



# NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

School of Education and Social Policy

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Senior Thesis Honors Abstracts

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2007-2008 Senior Thesis Honors Program

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*Learning and Organizational Change*

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*Learning and Organizational Change*

I am the first & so can you:

Effects of campus racial climate on second-generation Latino undergraduate students

**CLAIRE RYAN**

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The Staying Power of Green:

Environmental Education and its Ability to Change the Long Term Attitudes and Actions of Students

**KRISTEN BRIDGEMAN**

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**Teacher Disposition and No Child Left Behind**

A study examining the correlations between teacher beliefs, practices and values, and opinions in regards to an increased emphasis on standardized testing

Teacher disposition - the beliefs, values and personality traits that guide teachers- is a key component of teacher education. Research shows that a stronger and more defined professional disposition is an important factor in the success of teachers' interactions with their students (Wasicsko 2005). A self-report survey was used to measure a sample of Illinois public school teachers' professional dispositions and their opinions towards the standardized testing component of No Child Left Behind (NCLB). This study expected to find that teachers with stronger dispositions were less likely to be negatively affected by increased standardized testing of students. However, it was found that the majority of the teachers felt negatively about NCLB regardless of their dispositions.

**MEGAN CHIOU**

Learning and Organizational Change

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**Maintaining the Best:  
The Sustainability of Service Learning Programs in Chicago Public Schools**

Service learning is a teaching strategy that fuses community service, instruction, and reflection. These programs have the capacity to heighten civic awareness and engagement among youth. However, the success of service learning programs relies on their sustainability. Thus, this study examines what contributes to the sustainability of 20 exemplary service learning programs in Chicago Public Schools (CPS). Interviews were conducted with 27 service learning coaches, service learning teachers, and community partners. The collected data were organized into eight categories: administration involvement and support, climate, community collaboration, curricular integration, faculty development and involvement, program development and management, student participation and leadership, and institutionalization. The data revealed that the retention of the key service learning faculty and staff was crucial to the sustainability of the service learning programs. Such a singular approach to sustainability illustrated the lack of institutionalization of service learning in Chicago Public Schools.

## **MELISSA GLICK**

Human Development and Psychological Services

*Advisor*        *Seon-Young Lee, Ph.D.*  
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### **Does Project EXCITE, Excite? The Effects of an Academic Enrichment Program on Minority Students' Academic Self-Perceptions**

Currently, a large academic achievement gap exists between minority and non-minority students. In this study I investigated how gifted programs designed for academically talented minority students affect participants' academic self-concepts, motivation for learning and racial identity. Specifically, I evaluated Project EXCITE, an academic enrichment program designed for academically talented minority students and associated with Northwestern University's Center for Talent Development. I conducted 26 interviews and a survey on 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade participants. While the surveys revealed no significant change in academic self-concept over the 8-week session, responses showed that program participants, in general, had high self-concepts. The interviews suggested that the program positively impacted the students' academic self-concepts and their motivation for learning. Participants reported enjoying the camaraderie established among Project EXCITE students and acknowledged their fellow participants' academic dedication.

**JANET ROCHA**

Learning and Organizational Change

*Advisor Carol D. Lee, PhD  
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**I am the first & so can you:  
Effects of campus racial climate on second-generation Latino undergraduate students**

This study investigates how second generation Latino students who are the first in their families to attend college negotiate challenges of higher education. I hypothesized that existing university systems are not sufficient to fully support this underrepresented group. I further hypothesized that students' perceptions about campus climate reflect the problems in programs offered to support them. This group who are minorities in terms of both ethnicity and class has a harder time adjusting to college life than majority students from more affluent backgrounds. I interviewed eight second generation Mexican-American students who are the first to attend college. Thirty-four Latino undergraduates completed an on-line survey. Interview data indicated a range of social, personal-emotional, and academic adjustments faced by students as well as challenges with institutional attachment and family commitments. Findings also revealed a mixed pattern in use and perception of available university resources. Survey results reinforced the interview findings; perceived supports significantly predicted the types of college adjustment experienced. Results from the survey also indicated that perceived faculty support predicted overall college adjustment and academic and social adjustment. The study can help universities identify these students' specific needs and design effective supports for them.

**CLAIRE RYAN**  
Social Policy

*Advisor Douglas L. Medin, PhD  
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**The Staying Power of Green:  
Environmental Education and its Ability to Change the Long Term Attitudes and  
Actions of Students**

Environmental education programs are one avenue through which to create students who are committed to a sustainable future in the long-term. This study addresses how one particular environmental education program designed for urban youth influences the environmental attitudes of the participating students. Using a cross-sectional research design, surveys and interviews were conducted with both current and past participants of the College First environmental education program at the Chicago Botanic Garden in order to understand how the program influences its students' environmental attitudes and actions in the long term. First, surveys and interviews were conducted with 10 current and 7 past participants of College First ranging in age from 16 to 23 to determine their commitment to environmental protection. Then, survey responses of College First students were compared to the responses of 34 Northwestern undergraduates with no experience in environmental education to assess differences in ecological attitudes and actions between the two groups. By taking a closer look at one EE program, this study attempted to help determine how best to design a program to fulfill the goals of environmental education and effectively change perceptions in the long term.

**PRIYA FIELDING-SINGH**

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**Multicultural Policies in Practice:  
An Exploration of a British Academy's Religious Education Curriculum**

Among the educational policies directed at fostering social cohesion in England, policies regarding the role and purpose of compulsory Religious Education for all British pupils have long been a topic of scholarly debate. This study examined the process by which a British Academy designed and enacted a Religious Education curriculum and the role of the surrounding community, local government, and school ethos in that procedure. Given the lack of empirical work on current school practices due to frequent changes in national legislation and expectations for schools over the last fifty years, this case study of a British Academy's Religious Education program filled a gap in research on present-day programs. Through textual research, interviews with students and staff, and classroom observations, this research aimed to understand the political and cultural context within which the curriculum was conceived, how the curriculum was translated in the classroom, and the impact of its teachings on students. On-site research was performed at Mossbourne Community Academy, one of the forty-seven co-educational secondary schools created in London since 2000. Data was analyzed qualitatively using a coding scheme developed from themes found in Religious Education literature as well as grounded theory. Analysis confirmed schools' freedom and lack of accountability in program development as Mossbourne conceived and implemented its curriculum independent of government or community oversight. This study concluded that there was a strong relationship between the curriculum's design, delivery, and effect on students and the school's ethos. Mossbourne's ethos, which enforced strict behavior management, discipline, and accountability, ensured student participation and competency in the course.