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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents an explanatory model of cultural behaviors, which resulted from a 4-year ethnographic study of the different academic attainments in English of indigenous Fijians and the Indo-Fijians in the Fiji Islands. Fiji is a natural laboratory for investigating differential cultural behaviors because of these two culturally distinct main ethnic groups. Their different cultural behaviors were found to serve different values within each culture. A three-construct grounded model of these different values emerged from observations and analyses of these behaviors. These constructs were then deconstructed to define and explain a fourth target construct of their "Differential Teaching Behaviours," which were contributing to the different academic attainments of the two cultures. The validity of the four-construct model was both empirically and quantitatively ascertained, and it is argued that the model can be used to predict culturally determined behaviors and educational outcomes in similar multicultural contexts. The model can be used by education policymakers when devising policies aimed at maximizing educational attainment for all sociocultural groups within multicultural societies served by a formal education system. (Contains 2 figures and 15 references.) (Author/BT)

# Constructing and De-Constructing Cultural Values: An Explanatory Model of Teaching Behaviours

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## **CONSTRUCTING AND DE-CONSTRUCTING CULTURAL VALUES: AN EXPLANATORY MODEL OF TEACHING BEHAVIOURS**

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### Abstract (<150 words)

This paper presents an explanatory model of cultural behaviours, which resulted from a four-year ethnographic study of the different academic attainments in English of indigenous Fijians and the Indo-Fijians in the Fiji Islands. Fiji is a natural laboratory for investigating differential cultural behaviours because of these two culturally distinct main ethnic groups. Their different cultural behaviours were found to serve different values within each culture. A three-construct grounded model of these different values emerged from observations and analyses of these behaviours. These constructs were then de-constructed to define and explain a fourth target construct of their Differential Teaching Behaviours, which were contributing to the different academic attainments of the two cultures.

The validity of the resulting four-construct model was both empirically and quantitatively ascertained and it is argued that the model can be used to predict culturally determined behaviours and educational outcomes in similar multicultural contexts.

(144 words)

### Summary (<500 words)

This paper presents an explanatory model of cultural behaviours, which emerged from a four-year ethnographic study, which examined the different academic attainments in English of indigenous Fijians and the Indo-Fijians in the Fiji Islands. Fiji is a natural laboratory for investigating differential cultural behaviours because of its two culturally distinct ethnic groups. An in-depth examination of their utterly different cultural behaviours showed that these behaviours served different cultural intentions within each culture reflecting their particular sociocultural values.

An anthropological Grounded Theory methodology was used to develop a three-construct grounded model of different values, which emerged from observations, and analyses of these different cultural behaviours. These constructs were then de-constructed to define and explain a target construct of their Differential Teaching Behaviours, which were contributing to the different academic attainments of the two cultures.

This four-construct explanatory model emerged from in-depth ethnographic research aimed at explaining observed differences in teaching/learning behaviours, which contributed to the different English examination results of the two ethnic groups. The research focused on those behaviours whose prevalence differentiated between the two cultures. It then identified differently valued emic cultural intentions served by these behaviours. Emic intentions that were similar formed six main etic themes, which, in pairs, formed three higher order etic cultural constructs of consistent behaviours, intentions, and themes. These three resulting cultural constructs were *Event Horizon (EH)*, *Social Unit of Resource (SURA)* and the *Degree of Autonomy (DoA)* each one being naturally composed of thematically-categorised community and teaching behaviours.

Each construct was then deconstructed by separating its community behaviours from its teaching behaviours. The differential teaching behaviours that were contributing to the different attainments defined the target construct of *Differential Teaching*. The remaining community behaviours defined the three explanatory constructs of EH, SURA and DoA.

The theoretical significance of this four-construct explanatory model is that it has been framed in terms of etic constructs and emic values so that the data could empirically test the model in the Fiji context whilst the model itself would be generalisable to other multicultural contexts. The indicative behaviours in each theme are particular to the Fiji context but the constructs are meta-concepts, which can be used to investigate similar multicultural educational contexts. The validity of the explanatory model has been ascertained quantitatively by census of Fiji's secondary schools.

The educational significance of the model is its use as a predictor of culturally determined behaviours, namely teaching behaviours and their expected educational outcomes. The model can be applied to other culturally or socially diverse contexts to explain differential attainments by identifying the different cultural behaviours and values inherent to constituent ethnic or social groups. The model can be used by education policy-makers when devising policies aimed at maximising educational attainments for all sociocultural groups.

(453 words)

## **Constructing and de-constructing cultural values: An explanatory model of teaching behaviours**

### **Introduction**

This paper presents an explanatory model of culturally preferred teaching behaviours that emerged from a four-year ethnographic study in the Fiji islands in the South Pacific. Demographically, Fiji is a natural laboratory for investigating differential cultural behaviours because of its extremely culturally dissimilar bi-ethnic population: the indigenous Fijians and the Indo-Fijians. An investigation of the cultural polarisation of Fiji's two ethnic groups and its associated effects on educational outcomes has given rise to the explanatory cultural model of teaching behaviours which is described here.

### **Constructing cultural values to highlight differential cultural preferences**

The study has used an anthropological Grounded Theory methodology (Strauss, 1987; Strauss & Corbin, 1994; Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to investigate the widely divergent cultural behaviours of native Fijians and Indians. This investigation has led to the emergence of a three-construct model of cultural values. The model emerged from ethnographic observations and analyses of differential Fijian and Indian community and teaching behaviours and the cultural intentions they served. The emergent model was designed to conceptualise how these two contrasting cultures operationalised a common English as a Second Language (ESL) curriculum and how their different operationalisations resulted in different educational attainments in ESL.

The three cultural constructs that described this process were identified as: *Event Horizon* (EH), *Social Unit of Resource Allocation* (SURA) and *Degree of Autonomy* (DoA). These three constructs were empirically described by consistent cultural behaviours that most distinguished between the two cultures and their corresponding emic cultural intentions. These cultural intentions comprised themes which structured each construct and they were defined by semiotic analysis (Abrams, 1993; Feldman, 1995; Lévi-Strauss, 1958; Saussure, 1959) which maximised the consistency of the behavioural indicators of these cultural intentions within each culture. The behavioural indicators were thus used as signs for the cultural intentions. The most distinguishing behaviours, and the intentions they served, comprised six themes, and some sub-themes, which defined in pairs the three differential cultural constructs identified as EH, SURA and DoA.

This structure of the three cultural constructs is illustrated in Figure 1. Each cultural construct was made up of two themes each comprising community and teaching behaviours. The EH construct was structured by the two cultural themes of *Detailed future planning* and *Delayed reward*. The SURA construct was structured by *Emphasis on personal relationships* and *Structure of the social units*. The DoA construct was structured by *Acquiescence to authority* and *Personal responsibility with accountability*. Each theme was described by a consistent set of differential cultural behaviours indicative of the theme.

The values of each cultural group can thus be represented by profiles of different emphases on these constructs. For example, Fijians have lower EH, e.g. seek immediate

gratification, have a larger SURA, e.g. are part of the clan or 'mataqali' and have a higher DoA, e.g. have more latitude in school attendance. By contrast, Indians have a high EH, e.g. plan for a distant future, have a smaller SURA, e.g. marry off daughters, and have a lower DoA, e.g. are more inclined to follow the rules.

A structural analysis of the cultural constructs was then used to develop the explanatory cultural model of preferred teaching behaviours. This deconstruction and reconstruction process is illustrated in Figure 2. First, the three cultural constructs were deconstructed by partitioned the behaviours in each theme into community behaviours and teaching behaviours. Secondly, teaching behaviours were reconstructed within the same intentions they served, to define the target construct of Differential English Teaching. At the same time, the remaining community behaviours were reconstructed, within the same intentions, they served, to form three explanatory community constructs corresponding to the original EH, SURA and DoA. Hence, the community cultural constructs must explain the teaching cultural construct of preferred teaching behaviours because they serve the same cultural intentions within the same cultural themes.

### **De-constructing cultural values to explain Differential Teaching behaviours**

The target construct of Differential Teaching was achieved by separating the different teaching behaviours from community behaviours that were in the six themes, as shown in Figure 2. For example, the amount of money teachers spent on education policies was an EH cultural behaviour pertaining to the theme of 'Delayed reward' and 'Detailed future planning', with the sub-theme of 'saving' (Boufoy-Bastick, 1997). These two themes could be grouped under the EH concept of 'Delayed reward' which was also reflected by 'Homework' behaviours which were Reward-delaying teaching behaviours. Teachers who expected that students would forego immediate gratification expected students to do homework rather than to play; that is, they expected students to be self-disciplined and to do the homework to ensure their educational success. The behaviours of 'foregoing immediate gratification' are 'Delayed reward' behaviours linked to 'saving' through the sub-theme of 'education equals wealth'.

So, the explanatory model was achieved by partitioning the differential teaching behaviours and community behaviours that were in each of the six themes and using the teaching behaviours, structured by the same cultural themes, to create the fourth construct of Differential English Teaching. So all the themes defining each of the three constructs appear in the differential construct of teaching behaviours.

The deconstruction and reconstruction of the cultural constructs shows how cultural values determine educational attainments. The fact that the behaviours and cultural intentions were chosen because they most differentiated between the groups, and that the preferred teaching behaviours were also contributing to their differential academic attainments, argues that different profiles of community cultural constructs can predict differential academic attainment.

**Using the explanatory model of teaching behaviours to predict educational outcomes**  
“The test of validity of the qualitatively ‘grounded’ theory is its predictive power”  
(Erickson, 1981, p. 19). It is this theoretical significance that guided the development of the model.

The model explained how differential teaching behaviours are predicted by the community cultural constructs. This is because the behaviours that define the teaching construct are categorised by the same themes and constructs that were defined by the cultural behaviours. Therefore, culture defines the differential teaching behaviours that lead to varied educational attainments across culture.

The validity of the explanatory model has been ascertained quantitatively by analyses of sample data from a census of Fiji's secondary schools. Canonical correlation predicted culturally preferred teaching behaviours from the community cultural constructs, defined by 36 behaviours, with a significance of  $p < 0.0001$  ( $n = 45$ ,  $r = 0.96$ ). The model has allowed an explanation of the differential educational attainments of Fijians and Indians. It showed that the sociocultural values of the Indo-Fijians are more aligned with those promoting high attainment in Fiji's formal education system (Kishor, 1981; Ravuvu, 1987; Stewart, 1984; van der Staay, 1997).

This explanatory model of differential academic attainments is generalisable to other cultural contexts under different formal education systems; that is, the same cultural intentions leading to these differential attainments would explain differential educational outcomes in other formal systems. That is, values that result in optimal attainment in different formal education systems may be described in terms of varying emphases on these three community cultural constructs. A cultural group whose profile of community cultural values approximates the optimal for the formal education system will perform optimally in that system.

It is important, however, to note that specific behaviours are only a contextual expression of generalisable cultural values that predict attainment in formal education systems. Thus, a model based on behaviours may be empirically verified in its context but may not be generalisable to contexts where those behaviours may not be available. It is the cultural intentions, that is the cultural values, underlying attainments in formal education systems as described by the model, that are generalisable. The particular observed behaviours that validated the model were specific to the Fijian context; being those that were available to the groups in Fiji. In different cultural contexts, however, other behaviours may be available to serve these same values.

In sum, the theoretical significance of the four-construct explanatory model is that it has been framed in terms of etic constructs (through rigorous in-depth interpretive analysis) and emic values (by semantic sign consistency) so that the data could empirically test the model in the Fiji context whilst the model itself would be generalisable to other multi-cultural contexts (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996, p. 117; Phillips, 1987, p. 12). The indicative behaviours in each cultural theme of intentions are particular to the Fiji context but the

constructs are meta-concepts which can be used to investigate similar multicultural educational contexts.

## Conclusion

This paper has presented an explanatory model of culturally preferred behaviours for explaining varying attainments in education. The model explains how sociocultural values significantly define culturally preferred teaching practices which result in differential attainments. The model can be used to predict educational attainments in similar multicultural contexts.

The educational significance of the model is its use as a predictor of culturally determined behaviours, namely teaching behaviours and their expected educational outcomes. The model can be generalised to other culturally or socially diverse contexts to explain differential attainments by identifying the similarity of cultural values inherent to each ethnic or social group and comparing them to the values that maximise academic attainment in their formal education system. The model can be used by education policy-makers when devising policies aimed at maximising educational attainments for all sociocultural groups within multi-cultural societies served by a formal education system.

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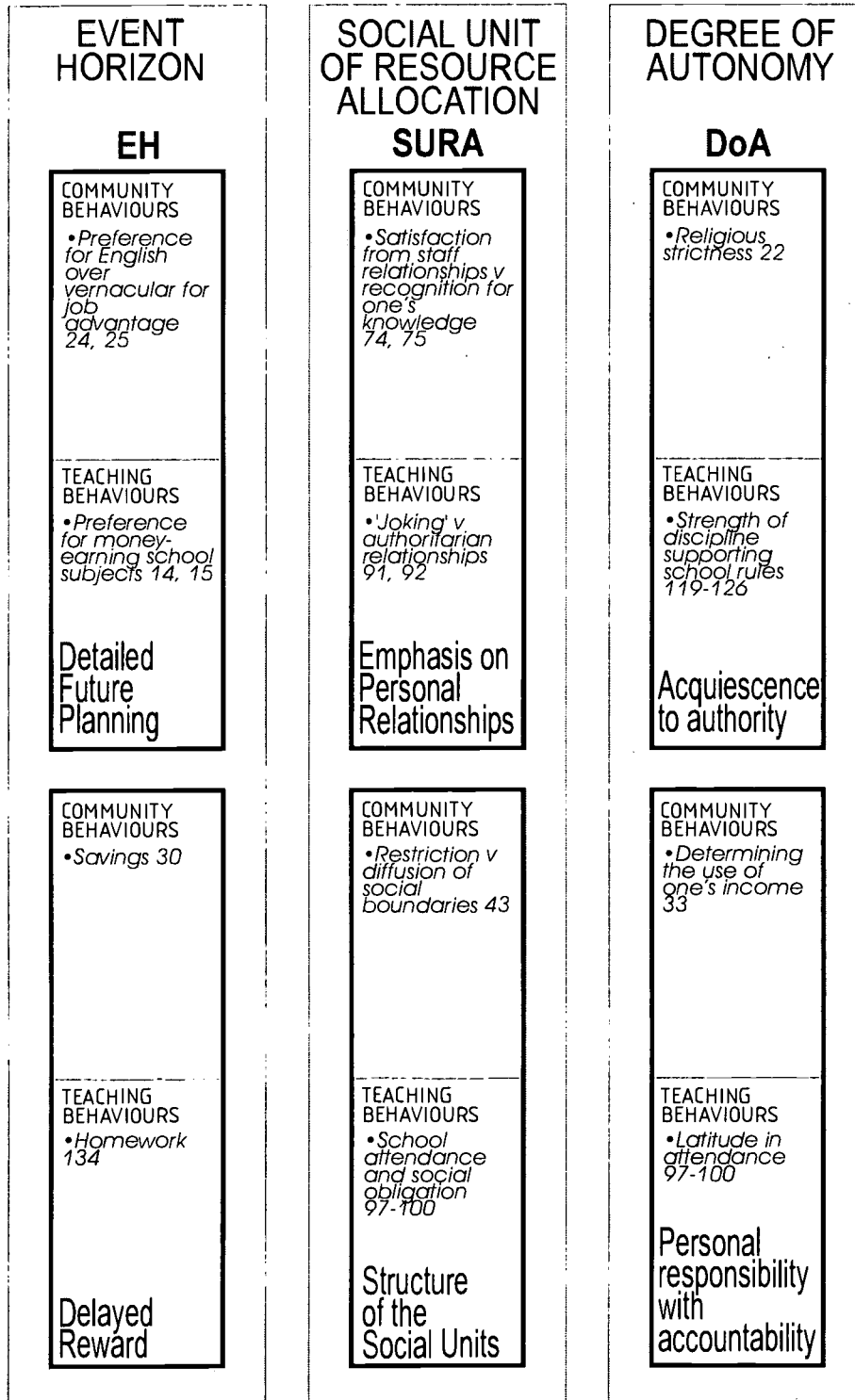
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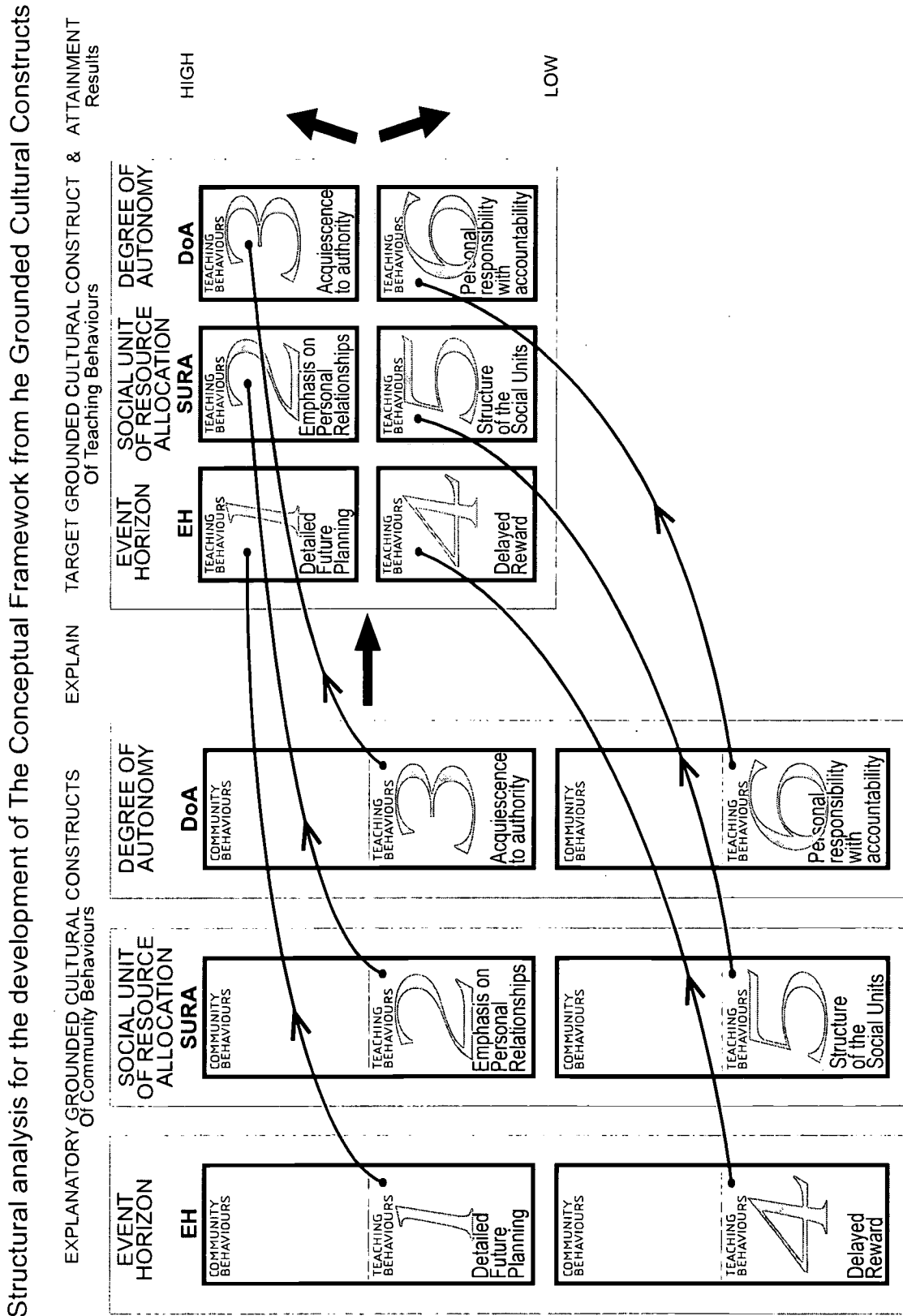
Figure 1: Three cultural constructs describing differential cultural intentions served by differential cultural behaviours

Three Grounded Cultural Constructs that distinguish between Fijian and Indian cultures



Three distinguishing Cultural Constructs composed of six cultural themes each described by examples of differential community and teaching behaviours with their question numbers

Figure 2: Deconstruction of the three constructs and their reconstruction as the four construct explanatory model of culturally preferred teaching behaviours



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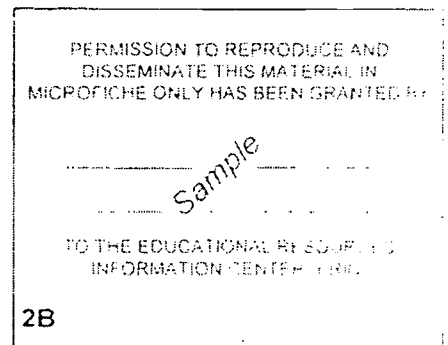
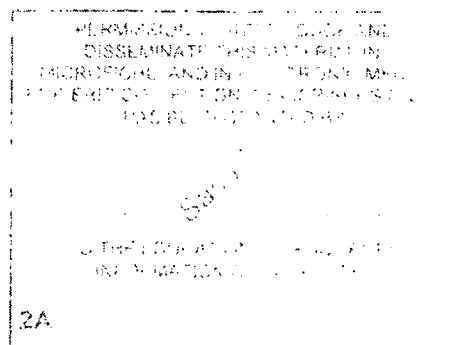
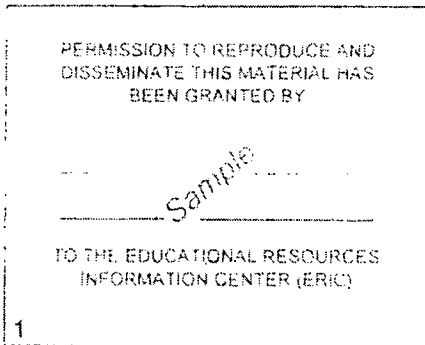
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