Research Project Title: Intersectionality of race and gender in higher education: the plight of the African-American woman at a predominantly white institution (PWI).

Student Presenter: Candace Cooper

Faculty Mentor: Carla Curtis

Faculty Mentor Department: Social Work

Research Abstract: According to the National Center for Education Statistics, African-American women are the most educated group in the United States of America. During the academic year of 2013-2014, African-American women earned 66 percent of associate degrees, 64 percent of bachelor’s degrees, 70 percent of master’s degrees and 64 percent of doctoral degrees. In today’s society, African-American students have a different collegiate experience than their counterparts due to the basis of race and gender. Moses (1989) eloquently states, “African-American women have a unique experience of being two minorities: both black and female and because of this have been treated in a peripheral manner by higher education.” The purpose of this study was to conduct a qualitative study focusing on the intersectionality of race and gender in higher education and how these domains may impact the academic successes of African-American women at Predominantly White Institutions or PWIs like The Ohio State University. Measurement was through a primary data collection with usage of audio recorders during in person interviews. A Qualtrics survey was administered during the in-person interviews that lasted an hour long. The survey examined social supports, campus climate and sense of belonging. Data was transcribed verbatim upon the collection of auditory data recording and themes were developed. Questions constructed for the interview included assessment of barriers that these supports may present and the advantage of these supports will be included. Additional questions were focused on lived experience of each participant that impact their collegiate career, their perspective of support of African-American women at the university level and their experience academically at a PWI. Results show that African-American women are constantly reminded that they are a part of two minority groups Black and female. This alone can create an environment where women feel the need to work twice as hard to receive the resources, benefits and support like their counterparts receive at the university level.
Research Project Title: The role of 6-8th grade English and Language Arts curriculum in transmitting messages about mental health

Student Presenter: Sarah Leonard

Faculty Mentor: Joseph Guada

Faculty Mentor Department: Social Work

Research Abstract: Mental illness is a serious issue facing numerous children in the U.S. If not treated early, childhood mental illness can lead to negative outcomes which are painful for the child, family, and community. Research shows that both exposure to stigmatizing messages and a lack of information about mental health prevent individuals from seeking needed treatment and that such messages might be present in the school setting where children spend the majority of their time. The following study explores the presence of mental health-related messages in 6-8th grade English and Language Arts (ELA) curriculum materials that can have an impact on help-seeking behaviors among students. This mixed-methods exploratory study aims to determine whether middle school ELA classes could be utilized to improve mental health literacy and outcomes in young people. The first part of the study includes a content analysis of ELA curriculum materials, with a focus on mental health-related themes and messages. The second part of the study involves collecting quantitative data via a survey of 6-8th grade ELA teachers to assess their knowledge about and attitudes toward mental illness as well as their experiences with mental health issues among students. ELA curriculum materials were expected to include stigmatizing messages about mental health, but a preliminary content analysis of two books and one short story suggests that they can also provide students with information that actually might prompt help-seeking behaviors. Preliminary analyses of survey results from 59 6-8th grade ELA teachers support this finding. Several survey participants report that students have been prompted to seek help for mental health concerns based on topics presented in curriculum materials. Although data collection and analysis are ongoing, these preliminary results offer the hope that children are receiving positive messages regarding mental health issues from their ELA classes that can prompt help-seeking behaviors in the event that there is a need for treatment.
Research Project Title: Assessment of test anxiety on the OSU Lima Campus: prevalence, intensity, and coping methods

Student Presenter: Andrea Morales

Faculty Mentor: Joseph Green

Faculty Mentor Department: Psychology

Research Abstract: Previous research has suggested that a large percentage of students are affected by test anxiety yet don’t know how to successfully cope with it (Sung, Chao, & Tseng, 2016). In an attempt to better understand test anxiety within a college sample, we surveyed over 200 undergraduate students at The Ohio State University at Lima. Students completed a variety of questionnaires including the GAD-7, the Cognitive Test Anxiety Scale, and the Westside Test Anxiety Scale, and they granted us permission to obtain their GPA, SAT/ACT, and declared major from university records. Students also reported, in narrative form, what methods they typically use to cope with test anxiety. Our goal is to better understand the frequency and severity of test anxiety symptoms among students on our campus and whether the intensity of test anxiety differs by major, subject matter, gender, or academic ability. We will tally and rank order students’ preferred method of coping with test anxiety. We will also conduct correlations between our scales. Our results are forthcoming. We believe that our results will be helpful not only to students, but also campus counselors, administrations, faculty and staff that work with students struggling with test anxiety.

Sung, Y., Chao, T., & Tseng, F. (2016). Reexamining the relationship between test anxiety and learning achievement: An individual-differences perspective.

Contemporary Educational Psychology, 46, 241-252.

doi:10.1016/j.cedpsych.2016.07.001
When people think about education as a factor of society they most often think of the learning that occurs in its simplest forms. A great deal of people fail to notice the role that education plays in developing and preserving inequality. In modern day society, higher education is a vital factor in social mobility and its effects are everlasting for generations to come. In an attempt to provide the equal opportunity of a higher education to all, institutions such as The Ohio State University have granted Pell-Grant recipients tuition subsidies. These efforts are not only restricted to micro-levels, but are equivocal at the macro-level as well. An active implementation was noted in the 2017 academic year, adhering to federal regulations, student attendance must be confirmed before issuing refunds for Title IV recipients. Different subsets of society have differing perceptions of who should be paying the costs of college. There are various factors (gender, age, SES) that explain the varying responses of which education does not seem to play a pivotal role, but why? To bring light to American attitudes regarding the funding of higher education I will be reviewing telephone responses from a survey called the Constructing the Family Survey, a national survey of approximately 800 U.S adults that was fielded in 2015. The data were collected through the Indiana Center for Survey Research. Among these surveys not only am I going to discover who the American public believe should be paying for the cost of higher education, but also the underlying reasoning for their opinions on this issue. Early results indicate that many individuals believe students should pay the cost of college because graduating high school serves as a rite of passage into adulthood. Alternative responses relating to parents, local/state/federal government are analyzed as well and will be presented at the 2018 Denman Research Forum. These responses will provide the public with a chance for their voice to be heard, which is especially important as it has been missing for quite some time on this important social issue.
Research Project Title: The impact of publishing Ohio teachers’ value-added scores

Student Presenter: Eleni Packis

Faculty Mentor: Stéphane Lavertu

Faculty Mentor Department: Public Affairs

Research Abstract: “Value added” is a teacher evaluation technique that has garnered quite a bit of publicity and controversy. It refers to the amount of “value” that a teacher provides as measured by gains in their students’ test scores. Research indicates that students whose teachers have high value-added scores enjoy a number of benefits later in life, including higher earnings. However, research also indicates that effective teachers (as measured by value-added) are more likely to leave low-performing schools in favor of higher-performing schools, while less effective teachers are more likely to stay in low-performing schools or leave the school system or profession altogether.

This project examines such dynamics among teachers in Ohio. Specifically, it investigates the lasting effects from the Cleveland Plain Dealer’s unexpected publication of 4,200 Ohio teachers’ value-added scores in June of 2013. It uses data from 2008-2016 from the Ohio Department of Education on all Ohio teachers’ education levels, salaries, specific job position and location within their school district, and school- and district-level effectiveness measures. Thus, these data enable me to follow these teachers, schools, and buildings that had individual teachers’ value-added scores published by The Plain Dealer (designated as “treatment” groups in my study) over time, to analyze differences in outcomes for teachers, schools, and districts based upon their value-added scores, and to estimate how publishing teachers’ scores affected those groups involved.

Using a difference-in-differences statistical model, my results suggest that treatment schools had a statistically significant higher amount of turnover since 2010 i.e., a higher number of teachers leaving or being fired from that school since 2010 than schools that did not have individual teachers’ value-added scores published. Additionally, I found higher average school-level achievement gains in test scores among schools that participated in the value-added teacher evaluation program. These findings suggest that buildings that participated in this study may have taken action to remove teachers receiving low value-added scores, and through doing so, may have improved their average student performance. This carries interesting implications for the usage of value-added or other teacher evaluation measures in the future.
Research Project Title: The Impact of school district fiscal stress labels on district and charter school enrollments

Student Presenter: Sarah Souders

Faculty Mentor: Stéphane Lavertu

Faculty Mentor Department: Glenn College of Public Affairs

Research Abstract: School choice policies require that parents make informed decisions about where to enroll their children. If parents select schools that are inferior to those their children otherwise would have attended, then these policies could actually weaken U.S. public education. Whether information about school district finances affects the school's parents choose is unknown, however. This study examines one publicly disseminated piece of financial information—whether school districts are in financial distress—and estimates its impact on student enrollment in charter schools located within their district’s bounds between 2001-2012.

The shock that comes from fiscal stress label receipt makes it likely that it will impact decision-making. Unlike academic quality indicators, financial information is rarely picked up by the news. It is often only after receipt of a fiscal stress label that budget deficits are made known, as state law requires the Auditor of State to announce label receipt.

This research extends upon Thompson’s 2016 paper, which is the first to examine the impact of fiscal labels on school districts. Thompson finds that unlabeled districts have better test scores, finances, and fewer economically disadvantaged students than labeled districts. Once districts receive a label they reduce capital expenditures by $850 per pupil and increase local tax revenues by nearly $500 per pupil, on average. Thompson also finds that, following label receipt, district enrollments decrease by 5% and the number of schools and teachers also decrease. I extend this work by identifying where students go.

I examine whether fiscal stress labels lead to a decline in district enrollments because students are entering charter schools by comparing changes in charter enrollments between districts that did and did not receive a label. This difference-in-differences analysis determines changes in charter and district enrollments and controls for district’s student-teacher ratios and performance index scores, which research shows affect parental decision-making. The results indicate that labeled districts experience enrollment declines of 6% in the next year, which is slightly higher than Thompson’s estimate, while charter schools in labeled districts experience enrollment increases of 53.8%, on average, holding all else equal. Both results are statistically significant at the 5% level.
Research Project Title: The future of programming jobs: Changing realities and stagnant perspectives

Student Presenter: Andrea Stanic

Faculty Mentor: Nancy Ettlinger

Faculty Mentor Department: Geography

Research Abstract: Across the United States, there has been a massive expansion of coding boot camps. This development is tied to the emphasis in K-12 schools and universities on teaching students coding skills to prepare students for jobs. Academicians debate the sustainability of programming and related jobs. Some argue that the demand for programmers will meet the growing number of coders, while others argue that coding jobs in the United States will be threatened by outsourcing, automation, and the precarious, less-than-full-time nature of these jobs. I will evaluate this debate and also examine programmers-in-training’s in/familiarity with potential problems of the jobs for which they are preparing, how they view their future job prospects, and the reasoning behind their beliefs in their job prospects. I will compile data from reports on programming jobs and their employment projections. Additionally, I will interview computer science students at The Ohio State University, Youngstown State University, and Illinois Institute of Technology. I plan to submit a proposal to the IRB by end of the first week in February. Jobs in information technology are predicted to decline considerably in the United States. Automation in the form of artificial intelligence is already cutting programming jobs abroad in India, where US firms have been outsourcing and offshoring programming jobs since 1990. However, most Americans, including programmers, do not see their jobs at risk of automation. Although jobs in information technology are predicted to decline, student programmers and computer science students more generally are confident about their future employment, and moreover are unaware of ongoing debates. Their confidence stems from conventional notions that only blue-collar jobs are at risk due to automation, outsourcing, and flexibilization of jobs. The disconnect between changing realities and perceptions of the future of programming-related jobs can be explained by neoliberal norms that guide students to pursue skills deemed valuable in society while universities lack education about industrial change in the context of processes occurring in the global economy. Students are focused on increasing their human capital without attention to the changing context of the jobs for which they train.
Research Project Title: Affects of manipulation of perceptual features on children's ability to understand fraction concepts

Student Presenter: Madison Ramirez

Faculty Mentor: Vladimir Sloutsky

Faculty Mentor Department: Psychology

Research Abstract: The formation of a strong foundation in early math education can enable a child to develop a deeper understanding of math in their future academic endeavors. Complex math concepts (e.g., fractions) are particularly challenging for elementary-age children to grasp (Bailey et al., 2012; Department of Education, 1997). In the current study, we explored children’s ability to learn and generalize difficult fraction concepts through an abstraction task in the face of varying perceptual information (as encountered in the real world). We presented four-to six-year-old children with a computer task that displayed exemplars of novel fractions that progressed from perceptually impoverished to perceptually rich (concreteness fading; per Fyfe et al., 2014). Through the use of a pre- and post-test design, the present study examined whether children could learn and generalize a novel fraction concepts following training (pre- to post-test gains). Data show that children could learn a novel fraction concept through this concreteness training in an abstraction task. However, with such a short training, the results did not indicate that children were able to do this for novel (non-taught) fractions, nor were pre- to post-test gains on a more traditional measure of fraction knowledge observed. A follow-up experiment explored the mechanism behind children’s success in the original abstraction task. Pilot data suggest their use of a “whole number strategy,” such that they succeeded at identifying a new fraction if they could successfully identify its numerator. These findings have implications for curriculum development and teacher training.
Research Project Title: Evaluation of the Vice President's conversation on the future of Extension

Student Presenter: Mariah Stollar

Faculty Mentor: Greg Davis

Faculty Mentor Department: OSU Extension

Research Abstract: The purpose of this research project was to better understand perceptions surrounding the outcomes of the VP Conversation. Results of this project could inform future steps of the VP Conversation or similar efforts.

Four OSU Extension Administrative Cabinet members and four VP Conversation Steering Committee members were identified and interviewed by the lead investigator in person or via phone. Administrative Cabinet members were selected for this project because of their state level orientation. The Steering Committee members were selected because of their involvement in the project planning and implementation; and their perceived ability to see the project’s impact on county work.

Overall, participants saw value in the VP Conversation and the study outputs generated. A shift in the organization’s thinking toward the future, rather than reacting to crises, was observed. However, several issues were identified. Discussion and utilization of knowledge gained from the VP Conversation was observed to be minimal. Confusion surrounding the concepts of futuring and visioning were still believed to exist within the organization. Lack of application of key project concepts in daily work and fear of change to organizational structure were also observed.

OSU Extension should place a greater emphasis on educational efforts regarding the VP Conversation and use of the resources that it produced. It may also be beneficial to readdress the VP Conversation. Cabinet members and administrators of OSU Extension may need to brainstorm ways to revitalize the concepts and ideas surrounding the VP Conversation, possibly by developing new curriculum and programs. It may also be beneficial to continue to educate how this program could directly benefit participants, and how to effectively integrate its key concepts into day-to-day work.
Research Project Title: Past, present, future: developing kinesthetic teaching methodology and choreographing experience

Student Presenter: Anthony Milian

Faculty Mentor: Ann Sofie Clemmensen

Faculty Mentor Department: Dance

Research Abstract: A dancer’s body is the instrument through which a dance is created. I am researching the process of developing a teaching methodology centered around finding the necessary physical skills needed to successfully embody the core aesthetic qualities found in my choreographic work. It is widely understood in the field of dance that the stronger and more flexible a dancer’s body is, the more capable it is of a wide range of movement. The central question in my research is: what specific skill-sets and/or physical qualities does a dancer need to successfully engage in my choreographic process and perform my work with confidence? I am working to cultivate a specific teaching methodology intended to enhance my choreographic aesthetic, resulting in a choreographic work presented in Spring 2018. I have been able to develop my teaching methodology through studio practice, and practical, in-person dialog with professional movement educators during last summer’s study abroad opportunities in Europe, including Dance Denmark and The Dance Italia Program, in Lucca, Italy. My methodology looks specifically at the integration of a multi-unit torso by examining the use of pelvis and scapula; pursuing specificity in spinal articulation through the usage of isolated shoulder and pelvic movements. The spine is integral in movement because it holds the main infrastructure of the body. All movement in the body is controlled by the brain, then sent through the spinal cord via neurotransmitters into the muscles. In my choreographic aesthetic and teaching methodology, my goal is to focus on the movement pathways traveling throughout the spine. I am looking to accentuate this movement pathway from the brain, to the limbs, and provide a visual tracking of this physicality. By giving my dancers the liberty to embellish movements and use an explorative process, they are able to find what suits their own bodies most effectively. I am looking to find how my dancers can personally embody, physicalize, and develop the choreography to further demonstrate the idea of a highly kinetic mobile spine.
Research Project Title: Factors influencing preservice teachers’ decision to major in agriscience education

Student Presenter: Sarah Landis

Faculty Mentor: Susie Whittington

Faculty Mentor Department: Agricultural Communication, Education and Leadership

Research Abstract: The purpose of the study was to acquire information that could assist the Department of Agricultural Communication, Education, and Leadership in developing materials and targeting audiences to assist in addressing the shortage of agricultural science teachers across Ohio. The objective was to describe factors influencing students to choose Agriscience Education as a major in college. In this study, a census (N = 19) of the students participating in the 2017 Preservice Teacher Professional Block Program at The Ohio State University completed a questionnaire describing factors influencing their decision to choose Agriscience Education as a college major. The research questionnaire was distributed to all students with 100% participation. The questionnaire was comprised of a 5-point Likert scale, from strongly disagree to strongly agree, measuring factors such as desire to work with students, influence from parents, past agricultural teachers, friends, and their own experiences in agricultural organizations such as FFA and 4-H. From the data, the top factors influencing students to enter the major included: their experience with traditional agricultural student organizations (i.e. 4-H, FFA), the opportunity to teach students, the opportunity to educate the public about agriculture, and the chance to teach a community about many aspects of agriculture. Conclusions from the data included putting emphasis on FFA events and other agricultural related organizations’ events that encourage members to use their strengths in scenarios dealing with educating the public. Specifically, educating the public about agriculturally-related concepts was important. Implications include encouraging students to be involved with events, so that more students may be interested in entering the agricultural education program and therefore, becoming agricultural science educators.
Research Abstract: Session notes, also called Client Report Forms (CRFs), are utilized in writing center reflective practice and administrative record-keeping. CRFs are completed by writing tutors after each session they conduct, and typically include information about the content of the session. Although session notes are common, research and training suggestions are extremely limited; the most prominent scholarship focuses on external and institutional uses of the forms (Pemberton, 1995; Cogie, 1998). This study aims to reimagine session notes as primary documents for internal use—in other words, as a reflection of the inter-workings of a writing center that can serve as an assessment tool. I first identified discrepancies between the conceptual and practical uses of session notes and addressed this gap through the design and implementation of a center-wide training module. CRF data (n=3,000) was collected from an analytics and scheduling software (WCOnline) and stripped of identifying markers before being coded according to the normed rubric. I analyzed our center’s completed CRFs using a hand-coding method of discourse analysis in which a rubric for linguistic assessment and coding was created. Variables of interest included keywords and phrases that indicate descriptive and prescriptive language, as well as key terms related to training, such as specific tutoring methods. It was found that the usage and completion of session notes within the OSU Writing Center varies by consultant, despite standardized trainings. Much of the data presents statistical significance of usage discrepancies between consultant identity categories. For instance, when looking at education rank and usage of prescriptive language among consultants of the same experience and training level, CRFs from undergraduate consultants include higher levels of prescription than those forms completed by their graduate student counterparts. In short, this study focuses on session notes as a site of occupational data uniquely capable of fulfilling many functional and administrative goals within writing centers. The study offers deeper insight into the practical usage of a largely theoretical part of the field; by tracing local impact of this assessment onto our writing center’s tutoring practices, we can facilitate reflection around the tutoring process and understand how tutors understand their work.