

The spine of the book is decorated with marbled paper featuring a complex pattern of swirling blue, black, and cream colors.

# READINGS & CASES IN EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY

ANITA E. WOOLFOLK



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# Readings and Cases in Educational Psychology

Anita E. Woolfolk  
*Rutgers University*

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## Subject Guide

The articles and cases in this reader provide information about many specific topics in education and educational psychology. Use the guide below to locate material on topics that interest you. Many articles cover much more than is indicated below, but this guide should give you some direction in your reading and research.

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# Preface

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## TO THE READER

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Many of you reading this book are studying educational psychology for the first time. Others may be taking an advanced course or a graduate seminar. To all of you, welcome to some interesting reading and exciting ideas. I have been teaching and learning about educational psychology for over 20 years and have witnessed many developments. But of all the times to study educational psychology, this is the most fascinating. The field has been changing rapidly. There is renewed interest in how the mind works, how children and adults learn, what motivates students, and how excellent teaching happens. Educational psychologists have more useful information for teachers than ever before, as you will see in the coming pages.

This volume has two parts. In the first section is a collection of readings selected from professional journals and magazines. Some of the articles are reviews of research on important topics prepared for practicing teachers and administrators. Other articles take a position or make an argument for a particular approach to teaching or testing. Finally, a few of the entries report results of research. These give you a firsthand look at how educational psychologists study teaching and learning.

In the second section are five original cases written for this book by experts studying the teaching and learning of school subjects. These cases show principles of educational psychology in action in actual classrooms as students attempt to learn math, reading, or history.

## TO THE INSTRUCTOR

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This book is divided into two parts. The first is a collection of articles chosen from professional journals and magazines. Many of the articles are summaries of research in a given area—some written for researchers and others for practicing teachers and administrators. Other articles take a position on a controversial issue. These reviews and position papers are taken from *Educational Researcher*, *Phi Delta Kappan*, *Educational Leadership*, *Harvard Education Letter*, and *Educational Psychologist*. A few selections are primary sources—reports of research from such references as the *Journal of Educational Psychology* and *Sex Roles*. The statistics in these research studies are very basic and descriptive. Even introductory level students will find these studies easy to understand. I have included a few examples of research so readers can see firsthand the sources of knowledge in educational psychology.

All of the readings in this volume are cited in my educational psychology textbook (*Educational Psychology*, 5th edition, published by Allyn and Bacon), but I have chosen the articles to complement any text, even if these sources are not



directly cited. The articles are grouped by topics that are consistently found in most educational psychology books.

The second section of the book contains five original case study analyses, written by educational psychologists who study the teaching and learning of specific school subjects. These five analyses represent the most current thinking and research in educational psychology and reflect current attempts to understand how the principles of educational psychology are manifest as students learn math, reading, or history. Each analysis includes some case material—slices of life from real classrooms. This material may be in the form of interviews with students or descriptions of class events or experiences of a particular teacher. What distinguishes these “cases” from the many others currently available is that *each is based on actual events and each is derived from a program of research*. Thus, in reading and analyzing the cases, your students not only learn about the realities of classroom life and how principles of educational psychology look in action, they also get a glimpse of how research is conducted in educational psychology and how information from research can inform practice. Some of the contributors have included extensive analyses of the case material while others leave this analysis to the reader. Each case includes questions to stimulate students’ thinking about the situation.

Hilda Borko’s contribution, “Ms. Daniels: Strengths and Limitations in a Novice’s Teaching,” describes a student teacher’s more and less successful attempts to make difficult concepts in mathematics understandable to her sixth grade students. In the process, she shows readers what the term “pedagogical content knowledge” means in a real teaching situation. Borko’s case can be assigned when your class is studying research approaches in educational psychology, expert-novice differences, teacher knowledge and thinking, or math instruction.

Lynne Díaz-Rico’s case, “From Monocultural to Multicultural Teaching in an Inner-City Middle School,” describes the experiences of an excellent and dedicated teacher who encounters problems in one of her history classes. The teacher’s genuine efforts to understand how her own biases and beliefs contribute to the problems and her energetic work to improve her teaching will help your students understand the human side of multicultural education. This very rich case can be assigned to accompany topics of cultural diversity and multiculturalism, motivation, individual differences, teacher expectations, classroom management, or teaching strategies.

The third case, “Analysis of Two Middle School Students’ Cognitive Strategies, Memory, and Learning,” by Paul Pintrich and Allison Young presents interviews with two students who are struggling to understand their science textbook. As these students describe how they try to understand and remember the material, their words provide concrete manifestations of abstract concepts from cognitive learning such as schemata, reconstructive memory, elaboration, and retroactive interference. This case can be assigned to accompany the study of cognitive views of learning, the role of schemata in learning, transfer, learning strategies and study skills, or science instruction.

Margaret Meyer and James Middletown describe and analyze two classroom events that occur in some form or another every day in secondary math classes. Their contribution, “Affect and Motivation in Secondary Mathematics,” raises questions about teachers’ differential treatment of males and females in math classes and explores the effects of these differences on students’ motivation and self-concept. A second segment examines the motivational properties of common tasks in secondary math classes and asks what can be done to improve these tasks. The authors make it clear that the issues they raise are relevant for other

subjects in addition to mathematics. This reading can be assigned when your class is studying motivation, gender differences in the classroom, self-concept, or teacher expectations.

The final case, "Motivation in First Grade Literacy," by Julianne Turner examines young students learning about reading and writing. This case contrasts two classes, one with more traditional "closed" tasks and the other with "open" authentic tasks that allow students choice and control. Turner analyzes the different responses of the students in these two classrooms in relation to principles of motivation such as task characteristics, goal setting, dealing with distraction, persistence, interest, difficulty, and social support. This case can be assigned when students consider motivation, teaching strategies, or whole-language approaches to literacy.

I am interested in hearing about how you use these readings and cases in your teaching and about your students' reactions to them. Please send any comments or suggestions to:

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# ► Chapter 1

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## The Obviousness of Social and Educational Research Results

N. L. GAGE

*Highly estimable writers have averred that well nigh all of the results of social and educational research are obvious, that is, could have been predicted without doing the research. To examine the justifiability of this allegation, one should examine its accord with actual research results. Thus, is it a "truism" that higher achievement comes about when students spend more time with the subject matter? That smaller groups are easier to control than larger groups? Do judges regard actual results as more obvious and statements of their opposites as nonobvious? Both the century-old research results of Joseph Mayer Rice and recent results throw light on these issues.*

—*Educational Researcher*, Vol. 20, no. 1, pp. 10–16

Is what we find out in social and educational research old hat, stale, platitudinous? Are the results of such research mere truisms that any intelligent person might know without going to the trouble of doing social or educational research?

### THE IMPORTANCE OF THE OBVIOUSNESS QUESTION

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The obviousness question has important ramifications. It can influence the motivation of any person who is thinking about doing social or educational research. Why do research if you are not going to find anything new, anything not already known? Obviousness also relates to the justification of social science departments and schools of education in expecting or requiring their faculties and graduate students to do social and educational research. It also concerns government funding policies, such as those of the National Science Foundation and the

National Institute of Mental Health that support social research, and those of the U.S. Department of Education, particularly the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, that support educational research. Foundations, school boards, state legislatures, and Congressional committees need to be convinced, before they put up the money, that social and educational research will produce something that any intelligent adult might not already know.

So, the issue of obviousness, apart from piquing our intellectual curiosity, has tremendous practical importance. Unless social and educational researchers face that issue, they may lack motivation to do research and lose societal support expressed in dollars.

### THE CHARGE OF OBVIOUSNESS

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Does anyone really hold that social and educational research yields only the obvious? I begin with an old joke attributed to James T. Farrell, the novelist

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who became famous in the 1930s for *Studs Lonigan*. Farrell was quoted in those days as having defined a sociologist as someone who will spend \$10,000 to discover the location of the nearest house of ill fame. He actually used a less polite term, and nowadays he would have said a quarter of a million dollars. I also remember a fellow graduate student who could always get a laugh by referring to the content of some of his textbooks as “unctuous elaborations of the obvious.”

### Schlesinger's Critique

The first serious piece of writing that I know of that made the same charge appeared in 1949 in *The Partisan Review*. It was in a review by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., of the two volumes of *The American Soldier*, which had just been published. *The American Soldier* was written by a group led by Samuel A. Stouffer, who later became a professor of sociology at Harvard. It reported on the work done by sociologists and other social scientists in surveying, with questionnaires and interviews, the attitudes of American soldiers during World War II. The first volume, subtitled “Adjustment During Army Life,” dealt with soldiers’ attitudes during training, and the second, subtitled “Combat and Its Aftermath,” dealt with soldiers’ attitudes while they were engaged with the enemy and risking their lives. As a young assistant professor, I found the two books impressive for their methodological thoroughness, sophisticated interpretation, and theoretical formulations of such concepts as “relative deprivation.”

So I was taken aback after some months when I discovered a review of those two volumes by Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., the distinguished historian. Then a young professor at Harvard University, Schlesinger had just won a Pulitzer Prize for his *Age of Jackson*. Witty and vituperative, Schlesinger’s review also denounced what he considered the pretensions of social scientists. Schlesinger wrote:

*Does this kind of research yield anything new? . . . [T]he answer . . . is easy. Most of the American Soldier is a ponderous demonstration in Newspeak of such facts as these: New recruits do not like noncoms; front-line troops resent rear-echelon troops; combat men manifest a high level of anxiety as compared to other soldiers; married privates are more likely than single privates to worry about their families back*

*home. Indeed, one can find little in the 1,200 pages of text and the innumerable surveys which is not described more vividly and compactly and with far greater psychological insight, in a small book entitled Up Front by Bill Mauldin. What Mauldin may have missed will turn up in the pages of Ernie Pyle. (p. 854)*

### Lazarsfeld's Examples

At about the same time as Schlesinger, Paul Lazarsfeld, a professor of sociology at Columbia University, also reviewed *The American Soldier*. Lazarsfeld (1949) was clearly aware of the same problem of obviousness. He wrote:

*[I]t is hard to find a form of human behavior that has not already been observed somewhere. Consequently, if a study reports a prevailing regularity, many readers respond to it by thinking “of course, that is the way things are.” Thus, from time to time, the argument is advanced that surveys only put into complicated form observations which are already obvious to everyone.*

*Understanding the origin of this point of view is of importance far beyond the limits of the present discussion. The reader may be helped in recognizing this attitude if he looks over a few statements which are typical of many survey findings and carefully observes his own reaction. A short list of these, with brief interpretive comments, will be given here in order to bring into sharper focus probable reactions of many readers.*

1. *Better educated men showed more psychoneurotic symptoms than those with less education. (The mental instability of the intellectual as compared to the more impassive psychology of the man-in-the-street has often been commented on.)*
2. *Men from rural backgrounds were usually in better spirits during their Army life than soldiers from city backgrounds. (After all, they are more accustomed to hardships.)*
3. *Southern soldiers were better able to stand the climate in the hot South Sea Islands than Northern soldiers. (Of course. Southerners are more accustomed to hot weather.)*
4. *White privates were more eager to become noncoms than Negroes. (Because of their*