

2008 Professional Development Grant Report

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Restatement of Problem Researched or Creative Activity

In March 2008, I was awarded a Professional Development Grant in the amount of \$1,328.00. I spent a total of \$1,088.94. The grant enabled me to attend the 78 annual convention of the Southern States Communication Association in Savannah, GA, and accomplish the following:

- present my paper entitled "Dialogue, Narratives, and the Human Condition"
- participate in the Spotlight Scholar Session
- as the Planner for the Language and Social Interaction Division, attend the Planners' Meeting for the 2009 annual convention
- chair the panel "Language as Negotiation: How Communication Shapes Our Lives" in the organization of the Division on Language and Social Interaction

Brief Review of the Research Procedure Utilized

The paper, "Narratives, Dialogue, and the Human Condition," utilizes dialogue and narrative theory in analyzing James Lovelock's book *The Revenge of Gaia: Earth's Climate Change and the Future of Humanity*, and explains its various dialogic aspects. The paper also addresses the implications of the book for the human condition in light of Lovelock's genuineness and openness at the expense of an archetypal and narrative appeal.

Summary of Findings

The 2007 Professional Development Grant made it possible for me to accomplish the following:

- present my paper entitled "Dialogue, Narratives, and the Human Condition"
- participate in the Spotlight Scholar Session
- attend the Planners' Meeting for the 2009 annual convention
- chair the panel "Language as Negotiation: How Communication Shapes Our Lives"
- advance my scholarly knowledge
- advance my pedagogical skills

Conclusions and Recommendations

Attending the Southern States Communication Association annual convention was a meaningful, rewarding, and enriching experience. I met and interacted with colleagues from

various schools mostly from the South and I learned about the latest scholarly and pedagogical developments and advancements in the field of communication.

I am very grateful for being awarded the 2007 Professional Development Grant. The grant, together with the grants that I received in two previous years, was very important in advancing my scholarly, professional, and pedagogical experience. It helped me continue my research and become a better, more motivating, and inspiring mentor and educator. Over the past three years the students that I guided and mentored have achieved remarkable success. A part of that success I can directly attribute to the grants that I received and the opportunities that the grants provided. The most recent success of one of my mentee's is acceptance of her paper at a national-level convention, which is an outstanding achievement.

Appendix: Abstract

Dialogue, Narratives, and the Human Condition

We live in environmentally confusing times. Messages predicting the imminent demise of the Blue Planet unless humans drastically change their devastating ways are countered by reassurances that the planet is going through a naturally occurring warm cycle, a hot flash of sorts, and that there is nothing human beings can do to temper the whims of Mother Nature. Proclamations that we are on the brink of a new ice age muddle the issue further and add to the perplexity. This ideational and informational confusion metaphorically reminiscent of a chaotic Hobbesian world can be overbearing. It is of no surprise, then, that some important messages may be overlooked or deliberately shunned. One such message is James Lovelock's latest book, *The Revenge of Gaia: Earth's Climate Crisis and the Fate of Humanity*. In this paper, the author argues that Lovelock's book failed to garner the audience's interest due to the inherently dialogic tone that permeates the book. The author further argues that a narrative rather than a dialogic text may present a more compelling message regardless of its veracity and accuracy. Potential implications for the human condition can be far-reaching.