

Bush Faculty Development Grant Report
Dr. Feinstein
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Summary:

This project involved two secondary education majors and one education faculty in research focused on Bronfenbrenner's environmental theory as it pertains to adolescent development and Native American culture in the following areas: a.) microsystem (the environment in which the adolescent lives and actively participates), b.) mesosystem (connections between the experiences in the microsystem), c.) exosystem (social settings that the adolescent is not directly involved in, but that influence them), d.) macrosystem (the culture), and e.) chronosystem (sociohistorical events over a life span). We met together several times to develop our research design and then the students conducted a literature review independently.

Both students were able to investigate, through numerous research journal articles, books, and Internet resources the following topics: at-risk and resiliency theories and Bronfenbrenner's environmental theory. Once the students had researched the topic we began to develop interview questions. A basic framework of questions was developed by Dr. Feinstein using a literature review of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Subsystems, the Search Institutes Risk and Resiliency Theory, and The Circle of Courage. The questions were then refined by the two undergraduates. Dr. Feinstein and the undergraduates met frequently to review questions and prepare for the student interviews.

Interviews were tape recorded and field notes were taken. Collaboratively and independently the researchers identified themes and patterns from the interviews. They chose significant quotes from their interviews with the students to support the patterns they found. Due to the emergent nature of qualitative research it was decided to send a questionnaire to the junior and senior high school students on the reservation. Two teachers at the school distributed and collected 53 surveys. Data from the survey was tabulated and presented in percentage form.

This fall, the team presented the results of the research at the Education Department Symposium, please find the program attached. In addition, an article for possible publication in the American Secondary Education Journal is being written, please find a draft attached.

Overall Goals of Bush Faculty Development Grant

The purpose of this project was for students to research a topic related to secondary education, and in particular resiliency in Native American youth. This project was a meaningful way for students to engage in research. It was their first experience at qualitative research and they stated it set the groundwork for action research in their future classrooms.

There is a need in education to not only identify at-risk youth, but to find ways to encourage adolescent resiliency. Hopefully, strategies can be adopted to prevent problems from occurring in the first place. This research project offered the opportunity for students and professor to explore and identify strategies to support resiliency factors. Not only is this best practice, but our accreditation service, NCATE, requires involvement with minority populations.

Thank you to the Bush Faculty Development Committee for the opportunity to create a worthwhile learning experience for these students.

Sincerely,

Sheryl Feinstein