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# What's in a choice? a study in how choice in assignment affects student completion of assignments

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WHAT'S IN A CHOICE? A STUDY IN HOW CHOICE IN ASSIGNMENT EFFECTS

STUDENT COMPLETION OF ASSIGNMENTS

by
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# ABSTRACT

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In this action research project, the effects of giving students a choice in their assignments

on students' intrinsic motivation were measured. This was done by giving the students

an increasing amount of choices for their summative assessment following the end of

each of five units studied in World History. Analysis of the data showed that there was

some positive correlation between the amount of choices and the likelihood that students

completed the assignments. While this correlation was present, it may be possible that

other factors influenced this increase in student completion of assignments. These factors

include when during the grading period the assignment was given, the number of times

assignments of a certain type were given, and the relationship between the teacher and

the student.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

*Statement of the Problem*

Through discussions with five other teachers, I have been led to draw the

conclusions that students are becoming less intrinsically motivated to fulfill their

requirements as a student. From putting less effort, to not studying, to completing

assignments, students are portraying an increasingly disinterested attitude toward

academics. This leads to several problems for students and their teachers. First, without

being motivated to learn, the likelihood of learning decreases (Iyengar and Lepper

(1999). If students do not want to learn a particular subject, then they are likely not to

learn it. For teachers, this disinterest by students can become very frustrating. Teachers

wish to see their students succeed; but without the students being motivated, success is

less likely. This may lead to teachers having to re-teach material more than once, or

spend more time than is necessary on one topic, leaving less time for additional topics.

When I first began my student teaching experience, I had the opportunity to

observe in the classroom, look through grade books, and speak with other teachers, all in

an effort to get to gain an understanding of the school atmosphere. Through my

observations, I came to discover that many of the students that I would be teaching did

not turn in an excessive amount of assignments that they were to complete on their time;

this did not only include homework, but also larger assignments such as take home

essays. This was very disheartening for me as a future teacher. It is my belief that assignments that students complete on their own as homework are essential to the learning process in order to supplement what is being learned in the classroom. I believe that without the students completing these assignments, their learning would suffer, and this would have a detrimental effect on their grades. Seeing this led me to want to measure methods of increasing intrinsic motivation.

*Significance of the Study*

This issue of lack of student motivation is a problem for most educators. Wanting the best for their students is a common goal among teachers, but this goal is hindered greatly by students who do not want to learn. It is our goal as educators to find different methods of teaching to reach those students that are not motivated on their own. This study examines one of these said methods of motivation students, giving students some type of choice in their assignments. By successfully pinpointing different methods to increase students' motivation, educators will be able to reach more students and in-turn increase the total learning of the classroom.

*Question*

This research answers the question, what effect does giving the students choice in their assignments have on the likelihood that students will complete the assignments?

*Integrated Action and Purpose*

As part of my research, I had given my students an increasing amount of options, beginning with no alternate options, in their summative assessments for each unit of study in order. The rationale behind this strategy was to see if a greater amount of choices will increase the students' motivation to do the assignments. This was

accomplished by using a writing strategy in which the students have to write in a

particular Role, to a particular Audience, in a certain Format, and on a given Topic

(R.A.F.T.), as the students' summative assessment. This assignment will come at the

conclusion of each of five units that the students will be working on. These unit topics

covered were the Roman Empire, the Byzantine Empire, Islamic Civilization, the Early

Middle Ages, and the High Middle Ages.

The first of these assignments (Appendix A), which is based on the unit on the

Roman Empire, will be a set assignment, where the students have no other options but the

one given to them to write about. This will act as a baseline test to see how many

students will complete the assignment given no alternative options. The day after the

assignment was due, I had the students answer the question "Why did you (or didn't you)

complete the assignment?" This was used to help explain any anomalies in my findings,

such as a student who normally completes every assignment not completing the R.A.F.T.

With the completion of additional units came additional R.A.F.T. assignments.

The second R.A.F.T. (Appendix B) was based on the Byzantine Empire, and gave the

students the options of two different sets of role, audience, format and topic. Following

this, the students once again answered the question "Why did you (or didn't you)

complete the assignment?" In addition to this, the students were asked, "If you did not

complete the first assignment but did complete the second assignment, what changed for

you?" The third R.A.F.T. (Appendix C), based on the Islamic Empire, reverted back to

not giving the students any options. This was done to see if the number of students who

completed the assignment continued to increase or decreased. As with the second

R.A.F.T, the same two questions followed the third R.A.F.T, as well as the fourth

R.A.F.T (Appendix D), which was based on the Early Middle Ages and gave the students a choice between four sets, and the fifth R.A.F.T. (Appendix E), which was based on the High Middle Ages, and gave the students a choice between five sets. These assignments were implemented approximately every three weeks.

*Assumptions and Limitations*

There are limitations to this study. The first is the population of the research participants. Based on a survey given at the beginning of my student teaching experience to my students (Appendix F), 72% of my students come from homes where there is little to no help or support from family on academic assignments. Also, based on my observations, and discussions with my cooperating teacher, the class is a mix of different academic levels, interests, languages, and a range of socioeconomic statuses. This makes it difficult to pinpoint where the strategy is having is greatest and least effect. A second major limitation is that out of 70 students, only 25 returned their consent forms. It can be said that the majority of those who returned the consent forms also generally turn in their assignments. These students may also be the same students that put more effort into survey questions used after each assignment. Other limitations to this study are influences that are not part of the study. For example, one student listed as a reason for not doing the first R.A.F.T. as "I don't like you, so I didn't do it." Another outside influence is sports/clubs that take the students' time on certain days of the week. I tried to remedy this by giving the students several days (approximately 5) for each assignment.

*Definitions*

Action Research: According to Mills (2007), "Action research is any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other

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stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn. This information is gathered with the goals of gaining insights, developing reflective practice, effecting positive changes in the school environment (and on educational practices in general), and improving student outcomes and the lives of those involved."

Extrinsic Motivation: Mark Lepper describes extrinsic student motivation as performing a task "IN ORDER TO obtain some reward or avoid some punishment external to the activity itself" (as cited in Lumsden, 1994, p. 2).

Intrinsic motivation: is described as doing an activity "for its own sake, for the enjoyment it provides, the learning it permits, or the feelings of accomplishment it evokes" (as cited in Lumsden, 1994, p. 2).

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

On the subject of student choice as motivation, Flowerday and Schraw found that

it is a common belief among teachers that giving choice in assignment has a positive

affect on student motivation and learning (as cited in Katz and Assor, 2007). Among the

research, the conclusion that increasing choice in an assignment/activity will increase

students' motivation is common (Cordova & Lepper, 1996; Kosky & Curtis, 2008; Patall,

Cooper, & Robinson, 2008). Contrary to these findings, other research has found

different effects of student choice on motivation. Some researchers have found that

granting choice to students had no effect on student motivation to learn (Parker &

Lepper, 1992).

*Student Motivation Increases*

There is much research to support the theory that student motivation will increase

when the student is given choice in an assignment. Cordova and Lepper (1996) even go

as far as stating that even the smallest amount of choice in an assignment will reflect

positively in the area of motivation. The slightest bit of choice will help the student

making the choice become more intrinsically motivated, and in turn, increase the

student's learning. Still, Cordova and Lepper admit that these results contradict an earlier

finding by Parker and Lepper (1992). Cordova and Lepper states that the difference

between these studies though is that Parker and Lepper only offered one alternate choice where-as their own study offered multiple choices

In a meta-analysis of several works on choice, Patall, Cooper, and Robinson (2008) found that student choice has a positive effect on intrinsic motivation. Patall et al., (2008) link this relationship between choice and motivation to the student's need for a sense of autonomy in his/her life. By allowing a student to have choice in an assignment, the teacher is allowing for that student to affirm his/her sense of autonomy, and is thus more willing to partake in the assignment. Furthermore, choice in an assignment will also have a positive effect on a student's "effort, task performance, perceived competence, and preference for challenge," (Patall et al., p. 25).

Additionally, in an attempt to see how the Arts affected the Social Studies in a sixth grade classroom, an Action Researcher came upon an unexpected result. In their study, Kosky and Curtis (2008) found that providing her students with choice about what they did in the classroom had an important positive impact on the students' motivation and participation.

*Self-Determination Theory*

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is a theory based on the idea of "people's inherent growth tendencies and innate psychological needs that are the basis for their self-motivation and personality integration, as well as for the conditions that foster those positive processes" (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p 68). According to Ryan and Deci (2000), these needs that are being referred to are competence, autonomy, and relatedness. Many researchers have based their experiments on choice around this theory.

Katz and Assor (2007), using the SDT, found that for choice to have a positive impact on student motivation, certain conditions must be met. These conditions are the psychological needs that are expressed in the SDT; competence, autonomy, and relatedness. The options that students have to choose from "should be constructed [so that they] are relevant to students' interests and goals (autonomy support), are not too numerous or complex yet not too easy (competence support), and are congruent with the values of the students' families and culture of origin (relatedness support)," (Katz & Assor 2007, p. 439). Also, choices should be offered in a non-threatening manner. When all of these conditions are met, choice will have a positive impact on motivation.

Fries, Dietz, and Schmid (2008) take a different approach to the discussion of choice, SDT and intrinsic motivation. It is their belief that when schools can foster self-determination in students, this will lead to less motivational interference. By giving students choice in what they will do, as opposed to the compulsory assignments that they are used to, the students will become more self-determined, and will in turn, become more intrinsically motivated.

*Limitations of Effects of Choice on Motivation*

Not all researchers found the hard evidence that the above researchers have found, though, choice has a positive effect on intrinsic motivation. Some have found limitations in the connections between choice and motivation while others found no connection at all.

Iyengar and Lepper (1999) had found, despite popular belief, that choice, or even perceived choice is not always an indicator of an increase in intrinsic motivation, or at least not the highest level of intrinsic motivation. This study is in contradiction to the

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findings of most other studies on choice and intrinsic motivation. This study also found that the belief of a positive link between choice and intrinsic motivation is not a universal link, and that other cultures do not share the connection with Anglo-American students. The study found that the "intrinsic motivation and performance of Asian-American children proved highest not in contexts offering personal choice, but in those in which choices were determined for them by valued in-group members," (Iyengar & Lepper 1999, p 363). Iyengar and Lepper seem to give credit for this phenomenon to the difference in cultures with the Anglo-American culture being more independent and the Asian-American culture being interdependent.

Another limitation that has been discovered in the literature is that in some cases, too many choices can have an adverse affect on intrinsic motivation. Patall et al., (2008) explain that it is important to offer a few choices, but only to a point; if the decision becomes too laborious, than the option of choice will have an opposite affect than that which was intended. Also, along these same lines, the decision should not be too effortful, perhaps because of its importance, or else the choice may cause the student stress, which would decrease intrinsic motivation.

Reeve and Nix (2003) found the opposite results of most of the other research on the topic of choice. This study found that perceived choice was not a quality of self-determination as much other research had found.

When it comes to the discussion of whether or not choice positively affects intrinsic motivation, many schools of thought have surfaced, compromising the entire spectrum of possible findings. Everything from positive affect, to no affect, to even a negative affect has been realized in some study or another. It is controversial topics such

as this that make for good research topics, which is one of the reasons it has been so heavily researched, and will continue to be researched in the future.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

The purpose of Action Research is to study the happenings of one's school or classroom in an effort to improve the learning of the students and effectiveness of the teacher (Mills, 2007). Mills (2007) states that there are four steps when conducting action research: identifying an area of focus, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting data, and developing an action plan. This process can be cyclical in nature in that when analyzing the data collected for your original area of focus, new areas of focus may arise beginning the process anew.

*Context of the Study*

Collingswood High School is located in the Collingswood School District, which encompasses three sending districts, Collingswood School District, Oaklyn School District (a small town located adjacent to the town of Collingswood ), and Woodlynne School District (a section of a larger nearby city, adjacent to Collingswood). The school district is a K-12 district, with Oaklyn and Woodlynne sending their students beginning in 9th grade. Collingswood School District is a suburban/urban district located in the North-western portion of Camden County in New Jersey. The district is host to 1757 students among one high school, one middle school, and five elementary schools. The district has brought in an increasing amount of technology over the past few years but is

still rated well below the state with a student to computer ratio of 4.5 compared to the state ratio of 3.3 (New Jersey State Report Card, 2009).

According to NJ Report Card (2009), Barry Street High School consists of a wide range of socioeconomic statuses (SES) with some students coming from high SES homes while many others are coming from low SES homes with 26% of students being eligible free and reduced lunch. The school has a multi-ethnic population with 63% of the students being White, 17% being African-American, 13% Hispanic, and 4% Asian. The high school consists of grades 9-12. Several of the students receive special accommodations with 15.7% of the students having an Individualized Education Plan (IEP). The school also has 2.2% of its students classified as English Language Learners.

The classes being used for this study are three academic level World History courses that consist primarily of 9th grade students. Though the school does not officially use tracking, there is a distinct difference in the difficulty of the same course taught by different teachers. In more than one case, a student has been moved from one section of World History (with a different teacher) into my cooperating teachers' class (which is not as difficult. Among the three World History classes, there are 69 students, 7 of which receive in-class support, 13 of which having IEP's, and 3 of whom are classified as English Language Learners. Since the cooperating teacher has to share the classroom with other teachers, the students' desks are set-up in rows, in compliance with what the other teachers want.

The participants were chosen among the 69 students in the three World History classes by who returned the permission slip (APPENDIX G) that I handed out which went along with my research. Of the 69 students, 23 of the students returned their

permission slips with their parents granting permission. The rest of the students failed to return their permission slips, with zero students returning permission slips with a denial of permission from their parents. Of the 23 participants, one student is a senior, one is a junior, and the rest are freshmen, one is classified as an English Language Learner, and two students have IEPs (both whom receive in-class support). Of the participants, there is a wide range of student completion, with a few students who rarely complete any assignments, a few students who complete all assignments, and most of the others falling in the middle.

*Data Sources*

This Action Research project incorporated four different types of connected data. The first type of data used was the percentages of completion for each assignment. This was used to observe any changes that had occurred in student completion as the number of choices in the assignment increased or decreased. The second form of data is artifacts, or students' completed assignments. This was used to measure the amount of effort put into each assignment based on how well the assignment was done. This was used to perceive whether the students were motivated to put effort into the assignment, or did the minimum needed to complete the assignment. The third form of data collected came in two forms, surveys used at the completion of each assignment (Appendix H) and a survey given to the students following the completion of the research (Appendix I). The first of these two types of surveys were used to discover why (or why not) the student completed each individual assignment. This was used to find any anomalies in the first to forms of data, such as a student who always completes his work not doing one of these

assignments. The second of these surveys focused more on how the students believe

choice effects their willingness to complete assignments. The last piece of data used in

this research was interviews will select students. The interviews were used to expand on

what some of the students wrote in the final survey.

*Trustworthiness*

To be sure that my data is trustworthy, I will be using Guba's Criteria for Validity of

Qualitative Research (1981, as cited in Mills, 2007). Guba states that there are four

pieces to validity that have to be examined, credibility, transferability, dependability, and

confirmability. Credibility is being able to deal with unexplained patterns and account

for any complexities that may present themselves. I will do this by having the students

answering surveys about the why of their actions (whether or not they completed the

assignment). Transferability is the belief that the research is "context bound" and that the

results can be duplicated in a similar setting. This will be accomplished by collecting

detailed information on the context of the classroom being studied. Dependability refers

to the stability of the data. I will show stability by using several forms of data that

overlap. For example, I will be using the student surveys to find why the students did or

did not do the assignment. I will also be leaving an "audit trail" encompassing all of my

data. Confirmability refers to the neutrality of the data collected. One way that I will be

doing this is to own up to my biases and being open to other options that may explain my

findings.

There are a few potentials for bias in this research. It is possible that in my desire

to see the results I am hoping for, I may disregard other possible causes for the outcome.

For example, completion of the assignment can be a result of students getting used to the

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R.A.F.T being a reoccurring assignment, and that not completing any of them will be detrimental to their grade. Also, as the marking period comes to a conclusion, students become more willing to complete assignments to build their grade before it is too late for their marking period grade. An increase in completion may also have to do with me pushing students to complete assignments more and more as the school year goes on.

CHAPTER IV

Findings, Analysis, and Interpretations

*Findings*

This study found that as the students were given additional choices, completion of the given assignment also increased. It also found that, given a high amount of choices, student completion of assignments begins to decrease. Figure 1 shows that when the students were given five choices, fewer students completed the assignment than had completed the assignment given four choices.

**% Completion**

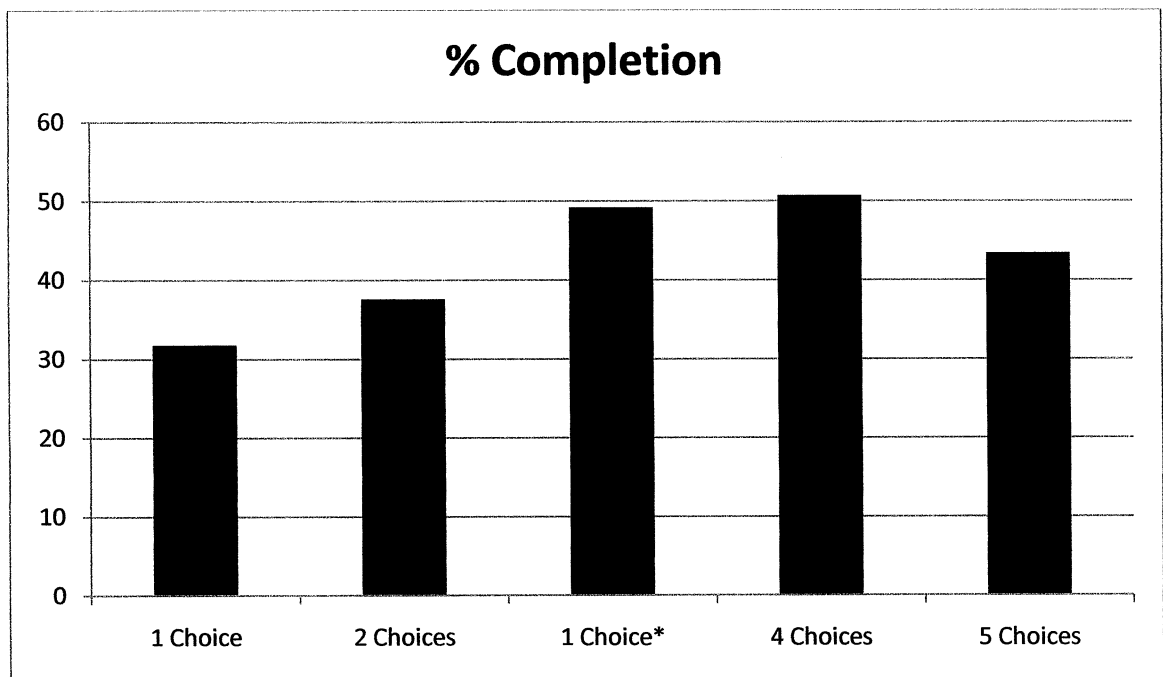| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 Choice | 2 Choices | 1 Choice* | 4 Choices | 5 Choices |

**Figure 1: Chart shows the percentage of completed assignments based on the amount of choices. *This assignment was given after the two-choice assignment.**

In response to the survey given, 12 of 17 students who completed the final survey

answered that they would be more willing to complete an assignment if they had some

type of choice in the assignment. Of these 17 surveys, 13 of the students answered that

too many choices would be less motivating. Figure 2 shows how many choices these

students believed to be too many choices.

**How many choices is too many?**
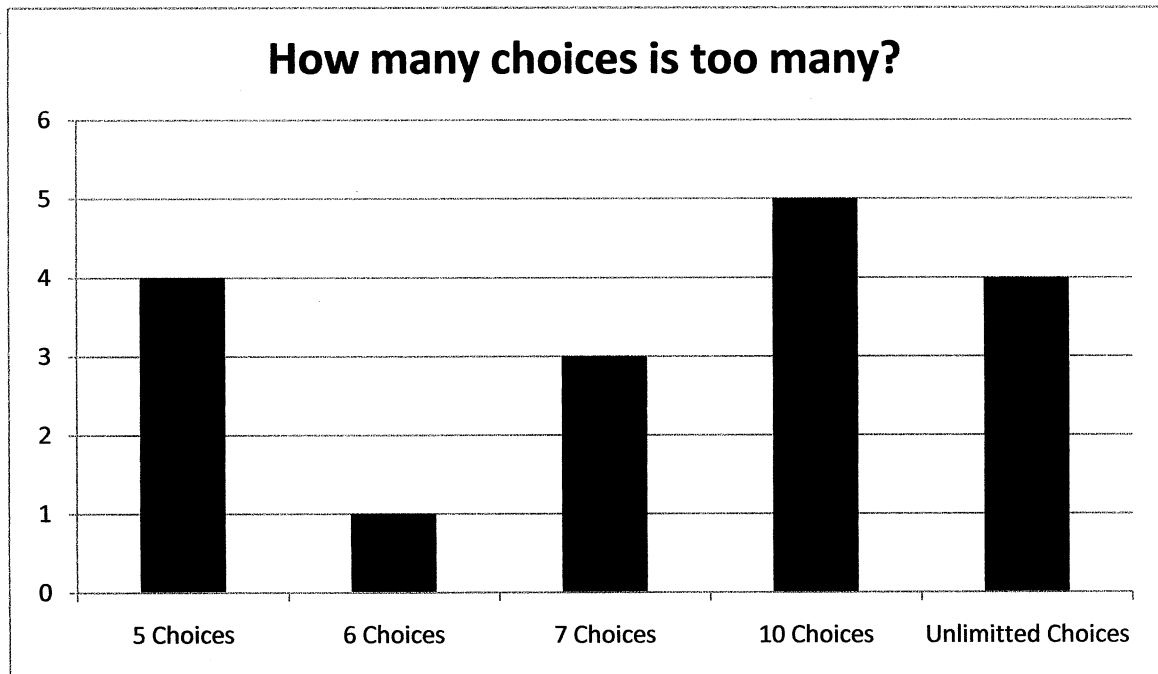
*Analysis*

The percentages given, along with the students answers to the survey questions,

show two main themes. The first is that students are more motivated to complete an

assignment when the students are given some type of choice in the assignment. This

makes the student feel a sense of ownership over the assignment, granting them a feeling

of autonomy, which is essential to their intrinsic motivation (Patall et al. 2008). When

asked on the survey "Do you believe that choices in a given assignment will increase

your willingness to complete the assignment?" Michael answered "Yes, because it

makes you more interested in one of the topics" (Survey May 6, 2009). When students

have no choice in a given assignment, they must complete what is given to them. By giving the students some choice in their assignments, it increases the likelihood that the students will have some interest in the topic, increasing their motivation to complete the assignment.

The second theme is that, at a certain point, choice can become detrimental to student motivation. Patell et al. (2008) discuss that when too many choices are entered into the equation, the decision could become too laborious for the student, and could lead to a decrease in the student's motivation. One student, Donald, stated that any more than seven choices would be "too many" (Survey May 6, 2009). When asked about his answer in an interview, Donald, expressed that he would "have trouble" from choosing between more than seven choices (Interview May 7, 2009). This trouble choosing would decrease the student's motivation to complete the assignment.

*Interpretations*

There is more than one way to interpret the results of this study. Though there is a correlation between adding choices and more students completing their assignments, there are other possible explanations as well. The increase in student completion could be linked to choice, but it could also be linked to students getting accustomed to this type of assignment, students finding the assignment less intimidating, students completing the assignments to increase their grades at the end of a term, the changing in high school sports seasons, or the increase could be linked to personal feelings towards the teacher.

I came into my student teaching with several new ideas which were very different from what the students were used to, the R.A.F.T. writing assignment being one of them. One of the students, Andrew, when asked why he didn't do the assignment replied, "I

didn't do it because I thought it was stupid and not necessary" (Questionnaire March 20, 2009). This is evidence that the class was not accustomed to an assignment of this type, and became more willing to complete the assignment the more often they were exposed to the assignment.

Another possibility to explain the results is that the students found the assignments to be easier and less intimidating than originally thought. Some students who did not complete the first few assignments in this study did the last couple. When I asked the students what changed, several students mentioned how the assignments were easier than they had originally thought. One example of this is Donald who, in his survey, explained that when he found out they R.A.F.T.s were easy, he began doing them (Survey May 6, 2009).

One finding was that when the research reverted back to the students having only one choice (Appendix C, which was the third in the study) the percentage of student completion still increased from the previous assignment (Appendix B, which gave the students two choices). This assignment saw the completion percentage increase by 18% over the other one choice assignment (Appendix A) and 12% over the previous assignment (Appendix B). This would suggest that giving choice had no effect. A piece of information that puts this into context is that the grading term ended one week after the assignment was due. Several students noted on their questionnaire for that assignment that they did this assignment to increase their grade before the end of the marking period. This is evidence that the students become more motivated to complete assignments when the end of the grading term approaches.

A fourth possible explanation for the results is that, for some students, sports and

activities take preference over academic work. In one example, one student, Jim, claimed he did not complete the assignment because he was in the middle of basketball season, and did not have the time to complete the assignments between games and practice. After the season ended, his completion percentage of the assignments increased. One final possible explanation is the students' personal attitudes' toward me as the teacher. In one instance, when asked why he did not do the assignment, a student replied that he did not do it because he did not like me at first. As time went on, and he grew more accustomed to me as a teacher, he began completing the assignments. In the end, it is likely a combination of all of these possible conclusions.

CHAPTER V

Conclusions

*Summary*

In conclusion, there was some positive correlation between granting the students

choice and student completion of assignments. The students were given an increasing

amount of choices on a given assignment that was regularly used to end each unit of

study. Beginning with no choices, these assignments would give the students two

choices to choose from, four choices, and finally five choices. There was a positive

correlation between the number of choices and the number of students who completed the

assignment up to four choices. When the students were given five choices, there was a

decrease in the amount of students who completed the assignments in comparison to the

number of students who completed the four-choice assignment. Still, while there was a

correlation between choice and completion, there were several other factors that at least

influenced the results, if not caused the results.

*New Understandings*

Through my research, I had found that there is a correlation between granting

student's choice in their assignments and increased motivation, and in-turn, an increased

likelihood that the students will complete the assignments given to them. The research

has shown that as the number of choices increased, to a point, so did the number of

students who completed the assignment. The research also shows that when too many

choices are given, students become less likely to complete the assignment. When

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surveyed, 94% of students agreed that more choices would increase their likelihood of completing their assignments. Although, despite the data representing some positive correlation between students' choice and completion of assignments, I do not believe that the correlation is strong enough to make an absolute statement that the increase choice caused the increase in student completion. There are other factors that may prove the likely reason for the increase in student completion.

One such factor that may have led to an increase in the completion of assignments is the nearing of the end of the grading period. I had noticed in my student teaching that students are more likely to complete assignments in the last three weeks of the grading period than they are during the rest of the grading period. In this, I also noticed that when a new grading period begins, many of those same students whose completion of assignments increased toward the end of the previous grading period would revert back to the completion percentage of the rest of the grading period.

A second understanding that emerged is how the students' attitude toward the teacher effects their motivation and completion of assignments. In my research I had found that there were several students who refused to do the given assignments because of their personal feelings toward me as a teacher. Eventually, I would build a better rapport with many of these students, and their completion of assignments increased as well.

A third understanding that emerged in my research is the increased likelihood that students will complete a type of assignment the more that type of assignment is given. Several of the participants in the research stated that they did not do the first and/or second R.A.F.T assignment because they did not care about missing one or two

assignments. Once they realized, though, that this type of assignment will be given on a regular basis, the participants realized that the students would have to begin doing the R.A.F.T assignments so that their grade in the class would not falter.

*Implications*

For my classroom, the implications were many. Prior to this study, completion of essays on exams (which was only one part of the exam) was also a problem in my classroom. Many students would not do the essay, which was 10% of the exam grade, even when given the question ahead of time. Seeing the results of my research, I tried to implement the idea of choice in other areas of my teaching, the first of which was the exam essays. I would come to find that when I gave the students a choice between two or three essays, the amount of students who attempted the essay increased greatly. By spreading this idea of choice to other areas of the classroom, I would see an increase in the students' willingness to complete different activities.

As for some of the new understandings I have discovered, I will attempt to implement these findings into my future classrooms. For example, when it comes to assignments that are more important to the students' understanding of the course, and assignments that are worth more of a percentage of the students' final grade for a particular grading period, I will be more likely to place these assignments toward the end of a grading period to increase the likelihood that the students will complete these assignments. Also, I will work more toward building a positive relationship with my students early in the school year. This will decrease the likelihood that students will not do certain assignments because of their personal attitude toward me as their teacher. Eliminating these factors that hinder students motivation to complete assignments, as

well as increasing the amount of choice students have in certain assignments will likely increase the amount of assignments my students complete, which will increase their learning and increase their grades.

*Recommendations*

My recommendation for teachers is to, whenever possible, grant students some type of choice in what they are doing in the classroom, whether it is with an assignment, with a project, or with exam questions. Allow students to feel that they have a role in their schooling. By doing this the students will become more motivated to be active in their learning experience. I would also recommend building a good rapport with students. In my experience, students who have negative feelings toward their teacher tend to complete fewer assignments for that teachers class, hindering their learning.

*New Directions and Questions*

Out of this study came a few areas which I would like to explore further. The first of these relates to the original study; what effect does unlimited choice in assignment have on student completion and how many choices are too many choices? There is much research discussing the detriment of an excessive amount of choices (Patall et al, 2008). In a future study, I would like to examine more closely the other end of choice, how many is too many.

A second area of discussion that came out of this research for me is the relationship between the student-teacher relationship and students' completion of assignments. In other words, how much of an effect does a positive relationship between a student and his/her teacher have on that student's achievement in that classroom? Or more importantly, how much of an effect does a negative relationship between a student

and his/her teacher have on that student's achievement in the classroom?  Would a student allow his/her contempt for his/her teachers affect his achievement in the classroom, via class work, participation, and homework?  And, along with this, how much would a student allow his/her own grade to suffer because of this contempt of the teacher?

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# R.A.F.T # 1

**R**—Role of the writer (Who or what are you?)

**A**—Audience for the writer (To whom or what are you writing?)

**F**—Format of the writing (What form you're writing assumes?)

**T**—Topic (What are you writing about?)

R – A plebian

A – Your Children

F – A Family History

T – How has your family's status in society changed from the beginning of the Republic (509 BC) until 300 BC?

You will write 1-2 pages using this writing method. You will be graded on whether or not you have stuck to the parameters (the R, the A, the F, and the T) and on the accuracy of the information in your writing.

All of the information that you need can be found in chapter 7 of the textbook.

This will be due on Tuesday February 17, 2009.

APPENDIX B

**R.A.F.T**


**R**—Role of the writer (Who or what are you?)

**A**—Audience for the writer (To whom or what are you writing?)

**F**—Format of the writing (What form you're writing assumes?)

**T**—Topic (What are you writing about?)

Choose 1:

| R | A | F | T |
|---|---|---|---|
| Justinian I | A village you are about to conquer | A town hall speech | Why your attack on the village is necessary. |
| A villager | Justinian I | Pleading | Why Justinian should leave your village alone. (Focus on all the good that Justinian has done.) |


You will write 1-2 pages using this writing method. You will be graded on whether or not you have stuck to the parameters (the R, the A, the F, and the T) and on the accuracy of the information in your writing.

All of the information that you need can be found in chapter 10 of the textbook.

This will be due on Thursday, February 26, 2009.

APPENDIX C

**R.A.F.T #3**

**R**—Role of the writer (Who or what are you?)

**A**—Audience for the writer (To whom or what are you writing?)

**F**—Format of the writing (What form you're writing assumes?)

**T**—Topic (What are you writing about?)

R – Islamic Religious Leader (around 700 AD)

A – People you are trying to convert to Islam

F – Preaching

T – The 5 Pillars – Why they are essential to life.

You will write 1-2 pages using this writing method.  You will be graded on whether or not you have stuck to the parameters (the R, the A, the F, and the T) and on the accuracy of the information in your writing.

All of the information that you need can be found in chapter 11 of the textbook as well as our discussions.

Be Creative with this.

This will be due on Thursday, March 19, 2009

## R.A.F.T #4

**R**—Role of the writer (Who or what are you?)
**A**—Audience for the writer (To whom or what are you writing?)
**F**—Format of the writing (What form you're writing assumes?)
**T**—Topic (What are you writing about?)

Choose 1:

| R | A | F | T |
|---|---|---|---|
| Peasant | Lord (Knight) | Begging | You want to live on the knight's land. (Focus on what you will do for him in return, and the horrible conditions you currently live in.) |
| Charlemagne | Your Subjects | Speech | Why you should be given the title of "Best King Ever". (Focus on your accomplishments.) |
| Barons | King John | Petition | Why he must sign the Magna Carta. (Focus on the reasons for the document, and the consequences of not signing it.) |
| Peasant | Yourself or Future Readers | Journal | A day in your life. (Focus on living conditions, working conditions, clothing, etc.) |

You will write 1-2 pages using this writing method. You will be graded on whether or not you have stuck to the parameters (the R, the A, the F, and the T) and on the accuracy of the information in your writing.
All of the information that you need can be found in chapter 13 of the textbook.
This will be due on Wednesday, April 8, 2009.

## R.A.F.T #5

**R**—Role of the writer (Who or what are you?)
**A**—Audience for the writer (To whom or what are you writing?)
**F**—Format of the writing (What form you're writing assumes?)
**T**—Topic (What are you writing about?)
Choose 1:

| R | A | F | T |
|---|---|---|---|
| Family of a young boy | Master | Pleading | You want the master to take your son under his wing and train him. (Focus on why it is important for your family that he enters into the trade and what you (and your son) will do in return for the training |
| Master | Apprentice | Ordering | You are discussing with your apprentice what his requirements are. (Focus on what his job will be, punishment for not fulfilling the requirements, and explaining the standards that have to be met.) |
| God | Joan of Arc | Command | You will be commanding Joan of Arc to lead the French army and help Charles VII rise to power. (Focus on why Joan must lead the army and what will happen to both her and the French people if she does not.) |
| Plague Survivor | Yourself or Future Readers | Journal entry | A day in your life. (Focus on all of your losses, the living conditions that you are currently living in, and how hard it was to watch your family and friends die – be specific.) |
| Pope Urban II | People of Europe | Proclamation | You will be calling for the Crusades. (Focus on what the crusades will be, why they need to be done, and the benefits to an individual if they fought. |

You will write 1-2 pages using this writing method. You will be graded on whether or not you have stuck to the parameters (the R, the A, the F, and the T) and on the accuracy of the information in your writing. All of the information that you need can be found in chapter 14 of the textbook.
This will be due on Tuesday, May 5, 2009.

APPENDIX F

Student Information Survey

Name:   (what you would like to be called)          Seat Location

Grade:

Age/Birthday:

Favorite Subject:

Least Favorite Subject:

Electives:

Interests:

After School Activities:

What in your life may be a hindrance to your success in the classroom?

How much support/help do you receive from your family on your school work?  A lot,

some, or little to none.

What are your plans for after High School?

ON BACK:

One question that you have for me (about my teaching style, about my background, etc)?

PLEASE KEEP APPROPRIATE!

APPENDIX G

Permission Slip

Dear Parent/Guardian:

      I am a graduate student in the Masters of Science in Teaching (MST) program at Rowan University. Over the next several weeks I will be the teacher in your child's World History classroom. As part of my Masters program, I must complete a research thesis that will be conducted in the classroom. I am requesting permission for your child to participate in this research. The goal of this study is to discover the effects of certain motivational strategies on students completing assignments.

      The assignments given in this study will be counted toward your child's final grade, just like any other assignment. I will be tracking the students' completion percentage as a class, to see if it increases as I use the motivational strategy, as well as tracking each individual student's completion rate. All data collected, outside of what I have to give to the high school (for example – grades on the assignments), will be retained by myself until the conclusion of the study. To preserve each child's confidentiality, my final report will use fake names, in place of your child's name.

      Please be aware that the decision to allow your child to participate in this study is entirely up to you and your child, and will have no effect on his/her standing in the class. At the conclusion of the study, a summary of the findings will be made available to all interested parents. Please note that individual students' results will not be available to maintain confidentiality. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me at 856-220-9809 or you may contact my supervisor, Dr. Beth Wassell, at 856-256-4500 ext. 3802. Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Christopher J. Croge

Please indicate whether or not you wish to have your child participate in this study by checking the appropriate statement below and returning this letter to your child's teacher by Monday, Feb. 23, 2009.

___I grant my permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.

___I do not grant permission for my child _____ to participate in this study.

_____ _____
(Parent/Guardian signature)     (Date)

## APPENDIX H

## Post R.A.F.T. Survey

If you completed the assignment, why?  If you did not complete the assignment, why not?

What changed from the last assignment?

APPENDIX I

Final Survey

Did you do the last R.A.F.T. assignment? Why or why not?

Did you do ALL the R.A.F.T assignments? Why or why not?

What changed?

What did you like about the R.A.F.T. assignments?

What did you dislike about the R.A.F.T assignments?

On average, about how much time did you spend on each R.A.F.T assignment?

Did the amount of choices that you had increase your willingness to do the assignment?

How many choices in an assignment would be too many choices?

Do you believe that choice in a given assignment will increase your willingness to complete the assignment?

# APPENDIX J

## R.A.F.T. #3 – Student Sample

Religion is very important to me.

If you like to pray a lot and not eat the Islamic religion on is just right for you. It gives you the opportunity to express yourself in many different ways.

There is a lot of ways used to make people convert to the religion they want to go to. Tolerance is one way I will use to convert people. Wise policies are another technique I would use. Finally, I would use force to make people my slaves.

As long as they still know about, *the profession of fate* is important because there is only one main god who stands for everything they believe in. There are no other gods in this religion. In the country of Islam they face toward Mecca and pray at least 5 times a day. So that everyone can be almost equal they pay an annual tax to give to the unfortunate. They fast because they want to purify their body, and practice self-discipline. Once a year Muslims take part in a pilgrimage which is the meeting of all Muslims at Islam and to pray with each other.

APPENDIX K

R.A.F.T. #4 – Student Sample

We, the Barons of England, are threatening our King,
John, with the force of our uprising to overthrow him
for such unrightly actions of demanding more taxes
for his own personal agenda. We are forcing King John
to sign this Magna Carta, which will limit his
"rights" as our King and make the law, not
the King, the Supreme ruler or power of England.
We, as Barons (nobles) want our liberties protected.
We need a limited amount of rights for our
ordinary citizens. King John must agree, (1) not
to impose new taxes without the Great Council's
consent, (2) King John may not take property without
paying for it, (3) King John must promise not to sell,
refuse, or delay justice, and agree for an accused
person to be judged by his peers.
And finally, the King must obey the law
or face being overthrown and possibly executed.
The law is with the supreme power in
England, and were it above it.