

## **Dr. Valerie Lynn Schrader**

**Professor Tenure-Line**

**Communication Arts and Sciences**

**Title of your research project.**

“Journey On:” A Rhetorical Analysis of Relational Dialectics in the Musical Ragtime

**Description of research. Please provide a few sentences that explain the question and the methods employed in this research project.**

The dynamic nature of relationships makes them an area of interest for scholars to study. One particular aspect, the contradictions between opposing ideas and their effects, has led to the development of the theoretical construct termed relational dialectics. Although relational dialectics is primarily utilized to study real-life scenarios, it is also applicable to fictional events, such as those in the popular musical Ragtime. Drawing primarily from the research of William K Rawlins (1981, 1992, 2008), we examine the tensions in four relationships within the musical, arguing that the success of the characters' relationships is dependent on the mutual negotiation of inherent oppositions. Through the respective successes and failures of the fictional relationships in the musical, applicable lessons for real life relationships are communicated to audience members.

**Did this project include Penn State students as researchers?**

Yes

**If yes to the above question, please state where it was published.**

This project is co-authored with a former Penn State student, Joshua Bachert. We published it in the the Pennsylvania Communication Annual.

**What problem do you address with your research?**

We explore how theatre-goers can learn lesson about negotiating tensions in relationships by seeing different relationships in Ragtime.