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Dean's Foreword

It is a distinct pleasure for me to write the Foreword to this journal, since it marks the return of the *Journal of Education and Humanities* (JEH) after a hiatus of over seven years. This appearance of the second issue of the JEH is therefore much welcomed. From the onset, therefore, I would like to congratulate and thank all of the members of the faculty who contributed to it: those who submitted papers and underwent the process of having their papers scrutinized for inclusion in this journal, all of the anonymous reviewers who, in the best spirit of academia, gave their time, knowledge and high standards, and those members of faculty who worked towards the realization of the journal's publication. I reserve special thanks for Dr. Mark Tumbridge, who, having been entrusted with the task, worked diligently to ensure that it came to fruition in the best possible way.

A publication such as this one is important for the faulty and the university. On one level – and this very important in our context - it signals that the faculty has a live interest in the pursuit of research, and it gives the public a glimpse into the research being conducted by faculty members. At another level, the journal brings ideas and findings into the collegiate and public domains, allows the sharing of information and knowledge, and engenders further discussion and investigation. All of these are critical functions of a university. The journal also affords members of the faculty an outlet for their research, and it is therefore a welcome facility in the difficult circumstances of publication in Guyana.

The faculty intends this journal to be a source of stimulating and useful information and ideas to readers. We have kept in mind the mandate set out in our Mission Statement: "…the dissemination and application of knowledge in languages, social, cultural and historical studies, education, the arts and letters in the highest standards…" in producing this journal. Likewise, special effort has been made in the preparation and refereeing of the articles so as to ensure that the journal meets high international academic standards.

I hope that readers will welcome this issue of the *Journal of Education and Humanities* as warmly as we offer it, and that it will help to stimulate and sustain a culture of inquiry, research, and writing which will help the university to fulfil its role.

Alim Hosein
Dean (2015)

The Use of Apology Strategies in Face-Threatening Situations in Guyana

Alim Hosein

Abstract

This paper reports on one aspect of the linguistic strategies that Guyanese use when they make apologies. Within the framework of politeness theory, pragmatics and face theory, it examines the various responses Guyanese make to five kinds of face-threatening situations. The research shows that Guyanese use apologies in strategic ways to repair loss of face.

1. Introduction

In the Introduction to their book Politeness and Face in Caribbean Creoles: An Overview (2005:2) Muhleisen and Migge highlighted a state of affairs in the study of Caribbean languages:

> …the greater part of sociolinguistic research on Caribbean Creoles has so far mainly dealt with structural aspects of variation and has paid little attention to its socio-pragmatic meanings or to the socio-cultural rules and principles that generate it.

While this is so, there is among the public an awareness of how language use relates to the particular character of the people of different Caribbean countries. The editorial in the Friday, February 22nd 2008 issue of the Sunday Stabroek, a respected and influential newspaper in Guyana, noting a recent spate of apologies by persons in high positions around the world, went on to comment on the lack of a culture of apologising in Guyana even among the government and politicians. The editorial commented: "… we do not in Guyana appear to have embraced a culture of apologising for anything, least of all our misdeeds, whether they be individual or collective, private or public."

Politicians, of course, have their reasons for not apologising, but it can hardly be true that the man in the street does not use apologies: perhaps he has less-overt ways of doing so. This raises the intriguing question: *how do Guyanese apologise*?

This paper stems from a larger investigation conducted in Guyana involving thirty scenarios in which an apology may be expected. The investigation found that Guyanese speakers do make apology responses on such occasions. The subset of data reported on in this paper, however, comes from the responses to five scenarios in which the utterances offered as apologies do not always resemble the ideal apology. These responses form an interesting corpus of linguistic performance worthy of further attention. I call these less-than-ideal apology utterances "apology strategies", and in this paper, I examine these strategies. The apology is one speech act that has been considerably researched, but the use that people make of apology-type strategies has not been so widely explored.

2. The Apology as Strategy

The concept "apology" is theorised in various ways. In some theories, apologies serve a social function, while in others they serve a more personal function. The concept of "face" first proposed by Goffman (1955, 1959), became central to the study of apologies ever since Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) argued that it is a motivating factor in apology use and a determining factor of apology type. As defined by Goffman (1955: 213) "face" is "...the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself ... [it] is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes." Face is lost, damaged or threatened when one commits blunders, and apologies are one way of rescuing or repairing face.

Scher and Darnley (1997) locate apologies in the social realm, seeing apologies as an aspect of the positive social conditioning of the person. In their study, they show that the apology has a definite effect on how the offender is judged by the offended person. The approach taken by Shaver and Boster (n.d.) is similarly social in character, but adds a psychological dimension. They consider the emotional content of apologies and point out that some apologies are really meant to satisfy the hearer's emotional needs. These they call "hearer-directed" apologies which include offers to remedy the problem or not repeat the error. On the other hand, some apologies – e.g. self-justifying ones - are "speaker-directed", aimed at satisfying the speaker's ego.

Similarly, Holmes (in Fahey n.d.) feels that the most important thing in apologies is the face of the hearer, while Lewis and Neighbours (2005:469) include apologies in their list of self-presentation strategies. They note that "apologies are sometimes used to help restore or defend an image that has been threatened".

But Leech's (1983) distinction between the speakers' social goals (e.g. being truthful) and his illocutionary goals (what he intends to be communicating), reminds us that speech acts are complex matters. For example, Scher and Darnley did not pursue the possibility that the offender may also be projecting a state of mind which might not be true of his feelings at all, but which might be strategically related to the behaviour he thinks is relevant to the situation. Shaver and Boster's concept, however, introduces the possibility that the offender is a strategist in this sense. He manipulates the rules to his advantage in order to satisfy both the social requirement to apologise and also to satisfy his ego, maintaining maximum responsibility and social posture while defending himself as an individual. The question of persons acting in this manner is relevant to societies like Guyana and other Caribbean societies which allow non-conformism and individuality.

3. Data

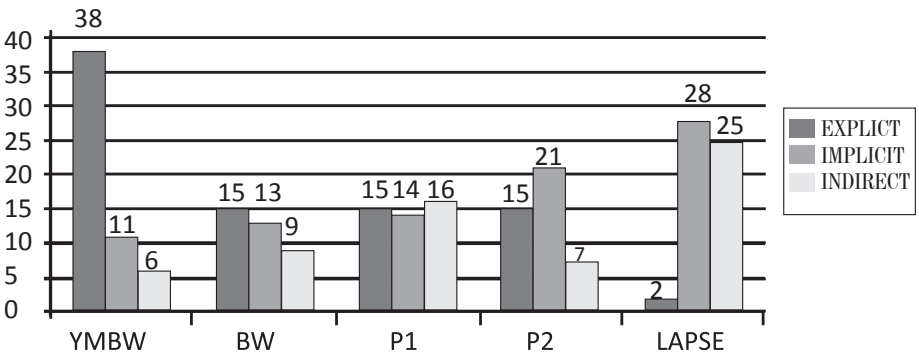
This paper is based on research on 30 scenarios in which an apology could be expected. These scenarios ranged from innocuous incidents such as bumping into someone in the street to more serious ones in which there is great potential for threat to the face of the offending person. Five scenarios were chosen, each showing a different degree of face threat. They are: forgetting a promise the first time (this is coded as P1); forgetting the promise a second time (P2); being found blameworthy for an incident (BW); commit-

ting a lapse in the area of one's competence in the presence of others (L) and finally, coming to the acceptance that one might be the guilty party in an incident – realising that you may be wrong (YMBW).

Twenty-nine informants from a wide range of occupations, levels of education, social levels, and ages from eighteen years of age upward were interviewed for this study. Both sexes were included and so were different ethnicities. Informants were drawn from a wide geographical area which includes the main population areas: East Coast of Demerara, Berbice and Linden. No attempt was made to predetermine the ratios of informants based on any of these or other variables. From the 29 interviewees, a total of 308 tokens were elicited as responses to variations of the five situations: the interviewees were asked how they would respond to different persons (e.g. of the same, lower or higher social status than themselves; or to close or not-close acquaintances) in each of these situations.

A range of responses are seen among the 308 tokens that were collected. The overwhelming number (=245) are, or resemble, the typical apology (i.e. the use of the word "sorry" either by itself or accompanied by a supporting phrase). However, they also show different ways in which persons signal their acceptance of blame, and moreover, how they position themselves with respect to accusations of blame. In 85 cases (34.6%) the speakers explicitly acknowledged their error and accepted blame ("I am sorry. I am to be blamed"), but in the other 160 cases, they do not show the same willingness to accept culpability and instead use other types of strategies to avoid full responsibility. In 87 cases (35.5%) they use strategies which only hint at the error ("Thank you for pointing this out"), and in the other 63 cases (25.7%) they resort to such strategies as making excuses ("You know, I didn't notice that"). In the final 10 cases (4.08%) they make ambiguous statements such as: "Sorry. I might have made a mistake". As noticed in this example, even when the speakers use the canonical apology word "sorry" they sometimes couple it with statements which do not support the regret expressed by that word. Adopting a typology devised by Trosberg (1987) I call these *explicit* (those making a clear statement of responsibility), *implied* (only hinting at responsibility) and *indirect* (making excuses) apology strategies.

Table 1: Explict and Indirect Apoligies



Apart from these, there are 63 other kinds of responses. Forty-one of these strongly deny blame and even attack the interlocutor. Finally, there are 14 instances where the offender would only utter the word "sorry" and 8 cases where his response would be to say nothing at all.

4. Attenuation of Agency

Taking the total number of responses to the five situations, the general analysis shows that in 223 out of the 308 responses (72.4% of the responses), offenders avoided making a clear, canonical apology. However, in the interviews, they clearly believed that the statements they made in response to the five situations were apologies, except in the cases where they attacked their interlocutor.

Most of the Guyanese interviewed in these five situations would not explicitly admit to committing an error, but neither would they utterly deny error or attack their interlocutor. Instead, they *nuance* their acceptance of blame and guilt, and they are expert users of various strategies in order to do so. Even when apologies are made, closer examination shows that the speakers often qualify and even compromise the sincerity of the apology even as they utter it.

I call this the *attenuation of agency*: the linguistic mitigation of responsibility for the error. This takes two forms: firstly, there is de-focusing which happens at the surface level of the utterance in the form of statements in which the offender sidesteps the question of blame and shifts the focus to the hearer. This is what happens when the implied apology strategies are used. Through pledges of forbearance, offers to repair or compensate for the damage, thanking and praising, philosophising, co-optation, equalisation, and so on, the offender shifts attention away from himself and to the hearer. Secondly, there is mitigation of agency or nuancing of responsibility through the use of the indirect strategies – claiming lack of intention, telling a lie, making excuses, etc. – where the speaker uses language which mitigates his responsibility for his error.

In both of these cases, the speakers do not deny blame but in the overwhelming number of cases, they use language to locate themselves in relation to the two necessities of being socially-responsible and of repairing the loss of face that their error causes. This takes the form of a placement of self, expressed through the way their response is made: the closer their response is to a classic apology, the more responsibility the persons take on for their actions. The less-normative the apologetic statement is, the less responsibility the persons invest in themselves for their error. However, through careful use of language, this is achieved without politeness being lost. By these means, speakers show themselves to be skilful negotiators at the social level in fulfilling the expectations of society, while at the same time psychologically guarding themselves from the full burden of the gaffes they commit.

Attenuation strategies are of two kinds: those directed to the hearer and those directed to the speaker himself. The speaker-directed strategies are meant to give the hearer a favourable impression

of the speaker, while the hearer-directed strategies satisfy the speaker's psychological needs. Hearer-directed strategies are found in the implied apologies, while in the indirect apologies, speaker-directed strategies are used.

5. Types of Strategies

5.1 Explicit Apologies

In a full and explicit apology such as "I forgot to look into the matter and I am very sorry about that and I'll get it done as soon as I have time" there is a clear focus on the error ("I forgot...") followed by a statement of contrition ("I am sorry") and then a promise to repair the damage. The data shows that there are two kinds of explicit apologies which Guyanese use: those in which responsibility is fully and unambiguously acknowledged and taken on ("I am sorry. I am to be blamed"; "I am wrong. I take responsibility") and those in which fault is acknowledged only ("I didn't remember. I forgot").

The YMBW situation (i.e. when the speaker realises that he indeed may be in the wrong) is the only one in which explicit apologies form an overwhelming response: out of a total of fifty-five apologies of various kinds in this scenario, thirty-eight or 69% are explicit apologies. Further, all of these are the type of explicit apology in which responsibility is unambiguously acknowledged.

5.2 Implicit Apologies

Implicit apologies are marked by the use of verbal actions such as philosophical statements ("Nobody's perfect"), thanking ("Thank you for pointing this out"), or the offering of undertakings such as promises of improved performance ("Another time I'm going to do it better") or improved behaviour ("It won't happen again"), offers to repair the damage caused ("Lemme do this over and get back to you"), or self-reflective statements ("I don't know what happen to me..."). I call these "implicit" strategies because they leave out the explicit parts of the apology.

Implicit apologies only make use of strategies that are used in the third part of the full and explicit apology, and can be grouped into three categories: repair, equalisation and co-optation. The repair strategies either seek to remedy the situation (through repair or compensation) or to rehabilitate the speaker (through pledges of forbearance). Repair and compensation address the error or damage caused: repair strategies attempt to undo damage ("I will do it over later") while compensation offers attempt to put something in place to make up for the error or damage caused, without a statement accepting responsibility for causing the damage. Such offers do not necessarily refer to financial or material recompense but may be open offers, e.g.: "Oh I'm very sorry. How to make recompense?" or "Sorry. I hope I can make amends".

On the other hand, pledging forbearance ("I will not do it again") is a strategy through which the speaker seeks to rehabilitate his own image. By using these strategies, the speaker acknowledges his error since his pledge of forbearance indicates that he has recognised his error and is contrite. Pledges of forbearance are appeals to the hearer.

The speaker's willingness to mend his ways rehabilitates his face.

The strategy of co-optation is used by the speaker to get the hearer on his side through the use of praise or thanks, for example: "You have a good head on your shoulders. Thank you for pointing it out". This strategy is not much used and appears only 6 times in the data.

Equalisation strategies are those which are used in an attempt to mitigate the force of the offence by bringing the speaker and hearer on to the same level. These include philosophical statements ("We're all human"), or self-reflection to show common human frailty ("I don't know what's happening to me. I'm so forgetful nowadays"), or other such strategies.

Table 2: Strategies Used in implied apologies

Key: Fb.= forbearance; C.= compensation; R.= repair; S.= self-reflective; P.= philosophy; Pr.= praise; T.Y = thank you.

	REPAIR			EQUALISATION		COOPTATION		TOTAL
	Fb.	C.	R.	S.	P.	Pr.	TY.	
BW	6	1	1	2	2	-	1	13
LAPSE	6	2	10	3	2	1	4	28
P1	2	-	12	-	-	-	-	14
P2	3	-	4	6	1	-	-	21
YMBW	7	-	4	-	-	-	-	11
TOTAL	**24**	**3**	**38**	**11**	**5**	**1**	**5**	**87**
	=65			**=16**		**=16**		

5.3 Indirect Apologies

Indirect apologies attenuate agency and acceptance of blame even more than implied admissions. Implicit admissions contain statements which are premised on the unspoken admission of guilt, but indirect apologies proffer reasons for the blameworthy behaviour ("Sorry. Didn't know what I was thinking"). Persons who make indirect apologies use a number of strategies in their apologies: excuses, justifications, rationalisations and other such strategies as ways of tempering responsibility for error. In addition, the use of indirect apologies gives the impression that the speaker is not totally blameworthy. However, they do so without giving the impression that blame is being reject-

ed. In both implied and indirect apologies, the admission of guilt is unstated; in the indirect apologies, this is done in a more oblique manner.

When indirect apologies are used, it is as if the speaker does not want to admit that he has made an error but wants to substitute a reason why the error occurred. Such speakers therefore make use of accounts: excuses, explanations, justifications, claims of ignorance, claims of lack of intention, and other such ego-satisfying strategies which allow them to distance themselves from responsibility for the error. In such apologies, even though someone may say that he is sorry, he may still seek to modify the blame or culpability associated with his error or lapse through the addition of these kinds of statements which have the effect of vitiating in some way the claim established by the apology. There are various strategies of accounting that speakers use. Those found in the data include:

1. Lack of intention
- a. I didn't mean/intend to
- b. It wasn't wilful
- c. I had no intention

2. Lapse
- a. Wasn't concentrating
- b. Didn't know what I was thinking
- c. It slip me
- d. I didn't check it properly
- e. Accident/mistake

3. Ignorance
- a. I don't know
- b. I didn't realise
- c. I don't know how come
- d. I didn't see it
- e. I was unconscious

4. Lie
- a. Something came up
- b. I didn't get to finish it

These strategies show different degrees of attenuation of agency. In the first case (lack of intention), the speaker claims to have knowledge of his intentions, which allows him to declare that the error was totally uncorrupted by any conscious agency on his part. In the second set (lapse) he admits to a temporary suspension of his control over himself. In the third case (ignorance) he professes puzzlement over the error, which reflects a major loss of agency on his part. This translates into increased lack of responsibility for the error.

Finally, he lies. In this strategy, the claim is that there really is no error at all, only a minor inconvenience which would soon be cleared up. In these cases, the fault for the error lies outside of the speaker. In using a lie, the speaker performs maximal facework in order to give the impression that he is perfectly blameless and in control of himself. For example, in relation to the Promise 1 situation, one interviewee said that if, for instance, she had promised to download an article from the internet for a friend but forgot to do it, she would lie and claim "I had problems printing it…", which would give the false impression that she remembered the promise and had actually tried to fulfil it. On the other hand, accounts acknowledge that an error has occurred, but purport to explain it away: "You know I didn't notice…"; "It happen that way…It was not wilful…". Consequently, acceptance of some degree of loss of face is implied when accounts are used, but this is not the case when the speaker lies.

Nevertheless, lying occurs relatively few times - 33 times, all in the Promise situations - in the data. There is a significant decrease in lies when the promise is forgotten a second time: 23 times in Promise 1 and only 10 times in Promise 2.

In this research, the highest amount of implied apologies (28) and the highest amount of indirect apologies (25) occur where there is a lapse of competence in the presence of others (see Table 1), showing that where embarrassment is self-generated in the presence of others, face-saving apology strategies become more evident and almost no explicit apologies or acceptance of the error are seen. Only 2 (3.6%) of the 55 responses in this scenario are explicit apologies. A lapse in competence represents a major embarrassment (and thus loss of face) for the speaker since he has been responsible for embarrassing himself through his poor performance. It is relevant and revealing, therefore, that the apology strategies in this scenario focus on agency - on whether or not the speaker was in control of himself when he made the lapse – and that the speakers downplay agency.

5.4. Hedges

Another way of avoiding explicit admission of blame while also avoiding an overt denial is to hedge: to make a half-way suggestion of admission or an ambiguous suggestion of guilt. This strategy is different from those which imply guilt. Persons who use language to imply their guilt do accept blame, but it is just that they do not do so explicitly. Persons who hedge, on the other hand, suggest an admission of guilt while simultaneously appearing not to do so. One clear marker of hedges is that they begin with or contain adverbs of condition such as "perhaps" or "maybe" and they also contain modals such as "might": "Maybe I was wrong. Sorry"; "I'm sorry. I might have made a mistake". Even when persons who hedge include the word "sorry" in their apology, the conditionality in which their apology is contextualised undermines their acceptance of blame.

Hedges do not occur much in the data. They appear mostly in the YMBW situation, where 8 of the 9 hedges in the data are found. Yet, the use of hedges shows that some people are still not willing to produce a whole-hearted apology, or even a bare "sorry" apology even in a scenario where they are coming to terms with their blameworthiness.

6. Rejecting Guilt: Opposition

Using strategies in order to deny guilt or blame – which I call "opposition strategies" – is another response to face-threatening situations. But what is of interest to us here is that while the speakers respond in a hostile or aggressive manner, some of them do so within the framework of an apology and even comply with some of the norms for politeness, including the use of the word "sorry". This is seen in BW when the speakers use the various opposition strategies: "Sorry, I'll keep my mouth shut"; "If I'm the fault, sorry. Let somebody else do the job"; "You choose to blame me, I'm very sorry"; "Sorry but I am not to be blamed".

There are various opposition strategies which are used, ranging from less-direct to very direct statements of denial or opposition. These include:

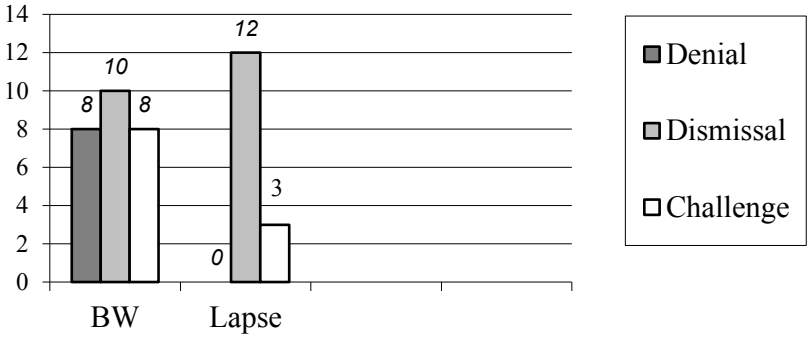
1. **Denials:** these are direct ("Sorry, I am not to be blamed") or indirect ("I don't think that I am wrong")

statements which state the speaker's non-acceptance of blame.

2. **Challenges:** these are more indirect than denials. In some cases, the speaker appears to seek confirmation or clarification of the charge ("Why do you think so?") against him. In some cases, the challenge is a more direct one: "What gives you the authority to say that I am wrong?"
3. **Dismissals:** these are used to brush aside the whole matter ("Don't bother with that. Keep your mouth shut") or even to dismiss the interlocutor ("You can't tell me that I am wrong. You don't know more than me").

Within these strategies, a number of other ones could be used, such as turning the table ("You does make mistakes too") on the interlocutor and shifting the focus onto the interlocutor ("Why not do it yourself? Why ask me?").

Table 3: Opposition Strategies



Cupach and Metts (1992) found that high embarrassment is generated in such situations of individualisation, and that in these situations, the accused responds with aggressive behaviour. In the current research, opposition and attack strategies are found only in the Lapse and BW situations, where the person's error has been pointed out or noted by others. Therefore, these are situations of extreme face-threat. Additionally, in cases where the person is targeted as being responsible for the error, more denial/opposition strategies are used than when the lapse is simply pointed out: 25 of the attacks occur in the BW scenario and 16 in the Lapse scenario.

On the other hand, speakers do keep social considerations in mind when they use the opposition strategies. In the Lapse and BW scenarios, persons of relatively lower status (LS) and those of same status (SS) in relation to the speaker receive most of the aggressive responses. Twenty of the 41 opposition strategies in these two situations are used against LS interlocutors, 15 against SS interlocutors and only 6 against HS interlocutors.

7. Discussion

The apologies discussed in this paper may give the impression that Guyanese are overly concerned about presenting and preserving face. But on the other hand, the data also shows cases in which Guyanese are willing to accept blame and make an apology, even in circumstances where there is only a hint or suggestion that they may be blameworthy, as seen in the YMBW, BW and Lapse situations. In the YMBW situation, there is a preponderance of explicit apologies, all of them including unambiguous acceptance of guilt.

This paper focuses on the cases where apologies are attenuated, and the different linguistic forms such attenuation may take. One explanation for the existence of such apologies to a significant degree in the data may be related to the relative freedom that Guyanese enjoy or claim for themselves in social interactions. Unlike the situation in societies or cultures where linguistic behaviour, including apologising, is strictly correlated with social structure, in Guyana, apologies or politeness as a whole are not totally or uniquely co-indexed to social regulation, although persons are sensitive to social structure. Kasper (1998) and Galaczi, (n.d.) capture the practice of the social integration of linguistic behaviour through the concepts of "social indexing" and "discernment" which encapsulate the notion of linguistic behaviour that is tailored to suit the social rank of the recipient. An illustration of such integration is seen in Gu's (1990) discussion of politeness in Chinese society. In this society, Gu notes that that "politeness" also includes the sense of "denigrating self and respecting other", a concept which is captured in the term *limao* (1990:238). Chinese social hierarchy is reflected in its practice of politeness, and the correct practice of politeness expresses and helps to maintain the social hierarchy.

Such close integration of politeness and social structure is not a feature of the Guyanese (and many other) societies. Therefore, while Guyanese obviously acknowledge and practice politeness, there are no conventional strategies that operate in lock-step with different social strata or groups. While continuing the traditions of "manners" inculcated during British colonial rule, apology use in Guyana is more volitional (Hill 1986:384) – that is, more dependent on the nature of the individual speaker. The speaker is free to use a range of apology forms as seen in this research. Volitional apologies satisfy the purpose of apologising (or showing politeness) but also serve other requirements such as re-establishing bonds, re-asserting place, easing tension, or saving face.

Another reason for attenuated apologies is that they help to fill gaps in the pragmatics of the language. The kinds of apology strategies discussed in this paper – thanking and praising, hedges, excuses, repairs, forbearance, and others – are dealt with in the literature in various ways: some researchers see them as part of the apology, or as separate from it, as speech act realisations, or as sub-classifications of the apology, among other ways, while others such as Smith (2005:479) do not feel that such constructions satisfy the strictest criteria for apologies. These approaches do not consider the pragmatic value of these strategies in relation to the basic act of acknowledging blameworthiness. The current study suggests that

such strategies are important components of apology behaviour not only because they modify, mitigate and even abrogate the force of the apology, but also because they reveal how the speakers meet their face-preservation needs, and they give us a more cogent view of what speakers do when they apologise and how they react to face-threatening situations.

Attenuated apologies carry the same locutionary force as the standard apology (they serve as apologies or as attempts to save face), but carry a different illocutionary force (they convey to the hearer more messages than "I apologise"). They are person-directed – that is, they are directed either at the hearer or at the speaker. Promises of repair, forbearance, accounts, use of "sorry", and other such apologies attempt to placate the hearer/offended person and restore the relationship between the speaker and hearer. On the other hand, rejections, excuses, indirect and implicit strategies are directed at the speaker, and indicate his or her attempt, through language, at psychological self-healing.

Attenuation of agency is a linguistic strategy which allows the speakers to be maximally individualistic and socially responsible at the same time, in cases where these two parameters could be in conflict.

Research into the relationship between self and society shows that even in societies which value individualism, "people have an autonomous responsibility to society through their individual actions and activities" (Earley 1997:105), and that in societies which are more collectivist in nature, persons are still not locked into pre-determined systems of politeness but are still free to make individualistic responses (Kasper in Coulmas 1998). Kasper also refers to a position argued by Mao (1992) which proposes "relative face orientation" (1998:380) i.e., that speakers locate themselves relative to two ideals: individual autonomy on the one hand, and social conformity on the other. Guyanese society allows a great degree of autonomy, and it is also a society that has grown up with high expectations of "good manners" inculcated through over one hundred years of British colonial rule. It is not surprising to find that speakers try to find a middle ground between social conformity and individuality in cases where an apology might be required.

8. Conclusion

Apologies in Guyana are strategic (used to save face), volitional (open to the speaker's choice) and also socially-indexed (sensitive to social structure and needs).

The data suggests a distinction between the apology as an act and the apology as a form. As an act, an apology evidences conformation to social regulation. The form of the apology, however, is not totally dependent on social rules. There are, for example, strategies used which offer excuses, hedge the apology, or apologise only indirectly, and their use is individualistic. The literature does not make this distinction although there is much discussion about socially-dependent and individualistic apologies or apologies whose forms (e.g. self-denigration, use of special respect forms, etc.) are constrained by social regulations and those whose forms are left open to the speaker's choice. The concept of "social indexing" or "discernment" (Kasper 1998, Galaczi, n.d.) might capture intrinsically the

notion that the apology is tailored to suit the recipient.

However, this operates in more hierarchical societies and is used to meet social rank demands and so might not capture the individualistic nature of some apologies. The concept of "volitional" apology (Hill and Ide 1986: 348) capture the latter situation.

Guyanese are not averse to explicit admission of blameworthiness. However, they do so when they can accommodate to the face threat that certain situations give rise to. Apart from this, in high face-threat situations, there is a greater tendency to try and salvage or protect face through implicit and indirect apologies rather than to try to gain face through explicit admission or acceptance of blame. In the scenarios discussed above, there seems to be a direct correlation between loss of face, repair of face, and type of apology. The high use of explicit strategies in response to accusations of blame and the psychological accommodation to such accusations seen in the acceptance of responsibility in the YMBW and BW situations are directly contrasted by the low use of such strategies in cases where embarrassment is internally-generated as in the Lapse situation most clearly, but also in the two Promise situations.

Biographical Note

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Effectiveness of Concept Mapping in Higher Education to Teach Text Comprehension in Inter-Lingual Contexts

Artie Harricharran

Abstract

This study examined the effectiveness of using concept maps to develop higher level comprehension skills – inferential, evaluative and appreciative levels. For the purpose of this study, two groups were formed – one control group and one experimental group. These groups were formed from a random selection of first-year University of Guyana students. The control group was taught comprehension using a traditional approach – the linear text presentation method; while the experimental group was exposed to concept maps. The researcher developed three concept maps, which incorporated the cognitive domains required to interpret, evaluate and appreciate varying textual relationships. This explicit teaching aimed at empowering students to take responsibility throughout the teaching-learning interaction. This study uncovered that by using concept maps to teach comprehension, the teacher created a non-discriminatory learning environment for students who come from Guyana's varying linguistic backgrounds. Comparisons of data gathered through the researcher's pre-test and post-test scores reveal that using concept maps to teach comprehension does provide an enabling environment for students to develop higher-level comprehension skills.

Key Terms

According to Novak and Canas, "Concept maps are graphical tools for organizing and representing knowledge. They include concepts, usually enclosed in circles or boxes of some type, and relationships between concepts indicated by a connecting line linking two concepts. Words on the line, referred to as linking words or linking phrases, specify the relationship between the two concepts" (2012, http://www.ihmc.us).

Novak and Canas defined skeleton maps as a representation of "a small number of concepts that are key to understanding the topic, and express accurately the relationships between these concepts" (2012, http://www.ihmc.us).

Scaffolding instruction is defined by Novak and Canas as "a teaching method that provides differing degrees of assistance for a learner according to his or her progress" (2012, http://www.ihmc.us).

Theoretical Framework of This Research

The success of any teaching-learning interaction hinges upon the students' ability to read and think critically. Critical reading empowers readers to make judgements regarding the effectiveness of the writer's craft, critically analyse the argument the writer develops, and the ability

to infer the writer's purpose. By using concept maps to teach comprehension, and simultaneously illustrating the cognitive domains that are required for each comprehension level to the students, the teacher creates an enabling environment for students to not only critically assess the text, but also to become critical thinkers. In their article *The Theory Underlying Concept Maps and How to Construct and Use Them,* Novak and Canas explain that "critical thinkers are active, not passive. They ask questions and analyze. They consciously apply tactics and strategies to uncover meaning or assure their understanding" (2012, http://www.ihmc.us). Concept maps serve as a platform for students to read and think critically; this scaffolding-instruction method enables students to move from the literal sphere of the text into discovering textual meaning through higher levels of comprehending – inferential, evaluative and appreciative.

Through the use of concept maps, the teacher is able to effectively engage students' working memory in the process of teaching text comprehension. Once the working memory is strategically engaged, the teacher is better positioned to stimulate students' higher-level comprehension skills. According to Todd S. Braver, the working memory is likened to

> a mental blackboard—that is, as a workspace that provides a temporary holding store so that relevant information is highly accessible and available for inspection and computation. When cognitive tasks are accomplished, the information can be easily erased, and the process can begin again with other information (2012, http://scholar.google.com).

This assumes that mental images, ideas, and interpretations that the reader gathers prior to the reading process, during the reading process, and after the reading process are stored in the working memory. As is also posited by Adams and Carpenter, the "working memory plays a central role in all forms of complex thinking, such as reasoning, problem solving, and language comprehension" (1992, p. 122). Using concept maps as a scaffolding-teaching method will enable students to see the relationships within the text that lead to macro-textual understanding. From this platform, it is easier for students to engage their higher level comprehension skills – inferential, evaluative and appreciative skills – since the working memory does not have to be taxed with making these connections.

During the preparation of activities aimed at stimulating students' higher-level comprehension skills, the teacher must be cognisant of students' individual differences in their ability to read and comprehend. Students' varying lexical and syntactic understanding of the language impacts on their semantic ability in text comprehension. This is a complex reality in which teachers within the Guyana linguistic situation operate. Guyana's native language is creole of which there are many varieties depending on the geographic location, ethnicity, social and economic background of the speaker. One of the complexities this linguistic situation poses is the refusal of the administrators and education officials to acknowledge our creole as a language; it is treated as "bad English." Therefore, English is not taught as a second language and this impedes these creole speaking students' ability to learn English lan-

guage. The damaging impact of this practice is especially prevalent in the students' ability to read and comprehend text written in English.

In their article, *Teaching Creole-Speaking Children: Issues, Concerns and Resolutions for the Classroom*, Gillian Wigglesworth and Rosey Billington explore the difficulties Australian children from creole speaking homes have in schools where English is taught. According to Wigglesworth and Billington, this problem is compounded by educators' view that the creole is not a language but simply a "deficient version of the standard language" (1). This Australian language situation mirrors that of Guyana. Wigglesworth and Billington's conclusion, "In the face of negative attitudes towards their home language, students may simply choose not to align themselves with the standard language being taught at school, preferring the solidarity offered by continued use of the home language." (4). The vast majority of Guyanese students are reluctant to embrace English because of teachers' negative attitudes to Creole, which is predominantly spoken. Comprehension, as taught at the University of Guyana, (using mainly linear text approach) does not acknowledge students' attitude towards English. My response to this language situation is to use concept maps to enhance their ability to understand and interpret text written in English. The scaffold that concept maps offer to understanding text written in English bridges this negative attitude to English and developing comprehension skills. In order to comprehend, students have to draw conclusions based on what they read – reading plus thinking and reasoning skills are required. In order for them to do this they must interpret what they read, make connections between what they read and what they know. All of this is hinged upon knowing the meaning of the words, use-context clues and recognizing grammatical and lexical cohesive devices. Concept maps illustrate the connections within the text, which would enable learners to see the grammatical and lexical cohesive devices. As opposed to the traditional linear text approach, the scaffold afforded by concept maps would aid students, especially creole speakers, to understand text written in English. This type of scaffolding helps learners to succeed. These successes can stimulate a positive change in attitude that the creole speaking learners have towards English.

According to Dennis R. Craig in *Teaching Standard English to Non-Standard Speakers: Some Methodological Issues*

> The strongest reasons adduced for failure in the teaching of standard English to nonstandard speakers are: (1) the speakers do not perceive standard English as relevant to their social needs; (2) the simulated social situations that might be used in some teaching programmes in school are not real situations and cannot be expected to have the same effect on learners that real situations might have, given the fact that language is best learned in real social situations; and, (3) nonstandard speakers often have negative attitudes toward standard English, particularly toward standard English speech because of the varied

> prejudices that accompany social stratification (66).

According to Dennis R. Craig, creole-speaking learners are more likely to succeed in learning English if they can establish relevance of English in their lives. By using concept maps to teach comprehension, the teacher can demonstrate to learners a process of managing, assessing and critiquing information. Once learners realize that their academic success is inextricably linked to their ability to manage, assess and critique information, it is highly likely that this teaching-learning situation may become relevant to them. By implication, the thirteen lecturers that teach this course can adopt Craig's position by explaining to students that the comprehension skills taught in this course can help them succeed academically. This course – Use of English – is one of the largest courses taught at the University of Guyana since it is mandatory for all first year students. This course is plagued by high failure rates and poor student attendance. Perhaps the most effective way to get our creole-speaking students to embrace English is to explicitly show how it can impact their academic career and by extension their economic (via career) and social lives.

Sara A. Allsop, in her paper *Assisting Creole-English and Non-Standard Dialect Speaking Students in Learning Standard English,* explains that "Students in Hawaii often find themselves in baffling situations at school. They are constantly corrected in their speech, and often stereotyped as apathetic or unintelligent. Their contributions to class are disregarded because of the way they phrase their comments" (1). This is a very real issue that creole learners face in English language classrooms throughout Guyana. By the time these students arrive at university, they would have been so victimized over the years that they become reluctant to speak in class. Through the use of concept maps, the teacher can create an environment that is less threatening to these learners. Concept maps visually illustrate the relationships between concepts and ideas, often represented in circles or boxes, and concepts are linked by words/phrases that explain the connection between the ideas; this type of scaffold helps students organize and structure their thoughts to further understand information and discover new relationships. Once students are not faced with the struggle to make connections and simultaneously order their thoughts in English, it is likely that they will participate more readily. Our creole-speaking students need a classroom which offers a non-threatening environment so that their affective filters are lowered. As we have established, if our Creole-speaking students are to embrace English, they must see the relevance of it; oral presentations are a critical part of academic life, and an integral part of career development. Our students need to see that, through the teaching of comprehension via concept maps, we as lecturers are preparing them for success.

Using concept maps as a learning tool, especially for students within this linguistic situation, is effective since the contextual relationships within the text are illustrated. These illustrations will engender the students' macro understanding of the text despite their lexical and syntactic limitations. Through this type of explicit teaching, students can over-

come learning constraints posed by ineffective policies and methods; learn how to use the upper-level comprehension skills, read and think critically.

Concept maps as a learning aid are more effective than the traditional linear text approach to teaching comprehension. With the traditional method, students read the text starting from the introduction and finishing at the conclusion, attempting to glean meaning as they progress; this passive approach is not effective, especially in the Guyana linguistic situation (described above). With concept maps, students are presented with an illustration of the contextual relationships, which is accessible to students before the reading activity, during the reading activity, and after the reading activity. This enables students to understand the text at deeper levels as they progress.

The fundamental aim of this research is to use concept maps in the teaching of comprehension to enable students' active engagement of the higher-level comprehension skills. The development of these first-year university students' higher-level comprehension skills will positively impact on all their academic endeavours. The concept maps used in this study incorporates the varying cognitive domains and the varying levels of textual relationships. This type of explicit teaching is aimed at empowering students to comprehend at inferential, evaluative and appreciative levels; thereby enabling these first-year university students to become strategic readers.

Method

Participants

The participants were forty six (46) first-year University of Guyana students, currently pursuing the Associate Degree in Chemistry, B.Sc. Biology, B.Sc. Physics, B.Sc. Agriculture, and B.Sc. Mathematics. These students formed two (2) tutorial groups: one experimental group of twenty three (23 students) and one control groups of twenty three (23 students). These groups were randomly selected.

Design

At the end of the second week of the semester a pre-test designed to measure the students' higher-level comprehension skills was administered to both groups. After the pre-test, this four-week study commenced. For three consecutive weeks, both groups participated in reading and discussing three comprehension passages with the aim of identifying (1) main ideas within paragraphs, (2) summarize the main ideas within the text; (3) analyze the effectiveness of the writer's craft and strategies (which will inform their own writing). Simultaneously, explanation of the higher-level comprehension skills required to complete these tasks – Application, Analysis, Synthesis and Evaluation – was graphically illustrated in the concept maps presented. The concept maps used in this experiment enabled students to see intertextual relationships and the comprehension skills required for the interpretation of each type of relationship. The aim of this is to enable students to become strategic readers.

With the experimental group, three comprehension passages were explored using skeletal concept maps (prepared by the researcher). With the control group, these passages were explored using a traditional ap-

proach to teaching comprehension – the linear text presentation method. At the end of the three weeks, a post-test was given to both groups. The results of the post-test (the dependent measure) have been compared with that of the pre-test; in addition to this, the post-test results of the experimental group have been compared with that of the control group. The fundamental aim of this analysis was to assess the effectiveness of using concept maps, which details the higher-level comprehension skills requirements, in the course of teaching comprehension.

Teaching Methodology

Activities Prior to Diagnostic Test

The week before the diagnostic test, the passage Should Vaccination of All Children Be Made Mandatory by Law? was discussed with both groups using a traditional approach to teaching comprehension – linear text presentation method. This passage has 1000 words; is comprised of 7 paragraphs – introduction, four points, conclusion; and the predominant rhetorical strategy is persuasion. The students were given this comprehension passage and were required to read it from introduction to conclusion. After they spent 20 minutes reading, students and teacher engaged in a half-hour discussion, during which the terms – main idea, literary devices, thesis statement and topic sentence, and rhetorical strategies were explained to students. All the students indicated prior knowledge of these terms. After this discussion, students were required to answer the following questions:

1. Identify the topic sentence in each paragraph.
2. In not more than 80 words, summarize the main ideas in this passage.
3. Does the writer use any literary devices? If so, identify and explain the effectiveness of these devices.
4. Write a thesis statement for this essay.

Upon completion of this activity, students were asked to read their answers aloud and their fellow students offered corrections, which were either accepted or debated by the presenting student. By the end of this session, teacher and students:

1. Identified the topic sentence within each paragraph.
2. Expressed, in their own words, the main ideas within the passage that would form the summary.
3. Identified and explained the effectiveness of all the literary devices within the text.
4. Developed possible thesis statements for the passage.

Description of the Pre-Test

The comprehension passage, Why Should People Read Books?, was used as the pre-test. Forty six (46) students wrote this pre-test one week before the commencement of this research activity. This passage has 645 words; five paragraphs – introduction, three points and conclusion; and the predominant rhetorical strategy is argumentation. The following free response questions were asked:

1. Identify the topic sentence in each paragraph.
2. In no more than 50 words, summarize the main ideas within this passage.
3. Does the writer use any literary devices? If so, identify and explain the effectiveness of these

devices.
4. Write a possible thesis statement for this essay.

Procedure Followed in the Administration of the Pre-Test

Just before this pre-test was administered, the concepts – topic sentence, main idea, literary devices and thesis statements – were reviewed with the students. After this twenty-minute discussion, students were given the comprehension passage. They were allowed 10 minutes reading time, in addition to the 40 minutes given to answer the four questions above. At the end of this duration, all papers were collected.

Instructional Materials

In this study, three comprehension passages were used: 'Fixing' What Isn't Broken, Engineering Food for All, and Why People Should Connect More with Nature with the control group and the experimental group.

Description of Comprehension Passages Used during This Research

Passage 1: 'Fixing' What Isn't Broken has 892 words, and is comprised of six paragraphs – introduction, body, and conclusion. The predominant rhetorical strategy is argumentation.

Passage 2: Engineering Food for All has 759 words, and is comprised of seven paragraphs – introduction, body, and conclusion. The predominant rhetorical strategy is argumentation.

Passage 3: Why People Should Connect More with Nature has 654 words, and is comprised of four paragraphs – introduction, body, and conclusion. The predominant rhetorical strategy is argumentation.

These passages were chosen for two fundamental reasons. Firstly, the students are scientifically inclined and they may find these passages interesting. Secondly, the second part of this course is argumentative writing. These comprehension passages deal with topics that lecturers normally use in teaching argumentative essay writing. I chose these passages to teach comprehension and stimulate argumentative essay writing.

Teaching Methodology Used with the Control Group

With the control group, these three comprehension passages were discussed using the traditional linear text presentation method. The method used to discuss each of these passages were the same: students were given 15 minutes to read, this was followed by discussion on topic sentence, summary writing, literary devices, rhetorical strategy, and thesis statement. Students were required to answer the following questions.

1. Identify the topic sentence in each paragraph.
2. In no more than 50 words, summarize the main ideas within this passage.
3. Does the writer use any literary devices? If so, identify and explain the effectiveness of these devices.
4. Write a possible thesis statement for this essay.

With the first comprehension pas-

sage, 'Fixing' What Isn't Broken, students were placed in groups of five after they read the passage for the first time. The questions were given to them, and they were required to read the passage for a second time with these questions in mind. After the second reading, they were given 30 minutes to answer the questions. Upon completion of this exercise, each group presented their answers to the class; these answers were critiqued by their fellow classmates and they made the necessary corrections at the end of this exercise.

With the second comprehension passage used, Engineering Food for All, the same procedure was followed, except students worked in pairs.

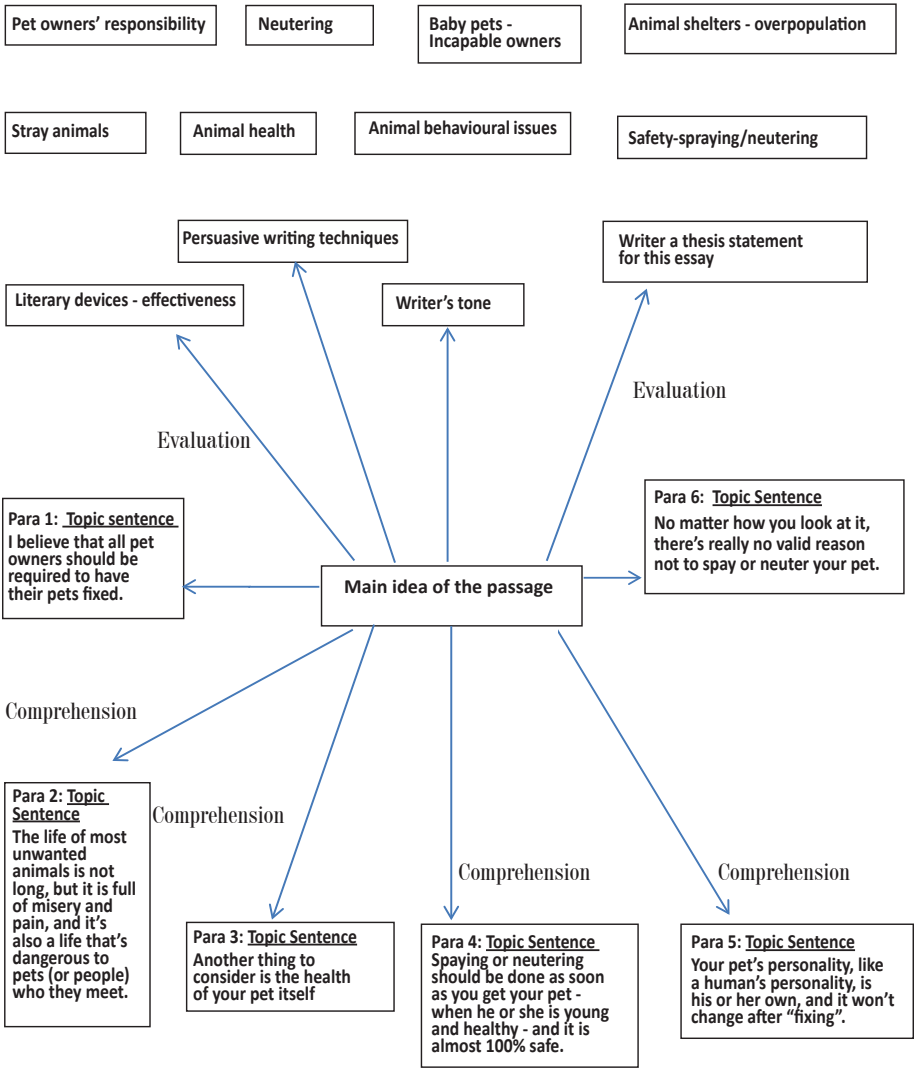
With the third passage, Why People should Connect More with Nature, students completed this exercise individually. Upon completion, they exchanged papers with the person next to them and engaged in peer marking; they were required to identify the correct answer with ticks and incorrect answers by an x. Students were required to justify their view of what they deemed correct and incorrect answers.

Teaching Methodology Used with the Experimental Group

The same three passages that were used with the control group were used with the experimental group. However, instead of the linear text presentation method, students in the experimental group were presented with skeletal concept maps. These maps illustrated relevant relationships between concepts that would enable students to grasp the macro-meaning of the text. On each node within the concept maps, the comprehension skill required to form macro-meaning within the text is identified. The fundamental aim of this approach is to explain to students the comprehension process – the skill requirements needed to interpret the given text. The aim of this explicit approach is to empower students to take ownership of the thinking/learning process with minimal teacher involvement.

Fixing What Isn't Broken

Focus Question: What is the main idea of this passage? How does the writer communicate this idea? The main concepts of this passage are displayed in a parking-lot style above the concept map. The fundamental aim of this partially developed concept map is to illustrate a strategic reading process that will enable students to read actively.



Please answer the following questions:-

1. Identify the topic sentence in each paragraph.
2. Summarize this passage in 50 words.
3. Does the writer use any literary devices? If so identify and explain the effectiveness of these devices.
4. Write a thesis statement for this passage.

Engineering Food for All

Focus Question: What is the main idea of this passage? How does the writer develop this idea?

Evaluation

(Critique)

Effectiveness of literary devices and persuasive techniques

Synthesis

(Write, categorize)

In 80-90 words, summarize the writer's view of genetically engineering food for humans consumption.

Analysis

(Differentiate, outline)

What argumentation strategies did the writer use to develop the main idea in each paragraph?

a) Argument from analogy

b) Argument through experiments

c) Argument from absurdity

Application

(Show, demonstrate)

The effective use of persuasive techniques:

1. Repetition
2. Rather than instruction give 'reasons why'
3. Adherence to argument
4. Quote other points of view/issues that support your argument.
5. Comparison
6. How present events impact on the future
7. Elicit empathy and offer solution
8. Address potential objections to argument

Comprehension

(Explain, summarize)

Identify the topic sentence in each paragraph

Knowledge

(State, identify, list, select)

Genetic engineering of food:

a) Poses risks to human health, environment and economy.

b) Not sustainable

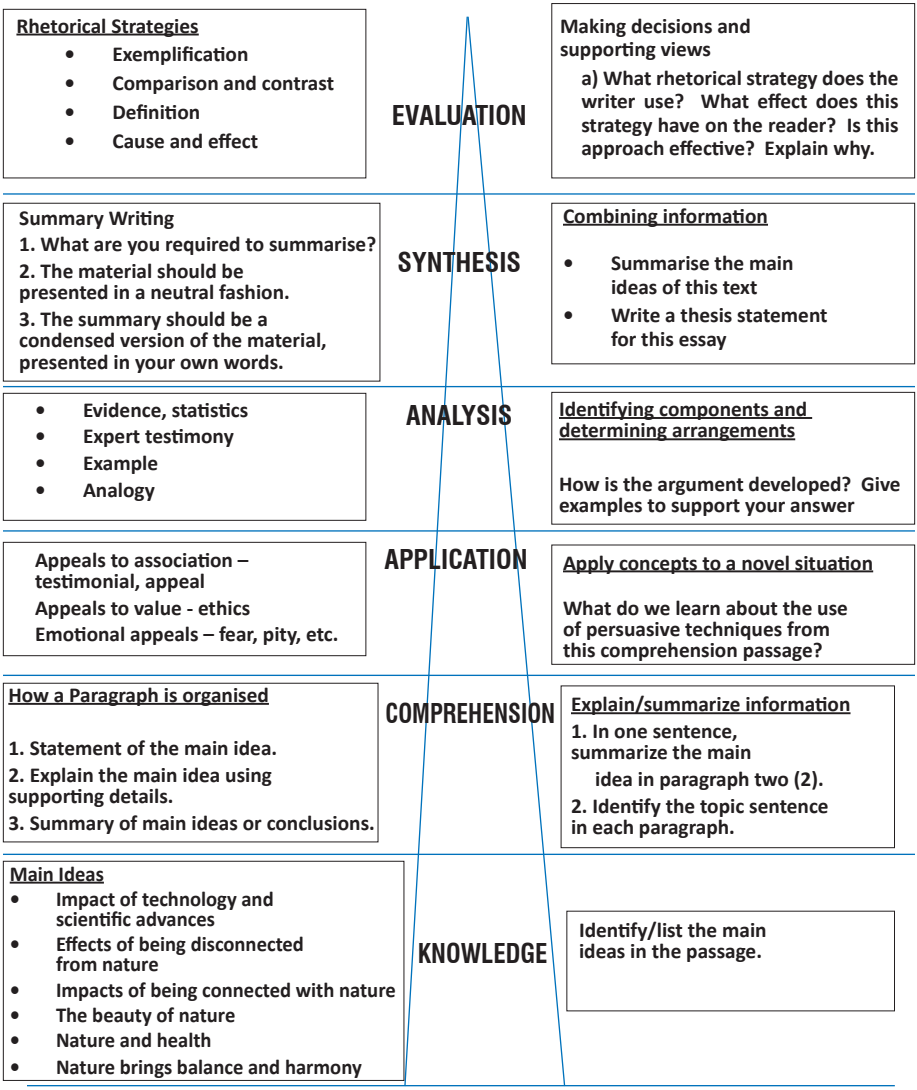
c) Does not ensure food security

Please answer the following questions:-

1. Identify the topic sentence in each paragraph.
2. Summarize this passage in 50 words.
3. Does the writer use any literary devices? If so, identify and explain the effectiveness of these devices.
4. Write a thesis statement for this passage.

Why People Should Connect More with Nature

Focus Question: What is the main idea of this passage? How does the writer develop this idea?



Please answer the following questions:

1. Identify the topic sentence in each paragraph.
2. Summarize this passage in 50 words.
3. Does the writer use any literary devices? If so, identify and explain the effectiveness of these devices.
4. Write a thesis statement for this essay.

Post-Test Activity

At the end of this study, the post-test was administered. Students were required to read the comprehension passage, Should There Be a Division between Boys' and Girls' Sports? (842 words, 6 paragraphs – introduction, four points, conclusion, and the predominant technique is persuasive). Students were given one (1) hour to answer the following questions:

1. Identify the topic sentence in each paragraph.
2. In 50 words, summarize this passage.
3. Does the writer use any literary devices? If so, identify and explain the effectiveness of these devices.
4. Write a thesis statement for this essay.

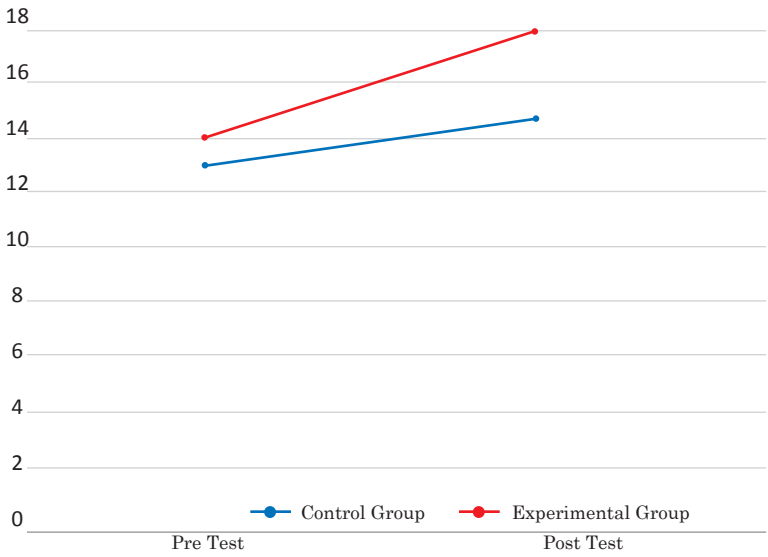
The students in the control group read the passage and started answering the questions. The students in the experimental group were given scrap paper and asked to make sketches of the textual relationships (similar to concept maps they were exposed to) as they read the passage and questions.

Results

The charts in this section compare the pre-test and post-test results of the control and experimental groups. The graph below offers a comparison of the average pre- and post-test scores that were awarded to the control and the experimental group. We see an increase in performance in both groups. The control group showed an increase of 12.85% while the experimental group recorded an increase of 14.85%; there is a 2% margin between these two groups. On the pre-test, the experimental group scored 0.67% higher than the control group. It must be noted that these groups were randomly selected.

The chart below compares the variance in the high and low scores within

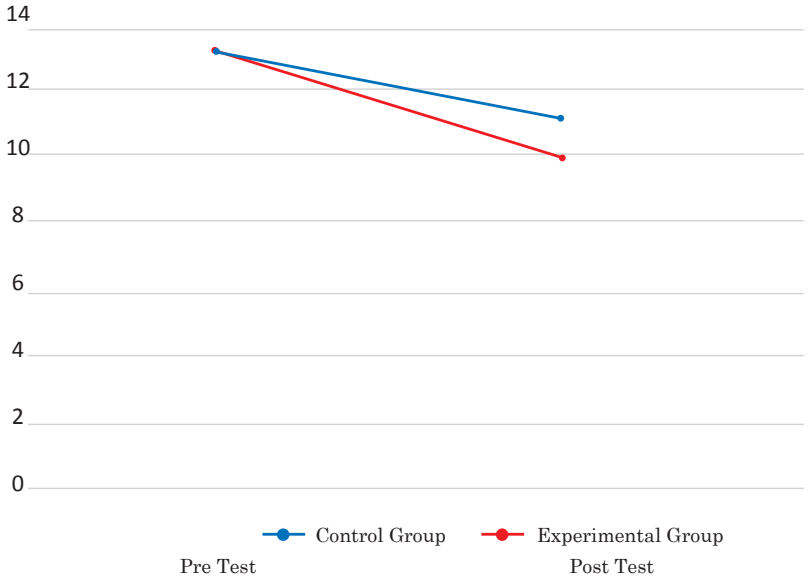
Chart Showing Average Pre- and Post-Test Scores for Control and Experimental Groups



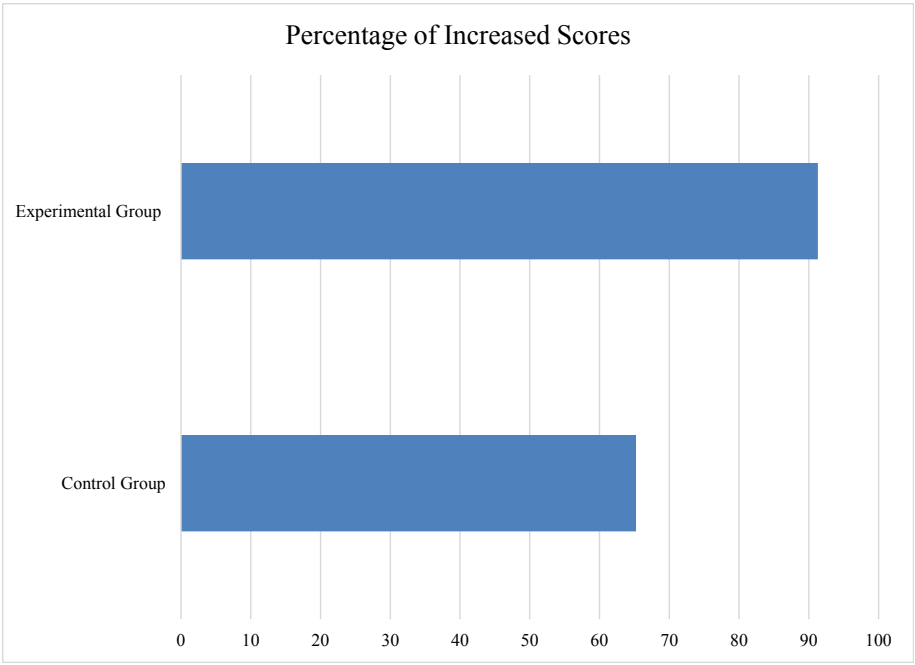
each group. On the pre-test, in both the control and experimental groups, the variance in high scores and low scores within both groups is 13. On the post-test, the variance between the high and low scores within the control group dropped to 11; this is indicative of enhanced group performance. The experimental group recorded a variance of 10; like the pervious graph, this one also establishes that the experimental group is performing better than the control group.

The following chart compares the percentage of students whose perfor-

Chart Showing the Range of Pre- and Post-Test Performance Scores for both Groups



mance improved after being taught. The control group records 65.22% of students whose scores increased by the end of this study. The experimental group records 91.30% of students whose scores increased by the end of this study. This chart, like the others before it, illustrates that using concept maps to teach comprehension is more effective than the traditional linear text approach.



Summation

This study, *Effectiveness of Concept Mapping in Higher Education to Teach Text Comprehension,* revealed that through the use of concept maps, which detail the textual relationships, concepts and matching cognitive domains, teachers can create an environment that enables students to develop and use higher-level comprehension skills. It seems that, in the initial stages of teaching comprehension, once students' working memories are not tasked with making textual connections, they can focus on the various textual relationships and the required cognitive domain that they must consciously engage, in order to understand beyond the literal meaning. This type of explicit scaffolding instruction has the potential to create strategic readers.

Using concept maps to teach text comprehension also aided in the creation of a non-discriminatory learning environment for learners who come from Guyana's various linguistic backgrounds. Many of the students who participated in this study are severely challenged by the syntactic and semantic nuances of Standard English. The various versions of the Creole spoken in Guyana differ syntactically and semantically from Standard English. Since students working memories are not taxed with grappling with the language issues, in addition to forming textual relationships, they are better able to focus on developing and employing the higher-level comprehension skills.

Teaching comprehension with concept maps can also stimulate essay writing. This is an excellent method to illustrate to students how main ideas are developed; thereby, underscoring the writer's craft. Students can apply this process of managing and critiquing information to write essays in which their arguments are logically developed.

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Appendices

Pre-Test Results – Control Group

1	12/0702	12
2	12/0702	14
3	12/0702	14.5
4	12/0715	14
5	12/0715	14.5
6	12/0715	9
7	12/0702	16.5
8	12/0702	18
9	11/0719	20
10	11/0712	14
11	11/0721	7.5
12	12/0721	12.5
13	12/0702	13.5
14	10/0719	14.5
15	12/0723	13
16	12/0723	6.5
17	12/0712	18.5
18	10/0702	7
19	11/0702	10
20	12/0702	15.5
21	11/0702	17.5
22	12/0702	14.5
23	12/0702	13

Pre-Test Results – Experimental Group

1	10/0721	12
2	10/0721	9
3	12/0709	15
4	12/0702	13.5
5	11/0702	14.5
6	11/0702	10.5
7	12/0702	16.5
8	11/0702	19
9	12/0719	18
10	12/0702	20
11	12/0721	9.5
12	12/0721	14
13	12/0715	17
14	10/0715	16
15	10/0723	11
16	11/0723	12
17	12/0723	18.5
18	12/0702	7
19	12/0702	13.5
20	12/0702	15.5
21	11/0702	15.5
22	12/0702	15
23	11/0723	13

Post-Test Control Group

1	12/0702	14
2	12/0702	14
3	12/0702	16
4	12/0715	15
5	12/0715	19
6	12/0715	12
7	12/0702	20
8	12/0702	18
9	11/0719	17
10	11/0712	15
11	11/0721	12
12	12/0721	16.5
13	12/0702	15
14	10/0719	14.5
15	12/0723	10
16	12/0723	9
17	12/0712	19.5
18	10/0702	10
19	11/0702	10
20	12/0702	17
21	11/0702	17
22	12/0702	15
23	12/0702	12

Post-Test Experimental Group

1	10/0721	14
2	10/0721	12
3	12/0709	18.5
4	12/0702	13.5
5	11/0702	16
6	11/0702	13
7	12/0702	19
8	11/0702	22
9	12/0719	18
10	12/0702	22
11	12/0721	13
12	12/0721	15.5
13	12/0715	17.5
14	10/0715	18
15	10/0723	14
16	11/0723	14
17	12/0723	19.5
18	12/0702	13
19	12/0702	17
20	12/0702	18
21	11/0702	21
22	12/0702	23
23	11/0723	16

Children's Play Disputes:

Early Childhood Teachers' Interpretations and Interventions

Godryne P. Wintz

Abstract

This study considers Guyanese early childhood teachers' interpretations and interventions in play disputes. The notion that children are experts in their own right is invoked as a fundamental framework for explaining young children's agency in settling play disputes, largely free from adult intervention. Qualitative data was collected through a self-administered questionnaire consisting 5 open-ended inquiries. Forty-five (45) undergraduate teachers from the University of Guyana participated in this study. The study utilised thematic analysis. The data gathered yielded several core themes regarding teachers' interpretations and interventions in play dispute: Play dispute: A source of conflict, Play dispute: A positive experience, Play dispute: A hindrance to development, We sort things out, We use discussion, We deny them privileges, We use warning, We provide alternatives, and We use storytelling. The study showed that while a majority of teachers described play dispute as healthy only a few of these teachers reported that they allowed the children to solve their dispute. Further analysis revealed that cessation strategies were popular among those teachers who reported that play dispute is healthy and those who described it as unhealthy.

Keywords: **Play dispute, teachers' interpretations, teachers' interventions, agency**

Introduction

Play constitutes a unique and crucial component in young children's development including cognitive and social skills; without play these skills would not develop (Weisberg, Zosh, Hirsh-Pasek & Golinkoff, 2013). Play comes naturally to children, and children are, by natural selection, designed to play (Brown, 2010; Gray, 2011). Like the spontaneity of play, disputes are embedded in young children's play and interaction both inside the classroom and on the playground. While play dispute presents challenges, it is perceived to be a natural and vital part of children's daily experiences. Learning to deal with such daily challenges begins early in life – on the playground, as preschoolers, where dispute resolution skills are first developed (Abrams, 2003). A valuable lesson that is learned at this tender age is that selecting an appropriate dispute resolution process is the most important factor in the successful resolution of a dispute (Abrams, 2003).

In this study, 'play dispute' refers to any conflictual interchange resulting from children's play interactions. Also applicable to this study, 'dispute' is an exchange in which one person does something [during a play situation] to which a second person ob-

jects (Hay & Ross, 1982 as cited in Mashford-Scott & Church, 2011).

Unlike traditional thinking of dispute between children as something negative, undesirable, and needing to be prevented or warranting adult intervention, recent theory and research suggests that play dispute contributes to children's development and learning and represents an important form of social interaction (Rende & Killen, 1992; Ross & Conant, 1992; Maynard, 1986; Goodwin, 1990, 2006; Danby & Farrell, 2009). Conflictual interchange and their resolution have been declared as fundamental processes in children's friendships and the development of a variety of language and interactional skills and communicative competence (Shantz, 1987; Danby & Baker, 2000; Evans, 2002; Church, Cohrssen & Mashford-Scott, 2011). Play dispute constructively managed not only stimulates the development of a myriad of interactional and interpersonal skills, but also promotes children's agency in arriving at solutions free from adult intervention (Church et al., 2011).

In early year's classrooms, play is valued as a means through which children learn. As children engage in play, there is a likelihood that relationships will be tested and that children will be confronted with challenging situations that may give rise to disputes. Teachers' actions in the classroom have a significant influence on the way children handle disputes and, in turn, the development of children's skills. The adult's role of being supportive, as children work to master their resolution skills becomes crucial. Research on conflictual interchange reveals that many teachers agree that conflict between peers is a valuable learning experience, yet they are more likely to stop the dispute than mediate it (Silver & Harkins, 2007). "Behave yourself!" and "Stop!" are common teacher expressions heard during my observations of teachers' classroom practice at the nursery school level in Guyana. This begs the question: To what extent are Guyanese teachers' interventions supportive of children's agency in resolving their 'own' disputes? It is anticipated that the findings of this study will serve as a reflective exercise for teachers' professional practice and their role in managing play dispute.

Research Aim and Questions

This qualitative study explored Guyanese early childhood teachers' interpretations of play disputes and examined the teachers' repertoire of intervention strategies. Consequently, the research questions addressed were: (1) What are early childhood teachers' interpretations of play dispute? (2) How do teachers intervene in play disputes?

The Participants

The sample consisted of forty-five (45) undergraduate early childhood teachers who were pursuing the Bachelor of Education Degree from the University of Guyana, Turkeyen Campus: twenty-five (25) third-year and twenty (20) fourth-year students. All of the participants hold a Certificate in Early Childhood Education from the University of Guyana. The teachers worked with children aged 3 years 9 months to 5 years 9 months. Their experience as trained teachers ranged from 5 to 20 years. The participants, whose ages ranged from 20-49 years, were all females. Participants worked in both

urban and rural schools. The participants were a multi-ethnic group comprising of Amerindians, Africans, East Indians, Portuguese, and mixed descent.

Theoretical Framework

The study's theoretical framework lies within the new sociology of childhood (James, Jenks & Prout, 1998; Mayall, 2002; Corsaro, 2005) which theorizes children as competent and active agents rather than passive objects. This agentic perspective views children as having agency –capable of reflecting upon and making decisions about things that concern them, and recognizing that their actions have consequences (Mayall, 2002). 'Child agency' means believing that children are capable of making choices and decisions, influencing events, and impacting on their world (see Mashford-Scott & Church, 2011). The child's role in constructing his or her experience of the world is active. Thus children are, in Bandura's (2001: 4) words, "agents of experience rather than simply under-goers of experiences". Tied to the concept of agency are key elements such as moral and intellectual autonomy (Mullin, 2007) and self-efficacy (Bandura, 2001). In line with the contemporary socio-constructivist view, a child is a highly skilled co-constructor of their own learning and environment. In addition, the promotion of children's rights to agency has long been high on the agenda of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC 1989). United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child positions children as being entitled to autonomy, to full participation in, and influential in matters that concern them (United Nations, 1989; Coady & Page, 2005; Page, 2008).

In terms of children's development, the influential role of children's interaction with others and participation in their environment is documented by a substantial body of research (Bandura, 2001; Corsaro 2005; Carpendale & Lewis 2006). As demonstrated by Mashford-Scott and Church (2011), the promotion of children's agency has a direct relationship on, and is foundational to, children's learning, development and well-being outcomes. It is important to recognize that conflicts are underpinned by claims of control and/or status; the social rules that underwrite this status are constructed by the children themselves (Corsaro 2005; Goodwin, 2006; Green & Cillessen, 2008; Cobb-Moore, Danby & Farrell, 2008; Church, 2009). This is demonstrative of the agency that children display in their negotiations.

Promoting Children's Agency through Dispute Resolution

The concept of human agency is generally understood, across various philosophical, sociological and psychological constructs, as a quality which enables an individual to initiate intentional action in order to achieve goals that are valued (see Mashford-Scott & Church, 2011). Research substantiates the claim that conflictual situations provide important avenues for children's social, cognitive and moral development (Goodwin, 2006; Cobb-Moore, et al., 2008; Green & Cillessen, 2008; Church, 2009). Children's participation in dispute resolutions provides opportunities for them to develop agency and autonomy (Mullin, 2007). This view parallels Mashford-Scott and Church's (2011) claim that, dispute situations provide

opportunities for children to develop and enact agency.

Social skills that enable ongoing positive relations with peer also develop when children participate in the resolution of disputes (Mashford-Scott & Church, 2011). This view parallels the claim, that peer disputes are a context which promotes the development of social competence (Maynard, 1986; Butler, 2008; Church, 2009) and "the ability to meet one's own needs while maintaining positive social relations with others" (Green & Cillessen, 2008, p. 161). Further, Goodwin and Goodwin (2004) have found that children's arguments and disagreements provide them with a rich arena for the development of proficiency in language, syntax and social organization. Goodwin (2006, p. 33) adds that a dispute "is an interactional accomplishment and one of the most important loci for the development of friendships and peer relationships". The claim that as children work to resolve disputes they are developing communicative competence has relevance here. Further, children's engagement in disputes allows them to express who they are and what counts as important to them in the conflict situation, by the goals they pursue and resist (Shantz 1987; Mullin, 2007).

Effectiveness of Teacher Intervention in Children's Dispute

Teachers play a pivotal role in managing play dispute. Essentially, the way teachers view dispute ultimately influences the way they intervene. Church, Cohrrsen and Mashford-Scott (2011) have found that teachers tend to intervene only when there is dispute escalation, for instance, if children are shouting or in response to a child's request. Silver and Harkins (2007) contend that although many teachers will agree that conflict is a valuable learning experience for children, these same teachers are more likely to stop the dispute than mediate it. As Dunst and Trivette (2009) assert, a gap exists between what teachers say they would do and what happens in practice.

Effective teacher intervention can support children to solve their own play disputes. Early childhood teachers are encouraged to support children's development of resolution strategies independent of adult intervention (Ramsey, 1991). Young children are indeed capable of resolving disputes on their own Church (2009) by employing tactics such as negotiating, reasoning, offering apologies and compromising (Silver & Harkins, 2007). Research also indicates that to oppose or persuade their peers, children employ strategies such as assertions, allegations, claims, contradictions, challenges, insults, requests for explanations; physical and verbal tactics that can be both aggressive and non-aggressive (Esenberg & Garvey, 1981, Maynard, 1986). As children, resolve disputes they are learning to take control of their own lives; learning and practicing life skills, thereby developing competence and confidence. However, due to socialization children often display tendencies to recruit teachers' assistance when confronting conflictual interchanges.

Silver and Harkins (2007) point out that while much research on conflict resolution suggests that children possess the interactional tools necessary to engage in interpersonal negotiations, research has also highlighted the tendency of teachers to intervene in the resolution process

with cessation – a strategy whereby teachers tell or direct children what to do. There is controversy regarding whether teachers should intervene in children's disputes or whether this interrupts the conflict resolution cycle (Roseth et al., 2008). Adult intervention may be inappropriate in relation to children's cultures, given the fact that children actively construct their own worlds (Cobb-Moore, et al., 2008). Classroom rules, for example, may not always correspond with rules navigated, negotiated and ratified by children (Cobb-Moore, et al., 2008). On the other hand, arguments in the literature support adult assistance in helping children to learn socioculturally acceptable ways of resolving their disputes (Rogoff, 2003).

Given the tension surrounding teacher interventions, the more productive types of intervention have been distinguished from those that are less productive. Interventions or strategies that impede on children's right to agency and autonomy, such as those characterized by 'cessation' or 'coercion', for example commanding and directing, are most common, yet most unproductive in supporting children's development (Devries & Zan, 1994: Chen, Fein, Killen & Tam, 2001). Interventions or strategies considered to be productive are those that respect the child's right to agency and choice, and serve to aid the development of particular skills, dispositions, understandings, or efficacy-beliefs (Devries & Zan, 1994). Such interventions or strategies are characterized by 'mediation' or 'cooperation', for example questioning and explaining.

Research suggests that productive forms of teacher intervention involve supporting children's agency. Church, Cohrrsen and Mashford-Scott (2011) assert that effective forms of teacher intervention involve supporting children to be active in the collaborative resolution of their disputes and are underpinned by a principle of fairness. Focusing on resolution rather than on the cause of the conflict, inviting children to participate in the discussion, acknowledging each child's suggestion as valid and inviting or prompting children to respond to each other's contributions and to making the final judgment are some effective strategies highlighted by Church, Cohrrsen and Mashford-Scott (2011).

Methodology

In seeking to explore early childhood teachers' interpretations of play disputes and examine the teachers' repertoire of intervention strategies, this study employed a qualitative mode. The qualitative approach allows for gaining access to the perspectives of participants (Bryman, 2004). Relevant data was obtained via a survey, conducted with forty-five (45) undergraduate teachers. The participants responded anonymously to a questionnaire consisting of five (5) open-ended inquiries regarding children's play disputes, namely:

1. Tell me, what is play?
2. Tell me about your concept of play dispute.
3. Tell me, do you think play dispute is something healthy? Why or why not?
4. Tell me, what forms of play dispute do you encounter in your classroom?
5. Tell me, how do you intervene in play dispute in your classroom?

The structure of the questionnaire was influenced by Izumi Taylor, Samuelson and Rogers' (2010) ques-

tionnaire that focused on play.

The questionnaire was pilot tested on six (6) first-year and six (6) second-year students, who were pursuing the Bachelor of Education Degree specializing in Early Childhood Education. No adjustment was made to the questions posed. The 5-item questionnaire was then group-administered to the two (2) intact class groups: one third-year and one fourth-year class. Both groups comprised students who were pursuing the Bachelor of Education Degree, specializing in Early Childhood Education at the University of Guyana, Turkeyen Campus. The sample was purposively selected due to accessibility.

In conducting this research, consideration was given to a number of ethical guidelines, including information, consent, confidentiality and conduct. The participants were apprised, in advance, of the purpose of the data collection and their consent to participate in the study was requested. Participants' willingness to participate and their right to withdraw from the study at any time were also important considerations. They were also assured that anonymity would be maintained in the reporting of and use of the data.

A thematic analysis of the survey data was conducted to examine teachers' interpretations of play dispute and intervention strategies they employed. Thematic analysis is a process of "encoding qualitative information" (Boyatzis 1998). Thematic analysis places emphasis on "what is said …" (Bryman 2004). Data from the questionnaire survey was reviewed and sorted into categories to identify recurring patterns and emerging themes.

Results

Teachers' Interpretations of Play Dispute

The teachers' interpretations of play dispute were not without a consideration of the concept of play. The participants' responses revealed that they conceptualised play as an activity that significantly contributes to children's learning and development. The participants conceived play to be an activity that aids the healthy development of children. One participant conceptualized play as, "an opportunity for exploration and discovery". Play was also described as "an activity that teaches children social skills". Another participant posited, "Play is a pleasurable experience carried out both individually and among children. It greatly aids in children's learning". One participant aptly summed play up as "a fun activity that promotes children's total development".

Play as an interactive activity was mentioned by some of the participants and all of the participants valued play as a social experience. One participant stated, "Play is an interactive and learning process. Through play children learn interactive skills". One participant described play as, "a fun activity that encourages social interaction and building of friendships". Play was also perceived as "a social experience". One participant wrote: "Play is a happy form of interaction which sometimes results in conflict"; a response that certainly supports the claim that play disputes are embedded in children's play.

The teachers' interpretations of play dispute are presented under three themes: Play Dispute: A Conflict Situation, Play dispute: A Positive Experience, Play Dispute: A Hindrance to Development.

Play Dispute: A Conflict Situation:

The participants had similar conceptualizations of play dispute. They referred to it as a conflict situation. A few of the participants described play dispute as a fight. One participant conceptualized play dispute as, "A disagreement that is hard to find a solution to". Another stated, "My concept of play dispute is when children are always fighting and arguing over play materials. And there can never be enough materials for them to use, when they see their friends have more than them – there is a dispute". Another participant declared, "Play dispute is a conflict that results in fights and argument".

Play Dispute: A Positive Experience:

A majority (27) of the participants described play dispute as something healthy. Their responses revealed that, like play, play dispute aids children's development and learning. One participant reported, "Play dispute aids the healthy development of children in all areas". Other claims made by the participants were that play dispute "allows children to share opinions, negotiate and compromise" and "helps children to better understand others". Play dispute was also claimed to "help children to learn how to be a friend". One participant wrote, "Play dispute is something healthy because children are able to sort out their differences and come to an understanding". Another participant stated, "Play dispute is healthy because it allows the children to celebrate their differences. It allows them to know that he or she is unique and that each person must be respected. It allows the child to compromise and value the opinion of others". Play dispute was also claimed to "promote problem-solving, build children's self-confidence and self-esteem, help children to express their emotions and teach children that they cannot always be in control".

Play Dispute: A Hindrance to Development:

A minority (18) of the participants indicated that play dispute was negative and unhealthy. One participant reported, "Play dispute is unhealthy because children could get hurt as a result of the dispute". Others believed that children could become aggressive during a dispute. One participant noted, "Dispute hinders children's social development". Another participant stated, "Play dispute hinders children socially, emotionally and physically".

Teachers' Interventions in Play Dispute

The teachers' interventions in play dispute ranged from cessation to storytelling and are captured under the following themes: We sort things out, We use discussion, We deny them privileges, We use warning, We provide alternatives, and We use storytelling. Participants reported that the disputes they confronted in their classrooms were commonly associated with access and possession issues. A majority of the participants declared that disputes frequently resulted from access and possession of a particular toy or friends. Others reported that disputes in the classroom often stemmed from children wanting to be in control and wanting to maintain control over or dominate the play. Some participants reported that disagreements and arguments were common forms of dispute behaviours they encountered.

The forty-five participants employed six intervention strategies to manage play disputes (see Table 1). Eleven participants used one intervention strategy. Twenty-seven used two strategies, while seven participants listed three strategies.

Table 1
Teachers' Intervention in Play Dispute

Themes	Teacher Intervention Strategy	Popularity of Intervention
We sort things out	Cessation	37 (82.2%)
We use discussion	Discussion	37 (82.2%)
We deny them privileges	Denial of privileges	4 (8.8%)
We use warning	Warning	2 (4.4%)
We provide alternatives	Provide alternatives	5 (11.1%)
We use storytelling	Dissuasion through storytelling	7 (15.5%)

The data, in table 1, show that a high proportion (37) of the participants reported that they used cessation strategies and the same amount used discussion. When discussion is used as an intervention strategy the participants indicated that they would first terminate the dispute and then have a discussion with the children involved. Cessation hinges on directing or suggesting decisions and the teachers taking the lead in sorting things out themselves. Five of 27 participants who conceived play to be healthy reported that they used cessation strategies. One participant claimed, "I give the toy to the child who had it first". Another indicated, "I take away the toy or item that is causing the problem". A participant stated, "I have the child apologise". One participant reported, "To overcome play dispute in my classroom, I tell the children they must share the materials with each other. If they do not hear on two occasions, I will ask the group to pack away the materials that are causing the dispute and take other materials to play with".

The second most popular intervention strategy was dissuasion through storytelling. Seven participants indicated that they used storytelling as a strategy to dissuade children from getting involved in disputes. As reported by one participant, "Children who are selfish are told stories to bring out the concept of sharing and benefits of sharing". Next was providing alternative solutions to help children to solve their disputes. One of the five participants indicated, "I provide children with alternatives. Providing alternatives is an intervention strategy that helps the children to manage their own dispute". Another participant declared, "When there is a dispute in my classroom, I would sometimes have a chat with the children giving them the opportunity to think of a positive way or other ways of dealing with the issue. Other times, I would observe them and allow them to solve it on their own". One participant stated, "Most

of the time I don't intervene in play dispute in my class. I would sit and observe the disagreement and allow them to work out their differences. If they cannot solve the problem then, I would intervene".

Four participants stated that they used denial of privileges as an intervention strategy by depriving the children involved in the dispute from playing with the 'disputed toy'. Two participants used warning which was the least popular intervention strategy.

A majority of the participants had witnessed extreme forms of dispute behaviour including biting, hitting and fighting. In these cases participants seldom used denial of privileges and warning. Cessation and discussion dominated the intervention strategies employed.

Discussion

This study sought to explore the teachers' interpretations of play dispute and to examine their repertoire of intervention strategies. The findings revealed that the majority (27) of teachers described play dispute as healthy, yet only five of them encouraged the children to solve their own dispute by providing them with alternative solutions to problems. Evidence of their classroom practice, as reported by the teachers, does not support their claim that play dispute is indeed healthy. This apparent contradiction may well be an act of 'lip service' rather than grounded understandings of the benefits of play dispute to children's learning, development and well-being. Such action by teachers certainly limits children's engagement in negotiations with peers, in making important decisions about how to solve their disputes and developing a myriad of interactional and interpersonal skills. As the literature suggests, play dispute provides opportunities for children to develop a variety of language and interactional skills and communicative competence (Church, Cohrssen & Mashford-Scott, 2011). Teachers must be cognizant that conflictual interchanges provide important avenues for children's social, cognitive and moral development (Church, 2009; Cobb-Moore, et al, 2008; Green & Cillessen, 2008; Goodwin, 2006).

Additionally, a high proportion of participants admittedly resorted to cessation strategies; telling children what to do. Why do teachers readily resort to such strategies? Teachers' interpretation of play dispute as something unhealthy might explain why some teachers impulsively terminate the dispute as soon as it starts (Silver and Harkins, 2007). When teachers command or tell children what to do they are not being supportive of children's agency.

Moreover, such findings contrast with Mashford-Scott and Church's (2011) assertion that, the promotion of children's agency has a direct relationship on, and is foundational to children's learning, development and well-being outcomes. It is essential that teachers see themselves as promoters of children's learning and development. Teachers must be able to separate their 'adult' role from the role of teacher in a learning environment – ultimately the way adults see children.

Interestingly, it was noted that cessation as an intervention strategy was popular among teachers who described play dispute as healthy and those who described play dispute as unhealthy. As the literature suggests,

this accounts for the gap that exists between what teachers say they would do and what happens in practice (Dunst and Trivette, 2009). Such action by teachers is also indicative of teachers' lack of understanding of the effectiveness of teacher intervention and how this may support children to resolve their own disputes (Church, et al., 2011). Vygotsky's thinking that teachers can provide appropriate assistance as children try to "reach' new skills has relevance here. Without denying the importance of children's agency in solving their own disputes, the teacher's role becomes increasingly important in scaffolding children's development of interpersonal skills necessary for effective communication and the development of positive non-violent ways of resolving disputes. Further, in the absence of more sophisticated problem solving strategies, the teacher's role in scaffolding children's learning, guiding the process of their interactions, establishing rules and stopping dispute escalation when necessary is indeed crucial.

Essentially, teachers can help to promote children's social competence by building their communication skills and facilitating peer friendships. The ideal role of the teacher is to equip children with skills needed to constructively manage challenging social situations. Such interventions build on Bandura's social-cognitive theory which posits that children learn social skills through observation and interaction with parents, teachers and others in the environment as well as media role models. Bandura's theory demonstrates that social modelling and role-playing aimed at enhancing social interaction and helping children find non-violent alternatives to dispute resolution lends support to adult intervention in children's dispute.

The study's findings also revealed that the type of dispute behaviours teachers encountered in their classroom did not dictate the forms of interventions used. Results showed cessation strategies to be widely used. This supports the findings of Chen et al. (2001) that cessation strategies were most favoured among teachers regardless of the age or the conflict resolution behaviour of the children involved.

Additionally, the results revealed that although the teachers reportedly used discussion as a strategy, the discussion followed cessation strategies as teachers would first terminate the dispute. This concurs with Silver and Harkins' (2007) findings that although teachers agree that play dispute is a valuable learning experience for children they are more likely to stop it. Further, of all the interventions teachers reportedly used, providing children with alternatives is among those considered to be productive. Such strategy respects the child's right to agency and choice and serves to aid the development of particular skills, dispositions, understandings, or efficacy-beliefs (Devries & Zan, 1994).

Concluding Remarks

Much research on conflictual interchanges suggests that play disputes are complex social interactions that provide a context for children to master interactional and personal skills, and in Piagetian terminology, learn to take the perspective of others and decrease egocentrism. Although young children tend to recruit teachers' assistance in supplying a solution

to their problem, teachers would do well to allow children time to develop their own resolutions. Children only stand to gain when given the choice of negotiating, deciding whether to change the activity or give up a 'disputed toy', to drop the issue or to create new rules. Essentially, teachers should see their role as providing appropriate support in dispute resolution. They must be cognizant that children, who lack social problem-solving skills, when faced with social situations for which they are emotionally and cognitively unprepared are likely to react in aggressive ways. In line with Bandura's social-cognitive theory, teachers play a significant role in providing children access to models of knowledge, skills and behaviours they are expected to learn.

Moreover, the teacher's first action should not be to terminate the conflict situation as soon as it starts unless the child's right to safety is threatened. Teachers should know their children well enough and use this knowledge to help in their judgement about dispute situations. It is the teacher's responsibility to encourage children's active participation and interaction in social situations, including peer disputes, as this provides opportunities for the assertion of agency and autonomy (Mullin 2007). It is crucial for teachers to reflect on their classroom practice and position themselves as promoters of children's agency. In this respect, children will not merely be treated as under-goers of experiences but rather as agents of experience (Bandura, 2001). However, it is recognized that this can only be achieved when teachers better understand the effectiveness of teacher intervention, and how this intervention may support children to resolve their own disputes. Teachers are challenged to question their role in enhancing productive dispute resolution. Should their role be to intervene to 'stop fights' or 'sort things out'? I argue that skilling children is indeed crucial. Further research on Guyanese teachers' evaluation and understandings of the effectiveness of teacher intervention in children's play dispute is recommended.

Biographical Note

Godryne Wintz is a lecturer in early childhood education and Head of the Department of Foundation and Education Management at the University of Guyana. She has a strong commitment to child development. Her research interests include play in early years, children and the media, and children's rights.

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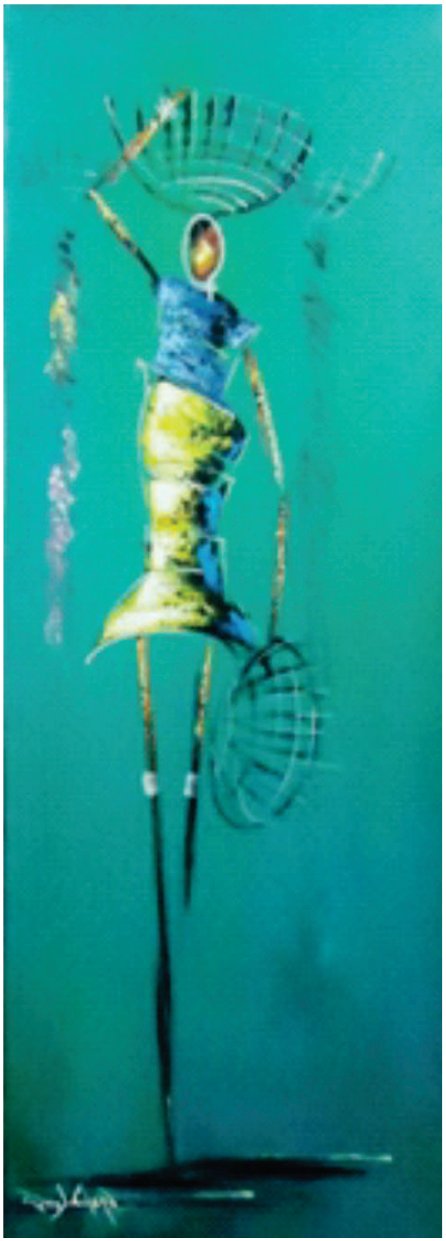
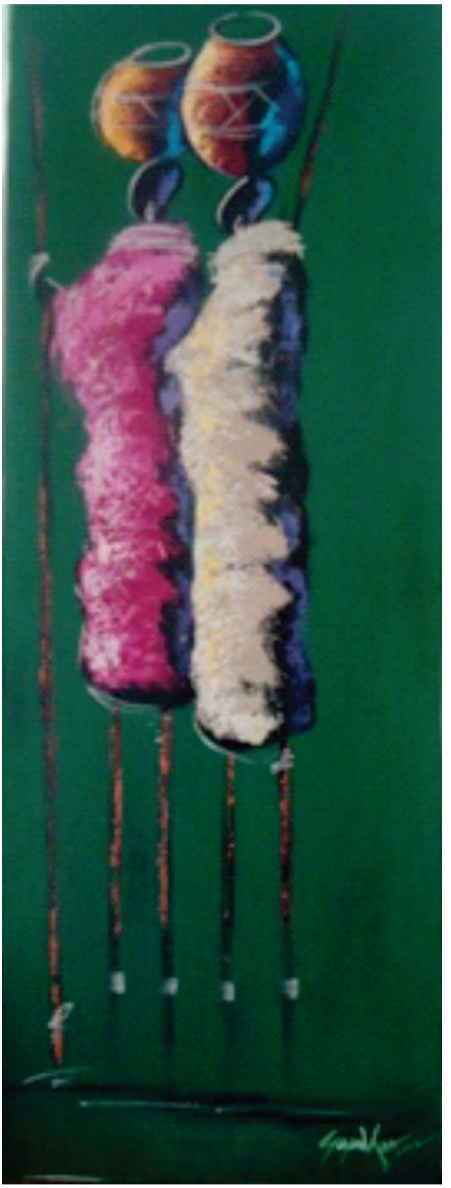
Winslow Craig, Release, 2013, Saaman, 24x10x12 inches

Philbert Gajadhar, Abakashama bafuma mukutema inkuni – Girls from Cuttng Fire Wood, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 37 x 13inches.

Winslow Craig, Higher Ground, 2014 , Mixed Media, 72x 22x7 inches



Philbert Gajadhar, Bana mayo bafuma kuchishima – Women from the Well, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 37 x 13 inches



Philbert Gajadhar, Bana mayo bafuma kuchishima – Women from the Well, 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 37 x 13 inches

Philbert Gajadhar, Bana mayo bafuma kumabala III – Women from the Farm 2012, Acrylic on canvas, 37 x 13inches

Utilizing Portfolio as an Assessment Tool in Science: Teachers' Perceptions and Concerns

Azad Khan

Abstract

This study reports on the perceptions and concerns that teachers showed when exposed to portfolio usage as an assessment tool in their science course at the university. The data was collected from sixty seven (67) undergraduate in-service student teachers, who were exposed to portfolio usage as an assessment tool in one science course. Data was collected by using a questionnaire which solicited the teachers' use and exposure by faculty of various modes of assessment. The data was analyzed using cluster means, percentages, graphical plots, correlation and t-test analysis; this addressed the perceptions and concerns of the teachers. The study revealed that the most frequently used mode of assessment in science is the traditional mode (objective and/or subjective). Correlation analysis, rxy =0.89, showed that a high level of congruency between the modes of assessment used by in-service teachers and faculty, indicated that the extent of use of the assessment modes by teachers in the schools are similar to those which they are exposed. Portfolios are seldom used. The ways student-teachers are assessed in science content, are the way they also assess. T-test analysis showed that the traditional mode of assessment is used to a significantly greater extent than authentic assessment by both in-service teachers and faculty. The main concern expressed by the teachers were that portfolio usage would be unsuitable for the lower grades in the primary schools. Other significant concerns were the time required for preparation and marking of portfolios. Finally, the overall findings are interpreted to signal that an intervention is needed in the way we assess.

Keywords: alternative assessment, performance assessment, authentic assessment, student teachers, portfolio, science

Introduction

It is often said 'show me your test/test items and I will know how and what to study to pass the examinations.' Students can master taking and passing examinations, but they may not develop an adequate knowledge of the subject matter or the skills to operate in an effective way in the world of work or in the laboratory. The "hands on" application of correct scientific principles and procedures are particularly important in problem solving in science. Arguably one of the more important reasons why students do not opt in great numbers to do science, or to develop good enquiry skills, could be a result of the way we assess our students. With traditional testing procedures, students become engrossed in remem-

bering the language of science; trying to memorize new words, their spelling and their special meanings for written science tests.

Even laboratory procedures, results and inferences are memorized in preparation for tests. It is felt that many inquiry and research skills associated with learning science, getting to understand and appreciate science, and using the scientific approach in problem solving are overlooked by both teachers and students in a significant way in the quest for grades at paper and pencil tests. The way the teacher assesses determines the way the students will prepare for examinations, which will determine the amount and kind of knowledge and skills that students carry with them to the work environment, higher learning institutions, and back to the classrooms as teachers and so on.

Birgin & Bakti (2007) argues that recent educational developments such as constructivism and multiple intelligence theories as well as society-requested new trends, engendered radical changes in traditional approaches of instruction and assessment. How the teacher assesses in the classroom has a significant impact on the future performance and effectiveness of the students. Zollman & Jones (1994) claim that within the past decades going back to 1980s, educational reform has caused "portfolios and other type of performance based assessment to be recognized as viable alternatives to standardized tests."

Zollman & Jones (1994) claims that with the emphasis on performance assessment, the use of portfolios comes from a widespread dissatisfaction with more traditional methods of assessment which include standardized achievement test, criterion-referenced tests, unit tests and so on. He indicated that educators are dissatisfied with traditional assessments, because traditional assessments have been based upon an outdated and inappropriate model of literacy, and that the research of process versus product has changed the way we view assessment.

Traditional assessments are often removed from real purposes and uses, test esoteric skills in isolation, and ignore the prior knowledge and thinking strategies. It focuses on competitive success on test rather than on authentic learning. Traditional assessments often provide results that are understood by students, are of limited use to teachers, and are subject to misuse and misinterpretation by policy makers (Neill & Medina, 1989; Parris & Winograd, 1990).

Nowadays, one of the alternative assessment techniques used in various disciplines such as mathematics, science and social sciences and so forth, is portfolio (Birgin & Bakti 2007). In the field of initial teacher training, portfolios are widely used to assess pre-service teachers' performance as well as the outcomes of university-based teacher preparation programmes (Denney, Grier & Buchanan, 2012).

In this study, in-service teachers were taught science and assessed using objective items, essay items, laboratory sessions, presentations and portfolio. Most of the students, when presented with developing a portfolio for assessment,

were unsure of how to proceed as they were not previously exposed to this method of evaluation.

What Is Portfolio Assessment?

Jorgensen (1996), in detailing the theory and practice of portfolio assessment in mathematics and science in a project funded by the National Science Foundation, surmised that portfolio assessment is typically described as a purposeful collection of students work that exhibits the student's efforts, progress, and achievements in one or more areas. The collection must include student participation in selecting contents, the criteria for selection, the criteria for judging merit and evidence of student self-reflection. The study was conducted over a three year period with six school systems in Georgia, US, and focused on portfolio usage from grades 3 to 6 in mathematics and science. These Grades are equivalent to Primary School Grades 3 to 6 in Guyana.

Over the years, portfolio assessment as a form of authentic assessment has gained ground to such an extent that some argue more radically; for example, in one study it is claimed that portfolio assessment is often used by faculty in teacher preparation programmes as part of the graduation requirements for pre-service teachers. In some cases, portfolio assessment has replaced the traditional 'exit exam' (Van Sickle, Bogan, Kamen, Baird& Butcher, 2005). The purpose of portfolio assessment in either case, is to receive a more thorough and accurate portrayal of the future teachers' abilities and skills in the classroom and in the school (Bull, Sebastian and Fletcher 1994). Authors such as Cavanaugh & Linek (1995), Peterson (1989), and Ryan & Kuhs (1993), suggest that portfolios show the abilities and interests of the student. They further purport that a major value of portfolio creation is for the student to self-evaluate their understanding and personal growth. Such portfolios would contain documentation of attitudes, behaviours, achievement, improvements, thinking, and reflective self-evaluation (Linek, 1991). Fung (2006), argues that the use of portfolio assessment in teacher education has a number of potential benefits as it can: provide a more comprehensive picture of student teachers' performance throughout a course of study, document their learning process and development, and provide opportunities for self-evaluation. Marsh (1997) argues that positive properties of portfolios include that they are holistic, focus on demonstrating competence, includes higher order outcomes of knowledge and skills, can serve both formative and summative functions, can have qualitative and quantitative components, can be very motivating to students, and can encourage teachers and principals to think systematically.

Some disadvantages or concerns of using portfolios identified by Marsh (1997), are that they are: time consuming to prepare, difficult to collect and store, lacking in administrative support, difficult in specifying criteria for student work, and weak content knowledge in some areas by the teacher. Also, Jorgensen (1996) contended that rating or scoring portfolios are difficult and may vary because of the idiosyncratic nature of portfolios.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study were

to determine:

- The extent of use of the various modes of assessment by the in-service student teachers and faculty in teaching science
- Whether there is a significant difference in the frequency of use of the traditional modes (objective and subjective) of assessments, as against authentic modes by both the in-service student teachers and the lecturers in the Faculty of Education and Humanities (FEH)
- Teachers' perceptions of this form of assessment with other forms of assessment and perceptions of the possible benefits of portfolio usage in the science classroom.
- The concerns by student teachers in using portfolio in the assessment of science.

Research Questions

1. What are the most frequently used modes of assessment by in-service science teachers and lecturers? Is there a correlation between in-service teacher and faculty use of the various modes of assessment?
2. Is the extent of the use of the traditional assessment mode significantly more than the authentic assessment mode by i). In-service teachers and ii). Faculty?
3. What are some perceived benefits of portfolio usage as an assessment tool?
4. What are some of the concerns teachers have about portfolio usage in their second year science course and in using it in their classrooms?

Design and Methodology

The survey design was used. The survey utilized a questionnaire which was administered to the participants for them to complete and return. One hundred and twenty (120) questionnaires were printed and distributed to students who were exposed to the second year science course in Education. A total of sixty seven (67) questionnaires were collected sorted and used for this research.

Population and Sample

The population consisted of the in-service teachers in the Faculty of Education and Humanities in the second year science class, and those who had completed the course but are now in their third and final years at University of Guyana, Turkeyen Campus. These teachers are from the various ethnic groups, geographic locations, socioeconomic status, and religious backgrounds. The student teachers were all Cyril Potter College of Education (CPCE) graduates but with different lengths of teaching experiences and operated at different grades in schools. All the subjects teach science.

Instrument

The questionnaire comprised of two sections

1. Biographic data
2. Item Clusters on:
   - Teachers' commitment
   - Teachers' pedagogical skills
   - Parental environment
   - School environment

For each item, the respondent had to indicate whether s/he used portfolios 'very often', 'often', 'seldom', or 'never', in keeping with the modified

Likert 4 point scale or forced choice scale.

On the scale, mean values found are interpreted as: 1= very often, 1.5 to <2.5 = often, between 2.5 and <3.5 =seldom and > 3.5 = never. Also, mean values <2.5 indicate that the activity is occurring often and mean values >2.5 indicate the activity is occurring seldom.

A panel of four experts (education and measurement and evaluation) was asked to proofread and validate the instrument. Suggestions and comments were used in correcting and improving the instrument. A draft was pilot tested with ten student teachers; difficulties and clarifications sought by the teachers were noted and utilized in preparing the final questionnaire.

Statistical Analysis

The returned questionnaires were sorted, numbered, and the data extracted onto a broadsheet. The mean scores and standard deviations were calculated for each item and for each cluster representing a research question. A descriptive analysis by way of comparison of the values obtained was then carried out for each research question. The inferential analysis was conducted for significant difference between each factor at the two schools using the t-test at the 0.05 level.

Data Analysis - Results and Discussion

Research Question 1

What are the most frequently used modes of assessment by in-service teachers in the classroom? How does this compare to the assessment modes to which they are exposed by faculty?

Table 1.1: Modes of assessment ranked from highest to lowest extent of usage

Rank	Modes of assessment	Mean Score (Method faculty use to assess students trs)	Mean Score (Method used by trs. to assess students)	No. of respondents	Comments: **Method is used**
1.	Objective	1.7	1.2	67	**often** by lecturers at UG and **very often** by trs. in schools
2.	Subjective/ essay	1.9	1.7	67	**often** by lecturers at UG and by trs. in the schools
3.	Presentations	2.0	2.62	67	**often** by lecturers at UG and **seldom** by trs. in the schools
4.	Research Projects	2.2	2.57	67	**often** by lecturers at UG and **seldom** by trs. in the schools
5.	Lab Practical	3.2	2.96	67	**seldom** by both lecturers at UG and by trs. in the schools

6.	Portfolios	3.87	3.60	67	**never** by lecturers at UG and **never** by trs. in the schools
7.	Other	3.31	3.53	11	**seldom** by lecturers at UG and **never** by trs. in the schools.

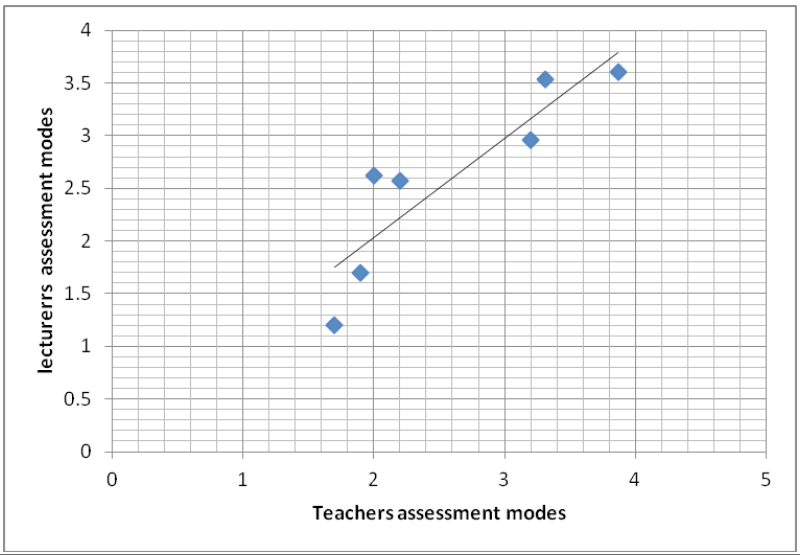
Using a modified four points (4) Likert Scale, mean values found are interpreted as very often =1, often = 1.5 to < 2.5 and 3.0 =seldom and never = >3.5. Also mean values <2.5 indicates that the activity is occurring often and mean values >2.5 seldom occurring.

When the modes of assessment used are ranked by frequency of usage (Table 1), it is shown that the objective test is the most frequently used method by both in-service teachers and lecturers at the University in F.E.H. followed by subjective tests. However, teachers in the classroom use the objective tests more often (1.2 ~1) in the classroom than the lecturers (1.7~2) in F.E.H.

Lecturers also use presentation and research projects often (2.0) to assess students, but teachers seldom (2.6) use these assessment methods in the classroom. Also both lecturers and teachers in the classroom seldom use laboratory practical to assess students. Lecturers rarely or never (3.60 approx. 4) use portfolios as a method of assessment, and school teachers never use portfolios (3.87 approx 4). Lecturers also use other methods to assess students but the in-service teachers do not.

A close relationship seems to exist between the methods used by lecturers and the methods used by the undergraduate school teachers.

Figure 1: Scatter diagram showing relationship in the use of different modes of assessment by both undergraduate teachers and lecturers.



A correlation test was done to test and determine the extent of the relationship. A correlation rxy value of 0.89 was found indicating a very strong correlation between the assessment practices by the in-service teachers and faculty. This is interpreted to mean that the extent of use the various assessment modes by in-service teachers, is similar to the extent of use by faculty. The results, here, confirm the use of the various modes of assessment to a similar extent by the in-service teachers and faculty, indicating, an overall assessment practice is closely linked to how they are assessed by faculty.

However, table 1.1 indicates that the traditional assessment mode (objective/subjective) is much more frequently used than the authentic mode, thus, the modes of assessment were split into two groups, namely traditional mode and non-traditional mode (authentic). The t-test was used to investigate if the traditional mode was used significantly more than the non-traditional modes (authentic).

Research Question 2

Is there a significant difference in the assessment modes (traditional versus non-traditional) used by (i) the in-service teachers and (ii) those to which they are exposed by lecturers in the FEH?

The t-test was used to test for significant difference in the frequency of use of these two groups of assessment by both the in-service teachers and lecturers.

Table 1.3: Means scores of lecturers and school teachers use of written – in-class test as against other forms of assessment.

	Mean score Objective/ Essay (traditional)	Mean score On other types of assessment (non-traditional)	Comments: T-test used (t_{able} = 1.98) P=0.05 d_f = 132
FEH lecturers	1.8	2.92	T_{calc}= 7.75 Significantly different
Student Teachers	1.45	3.06	T_{calc}= 7.07 Significantly different

The results show that there is a significant difference in the frequency of use of the traditional modes of assessment as against the non-traditional modes (table 1.3). The traditional mode is being used significantly more frequently in assessment than the non-traditional mode by both the in-service teachers and lecturers in the Faculty.

The findings are interpreted to indicate that both the teachers and the lecturers have not yet bought into using the more authentic forms of assessment, and show a significant preference in practice by using the traditional mode of assessment. This finding on the practice of assessment is not the best for students since it is neither holistic nor authentic. Also the findings are indicating a reluctance for the adoption of more current assessment modes as is happening in parallel institutions of the developed countries. It is felt that there is need for inclusion of more authentic modes of assessment, thereby, reforming the widespread use of traditional methods of evaluation.

Research Question 3

What are some perceived benefits of portfolio usage as an assessment tool?

Importantly, it must be noted that most of the students, when presented with developing a portfolio for assessment, were unsure of how to proceed, as they were not previously exposed to this method of evaluation.

The responses were split into two groups. The first group looked at perceptions of portfolio as a method of assessment (Table 2.1) and the second group of responses dealt with their perceptions of using it in their classrooms (Table 2.2).

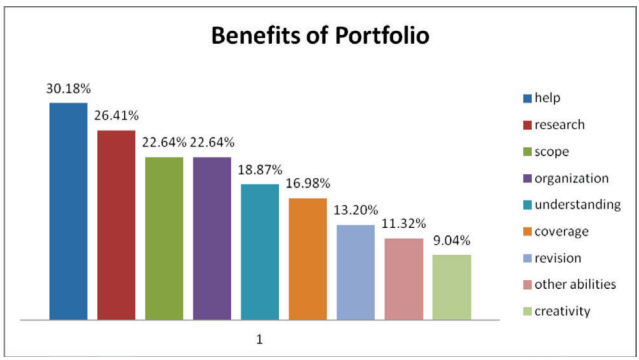
Table 2.1: Benefits of Portfolio Usage.

No.	Benefit to students/teacher	Score/ frequency	% Respondents (53)
1.	Helps them to learn/on their own /at own pace	16	30.18%
2.	Students develop research skills	14	26.41%
3.	It gives more scope for assessing students	12	22.64%
4.	Develop organization skills	12	22.64%
5.	Allows students to show their understanding	10	18.87%
6.	Allows wider/ in-depth coverage of content	9	16.98%
7.	Useful for later learning/ revision/reflection	7	13.20%
8.	Allows tr. to measure other abilities/ multiple intelligences	6	11.32%
9.	Encourages students creativity	5	9.04%

For this item, the respondents were asked to identify the benefits of doing a portfolio for their science course. Their responses were varied and had to be grouped as shown in the table. Some respondents identified more than one benefit. These group responses were then ranked and place in a table (Table 2.2).

The most frequent benefit in being exposed to portfolio usage was that it helped them to learn namely on their own (in their own way) and at their own pace. Also, they were impressed that portfolio usage allowed them to develop research skills. The least perceived was that encouraged creativity with only 9 percent indicated that it encouraged creativity. A plot of the perceived benefits is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Bar graph showing perceived benefits of portfolios



These findings, as they relate to the perception of benefits when using this method of assessment, are consistent with other researchers who have published on the subject (Zollman, 1994, Jorgensen, 1996).

Table 2.2: Perceptions of portfolio usage in their classroom.

Item Description	No. of trs.	%	Comments
First time using portfolio	62	92.5%	
Use of portfolio in other course	5	7.5%	Practicum
Are you now inclined to use portfolio?	62	92.5%	
Is it a good assessment tool?	43	69.35%	

Most (92.5%) of the teachers indicate that they were using it for the first time in the Faculty (FEH) with only 7.5% claiming the use of it in Practicum.

Most teachers indicate a willingness to use it in their classroom in the future and the ones who indicated unwillingness were under the impression that it would not be appropriate to use in the primary level. This is a misunderstanding, as it can and has been used widely at this level and in science (Jorgensen, 1994, Gottesman & Villa 2001). The activities/demands/challenges would obviously have to be adjusted for that level.

Research Question 4

What are some of the concerns teachers have about portfolio usage in their ESC313 course and in using it in their classrooms?

Table 3: Teachers main concerns in using portfolios ranked by frequency of responses.

Rank	Main concerns	Score / frequency respondents	Percentage of respondents (53)
1.	Should not be used at lower levels of the primary schools(1,2,3,4)	14	26.41%
2.	Time consuming to prepare	12	22.64%
3.	Useful for secondary students	11	20.75%
4.	Time consuming to mark	9	16.98%
5.	Not suitable for primary schools at all levels	7	13.21%
6.	May be frustrating/ fatiguing for primary pupils to do	6	11.32%

NB: Some respondents stated more than one concern.

The highest ranked concern of the teachers was that it should not be used at the lower levels in the primary schools (26.41%). Another 13.21% felt it was not suitable for primary schools at all levels, and 11.32% were concerned it would be too frustrating or fatiguing for primary pupils to undertake. Many felt a good portfolio would be time consuming to prepare and time consuming to mark. This is consistent with the disadvantages cited by Marsh (1997) in the use of portfolio as an assessment tool.

Conclusion and Implications

The modes of assessment most frequently used by both in-service teachers in schools and faculty in the FEH are the traditional objective and essay items with minimal use of portfolio as an assessment tool. The implications of this are that there is need for reform to come more in line with international trends in keeping with new learning and assessment theories (Zollman 1994, Jorgensen 1996, Gottesman 2001). There is, however, a greater preference for use of the traditional mode of assessment in their practice as against the more non-traditional authentic mode such as portfolios.

The findings on the perceptions and concerns of the in-service teachers are consistent with literature. They expressed positive views about the use of portfolio and indicated that portfolios greatest help is to the learners, and that it develops skills, content and creativity. The in-service teachers' perceptions, that it allows a holistic assessment that is authentic in that it caters to multiple intelligences theory, are consistent with the findings of the other researchers (Arter & Spandel 1991; Bull, Sebastian and Fletcher 1994; Zollman & Jones 1994; Cavanaugh & Linek, 1995; Jorgensen 1996; Gottesman, 2001).

The greatest disadvantages for using portfolios were cited as being too time consuming to prepare and mark, and a misgiving that it cannot be used with lower-level children. This misgiving that it cannot be used with primary level pupils could be corrected by appropriate exposure in the use of portfolio assessment appropriate for those levels, as found by Zollman & Jones (1994);Cavanaugh & Linek (1995);Jorgensen (1996), Marsh (1997).

Overall, the findings seem to suggest that portfolios usage as an assessment tool is not popular among the in-service teachers and faculty under study, which is quite unlike the situation in the more developed countries. There seems to be a reluctance to the use of portfolios by in-service teachers as well as faculty, even though, portfolio benefits are many because of its experiential and authentic nature and have been reformed to be used at all levels in the education system (Zollman & Jones (1994); Cavanaugh & Linek (1995); Jorgensen (1996), Marsh (1997); Birgin & Bakti, (2007); Denney, Grier & Buchanan, (2012)). The findings of the study shows that even though the science educators may know of this mode of assessment, its practice is limited and widespread use has not been realized because of the preference for the more traditional mode of assessment. Hence, the benefits to the teachers that go with portfolio and authentic or performance assessment are minimal.

Recommendations

Although a small sample of in-service teachers and science lecturers in the Faculty of Education and Humanities were studied, the information gained is important, and further studies using a larger sample are recommended. Additionally, studies in other subject areas (other than science) should be undertaken.

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Adolescent Spirituality and Coping: A Case Study in One Secondary School in Guyana

Penelope Montfort

Abstract

This research examines the relationship between levels of spirituality and coping among adolescents. One hundred (100) final year high school students randomly selected from one secondary school on the East Coast of Demerara in Guyana, participated in this research. The participants completed the Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experiences (A-COPE) (Patterson & McCubbin, 1981), a coping inventory designed to identify the behaviours adolescents find helpful in managing problems or difficult situations. Data analysis supported the prediction that there is a relationship between spirituality and positive coping styles. Those adolescents who were classified as highly spiritual were the ones most likely to use family and professional support systems in coping, and engage in relatively sedate activities such as sleeping and watching television.

Keywords: spirituality, coping styles, adolescent, Guyana, secondary school

Introduction

Adolescence is the period that spans the transition from late childhood to early adulthood. It is the longest period in the human lifespan, and is generally conceptualized as the most turbulent and complex one. This prolonged period is indexed by "upheaval in three developmental areas: physical, cognitive, and personal-social" (Webber & Plotts, 2008, p. 315). During this phase adolescents become preoccupied with enhancing their gender-specific attractive qualities, gaining autonomy, and conforming to their peer groups (Webber & Plotts, 2008). Young adolescents' insatiable quest for peer-group acceptance often supersedes their ingrained values and morals, and influences them to engage in illicit and self-injurious activities (Santrock, 2008).

At the very vortex of adolescents' physical, social and emotional turbulence is the need to redefine their identity. This redefinition is framed and filtered through the prism of experimentation, which is an adolescent's naturally endowed attribute (Webber & Plotts, 2008). Experimentation is critical to the emergence of self. However, the manifestations of the experimentation process elicit different reactions. Many adults perpetuate the subjective stereotypical view that adolescents are rebellious, disrespectful and deviant. Adolescent psychologists, Hamburg and Hamburg (2004) purport a strikingly contrastive perception that adolescents are merely evaluating and interpreting the world around them to make the best adaptations possible (as cited in Santrock, 2008). While most adolescents navigate this period suc-

cessfully and emerge as well-adjusted youth, a number of them succumb to the negative influences and practice maladaptive coping behaviours (Webber & Plottts, 2008; Nichols & Good, 2004).

The pertinent questions at this juncture are: What differentiates these two groups of adolescents? Where does the problem lie? Several researchers suggest that most of the youth-related problems exist outside of the youth themselves. They attribute these problems to the unavailability of, and/or inaccessibility to opportunities and reliable support systems (Benson, Scales, Hamilton & Sesma, 2006; Youngblade & Theokas, 2006). Dryfoos (1990) asserted that in order for social support systems to effectively address adolescent problems they must combine individualized and community-oriented interventions in non-coercive settings (as cited in Santrock, 2008).

Religious and spiritual institutions play a significant role in nurturing adolescents. These institutions offer adolescents an alternative pathway to a meaningful future. Several studies have shown that adolescents who are meaningfully engaged in spiritual activities develop healthy psychosocial behaviours (Benson, Roehlkepartain, & Rude, 2003; Bridges & Moore, 2002; Rubin, Dodd, Desai, Pollock, & Graham-Pole, 2009). Garbino's (2001) interactions with youth killers in America substantiate the interrelatedness of spirituality and healthy psychosocial development. He concluded that the adolescents' violence stemmed from the spiritual void they experienced in their search for meaning and purpose (as cited in Santrock, 2008).

According to Spilka, Shaver, and Kirkpatrick (1985) religion provides a philosophical framework for individuals to examine and understand their existence (as cited in Steward & Hanik, 1998). Adolescents explore this system in the process of forming their identity (Good & Willoughby, 2008). They use the crises and other conflicts they experience to negotiate their spiritual development. On the one hand, adolescents struggle with the abstract notion of God whom they must revere, and to whom they must submit their control. As a result they become indifferent to spiritual things and adopt a lifestyle contrary to societal norms (Good &Willoughby, 2008). On the other hand, Waite (2001) indicates that through consistent interactions with the divine, the abstract God is reified and "becomes a confidant and a source of emotional support" to the adolescent (as cited in Bridges & Moore, 2008, p. 13). The instability and confusion adolescents experience at the developmental level transcend to the spiritual realm. Based on this premise the researcher proposes to examine the question: 'what is the relationship between levels of spirituality and coping among adolescents in Guyana?'

Philosophical Foundations

What is the origin of man? What is the purpose of man's existence? What comes after death? The answers to these questions form the Christian philosophical foundation on which my concept of spirituality is built. According to the biblical account of creation, God "formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul" Genesis 2:7 (King James Version). Every human imbued with the breath of God is a spir-

itual being, and therefore craves an intimate connection with the source of his origin. Man exercises his freedom to choose who that source is, and how to demonstrate obeisance to that source. Man also exists as a social being whose purpose is to love his fellow mankind. Through sin, humans are constantly at conflict with each other which subsequently affects their spiritual connection with God. However, Jesus' atoning sacrifice reconciled man's fragmented relationship with God, and offers him everlasting life beyond the grave.

Literature Review

Spirituality as a separate social construct began to receive attention from social and behavioural scientists at the onset of the twenty-first century. Prior to this period, empirical research combined spirituality and religiousness for three main reasons. Firstly, spirituality is an inherently complex notion compounded by cultural disparities and individualistic interpretations. Secondly, spirituality and religiousness are so inextricably interrelated that they cannot be distinctly defined. Thirdly, researchers held divergent perspectives on the conceptualization and measurement of spirituality (George, Larson, Koenig, & McCullough, 2000).

Quite recently, spirituality has been given its own meanings independent of religiousness. Though both constructs promote beliefs, practices, and experiences in the sacred, the fundamental difference lies in the context within which these experiences occur. Researchers concur that religiousness is sought through formalized traditional institutions such as churches, mosques and temples, whereas spirituality is individualized and not necessarily linked to an organized institution (George et al., 2000; Good & Willoughby, 2008). The researchers also caution that regardless of this distinction individuals can be both religious and spiritual. Religiousness may involve a spiritual quest within an institutional setting, while spirituality can be attained within a religious context (George et al., 2000; Good & Willoughby, 2008; Pargament, Magyar-Russell, & Murray-Swank, 2005).

Adolescent spirituality and religiousness was not a prominent issue in empirical research. Interest in this field was stimulated from several major reports of the positive impact of spirituality on adolescent development (Bridges & Moore, 2002). However, while there is prolific research on this phenomenon among the western Judeo-Christian population, it is quite limited in the Caribbean, and other prominent religions such as Islam (Morris, Martin, Hopson, & Welch-Murphy, 2010; Abdel-Khalek, 2007). Researchers advocate that with the rise in violence, suicide, and other at-risk behaviours among adolescents, religious involvement can serve as a useful resource to prevent such behaviours (Bridges & Moore, 2002; National Research Council, 2002; Scales & Leffert, 1999). Therefore, studying the psychological well-being of adolescents extends these conversations.

Researchers generally concur that psychological well-being among adolescents is not easily attainable (Benson et al., 2006; Nicholas & Good, 2004; Santrock, 2008). Adolescents are constantly grappling with physiological and other changes typical of that developmental period, and lack the knowledge, skills and experience

to circumvent that nodus in their development. During this period many of them seek refuge and/or solace in religion and religious activities, to find the equilibrium in their socio-emotional functioning (Rose, Joe, Shields, & Caldwell, 2014; Good & Willoughby, 2008; Bridges & Moore, 2002). Religion as an integral part of social life offers them hope, positive mental health, and the well-being that can be elusive for some at this developmental stage. Many others choose antisocial avenues such as gangs. Adolescents need to develop stronger socially-acceptable coping strategies to promote psychological well-being.

A fundamental advantage adolescents have is the malleability of the developmental system during this period. Dowling, Gesttsdottir, Anderson, Von Eye and Lerner (2003) contend that every adolescent is equipped with intrinsic mechanisms to foster positive development. Adolescents must possess a strong sense of moral, personal and civic identity to augment positive growth and development. Religion is the conduit that channels positive self-perceptions and prosocial behaviours to form this identity (Pandya, 2015; Sallquist, Eisenberg, French, Purwono, & Suryanti, 2010). On the authors' premises, it appears that every young person has the potential for successful, healthy development regardless of the negative stressors faced on a daily basis. One major way to facilitate healthy adolescent development is through meaningful spiritual involvement.

Conceptual Definitions

Defining Spirituality

A conceptual framework for the term spirituality must be developed to guide the discussions of this study. The term is of a complex nature given the diverse cultures, belief systems, religious practices to name a few, existing in our post-modern world. The word 'spirituality' is a derivative of the Latin word *spiritus,* meaning breath, combined with the Greek word *enthousiasmos,* meaning "the God within" (Lindholm &Astin, 2006). Fundamentally, the word 'spirituality' connotes the imagery of being inspired by the revivifying breath of God, and projects a psychological transcendence from the earthly realm to a divine terrestrial plane.

Traditionally, the term spirituality derived its meaning and significance from close associations with religious beliefs and persuasions. In this modern era however, spirituality is conceptualized as a more inclusive construct. Spirituality has grown to embrace the intrinsic values, identity, origin and heritage, all of which propel humans to achieve self-actualization (Astin, 2004). These core traits also determine the purpose of human existence, their relationship with each other, and their responsibility to the environment (Astin, 2004; Rubin et al., 2009). The ability to centralize their day-to-day existence and survival on the inner self is another dimension to spirituality that imbues the inner self with peace, emotional control, and inner strength to resolve inner conflicts.

A definition of spirituality offered by a special panel convened by the National Institute for Healthcare Research [NIHR] is, "the feelings, thoughts, experiences, and behaviours that arise from a search for the sacred" (Larson et al., 1997, p. 21). The term "sacred" refers to an indi-

vidual's perception of a deity, a supreme being, or a supernatural force. Humans use their naturally endowed inquisitive nature to explore the spiritual realm to know, understand and connect to the divine being. Most religious theorists purport that humans' spiritual beliefs and religious practices metamorphose contiguously with their cognitive development. The literal beliefs about the divine held in childhood transform into a faith-oriented perspective in adolescence and adulthood (Bridges & Moore, 2002).

As alluded to in an earlier section of this paper, spirituality and religiousness are not entirely the same construct. The literature on the domain of spirituality uses the term interchangeably with religiousness. While religiousness deals with affiliation to a denomination or adherence to a set of principles and dogmas, spirituality can grow out of connectedness with a religion (Bryant, 2007; Lindholm & Astin, 2006; Good & Willoughby, 2008). Thus there is an obvious interrelatedness between these two domains. Irrespective of adherence to religious persuasion individuals are spiritual beings, who find inner strength and resilience from a higher supreme power that directs their path in life (Bryant, 2007; Lindholm & Astin, 2006). In this study spirituality refers to adolescents' personal beliefs as well as their associations with a religious body.

Spirituality and Adolescence

As adolescents transition from childhood to adulthood they undergo significant changes in their physical, cognitive, and social development. They become independent thinkers and conceptualize the world at a distinctly mature level from childhood, but not as crystallized as in adulthood. Adolescents also question their foundational beliefs and teachings, and gain new information which often conflicts with their existing knowledge base. Piaget (1967) observed that adolescents may either adjust their perceptions or merge the new and existing ideas to resolve these conflicts (as cited in Santrock, 2008). For these reasons the adolescent period is very sensitive, yet vulnerable, to spiritual development (Good & Willoughby, 2008; Bridges & Moore, 2002).

According to Erikson's (1968) psychosocial theory of development, identity formation is critical at the adolescent stage (as cited in Santrock, 2008). A major crisis they encounter in the formation of an identity is the search for meaning and purpose in life. This search entails the exploration of different ideologies and world views to find answers to life's questions. Religion, which is a component of adolescent identity, can satisfy this need among adolescents (Bridges & Moore, 2002; Santrock, 2008). Adolescents critically evaluate religious dogmas and beliefs, adopt a world view and make a lifetime commitment to that belief system (Good & Willoughby, 2008; Ahmed, Fowler & Toro, 2010).

Religious institutions also provide social and emotional support for adolescents. Adolescents co-exist with a community of believers who uphold similar values and beliefs. The more experienced adults and peers function as spiritual mentors and counsellors to the adolescents, particularly in situations where the family and school as social agents, fail (Rose et al., 2014). Social cohesion and a familial bond are further enhanced through adolescents' participation in orga-

nized programs and activities. For most adolescents church becomes a safe haven where they can be vulnerable, and use that vulnerability as an impetus for spiritual growth and development (Bridges & Moore, 2002).

The search for a purpose-driven life through religion can also create negative repercussions for adolescents. Ahmed et al. (2010) noted that adolescents' cognitive development is not at the required level to adequately rationalize complex religious teachings. They are therefore inclined to make emotionally-charged decisions without consideration of the long-term effects of those decisions (Good & Willoughby, 2008). Additionally, the supportive nurturing environment adolescents seek makes them vulnerable to influential religious leaders, who coerce adolescents into making emotionally-biased spiritual decisions (Bridges & Moore, 2002; Good & Willoughby, 2008).

Religious organizations are generally governed by a formalized creed that is broken down into moral, spiritual and health tenets. While not inherently spiritual, the moral and health principles take on spiritual significance as a sacred allegiance to the divine being. Adolescents who accept and conform to a religion's moral and health standards are likely to develop a healthy spiritual life (Bridges & Moore, 2002; Rubin et al., 2009). Bridges and Moore (2002) further claimed that the guilt factor associated with nonconformity to religious teachings may also be a strong predictor of prosocial behaviours among adolescents.

Adolescents need stability and positive influences to function optimally in society. The literature on youth development is replete with evidence to support the significant impact of religion on adolescent health and well-being (Bridges & Moore, 2002; Good & Willoughby, 2008; Ahmed et al., 2010; Rubin et al., 2009). From his extensive research in this field, Lerner (2002) endorsed the role of spirituality on positive adolescent development. This research on adolescence opens a critical gap in the relationship between spirituality and coping.

Spirituality and Coping

Folkman (1984) defined coping as ". . . constantly changing cognitive and behavioural efforts to manage specific external and/or internal demands that are appraised as taxing or exceeding the resources of the person" (as cited in Gelhaar et al., 2007, p. 130). This definition hints at the combined effect of mental reflective processes and actions to produce socially- acceptable coping strategies. Adolescents who are constantly plagued with developmentally-triggered stressors must use effective coping strategies to maintain their psychological well-being.

In their comparative study of the coping styles of European adolescents from seven nations, Gelhaar et al., (2007) discovered that adolescents retrieve and utilize coping behaviours according to the negative situation experienced. These coping behaviours are categorized as active coping, internal coping, and withdrawal coping. The adolescents in the study selected more functional means of coping (active and internal), than dysfunctional ones (withdrawal). The researchers also noted that there were gender differences in the choice of coping styles. Males engaged in more physically demanding activities, whereas females used more social support.

While Gelhaar's et al. (2007) research alluded to the role religion plays on coping behaviours, numerous other studies have shown that religion and spirituality offer adolescents active positive ways of coping (Chapman & Steger, 2008; Spencer, Fegley & Harpalani, 2003; Steward & Hanik, 1998; Abdel-Khalek, 2010; Lerner, 2002; Sallquist et al., 2010; Pandya, 2015). Religions perpetuate selfless humanitarian service, harmonious existence and health-related lifestyles. They also espouse the faith-based principles of compassion, love, forgiveness and hope (Abdel-Khalek, 2012). Adolescents who adhere to these principles develop healthy prosocial coping strategies. Moreover, empirical findings reveal that spiritual beliefs and religious activities reverse the debilitating psychological effects of chronically-ill adolescents. These adolescents attest to the therapeutic impact of religion on their mental health (Rubin et al., 2009; Ahmed et al., 2010; Abdel-Khalek, 2012).

Societal and cultural practices must be considered in the examination of adolescent development and coping strategies (Gelhaar et al., 2007; Spencer et al., 2003). In the corpus of studies on the effects of spirituality and religion on coping behaviours among adolescents from diverse religious persuasions and cultures, scholars note a consistency. Findings from the research done on African and European American, Caribbean, Muslim, Arab and Hindu populations indicate that adolescents generally use religion effectively to cope with life's challenges (Abdel-Khalek, 2010; Sallquist et al., 2010; Pandya, 2015; Morris et al., 2010). Recent studies on this issue also claim that religion has a greater impact on the well-being of Muslim and Caribbean adolescents than those in America. The Islamic rites and customs present Muslim adolescents with positive avenues to relieve stress, and their belief in predestination leads to satisfaction and self-fulfillment (Abdel-Khalek, 2010, 2011, 2012). For Caribbean adolescents, life is slow-paced, less rigid and there are fewer distractions in comparison to the United States of America (Morris et al., 2010).

The literature reviewed on coping suggests that a positive relationship exists between spirituality and effective coping strategies. Irrespective of cultural or religious background, adolescents who profess and demonstrate belief in a supreme being use effective functional coping behaviours and lead healthier lives. Does this proposition hold true for Guyanese adolescents who face similar challenges as their counterparts in the developed and developing world?

Guyana's Sociological Context

Guyana is a third world country marked by widespread poverty, high population growth, and a highly dependent economy. It is ranked as the second poorest country in the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) ("On Basis of Per Capita Income…," 2013). The debilitating effects of the country's economic status are reflected in the overall quality of life of its citizenry, particularly those residing in rural and underdeveloped urban communities. Adolescents who are products of these communities are predisposed to unique stressful conditions that impact their psychosocial, sociocultural, and socio-emotional functioning.

Gruesome violence formerly associated with westernized cultures has

infiltrated society via the media and technology among other communication platforms which have proliferated over the past three decades. These powerful influences develop value systems and shape behaviours. Akin to global cultures which are saturated with crime, violence, and immorality, Guyana is no exception. Guyana's daily news is replete with reports of violent criminal acts perpetrated by adolescents to satisfy their cravings. One the most pervasive problems plaguing the Guyanese society is teenage violence. Not only have adolescents become perpetrators of violence, they are victims as well. Adolescents' involvement in violent practices typifies the degrading coping mechanisms they resort to, to solve their dilemmas.

Another social issue that has reached epidemic proportions in Guyana is suicide ideation. Guyanese journalist Jeanna Pearson (2016), who has cited The World Health Organization (WHO), observed that this suicide phenomenon has escalated among adolescents "who belong to vulnerable groups struggling with relationship issues, discrimination, trauma and abuse, isolation and lack of social support from families and friends" ("Poor Parenting and Relationship Conflict"). Adolescents belong to vulnerable groups and they are already burdened with personal psychological stress. Poor parenting styles and hostile social contexts in which they operate can exacerbate adolescents' stressors. While Pearson has not provided a solution to the problem, Loncke (2016) has proposed that social support systems, religious beliefs, and culture can impact adolescents' suicidal tendencies. Taken together both Pearson and Loncke have identified crucial factors that impact suicide among adolescents, but Loncke indicated factors that can also provide positive impact away from suicide.

In addition to the practice of violence and suicide, a third social issue which complicates discussions on adolescents' coping mechanisms is adolescent pregnancy. Decrying this phenomenon as a violation of adolescent girls' human rights, and their physical and psychological health, the State of World Population 2013 report has described Guyana's adolescent pregnancy rate thus: "Guyana has the second highest rate of adolescent pregnancy in both the Caribbean and South America with higher incidences among impoverished and rural areas" (http://www.unfpa.org/publications/state-world-population-2013). The report further purports that "adolescent pregnancy is most often not the result of a deliberate choice, but rather the absence of choices; and of circumstances beyond a girl's control" (http://www.unfpa.org/publications/state-world-population-2013). Adolescent females must be empowered with decision-making strategies to re-conceptualize their roles in society. They must understand that pregnancy is not the panacea to the economic and social pressures they face.

Instrumental Definition

Measuring Spirituality

Spirituality is a multidimensional construct that is subjected to highly individualistic meanings and interpretations. It develops out of one's experiences with the social, cultural and religious systems. Because spirituality cannot be easily operationalized,

developing an instrument to measure this variable can be problematic. Benson et al. (2006) proposed three fundamental characteristics of spirituality measures—inclusivity, variability, and replicability. Instruments that are designed to measure spirituality must reflect the divergent beliefs and world views of our global religious culture. The items on a spiritual scale must also be sufficient to produce variability in the data, to avoid skewed disproportionate results. Further, spirituality measures, like all other constructs, must be constructed in a concise manner to be replicated in other studies.

Methodology

Participants

One hundred ninth, tenth and eleventh graders enrolled in one secondary school on the East Coast of Demerara in Guyana, participated in this study. Students were selected from these three levels based on three factors: they are at the peak of the adolescent period; they are at a major turning point in their academic life; and they are prospective university students. The participants were primarily from lower to middle-class families residing in rural communities. The sample population comprised thirty seven (37%) males and sixty three (63%) females, aged 14 (n=11), 15 (n=41), 16 (n=42) and 17 (n=6).The mean age was 15.43 years. The ethnic groups represented in the sample were distributed as follows: Africans (48%), Portuguese (8%), Chinese (1%), Europeans (2%), East Indians (41%), and Amerindians (2%). Sixty-three percent of the participants were Christians, 17% Hindus, 6% Islamists, and 13% were uncategorized.

Instrumentation

The instrument developed to measure the variables in the study is the questionnaire. It is divided into two sections—Section A and Section B—totaling fifty-nine (59) questions. Section A has five questions which relate to the biodata of each respondent, and Section B is the Adolescent Coping Orientation for Problem Experience (A-COPE) fifty-four item standardized questionnaire (Patterson & McCubbin, 1987). This scale was designed to identify the behaviours adolescents engage in to cope with problems or difficult situations. The participants responded to a five-point Likert scale from **Never =1, Hardly Ever = 2, Sometimes = 3, Often = 4, to Most of the Time =5.** Each item is prefaced with the statement, "*when you face difficulties or feel tense, how often do you*". The items are categorized according to the following coping patterns: ***seeking spiritual support*** (religious behaviour); ***ventilating feelings*** (using aggressive methods such as swearing, to express frustrations); ***seeking diversions*** (engaging in relatively mild activities as a means of escapism, such as reading or going shopping); ***developing self-reliance and optimism*** (being organized and in control, as well as developing a positive self-concept); ***developing social support*** (maintaining relationships with others through open communication and affective behaviours); ***solving family problems*** (communicating with family members and following family rules to minimize conflict); ***seeking professional support*** (seeking advice about problems from professional sources); ***being humorous*** (taking a light-hearted jovial approach

to difficult or problematic situations); ***investing in friends*** (seeking the companionship of very close and special friends); ***engaging in demanding activities*** (striving to attain high standards or achieve a goal); ***avoiding problems*** (using substances to escape, or to avoid problems); and ***relaxing*** (reducing tension in several ways, for example, listening to music or daydreaming). Reliability measures for the subscales using Cronbach's alpha, ranged from .52 to .83.

The independent variable used in this research is ***seeking spiritual support*** (religious behaviour). The researcher assessed how the ***seeking spiritual support*** subscale influences the selection of coping behaviours from the other subscales—dependent variables. Each subscale comprises several items, the sum of which produces an individual score. The A-COPE instrument presupposes that adolescents will use multiple styles of coping with difficult situations. Completion time of the questionnaire for this study is approximately fifteen (15) minutes.

Results

The findings of the investigation of coping styles adopted by Guyanese adolescents are presented in this section. Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of the population for the seeking spiritual support subscale by gender, age, ethnicity, and religion. The means and standard deviations were relatively similar for both genders. However, on the average, adolescent females had higher scores on this subscale than males. This choice of coping style was relatively constant for the fifteen, sixteen and seventeen year olds, which was significantly higher than the fourteen year olds. The means and standard deviations for ethnicity and religion show that Africans, Christians and the uncategorized religious group utilize spiritual support systems more than the other groups.

The twelve coping patterns in the A-COPE inventory were utilized by the respondents. The three most popular coping styles for the general population in order of frequency were: (a) engaging in demanding activities, (b) developing self-reliance, and (c) being humorous. The three coping styles that are the least utilized in order of frequency were: (a) solving family problems, (b) avoiding problems, and (c) seeking professional support. This pattern was evident across genders, age groups, ethnicity and religions. However, females as well as the Chinese, Portuguese, Europeans and Amerindians were reported as utilizing more social support systems, while the youngest and oldest respondents invested time in close friendships.

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine the relationship between seeking spiritual support and each of the following factors: age, gender, ethnicity, and religion. While there was no statistical significance for any of the factors, the relationship between seeking spiritual support and religion was approaching significance $F = 2.46$, $p = .05$. A one-way ANOVA was also conducted to evaluate the relationship between seeking spiritual support and the other coping measures. The ANOVA was significant for four of these measures: (a) avoiding problems $F = 1.88$, $p = .05$; (b) solving family problems $F = 1.88$, $p = .05$; (c) seeking diversions $F = 1.93$, $p = .05$; and (d) ventilating feelings F

= 1.87, p = .055.

Pearson correlations were performed to assess whether the choice of coping among adolescents could be predicted from the religious behaviours subscale. The results of the correlational analyses presented in table 4, show that the seeking spiritual support subscale scores were found to be significantly and positively related to seeking professional support (r = .29; p = 0.003). In addition, it was progressing toward statistical significance for seeking diversions (r = .19; p = 0.58). The correlation of seeking spiritual support with the other coping subscales tended to be lower and not significant. In general, the results suggest that adolescents who have a high level of spirituality have the propensity to utilize professional support services, and to a lesser degree, seek diversions.

Discussion

A typical adolescent's life is characterized by crises, confusion, and conflict. During this phase adolescents employ diverse strategies to manage the negative emotions that surface. In order to maintain their mental, emotional and psychological health and well-being, adolescents must develop positive adaptive behaviours. A widely used positive coping style that transcends all cultures is religious behaviours and practices. The aim of this study was to determine whether a relationship existed between spirituality and coping styles among Guyanese adolescents. The study further examined the extent to which adolescents' spirituality influenced their choice of coping strategy.

Consistent with the research data in this study as well as previous findings (Abdel-Khalek, 2010; Spencer et al., 2003; Chapman & Steger, 2008; Pandya, 2015; Sallquist et al., 2010), the results indicate that there is a relationship between spirituality and other positive coping styles. The high school adolescents who practice religious behaviours and spirituality were more inclined to use other effective means of coping such as seeking professional support and seeking diversions.

The results also indicate that there are significant gender differences in the choice of strategies that adolescents use to deal with stressful situations. Adolescent females are more religious than the males, and have the proclivity to utilize more social support systems. Conversely, males engage in demanding activities more frequently than females. These results are consonant with the literature and are often attributed to cultural influences on gender roles (Kanis, 2002; Gelhaar et al., 2007).

A significant finding of the research was that all the adolescents demonstrated similarity in their preferential selection of specific coping styles. The most frequently utilized coping styles—engaging in demanding activities, developing self-reliance, and being humorous—were highly similar across the four demographics—age, gender, ethnicity and race. These are generally emotional-focused coping styles. A similar pattern was observed for the least popular coping strategies—solving family problems, avoiding problems and seeking professional support. Regardless of the social demographics, all adolescents are nurtured in a Guyanese culture where traditional parental roles of authority figures and decision-makers are upheld. Children and adolescents who deviate

from this societal norm are deemed disrespectful and precocious. (Leo-Rhynie & Brown, 2013). Gelhaar et al. (2007) cited similar observations of adolescents in their study. The adolescents who are products of authoritarian parenting refrained from using active problem-solving strategies. Professional support as an unpopular option could be attributed to the unavailability of relevant services in the rural area from which the sample population was drawn.

Since the practice of religious behaviours and spirituality has been found to be effective, religious and educational institutions, and other organisations, need to capitalize on it to promulgate functional, constructive interventions.

Limitations and future research

Findings from the present study have a few limitations. The sample size was relatively small and was restricted to adolescents of a particular age group, attending secondary school. Based on convenience sampling, the population was drawn from one rural district to the exclusion of urban, remote or high-risk communities. For these reasons the sampling was not representative of the Guyanese adolescent population. To generalize these findings, future research must use larger samples inclusive of a wider cross-section of geographical areas, age groups, and out-of-school adolescents.

Another limitation of this study relates to the psychometric instruments designed to measure spirituality. These instruments cannot adequately capture all the components of spirituality because all behaviours associated with spirituality are not observable. It is imperative therefore, to qualitatively analyze adolescents' lived experiences and subjective views on spirituality and its relevance to their development. This preliminary investigation sets the background for future research on spirituality and well-being among Guyanese adolescents.

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Appendices

Table 1
Descriptives for Student Demographics

		Frequency	Per cent
Gender	M	37	37
	F	63	63
Age	14	11	11
	15	41	41
	16	42	42
	17	6	6
Ethnicity	African	46	46
	East Indian	41	41
	Amerindian Chinese European Portuguese	2 1 2 8	2 1 2 8
Religion	Christianity	63	63
	Hinduism	17	17
	Islam	6	6
	Uncategorized	14	14

Table 2
Descriptives for Seeking Spiritual Support

		M	SD
Gender	M	3.13	.99
	F	3.17	.79
Age	14	2.88	.73
	15	3.12	1.01
	16	3.25	.75
	17	3.33	.92
Ethnicity	African	3.33	.89
	East Indian	2.99	.89
	Amerindian	2.83	.73
Religion	Christianity	3.21	.79
	Hinduism	2.88	.92
	Islam	3.06	.65
	Uncategorized	3.41	1.06

Table 3
Means and Standard Deviations on the Demographics for the Most Popular Coping Styles

		Demact		Selfrel		Humour	
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
General	Population	4.83	.85	3.85	.57	3.63	1.02
Gender	M	4.93	.94	3.78	.59	3.66	1.07
	F	4.77	.81	3.89	.56	3.60	.99
Age	14	5.02	.65	3.68	.49	3.5	1.07
	15	4.89	.82	3.80	.60	3.6	1.00
	16	4.80	.93	3.98	.52	3.58	1.09
	17	4.21	.74			3.92	.58
Ethnicity	African	4.78	.96	3.82	.52		
	East Indian	4.78	.73	3.73	.55	3.52	.99
	Amerindian	6.13	.18	4.25	.35		
	Portuguese	4.91	.81	4.20	.72		
	Chinese	5.5		4.33			
	European	4.88	.88	4.83	.24		
Religion	Christianity	4.86	.89	3.87	.58	3.72	.98
	Hinduism	4.72	.63	3.72	.52		
	Islam	4.83	1.86	3.66	.64	3.75	1.13
	Uncategorized	4.79	.67	4.01	.57		

Table 4
ANOVA Showing Statistical Significance of the Dependent Variables

	Avdprobs	Seekdiv	Solfamprobs	Ventfeel
F	1.875	1.928	1.875	1.866
Sig	.053	.046	.053	.055

Table 5
Correlations Between Seeking Spiritual Support and Other Coping Subscales

	Devsocsup	Ventfeel	Seekdiv	Devselfrel	Solfamprob	Avdprobs	InvClosfrn	Skprofsup	Demact	Humor	Relax
SkSpirSup	.167	.066	.191	-.005	-.170	-.170	.006	.291**	-.027	.046	-.066
Sig. (2-tailed)	.097	.517	.058	.958	.090	.090	.955	.003	.791	.653	.512
N 100											

**p<0.01, two-tailed

Adolescent Spirituality and Coping Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed to obtain information about the concept of spirituality from an adolescent perspective, and the role it plays in their beliefs, values and lifestyle choices. As an adolescent, your participation in this project is highly valued to the researcher. The questionnaire has three sections. Kindly complete all the questions in all sections. Read the instructions carefully, and indicate your choice honestly appropriate to your perceptions, by placing a tick in the box next to it. Your responses will be held in the strictest of confidence.

Section A

Age:	15years	16 years	17 years	18 years		
Gender:	Male	Female				
Class:	Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12			
Ethnicity:	African	Chinese	European	Indian	Portuguese	Amerindian

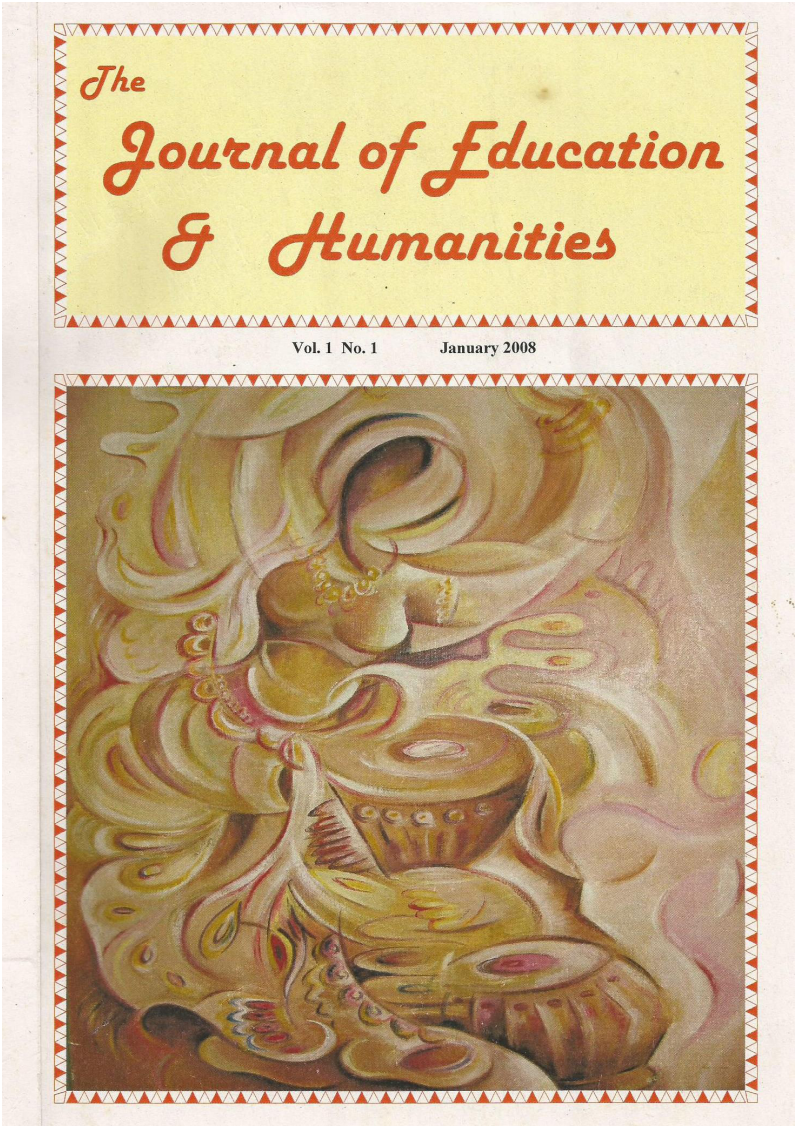
Section C

Read each of the statements below which describes a behaviour for coping with problems. Decide how often you do each of the described behaviours when you face difficulties of reel tense. Even though you may do some of these things just for fun, please indicate only how often you do each behaviour as a way to cope with problems. Circle one of the following responses for each statement: 1 – NEVER 2 – HARDLY EVER 3 – SOMETIMES 4 – OFTEN 5 – MOST OF THE TIME.

When you face difficulties or feel tense, how often do you	Never	Hardly Ever	Sometimes	Often	Most of the Time
1. Go along with parents requests and rules	1	2	3	4	5
2. Read	1	2	3	4	5
3. Try to be funny and make light of it all	1	2	3	4	5
4. Apologize to people	1	2	3	4	5
5. Listen to music-stereo, radio, etc.	1	2	3	4	5
6. Talk to a teacher or counsellor at school about what bothers you	1	2	3	4	5
7. Eat food	1	2	3	4	5
8. Try to stay away from home as much as possible	1	2	3	4	5
9. Use drugs prescribed by a doctor	1	2	3	4	5
10. Get more involved in activities at school	1	2	3	4	5
11. Go shopping; buy things you like	1	2	3	4	5

12. Try to reason with parents and talk things out; compromise	1	2	3	4	5
13. Try to improve yourself (get body in shape, get better grades, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
14. Cry	1	2	3	4	5
15. Try to think of the good things in your life	1	2	3	4	5
16. Be with a boyfriend or girlfriend	1	2	3	4	5
17. Ride around in the car	1	2	3	4	5
18. Say nice things to others	1	2	3	4	5
19. Get angry and yell at people	1	2	3	4	5
20. Joke and keep a sense of humour	1	2	3	4	5
21. Talk to a minister/priest/pandit or other religious leader	1	2	3	4	5
22. Let off steam by complaining to family members	1	2	3	4	5
23. Go to church	1	2	3	4	5
24. Use drugs (not prescribed by doctor)	1	2	3	4	5
25. Organize your life and what you have to do	1	2	3	4	5
26. Swear	1	2	3	4	5
27. Work hard on schoolwork or other school projects	1	2	3	4	5
28. Blame others for what's going wrong	1	2	3	4	5
29. Be close with someone you care about	1	2	3	4	5
30. Try to help other people solve their problems	1	2	3	4	5
31. Talk to your mother about what bothers you	1	2	3	4	5
32. Try, on your own, to figure out how to deal with your problems or tension	1	2	3	4	5
33. Work on a hobby you have (sewing, art, etc.)	1	2	3	4	5
34. Get professional counselling (not from a school teacher or school counsellor)	1	2	3	4	5
35. Try to keep up friendships or make new friends	1	2	3	4	5
36. Tell yourself the problem is not important	1	2	3	4	5
37. Go to a movie	1	2	3	4	5
38. Daydream about how you would like things to be	1	2	3	4	5
39. Talk to a brother or sister about how you feel	1	2	3	4	5
40. Get a job or work harder at one	1	2	3	4	5
41. Do things with your family	1	2	3	4	5
42. Smoke	1	2	3	4	5
43. Watch TV	1	2	3	4	5
44. Pray	1	2	3	4	5

45. Try to see the good things in a difficult situation	1	2	3	4	5
46. Drink beer, wine, liquor	1	2	3	4	5
47. Try to make your own decisions	1	2	3	4	5
48. Sleep	1	2	3	4	5
49. Say mean things to people	1	2	3	4	5
50. Talk to your father about what bothers you	1	2	3	4	5
51. Let off steam by complaining to your friends	1	2	3	4	5
52. Talk to a friend about how you feel	1	2	3	4	5
53. Play video games, pool, pinball etc.	1	2	3	4	5
54. Do a strenuous physical activity (jogging, biking, swimming)	1	2	3	4	5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