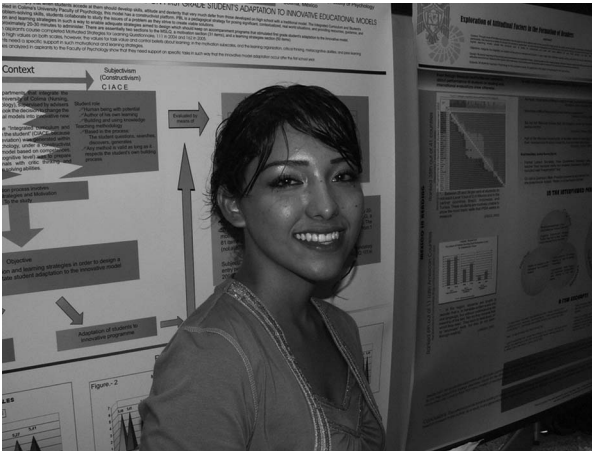


THE STUDENT'S VOICE

An Interview of Liliana Lizeth Jiménez Galván



This interview was conducted at the Network: TUFH conference in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, November 2005. It was edited and abridged and consequently reviewed via e-mail.

Pertti Kekki
Associate Editor
Education for Health

Liliana in front of her Poster at the Network: TUFH Conference in Vietnam, November 2005.

Liliana is a 21-year old social psychology student at the University of Colima, Mexico. Those who attended The Network: TUFH Conference in Vietnam last November may have seen her there. She was presenting a poster describing a study on the influence of motivation and learning strategies on freshmen's adaptation to innovative education. She was one of the authors of the poster abstract, along with Dr Zian Julio Aguirre Taboada, Liliana's teacher. The study was conducted at Colima University's Faculty of Psychology and it was connected with the Faculty's innovative curriculum applying student-centred learning.

When did you decide to choose psychology as your study area?

That was in high school where we had a teacher who was a psychologist. I became very interested and I even went to a Psychology Conference held in Colima City to study and observe what it was all about.

How long have you studied now?

I'm in my fifth year, this is my ninth semester. Psychology studies take 5 years. I will graduate next spring (2006).

Are there any psychologists in your family?

No.

Do you have sisters or brothers?

I have a sister, who is 16, and a brother, who is 5 years old.

What about hobbies? What kind of leisure time activities do you have?

I like to stay with my family, I read novels and I like to listen to music – all kinds of music. I do not play an instrument myself.

You mentioned something about a new model of learning at your University. Your poster was connected with that. Tell me a little bit about your university. How big is it?

Together with the college and senior high school, the university has about 10,360 students, 1153 in the health area. The Faculty of Psychology has 426 students. There are 25 faculties and 29 different careers (major fields) at the university located in different parts of the state of Colima. In our location, there are faculties such as medicine and nursing and social sciences. The faculties of architecture and engineering, for example, are located in another part of the city.

What is your area of study in psychology?

I study social psychology.

How many students are there in your class?

There are 4 students in social psychology and 40 students in educational psychology and clinical psychology each. One of our social psychology students is from Argentina as an exchange student, so there are really only three students of the Colima University in this area of study.

Why so few in social psychology?

Because people may think that in those other fields of psychology you can find jobs which are better paid and perhaps also because people think that social psychology may be more research oriented.

You mentioned the innovative, integrated, and student-centered curriculum. What does it mean?

In Colima, you do not only learn about theory and practice, you also learn how to apply and develop these to the best of your abilities. You learn about the instruments you can apply, like a Likert scale, and how to use them. The aim is to develop a person, a human being, not only a professional. The personal development is considered very important. You can be a professional, but when you have not developed your own personality, it will be difficult to work with people. You need to be able to express yourself and face all kinds of problems,

talk with people and try to understand them. Knowing theory or the principles of practice is not enough. You have to understand. You have to understand life.

There is also a multiprofessional approach in your studies?

Yes, the multiprofessional aspect is very important. You do not know all things. You need to learn from other people and study with other people. You need to understand that others may know more about certain things, they may have experience. You need to know what they have learnt. At the Faculty of Psychology, we have problem-based learning (PBL). Our students need to look for help from other faculties to be able to solve the problems. It is an important strategy for learning to seek help from others. It is not only important to read in books, it is also important to discuss with others. You will learn more. We have a library in common with medical and nursing students. We can discuss and exchange ideas. This is part of the innovative approach. You can learn about other areas and you will understand them better. From my own experience, we can work with the professor in research projects, discuss our problems, learn communication and leadership skills and develop the abilities we will need in the future. I feel that you can learn anything you want to learn, if you apply these skills.

What about student activities?

I am a member of our Faculty's alumni association. We organize various kinds of activities. I am also the representative of Latin America in the Student Network Organization. In this capacity I'm participating in The Network: TUFH conference.

Can the students influence the curriculum development or teaching programs in your faculty?

Yes, always. Students have a possibility to influence changes in the program. Every year we evaluate the program and students can participate in it. There is also student representation in the faculty committees. I am the senior student representative of the ninth semester.

So, what are your plans for the future?

First, I am going to finish my bachelor's thesis. After 5 years of studies in psychology, we get the bachelor degree and the license to practice. But I want to continue and do a doctoral degree. It will take about 5 more years as I first have to do a master's degree. It will give me better opportunities to apply my knowledge and contribute to the development of my city and country. I have many ideas but it is still too early to plan as much more information will be needed.

I totally agree. Thank you very much for this interview and I wish you all the best for the future.