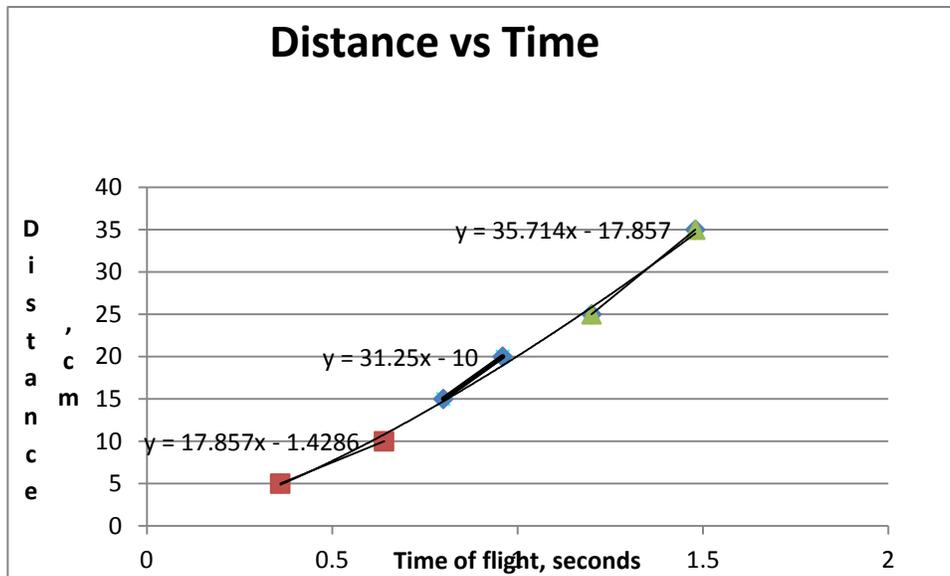


Figure 6. A plot of distance travelled by the robo vehicle (in units of cm) vs duration of the time for the corresponding distance (in units of seconds) for a NXT Robo cart on an incline.

A screen shot of the NXT program for datalogging and the NXT data of the sensor light interruptions retrieved for display on the computer monitor is shown in Figure 5. The time taken by the NXT Robo cart to travel the distance between the strips of paper is measured and recorded in Table 1. The measured time intervals are greater than 100 ms (0.1 s) in comparison with the temporal accuracy of 50 ms (0.050 s) that can be obtained from the NXT datalogging software measurement.

Table 1: Distance and time relation of a NXT Robo cart rolling down an inclined plane					
Distance of separation between paper markers, in units of cm	Light interruption of NXT sensor intensity peak positions on a time scale, in units of seconds		Time of travel between points of light interruption t, seconds	Square of the time interval, in units of seconds <sup>2</sup>	Successive difference of column 4 items, in units of seconds <sup>2</sup>
5	1.76	1.4	0.36	0.1296	
10	2.36	1.72	0.64	0.4096	0.28
15	1.48	0.68	0.8	0.64	0.16
20	1.84	0.88	0.96	0.9216	0.16
25	1.96	0.76	1.2	1.44	0.24
35	2.04	0.56	1.48	2.1904	0.28

A graph is drawn between distances versus time using Microsoft Excel, and is shown in Figure 6. As expected for the motion of an object moving with constant acceleration, Figure 6 shows a quadratic variation between the distance and time. The slope of the graph for each location gives the instantaneous speed of the cart. The calculated speeds are overlaid on the graph and show increasing speeds from 0 to 35.71 cm/s with the progression of time of travel by the cart corresponding to the distance range of 0 to 35 cm. Further, a graph is drawn for distance versus time squared and is shown in Figure 7. The slope of graph for Figure 7 gives the acceleration of the moving cart.

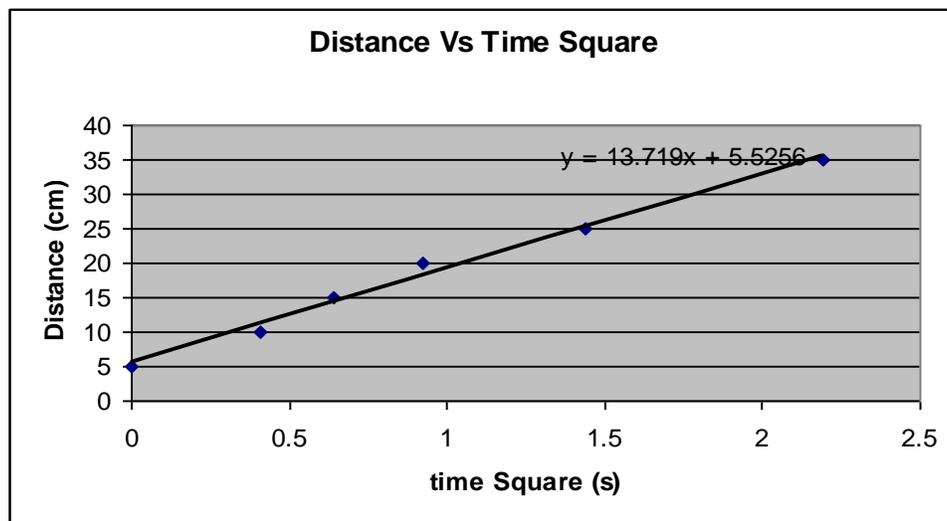


Figure 7. A plot of distance vs time squared for a NXT Robo cart on an incline

The measured acceleration of the cart is  $27.3 \text{ cm/s}^2$ , but the calculated acceleration of the cart on the incline is  $20.2 \text{ cm/s}^2$ . Even though the measured value is about 25 percent in error compared to the calculated value, the proposed technique of measurements has several advantages over its limitations. The importance of the technique is enhancing the understanding of physical concepts by experimentation, rather than focusing on the accuracy. The aim of the present study was to develop a novel, versatile, and economical technique of using Robotics Educational Modules as an interactive learning platform for understanding physical principles. Because the technique utilizes recent technologies such as robotics, it not only creates interest but also

makes the underlying principle transparent to the students. Even though the technique has accuracy of measuring time intervals of the order of 50 ms, the student researchers might be making several errors in setting up the system exactly the same way every time they repeat the measurements. The accidental errors could be as high as 25 percent but the students can still fully explore the underlying physical principles that they are studying. Considering the limitations of the technique, the measured and calculated values may be considered to be reasonably in agreement. Further, the technique enables the students to apply the scientific method of investigation to acquiring research skills in a classroom environment in a very economical way.

The NXT robotics based method of studying dynamics is interactive and creates interest in students to pursue critical thinking and research experience and has no parallelism with traditional method to compare with. NXT allows the students to focus their attention on studying the related physical principles rather than to be distracted by other factors not relevant to doing the experiment. The approach will make them check a prediction and redo the experiment without loss of time and effort.

The traditional method is laborious and is not interactive, not programmable, and not explorative. In the traditional method, one has to measure the time of flight using a stop watch and has limitations of measuring small time intervals of the order of 50 ms. The traditional method lacks a system integration approach while the NXT robotics based method integrates the physical system, electronics, data collection, and programming.

The NXT robotics based method takes the students to go beyond the boundaries of classroom to study “how science works.” For example, students will be able to relate how the acceleration of the trolley depends on its mass. From the underlying physics principle, the students will deduce that the mass of the trolley is irrelevant. Further, they will investigate that the acceleration depends on the slope of the incline and extend that concept to the case of free fall situation. They will be able to investigate the role of friction in their analysis.

### **Conclusions**

We have demonstrated a novel and versatile Robotics-based educational tool as an interactive undergraduate research lab

platform to study the dynamics of physical systems. The technique of integrating versatile NXT robot with a physical system opens an innovative scientific investigative lab environment for undergraduate students to experience scientific research in classroom learning. The application of the tool is described as a case study of the motion of a cart rolling down an incline under the influence of constant acceleration due to gravity. The underlying physical principles studied are: quadratic relation between distance and time, linear relation between distance and time squared. Considering the skills and practical experience of student participants in the experimental set up and collecting the experimental data, the agreement between the measured (27.3 cm/s<sup>2</sup>) and calculated (20.2 cm/s<sup>2</sup>) values is good. More than the accuracy of the results, the NXT Robotics-based tool makes the subject of study transparent to the students and opens vast scope of scientific investigation apart from creating interest in the learning process. The proposed tool inspires the students to apply scientific investigation to undertake research activities as an integral part of classroom learning.

The scientific investigative research skills learned by the student participants are: designing and building a Robot, Programming a Robot for datalogging, designing a Robotics-based physical system, and Data collection and analysis. The tool can be extended to similar investigations in several areas of science and engineering. Apart from creating interest among the students for learning, the tool is dynamic and interactive and opens a vast scope for students to explore the relation between theory and practice. Apart from gaining undergraduate research experience, the technique will empower students with critical thinking, analytical reasoning, and reinforce the underlying principles and concepts through novel hands-on activities.

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**DIVIDENDS OF DEMOCRACY IN NIGERIA: IS  
ECONOMIC GROWTH ONE OF THEM?**by  
S. U. R. Aliyu, Ph.D.<sup>1</sup>and A. O. Elijah, M.Sc.<sup>2</sup>

**Abstract**

Academic debate on democracy-growth nexus has remained unsettled and inconclusive for decades. This paper empirically investigates the impact of democracy on economic growth in Nigeria from 1999 to 2010. Using the endogenous growth model proposed by Romer (1986) on quarterly time series data, the study found that democracy exerts a positive and significant effect on economic growth in Nigeria during the study period. The result shows that a unit rise in democracy index, for instance, boosts growth by 4.5 percent. Upon examining the indirect effect of democracy, the paper also discovers that democracy impacts positively on some growth-transmitting variables like investment, human capital and government spending, but its impact on human capital is, however, not statistically significant. Interestingly and in line with evidence in the literature, corruption was found to be growth promoting in Nigeria. The paper therefore recommends that democracy should be deepened and strengthened by instituting credible electoral process, re-orienting the politicians, and increasing insecurity in the country so that the more dividends of democracy could be reaped.

Keywords: *Democracy, economic growth, corruption, social unrest* ; JEL Classification: E62, H52, J18, & J24

**Introduction**

Like citizens of most recently democratized economies, Nigerians still live with the aspiration of taking delivery of fundamental dividends of political democracy as a precondition for achieving long-term and sustainable economic development. The dividends of democracy are often presumed to include government's swift response to popular demands, adherence to

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<sup>1</sup> Shehu U.R. Aliyu is a Professor of Economics and Deputy Dean, School of Postgraduate Studies, Bayero University Kano, Nigeria.

<sup>2</sup> Akanni O. Elijah holds the M. Sc. and Bachelor's degrees in Economics from Bayero University Kano and Obafemi Awolowo University Ile-Ife, respectively.

rule of law, protection of property rights, enterprising civil society, due process, freedom of economic choice and an open society--all of which culminates into economic progress (Rodrik 1999). The wave of democratization that swept through at least 81 countries around the world between 1980 and 2000 might have been driven by the widespread expectation of reaping these dividends. However, Nigerians, having enthroned and sustained democracy since 1999, are still wondering whether the political system really possess the inherent ability to smoothly deliver on its promises giving the mixed realities on ground. But for several decades also, intellectual discourse on democracy-growth nexus has remained a breeding ground for theoretical and empirical arguments. The consensus seems to be that there is an inconclusive relationship between democracy and growth, depending upon the specifics of countries, regions, and other relevant channels observed.

Heterogeneous opinions exist on the relationship between growth and democracy in economic literature. Some empirical studies, for instance, Kormendi and Meguire (1985), Scully (1988), and Sierman (1998), found positive effects of measures of political freedom on economic growth. A second group of studies including Marsh (1979), Weede (1983), Cohen (1985), and Landau (1986), using cross-country data found, on average, that democracy exert a negative effect on growth. Another set of studies, including Russet and Monsen (1975), Baum and Lake (2003), Przeworski, et al. (2000), (Olson (1991), Helliwell (1994), Barro (1996), and Rodrik (2000), reported that democracy has no significant effect on growth but rather an indirect effect via a number of channels: maintenance of rule of law, free markets, small government consumption and high human capital, educational expenditure, life expectancy, lower tax rates, less spending on military, and political stability. One of the objectives of this paper therefore is to investigate which of these positions hold true for Nigeria after sustaining democracy for more than a decade.

An overview of general performance of the Nigerian economy since the enthronement of democracy in 1999 shows at best a mixed result. This is because the economy has been characterized by both positive and negative developments domestically and externally. The country, for instance, was able to resuscitate and sustain the face of economic reform programs which it started in the mid 1980s. Specifically, it resumed

privatization of a number of public enterprises, embarked on much needed banking reforms which included recapitalization of banks and more recently introduced a regional banking model to enhance efficiency and survival of Nigerian banks. Developments in the telecom industry have been unprecedented. Also within this decade of democracy, the country has earned more foreign exchange than it ever did in the previous years of oil boom put together and expended more money than it had since independence. Nigeria equally accumulated more foreign reserves than ever before as oil prices reached an all time high of more than one hundred dollars per barrel. Foreign direct investment (FDI) inflow peaked at \$8.5 billion in 2005 from an abysmal level of \$190 million in the year 1999 and despite the looming global financial crisis in 2008, Nigeria's FDI was at an appreciable level (Soludo 2010). However, the country had its worst period in terms of economic and political crisis: strikes, ethnic and religious crisis, and armed struggle, which all resulted in disruptions, destructions, kidnappings, and loss of lives and properties. The unemployment situation worsened from 13.1 percent in 2000 to 19.7 percent in the year 2009. The economy has also been rampaged by poverty, inequality and insecurity within the period. Besides, the global economic downturn which started in the last quarter of 2008 equally took its toll on the economy. Even FDI inflow fell by about 62 percent in 2010, that is, from \$6 billion in the year 2009 to \$2.3 billion in 2010, (UNCTAD 2011).

It is therefore imperative to undertake a study of this nature to assess the effects of democracy, if any, on the growth pattern of the economy from 1999 to the year 2010. The rest of the paper is divided into four sections. Section two contains the review of theoretical and empirical literature, section three presents the research methodology, while section four presents empirical results, and the final section contains summary and conclusion of the paper.

### **Survey of Theoretical and Empirical Literature**

Academic debate on the link between democracy and growth has been going on for more than three centuries. Three distinct propositions emerged from the review of literature: the "trade-off," the "win-win," and the "inverted-U." The trade-off proposition began with the work of Hobbes (1651) which argued

that political democracy is injurious to economic growth on the ground that democracy only divides power among factions or groups that pursue conflicting interests rather than common good. Similarly, Lipset (1959) opined that democracy is incapable of promoting growth except where per capital income reaches a certain level and poor economies require autocratic leaders to reach such level. This is what Gregor (1979) referred to as developmental dictatorship. In the same vein, Huntington (1968) argued that democracy often devotes itself to meeting consumption-driven popular expectations such that it neglects necessary profitable investments required for meaningful economic growth. Therefore resources necessary for investment cannot be accumulated by democratic means” (Rao 1984). Authors also argue that autocratic government facilitates growth through the forceful suppression of unrest--Hewlett’s (1980) study cited the case of Brazilian economy in the 1960s. More recently, Nilofar (2009) argues in the case of China, the world’s biggest repressive regime and India, the world’s biggest democracy, that China’s stunning growth performance could be a reward for repression and India’s sluggish growth a price for democracy.<sup>3</sup> Similar views were expressed by Rao (1985), Krueger (1974), Andreski (1968), and Haggard (1990).

The win-win proposition is based on the premise that liberal democracy allows for mutually beneficial deals. Harrington (1656), in his earliest response in favor of democracy, argued that autocratic rulers are potential looters whose exploitative tendencies and powers can be limited by democratic institutions. Democracy provides rule of law which gives individuals the confidence to plan and undertake routine economic activities. This is referred to as developmental democracy (Sklar 1987). In the same vein, North (1990), Olson (1993), and Claque et al. (1996) were of the view that democracy promotes greater incentive for investment by providing better property and contract rights, private liberty, and free flow of information. Besides, democratic regimes create a

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<sup>3</sup>Earlier, the famous *Lee hypothesis* where the former President of Singapore, Lee Kuan Ywe, advocates that disciplinarian states (such as South Korea, his own state Singapore, and post-reform China) recorded faster rates of economic growth than less authoritarian ones (including India, Jamaica, and Cost Rica). The Lee hypothesis is, however, based on sporadic empiricism, drawing on very selected and limited information, rather than on any general statistical testing over the wide ranging data that are available.

climate of certainty which is suitable for investment because it is difficult for rulers to change the “rules of the game” overnight (Goodell 1985). Rodric (1999) and Baum and Lake (2003) also argue that democratic regimes are committed to meeting public demand for infrastructure, justice, education, and health, all of which are prerequisite for growth. Thakur (2004) argued that both liberal democracies and market economies rely on similar attributes: political freedom, good governance, healthy competition, access to full information, secure property rights, and sanctity of contracts enforceable by independent judiciary. In this regards, Scully (1988) concludes that politically open societies, which bind themselves to the rule of law, to private property, and to market allocation of resources, grow faster and are two and one-half times as efficient as societies in which these freedoms are circumscribed or proscribed. Additionally, economic freedom is a positive and significant macroeconomic determinant of growth in per capita income.

The inverted U proposition put forward by Barro (1996) implies that in the worst dictatorships, an increase in electoral rights tends to increase growth and investment because the benefit from the limitation on governmental power is the key matter. In places that already have attained a moderate amount of democracy, however, a further increase in electoral rights tends to impair growth and investment. As electoral rights are increased, the dominant effect becomes an intensified concern with social programs and income redistribution.

Empirically, Kurzman, Werum, and Burkhart (2002) reviewed forty-seven (47) empirical studies on the effect of democracy on economic growth and results show that nineteen (19) reported a positive relationship, six (6) show negative relationship, and ten (10) reported no statistically significant relationship. Seven (7) studies found a combination of positive and non-significant results, depending on the model used and the cases included; two (2) found a combination of negative and non-significant results; two (2) found mixed positive and negative results; and one (1) reported an inverted-U effect (Barro 1996, 1997). Their study, however, shows that of the 106 countries studied, little or no direct effect of democracy on economic growth emerges, but positive indirect effects appear via two mechanisms: a marginally significant effect via investment and a robust effect

via government expenditure. They also discover a robust non-linear inverse effect of social unrest on economic growth.

Interestingly, evidence based on some empirical cross country studies suggests that the positive indirect effects of democracy are neutralized by opposite negatives effects and hence the net effect of democracy on growth remains nil—Helliwell (1994), De Haan and Siermann (1995a, 1995b), Granato et al. (1996), Przeworski and Limongi (1993, 1997), Barro (1996, 1997), Feng (1997), Dawson (1998), Siermann (1998), Gasiorowski (2000), and Przeworski et al. (2000). Evidence in support of this conclusion was also reported by Amsden (1989), Haggard and Kaufman (1995), Leftwich (1996), and Rodrik (2003). Furthermore, Muller (1985) and later Barro (1996) found evidence in support of the “inverted-U” proposition. Others in support of the proposition include: Comeau (2003), Plumper and Martin (2003), and Murphy et al. (2005). Lastly, Persson and Tabellini (1994) found that a transition towards democracy is not associated with economic growth.

It is difficult, based on the basis of these empirical studies, to form a conclusion on the nature of the relationship between democracy and economic growth. Kaufmann (2008) opined that there is neither a clear linear and casual link between democracy and growth, nor a sufficient basis to conclude that political liberalization results in deceleration of growth. However, democracy provides much greater economic stability, measured by the ups and downs of the business cycle. It provides better adjustment mechanisms to external economic shocks (such as terms-of-trade declines or sudden stops in capital inflows). Democracy further serves as a platform for attainment of higher investment in human capital—health and education and produces comparatively more equitable societies. The framework of analysis employed in the paper builds on some of the crucial variables identified in the literature. As economic and political characteristics between countries differ, so also would be the nature and magnitude of effect of democracy on growth. This study, therefore, seeks to investigate the effect of democracy on economic growth in the Nigeria—the biggest democracy in Africa, between 1999 and 2010.

### **Framework of the Empirical Analysis – Methodology**

The methodology employed derives from the theoretical literature on the effect of democracy on economic growth, which focus on several mechanisms through which such an effect might be transmitted (Przeworski et al. 2000) economic (investment), political (state expenditure), and social (social unrest). This concurs with the growth models proposed by Romer (1986), Lucas (1988), Jones and Manelli (1990), Barro (1990), and Rebelo (1991). Barro (1996), for instance, concludes that the established links between democracy and growth are a result of the connections between democracy and other determinants of growth, such as human capital. Consequently, this study, in line other empirical studies in the area, adopts a time-series approach, which among other advantages of the approach, takes account of changes in democracy over time. Using quarterly time series data on some key variables an Autoregressive Distributed Lag (ARDL) estimation technique was applied to assess both the long-term and short-term direct and indirect effects of democracy on growth in Nigeria.

Although the choice of time frame is straightforward, the period of smooth democratic rule in the country, the selection of regression variables was, however, influenced by availability of data on our theoretically relevant variables. Economic data was obtained on the following: Economic growth, government spending, investment, social unrest, human capital, corruption, democracy, and population growth rate.

*Economic growth* was measured as the quarterly natural log difference of gross domestic product (GDP) obtained from the publications of Central Bank of Nigeria: *Annual Reports and Statement of Accounts and Statistical Bulletin*. Consumer price index for the same period was used to transform the series into real growth rate and the paper uses log difference instead of quarterly percentage difference in line with practice in the growth models. See Barro (1997) and Kurzman, Werum, and Burkhart (2002).

*Government spending* was measured as the natural log of percentage share of quarterly government spending in gross domestic product obtained from the Central Bank's Statistical Bulletin.

*Investment* was measured as the ratio of total investment, public and private, to GDP. The data was obtained from the *Statistical Bulletin* of the Central Bank of Nigeria.

To measure the variable of *social unrest*, this paper adopts data published by Political Risk Services (PRS) Group, an international firm that provides annual assessment of political risk to foreign investors across the world. Political stability and absence of violence index of PRS is used as proxy for social unrest. This is justified by the composition of the index which comprises ethnic tensions, internal conflicts, external conflicts and government stability. The index is constructed to range from 0 to 1 with higher value indicating higher level of social unrest and vice versa. Adoption of this data is in line with Rivera-Batitz (1999).

Econometric growth models over the past decade recommend the inclusion of *human capital* indicators. This paper is in line with Barro's model (1996), uses two human capital measures: quarterly levels of expenditure on both education and health. Data on this variable was also obtained from the publication of the Central Bank of Nigeria.

The effect of the variable of *corruption* on economic growth has been extensively discussed in the literature. Hussain (1999), for instance, offers empirical evidence which suggests that corruption lowers economic growth through a number of ways which may include reduced domestic investment, reduced foreign direct investment, overblown government expenditure, distorted composition of government expenditure away from social and economic infrastructures, among others. this study adopts the Corruption Perception Index (CPI) published annually by the *Transparency International* (TI) on Nigeria and other countries in the world for the period under review. The index relates the perceptions business people on the degree of corruption in a particular country. A value of CPI of 10.00 shows a perfect case totally corruption-free country while a value of 0.00 shows an extreme case of a highly corrupt country. Although *TI* provides an annual measure, this paper uses Eviews version 5.1 to disaggregate the annual index into quarterly series, which was then converted into log.

Freedom house measure of political rights and civil liberties are a well recognized measure of democracy in economic literature, and as such this study utilizes the index as proxy for

*democracy*. Index of democracy was obtained by finding the average of political rights and civil liberties indices. Based on Freedom House interpretation, lower scores indicate more democracy while higher scores indicate less democracy. Hence countries with a score of less than 5.5 are either “free” or “partially free,” whereas countries with a score of more than 5.5 are “not free.” This is in conformity with Drury, Kriekhaus and Lusztig (1999).

*Population growth* data was obtained online from the Nigerian Bureau Of Statistics website and world facts data published on Index Mundi.

### Model Specification

In order to capture the relationship between democracy and economic growth in Nigeria, we specified an empirical model in conformity with Kurzman, Werum, and Burkhart (2002). The model is functionally expressed as:

$$\text{GROWTH} = f(\text{INV}, \text{GEX}, \text{SUR}, \text{HMN}, \text{POP}, \text{DEM}, \text{COR})$$

The model takes the form of multiple regression equation as

$$Y = \lambda_0 + \lambda_1\text{INV} + \lambda_2\text{DEM} + \lambda_3\text{SUR} + \lambda_4\text{HMN} + \lambda_5\text{POP} + \lambda_6\text{GEX} + \lambda_7\text{COR} + \mu \quad (1)$$

A priori:  $\lambda_1, \lambda_2, \lambda_4, \lambda_5, \lambda_6 > 0$ ; while,  $\lambda_3, \lambda_7 < 0$

Where  $\lambda_j$  are parameters to be estimated and  $\mu$  is a random error term assumed to be normally distributed with zero mean and constant variance. Our model indicate that economic growth (Y), proxied by real gross domestic product is determined by some crucial variables including Investment (INV), Government Spending (GEX), Social Unrest (SUR), Human Capital (HMN), Population Growth Rate (POP), Democracy (DEM) and Corruption (COR). All annual data collected on these crucial variables were disaggregated into quarterly time series before estimating the models.

To test the indirect effect of democracy on growth, we specify the following models:

$$\text{INV} = \beta_0 + \beta_1\text{GEX} + \beta_2\text{DEM} + \beta_3\text{SUR} + \beta_4\text{HMN} + \beta_5\text{POP} + \beta_6\text{COR} + \mu \quad (2)$$

$$\text{GEX} = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1\text{DEM} + \alpha_2\text{SUR} + \alpha_3\text{HMN} + \alpha_4\text{POP} + \alpha_5\text{INV} + \alpha_6\text{COR} + \mu \quad (3)$$

$$\text{HMN} = \phi_0 + \phi_1\text{DEM} + \phi_2\text{SUR} + \phi_3\text{GEX} + \phi_4\text{POP} + \phi_5\text{INV} + \phi_6\text{COR} + \mu \quad (4)$$

### **Empirical Results and Findings**

Our regression results for model 1 show that democracy impacts positively on economic growth in Nigeria. More interestingly, the impact of democracy on growth is found to be statistically significant at 5 percent given a t-statistic of 3.37. By implication, a percentage change in democracy index can boost economic growth by up to 4.5 percent. The result is in agreement with Kormendi and Meguire (1985), Scully (1988), Sierman (1998) Sklar (1987), North (1990), Olson (1993) and others. The estimated model also shows that human capital and population growth impact positively and significantly on economic growth. However, contrary to *a priori* expectation, the result indicates positive relationship between growth, social unrest, and corruption. The positive growth corruption links supports the earlier finding by Aliyu's (2009) and Wei's (1998) versions of the "virtuous bribery" story. According to Lui (1985) and Acemoglou and Verdier (2000), the degree of corruption may be part of the optimal allocation of resources in the presence of incomplete contracts or due to market failure.

Other interesting findings from the regression results show that population growth rate and human development index are growth promoting while the coefficient of lagged investment in the economy negates economic growth. All coefficients were tested at the five percent or better level. The model exhibits strong predictive power and robustness given adjusted-R<sup>2</sup> value 0.85 which implies that the model accounts for 85 percent of total variation in Nigeria's GDP. Besides, our regression result shows that all the regressors are simultaneously significant at five percent given an F-Statistic of 37.104.

Our estimated regression model 2 which was specified to capture indirect effect of democracy, reveals that there democracy is positively linked to investment in Nigeria. With a t-statistic of 2.57, the relationship is adjudged to be statistically significant, as a unit rise in democracy index has the potency of boosting investment by 4.2 percent. It therefore implies that investment is one of the transmission channels through which democracy impacts on growth. This finding corroborates the report of Goodell

(1985). The model also shows that social unrest has deleterious effect on investment, though not significant statistically. This might be due to the fact that the country has seen extreme social unrest like civil war, protracted revolution similar to that of Libya and Egypt within the period under review. Our result also confirms that human capital, government expenditure, and population growth impact growth positively in Nigeria.

The result obtained from the third model regressed shows that democracy has a positive and significant effect on government expenditure as is commonly reported in literature. This derives from the fact that democratic governments have the proclivity to lavish resources on popular demands in order to sustain support of the people. From our result we find that a unit increase in democracy index raises state expenditure by 1.1 percent. The model also reveals that corruption negatively affects government expenditure as it tends to reduce spending on productive projects and investments in various sectors of the economy.

Estimated model 4 shows that democracy affects human capital positively, though not statistically significant given a t-statistic of 0.08. Also, the regression result indicates negative and significant relationship between democracy and social unrest in Nigeria. It shows that government spending impacts positively on human capital, but contrary to *a priori* expectation it shows that investment has negative impact human capital. The model exhibits an interesting goodness of fit with an  $R^2$  Square of 0.94 which is confirmed by a strong adjusted  $R^2$  0.93, suggesting that the model explains 93 percent of total variation in human capital. Given an F-Statistic of 104.7 exogenous variables in the model are adjudged to be jointly statistically significant.

### **Conclusions and Recommendations**

The major objective of this paper is to empirically investigate whether democracy has been able to deliver economic growth as one of the dividends in Nigeria between 1999 and 2010. Our econometric results have shown that economic growth is indeed one of the dividends of democracy in Nigeria within the period. However, the benefits of this growth have not been adequately delivered to the masses as a result of protracted systemic problems like corruption culture and lack of accountability in Nigeria. The paper also tested the indirect effects

of democracy via some crucial growth-transmitting variables like investment, human capital development, and government spending. The paper found that democracy positively impacts on investment, human capital and government spending in Nigeria, but its impact on human capital is found to be insignificant. In the overall analysis, a unit increase in democracy index has the capacity to boost economic growth by about 4.5 percent. This finding brings to the fore the need to deepen and strengthen democracy in the country. In the light of this, we make the following policy recommendations:

1. The government must ensure that it puts in place a credible electoral process without which it is impossible to conduct free, fair, and credible elections. The process should ensure that a credible voters' register void biometric anomalies is used for elections.

2. There is the need to ensure training, retraining, and repositioning of Nigerian legislators. This will entrench the orientation that their offices are meant to serve the people that elected them rather than to pursue personal gains. Besides, government should review downward the excessive luxury and spending on national assembly members done at the expense of infrastructural development of the country.

3. There is the urgent to tackle all security problems in the country as they pose serious threat to democratic development in Nigeria. Insecurity has heightened in the country in recent times caused especially by the Jos crisis, Niger Delta militancy, and more recently Boko Haram. Government must ensure that all culprits are brought to justice and fundamental issues properly addressed.

4. Dealing with endemic corruption should not be a thing of lip service. Nigerians have seen many probes without punishments of culprits. President Jonathan Goodluck's administration must adequately punish individuals, institutions, and politicians convicted of corruption. Nigeria can borrow a leaf from China in this regard because when corruption is dealt with, dividends of democracy will reach the masses.

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## APPENDIX

Dependent Variable: LGDP Method: Least Squares Date: 11/23/11 Time: 22:39 Sample (adjusted): 1999Q2 2010Q4 Included observations: 47 after adjustments				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	-26.24143	9.585554	-2.737602	0.0093
DEM	4.555366	1.351569	3.370428	0.0017
SUR(-1)	16.03093	6.526485	2.456289	0.0186
LGEX(-1)	-0.066368	0.280944	-0.236232	0.8145
COR(-1)	1.960570	0.809904	2.420743	0.0202
POP	10.98021	4.593084	2.390597	0.0217
LOG(INV)	-2.963409	0.824881	-3.592531	0.0009
LOG(HMN)	2.964424	0.564011	5.255968	0.0000
R-squared	0.869447	Mean dependent var	15.04037	
Adjusted R-squared	0.846014	S.D. dependent var	0.985825	
S.E. of regression	0.386848	Akaike info criterion	1.092268	
Sum squared resid	5.836392	Schwarz criterion	1.407187	
Log likelihood	-17.66829	F-statistic	37.10416	
Durbin-Watson stat	0.992691	Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000	
Dependent Variable: INV Method: Least Squares Date: 11/24/11 Time: 22:13 Sample: 1999Q1 2010Q4 Included observations: 48				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	-28.31869	10.60268	-2.670900	0.0108
DEM	4.244978	1.650156	2.572470	0.0138
COR	5.166269	0.894466	5.775812	0.0000
SUR	-14.29230	7.622456	-1.875025	0.0679
POP	21.09397	4.419588	4.772836	0.0000
LOG(HMN)	1.319441	0.603026	2.188033	0.0344
LGEX	0.895356	0.260814	3.432931	0.0014
R-squared	0.639019	Mean dependent var	6.139188	
Adjusted R-squared	0.586192	S.D. dependent var	0.740268	
S.E. of regression	0.476199	Akaike info criterion	1.488074	
Sum squared resid	9.297367	Schwarz criterion	1.760957	
Log likelihood	-28.71378	F-statistic	12.09655	
Durbin-Watson stat	0.347858	Prob(F-statistic)	0.000000	

Dependent Variable: LGEX				
Method: Least Squares				
Date: 11/24/11 Time: 22:59				
Sample: 1999Q1 2010Q4				
Included observations: 48				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	3.863443	6.032546	0.640433	0.5255
LOG(HMN)	-0.160115	0.335373	-0.477424	0.6356
INV	0.249358	0.072637	3.432931	0.0014
DEM	1.774268	0.896653	1.978768	0.0546
COR	-0.772610	0.624149	-1.237862	0.2228
SUR	9.313101	3.931099	2.369083	0.0226
POP	-6.142697	2.746280	-2.236734	0.0308
R-squared	0.665897	Mean dependent var		2.888007
Adjusted R-squared	0.617003	S.D. dependent var		0.406073
S.E. of regression	0.251305	Akaike info criterion		0.209742
Sum squared resid	2.589332	Schwarz criterion		0.482626
Log likelihood	1.966181	F-statistic		13.61942
Durbin-Watson stat	1.014432	Prob(F-statistic)		0.000000

Dependent Variable: HMN				
Method: Least Squares				
Date: 11/25/11 Time: 23:18				
Sample: 1999Q1 2010Q4				
Included observations: 48				
Variable	Coefficient	Std. Error	t-Statistic	Prob.
C	218702.5	32042.88	6.825308	0.0000
DEM	2035.857	23993.62	0.084850	0.9328
LGEX	12027.98	5121.758	2.348409	0.0238
INV	-5221.844	2564.810	-2.035957	0.0483
POP	-264277.6	47811.78	-5.527458	0.0000
SUR	-269626.5	121396.4	-2.221041	0.0319
COR	69869.10	20695.63	3.376032	0.0016
R-squared	0.938734	Mean dependent var		58209.95
Adjusted R-squared	0.929768	S.D. dependent var		31185.34
S.E. of regression	8264.503	Akaike info criterion		21.01136
Sum squared resid	2.80E+09	Schwarz criterion		21.28425
Log likelihood	-497.2728	F-statistic		104.7024
Durbin-Watson stat	0.419371	Prob(F-statistic)		0.000000

**RESEARCH NOTE**  
**THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

by

Hiba Jameel, M. A.\*

**Abstract**

Karl Marx, in his studies of the world economics, viewed women's socioeconomics as an indicator of national economic health. He clearly stated that to know the nation's economic advancement, one should take a look at the status of women. Generally, nations seek to advance their economies. Developed economies result into happier citizens and more political power to the country. Moreover, the increase in investment and other economic activities leads to more revenues to the state and opportunities to the citizenry. To improve the socioeconomics of a country, focusing on one aspect or category of that economy and neglecting the other is not sufficient. In fact, efforts are likely to be lost or the results of these efforts are to be insignificant. Focusing on education and welfare of men and excluding women is likely to hinder efforts of citizenry advancement given women are the majority in population. Economic development in most countries of the world is a matter of public policy. Therefore, to achieve and benefit from economic development, governments should consider the role of women both as beneficiary and contributors of productive public policy. To shed light on this fact, we examine previous work done in this regard. It is important to develop a correlation between advancement of socioeconomics and the participation of women. First, we analyze the concept of economic development. Then we demonstrate previous works analyzing the significance of women's role in economic development. Furthermore, we take a tour around the world demonstrating studies, reports and analysis of the impact of women in their local economies in different nations. Empowerment of women to contribute in their society is often a collective action. It is mostly fostered by international institutions specialized in development such as the World Bank, United Nations and others. We examine the acknowledgment and the contribution of these institutes to empowering women to be active in their local society.

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\* Ms. Jameel is a student in the Department of International Relations at the University of Central Oklahoma.

### **Introduction: Economic Development:**

To understand the role of population and governments in improving the economy, it is important to analyze the concept of economic development. Basically, development implies advancement and improvement. Economic activities involve local, urban, and rural engagement in activities such as education and capacity building advancement, advancement in supply side including comparative advantage, demand side including purchase power, income, Gross National Product development, and industrial advancement (Koven and Lyons 2010). However, the concept is more diverse and complicated and has different implications among the international community and localities.

In his explanation of the relationship between development and freedom, Nobel Prize winner Sen Amartya argues that in order to analyze these relations, the definition of economic development should be specific and narrowed. He states that, at some times, economic development is identified by the growth of Gross National Product or GDP, or with the rise in personal income, or the development in industrialization, advancement in technology or identified with social modernization (Amartya 2000). Criticizing his work, Renee Prendergast argues that economic development is considered a broad concept. However, the dominant concentration is on the expansion of real income and economic growth as the main characteristics of effective development (Prendergast 2004). Knox et. al argue that defining economic development, due to the divergence of economic environments around the world, is extremely “problematic” (Knox, Agnew and McCarthy 2008, 23). To reach the most suitable definition of economic development, Knox et. al. analyzed the term by breaking the implication of its components and referring to the most dominant implication of the name. They argue that since the term “development” implies “trajectory improvement” and the term “economic” mostly means the access to resources, health, credit and decent jobs and better income, and sometimes the Gross National Product GDP (Knox, Agnew and McCarthy 2008). Therefore, economic development means improvement in the aspects above and reflection on the national macroeconomics. Moreover, they utilized the concept provided by the United Nations and highlighted the Millennium Development Goals to narrow down the concept of contemporary economic development. These goals can be summarized as:

“eradicating extreme hunger and poverty; achieve universal primary education; promote gender equality and empowerment of women; reduce child mortality; improve mental health; combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases; ensure environment sustainability; develop a global partnership for development” (Ibid.). Ranis and Fei defined economic development as the “transition process through which an underdeveloped economy hopes to move from condition stagnation to one of self-sustaining growth” (Ranis and Fei 1961, 533).

### **Role of Women in Economic Development**

Women are known as the half of the community. In fact, and as the statistics demonstrate, women are the majority. They are a large contributing population category to the community. Their role has been significant and noticeable since they entered the work force. With such population density, certainly, their contribution to the economics of a certain area is significant. Their impact on the economic development is likely to be large. Therefore, their underdevelopment and oppression is likely to impact the economic development. Moreover, the seriousness of the issue extends beyond the national borders. The issue is relatively international. This situation has motivated a significant amount of literature and has drawn the attention of a large number of social researchers, academics, economists and politicians. The literature to be visited below will shed light on the impact of women on the welfare and the economics of the world in general and to their communities with narrower focus. Issues from human trafficking, domestic abuse, gender oppression and discrimination to inclusion and participation in the community and the impact on economic development will be visited and analyzed. The goal of this discussion is to assess the significance of the participation of women in the community and their role in the economic and social development. In a report published by The Bureau of Census, Velkoff argues that women’s lack of access to education and the relatively high ratios of literacy among women significantly harms local economy (Velkoff 1998).

The significance of the role of women is recognized first by politicians. For instance, in his remarks on the Millennium Development Goals Summit 2010, President Barack Obama pointed out that one of the pillars of economic development is

empowering women and creating a new generation of women entrepreneurs. He states that if women--mothers and daughters--have equal access to opportunities, the whole population would step in the advance of the economy (Obama 2010). Entrepreneurship is a very important tool for economic development. It could lead to higher income, to job creation, and to a significant change in GDP. Minniti studied the correlation between economic development and the propensities of local female entrepreneurship and suggests that, although men are more prone to start business and some national cultures negatively influence the participation of women, the awareness and support of women's entrepreneurship behaviors and propensities has positive impact on the well-being of the society (Minniti 2010). A report on women's entrepreneurship activities by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor Agency confirms these findings. The report's key findings suggest that 187 million women worldwide operate and establish business and significantly contribute to the national GDP. Although women are less likely than men to start businesses, their contribution to economic development is significant. Moreover, economic development starts with need-based business. Women, more than men, are likely to start and operate necessity-based businesses because they are more aware about household or community needs. Therefore, at the early stage of development, the contribution of women is highly valued (Kelley, et al. 2010).

The significance of women's role in socioeconomic development is highly recognized internationally. Conferences and symposiums have been held especially to demonstrate this issue. For instance, the Annual Gender Symposium in Egypt is completely dedicated to demonstrate the most recent research and information about the issue. In 2010, up to seventy papers were presented only to demonstrate the role of women, their lives, labor, migration, and immigration, and the economic development in the African continent and other places in the world (Symposium 2010). Another conference dealt with a distinctive aspect of the economy; the informal economy--and also highlighted the significant role of women in the economic development. The conference title is *Rethinking Informalization in Labor Markets*, held in 2002 in Cornell University. The papers presented in the conference argued that the development of the formal economy

goes side by side with the development in the informal economy. The majority of labor in informal economy is women. Therefore, with greater development for women; both economies shall grow (Kudva and Lourdes 2002).

Momsen, in her book about gender and development, discussed the significance of women in economic development. She argues that gender prospect became central to the many United Nations' meetings and conferences on development including the Beijing Women's Conference. She examined the impact of women's empowerment and education on economic development, demonstrating a strong correlation. Moreover, she described the role of the United Nations and changes in development organizations attitudes, through gender mainstreaming and other considerations (Momsen 2004). Mehra examined the proposition that the programs dedicated to encourage women to participate in the economic development by provide the opportunities for them to invest reflected positively on their national economies (Mehra 1997).

Another piece of work demonstrating the significance of women's empowerment on economic development that it has been integrated in public policy and strategic development policy planning is by Naila Kabeer. She examined the issue worldwide. She argues that policy makers considered the radical role of developing women and educating them in their efforts of economic development. Kabeer demonstrated most of the aspects that link women to economic development, including gender equality, to economic growth and poverty eradication, approaches to poverty analysis and its gender dimensions, the geography of gender equality, gender development and human development outcomes and enhancing capabilities (Kabeer 2003). Horton, in her work, argues that women have been left out of economic development. However, evidence from labor force surveys in middle income developing countries implies that women involvement has been highly needed in these countries. She argues that this necessity makes women take white collar and managerial jobs (Horton 1999).

Mary Schooling, Elaine Lau and Gabriel Leung demonstrated a direct link between infant mortality and economic development. In their paper in the *Journal of Social Science and Medicine*, they explained that with economic development, access

to health care facilities and solutions is easier and faster. This implication is equally applicable to both men and women. Therefore, more economic development, especially for women, results in faster access to health treatment and decrease in infant mortality rates (Schooling, et al. 2010).

Daines et. al. shed light on the response of women to economic crises in their study on response to the economic crises of 1980s. The results of this study revealed that women did not submit to economic crises adjustments such as austerity. In fact, they protested, resisted, and acted upon their economically miserable life conditions and improved them. Moreover, related development agencies recognized the role of women as social and policy planners and community organizers at early stages of crises response. As for political role, their study concluded that women in political action “should become as integral part of the decision-making process--in governments, international institutions, and the private sector as well as in the house” (Daines and Seddon 1993, 6). Moreover, the authors, and based on the findings of their studies, argued that it is important to integrate women’s concerns in crises response plans ( Ibid.).

The significance of the role of women in the economics of developing countries is highlighted by Dao in his research in this area. Dao found from examining different sizes of samples that the indicator of poverty and non-poverty level in developing country is the “Logarithm of per capita purchasing power parity gross national income and the region in which it is located” (Dao 2009). Therefore, the linearity of development is dependent on per capita income, purchase power, and the geographic location. In such geographic location, Dao indicates, where the linearity depends on agriculture value added, the growth is highly dependent on the share of women’s participation in agriculture labor force (Dao 2009). He insists that wherever in the world, no matter if it is Central Asia or Europe, the development and the sustainable growth in their economies are dependent on women’s participation in the agriculture labor force.

Roy et. al., in their overview of economic development and women, acknowledge the significance of the socioeconomics of women and the overall economic development. They point out that many conferences have been held to deal with the relations of women to economic development. The results of these conferences

might be summarized as follows: women's development contributes to the eradication of poverty by empowering women to engage in the labor force and to better manage their finances. The development of women contributes to family health and healthcare as well as better family planning, which contributes to the development of the economy. They argue that women are "the most important agents of change" (Roy, Tisdell and Blomqvist 1999). Moreover, they argue that developing the socioeconomics of women is a significant factor to the sustainability of the economic development (Roy, Tisdell and Blomqvist 1999).

Roxanna Carrillo demonstrated concern about the violence against women and its contribution to the preexisting marginalization of women in decision making and their role in economic development. Carrillo criticized the lack of statistical work on the violence against women and the linkage between such practices and the obstacles to economic development. Violence degrades the dignity of women and leads to paralyzing their abilities to contribute to economic development which reflects on the overall development of the nation (Carrillo 1993).

Indian born Nobel prize winner Sen Amartya argues that there will be no development in an area without freedom. Freedom is not complete if all the aspects of the society (including women) are not free. In the third world, this freedom is near to non-existent (Amartya 2000). Agyeman et. al. agree with Amartya in their book *Just Sustainabilities*, in which they argue that a social environment that lacks freedom and justice to all its categories is not likely to host sustainable development (Agyeman, Bullard and Evans 2003).

### **Around the World**

To study the impact of women on local economic development, it is important to visit some areas in the world and observe development activities there. This author plans to study developing and developed countries and demonstrate their experience in economic development, and the role of women in such activities. Developed countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, western Europe, and Australia realized and acted upon this fact early. Other areas, such as India, Nepal, Bangladesh, the Middle East, Africa, eastern Europe, and Asia would need to benefit from previous experience of developed countries in this regard.

Starting with the United States, Seon Mi Kim argues that there is wide range of activities to engage women in economic development. American politicians are aware of the fact that women have a large impact on general economic development. In general, American women have equal access to the workforce and activities that once were thought to be exclusive to men, such as engineering and military. Moreover, there are many activities and programs to encourage the empowerment of women. However, Kim argues, the programs for women to engage them in economic development are not sufficient. Women still suffer from inequalities in the work place, and their income is still less than men's (Kim 2012).

In the United Kingdom, policy planners are aware of the crucial role women play in economic development within the United Kingdom and all over the world. British Minister of State for International Development Mr. Alan Duncan spoke openly about the contribution of women to the global economy and the programs he is willing to implement to expand the range of this role (Duncan 2012). He argues that any efforts of poverty reduction, free trade which is the engine to economic growth, developing health care, and providing safe drinking water should involve women. He stated that the British local and international aid helped 7000 women get jobs, start businesses and contribute to economic development. He highlighted some facts that make the participation of women crucial to achieve economic development. At first, women are energetic as workers, producers, entrepreneurs, and cross-border traders. They form 40 percent of the global workforce although they own only one percent of the world wealth and have only a 10 percent share of the global income (Ibid.). He argues that when women establish their own business, and gain access to market, which is one of the best British international investments in development, they reinvest this income to better their families and give them better health and education. Therefore, the United Kingdom's government realized and acted upon this fact locally. This action led to a complete empowerment of women so that they have become prime ministers and key policy makers. To extend these efforts, the United Kingdom developed international aid programs specifically to help women worldwide (Duncan 2012).

O'Toole and Macgarvey noticed and demonstrated women's participation in leadership roles in local economic development organization in small southwest Victoria towns in Australia. They investigated the process and the motive for this paradigm shift. They discovered the close link between the role of women in this town and the new significant political and economic development (O'Toole and Macgarvey 2003). Another work investigating the role of women in economic development is by Christine Hippert examining the Bolivian popular participation as a gendered process. She concluded by demonstrating that women are highly visible in the development process there (Hippert 2011).

Studying the third world, Handelman argues that one of the major obstacles to economic development in this part of the world is limiting the participation of women (Handelman 2003 ). He argues that women's role in economic activities is limited and dominated by male approval with no consistency with the actual needs (Handelman 2003). Charlton agrees with him in her book *Studying Women in the Third World* (Charlton 1984).

Moving to Africa, Mbayo, in his study of gender inequalities in Sierra Leone, found a strong linkage between economic development in the region and women's empowerment. He describes women's empowerment in the region as an "indispensable tool for advancing and enhancing development and the reduction in poverty levels of countries, especially developing ones like Sierra Leone" (Mbayo 2004).

In Asia, Mammen and Paxson examined how women's work status changes with economic development. They utilized a cross-country database and microdata from India and Thailand. They discovered several clearly emerging patterns: Women's labor force participation first declines and then rises with development; women move from work in family enterprises to work as paid employees; there is a decline of fertility; and the gender gap in education has narrowed. Mainly, they came across a fact that women's well being improves on average with development, both in the absolute and relative to men. In addition, the participation of women contributes to economic development in this region (Mammen and Paxson 2000). Handelman, in his book discussing the challenges of development in the third world, states that communities started to get interested in the role of women in development for two factors: " the emergence of gender-related

social science research, and growing recognition by policy planners that women play a distinct and important role in the modernization process” (Handelman 2003, 78).

The dark side of women’s lives in the Middle East is demonstrated here. Women in the Middle East pass through many hardships with regards to their lives as well as their participation in the society. Kassem sheds light on the role of women in the Middle East in their societies: the obstacles, the opportunities, the political participation, and the victories women in this region have achieved (Kassem 2012). Staying the Middle East, Doumato assesses the impact of globalization on women in this region. She examines trends within states and the whole region. Her study revealed mixed results: some results show that globalization enabled women to have more access to education and employment; other results show that globalization increased the oppression of women under ideologically conservative regimes viewing globalization and an introduction of foreign values as things women need to be protected from (Doumato and Posusney 2003). In their study of post-conflict economies in the Muslim world (especially Iraq, Afghanistan, and Palestine), Ismael et. al. argued that the role of women in these areas in reconstruction and economic development efforts is “undervalued” (Ismael, Ismael and Langille 2010 ). They argued that women denied participation in both rural and urban areas and in both formal and informal sectors. Moreover, although that there are international programs to engage women both as participants and beneficiaries of economic development, these efforts have been hardly effective due to social and political factors. In such areas, women are denied equal access to health care, education, and income (Ismael, Ismael and Langille 2010 ). Sevgi et. al. investigated the role of the empowerment of rural women and economic development in Turkey and the European Union. The linkages between women’s participation in their communities and the rates of economic development are relatively clear (Sevgi, et al. 2012).

Continuing the international tour, Turshen and Holcomb gathered a significant amount of literature examining the role and the development mechanisms of women in economic development. Their research showed a significant correlation between the empowerment and development of women and the advancement

and the improvement of the economy among the nations they studied (Turshen and Holcomb 1993).

Moving to Southeast Asia, the linkage of the development and education of women to the overall economic development is examined by number of social scientists and their results are likely in favor of women's participation. Moreover, they investigated the effects of international development programs on the education and development of women. In Nepal, a group of social scientists argued that educated women are more prone to deal more effectively with health and reproduction issues. Educated women are aware of the importance of child education. Therefore, a more educated and professional population is likely to emerge. Educated women are more aware of local and international issues and how to participate in them and offer assistance (Burchfield, et al. 2002). Huq and Moyeen, studying development programs in Bangladesh, confirm this argument. They, upon their findings, encourage international development programs to focus on women in this region (Asia) for the effectiveness of women's development on local as well as the international economy (Huq and Moyeen 2011). The relation tying women's development evoked serious attention by a powerful leader. In Nepal, in his statement at the International Day of Girls, President Barack Obama states that the country would not develop if the politics did not pay attention to improving the treatment of women and develop their education and rights, and their countries will be far from development (USAID, USAID Nepal 2012). In India, Rashmi Arora conducted a study using access to data concerning education and health as an indicator of women's inequality. The key finding of the study indicated that at the area of sub-national India, higher per capita income is accompanied with more tendencies towards gender equality (Arora 2012). Clearly, the per capita income level is one of the indicators of economic development. Therefore, the more equality women enjoy in a society, the more the society enjoys economic development.

We stop to examine the role of women in economic development in eastern Europe. Amy Lind argues that women in this region had a significant share of participation in development. However, and as a result of government's cutting development funding, women suffered economically. Moreover, there are still some biased conceptions and constraint in their way (Lind 1997).

In Puerto Rico, the efforts of women literally prevented a recession in the economy by starting businesses and creating jobs. Moreover, they started requesting loans from the Economic Development Bank of Puerto Rico EDB which boosted the island's economy noticeably (Development 2012)

Finally, Lee et. al. examined data collected from eight East Asian countries and 15 European Union countries over the period of 1980 to 2008 about the endogeneity among women's employment, fertility, and growth. The results of their study revealed significant correlation between women's participation in their local governments and the rates of economic development. (Lee, Lim and Hwang 2012).

### **The Role of International Institutions; WB, UN, USAID and Others**

Empowering women and engaging them in economic development is a collective action. It is a form of international cooperation hosted by formal institutions to propose and implement an action plan. The World Bank, the primary institution for international economic development, recognizes the significance of gender development. It specified a specialized program for gender studies. The World Bank was the first multinational Institution to appoint a Women in Development advisor. The World Bank started to integrate women's findings and studies in its strategic policies and assess decision making in development accordingly (World Bank 2010). The World Bank emphasizes the significance of the participation of women in the processes of economic development. Demonstrating this significance and asserting the participation of women themselves in their development, the World Bank offers governments' full assistance in making policy to enhance the future well being and prosperity of women (Bank 1995).

The role of women in economic development has been recognized worldwide. The United Nations devoted enormous efforts to raise awareness of the significance of this role and to implement these objectives and endorsed Program of Action for the Second Half of the United Nations Decade for Women 1976-85. The United Nations called for conferences and promoted the recommendations of these conferences and action plans to integrate women as both agents and beneficiaries of economic

development. U. N. policies are based on the principle of "United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace" (U. N. 1981). Moreover, the development of women is integrated in the Millennium Development Goals by 2015 hosted by the United Nations. These eight goals were agreed upon by 189 countries in 2000. The goal of helping countries below the international poverty line is gradually being met. The planners of these goals acknowledge that eliminating poverty and lack of education among women is essential, ranging from curing children's malnutrition to reaching further development goals (McConnell 2012). An international institution such as the United Nations Development Program, UNDP is actively involved in women's empowerment programs worldwide. This involvement emerges from the significance of role of women in the economic development. The UNDP coordinated national efforts to integrate women in programs of poverty reduction, democratic governance, crisis prevention and recovery, and environment and sustainable development. UNDP believes that women's role is as important as men's in decision making and public policy processes. Therefore UNDP is supporting women in the private sector, civil society, and social development (UNDP 2012).

The significance of the role of women in development is highly recognized by the United States government. The future of this role is discussed in a hearing before the Committee on Foreign Relations, United States Senate, and other sessions (States 1984). Moreover, the role of women in economic development is integrated in foreign policy issues in the United States' government. For instance, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, in her remarks about the second International Council on Women's Business Leadership meeting November 27, explained the aspects that make empowering women an asset to national economies (Babb 2012). Clinton argued that the council has a crucial role in analyzing and coming up with policy recommendation for governments to integrate women in the process of economic development (Babb 2012).

The United States Agency of International Development collected a series of reports on the performance of its development programs related to women and the impact it made (USAID 2003). In the International Monetary Fund data the emphasis is on women and economic development. The data from

IMF indicate that investing in women and women's empowerment is as the expression goes, "Smart economics" (Revenge and Shetty 2012). Recognizing this fact, USAID recently launched a campaign to eradicate the violence against women. USAID is aware that violence against women is the primary obstacle to the economic development because it paralyzes women. Violence exposes women to physical and mental harm. This activity lasted from November 25th to December 10, 2012. It is a campaign initiated by USAID in collaboration with the United States government and non-government organizations. The initiative 16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence is based on the fact that one in three women around the world will experience some kind of gender-based violence in her life time. Violence is an explicit violation of human rights and limits individual and societal development which entails an economic cost (USAID, 2012).

The belief in the role of women in economic development has become widely institutionalized. Organizations working towards universal economic development established programs exclusive for women to train them towards self-sufficiency and raise their awareness in their role in economic development. For instance, Women for Women International works with women in war-torn areas to train women for business skills and other skills to enable them to make a living (Women 2012). The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women is an institution powered by the United Nations and works upon many issues concerning women such as leadership, violence, and economic issues. UNIFEM recognize that women still lag far behind men in access to resources, land, and decent jobs. They argue that there is a large body of research that demonstrates a linkage between enhancing women's economic options and the progress in macroeconomics of the nation. This organization stresses that achieving gender equality is the road to economic development and the barriers women face should be removed for women to seize economic opportunities (UNIFEM 2011).

The International Relief and Development (IRD) organization acknowledges the enormous role of women in their contribution to development. The organization argues that peace, social welfare and economic development will not be achieved, even by the effort of this organization, without the large contribution of women (IRD 2012). The organization developed

programs such as WOMEN FIRST. This program started in Zambia and is planned to be applied worldwide. The program is based on partnership between public and private sectors to engage women in economic activities such as trade, export, import, and leadership. This program involves women's capacity and skills building. The program administration reported increase of sales by approximately \$30000 since the beginning.

Ester Boserup was attentive to the role of women in economic development and the inequality of allocation in both resources and efforts of non-profit organization and government to develop women. However, she argues, most of these efforts did not reach most women in need. Although there is a relative attention paid to the significance of women's role to develop the economy, application has not been sufficient (Boserup 1989).

### **Conclusion**

Women are equal partners in the society. Excluding them from participation is considered an achievement in terms of culture in some places of the world. However, this would damage the socioeconomics of these places. Research studies and reports assert the fact that there is a significant correlation between the empowerment of women and economic development. The participation of women in their economies contributed significantly to the increase of welfare of their communities. Each category of economic development such as increase in GDP and income and the modernity of communities witnessed the relative participation of woman when improving. In contrast, it is obvious that the lack of development in some places of the world went hand in hand with strict oppression of women such as areas in the Middle East and eastern Europe. Community leadership, upon these facts, should take actions if they want to see growth in their communities. Policy makers, to achieve complete economic development, should give sufficient attention to integrate women both as beneficiary and participant in the development process. Although international organizations have been devoting enormous efforts and resources to achieve this goal and assist government to do so, their lack of access to the most needy categories sometimes gets in the way.

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## BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

by

Helen Chukwuma, Ph.D.\*

*Constructing the Literary Self: Intersections of Race and Gender in Twentieth-Century Literature.* Ed. Patsy J. Daniels. Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars, 2013. ISBN 13: 978-1-4438-4530-4. ISBN 10: 1-4438-4530-2 Pp. xvi + 253. \$75.99.

It is necessary to state directly that the two constructs of Race and Gender are fast losing their parametric identities as effectual means of delineating humanity. Color pigmentation alone does not define you solely as Nazi Germany showed in the different dimension they showed on race dynamics by excluding Jews from the Aryan race. The word Aryan itself in its linguistic base has an Indian component. Race, as it stands today, is fast becoming a melting pot of mixtures and nomenclatures. It is near futile to establish a pure race because of the hybridity occasioned by the movement of peoples, inter-marriages, and relationships which underlie globalization. Indeed this reality has driven some nations and peoples to practice ethnic cleansing to effect racial purity.

Gender now transcends the dual masculine and feminine and is not defined by obvious anatomical distinctions of being male and female. There is trans-gender but most importantly is the distinction a person gives to himself or herself according to his or her sexuality, gay or straight. All these point to the enormous complexity of Identity in the modern world. All these play out in power structures and being.

Identity is the issue that underlies the social constructs of Race and Gender. Identity or belongingness of its very nature poses the notion of otherness or alterity. In the center of these is power and control, superiority. What shapes one's identity, race, or gender, and is there room for upward mobility in these constructs? Writers in this text discuss the issues of race and gender as they affect characters in literary works. They show how both male and female characters fight and navigate the system in their bid to achieve identity and acceptance. Barriers as slavery and

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\* Helen Chukwuma is Professor of English at Jackson State University.

femaleness have to be circumscribed. Most of the characters analyzed show their efforts at establishing an identity and the resultant effects.

Cambridge in the eponymous novel, an ex-slave, educated and skilled in England, came to the Caribbean as an overseer in a farm owned by an Englishwoman. Is Cambridge accepted in his true worth or is he no more than a black ex-slave who has to live and die with his stigmatized identity? The question remains what value or worth is attributed to blacks outside labor? Slavery and labor and low social status attendant on their color are factors that continue to define them today. Color is the key and color determines race.

Identity is constructed more from difference than similarity. Virginia Woolf in her novel treated here, *To the Lighthouse* shows how the women characters' search for identity and permanence ended severally. The house remains the battleground of identity. Mrs. Ramsey tries to rid herself of ephemerality attendant on her subscribed life of wife and mother by focusing on the lighthouse in her search for permanence. The other female characters, such as Lily Briscoe, chooses to identify herself differently in the feministic bent of the author Woolf. She embraces her life as a painter and refuses to get married. She holds her identity as a woman, an artist, and a painter. She succeeds in realizing herself despite the subsuming constructs of patriarchy. Her lessons remains: Women can achieve an identity outside the restrictions of gender.

The book's treatment of minority and gay issues show how characters strive to maneuver constraints and establish themselves. The treatment of Han Ong's *Fixer Chao* shows how national minorities as Asian Americans can work toward mainstream identity and acceptance through enterprise and wealth acquisition. The characters have to combat not only homosexuality but the sexuality stereotyping of queer Asian males as essentially feminine. Again here, the characters have to work through the stigma of American cosmopolitan culture and its stereotyping. The same stereotyping tendency underlies the article on *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Tom Robinson suffers racial injustice in the southern United States for his identity based on his color and on nothing else.

Of interest is how the performing media have tried to re-structure the Shakespearian character of Othello the Moor to navigate race, gender and sexuality. The various constructs of Othello as white and even as lesbian is to give a modern interpretation of the character, re- presenting the stereotype of a robust macho black general of an army married to a lily-white woman to a lesbian or a white man which are all designed to soften the brash threatening masculinity of the black male in a racially conscious society. This is a typical example of paradigm shift to suit our sensibilities.

The text *Constructing the Literary Self: Intersections of Race and Gender in Twentieth Century Literature*, interrogates thorny issues that still surface in the lives and times of modern man in the world, issues of difference and identity. The text gives credence to the true meaning of literature, which is that it humanizes the world, sharpens our sensibilities, and presents a mirror to our world. The text tries to negotiate new meanings to identities as defined by racism and gender. The movement is from self to community to race and nation. Does one's identity depend on the pigmentation of one's skin, or one's gender or one's nationality or one's sexual orientation? All these are valid questions but the real problem is their interpretation and how this is used to oppress and violate people's humanity. The text speaks to the critical conscience of the reader in a real world and time and so transcends mere scholastic enterprise.

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