Abstract:

I became interested in Abraham Lincoln after reading *Lincoln’s Melancholy: How depression challenged a president and fueled his greatness* (Shenk, 2005). The author contends that marvel of Lincoln is not that he accomplished great things despite his depression, but rather, that his depression served as impetus to develop purpose which ultimately led him to do great things. This assertion resonated with my existential-humanistic psychology study. For years I have studied the writings of Rollo May, an existential psychoanalyst, who emphasized the role of destiny, will, freedom, responsibility, and the importance of developing purpose and meaning. Lincoln seemed a manifestation of May’s ideas about the human experience: a model life of developed meaning, contemplation, deep feeling, and exertion of will (Lincoln referred to his resolve as “the gem of my character”). Discovering Lincoln invigorated my study of existentialism. The purpose of this leave is to research Lincoln’s great humanity and quest for purpose, and to assess the transformational consequences of studying his life. My goals are two-fold. The first facet involves my readiness to further investigate 1) Lincoln’s life (specifically in relation to his assertion of will over depression); 2) Fatalism (determinism, fate, and predestination) culminating in a submitted manuscript to a humanistic psychology journal. The second facet is to 1) research and write a proposal to qualitatively research transformational changes in those who study Lincoln (Levitt, et al., 2009). Both projects will further develop my expertise and stature in humanistic psychology.

Conclusion:

During the leave I finished writing a manuscript titled, “Lincoln and May: Destiny Visible in the Life of the Great Emancipator” which has been accepted for publication in the *Journal of Humanistic Psychology*. I completed significant revisions on this manuscript, almost rewriting it entirely during the leave. As a side note, I believe this writing is my best to date. As well, I nearly completed a second article tentatively titled, “Expanded Consciousness: Lincoln as Hero, May as Helper.”

As well, I wrote an IRB as proposed research for examining the role of the *Harry Potter* series as mythology to young people. In this experience, I learned about a method of study that is new to me, qualitative research.

The Lincoln manuscripts and the IRB application were my goals for the Reagan Leave. In addition to those goals, I prepared and presented a poster to at the American psychological Association meeting in August titled, *The Insanity of Mary Todd Lincoln: an exemplar Case Study for Teaching Elements and Integration of the Biopsychosocial Model*” with my colleague Dr. Susan Buckelew, and student Kelsey Laxton. As well, I co-authored a poster with Dr. Ann Gathers from Biological Sciences and student research assistants J. Steele, R. McCollum, S. Bradberry, J. Furstenberg titled, “The Effects of Moderate Cardiovascular Activity on Cognition: Testing the Transient Hypofrontality Hypothesis Using Trail Making Tests A & B.”
Additionally, I applied for and was awarded the “Eminent Researcher” award from the College of Education, Health & Behavioral Science. Further, I was fortunate to attend the fourth annual Humanistic Psychology Conference, Division 32 of the American Psychological Association, Chicago, IL. Additionally, I conducted data checking and preliminary analysis on my aggressive driving and personality disorder research.

Although not documented in published work, I greatly enjoyed pursuing scholarly interest while on leave. I read books pertaining to William James, Existential-Humanistic Psychology, Psychology of Women, and History of Psychology. The leave provided me an opportunity to read and contemplate intrinsically motivating scholarly topics that revitalized my teaching and research interests. Thank you contribution for this enriching award.