

SAMFORD UNIVERSITY
2005 Faculty Development Grant Application
FORM 1

Applicant name: Angela Owusu-Ansah

School: OBB School of Education and Professional Studies

Department: Teacher Education

TITLE OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT ACTIVITY:

Exploring Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions in a University Setting using Hollins'
Structured Dialogue

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTIVITY: (500 - 700 words, titled as Brief description of Proposed Activity and attached to Form I)

Estimated timetable for project: 12 - 18 months

Total cost of proposed activity: \$1095-\$1335

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____
Applicant

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____
Department Chair (if applicable)

Signed: _____ **Date:** _____
Dean

NOTE TO DEANS: Faculty members will deliver their applications, with appropriate signatures directly to the Academic Affairs Committee chairperson. You will receive a list of all faculty members and grant application titles submitted from your school. Upon receiving notification, the Committee requests assurance from each of you that applicants will be employed for the 2006-2007 academic year.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF PROPOSED ACTIVITY

The proposed activity is a qualitative research study in which *Hofstede's Theory of Cultural Dimensions* will be applied to generate or uncover new knowledge on the social interactions and learning practices among minority- and majority- students studying at a primarily majority-university campus. The study intends to provide college students with knowledge that will enable them to interpret cultural variances at a more profound level than the merely behavioral one. A series of discourses grounded in the constructivist approach will be employed for the purpose of theorizing applicable approaches to enhancing the coexistence of post-secondary minority-majority student cultures on a majority-student campus. Generated theories could serve as tools to facilitate and enhance college and/or life experiences of the participants and others; promote culturally responsive learning in students to aid the sought attainment of full academic potential (in the classroom); and prepare prospective college graduates for differences in work-related values in employers/coworkers/employees of an organization. Consequently, the information gleaned would provide majority-university campuses with the elements of a campus model welcoming of *all* students and productive for *all* students.

The most famous and often cited work on culture which provides a framework for classifying cultural patterns is Hofstede's Theory of Cultural Dimensions. Three of Hofstede's five cultural dimensions will serve as the underpinnings of this study. They include *power distance* defined as "the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally" (Hofstede, 1994, p 28); *individualism/collectivism* dimension where "individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive in-groups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty" (Hofstede, 1994, p.51); and *uncertainty of avoidance* "the extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown situations" (Hofstede, 1994, p.113).

Participants of this study will include both minority and majority students of Samford University. A purposeful sampling technique will be used to select twelve to sixteen participants. Both minority and majority student members and associates of the "Black Heritage Association" of Samford University will serve as the target population. Participation will be voluntary. A series of three sets of three focus group sessions will be held to discuss the chosen three cultural dimensions of Hofstede (See Table 1).

| Set 1 - Set of 3 Focus Group Discussions (Minority Students) | Set 2 - Set of 3 Focus Group Discussions (Majority Students) | Set 3 - Set of 3 Focus Group Discussions (Minority & Majority Students) |
|--|--|---|
| Discuss Cultural Dimension 1 | Discuss Cultural Dimension 1 | Discuss Cultural Dimension 1 |
| Discuss Cultural Dimension 2 | Discuss Cultural Dimension 2 | Discuss Cultural Dimension 2 |
| Discuss Cultural Dimension 3 | Discuss Cultural Dimension 3 | Discuss Cultural Dimension 3 |

Structured dialogue (Hollins, 2005) will be the method used in the focus group discussions. It requires participants to share their successes and challenges, and identify approaches for addressing common challenges. It provides opportunities for documenting how a group of individuals with common challenges plan their own learning, constructively generate and share “formats of choice, and focus of such learning. The use of structured dialogue elicits participation in a *learning community* while simultaneously encouraging changes in the tradition of isolation and privacy... characteristic of a [group of individuals with common challenges]” (Hollins, 2005, p.24). In this study, structured dialogue, currently used by self-directed adult professionals, will have additional structure, namely a facilitator and Hofstede’s cultural dimensions integrated with the focus of learning, since participants consist of ‘young adults studying to become professionals’. Informed consent or assent will be obtained from all participants. The possibility of participants earning “Convo” credits for participating in the study will be explored.

The focus group sessions will be held in a technology conference room, OBB 417, equipped to record focus group interviews. Snacks will be served at each 1½ - 3 hour focus group session. Discourses will be transcribed and coded to generate themes, which will enhance meaning of transferable perspectives on cultural dimensions.

FORM 2: (1) Describe the relevance of your research project to current trends in your area of specialization; what is the value of your research to your area of study?

My area of specialization is educational research and assessment. Current trends in educational research and assessment reflect the need for research on appropriate methods of teaching and assessing ethnically diverse students. These trends are attributable to Federal Government mandates (e.g., No Child Left Behind Act) and the dramatic exponential increases in the number of English Language Learners in P-12 schools. In addition, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (2002) at the postsecondary level, requires the unit, consisting of “the institution, college, school, department, or other administrative body with the responsibility for managing or coordinating all programs offered” to educators to have an assessment system. With an assessment system, the unit could “conduct thorough studies to establish fairness, accuracy, and consistency of its performance assessment procedures” (p21) and its teaching of students, particularly its diverse students.

The value of the proposed research as regards to educational research and assessment include the following:

- Acquire a non-superficial research-based understanding and knowledge of students of diverse ethnicity/culture as one way to foster intercultural interactions
- Assess and enhance diverse students’ experiences with each other, other students, and with their higher education faculty (e.g. professors)
- Provide effective tools for cultivating cohesiveness among varying cultures
- Identify intercultural dispositions through the collection and analysis of data (discourse) to determine areas of improvement in the unit (university) and its campus
- Conduct development and applied research resulting in models for implementing systemic reform and for achieving improvement on a broad scale
- Expand facets of intercultural research. Most intercultural research using Hofstede’s dimensions focuses on the collectivism/individualism component but not on the other dimensions which are included in this study
- Shift focus. Current research emphasizes teachers growing in cultural responsiveness and modifying their teaching. This study proposes that post-secondary students grow in their cultural responsive learning strategies to further prepare them for successful learning and the workforce
- Recruit qualified minority candidates/students to majority colleges

FORM 2 (2) In terms of scholarship, assess the quality of knowledge needed for successful completion of your project and predict the thoroughness of coverage that you will achieve. What publishing value will the project have? What journals or other outlets for research might be likely to publish the work? Will it, when completed, provoke further thought and critical thinking? What further scholarship might result?

The quality of knowledge required for the successful implementation of the study is in depth comprehension of philosophical assumptions on what constitutes knowledge claim (epistemology); familiarity with strategies of inquiry; and experience in data collection, analysis, and writing (methods). My professional background in research ensures that I have the above mentioned qualities of knowledge which will enable me to complete a thorough and successful study. In addition, the study spans over a year or more (12-18 months) in data collection and analysis, and that should provide a means for attaining thoroughness of coverage. Finally, informal inquiries into the need for such discourse on Samford campus have revealed a great interest in participation.

The publishing value of the project will be the addition of a new perspective on intercultural research. Several studies on intercultural research have focused on resolving conflict, work-related values in employees of an organization, and the promotion of teacher awareness of the need for culturally responsive pedagogy. This study will focus on developing tools that may be used for prevention or avoidance of conflict; preparation of individuals for differences in work-related values in employees and employers of an organization; and the promotion of culturally responsive learning habits in students. These outcomes are possible as according to Dahl (2002) culture is also programmed or learned and does not form part of human nature as it is distinct from individual personality.

Journals and Educational Research Laboratories likely to publish this work include Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology; Journal of Education; College Student Journal; Journal of Instructional Psychology; WestEd Regional Lab; and Southeast Regional Vision for Education (SERVE).

The following represents existing scholarship upon which this study (results) may expand on. Each citation is followed by a thought-provoking critically evaluated question related to one of the three cultural dimensions explored in this study:

- Similar to individuals and groups, schools also have cultures and these cultures usually mirror the culture of the dominant (majority) society (Greenfield, 1994). [Question: What impact would the revelations of this study have on the extent to which the minority participants and the audience of the study “expect and accept that power is distributed unequally” and that there is no effective way to counter it?] ...*Hofstede’s power distance*
- Culture is an invisible control mechanism in the subconscious, operating in our thoughts such that we only become aware of this control mechanism when it is severely challenged, for example by exposure to a different culture (Hall, 1983). Yet culture permeates all we do and shapes our actions in ways that seem second nature (Greenfield, 1994) making the hardest culture to examine our own. Learning about one’s own culture by “making the familiar strange” is far more challenging than learning about the culture of others - “making the strange familiar” (Spindler & Spindler, 1988). [Question: What

does this study reveal about the possibilities of identifying and examining our own culture; individualism and collectivism; cause/effect, accurate predictability, and proactive measures in intercultural relationships?] ...*Hofstede's individualism/collectivism*

- Culture influences an individual's interpretations of the "meaning" of other people's behavior (Spencer- Oatey, 2000). The interpretive element of culture is significant as it illuminates the function culture plays in everyday life (Dahl, 2002). The interpretive role of culture is especially important when considering cross-cultural interaction or reaction towards products created in a different cultural context. [Question: What impact does the interface of various cultures have on the "extent to which the members of a culture feel threatened by uncertain or unknown {culturally-related} situations?"]... *Hofstede's uncertainty of avoidance*

FACULTY DEVELOPMENT GRANT BUDGET PROPOSAL FORM 3

The applicant must develop and submit an itemized budget including details of estimated expenses for your proposed activity. Justifying statements would be helpful to the committee as it prioritizes applications.

| Description | Total dollar estimate |
|--------------------|------------------------------|
|--------------------|------------------------------|

| Item | Charge per Item | Total Charge |
|---|--------------------------------------|--|
| Snacks for minority focus group session | \$5 per student (for 6-8 students) | \$30-\$40 x 3 = \$90-\$120 (3 sessions) |
| Snacks for majority focus group session | \$5 per student (for 6-8 students) | \$30-\$40 x 3 = \$90-\$120 (3 sessions) |
| Snacks for minority and majority combined focus group session | \$5 per student (for 12-16 students) | \$60-\$80 x 3 = \$180-\$240 (3 sessions) |
| Transcription per session | \$75 per session (9 sessions) | \$675 |
| Charge for use of OBB 417 facilities | \$20 per session (9 sessions) | \$180 |
| Total | | <u>\$1095-\$1335</u> |