

Sabiduría



Spring 2013

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Dear Readers,

We are pleased to present the spring 2013 edition of *Sabiduría*: The Dr. Floyd F. Koch Honors College Peer-Reviewed Journal. We congratulate **Mirline Petit-Frere** and **Joseph LoVerso** for the publication of their work.

We thank the writers who submitted their work and the peer-reviewers for their work in reviewing the submissions. It is the Honors College students who make *Sabiduría* possible by getting involved in the peer-review process.

Our gratitude is also extended to Marcella Montesinos, Dr. Ginger L. Pedersen, and Cyndi Demitruk for their dedication and support to *Sabiduría*.

As each issue of *Sabiduría* is published, we hope the publication continues to grow, improve and represent the best that the Honors College has to offer.

Sincerely,

Aida Rodriguez, Editor
Fernando Varela, Co-editor

In keeping with the mission of Palm Beach State College, the purpose of the Dr. Floyd F. Koch Honors College is to provide a challenging and supportive academic environment in which students are encouraged to think critically, demonstrate leadership, and develop ethical standards. The Honors College pursues an interactive learning experience where students acquire a creative and comprehensive understanding of concepts in an interdisciplinary and global context. Palm Beach State Honors students and faculty share a commitment and civic responsibility that extends beyond the classroom to local, national, and international communities.

Advocating School Choice in Palm Beach County

Mirline Petit-Frere

In economics, it has been proven that competition tends to increase profit and marketability either through goods or services. Likewise, schools that participate in choice programs tend to increase their standards of education, hence attracting more parents and students. Choice programs vary by state and district, but the element of competition remains consistent throughout. Just as services tend to vary based on the needs of the consumers, in terms of economics, choice programs may vary based on the needs of the population within the district. Although not all participating schools succeed in meeting their standards, the purpose of choice programs is to provide parents and students a variety of options within, and in addition to, the public school systems. For this reason, there has been a greater rise in the prevalence of choice programs. In Palm Beach County, the implementation of choice programs such as magnet schools and charter schools, among others, has improved not only the reputation of participating schools, but also the quality of education that the children receive.

In order to better understand how the implementation of school choice programs has improved the public school system in Palm Beach County, one must first know what school choice is and what the programs offered mean. School choice is not a one size fits all, for it comes in various forms (Cobbs and Glass 263). These forms can be divided into the two sectors within the education spectrum: public and private. Within the private sector, there are schools such as American Heritage and the Unity School, both in Delray Beach, which provide options to tuition-paying families. These private schools also provide vouchers and scholarships to families who qualify. Private sector schools can be both secular schools which tend to be more academic-based, like American Heritage and other preparatory schools, and non-secular, parochial schools such as Unity School and Daughter of Zion, both located in Delray Beach, Florida (Cobbs and Glass 263).

Within the public sector, the school choice options available include magnet schools, charter schools, and public schools that can be accessed through various desegregation and voluntary integration programs (Cobbs and Glass 263). Judith A. Gouwens, author of *Education in Crisis* (2009), defines magnet schools as “public schools

that are part of local school districts and that have curriculums or themes intended to attract students” (47). Some examples of such schools include the schools participating in Palm Beach County School District’s Choice and Career Options Programs, such as Boynton Beach Community High School and Congress Middle School, both located in Boynton Beach, Florida. The choice programs offered at Boynton Beach Community High School include its Aerospace Academy, which provides aviation training to high school students; its vocal music program, which requires an audition and provides an opportunity for students who possess a musical talent; and its Information Technology program, which introduces high schools students to the different career options available within the field of information technology (“Department of Choice and Career Options”). The choice programs available at Congress Middle School include its Medical Sciences program, which provides middle school students with insight and preparation for future careers in allied health and medical science by offering rigorous health-related science courses; and its Graphic Design Program, which prepares middle school students for careers in graphic design by introducing them to the fundamentals of design (“Department of Choice and Career Options”). Charter schools, like magnet schools, tend to have a central theme or curriculum that is designed to attract students; however, they are not essentially part of local school districts. The charters that bind charter schools to their respective districts typically last three to five years and are renewable. Although charter schools are not as tightly regulated as the schools that are part of the school district, they are accountable to their respective chartering agencies for student achievement and budgetary or fiscal responsibilities. These charter agencies may include local school districts, states, and universities (Gouwens 50). Some examples of charter schools in Palm Beach County include South Tech Academy High School, located in Boynton Beach, Florida; and G-Star School of Motion Picture and the Arts, located in West Palm Beach, Florida. Although these programs are currently available within the Palm Beach County School District, there have been arguments nationwide about how effective these programs are in improving academic standards in schools.

It is not the idea of school choice itself that will improve schools, but the opportunity it allows for diversity within the schools and the equal opportunity that it provides for students to receive a quality education. According to Thomas Stacy Doyal’s dissertation for Florida Atlantic

University's College of Education, some of the U.S. Department of Education's stated goals include providing "every child a quality education, provide every classroom a quality teacher, and leave no child behind" (15). This statement has sparked many debates concerning school choice and the quality education for which school choice supposedly stands. Within these debates are concerns about the many other factors that may affect the quality of education which children receive and the effectiveness of the tools measuring education quality. In the book, *School Funding*, edited by Lynn M. Zott, U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan argues that the culture among educators has an impact on the school's performance. Duncan's argument focuses on teacher experience and professional culture. In his argument, schools with teachers who have less experience and a higher turnover rate perform lower than schools with more stability, lower turnover rates, more experienced teachers, and an overall professional culture (35). His argument is an extremely valid one. Teachers with more experience will have the skills necessary to keep a classroom running smoothly. They will know what it takes to get the students on board and use their skills to train other, less experienced teachers, which will contribute to a more professional culture. When there is more stability, the students will have a greater desire to learn. The stability of teachers shows the students that the teachers do care and with that they will earn the students' respect. When the students respect their teachers, they tend to perform better and try harder to improve their performance. In school choice, the parents, students and teachers make a commitment to succeed. That commitment will lead to the qualities that teachers from the higher-performing schools possess.

Another important component of U.S. Department of Education's statement that needs addressing is the part concerning no child being left behind. Casey D. Cobbs and Gene V. Glass address this issue in their article, "School Choice in a Post-Desegregation World". Their argument does favor school choice, but it also addresses a crucial issue. In their article, Cobbs and Glass state:

By influencing the racial and social class composition of schools, choice programs can help determine the human capital bestowed on students and families...[which] can, in turn, lead to enhanced life opportunities for all children, but particularly to those who do not otherwise have access to such capital (262).

This statement implies that with the implementation of school choice, all children will be able to have access to quality education. It also implies that demographics have a very large impact on the quality of education that children receive. Children who reside in areas of low Socio-Economic Status (SES) and attend schools in those areas are more inclined to receive lower quality education. These schools tend to have children who have come from broken families and broken homes, children who bring these issues with them when they come to school. These schools tend to receive less funding and have higher class sizes. These are the schools where the teacher turnover rates are high because of behavioral issues and high stress. Parents who live in these areas should have an option. If the School District itself will not address the issue, then they should give parents that option. In Palm Beach County, parents do have that option, so if a school is performing poorly, parents have the option of sending them to another better-performing Title 1 school. They can also enroll their children in Palm Beach County School District's Choice and Career options program, giving their children the opportunity to receive higher quality education.

Within the choices that parents have is the choice to put their children in a magnet school. Magnet schools are themed schools within the public school system. They were originally designed to desegregate the existing school systems, providing children of ethnic minority groups the same quality education that their European American counterparts were receiving while also promoting population diversity and increased education standards within the schools (Smrekar and Goldring 13). However, even so, there are still inhibiting factors in play. Magnet and themed schools tend to require more funding than regular public schools in order to support their special programs, which require specialized instructors and facilities (Gouwens 48). This means that magnet and themed schools end up competing with the neighborhood public schools for funds. This may lead to various results: either they receive the funding they need, jeopardizing the quality of education that the children at regular public schools receive or they do not receive state funding and either rely on private funds to keep their programs running or shut their programs down. The dilemma here is that if public schools lose funding, then there will remain stratification within the education spectrum. It will become a war between the education given at the poorly funded public schools and the one given at the adequately funded choice schools. The children with less

motivated parents or with parents who have chosen to keep them in their regular schools would not be receiving the same quality of education that the children in magnet schools would be receiving, hence compromising the mission of all children having access to quality education.

This leads to Kathleen Knight Abowitz's argument concerning the perils of vouchers and choice within education. In her *Clearing House* article, Knight Abowitz argues that public schools would no longer be sustainable if they were to "lose significant moral authority and economic resources" to the private school vouchers and charter schools. She did not mention magnet schools in her argument, possibly because they are fully integrated into the public school system. Her argument concerning the sustainability of public school resources points back to the main drawback concerning magnet schools. Choice programs provide parents with many options to choose from, perhaps even motivate many schools to meet the demands of these parents and the Board of Education by increasing their standards. Despite this, programs are at risk of little to no federal or state funding. Lack of funding and resources become inhibiting factors which, in turn, create the low performing schools that were mentioned earlier. However, there are programs such as Race to the Top, among others, that reward schools for meeting certain quota. This allows schools to become more competitive and either maintain or improve their education standards.

With consideration to the arguments, it is crucial to recognize the importance of implementing and maintaining choice programs within the School District of Palm Beach County as well as throughout the state, if not nationwide. In an *Education Week* article, Sean Cavanagh highlights the progress that Florida students have made since the late 1990s. In this article, Cavanagh also mentions the gap between fourth graders from the Latin American and African American communities and their European American counterparts narrowing. He credited this to the policies that were established under Jeb Bush's governance. Under Governor Bush, Florida adopted policies that encouraged choice and competition. His policies included the pay-for-performance system, which became a highly disputed topic among educators statewide. His policies also include the Title I program of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYD). If a school did not meet the federal No Child Left Behind and AYD standards, then the parents were given a letter providing them with alternative school choices where they could send their children.

These alternatives were usually schools that did meet the AYD for Title I schools. These policies became the starting ground of school choice within the local school districts.

Under Bush's policies, Florida became one of the pioneers for performance pay. As mentioned before, there was great debate over this because it would have cost many teachers their jobs. Basically, in performance pay, the state would give extra money to higher-performing and improving schools. These schools could then use the money at their own discretion; some use the money for more staff or teacher bonuses, other schools may use the funds for technology and infrastructure (Cavanagh). The idea is to provide an incentive for schools to perform better. Unfortunately, these rewards are usually based on test score results, and there are many factors that may affect how students perform on standardized tests. Some of these factors may be school related and other times they may be more personal. The fact that there are some external factors affecting performance may deter many educational professionals and therefore the emphasis on the impact that quality teachers have on student performance may tend to lessen. However, this then leads to the idea that performance pay is ineffective in the case of lower-performing schools, where the demographics tend to include children who come from areas of lower SES and fewer parental support. This does not mean that teachers do not have an impact on school performance, however. According to Kent A Farnsworth, in his book *Grassroots School Reform: A Community Guide to Developing Globally Competitive Students*, teachers who are motivated, enthusiastic, and committed to their students' success, tend to get better results than those who are not as motivated. This factor, he argues, is more important than any other factor concerning school performance and teacher performance (108). He further argues that in every other profession there is a rewards system which involves performance evaluations and clear expectations, and that teaching should be like that (112). Earlier there was a brief discussion on professionalism and its impact on school performance and choice. If schools were treated more like businesses, in the sense that the consumers were receiving market value for their investments, then perhaps there would not be as many low-performing schools. If teachers were all enthusiastic about their jobs and more invested in these students, then schools might improve. If the individual schools and the districts invested more time and resources into these schools, then perhaps schools would

perform better. That is what school choice is really about. It is not solely about competition and vouchers, it is about providing quality education to the students.

Amidst all the arguments concerning school choice, there are still reasons why it should be advocated. In Palm Beach County, there are many options available within the public school system. If that is maintained, then there would not be any need to worry about lack of funds due to competition from the private sector. Also, if more schools are encouraged to improve their standards then children would have greater access to quality education. It is a worthy endeavor that should not be overlooked due to some setbacks in the past.

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Biography:

Mirline Petit-Frere



Mirline Petit-Frere aspires to be a midwife and a published author in both fiction and nonfiction. She will continue pursuing an undergraduate degree in the Health Care field at Palm Beach State College and hopes to obtain her Master's degree in Public Health. She wants to use her knowledge and education in Public Health to educate the global population about reproductive health through literature, workshops, and clinics.

Sexual Orientation: Nature vs. Nurture

Joseph LoVerso

The cause of homosexuality has been the subject of intense debate within contemporary Western cultures. Namely, the enduring nature vs. nurture argument: are genetic factors responsible for an individual's sexual orientation or is it his or her upbringing and environment that ultimately determines his or her sexual preferences? A focus of both arguments is the evident correlation between childhood gender non-conformity and homosexuality in adult life. The second question is whether parents' sexual orientation can influence their children's sexuality and whether the parents' tolerance of gender non-conformity can lead their children to develop a homosexual orientation. On the one hand, psychosocial theories such as the theory of opposite sex parent identification and the theory of parental socialization provide possible explanations as to how the culture and especially the child's relationship with his or her parents could impact and shape the development of his or her sexual orientation (Michael, Kenneth, 1995, pp. 14-15). On the other hand, biological theories hypothesize, with variation, that genetically determined factors such as hormone levels and neurological structures dictate how sexual orientation (Hamer, Hu, S., Magnuson, Hu, N., Pattatucci, 1993, pp. 321,325; Micahel & Kenneth, 1995, p. 14; LeVay, 1991, pp. 1034-1036). While both psychosocial and biological

theories provide explanations about sexual orientation and whether it is determined by nature or nurture; at the present, scientific evidence strongly indicates that genetic factors have the greatest influence on an individual's sexual orientation.

The relationship between childhood sex-typed behavior and adult sexuality is often closely analyzed by researchers hoping to understand and explain the development of sexual orientation. Bailey and Zucker argue that homosexuality is strongly correlated with opposite sex identification in childhood (as cited in Michael, Dunne, Michael, Martin, 2000). This assertion is also supported by Michael and Kenneth (1995, pp. 2-3), Bem (1996, p. 321), and Lippa and Tan (2001, p. 81). A longitudinal study by Green was done to investigate the correlation between sex-typed behavior and adult sexual orientation with a sample of 66 feminine boys and 56 control boys (as cited in Michael & Kenneth, 1995, p. 4). The mean initial age was 7.1 and ranged from 4-12 years. A longitudinal study was performed to factor out any biased recall that could confound a retrospective study on the subject. Green's study found 80% of the feminine boys were self-described as either bisexual or homosexual 13 years later as compared to 4% of the control group. As a result, Green concluded that gender identity emerges before and largely determines sexual orientation. A theory by Isay reversed the former, hypothesizing that sexual orientation is evident very early on and that sex type behavior is determined by it (as cited in Michael & Kenneth, 1995, p. 4). Both theories view gender identity and sexual orientation as being part of the same continuum, though even that assessment is debated as there is a margin of homosexuals who do not report opposite sex identification in childhood (as cited in Michael & Kenneth, 1995, p. 3). It should also be noted that men possess a more rigid sexual orientation often falling into either a 0 or a 6 on the Kinsey scale (0 representing exclusive heterosexuality and 6 representing exclusive homosexuality), while women have a more fluid sexual orientation averaging between 1-3 on the Kinsey scale (Michael et al., 2000, pp. 3, 6), and according to Gebhard, gender nonconformity is more predictive of male homosexuality than female (as cited in Michael & Kenneth, 1995, p. 12).

The major theories of sexual orientation development that correspond with the nurture argument are the psychosocial theories. The first is the psychoanalytic field hypothesis that homosexuality could be the result of children coming to identify with the opposite sex parent.

A young boy who is excessively close to his mother, and rejected by his father could then in turn identify with his mother instead of his father, and emulate feminine characteristics as a result. This theory is antiquated and lacks any empirical evidence (Michael & Kenneth, 1995, pp. 14-15). Another psychosocial theory is that of parental socialization. This theory contends that parents encourage gender specific behaviors and shape the way a child identifies with his or her gender. According to this theory, gender non-conformity might emerge when parents tolerate opposite gender behavior. This theory too lacks empirical evidence; however, there is evidence that parental socialization does influence how masculine or feminine heterosexuals and homosexuals see themselves (Michael & Kenneth, 1995, p. 15).

Embodying the nature argument, biological theories of development contend that genetically determined factors such as hormone levels and neurological structures determine how sexual orientation ultimately develops. Dimer (1976) hypothesized sexual orientation to be the function of neurological structures that are determined to be masculine or feminine by the level of androgen exposure experienced during the prenatal period (as cited in Michael & Kenneth, 1995, p. 14). This theory is strongly supported by LeVay's 1991 study comparing the hypothalamus in homosexual men to heterosexual men and women (pp. 1034-1036). His postmortem study analyzed the brain of 41 subjects: 19 homosexual men, 1 bisexual man, 16 heterosexual men, and 9 heterosexual women. He found the hypothalamus of homosexual men to be roughly half the size of a heterosexual man's, and about the same size as a heterosexual woman's hypothalamus. The findings supported LeVay's hypothesis that sexual orientation is the function of neurological structures. Another study by Sheri, Berenbaum, and Hines (1992) investigated the correlation between prenatal androgen, a male sex hormone, levels in girls and gender opposite sex-typed behavior (pp. 203-206). Sheri et al. tested 26 girls and 11 boys with congenital adrenal hyperplasia (CAH) against a control of 15 unaffected girls and 18 unaffected boys. Individuals with CAH have an enzyme disorder which causes them to produce high levels of androgen while still prenatal. Once born, diagnosed and treated, hormone levels quickly return to normal levels. By observing gender identity in girls diagnosed with CAH, the effect of prenatal and early hormone levels on sex-typed behavior of girls can be determined. The study found that girls with CAH played with boy toys significantly more than girl toys. In

fact, the CAH affected girls' play with boy toys as much as the control group of boys. The same effect was not observed in boys with CAH, but rather they behaved similarly to the control group. It was concluded that prenatal androgen levels have a significant impact on childhood sex-type behavior in girls, but was not found to impact the sex-type behavior of boys (Sheri et al., 1992, pp. 204-205). There is more evidence that homosexuality is influenced by genetics. Hamer et al. (1993) conducted a study of 114 families of homosexual men to investigate a possible linkage between the X chromosome marker Xq28 and male sexual orientation. Increased rates of homosexuality among maternal uncles, male cousins, and especially brothers of the homosexual subjects were found (pp. 321-327); however, a correlation between father and son, or any other paternal relatives was not established. Exclusive maternal transmission is to be expected if the trait is related to the X chromosome since males inherit their X chromosome from their mother and their Y chromosome from their father. The study by Hamer et al. (1993) concluded with a statistical confidence of 99% that at least one form of male homosexuality is determined genetically (pp. 321, 325).

At a glance, homosexuality as a genetically heritable trait may seem like an evolutionary contradiction. There are several proposed evolutionary explanations for homosexuality but strong enough empirical evidence to convincingly support any one theory does not exist. One such evolutionary explanation is the theory of offspring support, in which a homosexual offspring can assist in family care of children and the household rather than mating (Kirkpatrick, 2000, p. 391). Another such explanation is the theory of alliance formation. Kirkpatrick (2000) hypothesized that bi-sexual behavior in men emerged as a survival tactic that indirectly aided in reproductive success through the establishment of long-term mutually beneficial relationships (pp. 393-394). But according to this theory, the number of bisexual men should outnumber the homosexual men, as an exclusively homosexual man cannot reproduce and pass down the trait, but the opposite is observed (Michael et al., 2000, p. 6). To remedy this apparent contradiction, Kirkpatrick (2000) infers from historical literature that bisexual practices between men were common in cultures such as that of classical Athens, 15th century Florence, Melanesia before Western influence, and 17th century Japan, suggesting that culture plays a role in how individuals of a bisexual orientation interpret their desires. Yet another

theory hypothesizes that the unidentified gene linked to male homosexuality may be expressed in women in a way that promotes reproductive success, though the trait is not specified (Kirkpatrick, 2000, p. 401). These theories are pure speculation and are not based on empirical evidence. Currently there are not any fully satisfying evolutionary explanations for the prevalence of exclusive homosexuality in men or women.

The question still remains; can the sexual orientation of the parents influence their child? A review of studies done by Stacey and Biblarz (2001) assessed the effects of gay and lesbian parents on adopted children (pp. 159-183). The researchers found that there are no harmful differences between children adopted by and raised by heterosexual parents as opposed to lesbian or gay parents. Some differences observed were that children raised by lesbian parents were more likely to exhibit androgynous behavior. There was no correlation found between mental illness or psychological disturbances in children adopted and raised by homosexual parents. Children raised by homosexual parents were also found to be no more likely to develop homosexual tendencies themselves than the general population. Stacey and Biblarz (2001) concluded that the primary factor responsible for the differences was the gender of the parents rather than their sexual orientation. In other words, two heterosexual women raising a child would yield a similar effect as a lesbian couple. To the broader question of whether parents' tolerance of gender non-conformity can lead their children to develop a homosexual orientation, research by Green suggests that tolerance can lead a child to express more cross-gender behavior, but he concluded that the variation was limited, within the normal range for children, and had no observable connection to the development of the child's sexual orientation later in life (as cited in Michael & Kenneth, 1995, p. 15).

Human sexuality is composed of complex interrelated biological and psychological drives that can make it difficult to isolate each factor and understand its explicit function and value (Michael & Kenneth, 1995, p. 16). It is apparent that there are different mechanisms responsible for sexual orientation in men than in women, and that perhaps there are different forms of homosexuality, each with its own set of causes (Hamer et al., 1993, pp. 321, 325). Research in the field is far from concluded; but currently the scientific evidence strongly points to genetic factors that dictate the development of neurological structures as being the single largest

factor in determining an individual's sexual orientation.

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Biography

Joseph LoVerso



Joseph LoVerso is an Honors student in his first year at Palm Beach State College. He will be graduating in summer 2013 with an Associate of Arts degree. He plans to attend the University of Central Florida in the fall and major

in Psychology.

Sabiduría Staff

Aida Rodriguez, Editor



Aida Rodriguez will graduate from Palm Beach State College in spring 2013 and transfer to a 4-year university in the fall. She will major in Psychology with an ultimate goal of attending graduate school to earn a Doctorate in Social Psychology.

She was motivated to be the 2012-2013 editor of Sabiduría after being part of the peer-review process and having her work published in the fall 2011 edition.

Fernando Varela, Co-editor



Fernando Varela is a 2012-2013 Palm Beach State College Presidential Scholar. He will graduate with an Associate's degree in spring 2013 and continue his undergraduate education in Hispanic Literature at the Harriet L. Wilkes Honors College of

Florida Atlantic University. In the future, Fernando hopes to pursue a Doctorate in Hispanic Literature to become a college professor.

