Running head: BOOSTING DEGREE COMPLETION AND TRANSFER RATES

Pilot Study

Boosting Degree Completion and Transfer Rates:

An Examination of Counseling/Advising using the Relationship-Based Model

Trevina Jefferson

California State University Northridge

May 2010

Abstract

The purpose of this pilot study was to explore another way to boost degree completion and transfer rates through helping students develop informed decision-making power; specifically, counseling methods in Los Angeles Community Colleges using the Relationship-Based model was examined. As part of this study, students would develop their research techniques to explore educational goals and options. These research skills would allow students to make informed decisions about their education and possible careers. This qualitative study primarily used a quasi-experimental, or convenient rather than random, sample of participants. A qualitative study is based more on observations and experiences rather than on statistics like in a quantitative study. As part of this qualitative research design, I used interviews to gather the perspectives of the focus group (students) and an influential group (counselors). The interviews consisted mainly of open-ended questions. The focus group consisted of 3 students that were going through the college counseling process. Questions for the students focused on their experience with counseling and skills they acquired to make decisions about their education. The influential group consisted of 3 counselors, including those in the transfer center. Results indicate that the Relationship-Based Model allowed students to be more active participants in achieving educational goals and better prepared for next steps. Additionally, results showed that the Relationship-Based model would be possible despite funding resources, ethnic heritage, or current academic achievement. Educators need to train faculty and staff in the Relationship-Based model to help students become active confident participants in their education and thereby see an increase in transfer rates and degree completion. (Contains 2 surveys)

Key words: transfer rates, degree completion, Relationship-Based model, community colleges,

California Community colleges, student and faculty relationship, counselors, student advisement,

student success, disadvantage students, counseling, interviews, cognitive development,

emotional development

Boosting Degree Completion and Transfer Rates:

An Examination of Counseling/Advising using the Relationship-Based Model

Although California 4-year colleges and community colleges have similar retention rates, currently 15-25% of students that attend Los Angeles Community College achieve degree completion and 9-12% transfer to 4 year degree granting institution (C.A. Gov Postsecondary Education Commission, 2008) (California Community Colleges Strategic Plan Steering Committee, 2006) (Los Angeles Community College District, 2008). In today's market, it is important for all students to strive for the highest degree possible for better self-sufficiency over their lifetime. For example, the U.S. Census Bureau study from 2002 showed that all workers on average made more money as they attained more education; each educational benchmark (high school diploma, associates degree, bachelor's degree etc.) showed an increase of $10,000-25,000 in earnings (Day & Newburger, 2002).

Our society tends to push students to be more independent and to perform faster according to age and grade. However, age and grade have little to do with the developmental level of each person (Piaget, Brown, & Thampy, 1985). While everyone benefits from quality relationships, those students that struggle with multiple challenges such as being a single parent, having low-income, working at low paying jobs, and being the first in the family to be a college student need quality relationships even more because of their current developmental stage. In our society, there are different relationship-type models in the workplace, childcare, and K-12 schools [(Covey, 1989) (Levine, 2007) (Piaget, Brown, & Thampy, 1985)]; however, overarching relationship models for community colleges was not found. A way to boost degree completion and transfer rates in community colleges is using the Relationship-Based model to approach solving problems.

In this study, the Relationship-Based model led to an investigation about why some disadvantaged students do not know how to make well-informed decisions about their education and career choices. In addition, an exploration about how helping students develop informed decision-making power through counseling can boost transfer rates and degree completion was undertaken.

Purpose

The purpose of this pilot study was to explore another way to boost degree completion and transfer rates through helping students develop informed decision-making power; specifically, counseling methods in Los Angeles Community Colleges using the Relationship-Based model was examined. As part of this study, students would develop their research techniques to explore educational goals and options. These research skills would allow students to make informed decisions about their education and possible careers.

My empirical literature review suggested that relationship models are more prevalent in K-12 education, child development theory, and workplace collaboration trainings. Relationships at the college level are more limited to highlighting implications from interviews with students and faculty. The Relationship-Based model could be used to learn why some disadvantaged students do not know how to make more knowledgeable decisions about their education and career choices; additionally, it was essential to demonstrate collaborative problem solving with students would allow them to make more informed decisions about the best modes through education for themselves. At this stage of investigation, it is particularly important to highlight that students make decisions about what is best for them based on available data, not that counselors or other educators make the decisions for them based on their own preconceived notions. Interviews with students and counselors guided these research findings.

Rationale

There are many complicated problems at the community college level that seem to be driven by the vast needs of this special population. The gap in assisting student success across the board, and not just a few classrooms or departments, is having an over-arching model to involve students in their own success. There are some models in the workplace, childcare centers, and K-12; now, it is time implement a relationship model for college students and their educators. This proposed study addresses this problem by introducing a simple Relationship-Based model that can be used to help students succeed in any area at community colleges. By addressing this problem, pressure is taken off the educators to speculate how to solve students' problems because students become active participants in solving their own educational issues when effective relationships are built between students and educators.

Limitations

The pilot study was conducted at one Los Angeles Community college, which has a high Latino population. Each Los Angeles Community college will have a different cultural context and demographic population. However, all community colleges within the Los Angeles Community College District, as well as other community colleges in the country, can benefit from this study. Although there were few participants in this study, the participants were students and/or counselors with whom a relationship was already built with the investigator. Although the participants in the groups were familiar to me, this type of participant pool is well related well to the Relationship-Based model because the necessary relationships had been made prior to beginning collaborative problem solving.

Definitions

There are four terms that will be used in this paper: "Relationship-Based model", "developmentally appropriate", "disadvantaged", and "Latino(s)".

The "Relationship-Based model" is simple. It asks the mentor/teacher (faculty, counselor, administrator etc.) to recognize that there is a problem or gap preventing the student from succeeding, communicate these observations with the student, and then jointly come up with possible solutions. Please note that students may not have enough exposure to possible solutions to clarify what there needs are; therefore, they may need more guidance with forming possible solutions and why the solutions may be effective. In order to create an environment where collaborative problem solving can occur between students and educators, there are two key factors must be present: 1) an educator must develop trust with the student and 2) a willingness to invest time in creating solutions with students—not for students. When solving issues collaboratively with students, students become more active learners and invested in advocating for their own academic success. Different student issues were utilized to prompt exploration and problem solving using the Relationship-Based model through this study.

"Developmentally appropriate" is a term used more in child development that relates to the curriculum approaches to children at various cognitive, language, social/emotional, and physical motor stages (Bumgarner, 1999). Highly regarded theorists such as Erik Erikson and Jean Piaget define stages that all humans go through as part of human development (Bumgarner, 1999). However, disadvantaged students may be stuck between stages or at a lower stage than would be normally appropriate for their peers at the same age. To illustrate Piaget's developmental stages considering disadvantaged students, some educators have seen community college students grapple with Algebra. These same students seem to understand concepts better as more examples

are used that they can easily identify with from a cultural and habitual context. Piaget would call this stage Concrete Operations, which means understanding concepts through experience (Piaget, Brown, & Thampy, 1985). The stage that we may expect to see college students at is the Formal Operations stage; in this stage, one is no longer constrained to thinking about concepts in terms of what they have experienced directly (Piaget, Brown, & Thampy, 1985).

The term "disadvantaged" to describe a less than desireable environment or the lack of educuational preparedness of students; Chaney and Muraskin use a similar definition when describing "disavantaged students" (Chaney & Muraskin, 1998). In most cases in this study, you will see it used to refer to people that are not prepared socially/ emotionally nor cognitively for college level academics and expectations due to a lack of resources and/or appropriate mentoring.

Lastly, "Latino(s)" in this paper is used to represent both male and female gender or only males of people born in Spanish speaking countries that are here now in the United States. Although some Hispanic participants have told me that they consider themselves 'Chicano' because they are considered Mexican-American, Latino is used to mean all Hispanic people in the United States who were born in Spanish speaking countries or the United States. Hispanic is used in this paragraph to be all encompassing to all those born in Spanish-speaking countries; this includes people that are United States immigrants or born in the United States through an ancestral line that is from a Spanish Speaking country.

Background

Literature Summary of Selected Articles

Relationships, as a part of emotional/social and cognitive development, are one major focus in child development [(Bandura, 1964) (Erikson, 1959) (Gilligan, 1982) (Kohlberg, 1969)

(Piaget, Brown, & Thampy, 1985)]; educators must understand that child development is a part of human development. Just as relationships between caregivers and parents can predict outcomes of academic and cognitive functioning in primary grades (Downer, 2006), so do the relationships between educators and students in community colleges. Since families are students' first teachers, it is of little surprise that 60% of 30 interviewed Latinos reported that their families were a huge influence on their degree completion or transfer to a 4 year college; furthermore, 48% of these students reported that faculty also had a huge impact on their ability to attain degree and transfer goals (Cejda, 2002). The results from a Regression Cluster analysis of 104 Latinos gave similar results despite the amount of challenging factors that faced each student (Perez, 2009). This study supports that building strong relationships with students can increase degree completion and transfer rates despite challenging factors. Additionally, a 5-year ethnographic study among African American females showed similar results concerning the effects of family and faculty relationships on students concerning degree completion and transfer success (Shaw, 2000). Though these studies do not state how success was possible despite various obstacles, success was possible because students and educators collaborated and problem solved together. An exploration of collaboration and problem solving between students and educators is an important part of this research.

Given the researched benefit to faculty-student relationships, researchers have been offering ways that faculty can make the necessary relational bonds with students to promote student success for over 20 years. Green (2003) suggested that the curriculum should reflect students' lives and experiences to create better understanding and enthusiasm during learning. Although Green was referring to African American students, culturally diverse approaches support learning for all students. It is noteworthy that Green suggests that some students are in

the Concrete Operation stage or between that stage and the Formal Operations stage that Piaget discusses by suggesting students will learn better using their lives and familiar experiences. This shows a connection between child development theory and human development theory for adults in education. Similarly, McPhail (2001) insists that different cultures have different cognitive styles and that student success is directly related to accounting for these differences in the curriculum.

While all of these studies showed that students believed faculty largely influenced their success, only one study "Factors that Make Faculty and Student Relationships Effective" seemed to find that students wanted to interact more with peers and less with faculty (Anderson, 2002). Anderson's (2002) sample of 400 students came from a 4-year institution where 49% of the students were graduate students; in addition, economic and ethnic backgrounds were not disclosed. Since the population that desired less faculty support were graduate students, we can conclude that faculty-student relationships may be more necessary for those students at the community college level and/or in need of more support do to life challenges.

Furthermore, researchers such as Calcagno (2008) and Hegedorn (2006) address how faculty ethnic identity and/or part-time status negatively affected student success. As proven by Cejda (2002), the specific ethnic identity of faculty shows no true positive relationship over having a quality faculty-student relationship regardless of ethnic background. Actual ethnic identity barriers seem to be more language barrier related; and thus, do not need to be discussed further in this study. Only Laden's (1989) study addresses Hagedorn's concerns with part-time faculty and gives college administrators some actual tools to effectively implement faculty/staff relationships with students on any campus.

The studies that were reviewed all give portions of the focus of this paper. Articles and books focusing on why educator-student relationships and collaborative problem solving within academics was not found; however, it is important to student success given what is known about human development. In addition, research was not found that indicated the importance of relationships with other campus educators besides faculty. One of my colleagues in child development said something very profound; we were discussing academic difficulties in K-12; she said, "Teachers know how to teach subjects like science, math, etc, but they don't know how to teach children" (personal communication, 2009). Since a fundamental argument in this paper is that developmental stages determine students' needs and not age, then that argument holds true for disadvantaged students in community colleges as well. Human development theory, then, needs to be included in all pedagogy on campus whether in the classroom or student services office. The Relationship-Based model gives educators that starting point because it applies to all issues concerning students.

Research Questions

1. How will the Relationship-Based model support student self-exploration and collaborative problem solving?

2. What are key factors affecting counselors', faculty members', and administrators' use of a Relationship-Based model with students and among themselves?

3. Will students think the Relationship-Based model approach will help them succeed in other areas of academia?

Research Method

Research Design

This qualitative study primarily used a quasi-experimental, or convenient rather than random, sample of participants. A qualitative study is based more on observations and experiences rather than on statistics like in a quantitative study. As part of this qualitative research design, interviews were used to gather the perspectives of the focus group (students) and an influential group (counselors). The interviews consisted mainly of open-ended questions. Some questions were eliminated from the survey because they did not seem to support answering the research questions.

Research Setting

The study took place at one of the nine Los Angeles Community Colleges. In the final report, identifying factors like the colleges name and location were omitted to protect the college's identity. If the college and the District Chancellor agreed to have the college identified, then that information would have been included in the final report.

The college is located in an area, which has about 270,000 residents that report their income. Of that amount, roughly 42,000 residents are below the poverty line. Approximately, 10, 200 residents and/or local workers were enrolled at the College in Fall 2009, and about 7, 200 of them are full-time students. Turning our focus to the student population of the college, the ethnic representation is as follows: Asian – 7.2%, Afro American – 5.2%, Latino – 73.9%, White – 12%, Other 1.7%. Before the lay-offs due to the economic rescission during 2008, there were about 65 full-time and 247 part-time faculty members (Los Angeles Community College District).

Data Sources and Research Samples

As mentioned above, the interviews were used to gain insight into the study from both a focus group and an influential group. The focus group consisted of 3 students that were going through the college counseling process. Questions for the students focused on their experience with counseling and skills they acquired to make decisions about their education; see appendix A for the interview survey for students. The influential group consisted of 3 counselors, including those in the transfer center; see appendix B for the interview survey for counselors. Along with the interview for students, pertinent information from past conversations with these students concerning counseling and their knowledge about college and major (educational focus) choices was also included.

Strategy for Data Collection

Data Collection Procedures

As a former faculty member in a Campus Child Development Center Lab, Child Development adjunct faculty, and an intern in Academic Affairs in the Los Angeles Community College District, all data will be put into the cultural context of the students, faculty, and the overall college. In this study, the word 'faculty' is interchangeable with 'counselor' as the Los Angeles Community College District identifies counselors as faculty in their job description (10/12/2009, www.laccd.com). Using the Relationship-Based model, which is the foundation of this proposed project, it is not possible to utilize this model without showing perspectives of both students—who have been counseled—and counselors. The groups were studied within its own context to show more objectivity.

Informal Data Collection began April 2009 through conversation with college students. More information was gathered through informal conversation to build context into this research

study about students and counselors, then a formal interview was administered with each of

participant between January 1-February 15, 2010. Due to holidays and winter breaks, interviews

with college counselors were held February 1 through March 31, 2010.

Data Collection Instruments

The interview protocol in Appendix A was used for students, and the protocol in

Appendix B was used for Counselors. In order to assure better accuracy, the Dragon Speaking

Easy software and a recorder were going to be used to record the interview. Ideally, the recorder

would have had the added benefit of saving time because it would record the interview in a

format readable by word processing documents. After purchasing the Dragon Speaking Easy

software and recorder, it was learned that the software would only recognize one voice. Having

to transfer the voices to paper after the interview would increase the time to analyze the research

data. This prompted the investigator to take notes on a laptop as the interviewee answered the

questions. In order to manage the time for data analysis in future publishable research, it may be

beneficial need to find someone to take notes of the conversation while the investigator noted

their word choice and behavior; or, the investigator could use the recorder previously discussed.

All participants were given a disclosure statement and instructions at the top of their

interview sheet. The disclosure stated that all names, including the college, would be kept

anonymous. The only identifying information was terms such as a, 'student', 'faculty member',

'administrator' (defined as any an employee in a leadership position), and 'Los Angeles

community college'. After review of the final research project, the college could have elected to

have its name identified through a legal document signed by the college president and district

chancellor; in addition to the signed consent form, the college president and district chancellor

were required to sign a waiver of liability and a release from rights to the document. Faculty and

students could only be identified if the name of the college could be identified legally; in

addition, faculty and students were required to sign a legal document stating their consent to

using their name in the research document that may be published, a waiver of liability and a

release from rights to the document. Since neither the college president nor the district's

chancellor signed a consent form, no names were identified in this study other than references

that the college was located in the Los Angeles Community College District. To minimize

participants completing more than one survey, there is a statement asking the students "not to

complete this survey" if they completed the same one this semester.

Data Analysis Techniques

The open-ended questions for the interviews were analyzed using Thematic Analysis.

Thematic Analysis was used in this study as a way to group common opinions from students and

counselors. In this way, perspectives were compare and contrast from both the focus group and

the influential group.

Validity

Using the survey guidelines from an Educational Research class (Dr. Durdella's lecture,

November 14, 2009), simple questions were used so that the majority of the participants would

be able to answer. Once the interview instruments were constructed, a peer reviewer tested the

instruments. The goals of the instruments were discussed before the mock interview was

attempted. The mock interview prompted me to delete a few questions.

Reliability

The instrument was developed for the participants by what information was needed to complete this study and utilizing information participants gave me informally; therefore, the interview instruments are specific to the participant pool and their environmental/ cultural context. Reliability will be seen in the coding of the instruments as stated in the Data Analysis section. Interviews with individual counselors and students will be used to reflect perspectives and not quantitative results. In this qualitative study, few faculty and students will be interviewed and reliability cannot be measured.

Results with Discussion

Most of the counselors that felt counseling was not supporting the students effectively pointed to funding issues, undecided students, and the lack of collaboration between student affairs and academic affairs. One of the issues that stood out to me was the notion that students were undecided about the majors and careers. One counselor asked a rhetorical question, "What do you do when a student is undecided?" She went on to say, "We can't help, if they don't know" (personal interview, 2010). Another counselor simply said, "Undecided students are one of the biggest challenges to counseling" (personal interview, 2010). While having undecided students is a challenge, it was difficult to agree that students should know what they want to do when they get to counseling. Counseling should not be equated to advising. When students are undecided, it is a perfect opportunity to begin building a relationship with them to find out details about what motivates them and what goals do they have set for themselves. A big part of most counseling techniques requires reading between the lines and pulling hidden information out of the student (client) (Peterson & NIsenholz, 1999). In fact, the biggest challenges that the students expressed is confusion about their major, career goals, and the language in the college catalog. As will be

detailed more in this section, students that do declare their major and career goals still need

guidance and counseling. There should be more than a plan A and plan B pathways to major and

career goals as displayed in the counselors' worksheets, as described in the districts' college

catalogs, and on college credit articulation sites such as Assist.org. There needs to be a plan that

student customizes if he/she choose based on available data.

Some counselors complained that their ability to form relationships with students was

largely affected by a lack of funding. Therefore, it is necessary to look at ways to form

relationships despite funding availability in this paper. In addition to addressing funding issues,

the data reveals the ability to empathize with students' and ideas about pedagogy for

underprepared and underserved students will also be beneficial in solving the issues faculty and

counselors proposed during this project. The biggest challenges to student success that

counselors reported are linked to what students stated as their biggest challenges; and thus, the

students' difficulties with success will be explored through each theme the counselors reported.

Biggest challenges to student success

Funding/budget issues

Even before the California educational system suffered the 40% budget cut in categorical

funding during 2009-2010 (EdSource, 2010), counselors/faculty expressed a lack in full-time

members in their positions (personal communication, 2010). However the 40% budget cut

caused a severe reduction in counseling services; one counselor stated, " In EOP [Educational

Opportunity Program], we are supposed to give each student 1 hour of counseling [among other

responsibilities]; but we only have 1.5 counselors to [service] 1100 students. We can't meet the

need" (personal interview, 2010). The EOP program tends to 'improve access and retention of

historically low-income and educationally disadvantaged students' (California State University-

Mentor, 2010) and some counselors reported that one of the requirements for funding this program is that EOP students receive more intense counseling than the general population. Within matriculation and articulation, which usually deals with counseling students about pathways to certification, degrees, English/math proficiency, 4-year transfer capability etc., one counselor said, "We have to share 2 counselors with over 10,000 students enrolled" (personal interview, 2010). As a result, administrators in student services now have to manage both being a counselor and their duties as an administrator.

Further, many decisions about funding and the budget were made among shared governance committees. One observation was that the most involved members in shared governance committees that helped make decisions for the colleges were repeatedly a small group of the same full-time counselors/faculty. As someone who was a faculty member at one of the Los Angeles Community Colleges, the interviews revealed that some newer full-time college members kept their eyes open for other job opportunities in the event they were laid off because of the economic downfall. One faculty member shared, "I don't know if I will be back next year. It is so important to always network while I am in the community and at functions" (personal communication, 2010). Additionally, some part-time college members reported needing to work at multiple colleges to make rent sense most departments could only afford to give a faculty member 1-3 classes. One faculty member disclosed, "It's hard for everyone. I was lucky to get two classes. I…struggle, but I have to be happy for what I have" (personal communication, 2010). "I have one class here, and I live around the corner. I have to drive far to my other job in the district. I wish they could let me be full-time" (personal communication, 2010). Many classes are three units each; therefore, if the average wage is $60/hour, a part-time faculty member with a Masters degree could expect a monthly paycheck of about $2,200 if they had 3-3 unit classes

for the semester. When thinking about how funding affects counseling and faculty advisement, two questions emerged: (1) how involved will college members be with students and college business when they do not feel job security and (2) what influences effective counseling behaviors when funding is limited?

The first question will be better explored in another research project; however, we can begin to look at the second question through empathy. The ability to empathize with students is a factor that influences effective counseling behaviors when funding is limited. To be fair, we must keep in mind that having fewer resources can affect one's ability to sympathize with students even if one has adequate empathy to connect with the student.

Empathy

Empathy, here, means to have the ability to connect to another through an understanding of their situation, including struggles. Aside from being able to truly empathize with students through similar experience, one needs to be committed to helping students make their own decisions among many possibilities. As many counselors/faculty members at the college appear to struggle with giving advice and not giving advice, students have reported not getting direction beyond being directed to a college catalogue or being told exactly what they should do about their education and careers goals. One student spoke about her counseling experience as an international student in the Child Development major, "I ask questions but they never ask me questions to find out about me. I just get some catalogue, but it doesn't help" (personal interview, 2010). A citizen in the same major said, "My professor told me that I should go to Pacific Oaks (a university known for its excellent education in child development), and the counselor says that I am wasting my time in the Child Development major; she says I should be in the Liberal Arts major. I want to be a teacher, but I am not sure who I should believe"

(personal interview, 2010). The third student also reported that her professor advised her to go the Pacific Oaks university while the counselor advised her that she should switch to the Liberal Arts major (personal interview, 2010). Both approaches of insisting students find out everything on their own and giving them very specific advice shows a lack of empathy.

Since 40% of the students that attended the Los Angeles Community Colleges were below the poverty line (Los Angeles Community College District), most of the non-traditional students interviewed either lived with their parents or managed to get on government living subsidies. These students' ages ranged from the mid to late 20s. Not being able to live independently at their ages, reflects a higher probability that these students will struggle with independently achieving educational and career goals. They will most likely need someone to help them understand the pros and cons of the multiple opportunities available to meet their educational and career goals. For example, one student reported receiving a catalog but it was not in her language (personal interview, 2010). Although this student was learning English and was from Korea, her difficulty with the catalog was similar for other students. As stated before, the student population at the college is about 74% Latino. However, the majority of the college catalog is printed in English with only several paragraphs printed in Spanish; these Spanish paragraphs seemed to mostly deal with students' academic honesty and conduct responsibilities. The college catalog is a language barrier to student success because the more complicated language in English could be very difficult for bilingual students to understand. The other interviewed students that were Latino and bilingual seemed to know little about what was in the catalog. The language barrier in the college catalog reflects lack of understanding about the students' needs for success. Using the Relationship-Based model would have revealed these catalog issues to educational leaders. Since the students had difficulty understanding the catalog

they reported depending on the recommendations of other faculty and counselors more than referring to the catalog. It is not surprising that the students did not read the catalog entirely since they declared that they struggled in English and Math in high school and in college (personal communication, 2010).

Furthermore, recommendations and/or advice to students who do not understand the pros and cons of their choices tends to result in students making life choices without a true understanding of the consequences. As an example, let us look at a true situation where students received advice at the college. Students typically know about *some* majors and that there is *at least one* college that they can transfer to once they complete a specified list of courses. However, when the investigator asked a few Child Development students why they had chosen a particular private school to transfer to, their answer was that it was repeatedly recommended to them (personal communication, anonymous, September 2009). One of them reported that they did not know the difference between the colleges and which was better for them (personal communication, anonymous, September 2009). Digging deeper, the investigator found that one of them had over 90 units and was told she would need to complete 10 more courses (30 units) to transfer to California State University (CSU). The CSU she referred to was California State Northridge, which only allows students to transfer up to 70 units; a student can transfer with one class at the community college or no classes because the university allows students to transfer on freshman standing with less than 60 units; if the student has more than 60 units they only had four required courses that were needed to transfer "written communication, oral communication, critical thinking and quantitative reasoning" (www.csun.edu, May 1, 2010).   She was discouraged to consider a California State University because of how many more units she needed to complete, so she planned to transfer to the private school because they would accept

most of her child development units and she could transfer almost immediately. Two of the

students also reported that they wanted to be able to teach in public schools and found a Child

Development major would compliment that career and give them an opportunity to earn money

while going through school.

While the private college would benefit them in accepting most of their community

college units into the BA program, the problem was that the college would charge them an

average of $1000/unit; in addition, the university no longer recommended students for the Ryan

credential (teaching credential) as of 2005 and did not offer pathways to receiving a single

subject credential (Pacific Oaks College, 2009). These are very important challenges to

disadvantaged students because they could leave the school with a large debt and not obtain the

job they sought due to what the college/university could actually offer them. It is unclear if

students can receive a multiple subject credential after going through the program because the

California Commission on Teacher Credentialing must approve the program and the college/

university must recommend the student in order for the student to receive a credential. Lastly,

disadvantaged students may not be prepared to take the required Multi-Subject CSET exam after

the program. The multi-subject CSET exam covers a vast variety of subjects:

> Content Specifications for the Subject Matter Requirement for the Multiple
>
> Subject Teaching Credential are aligned and congruent with the requirements of
>
> Education Code Section 51210 and the Student Academic Content Standards
>
> (Grades K-8) of the State Board of Education (Content Specifications for the
>
> Subject Matter Requirement for the Multiple Subject Teaching Credential, 2009)

This means students will be tested on having expert knowledge in English, History Sciences,

Mathematics, Social Sciences, Health, Human Development, and Visual Arts for all grades K-8.

While K-8th grade curriculum may seem elementary. On a personal note, I have friends that have graduated from California State Universities and Universities of California that have spent more than 3 years trying to pass the components in this test. This implicates that disadvantaged students from community colleges may also have difficulty passing the exam since more than half of the California community colleges incoming students tend to lack foundational skills in English and Math (California Community Colleges Strategic Plan Steering Committee, 2006).

By listening and understanding the students' concerns and educational desires, the investigator was then able to move to agreeing on the problem and possible solutions with students in this pilot study. Students reported this approach being more beneficial to them because they were guided through multiple solutions and had an opportunity to weigh pros and cons; however, they knew that they were in control of their decision. One of the participants, reported to me that she knew which college she was going to, why, and what she needed to do reach her goals through the investigation we embarked on together.

Pedagogy

Once empathy, or understanding of the students struggle, is at the foundation of the relationship with the student, pedagogy becomes important to problem solving with the student. Pedagogy in this paper refers to an educator's theory about how students learn. So far, we have discussed counselors/faculty members' tendency to either give advice or expect students to be independent in education. There are counseling courses that help students explore education and careers at the college, but the funding for those courses is minimal and the courses are not required for students (personal communication, 2010). One counselor stated that she saw the differences between another California community college where she used to work and the Los Angeles Community college where she currently worked: "We had plenty of counselors and many sections of the

personal development courses. The counseling department at [the former] college was highly

regarded by the college community because of results obtained from these personal development

courses…It's nothing like it is here. I have never been in a counseling department where the

people look so down upon us" (personal interview, 2010) A peer reviewed research study on

academic workshops (similar to the counseling courses) revealed that these type of

workshops/courses could be a very viable resource in guiding students to make appropriate

educational and career decisions (Legutko, 2007).

One key thing the counselor said about teaching these personal development courses to

students is how involved she was in the process. She would meet her students at restaurants and

their jobs outside of class; basically she was not just teaching a course, she was building a

relationship with students and learning how to best meet their needs. Was this culture among the

majority of the counselors at her former college? Certainly a comparative study between

personal development courses with a 'hands off approach' vs. courses with a 'relationship-based'

foundation should be explored in a later study.

<u>Recommendations</u>

The Relationship-Based model is an asset to finding effective solutions in supporting

student success through counseling. Earlier in the paper, shared governance with students was

referred to as making decisions with students—not for students. Here, it is imperative to

recommend a means to use the Relationship-Based model despite funding issues and develop

relationships through empathy.

Relationship-Based counseling in the face of a funding/budget crisis

Budget issues in California education are not infrequent; they are the norm. Educators can streamline resources together to train faculty about counseling; we would thus form faculty advising teams in each department that can build relationships with students to help meet their needs. This model is being tested at one of the Los Angeles Community Colleges. Faculty advising could work because each faculty member at California community colleges typically has 5-10 hours of paid office hours per week to share with students. However, some counselors at the college claim that the problem with making this unity between faculty and counselors is that 'faculty members do not understand our students' (personal communication, 2010). This stems back to our discussion on empathy being necessary to effectively counsel underprepared students; in this case, counselors do not think that faculty members can empathize with students. A middle ground can be made by faculty and counselors working together on committees and attending the same in house training. This training would then put faculty and counselors on the same page to approaches of counseling/advising for students and strengthen necessary collaboration between student services and academic affairs.

Since Student Services members express feeling more affected by budget cuts than Academic Affairs members, then it may be time for student services to become more a part of shared governance teams that handle funding and decision making despite resistance from academic affairs (assumed or otherwise). Is it fair to say that the more student services becomes involved in efforts to raise and increase funds for the college the more funds will be allocated back to student services? This is also a topic for further research, but it should be noted that efforts to raise funds and make decisions together with academic affairs will most-likely build stronger relationships.

Using empathy to create relationships and meet student needs

Using empathy to create relationships in order to meet student needs is step that can before, during, or after conquering financial resources. In addition it is not a financial commitment as much as it is a time and collaboration commitment. Sharing an understanding of struggles that students face should lead to empathetic listening. By listening and understanding the students' concerns and educational desires, we can move to agreeing on the problem and possible solutions with students.

Implication for Further Research

Implications for Practice

The way to understand what needs to be changed is to develop effective relationships with students and all those people (including faculty and administrators), groups, and agencies that are involved in the students' lives; this is the reason, the Relationship-Based model is so important. Above all, the Relationship-Based model will derive from human development theory and be connected to what we know about how people learn and how effective partnerships are made. Community college students may begin to be seen as effective partners in deciding how they learn best and what they need to succeed.

The underlining ideology of the Relationship-Based model includes how academic affairs and student services work together to meet the needs of the students. This focus on students is important because we can better show why we need funds to keep essential programs running, give academic affairs appropriate funding to enrich curriculum and faculty, and ensure we effectively meet diverse student needs.

From the results of this study, counselors may develop strategies that develop students' skills in researching their education such as, workshops and university field trips. This study

shows that it is important that educational leaders, including counselors, use the Relationship-Based model to assess needs and create developmentally appropriate solutions collaboratively with students. In future studies, in investigation into approaching higher education pedagogy from a human development perspective is essential for all student success regardless of if the educator is associated with Student Services and/or Academic Affairs.

Additionally, the study was not limited to race though the majority of the college population and participants are Latinos. Teaching students research skills to have a better sense of direction about their education and career is not specific to Latino population, but that it is necessary to all students whom lack these skills especially those from disadvantaged environments.

This is a pilot study that will merely peek through the window at possibilities for the Relationship-Based model. A longitudinal mixed research study, which focuses on how we can ensure better student success from counseling through the Relationship-Based model, needs to be implemented at a community college with 30% or less students whom transfer or complete their Associates degree. While the Relationship-Based model can be applied to any area, it is more effective to expand on areas that have gone through preliminary research stages using the Relationship-Based model such as the pilot study. By building relationships in the college community, key factors that were affecting successful counseling were revealed. One of the biggest issues was funding and budgeting issues. Using some of these recommendations, perhaps a longitudinal mixed study could be done at multiple colleges with similar demographics and funding variables. Keeping similar variables, would allow researchers to evaluate the Relationship-Based model to approaching effective counseling during a budget crisis or limited funding times.

While we can get ideas from colleges that have different demographics, such as more stable funding and better student success, research must be done at California community colleges with similar funding and demographic variables as well. By having a pool of colleges that investigate the Relationship-Based model approach, more colleges can better see the benefits of the Relationship-Based approach to success and more readily apply the approach. If only colleges with fewer resources apply the model in published research, then colleges with more resources and different demographics will more likely disregard those results saying that 'those results do not apply to this college because key variables are different.' As stated before, this model will help colleges differing funding resources and other differing variables. Another important study would be to hold the funding variable steady as research is expanded to other colleges where the student demographics are different from the original study. For example, how would this model work in a low-income population that was more diverse or predominately African American?

This Relationship-Based model, which is so heavily rooted in human development theory, may spark research about how to use the model in a variety of areas within the community college arena. Unlike childcare and K-12 schooling, students go to community colleges because they want to be there. This can be assumed because they have a choice in the matter. Students spend time and effort seeking their degrees where the immediate compensation is largely knowledge and skills not money. This means that students are ready to advance to the next stage in development and only need educators to use the Relationship-Based model as a bridge for students to advance to the next developmental level. My theory needs to be tested on a large scale over time at community colleges. The reason the focus is on community colleges is that many community colleges have high participant involvement, but low degree completion

and transfer rates. Theses low rates have little to do with the efforts of educators, but more to do with their understanding of the developmental level of students and our understanding of how to use human development theory in pedagogy campus wide.

Once the model has been proven effective with community colleges, a survey of how the Relationship-Based model may work for all disadvantaged students at 2 & 4-year institutions would be the next viable step. From preliminary research concerning 4-year institutions, it appeared that disadvantaged students who transfer to 4-year institutions are more likely to go back to the community college level or drop out of college.

Appendix A

Research Protocol
Counseling and Knowledge About College
Student Interview

Interview Session:

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. **Before we begin, I would like to give you the opportunity to read and sign the consent form.** The interview is apart of an exploration about what has prepared you to make effective choices about your education through using your college counselor and/ or transfer center. If you have encountered useful tools outside of counseling and the transfer center that prepared you to make decisions about your education, I will be glad to hear your opinion about those experiences as well. Although faculty members in the transfer center are also seen as counselors, please specify the difference between the two groups when commenting.

This conversation is strictly confidential and care will be taken to exclude all names and identifying characteristics from the data. Further, any responses that you provide will not impact your performance in a class or in the program. I would like your permission to record our conversation on tape so that I can more accurately reflect your thoughts and experiences. We are going to begin the interview (Project HOPE Research Protocol, N. Durdella). You can contact me at jeffersontrevina@gmail.com.

Do you have any questions? If you would like your name revealed, we will discuss that at a latter date with your signed informed consent.

Students Name (please Print)

_____

Student's Signature _____
Date_____

Demographics
1. Which race would you consider yourself?
2. Were you born in the United States? If not, do you qualify for instate tuition?
3. Do you receive any government aid or subsidized housing?
4. Do you qualify for educational grants?
5. Do you qualify for EOP?
    a. If you qualify for EOP, do you receive benefits from that office?
    b. If so, what are they?
    c. Which benefits are most helpful to you?
    d. Which benefits would you change? Please describe how and why?

Educational background of student and parents
1. What is the highest grade level your mother achieved?
2. Your father?

3. If either one of your parents achieved a high school diploma or equivalent, was it achieved before or after you graduated high school?

Educational & Career Goals

1. What has your experience been with counseling concerning major and career objectives?
    a. Frustrations?
    b. Benefits?

2. Why did you want to transfer to the private school focused in Child Development before we discussed it?

3. What were your educational goals before we began discussing major and career possibilities?

4. If we researched colleges, majors and career objective together, what decisions are you thinking about making now? Why?

5. What would be helpful in making informed decisions about your education?

6. Name 2-3 educators, and (or) their job position, on campus that could be involved in helping you be better informed about your education? For each educator, name what they could do to help and why?

7. Do you feel comfortable talking to counselors about confusion you may have about your major or career objectives? Why or why not?
    a. And Faculty?

8. What do you think were the biggest issues when you thought about how to choose colleges, majors, or career objectives?

9. I am going to explain the 'Relationship-Based model' to you. Please tell me if you think this model would be useful for you to succeed at this college. Why or why not?

10. This research is to help educators understand how to help you and other students on campus achieve degree completion or transfer, what other ideas do you have about how we could help you?

Appendix B

Research Protocol
Counseling and Knowledge About College
Counselor Interview

Interview Session:

Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. **Before we begin, I would like to give you the opportunity to read and sign this consent form.** The interview is apart of an exploration about what actions counselors take to help prepare students to make effective choices about their education through using their college counselor and/ or transfer center.

This conversation is strictly confidential and care will be taken to exclude all names and identifying characteristics from the data. I would like your permission to record our conversation on tape so that I can more accurately reflect your thoughts and experiences. We are going to begin the interview (Project HOPE Research Protocol, N. Durdella). You can contact me at jeffersontrevina@gmail.com.

Do you have any questions? If you would like your name revealed, we will discuss that at a latter date with your signed informed consent.

Educator's Name (please Print)
_____

Educator's Signature _____
Date_____

Background Information

1. Which graduate degrees or credentials do you hold?

2. What type of education or training do you have in human development?

Students
1. What type of information do most students seek when they come to see you?

2. Do more than 80% of students seem to know what major they desire and why?
    a. Which colleges would benefit students' needs best?
    b. Which career choices may be best suited for their personality, skills, and compensation goals?

3. With your caseload, how much time are you able to spend with students on average in a one-on-one meeting?
4. From your perspective, what are the biggest factors that challenge students in degree completion and transferring to suitable colleges?

5. What projects are you implementing now or in the near future to help solve some of these challenges?

6. How do you see being able to collaborate with academic affairs personnel or faculty members could help you with the projects you mentioned above?

References

Anderson, L. E., & Carta-Falsa, J. (2002). Factors that make faculty and student relationships effective. *College Teaching* , *50* (4), 134-138.

Assist. (2009). *Agreements with other campuses*. Retrieved October 21, 2009, from Assist: http://www.assist.org

Bandura, A. (1964). The stormy decade: Fact of fiction. *Psychology in the School* (1), 587-595.

Bumgarner, M. A. (1999). *Working with school-age children*. New York, New York: McGraw-Hill Higher Education.

C.A. Gov Postsecondary Education Commission. (2008). *Detailed Data*. Retrieved October 10, 2009, from C.A. Gov Postsecondary Education Commission: http://cpec.ca.gov

Calcagno, J. C., Baiely, T., Jenkins, D., Kienzl, G., & Leinback, T. (2008). Community college student success: What institutional characteristics make a difference. *Economics of Education Review* (27), 632-645.

California Community Colleges. (2006, January 17). *Strategic Plan*. Retrieved November 9, 2009, from California Community Colleges System Strategic Plan: http://strategicplan.cccco.edu

California State University-Mentor. (2010). *CSU Mentor*. Retrieved April 3, 2010, from What is the Educational Opportunity Program (EOP)?: http://www.csumentor.edu

Cejda, B. D., Casparis, C., & Rhodes, J. (2002). Influences on the educational decisions of hispanic students enrolled in hispanic serving institutions. *Annual Conference of the Council for the Study of Community Colleges*, (p. 24). Seattle.

Covey, S. R. (1989). *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*. New York, New York: Free Press.

Day, J. C., & Newburger, E. C. (2002, July). *The Big Payoff: Educational attainment and synthetic esitmates of work-life earnings*. Retrieved April 20, 2010, from US Census Bureau: http://www.census.gov

Downer, J. T., & Pianta, R. C. (2006). Academic and cognitive functioning in first grade: Associations with earlier home and child care predictors and with concurrent home and classroom experiences. *School Psychology Review , 35* (1), 11-30.

EdSource. (2010, January). Categorical funding for 2007-08 and 2009-10.

EdSource. (2010, January). Community College funding 2009-10; Increased demand, reduced resources.

Erikson, E. H. (1959). *Identity and he life cycle in psychological issues*. New York, New York: International Universities Press.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women''s development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Green, V. C. (2003). Cultural factors influening the persistence of African-American community college students. *Dissertation Abstracts International , 64* (12).

Hagedorn, L. S., Chi, W., Cepeda, R. M., & McLain, M. (2007). An investigation of critical mass: The role of Latino represenation in the success of urban community college students. *Research in Higher Education , 48* (1), 73-90.

Kohlberg, L. (1969). Stage and sequence: The cognitive-developmental approach to socialization. In D. A. Croslin, *Handbook of socialization theory and research*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

Laden, B. V. (1992). An exploratory examiniation of organizational factors leading ot transfer of hispanic. *Annual Meeting of the Association for the Study of Higher Education*, (p. 37). Minneapolis.

Legutko, R. S. (2007). Influence of an academic workshop on once-undeclared graduates' selection of a major. *College Student Journal , 41* (1).

Levine, M. (2007). Teaching all students: Celebrating diverse minds. In Jossey-Bass, *The Jossey-Bass Reader on Educational Leadership* (2nd Edition ed., pp. 289-298). San Francisco, Ca: Jossey-Bass.

Los Angeles Community College District. (2008). *Research and Statistics*. Retrieved October 11, 2009, from Los Angeles Community College District: http://research.laccd.edu

Los Angeles Community College District. (n.d.). *About US: Los Angeles Community College District*. Retrieved March 1, 2010, from Los Angeles Commuity College District Website: http://laccd.edu

McPhail, I. P., McPhail, C. J., & Smilkstein, R. (2001). *Culture, Style, and Cognition: Expanding the boundaries of the learning paradigm for African-American learners in the communiy college*. Baltimore: Community College of Baltimiore County.

Pacific Oaks College. (2009). Retrieved September 13, 2009, from Pacific Oaks College: http://www.pacificoaks.edu

Peterson, J. V., & NIsenholz, B. (1999). *Orienttion to counseling*. Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Piaget, J., Brown, T., & Thampy, K. J. (1985). *Equillibration of Cognitive Structures: The central problem of intellectual development*. Texas: University of Chicago Press.

Shostrum, E. (Director). (1965). *Three Approaches to Psychotherapy* [Motion Picture].

William, P., Espinoza, R., Ramos, K., Coronado, H. M., & Cortes, R. C. (2009, May). Academic

resilience among undocumented Latino students. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral*

Sciences , 149-181.