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## High School Students Attending College: A Study Of The Dual Enrollment Program And Its Impact On The Postsecondary Institution Of Brevard Community College

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HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ATTENDING COLLEGE: A STUDY OF THE DUAL  
ENROLLMENT PROGRAM AND ITS IMPACT ON THE POSTSECONDARY  
INSTITUTION OF BREVARD COMMUNITY COLLEGE

by

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2011

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Applied Sociology  
in the College of Sciences  
at the University of Central Florida  
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Major Professor: Fernando Rivera

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study looks at the dual enrollment program at Brevard Community College in the state of Florida. It uses new interview data to determine if the positive and negative aspects of the program established by the literature still pertain. Four main themes were identified by the study of dual enrollment students and the postsecondary institution: money, quality of students, quantity of students, and opportunities of students and the institution. A discussion of each side of the discourse are made in order to help the program retain its positive attributes. While quality, quantity, and money are all issues concerning the day to day problems that arise in the program, it would appear that the motivation and reason a student is in the dual enrollment program drastically affects all three of these themes as they have the ability to positively or negatively use the opportunity of being in the program. Recommendations are made which may allow the institution and those involved in the dual enrollment program, specifically the faculty, to run as smoothly, efficiently, and productively as possible.

The difficulties that students face if they drop out of the education pipeline will someday become  
the difficulties faced by society as a whole.

**-Bob Herbert**

*The New York Times*

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## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Arguably one of the most important American crises is that of education. Padron (2009) acknowledges that we are facing a “shifting and demanding economic and workforce environment” (p.20). He explains the pressures (reduced funding for students, rising tuition, lack of community partnerships) that higher education has at it preparing students for jobs that may not even exist yet. Padron (2009) proclaims that a third of high school students do not graduate and of the two-thirds of students that do graduate only half of them actually have the skills needed to succeed in the workforce and higher education. He gives eight recommendations for a “New Era of American Education” (p.21). One of these recommendations is to support and strengthen community college-high school relationships. He believes that this is a critical junction in the education system as “these partnerships offer the best change to develop a broad-based, national strategy that can achieve dramatic results in a reasonable span of time” (p.22). The dual enrollment program has the ability to do just that.

The dual enrollment program was created in 1985 to help academically gifted students and institutions alike by expanding opportunities for students by reducing costs for families and the state, increasing access, and by helping keep students intellectually engaged (Brophy & Johnson 2007; Schmidt et al. 2007; Andrews & Mees 2001; Boswell 2001). However, perceptions have shifted as some people now see the program as being abused and hurting our educational system. They see the program as a way to temporarily combat space and funding issues, a drain on limited financial resources, and even a program that has lowered academic standards (Hunt & Carroll 2006; Bailey et al. 2002; Rosenbaum 1998).

But at the local levels the dual enrollment program has still been a viable option for those who have academically excelled. It has allowed high school students to stay motivated, focused,

and financially rewarded for their efforts by allowing them to attend postsecondary institutions. The dual enrollment program needs to be evaluated to see if it still benefits those individuals involved or if it no longer is achieving its original purpose. It has been around long enough (28 years) that researchers and educators alike need to start looking at who is benefiting from this program, and who is not. Specifically, this research asks the question: What are the positive and negative consequences of the dual enrollment program?

When addressing the issue of dual enrollment, past research shows that most of the programs that are designed to measure its success are geared towards student satisfaction and outcomes (Karp et al. 2007; Johnson & Brophy 2006; Andrews 2004). This study is an effort to take a different approach towards the program's effectiveness as it will look at those who directly participate in the day to day workings of the program. This will help compliment the literature to see if the strengths and weaknesses proclaimed by past scholars match up with current day encounters of faculty and students in the dual enrollment program.

## **CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### Education Journal Literature

Within the United States, policy makers and educators have been trying to find viable options to assist high school students with successful transitions into postsecondary institutions. This interest stems in part from the fact that the research indicates that students are vastly unprepared as almost half of them require remedial training when they arrive at a postsecondary school (NCES 2002). Research has shown that the success of a student at the postsecondary level is determined by the expectations at the college level and by how hard they were pushed while they were in high school (Karp et al. 2005). One such program that has the potential to alter the relationship between high school and college is known as dual enrollment (Bailey et al. 2003). The dual enrollment program gives high school students the opportunity to earn college credits by attending postsecondary institutions while they are still attending high school (Boswell 2001).

Almost all states have some sort of dual enrollment policy. Dual enrollment programs are nearly universal within United States community colleges. The Florida Department of Education (2004) reported a 98 percent participation rate, and four-year college participation rates of about 77 percent. In 1976, California started the path-breaking effort of adopting policies which would eventually establish the dual enrollment program (Mokher & McLendon 2009). Then, in 1985, Minnesota becomes the first state to implement policies that allow students to gain a postsecondary education while still being in high school (Boswell 2001). It is credited with being the first state to promote the dual enrollment program as a way to boost high school students' academic careers regardless of their current academic level (Kronholz 2011). In the state of Florida a student must meet the following requirements to be eligible for the program: a student in a Florida public school or in a home education program, have a 3.0 un-weighted GPA or a 2.0

un-weighted GPA to enroll in career certificate courses, be able to pass the appropriate section of the college placement test, and -meet any additional requirements specified by the university.

There are just under 40,000 participants in the program within Florida (Florida Department of Education 2012).

Past research has generally shown the dual enrollment program as being offered towards only the top students. But positions about the program have shifted as many conclude that the program actually may benefit almost any type of student (Hughes et al. 2005). Over the past couple of decades the program has grown and allowed many more students participate (Clark 2001). Kim et al. (2006) give a brief history of the dual enrollment program and show that it has drastically grown over the years. They note that laws and regulations on the program are quite a bit different among each individual state and that the programs essentially operate via local agreements. They specially note that this increase of the program is a concern to researchers as it expands to a broader range of students.

Research reports that high school (non-dual enrolled) students self-report spending about three hours a week studying, in comparison with their four-year and community college counterparts who more than double that amount of studying time (Balfanz 2009). This unfortunate disparity in self-reported study time coincides with remediation of high school students at postsecondary institutions. Other researchers believe that by exposing high school students to college curriculum prior to their entrance into a postsecondary institution will moderate the amount of postsecondary remediation courses needed for incoming students college students. (Karp et al. 2005:1; AASCU 2002; Martinez & Bray 2002; National Commission on the High School Senior year 2001).

When looking at dual enrollment Hoffman (2005) points out that this program, and its agenda to help increase high school students' education, is actually not a postsecondary institutional problem. Hoffman concludes that it is a possible solution to a bigger problem in which primary and secondary institutions are not adequately preparing students for postsecondary criteria and expectations. Other researchers argue that even though DE programs are catching on that we still don't know exactly how much they actually assist the student in achieving postsecondary success (Karp et al. 2007). Some even go one step further to say that there isn't enough evidence at all to prove that the DE program actually helps students succeed as they note that it is unclear if the program increases their likeliness to enter a traditional university later on, let alone attain a college degree (Karp et al. 2007; Bailey & Karp 2003). Scholars do note that it is critical to find out and understand the needs of the participants in the program, such as orientation programs and teaching experience, in order to increase effectiveness (Charlier & Duggan 2010; Strom-Gottfried & Dunlap 2004).

#### Sociology of Education Literature

There is very little sociology research on community colleges, let alone a specific program within. To capture a snapshot of what the sociological discourses are among education, this literature review categorized all articles from the American Sociological Association's journal *Sociology of Education* from 2004 to 2012. This was done in an attempt to show what the discipline's flagship association is discussing in terms of education in America. As of the end of 2012, 155 articles within the sociology of education journal fit into at least one of six categories: class, race, gender, policy, attainment/admission, and achievement/effectiveness. I created these categories in the fall of 2012 by reading the abstracts of all 155 articles and grouping them together based upon similar topics. If I was uncertain where an article should be

grouped based on the abstract I would read the article for further clarification. The six groups were created organically, that is to say that by the end of grouping like-minded topics together I found myself with six categories, at which time it was quite apparent what label could be placed onto each one. I did not start categorizing articles with a preset number in mind or preset labels for each category. It should be noted that some articles covered more than one of the six categories. When this occurred the article was placed into all of the categories that it pertained to. The majority of the literature appears to fall into what sociologists would deem the top three categories of inequality research: class, race, and gender. Ninety-nine of the 155 articles reside within these three categories. However, the dual enrollment program would fall into either one of the last two categories listed above, attainment/admission or achievement/effectiveness. This literature review contains an overview of the aforementioned six categories so one may see that literature indeed does not cover community colleges or the dual enrollment program within the current sociology of education discussions. This will be followed up with how the literature in education helps better establish this study and its relevance to both the sociology of education and education literature.

### *Class*

Researchers have looked at class differences among kindergarteners, differing college pathways, differences between college transfers, educational attainment, and parental participation in youth activities (Bennett et al. 2012; Goldrick-Rab & Pfeffer 2009; Paterson & Iannelli 2007; Goldrick-Rab 2006; Burkam et al. 2004). They have also looked at inequality among educational opportunities and outcomes (Reisel 2011; Torche 2010; Ayalon et al. 2008).

Literature also recognizes social capital in this light. Studies have looked at the effects of capital on academic achievement, computer technology in schools, school size, immigrants and

minorities, and dropout rates (Jaeger 2011; Gottfredson & DiPietro 2011; Ream & Rumberger 2008; Bankston III 2004; Frank et al. 2004; Kao 2004; Noguera 2004). A few studies have been done internationally looking at cultural capital in South Korea and Japan (Byun et al. 2012; Yamamoto & Brinton 2010).

The question of class brings up the most obvious site to study: that of the family. Research has looked at families in terms of their background and how it determines educational selection (Reisel 2011). It also been looked at in terms of pre-migration and what the expected educational outcomes will be for their children (Feliciano 2006). In addition, family structure, history, involvement, and instability have all been looked at to see their effects on academic achievement and success (Cavanagh & Fomby 2012; Cheadle 2008; Chu et al. 2007; Cavanagh et al. 2006).

### *Race*

Race is seen intersecting with class in many studies. Researchers have looked at social capital and minorities, social capital of one's peers, white students in minority schools, and parental influence (Mangino 2009; Ream & Rumberger 2008; Morris 2005; Kao 2004). In conjunction with class, in regards to race, is that of segregation. Studies have shown that segregation creates separate and unequal schools. This in turn equates to unequal performance among students at each school (Logan et al. 2012; Owens & Lynch 2012; Stark & Flache 2012; Saporito & Sohoni 2006).

Research shows that race affects attitudes, achievement gaps, and academic expectations (Byun & Park 2012; Matthew 2011; Riegle-Crumb & Grodsky 2010; Downey et al. 2009; Herman 2009; Kelly 2009; Alexander et al. 2008; Frost 2007; Jao & McKeever 2006; Goldsmith 2004; Morgan & Mehta 2004). One study was also conducted which shows that race affects

teachers' expectations of students' behavior inside the classroom (Downey & Pribesh 2004). Another study concurs, finding that race does alter teacher perception and satisfaction (Renzulli et al. 2011). It goes a step further to state that race and structural organization equally contribute to said teacher satisfaction.

Studies not participating in the overarching themes listed above round out the theme of race within the sociology of education journal. These studies looked at interracial friendships in college to see if one stayed within their own racial group or not (Stearns et al. 2009), enrollment rates for Mexicans and non-Hispanic Whites (Oropesa & Landale 2009), integration of minority students in white schools (Holland 2012), an analysis of black college curricula (Cole 2006), and grade retention and dropout rates (Stearns et al. 2007).

#### *Gender*

The category of gender does not find as much research within the sociology of education journal. Just barely over a dozen of the one hundred and fifty-five Sociology of Education articles look specifically at gender. No researchers appear to be covering the same theme with regards to gender. Three of the studies were done in Russia, China, or Turkey. They looked at either the gender differences in labor market outcomes, egalitarianism and education, or gender inequalities within their country (Rankin & Aytac 2006; Gerber & Schaefer 2004; Shu 2004). One study was done over 30 years in 8 different countries within Europe (Barone 2011) and this study looked at gender imbalances in scientific fields and attributed this difference to a "care-technical" division. This refers to fields that prepare students for "care" and "technical" jobs.

Scholars looked at the gender income gap and its effects on education as well as the effects of being poor and male (Bobbitt-Zeher 2007; Entwisle et al. 2007). One longitudinal study was conducted from 1971-2002 which specifically looked at doctoral programs and found

a significant increase in women receiving doctorates. This increase over 31 years went from 14% of women getting doctorates to 46%. This vast increase was attributed to the fact that society is moving past the devaluation perspective, or the idea that women are devalued and thus so is their work (England 2005). Studies also looked at gender differences in regards to school readiness, athletic opportunities, obesity, majors, and advanced courses (Cooper et al. 2011; Olzak & Kangas 2008; Pelak 2008; Crosnoe 2007; Riegle-Crumb et al. 2006).

### *Policy*

The sub-division of policy from the sociology of education journal has few articles pertaining to policy. Some may argue that this may be the most relevant aspect of education that sociologists should try and change. Karen (2005) would argue this point as his article “No Child Left Behind? Sociology Ignored!” places responsibility on sociologists and non-sociologists alike. He highlights the structural inequality issues that sociology recognizes as the true culprits of educational achievement gaps and urges policy makers to look at and fix these problems. A few other researchers have looked at the NCLB Act as well, giving credence to their thoughts on what sociologists and parents need to do in order to change the direction that education is going in (Dworkin 2005; Epstein 2005). Researchers have continued to look at parents both as structural obstacles and predictors of cognitive development (Lareau & Munoz 2012; Schaub 2010).

Scholars have honed in on specific sectors within their research on child care, charter schools, and school organizations (Davies & Quirke 2007; Renzulli & Roscigno 2005; Fuller et al. 2004). Some have studied policies that immediately affect the classroom such as testing and exit exams (Warren et al. 2008; Diamond 2007), while still others look at the effects of high schools on college enrollment and school-based social networks (Hill 2008; Neal 2008).

Studies have been conducted to determine who is actually placed into special education and to see how schools find loop holes to recruit individuals who meet the schools' goals (Hibel et al. 2010; Jennings 2010). These studies suggest that placement into particular programs or schools are not necessarily for the betterment of the individual or equal among all individuals.

#### *Attainment/Admission*

Some literature in the sociology of education journal has centered on the attainment and admission differences among individuals in our country and their ability to receive an education. Researchers have looked at military service in past wars to see what their educational attainment has been (MacLean 2005; Teachman 2005). Other studies have looked at educational attainment in terms of incarceration risks as well as adolescent drinking (Arum & LaFree 2008; Crosnoe 2006). Expectations for attainment of higher education as well as admission into post-secondary institutions and the reality of these expectations as just dreams for certain marginalized groups has also been addressed (Domina et al. 2011; Rosenbaum 2011). Furthermore, school choice by way of magnet schools, privatization reforms, and school sectors has been studied by a few researchers (Carbonaro & Covay 2010; Torche 2005; Archbald 2004).

While research has also looked at cultural boundaries (Carter 2006), the most prevalent research in regards to educational attainment has been in regards to those in high school. Researchers have looked at supply and demand for certain types of classes in high school as well as dropouts and the role technical education has for these individuals (McFarland & Rodan 2009; Plank et al. 2008). A study was also done which looked at the effects that high school has on "urban" students and their ability to achieve a post-secondary education (Roderick et al. 2011).

Literature has looked at high schools in terms of the "big fish, little pond" effect and how class rank, size, gender, and academic success play an important role in academic post-secondary

attainment and admission (Thijs et al. 2010; Espenshade et al. 2005). Specifically, these studies look at self-identifying where one fits into his or her high school as well as its reputation and prestige.

### *Achievement and Effectiveness*

Even more literature has been found in the sociology of achievement journal with respect to achievement and effectiveness of students and institutions alike. Scholars have specifically looked at the role of teachers. While one study looked at effects of the student-teacher relationship (Crosnoe et al. 2004), others viewed the problem of having under qualified teachers in the classroom as well as the institutional structure that develops and shapes effective teachers (Stevens 2007; Ingersoll 2005). Researchers also looked at teachers and their ability to affect behavioral and social skills from an early age and to get students “attached” to school and the benefits it provides (Jennings and DiPrete 2010; Hallinan 2008).

The remaining literature in this particular sub-category of achievement and effectiveness in the sociology of education greatly differs. Researchers have studied academic achievement and friend dynamics, personal effort, identities, as well as graduation rates (Flashman 2012; Brint et al. 2006; Carbonaro 2005; Alon & Tienda 2005). They have also looked the effectiveness of science education with respect to spiritual change, mathematical criteria and career outcomes, exit exams and dropout rates in Texas and Florida, the effects of actual schools themselves, and parental participation in young students’ academic lives (Park et al. 2011; Scheitle 2011; Downey et al. 2008; McFarland 2006; Domina 2005; Warren & Jenkins 2005). Literature also covers school shootings, food sales and obesity in schools, institutional environments, maternal cohabitation and academic success, comparison of public and catholic

school ideals, and more (Hallinan & Kubitschek 2012, Van Hook & Altman 2012, Fox & Harding 2005, Raley et al. 2005, Coburn 2004).

There was one particular study that did concentrate on community colleges within rural areas. This study was longitudinal and found that community colleges actually made a significant contribution to employment growth from 1976-2004. Unfortunately, since then state cut-backs on funding of schools has started to see community colleges negatively affecting employment growth and economic development in rural areas (Crookston & Hooks 2012).

#### Strengths of the Dual Enrollment Program from the Literature

Krueger (2006) believes that the dual enrollment program is a very important program that may be used to increase the enrollment rates of students at the postsecondary level. But for the program to succeed it will need to address access, difficulty, and affordability. Affordability is definitely a key strength when looking at dual enrollment. Researchers have noted the reduction of costs towards the family and the state as being very crucial towards the success of the program (Hunt 2007; Hunt & Carroll 2006; Boswell 2001).

The literature also shows that the high school students gain benefits while they are in the program and still in high school and after they leave for college. Some scholars believe that the program is very necessary as it facilitates a steady flow of skilled individuals prepared for the workforce (Reese 2008). Others have pointed out that the dual enrollment program provides assistance in overcoming the dreaded senioritis by keeping students intellectually and therefore academically engaged (Brophy & Johnson 2007; Boswell 2001). Other scholars believe that the program actually increases the strength of academic conviction of students as well as retaining high school enrollment rates (Kleine & Lewis 2005). A study by Puyear (1998) agrees with this finding as he found evidence that dual enrollment improves both the high school and the college

continuation rate for participating high school students. The literature continues to show that the dual enrollment program appears to be of great value to high school students as these students are considered to be well more prepared in all aspects of academia (Kim & Bragg 2008). Research conducted in Florida mirrors this belief as it concludes that the dual enrollment program promotes academic success in postsecondary education (Karp et al. 2007).

Upon entering into postsecondary institutions, Bailey et al. (2002) found that high school students have greater success as they earn higher grades in college than more typical groups of students. This success in high school students has allowed the doors to open up for a much broader range of students, not just those who have traditionally attended college, and introduces them to college expectations, culture, and curricula (Karp et al. 2005; Venezia et al. 2003). Some researchers believe this is due in part because community colleges and the dual enrollment program are able to help better transition students from public schools to postsecondary institutions all while augmenting the students chances for greater academic success (Charlier & Duggan 2010).

Once these students are in college, research has shown that 11% of students are more likely to continue their postsecondary education into the second year while 12% are much more likely to enter a postsecondary institution within seven months of getting their high school degree when compared to students not in the dual enrollment program (Swanson 2010). One caveat to Swanson's (2008) findings shows that dual enrollment students who are assertive and passionate in moving forward with their education are much more likely to earn Bachelors or advanced degrees. This increase in college participation and completion is further supported by the literature which recognizes that students are capable of creating a "nest egg" of credits

(Swanson 2010; Lewis & Overman 2008; Karp et al. 2007). This is more than likely a great stepping stone which assists the student in their quest for obtaining their desired degree.

Ultimately, and arguably, the most important strength of the program is the time and money that students end up saving as it helps decrease tuition costs (Andrews & Mees 2001; Boswell 2001). Hunt (2007) explains that this happens, and thus allows the program to succeed, when the postsecondary institution and the high school both are able to obtain full state funding for their dual enrollment students. But it isn't just students and families who save money. The literature shows that even the state is able to save money as federal spending helps out. This point is elaborated on as Brophy and Johnson (2007) believe that allowing high school students to complete college courses during their high school years makes sound state-level fiscal policy.

#### Weaknesses of the Dual Enrollment Program from the Literature

The literature also portrays weaknesses of the dual enrollment program. Kronholz (2011) reports that in the rush to accelerate high-school students into collegiate-level courses we may be, for a myriad of reasons, setting some up for disappointment. This is congruent with researchers who believe that regardless of what programs are in place, such as the dual enrollment program, dropout rates are still very high as roughly one-third of starting students earn degrees. Despite open door policies for most community colleges, researchers believe that high school students just aren't prepared well enough for postsecondary education and continue to drop out at an alarming rate (Kim & Bragg 2008; Cohen & Brawer 2003; Tinto et al. 1994). Researchers continue to support this by telling us that over forty percent of students dropped out of two year community colleges within their first year (Kim & Bragg 2008; NCES 1998). Other research adds that 32% of those that did complete their first year of community college did not actually come back to start their second year (SREB 2003). Dual enrollment is seen as a program

which can turn these numbers around. One researcher points out that people believe an open door policy and open access hurt the students. Too often people believe that when access is able to be granted to almost all, the academic standards for the students significantly decrease (Rosenbaum 1998).

All indicators point to continued growth in these programs because they are meeting the needs of students, parents, school districts, and colleges. But there are those who are concerned for the quality of the dual enrollment programs themselves (Clark 2001). Others believe that high school students actually decrease the difficulty of the postsecondary classes that they attend (Bailey et al. 2002). Some researchers point out that one course taught at a community college may not be as difficult as the same course being taught at a four year university (Boswell 2001). Some point out that this lack of uniformity of academic rigor stems from the belief that the quality of education and access to it is greatly hampered by the fact that there is not universal guidance or employment of policies at the state level (Andrews & Barnett 2002).

This notion of access is brought up by some. Scholars show that while some want to give access into the program to only the best students since there are great financial benefits, this restraint of access actually ends up going against public educational objectives (Bailey et al. 2003; Greenburg 1998). One researcher in particular would agree with this sentiment as she points out that access to programs such as dual enrollment aren't available to many students because of lack of information, high participation fees, and lack of academic preparation (Hoffman 2003). Other researchers add to this argument by pointing out that different institutions and different states have the capability of adding even more criteria than the minimum requirements set by federal policy, be it academic or financial, to get into the program. This has

the effect of restricting access. This is why some argue for the reconsideration of which courses and which students should be allowed into the program (Karp & Hughes 2008).

The next issue that the literature points to is one of finances. In states in which both colleges and high schools receive some funding based on enrollment, it appears that the state is paying twice for the same dual enrolled students. Researchers have shown that some programs have been caught “double dipping” from multiple financial assets since the student is enrolled in both high school and college programs (Bailey et al. 2002; Boswell 2001). Who picks up the proverbial tab of students in the dual enrollment program is seen as an important issue for some researchers (Kronholz 2011). A few states split their per-pupil funding between the high school and college. Past research done at the University of Florida has shown that this can be a problem for students who have to retake courses upon entering a four year university. Since the student ended up taking one or more classes more than one time, the state ended up paying double for each class (Windham 1997).

On the flip side of the argument legislators see dual enrollment principally as a mechanism to save the state money and free up space in all of Florida’s educational institutions as they all are seen as being vastly overcrowded (Hunt & Carroll 2006). Money is also saved as dual enrollment courses have been used to accelerate students' time to earn a degree both in high school and in college, which has the added benefit of reducing state education costs. Others maintain that dual enrollment and its funding are targeted only to academically advance students and that funds are directed away from career and technical education students (Karp & Hughes 2008).

A final issue concerning the dual enrollment program pertains to an arguably very big problem as faculty preparation is vastly under developed (Charlier & Duggan 2010). Andrews

and Mees (2001) conducted a study which found many concerns with dual enrollment including student readiness, acceptance of credits, and funding; among these concerns faculty support and instructor quality ranked highest. This lack of attention towards faculty is seen as an alarming issue for Hughes (2010) as well. She believes that college faculty needs to be aware of who their DE students are for support reasons. If a faculty member cannot identify the dual enrollment students in her classroom, this could set up the student for a negative first semester experience which impacts the students' entire collegiate career.

### Relevance to Research

This overview of the literature in the sociology of education shows that while many discussions are taking place, none of them are focusing on the dual enrollment program within postsecondary institutions. One may see that studies looked at high school students and the effects that gender and class size may have had on their success. Studies looked at teachers and their ability, or lack thereof, to affect student outcomes. Research also looked at how institutional structures shape effective teachers. This is interesting as perhaps the dual enrollment program somehow has an impact on shaping effective teachers. The sociological literature looked at how inequalities and policy seem to affect individuals' education. The lack of research on institutional effectiveness, especially on specific programs within education, is where the education literature picks up the ball and appears to bridge a gap between the individual and the institution. It rounds out the bigger picture, which cannot initially be seen just by examining the sociological literature. The education literature acknowledges that there are institutional sites and programs which may also affect individuals' opportunities to succeed. Therefore, the dual enrollment program may be seen as a site which needs to be evaluated more assiduously to ascertain its true importance to student educational outcomes.

This research will look at the dual enrollment program to determine what the positive and negative consequences of the program are. This will allow us to see how effective this particular program is in playing its part of educating students at the postsecondary level. This perfectly aligns with the sociology of education mission as it examines individual experiences within social institutions to determine what affect there is on the educational process.

### Theory

There are two theories which will be used to analyze the findings of this study: Robert Merton's (1936) unanticipated consequences and Ulrich Beck's (2001) zombie categories. Merton looks at particular phenomena and ascertains whether something happened that was not expected to happen. This study will look at the dual enrollment program and see if there were unintended consequences that were not expected upon the inception of this program.

Ulrich Beck (2001) has a theory which I have found most compelling and may contribute to the discussion as well. In his talk about individualism and the transformation within our society, he brings about the idea of zombie categories. A zombie category is named as such as it pertains to something that is both alive and dead. It refers to social institutions that are still operating (alive), but not at their original intent (dead). Beck proclaims that essentially everything we currently study in the social realm is a zombie category such as family, class, etc. We have an old school mentality of what a family is, or how to define social class. However, in today's day and age these archaic definitions no longer apply. Yet we wonder why we have the outcomes we get when studying phenomena in ways that are no longer applicable. I argue that education itself is a zombie institution. Obviously the educational system is operating in our country, but the way in which we operationalize success, failure, and indeed the actual tools we use to educate our youth are no longer relevant. They are no longer giving us the desired

outcomes that educational system should be. Through the lens of Beck's (2001) "zombie category" this study will try and determine if the dual enrollment program is operating under its original pretense. If it is not, then Beck would argue that the dual enrollment program is a zombie institution, in which it is still operating "alive," but is actually "dead" since it is not operating under its original intent.

### Subjectivity in Social Research

I would like to acknowledge at this point that I am aware of the discourse that social science has in regards to the subjectivity and objectivity that we as social scientists have towards our research, and thus the results, and the connotations associated with qualitative and quantitative approaches. On the one hand, and certainly among the minority, subjectivity is seen as unavoidable and desirable as it allows us to research what we are interested in and passionate about. From this point of view objectivity is seen as a killer of love, of passion, and ultimately the humanity behind doing social research at all. On the other hand, and among the majority within social science, many see any personal involvement in science as not doing science at all. The second a drop of subjectivity is dropped into the vial of research, it is forever tainted and not worthy of serious attention.

Regardless of which side of the discussion one may be situated on, all of our research is tainted with subjective bias no matter how much we wish it was not. Those that stick to strictly quantitative methods do so with the perception that they have completely cut out any and all subjectivity and thus their research is superior to that which employs qualitative methods. This line of thinking is most certainly detrimental to all scientists. The only way we as academics, and especially social scientists, may begin to overcome subjectivity is by personally acknowledging that it is present in all of our work. It is only at this point that may we start to weed out the

subjective bias in our research and *strive* for those perfect, object findings that we hope to achieve.

Dorothy Smith (1990) agrees with this concept of subjectivity as she believes that sociology does not produce objective knowledge independent of itself. Smith claims that we must accept, or at least acknowledge, that our methodology and results are altered by researchers' subjectivity. We should not try to separate ourselves from our research like we have done in the past, but rather embrace and acknowledge our personal biases. It is my goal to do what Smith asks of all social scientists, "to make our direct embodied experience of the everyday world the primary ground of our knowledge" (p.14).

This issue of objective bias is brought up as I do not wish to hide the reason for conducting research on this particular program within the educational system. This research did not come about as a vendetta towards the dual enrollment program, but rather I have a fascination of it. When I started to go back to college I had already dabbled in the college scene and had served our country for four years. I had taken a few years off to decompress and wrestle with an anomic lifestyle after the service. It is at this point that I decided to go back to school. Upon attending the postsecondary institution nearby I enrolled in the honors program, wherein I only took honors courses. These small courses contained intelligent, motivated, and energetic individuals. It was appalling to me that these students were almost all in their teens and still in high school. It was at this point that I first found out about the dual enrollment program. I thought that this was an amazing opportunity that I never had.

As my academic career went from a student at the local community college, to the state university where I attended undergraduate and graduate school, I was able to see the dual enrollment program from multiple perspectives. It is along this journey that I heard rumblings of

discontent from both students and faculty alike towards the program. I have had to look back retrospectively at my academic journey as I obtained new information and have had to acknowledge that even my own personal education was impacted, both positively and negatively, by dual enrollment program. This research was conducted because I wish to see the program succeed so that both the individuals and the institution alike may benefit from each other.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to determine what the consequences are of having a dual enrollment program at the postsecondary institution. In recent years the program's effectiveness has been a concern. Unfortunately, there is no consensus on what the problem may be (if there actually is one), let alone what needs to be changed or fixed. This study needs to be conducted as the educational system in America is a fragile institution which needs to be closely monitored. One law or program may drastically help, or hinder, the education our country dispatches to our young ones. Doing a "checkup" of all of our programs is in the interest for all of us in education. This study was conducted to do an evaluation as it investigates what the potential positive and negative aspects of the dual enrollment program are and where it lines up with the strengths and weaknesses stated in the literature review.

### Description of Participants

A nonprobability purposive sample was used to recruit participants from within a local community college. This particular institution is being used based upon my familiarity with the students, faculty, and location. This is consistent with Wolfer (2007) as she states that the researcher uses this method based on their knowledge of the population and what type of sample best suits their research goals. The college has four campuses within its county, all of which have attending dual enrollment students. Once permission was authorized to conduct research by this institution, ten faculty members were interviewed either in person or by email in within a two week period in February 2013. The respondents had been teaching anywhere from two years to 18 years with dual enrollment students in their classroom. Six of them were full professors, two of them were assistant professors, one was an instructor, and one was a lecturer. Note that these rankings may differ slightly than universities. At this institution a lecturer, or adjunct, is part

time. An instructor is full time but has no tenure. An assistant professor is full time and just received tenure and a full professor obviously is full time with tenure. Of the 10 interviewees, eight were female and two were male. The themes that my questions revolved around were created by prior literature. Simple, short, to-the-point questions were then asked to assess the relevance of each theme.

The participants were originally recruited from one campus as a snowball sampling technique was employed. Snowball sampling begins with the interviewer contacting one person, who in turn contacts others, and so on to see if they would be willing to participate in my study. I approach the first individual, who then contacts others and creates a “snowball” of participants. This technique allowed for all but a couple of the interviews to be done at one campus, as interviews of two of the ten individuals were conducted at a second campus and two were done via email.

The semi-structured interviews were conducted at each individual’s office at a time that best worked for them, save for the two which were conducted via email. This was due strictly to convenience but more than likely attributed to the interviewee being comfortable as well. Upon getting done with the first few interviews I asked the faculty member if he or she would be willing to forward my contact information to possible willing participants, thus continuing the snowball technique. As such, throughout a two week period faculty members would contact me by email or phone and set up a time for the interview to take place. Generally speaking this was before or after one of their classes. They all were teaching classes the semester of the interview and all had dual enrollment students in their classrooms at that time.

An important aspect that needs to be addressed are the disciplines. The majority of interviewees taught classes in the liberal arts department, specifically in the humanities and

social sciences. Only a couple of the interviewees were outside of this realm. One in particular taught English courses. There appear to be some differences in the responses based upon skill based vs. non-skill based disciplines and how the interviewee reacts towards dual enrollment students.

The interview questions followed particular themes that arose from the literature review. The questions afforded the interviewee the ability to respond however he or she saw fit with no bias coming from me. I chose to give all ten faculty members female pseudonyms to ensure secrecy. Since there were ten interviewees I used ten female names which consisted of Abby, Becky, Carrie, Diana, Ellen, Fiona, Gina, Heather, Isabel, and Jill. While numbers could have been assigned to each participant, I feel this dehumanizes the social research being conducted and thus I choose to give random names using the first ten letters of the alphabet. Before I started this interview process, approval for the study and exemption from informed consent from my university's Institutional Review Board (IRB) was given to me as no personal information was gathered about the interviewees.

### Analytical Strategy

My study on the dual enrollment program is exploratory in nature. I was able to analyze and assemble themes from the literature and then create an interview question to correspond with each theme. This was done to see how relevant the themes were in the daily lives of those in the dual enrollment program. When conducting the interviews a tape recorder was used in order to collect and review the data. After this was done I replayed the tape to transcribe the interviews. After transcriptions were done I was able to place the interviewees' responses into positive and negative categories under their perspective theme. At this point I was able to compare and contrast this data with what the literature deemed positive and negative aspects of the program.



## CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS

The purpose of this research is to find out what the positive and negative consequences of the dual enrollment program are in order to help facilitate any change that may be needed in order to keep both the program and the institution operating within a positive symbiotic relationship. My analysis looks at newfound transcript data via interviews. Four themes were created prior to creating interview questions based upon the education literature on the dual enrollment program. These themes include money, motivation, quality, and quantity. It should be noted that these themes are very much intertwined with each other. These four themes will be used to analyze the dual enrollment program and the impact it appears to make, from a faculty perspective, on both the students and the institution alike. The beginning of this section contains a rundown of the raw results of the survey and interviews while the second half is broken down into the four themes.

### Results

#### *Interviews*

The first question asked to faculty members was related to what they viewed as the advantages or disadvantages of the dual enrollment program for the school and for the students. The breakdown of that question can be seen below in the following sections. When asked if dual enrolled students do better or worse in their classes, of the ten faculty members interviewed, other than a couple, the majority said that yes they do. Many of them had caveats to this. They noted that on exams they did better but on critical thinking/writing assignments they did not. Others believed that they didn't do any better or worse than non-dual enrolled students. When asked if any of the faculty members taught their classes differently based upon the amount of dual enrolled students in their classrooms, there was a resounding "no." One interviewee pointed

out that immaturity on their part may slow the classroom down, thus affecting the focus of the teacher, which affects the momentum of the classroom.

When asked if there was anything they would change within the program there were two reoccurring points brought up. The first was be that of FERPA, Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act. One faculty member said she would like to have a form signed by the student so that parents could not get involved with their academic career despite FERPA. Others held the same belief as they saw parental involvement as one of, if not the, worst aspects of having dual enrolled students in college classrooms. Secondly, they would like to put greater restrictions on the requirements to get into the dual enrollment program. Some stated that they would like the GPA requirements to go back to 3.5, while others suggested the hiring of individuals who could monitor the program closely at both the high school and college levels.

The final question dealt with the perception that faculty members have of each other. They were asked if the program was a source of discussion amongst their peers, other faculty members, and whether or not these discussions were positive or negative. They essentially all answered uniformly, stating that there was definitely a constant discussion of the dual enrollment program in and outside of meetings. Regardless of their own personal beliefs towards the program, all ten of the interviewees felt that the discussion was equally represented, fifty-fifty, for and against it.

What became apparent to me is that these themes were spot on. As you will see below, the faculty were able to go into detail regarding specific instances on why or how they saw dual enrollment students the way they did, be it positive or negative. One thing that you will not obviously be able to take away from this research is the emphasis that each individual had on what they were saying. Most of the interviewees were quite passionate about what they were

saying and were trying to convey to me the importance of how much the dual enrollment students affect their classroom, again whether positively or negatively. Undoubtedly some of their passion was lost in transcriptions and even more, if not all, of it will have been lost by the time some of their quotes make it into this research paper. What I wish to convey is that this program, and the themes found within the literature, are of great concern to faculty members as their lives are directly affected by the students who participate in the program. Below is a continuation and elaboration of the themes as they were teased out via interviews.

### Themes

#### *Money*

One of, if not the, most influential aspect of the educational system is that of money. So it should be of no surprise that money is the very first topic that is brought up when discussing the dual enrollment program. The program itself was created to offer students a way to save money while earning a degree in higher education. However, some believe that the prospect of money has altered the original intent of the program both for the students and the institution.

The ability to take college courses while still in high school greatly benefits the student and his or her family from a financial standpoint. If they desire to be in the program and meet the requirements then their entire AA, including books and transportation, may be funded by the state and taxpayer dollars. All ten of the interviewee's proclaimed that saving money was the most obvious and advantageous aspect of the program. Abby's reply sums up all of the interviewee's responses quite nicely: "Well the advantages for the student I think is kind of obvious because they are getting college credit as well as high school credit and I have students who graduate with both, their AA and their HS diploma." It is easy to see why so many students

and families would be interested in such a program. The ability to save money in this current economic situation is more than appealing to some.

There were, however, a couple of interviewees that saw this “free” education in a negative light. Jill proclaims that, “they can technically earn their AA without paying anything, as it’s already being paid in taxes.” The awareness that the student is not getting a “free” education bothered her. Diana agreed with Jill, “The fact that they get their education paid for with tax payer dollars and they can get out of here with an AA, that’s two years of college right there paid for, that’s the advantage to the student.” It should be noted that she said this with a bit of disdain in her voice.

But it isn’t just the students and families who are acquiring monetary relief. The interviewees further back up this belief. Diana states that, “they’re [the school] guaranteed funding because the state pays for their education.” This is further supported by another interviewee.

Ellen: I know in the past the advantages for the school were budgetary. Dual enrollment students boosted our enrollment numbers overall, and it used to be how the state apportioned funding, was based upon enrollment numbers. That is now in flux, there is a lot of debate on how universities will be funded so that particular advantage may go away.

Never in any of the ten interviews was the notion of the institution losing money brought up. One could argue that there appears to be no negative monetary aspect to having the dual enrollment employed in post-secondary institutions since the schools themselves do not have to pay for the dual enrollment student’s tuition, books, or transportation. Yet any monetary gain that the

college may receive from the dual enrollment program may be negated as extra resources, such as more faculty, will be needed to support the increase in the number of students.

### *Quality*

If a dual enrollment student is not taking a proactive approach to getting a head start with their academic career, then they will more than likely be of a lesser quality student at the college level. If students are like the one that Becky described above, using the college as an excuse to get away from their high school, then more than likely they will not be the best college student they can be. Those that fit into this category have been readily identified by some faculty as the high school students bring their “clique” to the college campus.

Becky: The clique comes into the classroom so it’s like teaching a high school clique instead of a regular college class. There have been times where I have had classes that are primarily dual enrolled and I’ve had a few adult students who go “What in the heck is this?” That is one of the biggest disadvantages is the clique thing.

While obviously this “clique” mentality is also an issue of the quantity of dual enrollment students, it overlaps quality as well. Faculty told me that the quality of a dual enrollment student differs greatly based upon if they are a student who enters the classroom by themselves or with high school friends. They reported that they almost never have a problem with students that are alone, but those that come in by way of the “clique” tend to hinder the classroom environment. This hindrance towards the classroom comes by way of maturity, or lack thereof. Gina provided me with a bit of insight into this phenomena.

Gina: A specific example from something that happened today in class. A self-identified dual enrolled student from day one, this student told me he was a high

school student. And he just cannot stop himself from talking. He comments on everything. Everything is a joke to him. It frustrates me, it frustrates the rest of the class, and there have been several occasions where I've had to say to him, 'You need to have a level of maturity, this is not high school, this is college and we behave different in college.' And so it changes my focus in the classroom to have to deal with a level of maturity that probably wouldn't be there with more seasoned, older students who know the ropes of what it means to college.

This example appears to hold true as the amount of dual enrolled students rises in a classroom.

Ellen further supports this notion.

Ellen: The atmosphere due to the maturity level is reduced and that causes the older student to feel, whether it's true or not, that they are in an academic setting that is not rigorous. That they are in college with a bunch of high school students and it diminishes the value of their education in their eyes and it enhances, or has the potential to enhance, their discomfort at entering school so later on in life anyway. And I know that because I've had the older students tell me that directly, it's not something that I'm just making up. Not only do they tell me directly but I hear the discussion and I see the rolling of eyes and I hear the heavy sighs when sometimes the DE student's exhibit behavior that is immature. Typically that tends to happen in a group, when you get a gaggle of dual enrollment students that all take the class together, that kind of behavior tends to be exacerbated then, b/c there is safety in numbers, they all know each other. When it's just a classroom full of 10 disparate completely separate dual enrollment students who don't know

each other [and] are coming from different high schools that tends to not happen as much.

I wish to reiterate that these examples fit into both the quality and quantity themes of dual enrollment students. I give these examples in the quality theme as it is the both the quality of the student and the overall learning in a classroom that suffers when immaturity is allowed to flourish. What is important to take away from the immature dual enrollment student is that they take away time and energy away from the teacher. This, in turn, affects all those presiding within the classroom.

This lack of maturity is not seen by all. In fact, many faculty members note that “there have been some very good, stellar, dual enrollment students that deserve to be there.” Abby told me that “most of the experiences with my older students is positive with the dual enrolled students. The older students have enjoyed the perspective of the younger students. It’s nice to have a mix of people because you need to have different perspectives.” She brought up a point that others mirrored. They didn’t see maturity as an issue and found that the younger student complimented the classroom when there were much older students present. Heather pointed this out to me with great pleasure.

Heather: I absolutely love discussions in my classroom where we have a 16 year old viewpoint versus a 50 year old viewpoint. It is priceless to see the older student in awe of the teenagers that are often extremely insightful. We can learn what the textbook says about adolescence and menopause, but to hear the experience through someone that is living it is quite a different story. Having different generations in the class increases awareness and understanding.

It is apparent that there are definitely positive aspects to having dual enrollment students in the classroom. When looking at this theme of quality, one must appreciate that it appears that the quantity of dual enrollment students may potentially have some kind of effect on the quality of all the students in a given classroom, and in turn the quality of learning that takes place.

### *Quantity*

As we have already seen, the “clique” is ever present and detrimental to the quality of the classroom. Becky believes it is not a positive mentality to have, “It’s a herd mentality. Let’s all go to college and we don’t have to do anything.” There appears to be a crossroads with the institution in this regard as the college obviously wishes to obtain more students but faculty recognize that they may be detrimental to the classroom in larger numbers. This specific problem is one of the reasons the survey I have analyzed was created. The responses gathered from it put a 30% cap on classes. Meaning, a class cannot be comprised of more than 30% dual enrolled students. The caveat to this is that the teacher is allowed to give the student an override and have a classroom with as many dual enrolled students as he or she wishes. The survey data shows overwhelming that was a perceived percentage that faculty thought was fair and beneficial to the classroom. Upon interviewing faculty members, some desired it to be around the 10-15% mark so as to avoid the dreaded formation of the “clique.”

Gina: What’s problematic for us as teachers is that for some instances there tend to be large concentrations of them in our classrooms and that can be disruptive and it can change the complexion of the classroom, change the way you have to teach the course.

Another point that was brought to my attention and goes along with a change in the classroom environment is that of the older student. One faculty member was sharing with me that

older students feel that the academic setting may not be as rigorous as they thought it was going to be when there are so many dual enrollment students in a classroom. She went on to tell me that the older student feels like the value of their education has diminished, whether it be true or not, and that their discomfort and stress of entering school so late in life is further increased by the congregation of dual enrollment students.

### *Opportunity*

Money is specifically separated from opportunity because it is essentially the default answer to why the program exists no matter what one's viewpoint is towards the program. Thus, I singled out the quantitative aspects in order to talk about opportunities that are more qualitative in nature. It is here where faculty perceptions diverge from each other. While all agree that money is a strong, or primary, motivator for participating in the program, some start to divulge that problems arise with dual enrollment students as their motivations for being in college courses do not align with what makes a good, well-rounded college student as they may potentially squander a great academic opportunity.

The interview data claims that a student joins the program for other reasons besides saving money. The second most noted opportunity for students is that they get a quicker education. While this is obviously a money saver and was somewhat touched on in the above theme, it is important to note here as well as a significant opportunity for the student. I bring this up because faculty members have identified this accelerated path as both a positive and negative aspect of a student's academic development. Fiona argues that it is good for the students as she contends that, "With the job market as it is and as hard as it is to get a job for some people, the younger you are the more education you have the better your chances, so I think it's a great opportunity for students." Ellen once again sums up many of the faculty thoughts on this point.

Ellen: I think perhaps another advantage, probably not across the board, but for particular students, [is] that they can finally be challenged perhaps at a level that they would not be at their high school setting. They themselves are accelerated in terms of degree of difficulty and what they can handle beyond their peers and so it affords them an opportunity to work at a level that finally challenges them.

The opportunity to work at a higher level that a student has not yet been given a chance to prove is seen as a very positive part of the program. Indeed, this is exactly why the program was originally created. Those high school students who surpass their peers have an opportunity to continue to grow academically thanks to this program.

There are those that do not see things this way. The main opportunity that kept reoccurring within the survey data was that the program afforded the students a way to get out of their high school. This was a shared belief among some of the interviewee's as well. One interviewee in particular, Becky, shared a bit of this with me: "I've had students who have said 'I don't care about your class I just want to get out of high school' or 'I wanted to be in a class with my friends.' No, that's not why you are here. You are supposed to be here for something [an education]. The second part of her quote brings about another popular problem that the data from both sources has shown, that of the high school "clique." The concept of cliques will be addressed in more detail in the next theme. But at this point it is very important to note that the motivation of a student may actually be the catalyst towards other issues that faculty have raised. Students who are not at a postsecondary institution strictly to learn affect the other three themes. They use up resources that the state provides them while they affect the quality and quantity of other students in the classroom and do not capitalize on the opportunity they have of being in the program.

Interviewees also identified positive aspects of the program for the institution. The motivation for having the dual enrollment program appear to only strengthen the college. Becky told me that, “we have students who are in a program that once they start will usually finish. I think they are called completers. So when the numbers go to the state it’s like, here’s one that started and here’s one that completed.” Ellen had a fresh take towards the institution as she saw, “a perceived advantage [in] that it promotes community good will. It helps strengthen the relationship between the high school and the college. Parents like it. So the ‘brand’ is enhanced by that.” Isabel saw the program as beneficial in that it “assisted students in getting past the freshman activities that could de-rail a college career.” It was only Jill who spoke up about any perceived negative aspects that the program may have on the college as it “can be problematic in scheduling... [and] making sure that we have the classes they need.”

## CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION

This research was conducted in order to bring to light what the consequences of the dual enrollment program are and to compare these consequences with what the current literature shows. The design to interview faculty was intended to get an account of those ground level participants in the program and to compare what they said with what the literature sees as strengths and weaknesses. They have the unique privilege of dealing with both the dual enrollment students and the institution itself. After conducting the interviews it is clear to me that the program's intent is most certainly positive. However, there appear to be conditions that once met, hamper and degrade the quality of the program and its intended purpose. There are those that would agree with this sentiment, but currently believe that it is the other way around, that currently the program is having a negative effect and is only positive when certain conditions are met, and currently many believe these conditions are not being met. It should be stated once again that there are those who believe the program is running smoothly. Heather acknowledged that she is "honored to be a part of the dual enrollment program and [I] believe that it is a service that we should be proud of." As such, I wish to reflect on the findings with the lens of Robert K. Merton (1936) and his functionalist eye regarding unintended consequences. In addition, it is prudent to acknowledge that perhaps the dual enrollment program has become what Ulrich Beck has designated a "zombie category."

### Principal Findings

This research set out to assess the consequences of the dual enrollment program. The literature shows us that reduction of costs, academically engaged students, graduation rates, and money saved have all been positive aspects of the program for institutions and students alike. The interviews mirrored these positive attributes of the program. Faculty had many positive

things to say about their students. They stated that they are some of the most enthusiastic, high energy, intelligent, hardworking, and highly motivated students that they have ever had. One respondent proclaimed that “they are some of the best students out there.” So it is understandable that some faculty members do not understand why others do not like dual enrollment students. Who wouldn’t want this type of student? Any teacher would love it if all their students were attentive and motivated.

In addition to the positive quality of dual enrollment students, they also give the institution higher enrollment numbers which obviously makes the institution more money as well. This monetary increase is most certainly a motivation for the institution to find ways to increasing their numbers in the classroom. This benefits the student as well, since they have the ability to graduate high school with an Associate’s Degree. Indeed, on paper the quantitative aspects of the dual enrollment program shine. Enrollment rates are up, money is coming in, students are graduating quicker, and the student’s GPA is more often than not higher than non-dual enrolled students. My research supports the literature and the positive aspects of the dual enrollment program. However, there are qualitative aspects to the program which appear to have been overlooked by many. These aspects seem to be the origin of the rift in the discourse of the program.

The literature indicates that the dual enrollment program may be setting up students for disappointment, decreasing the difficulty of the classes, giving access to too many students, along with creating less quality students and unprepared faculty. My research compliments this literature and adds a bit of detail to the perceived lack of quality in students. Specifically, my research shows that the quality of the dual enrollment student is hampered by cliques and a lack of maturity. Interviewees asserted that the cliques of high school students were a great concern

and an obstacle that needed to be overcome. This lack of quality in students touched on another aspect that the literature has not shown: the effect on non-dual enrolled students in the classroom. Dual enrolled students directly affect the classroom experience of the older, non-dual enrolled students. This is a concern as it has led to older, more traditional, community college students resenting either the dual enrolled student or their own college experience. More than one interviewee proclaimed that traditional students have voiced concern towards the dual enrolled student and the degradation of the learning environment because of their presence.

This research has created the foundation to inform the sociology of education literature that the dual enrollment program is a site which may be doing a couple things at once; it may be promoting the success of white, middle class students or it could be allowing opportunities to marginalized students. I argue that perhaps the history of the program is an indication of what the program has been to the students. I believe it used to only benefit the white, middle class student as the standards were much higher. Undoubtedly marginalized students in the lower class did not meet the strict requirements nor did they have the opportunity to be at a high school with a dual enrollment program. In the more recent years the requirements have been relaxed and more students have had the opportunity to pursue the program. This has been met by much criticize, as my research shows. Yet maybe this is allowing opportunities for marginalized students who would otherwise be unable to achieve postsecondary success. This research cannot answer these questions, but it has shown that program is a site worth studying from a sociology perspective as there definitely is something going on that warrants further investigation.

## Theoretical Discussion

Many faculty believe that some of the positive affects listed above are true and do not denounce them. However, they believe that this is due to standardized testing procedures and a lack of critical thinking skills. Gina knew this particular aspect of the dual enrollment student was one of controversy in our interview.

Gina: Now see that's a tricky question. If we are talking about grades then I'd say they do about the same as my non-dual enrolled students. Some of them, with regard to performance, on multiple choice quizzes and tests will do very, very well because they have been brought up through the FCAT (Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test) environment in the public school system. And so I think they are groomed to learn the material in sound bites so to speak so that it makes it easy for them to study and spit it back out again. When it comes the really complex writing assignments that I require in my classes, that's where I find that dual enrolled students tend to underperform if I compare them to my other non-dual enrolled students. And I think the reason why is because they just don't have the skillset of critical thinking that we need our students to have at that level and I think they have a lack of world experience that makes it challenging often times to write a good assignment for the kind of classes that I teach.

This acknowledgement that the dual enrolled student certainly brings positive aspects, but also brings negative, possibly over looked aspects to the proverbial table aligns itself to Merton's (1936) assertion of unanticipated/unintended consequences.

While Merton asserts that unintended consequences have been greatly discussed throughout history, they have not been discussed at great length in the social world. Furthermore,

he contends that there are essentially three outcomes that unintended consequences can yield. These outcomes can either be positive, negative but occurring alongside the original intent, or negative and taking place of the original intent. In the case of the dual enrollment program I believe that the second outcome is present. This explains why there are faculty who claim that the program is operating as per its original intent, which has been to facilitate upper level education to young, accelerating high school students. It also explains why faculty claim that they believe that the program no longer works, as there are many aspects in the daily life of a teacher that were never intended when the program was created. The program may benefit the dual enrolled student, but those students who share the same classroom as the dual enrolled student may not benefit. Indeed, examples were given to me where faculty believed that the classroom as a whole suffered because of the dual enrolled student. The lack of maturity, lack of experience, lack of critical thinking skills, lack of personal responsibility, parental involvement, and involvement in “clique” within the classroom all contributed in some way, shape, or form to the detriment of all those students within said classroom.

It would appear, based on my research, that the amount of dual enrollment students in a given classroom is inversely proportional to the amount of learning within the classroom. The more dual enrollment students there are in a single classroom (possibly to exceed 10-20%), the amount of learning for all of the total students, dual enrolled and non-dual enrolled, goes down. This may be directly affected by the actual motivation of a dual enrollment student and their presence within the postsecondary institution. The financial benefit a student receives from the program may be a secondary or tertiary reason for participating in the program. The real motivation that a student has for being in the program more than likely affects the quality of

student they are. The quality of student an individual is may directly affect the learning environment for all of the students within a specific classroom.

I believe that Beck's (2001) zombie category applies here. Sure the program still exists but at the same time it is not operating under its original intent. The program is operating and high school students are attending college courses. The GPA has been lowered, allowing more and more high school students into the college. These students pay little to no money for their education out of their own pocket, get transported to and from school, and many appear to not take advantage of the clear head start they are getting amongst the rest of their peers. The program is still in place and yes, there are those few, gifted students who are taking advantage of it. The reality of what is going on may not match up with the intent of the program. As reported by respondents in this research, dual enrolled students often complain about taking responsibility for the quality of their work, engage in clique behaviors, try and get out of too many class periods due to high school events, and may even negatively affect the learning environment for the non-dual enrolled students within the classroom.

#### Program Suggestions

It is my belief that the program is allowing the good high school student to achieve the more accelerated education he or she desires and deserves. Over the years the program has become a bit too lax in its requirements and this has allowed students with motives other than learning to enter the postsecondary institution. These students appear to greatly outnumber the students who have aligned their motives and goals with what it means to be a college level student. Taking this into consideration, one recommendation would be to reinstitute and enforce the 3.5 GPA.

In addition to the GPA requirement, one of the faculty members brought up the liaison employed by the college to bridge the gap between the local school board and the college. She stated that there is currently one, but that issues do not adequately get addressed. I believe that her idea about instating more liaisons, perhaps at both the high school and the college, who can address issues listed above is an idea worth exploring. This would take pressure off of faculty members who do not wish to deal with issues that they feel they should not be dealing with. This in turn may make faculty change their mind about teaching dual enrolled students.

Another suggestion worth exploring is the implementation of disseminating information to high school students prior to them being accepted into the program. That is to say, there needs to be a way to let students know and understand that attending college classes is different and that there are different expectations. This is currently being done to some degree via orientations. But I believe that there needs to be a better way of showing them the rigors and expectations of the classroom. One idea that was brought up by faculty was that dual enrollment students should have to sit in on a class or two prior to being in the program to see if they are sure they can handle the load and the new expectations that will be placed on them. This could be part of a more strenuous entrance program that happens one to two semesters prior to the high school student being accepted into the program.

Different campuses had the same positive things to say about the students, but when it came to issues that could be dealt with, they seemed to differ. This leads me to think that one overall fix across the board may not be sufficient if change is to occur within the program. I believe that some sort of measure, such as more liaisons, should be put into place to allow each individual intuition and even each different location within said institution, the opportunity to fine tune and adjust the program to the specific needs of each campus. One campus may have

more transportation issues, one may have parental issues, or one may have behavioral issues than the others. The freedom to adjust to the given problem of the program at a specific location, at a specific time, seems an important aspect when considering future implementations for the dual enrollment program. Liaisons can help find out the true motivation for why students are enrolled in the program and help them align their sites towards more beneficial and productive goals if needed.

### Future Research

My research could be further expanded upon through various avenues. I know that the particular institution where I conducted my research has done an internal survey regarding the dual enrollment program. Future research could analyze that survey data along with my interview data to see how, or if, the discourse has changed among faculty. Additionally, the interview process could be broadened to incorporate both dual enrolled and non-dual enrolled students. This would expand upon what my findings have shown as it appears that dual enrolled students may be negatively affecting traditional students' learning. Obviously getting the testimony of the actual dual enrollment student would be greatly beneficial in either supporting or rejecting claims made by myself and the current literature on the dual enrollment program. Most importantly, as I indicated in the principal finding, future research by sociologists may be conducted within this particular program as it may be giving opportunities to a certain group of people while denying them for another group.

### Limitations

The sample I used to obtain my data was created through a snowball sample. The first person I contacted about the interviews I knew personally. This person then sent my contact information out to people and thus the collection of data via interviews commenced. I am aware

that two things may limit my findings. The first being that I did know the initial contact I made. The second being that in a snowball sample the initial contact made can greatly affect those that contacted me back. One may assume that the initial person I contacted will only contact individuals who are likeminded with their sentiments about the program. However, this individual was aware of this and tried to give my contact information equally to those who were on both sides of the discussion.

The interviews were all at one specific community college. The interviews were only conducted between two of the four campuses. As mentioned above in the recommendations, I believe that had my interviews been done at a different campus that more emphasize could have been put on different aspects of the program. This may or may not be true but I mention it as a possibility. Also, interviewees from many more disciplines would help get a more accurate depiction of how the dual enrollment students are affecting the classroom, specifically skilled vs. non-skilled disciplines.

## **APPENDIX A: IRB APPROVAL**



University of Central Florida Institutional Review  
Board Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276  
[www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html](http://www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html)

## Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138

To: **Matthew P. Hiesterman**

Date: **November 28, 2012**

Dear Researcher:

On 11/28/2012, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt Determination  
Project Title: An analysis of the dual enrollment program and its impact on post-secondary institutions.  
Investigator: Matthew P Hiesterman  
IRB Number: SBE-12-08884  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: n/a

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 11/28/2012 04:34:38 PM EST

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joanne Muratori".

IRB Coordinator

## **APPENDIX B: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. What do you see as advantages and disadvantages of the dual enrollment program either for the school itself and/or for the students?
2. Do dual enrolled students do better or worse than non-DE students in your classes?
3. Do you approach your curriculum differently based upon the number of dual enrolled students you appear to have?
4. Is there anything you would change about the dual enrollment program if you could?
5. Has the dual enrollment program ever been a source of discussion among you and your colleagues? If so, despite your own personal opinions about the program, do the discussions lend towards positive or negative aspects of the program?

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