

***Reflection – EDRS 811***  
***Quantitative Methods in Educational Research***  
***Dr. Michelle Buehl***  
***Fall 2008***

This course was probably the hardest course I have taken so far in my doctoral program for a couple of reasons. First, the content itself was difficult for me and if anything was going to confirm for me that I think in a more qualitative manner then, this course was it and second, I took this course with two other classes while working full-time in the fall.

The course goals include developing students' understanding of statistical ideas and procedures, teaching analysis of data using SPSS, and giving practice in the writing of reports of methodology and results. To help reach these goals, the course employs lecture, quizzes, homework and exams, as well as a substantial research paper due at the end of the semester. There were times when I spent entire afternoons on homework assignments, hours upon hours reviewing notes and studying for quizzes and often still felt like this material was not in firm grasp. Visits to the professor would provide temporary help until the next concept stymied me.

Because my learning style required that I work on something interesting or meaningful to me, I knew the way for the final research paper to be manageable was for my dataset to hold some interest. For that reason, I chose to work with the PISA 2006 data, specifically the student questionnaire that is given before the PISA test. The one big problem with that was that the dataset was huge and even Dr. Buehl had a hard time downloading it. After we discovered that the size of the dataset was an issue, Dr. Buehl and I discussed a solution to limit my project to one country, choosing one at the top of the order because it would be easier to get to. I selected Azerbaijan because as a majority-Muslim country, I could base my survey data and my paper on results from boys, since the PISA survey asks questions concerning interest in science. From other sources during background research, I had learned that Azerbaijan's female rate of school attendance was lower as was their female employment rate. With that settled, I proceeded to begin my final project and this is the artifact that was chosen to represent my work in the course.