

Traditional Age Students: Worldviews and Satisfaction with Advising; a Homogeneous Study of Student and Advisors

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This study sought to determine what student characteristic best predicts advising satisfaction. Outcomes of this study suggest that faculty behaviors such as discussing personal values, majors/ academic concentrations, and financial aid account for significant variance in the prediction of student advising satisfaction. This would suggest those faculties who provide developmental advising are more likely to receive positive advising outcomes.

Since the 1980s, colleges and universities have become a much more diverse environment as ethnic minority and other groups continue to increase in proportion (Priest & McPhee, 2000). Many institutions have been forced to reexamine their retention strategies in response to cohorts of incoming students who are increasingly diverse in gender, ethnicity, race, age, and socioeconomic status. This reexamination often has focused on the role of the academic advisor in the institution, as well as certain student characteristics like worldviews (Coll, in press; Coll & Zalaquett, in press). Worldview has been variously defined as equivalent to a person's perception of the world and philosophy of life (Ivey, Ivey, & Simek-Downing, 1997; Naugle, 2002). Ibrahim (1985) emphasizes that knowledge of a person's worldview helps others to understand an individual's life experiences, culture, and interaction within the environment. Sue (1978) defined worldview as relating to the individual's perception of and relationship with the world, and emphasized its importance in development of a person's identity. The notion that an individual's worldview is important to his or her life was reinforced by Koltko-Rivera (2004), who stated that individuals are actively engaged with their surroundings through the process of specifically constructed worldviews in order to gain a self-defined individualistic purpose.

Traditional retention strategies focused upon student ability and motivation; the changes in student population have encouraged a change in the focus of retention strategies. Educational institutions historically have used advising as a primary means to increase retention, and many researchers (Carstensen & Silberhorn, 1979; Glennen, 1976; Noel, 1976; Tinto, 2006) have supported the link between academic advising and student retention. The main thrust of these studies is that regular contact between advisors and students is an essential element in retaining students.

Researchers have also found that student satisfaction with advising plays an important role in students' commitment to their academic institution (Bailey, Bauman, & Lata, 1998; Brown & Rivas, 1995), which subsequently influences

student retention. Academic advising often is the only academic service that guarantees prolonged interaction between students and faculty, and it is precisely this guaranteed interaction that makes the advisor critical in the development of positive attitudes, relationships, and experience for students (King, 1993). Noel-Levitz's (2007) National Student Satisfaction Report, based on responses from 796 higher education institutions, indicated that academic advising is a key variable in student satisfaction. Students ranked the importance of academic advising second only to instructional effectiveness in four-year private colleges/universities.

Another main focus of retention studies has been students' perceptions of and their relationships with their academic institutions (Coll, in press; Reinartz, 2000). The development of attitudes and opinions about their institution is a process often influenced by the students' worldviews (Sue, 1978). The importance of understanding worldviews is imperative to the development of relationships between advisor and advisee (Coll & Zalaquett, in press).

Statement of the Problem

Retention and academic advising satisfaction is, perhaps, the modern academic advisor's greatest challenge (Coll & Zalaquett, in press; Upcraft, et al. 2005). In order to be most effective, the advisor must be sensitive to the many values and perspectives his or her advisees hold (Herr, Cramer, & Niles, 2004; Sue & Sue, 2003). Academic advisors should become aware of the importance of worldviews and understand that worldviews are dynamic paradigms that can be influenced by individuals and/or their environment. It is essential that advisors take into consideration the students' worldviews, because these frameworks provide students with the personal information they use to make decisions about remaining in their school. Most current models of advising do not take worldviews or levels of student development into consideration, and this may be one of the reasons many students fail to persist academically.

Purpose of Study

The relationship of worldviews to advising satisfaction has received little attention in the literature. Coll and Zalaquett (in press) found that non-traditional students with worldviews similar to those of their advisors appear to seek advising more often and perceive advising as an important event. The goal of the proposed study is to extend Coll and Zalaquett's investigation by (a) examining similarities and differences among the worldviews of students; (b) comparing satisfaction with the advising process among students as it relates to their reported worldviews; and (d) comparing students' satisfaction with the advising process, as related to the similarities between student and faculty worldviews.

Because the enrollment of diverse student populations continues to rise, it is important that advisors understand the unique makeup of student worldviews in order to improve the advising relationship and students' academic success. The goal of the study was to determine whether specific student worldviews enhance the student/advisor relationship, improve the quality of advising, and increase the level of academic success among students. Unlike Coll and Zalaquett, who studied non-traditional student worldviews, this study examined traditional age students to see if the Coll and Zalaquett results were replicable with a traditional population.

Methods

Design of the Study

This study uses an existing data set that was collected during fall 2006 from students enrolled in a freshman seminar class at a private comprehensive university in the Southeast. The sample consisted of 50% of the freshman who were enrolled in a required course. The research examines the degree to which student advising satisfaction can be predicted by the students' reported worldview, and the relationship between student and advisor worldview correspondence with advising satisfaction.

The data used in this study were collected at a private, Catholic institution, located in Florida. The university is comprised of three academic schools: the School of Arts and Sciences, the School of Business, and the School of Education and Social Services. The institution has an undergraduate population of 13,018 students (12,137 undergraduate students and 881 graduate students), of whom 57% are female. Slightly more than 10% ($n = 1,384$) of these undergraduate students reside in on-campus housing; the remaining students commute to campus, attend one of the fourteen centers across the United States, or are distance learners.

Description of Sample

The study employed a convenient sample of students enrolled in the freshman seminar course in fall 2006. All 382 students were invited to participate, and 202 (52.9%) agreed to participate. A total of 11 surveys were eliminated due to incomplete responses. The 191 students who completed the surveys included 90 males and 101 females, with a mean age of 18.28 ($SD = 1.63$). Most participants in the study (71.2%) were Caucasian ($n = 136$). The remaining participants were African American ($n = 20$), Hispanic ($n = 20$), Asian ($n = 1$), or some other race ($n = 13$). One person did not report ethnicity ($n = 1$).

Measures

In this study, worldview was assessed using the World Assumption Scale (WAS) developed by Janoff-Bulman (1992). Student advising satisfaction was assessed using the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI) developed by Winston and Sander (1984). A discussion of each instrument's reliability and validity is provided below.

The WAS is a 32-item questionnaire developed to assess individual worldviews. The WAS assesses the following three major beliefs: (a) *benevolence of the world*: believing that the world is a good place and that, overall, people are kind; (b) *meaningfulness of the world*: believing in justice, control, and non-randomness; and (c) *self-worth*: whether the person is happy with who he or she is and whether the person does good in order to receive the greatest good. Respondents report their assumptions by indicating their agreement on a six-point Likert-type scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to six (strongly agree). Benevolence is an eight-item subscale with a possible score range of 18- 38 and measures how people feel in general about the world. Meaningfulness is a 12-item subscale with a possible score range of 32-52, and it measures assumptions of justice, control, and randomness. Self-worth has 12 items within the subscale and has a possible score range of 27-57, measuring assumptions about personal luck, self-control, and self-worth. Consistent with Janoff-Bulman (1992), Goldenberg and Kimberly (2005) reported a total scale alpha coefficient of .86.

The AAI is a 52-item questionnaire divided into four major categories: (a) *developmental and prescriptive advising* measures how the student perceives his or her advising, (b) *descriptive information and frequency of activities* a student observes during sessions with his or her advisor, (c) *reported satisfaction of advising* scored on a four-point scale, and (d) *demographic information* (Winston & Sander, 1984). Within the developmental and prescriptive category, the AAI has subcategorized three subscales that are used to assess perceptions about services received. The first is Personalizing Education (PE), which is an 8-item subscale measuring the advisor's approach to a holistic concern for the student's education, including vocational/career, relationships, university activities, personal and social concerns, goal and outcome expectation-setting, and assisting students with the identification and location of services and resources available on campus. The score of the PE subscale has a possible range of 8 to 64. Scores of 33 to 64 are characterized as *developmental advising* and reflect a mutually derived relationship between the student and the advisor. A reported score range of 8 to 32 is identified as *prescriptive advising*, which indicates a formal and distant relationship between the student and the advisor. The second is Academic Decision-Making (ADM), a four-item subscale that measures the student's perceptions about the academic process that takes place at each meeting between the advisor and advisee, including academic progress, student interest and abilities, and academic concentration as a means to assist

with the registration for appropriate courses. ADM has a possible score range of 4 to 32. Reported high scores of 17-32 are indicative of developmental advising, and low scores of 4 to 16 represent prescriptive advising. The third, Selecting Courses (SC), is a two-item subscale that measures a student's perceptions of how the advisor approaches him or her selecting courses. Emphasis is placed on assisting students in course selection by first determining specific course needs and later developing an appropriate plan and schedule. SC has a possible score range of 2 to 16, with high scores (9 to 16) representing developmental advising and low scores (two to eight) indicative of prescriptive advising. The AAI was reported by Dickson, Sorochty, and Thayer (1998) to have high construct- related validity and test retest reliability of .78.

Procedures

Students were approached in their university classes and were asked to complete a self-report paper and pencil survey of advising and worldview. Prior to administration, the purposes of the study were explained to participants and researchers disseminated informed consent forms. In order to protect anonymity, students did not put their names on the survey packets. In lieu of names, researchers asked them to report their student identification numbers so that researchers could tie their data to that of their advisors. Advisors were recruited individually and asked to participate. All Participants were encouraged to call the researcher for an explanation of the research study after data analysis and interpretations. In total, complete data was collected on a total of 91 student-advisor dyads.

Analysis

Data were analyzed in SPSS 14.0. Following Coll and Zalaquett (in press), researchers examined whether correspondence between student and faculty worldview contributed significant unique variance to the prediction of student satisfaction. Correspondence was defined in two ways: (1) absolute correspondence was the correlation between student and advisor scores on each of the three WAS subscales, and (2) relative correspondence occurred when student score on any subscale fell within one standard deviation above or below the advisor's score. Researchers used multiple linear regression to examine the best set of predictors that would account for variance in student satisfaction. In addition, researchers used multiple linear regression to examine specifically which advisor behaviors and topics of discussion accounted for the most variance in student satisfaction with advising.

Results

Neither student worldview, faculty worldview, nor student/faculty worldview correspondence were significant predictors of student satisfaction of advising

in this homogenous sample of traditional students. Table 1 presents the outcomes of regressing satisfaction on student worldview, faculty worldview, correspondence, and faculty advising style.

Table 1. Forward Regression of Satisfaction on Student Worldview, Faculty Worldview, Worldview Correspondence, and Faculty Advising Style.

| Variables Retained | B | SE B | β | Adjusted R ² |
|-------------------------|-----|------|---------|-------------------------|
| Personalizing Education | .17 | .04 | .48** | |
| Scheduling Classes | .24 | .11 | .23* | |
| Model | | | | .19** |

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Table 2 presents the outcomes of the regression analysis to determine specifically which faculty behaviors influenced student satisfaction with advising. Discussing personal values, possible majors/ academic concentrations, and financial aid were the only behaviors that accounted for a statistically significant amount of unique variance in the prediction of student satisfaction with advising.

Table 2. Forward Regression of Satisfaction on Academic Advising Inventory Part II Items (Items 15 through 44).

| Variables Retained | B | SE B | β | Adjusted R ² |
|------------------------------------|-------|------|---------|-------------------------|
| Discussing Personal Values | .74 | .34 | .25* | |
| Discussing Majors / Concentrations | .97 | .34 | .33** | |
| Discussing Financial Aid | -1.16 | .32 | -.39** | |
| Model | | | | .21** |

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Student satisfaction was positively related to time spent discussing personal values and possible academic majors/concentrations, and *negatively* related to time spent discussing financial aid.

Discussion

Colleges and universities have become a diverse environment as ethnic minority and other groups continue to increase in proportion (Priest & McPhee, 2000). Institutions across the U.S. have been forced to reexamine their retention, admission, and advising strategies in response to the diverse characteristics of their students, such as socioeconomic status, ethnicity, and gender. This reexamination often has focused on the role of the academic advisor in the institution, as well as certain student characteristics such as worldviews (Coll, in press; Coll & Zalaquett, in press). Traditional retention and advising strategies focused upon student ability and motivation with a prescriptive

model; however, the changes in student population have encouraged institutions to adopt a developmental approach to advising and incorporate unique retention strategies based on student characteristics that impact satisfaction.

This study sought to determine what student characteristic best predicts advising satisfaction. Unlike, previous studies, which have determined that academic advising satisfaction is correlated with the similarities between a student's worldview and his/her advisors, this study found that worldviews of traditional student is not a good predictor of advising satisfaction even when the advisor has a similar global perspective.

The outcomes of this study suggest that faculty behaviors such as discussing personal values, possible majors/ academic concentrations, and financial aid account for statistically significant variance in the prediction of student satisfaction with advising. This would suggest that faculty who provide and conduct developmental advising with his/her advisee is more likely to receive positive advising outcomes.

Moreover, this study suggest that student satisfaction is positively related to time advisors spend discussing personal values with students and possible academic majors/concentrations. It is important to emphasize that, though there was a negative correlation between financial aid discussion and satisfaction, this is a correlational study. A likely explanation is that difficulties with financial aid contribute to both more time spent discussing financial aid with the advisor and lower satisfaction with the institution as a whole, including their academic advisor. It seems unlikely that advisors and advisees would spend much time discussing financial aid in the absence of such problems.

The results of this study suggest that advising satisfaction, which can influence academic performance, retention, and student development; is best achieved by

utilizing a developmental approach, which allows for faculty/student discussions on values and career options.

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