

**COUNCIL** *for* **OPPORTUNITY** *in* **EDUCATION**



# **TRIO Dissertations Summaries 2000-2011**

**THE PELL INSTITUTE**

*For the study of Opportunity in Higher Education*



# TRIO GENERAL

## APA Citation

**Kline, W. (2001). Resilience: A case study of the post secondary experience of TRIO program students (Doctoral dissertation, Ball State University, 2000). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 61 (10), 9991342A.**

## Author(s)

Willa Kline

## Title

Resilience: A case study of the post secondary experience of TRIO program students

## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe the resilience in adult at-risk college students who had overcome adverse circumstances and the role resilience played in the post secondary experience in formal education. This qualitative study examined the characteristics and behaviors of resilience within the framework of human development.

The eight study participants were clients of the Educational Opportunity Center program in Fort Wayne, Indiana. The study participants were low-income, first generation college students. Several assessment tools were administered to evaluate levels of resilience in the eight participants. In addition, all participants were interviewed, which allowed the participants to share their post secondary experience.

The analysis of the evidence gathered showed that the eight participants exhibited traits of resiliency. These traits included being goal-oriented and exhibiting a desire to excel, exhibiting positive responses to new opportunities, using a capacity to delay gratification, demonstrating a high level of personal discipline and responsibility, being self-understanding and independent, exhibiting a high self-esteem, being flexible and creative in responding to life events, displaying a strong internal locus of control, making wise use of the presence and support of a caring person, building positive relationships with others, selecting environments that provided positive and high expectations as well as an opportunity to participate and contribute, possessing an easy-going temperament, finding meaning in life and having a vision of the future, responding with a sense of humor, and possessing a strong faith.

All of the eight participants believed that resilience is present in all people and that resilience can be learned. There was not sufficient evidence provided by the assessment tools in this study to support strongly that resilience is a developmental process in adulthood. However, the analysis of the data gathered from the interviews suggest that resilience may be learned and strengthened by observing and learning from others.

Conclusions and recommendations of this study focused on the identification of resilient at-risk adult students, determination of the role environment plays in the development and use of resilience in at-risk adult students, and the evaluation of effective assessment tools in identifying resilient at-risk students. Implications of this study for low-income, first-generation post secondary students include providing and strengthening the support of at least one caring adult in students' lives, as well as determining methods to teach or foster resilient behavior in at-risk adult students.

## Research question

- 1) What experiences and factors influenced the low-income, first-generation students to pursue a post secondary education?
- 2) What actions do low-income, first-generation students take to meet successfully the challenges they face in their post secondary education?
- 3) What is the role of resilience in the students' post secondary experience?

### **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Current participants of TRIO programs (Fort Wayne EOC program) and students who graduated within the last two years.

### **Method / Research Design**

The researcher used qualitative methods through a case study. The participants were 279 students who responded to a questionnaire, in which eight low-income, first-generation students who fell under a given criteria were specifically chosen for the study. The eight participants completed the Rotter's Locus of Control, Bus and Plomin's Emotionally Activity Sociability Temperament Survey for Adults and the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator. The eight participants were then subject to three one-hour structured and unstructured interviews.

### **Analysis**

Data coding of interviews through taxonomic analysis

### **Key Findings**

All eight participants showed characteristics of resiliency. Some of these features included: valuing caring individuals; proactively seeking out environments with high expectations; and having a vision of the future.

### **Implications**

Implications of this study for low-income, first-generation post secondary students include providing and strengthening the support of at least one caring adult in students' lives, as well as determining methods to teach or foster resilient behavior in at-risk adult students. The researcher suggests that future research should explore: the exact role environment plays in the development and use of resilience in at-risk adults; if students in other Educational Opportunity Center programs also were resilient; effective ways to build and strengthen the support relationship; if resiliency can be taught; and further evaluate assessment tools used in current study.

## **APA Citation**

**Marmon, D.H. (2002). Core Competencies of Professional Service Providers in Federally Funded Education Programs. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Tennessee, 2003). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 63 (12), 3075555.**

## **Author(s)**

Dora Heacker Marmon

## **Title**

Core Competencies of Professional Service Providers in Federally Funded Education Programs

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this national study was to identify core competencies for administrators and other professional service providers in selected federally funded education programs. The population was administrators of Talent Search, Upward Bound, and Student Support Services programs. A proportional stratified random sample of 579 administrators received the survey; 354 responded. The usable response was 346 (59.8%).

A researcher-developed instrument was developed and revised according to advice of a national panel of experts. The instrument was piloted and again revised prior to the national survey. The overall Cronbach alpha for the instrument was .97. The 100 item questionnaire was divided into 18 categories: Administration, Admissions, Advising, Curricula, Extra-Curricula, Financial Aid, Follow Up and Evaluation, Grantwriting, Information, Interpersonal Skills, Leadership, Motivation, Planning, Professional Development, Public Relations, Recruitment, Teaching, and Technology.

Two research questions guided the study: Are there significant differences in perceived core competencies according to specific demographic variables? and Are there significant differences in perceived core competencies for respondents as compared to core competencies respondents believe are needed by those professional service providers whom they supervise? Nine null hypotheses were developed to address the first research question; one null hypothesis was used to address the second question.

Significance at the .05 level was found for the demographic variables Years in Position, Years in TRIO, Program, Institution, Race, and Gender. There was no significance for Region, Age, or Education. The last hypothesis was also significant at the .05 level for differences between perceived core competencies for administrators and for those whom they supervised. For the last hypothesis, every core competency except Motivation was significant.

## **Research question**

- 1) Are core competency categories for professional service providers different according to selected demographic variables?
- 2) Are core competency categories different for administrators from those needed by the professional service providers whom they supervise?

## **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

General TRIO Programming

## **Method / Research Design**

A proportional stratified random sample of 579 administrators received the survey; 354 responded. The usable response was 346 (59.8%). A researcher-developed instrument was developed and revised according to advice of a national panel of experts.

## **Analysis**

The instrument was piloted and again revised prior to the national survey. Parametric tests through SPSS full 10 null hypotheses. Multiple analyses of variances (MANOVAs) to test null hypothesis one through nine. Paired sample t tests were used for the final null hypothesis. Descriptive statistics were generated for the demographic items. The overall Cronbach alpha for the instrument was .97. The 100 item questionnaire was divided into 18 categories: Administration, Admissions, Advising, Curricula, Extra-Curricula, Financial Aid, Follow Up and Evaluation, Grantwriting, Information, Interpersonal Skills, Leadership, Motivation, Planning, Professional Development, Public Relations, Recruitment, Teaching, and Technology.

### **Key Findings**

Significance at the .05 level was found for the demographic variables Years in Position, Years in TRIO, Program, Institution, Race, and Gender. There was no significance for Region, Age, or Education. The last hypothesis was also significant at the .05 level for differences between perceived core competencies for administrators and for those whom they supervised. For the last hypothesis, every core competency except Motivation was significant.

### **Implications**

Differences in the 18 core competency categories by Program carry important implications for Professional Development because these differences highlight the significance for each competency category according to students' ages and according to their educational levels. Talent Search and Upward Bound programs serve those students who have not yet finished high school or who have not enrolled in programs of postsecondary education. Findings of the current study highlighted their needs for Advising, Admissions, and related pre-college services. For Student Support Services programs, Financial Aid is significant even above those of the pre-college programs. The researcher suggests that future research examine: variance in core competencies by region; if private institutions need TRIO programming; perceptions of professional service providers other than administrators of TRIO programming; differences in ranking in relation to years spent in position; and the importance of transfer of training in TRIO.

## APA Citation

Washington, S.D. (2005). Correlates of job satisfaction among mid-level TRIO program administrators in the mid-eastern region of the United States. (Doctoral dissertation, State University of New York, Buffalo, 2005). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 66 (08), 3185342.

## Author(s)

Sandra Dee Washington

## Title

Correlates of job satisfaction among mid-level TRIO program administrators in the mid-eastern region of the United States

## Abstract

This study examined factors that contribute to job satisfaction among directors working for federally funded TRIO programs at colleges and universities in the mid- eastern region of the United States. Both independent and dependent variables were considered in this study. The independent variables were the demographic and institutional factors and the dependent variables were the intrinsic, extrinsic and general job satisfaction factors.

The conceptual framework for this study was based on Dawis and Lofquist's *Theory of Work Adjustment*. This study utilized the 1967 long-form version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) to measure the dependent variable of job satisfaction. This self-administered instrument is composed of 100 items which are work- related statements developed to test employees' satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their jobs. Demographic data were collected through the use of a researcher designed data form. A total of 238 useable surveys were returned from directors of TRIO programs working in federal regions II, III, V and VII.

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, content analysis, Independent Samples *t*-Test, and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). This study presented evidence that directors' satisfaction is influenced more by intrinsic factors than by extrinsic factors. The findings in this study indicated that respondents were most satisfied with the job related intrinsic factors of social service, moral values, achievement, creativity, and responsibility. They were least satisfied with the extrinsic factors of institutional policies and practices, compensation and advancement. The results indicated that there were significant relationships between the following independent and dependent variables: race/ethnicity and the social service facet; regional location and the advancement facet; and institution type (two-year/four-year) and the social service facet.

This study further revealed that the participants in this study were generally satisfied with their positions.

Recommendations for mid-level administrators, institutions, human resource development professionals, policymakers, and researchers were suggested.

## Research question

1. When examining mid-level college and university administrators working in TRIO programs in the mid-eastern region of the United States, is there a significant difference in job satisfaction factors by race/ethnicity, gender, age, institutional type (public/private and two-year/four-year), and regional location?

## TRIO program(s) or students involved

TRIO programs working in federal regions II, III, V and VII.

### **Method / Research Design**

The 1967 long-form version of the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (MSQ) to measure the dependent variable of job satisfaction; Total of 238 useable surveys were returned from directors of TRIO programs working in federal regions II, III, V and VII.

### **Analysis**

The data collected were analyzed using descriptive statistics, content analysis, Independent Samples *t*-Test, and One-Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

### **Key Findings**

The findings in this study indicated that respondents were most satisfied with the job related intrinsic factors of social service, moral values, achievement, creativity, and responsibility. They were least satisfied with the extrinsic factors of institutional policies and practices, compensation and advancement. The results indicated that there were significant relationships between the following independent and dependent variables: race/ethnicity and the social service facet; regional location and the advancement facet; and institution type (two-year/four-year) and the social service facet. This study further revealed that the participants in this study were generally satisfied with their positions.

### **Implications**

Given the unique employment circumstances surrounding TRIO professionals' positions (e.g. non-tenured status, grant funded, dual accountability, etc.) and the fact that they work at a variety of institutions with unique characteristics, they face unique professional development challenges. It is very unlikely that one type of career development program will meet the needs of this group. The individual institutions where directors are employed must continuously assess their job satisfaction levels. The institution should conduct annual performance evaluations with TRIO professionals to mirror what is done in relation to other mid-level professionals on campus. At the same time, institutions should assess employee job satisfaction levels. This is imperative for institutions that would like to improve productivity, organization, efficiency, retention and the overall quality of employees' work lives. In addition to evaluating performance, this would provide an opportunity to engage in dialogue about TRIO professionals' satisfaction and dissatisfaction with the work environment. Understanding what employees are satisfied and dissatisfied with is the first step in ensuring that employee satisfaction is sufficient. Other strategies might include: opportunities to become involved with committees and other activities on campus; identify professional development opportunities both on and off campus and encourage staff to improve their professional skills; support active involvement in regional, state, and national associations and conferences; and encourage continuation of education and support flexible schedules to take a course, workshop, and participate in scholarly activities. All of the aforementioned can help TRIO professionals become an integral part of the campus community so that they do not feel as if they operate on the periphery of the institution.

The findings of this study answered the research questions, but generated other questions that need further exploration in relation to job satisfaction. Based on the findings in this study and the review of related literature, the following areas were found to require further research: this study should be replicated using a national sample once the budget issues related to TRIO funding are resolved; a similar study on the job satisfaction of other mid-level administrator positions within TRIO such as associate director, assistant director, and coordinator; studying other positions within TRIO may provide more information on the work-life perceptions of these professionals; a qualitative or mixed method approach may provide a personal explication on the job satisfaction of TRIO administrators; a longitudinal study should be considered to compare job satisfaction levels over time as well as job tenure and to ascertain the extent that director's experience with TRIO helps them obtain higher level positions within higher

education; and examine other variables such leadership, superior- subordinate relationships, decision making and bureaucratization, organizational culture, organizational commitment and their relationship to job satisfaction for mid-level TRIO professionals.



**APA Citation**

**Marin, A.S. (2008). Beyond Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire Leadership: An Inferential Study of Leadership Styles of Federal TRIO Program Directors. (Doctoral dissertation, New Mexico State University 2009). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 70 (03), 3351912.**

**Author(s)**

Anthony S. Marin

**Title**

Beyond Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire Leadership: An Inferential Study of Leadership Styles of Federal TRIO Program Directors

**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to focus on Federal TRIO Program Directors who are located across the US and U.S. territorial possessions and their self-reported leadership styles. In particular, this study sought to examine leadership styles in conjunction to gender, race/ethnicity, and years of experience. Twenty-one specific research hypotheses were developed via the study's five research questions. General conclusions point to Transformational leadership style as the style of leadership most commonly associated with the sample population. Furthermore, significance in additional variables such as gender and years of professional experience was not demonstrated in leadership style. No differences in race/ethnicity and leadership style were found. The implications of the findings provide insight into the type of leaders Federal TRIO Program Directors are. Future studies would enhance the literature base, assisting researchers who wish to study further leadership as it relates to Federal TRIO Program Directors.

**Research question**

1. What types of leadership styles do Federal TRIO Program Directors have?
2. What types of leadership styles exist among female and male Federal TRIO Program Directors?
3. What relationships exist among years of experience in directing a Federal TRIO Program and leadership styles of Federal TRIO Program Directors?
4. What relationships exist among years of experience in directing a Federal TRIO Program, gender, and leadership styles of Federal TRIO Program Directors?
5. What racial differences exist in the reporting of leadership styles among Federal TRIO Program Directors?

**TRIO program(s) or students involved**

General TRIO Programming

**Method / Research Design**

The researcher used an inferential study method through the use of surveys. Participants were selected through a three-stage, random sample; of the 2,700 Federal TRIO Program Directors, 900 were randomly selected; random selection was accomplished by selecting every third Federal TRIO Program Director as listed in the *Directory of TRIO and GEAR UP Programs*; a sample of 33%; of the 900 randomly selected,

electronic mail contact information for 74 potential participants was obsolete; leaving a randomly selected sample size of 826; one hundred ninety-5 or 24% completed the survey.

## **Analysis**

The use of inferential (t-tests) and descriptive statistics was utilized in the study. Inferential statistics were used to make inferences and predictions about leadership styles in Federal TRIO Program Directors. Descriptive statistics were used to construct a profile of select demographics.

## **Key Findings**

Research hypothesis 1 proposed that Federal TRIO Program Directors would gravitate towards a Transformational style of leadership as opposed to a Transactional style of leadership. The findings supported this hypothesis.

Research hypothesis 1b1 proposed that Federal TRIO Program Directors' mean score would be higher on the Transformational style of leadership than the mean score on Laissez-Faire style of leadership, as measured by the MLQ. The hypothesis was accepted.

Research hypothesis 1b2 proposed that Federal TRIO Program Directors would favor a Transactional style of leadership as opposed to a Laissez-Faire style of leadership. This research hypothesis was accepted.

Research hypothesis 2a proposed that female Federal TRIO Program Directors would score higher on the Transformational style of leadership, as measured by the MLQ, as opposed to their male counterparts. This hypothesis was not supported by the data and therefore rejected.

Research hypothesis 2b proposed that female Federal TRIO Program Directors would score higher on the Transactional style of leadership, as measured by the MLQ, as opposed to their male counterparts. Research hypothesis 2b was rejected as the data indicated no significant differences exist.

Research hypothesis 2c proposed that male Federal TRIO Program Directors would score higher on the Laissez-Faire style of leadership, as measured by the MLQ, as opposed to their female counterparts. There was no significant difference.

Research hypothesis 3a proposed that the mean score on the Transformational style of leadership would be higher for those with 6 or more years of professional experience in directing a Federal TRIO Program than the mean score of those with 5 or less years of professional experience, as measured by the MLQ. Research. There was no significant difference.

Research hypothesis 3b proposed that the mean score on the Transactional style of leadership would be higher for those with 6 or more years of professional experience in directing a Federal TRIO Program than the mean score of those with 5 or less years of professional experience, as measured by the MLQ. The data analysis of the present study did not support this research hypothesis; therefore it was rejected.

Research hypothesis 3c proposed that the mean score on the Laissez-Faire style of leadership would be higher for those with 5 or less years of professional experience in directing a Federal TRIO Program than the mean score of those with 6 or more years of professional experience, as measured by the MLQ. The analysis specific to research hypothesis 3c was rejected.

Research hypothesis 4a 1 proposed that the mean score on the Transformational style of leadership would be higher for females with 6 or more years of professional experience in directing a Federal TRIO Program than the mean score of females with 5 or less years of professional experience, as measured by

the MLQ. The analysis did not support this hypothesis and the hypothesis was rejected.

Research hypothesis 4a2 1 proposed that the mean score on the Transactional style of leadership would be higher for females with 6 or more years of professional experience in directing a Federal TRIO Program than the mean score of females with 5 or less years of professional experience, as measured by the MLQ. As in the case with research hypothesis 4a1, no significant differences in research hypothesis 4a2 were detected resulting in a rejection of the research hypothesis.

Research hypothesis 4a3 proposed that the mean score on the Laissez-Faire style of leadership would be higher for females with 5 or less years of professional experience in directing a Federal TRIO Program than the mean score of females with 6 or more years of professional experience, as measured by the MLQ. Again, no significant differences were found resulting in a rejection of research hypothesis 4a3.

Research hypothesis 4b 1 proposed that the mean score on the Transformational style of leadership would be higher for males with 6 or more years of professional experience in directing a Federal TRIO Program than the mean score of males with 5 or less years of professional experience, as measured by the MLQ. However, one can conclude from the findings that when gender (male) and years of professional experience are examined in relation to leadership style, no relationship exists.

Research hypothesis 4b2 proposed that the mean score on the Transactional style of leadership would be higher for males with 6 or more years of professional experience in directing a Federal TRIO Program than the mean score of males with 5 or less years of professional experience, as measured by the MLQ. As in the case with research hypothesis 4b 1, no significant differences in research hypothesis 4b2 were detected resulting in a rejection of the research hypothesis.

Research hypothesis 4b3 proposed that the mean score on the Laissez-Faire style of leadership would be higher for females with 5 or less years of professional experience in directing a Federal TRIO Program than the mean score of females with 6 or more years of professional experience, as measured by the MLQ. Again, no significant differences were noted resulting in a rejection of research hypothesis 4b3.

Research hypothesis 5a1 proposed the mean scores for Federal TRIO Program Directors who are Anglo would not be different than the mean scores of non-Anglos on the Transformational style of leadership. As predicted, no significant differences exist. As such, research hypothesis 5a1 was accepted.

Research hypothesis 5a2 proposed the mean scores for Federal TRIO Program Directors who are Anglo would not be different than the mean scores of non-Anglos on the Transactional style of leadership. As in the case with research hypothesis 5a1, no significant differences in research hypothesis 5a2 were detected resulting in a rejection of the research hypothesis.

Research hypothesis 5a3 proposed the mean scores for Federal TRIO Program Directors who are Anglo would not be different than the mean scores of non-Anglos on the Laissez-Faire style of leadership. No significant differences were noted resulting in the acceptance of research hypothesis 5a3.

Research hypothesis 5b 1 proposed the mean scores for Federal TRIO Program Directors who are African-American would not be different than the mean scores of Latinos on the Transformational style of leadership. However, no significant differences were noted in the data; therefore research hypothesis 5b 1 was accepted.

Research hypothesis 5b2 proposed the mean scores for Federal TRIO Program Directors who are African-American would not be different than the mean scores of Latinos on the Transactional style of leadership.

As in the case with research hypothesis 5b 1, no significant differences in research hypothesis 5b2 were found resulting in a rejection of the research hypothesis.

Research hypothesis 5b3 proposed the mean scores for Federal TRIO Program Directors who are African-American would not be different than the mean scores of Latinos on the Laissez-Faire style of leadership. Again, no significant differences were found resulting in a rejection of research hypothesis 5b3.

### **Implications**

The findings suggested that Federal TRIO Program Directors perceived themselves as transformational leaders, as opposed to Transactional and Laissez-Faire leaders. The findings of this study provided insight into the type of leaders Federal TRIO Program Directors are. One can imply that regardless of gender, Federal TRIO Program Directors exhibit a higher level of commitment to the profession and to the purpose, goals and objectives of the Federal TRIO Programs. One can also imply with respect to gender and Federal TRIO Program Directors, similarities rather than differences are more prevalent. Also, regardless of race/ethnicity, Federal TRIO Program Directors still tend to identify with the same leadership styles. The researcher recommends that institutions of higher education must expand personal development opportunities. Recommendations for future researcher are to further examine the relationship of leadership and gender, years of professional experience, and race/ethnicity with the population of Federal TRIO Program Directors including individuals who have left the profession as a mechanism to compare similarities and/ or differences of those who stay and those who choose to leave the profession. Additional future research may want to examine similarities, rather than differences, as related to gender and leadership.

## APA Citation

**Valdes, P. (2008). *Mi Voz, Mi Historia – My Voice, Mt Story: Portraits of Four Latina/Chicana Undergraduate Leaders From Migrant Farmworker Backgrounds*. (Doctoral dissertation, Gonzaga University 2008). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 69 (04), 3311713.**

## Author(s)

Patricia Valdes

## Title

Mi Voz, Mi Historia – My Voice, Mt Story: Portraits of Four Latina/Chicana Undergraduate Leaders From Migrant Farmworker Backgrounds

## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore the ideas and life experiences that influenced four undergraduate Latina/Chicana students to pursue leadership roles throughout their educational careers. This study was engaged to reveal the Latina's voices who are first generation, to the United States, and who grew up in migrant farmworker families. A theoretical framework utilizing Chicana feminist theory, and portraiture, a qualitative methodology, was used to describe these women; their ideas and leadership experiences, the experiences that influenced them to be leaders, and the challenges and supports that they received.

The findings revealed four core themes: (a) heritage and becoming, (b) living leadership, (c) courage, passion, resilience, (d) reaching out. Heritage and becoming, presents the women's familial and cultural heritage and their impact on the development of who they are as leaders. Living leadership embodies the participants' ideas and experiences about leadership; not as an abstraction, but as a constant state of being that keeps them responding to the call for service and action. Courage, passion, and resilience embody the qualities exhibited by these four women in the context of their families, school activities, and communities. Finally, reaching out, both to receive support and to provide leadership, embodies the Latinas' life challenges as they moved out of the familiar, and experienced obstacles while navigating between mainstream culture and Mexican culture.

The findings of this study suggest recommendations for incorporation of a leadership curriculum in the school system and higher education. Furthermore, recommendations are given for the creation of school environments where migrant children's unique experiences and culture are recognized, and where the idea of leadership as a way of being is encouraged and viewed in the context of culture. It is recommended that leadership be explored in the context of service, social justice, and culture in leadership curricula, and that leadership curricula create opportunities for self-reflection. In addition, recommendations are made to provide opportunities for Latinas to be role models, mentors, and leaders who can use their bicultural knowledge. Finally, it is recommended that TRIO Programs, College Assistance Migrant Program, and Chicano Education programs be supported.

## Research question

1. Who are these women?
2. How do they understand and experience leadership?
3. What are the stories that inform us of the life experiences that influence Latina undergraduate students to become leaders during their educational career?

4. What are the challenges and supports that they received?

## **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

General TRIO programming

### **Method / Research Design**

A theoretical framework utilizing Chicana feminist theory, and portraiture (along with interviews), a qualitative methodology, was used to describe these women; their ideas and leadership experiences, the experiences that influenced them to be leaders, and the challenges and supports that they received. Four women attending Eastern Washington University were recruited through snowball effect. The women were first generation immigrants to the United States and from a Mexican migrant farmworker background, undergraduate students at a university and hold or have held positions of leadership during their educational careers and, are eighteen years old or older.

### **Analysis**

Portraiture utilizes primarily personal interviews, but also includes, notes from an impressionistic record, observations, and reading from gathered materials. The analysis of these data is a continuous process producing "emergent themes that grow out of data gathering and synthesis, accompanied by generative reflection and interpretive insight" (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 188). Coded for themes through: (a) listening for repetitive refrains, (b) metaphors, (c) cultural and institutional rituals, (d) the use of triangulation, and (e) the construction of themes and patterns among perspectives that are often experienced as contrasting" (p. 193).

### **Key Findings**

The findings revealed four core themes: (a) heritage and becoming, (b) living leadership, (c) courage, passion, resilience, (d) reaching out. Heritage and becoming, presents the women's familial and cultural heritage and their impact on the development of who they are as leaders. Living leadership embodies the participants' ideas and experiences about leadership; not as an abstraction, but as a constant state of being that keeps them responding to the call for service and action. Courage, passion, and resilience embody the qualities exhibited by these four women in the context of their families, school activities, and communities. Finally, reaching out, both to receive support and to provide leadership, embodies the Latinas' life challenges as they moved out of the familiar, and experienced obstacles while navigating between mainstream culture and Mexican culture.

### **Implications**

The findings of this study suggest recommendations for incorporation of a leadership curriculum in the school system and higher education. Furthermore, recommendations are given for the creation of school environments where migrant children's unique experiences and culture are recognized, and where the idea of leadership as a way of being is encouraged and viewed in the context of culture. It is recommended that leadership be explored in the context of service, social justice, and culture in leadership curricula, and that leadership curricula create opportunities for self- reflection. In addition, recommendations are made to provide opportunities for Latinas to be role models, mentors, and leaders who can use their bicultural knowledge. Finally, it is recommended that TRIO Programs, College Assistance Migrant Program, and Chicano Education programs be supported.

# Student Support Services

**Martin, K. (2001). A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Community Colleges' Student Support Services. (Doctoral dissertation, Baylor University, 2001). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62 (01), 3002552.**

## **Author(s)**

Kenneth Martin

## **Title**

A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Community Colleges' Student Support Services

## **Abstract**

This study analyzed data regarding the services, program components, outcomes and personnel in selected urban and rural Community College Student Support Services Programs in Texas.

Twenty-three Texas Community College Student Support Services Programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education participated in the study. Each institution received funds to serve 150 or more students. Directors of each program agreed to participate in the study and to allow the researcher to study the Student Support Services proposal or yearly report. Proposals indicated the intent of each institution's Fiscal Year (FY) 1998-99 Student Support Services Program, and the end of the year reports described the actual services, components, outcomes, personnel, and number of participants assisted during the period. The end-of-year or performance reports provided information about the participants served during the year and how each qualified within the program.

A simulated performance evaluation data sheet was used to document the data. A t-test was used to compare the 23 variables in the study.

The study found that there were two ethnic groups with a statistically significant difference in service levels between the rural and urban programs. The rural programs served significantly more White Non-Hispanic participants compared to the urban programs, and the urban programs served significantly more Asian/Pacific Islanders compared to rural programs.

The rural programs served a significantly larger number of Disabled/Low Income participants compared to those at urban institutions. The analysis indicated 64% of the urban community colleges Student Support Services participants were commuters and was statistically significant compared to the rural colleges. The research further determined there was a significant difference between rural and urban Graduate or Successfully Transfer outcomes. The study found the rural programs had a higher success rate for graduating and transferring students.

Five of the twenty-four variables were statistically significantly different. The analysis of these variables was explained within the findings and conclusions in Chapter Five.

## **Research question**

1. Do the urban and rural community colleges' programs differ significantly in the number of participants served by career counseling, academic counseling, financial aid, tutoring or two-year/four-year articulation components?
2. Do the urban and rural community colleges' programs differ significantly in the number of participants who attended cultural enrichment activities?

3. Do the urban and rural community colleges' programs differ significantly in the number of participants served with regard to ethnicity, gender, and educational status?
4. Do the urban and rural community colleges' programs differ significantly in the number of participants served who are classified as low-income/first-generation, low-income/first-generation/disabled, or disabled/low-income?
5. Do the urban and rural community colleges' programs differ significantly in the percentage of participants who were commuters?
6. Do the urban and rural community colleges' programs differ significantly in the percentage of participants who graduated or successfully transferred to a four-year institution?
7. the urban and rural community colleges' programs differ significantly in the rate of participants retained or with grade point averages above 2.0?
8. the urban and rural community colleges' programs differ significantly in the number of personnel reported as full-time employees?

### **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Student Support Services

### **Method / Research Design**

Twenty-three Texas Community College Student Support Services Programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education participated in the study. Each institution received funds to serve 150 or more students. Directors of each program agreed to participate in the study and to allow the researcher to study the Student Support Services proposal or yearly report. Proposals indicated the intent of each institution's Fiscal Year (FY) 1998-99 Student Support Services Program, and the end of the year reports described the actual services, components, outcomes, personnel, and number of participants assisted during the period. The end-of-year or performance reports provided information about the participants served during the year and how each qualified within the program.

### **Analysis**

A simulated performance evaluation data sheet was used to document the data. A t-test was used to compare the 23 variables in the study.

### **Key Findings**

The study found that there were two ethnic groups with a statistically significant difference in service levels between the rural and urban programs. The rural programs served significantly more White Non-Hispanic participants compared to the urban programs, and the urban programs served significantly more Asian/Pacific Islanders compared to rural programs.

The rural programs served a significantly larger number of Disabled/Low Income participants compared to those at urban institutions. The analysis indicated 64% of the urban community colleges Student Support Services participants were commuters and was statistically significant compared to the rural colleges. The research further determined there was a significant difference between rural and urban Graduate or Successfully Transfer outcomes. The study found the rural programs had a higher success rate for graduating and transferring students.

### **Implications**



The researcher suggests that future research investigate: the specific services offered per Student Support Services Programs according to geographical location; possibility of allowing incentive funds for individual programs demonstrating exceptional outcomes and performance; possibility of providing additional funding for rural or urban programs who provide services to the disabled; and the staffing needs for both rural and urban Student Support Services.

**APA Citation**

Cotter, M.S. (2001). *Coversations in the Zone: Collaborative Learning in the Counselor/Student Relationship*. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Tennessee, 2001). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62 (04), 3010312.

**Author(s)**

Mark S. Cotter

**Title**

Coversations in the Zone: Collaborative Learning in the Counselor/Student Relationship

**Abstract**

This study was an action research project using collaborative learning to inquire into my practice as a counselor working with nine first-generation college students in a federal TRIO Student Support Services (SSS) program at a land-grant university. The study followed the description of the history and parameters of my practice, my assumptions and reasons for interest in the initiative, a practical theory for addressing issues, and the reasons I believe collaborative learning reconciles practical and formal theories.

My goal in this work was to move beyond an information-gathering role with students to a dialogical relationship in which we jointly construct knowledge. To this end, I initiated a phenomenological interview as part of the intake process for students applying to the SSS program and then followed this with a dialogue with students.

Three students participated in the summer semester of 2000, and six in the fall semester of 2000. A change in procedure from the summer to fall semesters enhanced the sought-after conversational qualities I define as "in the zone." I found elements of our dialogue that help to define this type of conversation--speech that carries its own momentum, playing with concepts, and use of images and metaphor. Experiential knowledge was also co-constructed within the zone.

The study revealed phenomenological interviews to be an enlightening experience for students and myself. It also demonstrated that in-depth and image-rich conversations can help develop responsive relationships while preserving our respective roles. Results indicated that participants interpreted experiences through meaning perspectives and that the criteria for dialogue and expectations of participants had an effect on the quality of our conversations. An analysis of the action research project indicated that it does meet the criteria set out by Helen Bradbury and Peter Reason in the *Handbook of Action Research*. Beyond providing new knowledge and meeting quality standards, the study contributed to my practice by helping me to transcend a fear of engagement and thereby to be open to the experiences of others.

**Research question**

1. What are the forms of the dialogue?
2. What is the nature of our relationship as we move from one form of dialogue to another?
3. What makes the form of dialogue what it is?

**TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Student Support Services

## **Method / Research Design**

The researcher used qualitative methods through a phenomenological interview as part of the intake process for students applying to the SSS program and then followed this with a dialogue with students. The participants were three students participated in the summer semester of 2000, and six in the fall semester of 2000.

## **Analysis**

The researcher uses the DATA-DATA model (Peters, 1997). The researcher describes, analyzes, theorizes, and then acts through each DATA model. The structure of a DATA-DATA approach is reflected in the work that is to follow. DATA 1 is seen in exploration of the practice, its historical roots and philosophies, and the ways of negotiating practice at the institutional and counselor level. DATA II spells out the way the researcher has chosen to inquire in that practice. The researcher chose this design because it establishes the links connecting the researcher's philosophical stance, the established theories of the practice, the process of decision-making, and the learning that takes place.

## **Key Findings**

Results indicated that participants interpreted experiences through meaning perspectives and that the criteria for dialogue and expectations of participants had an effect on the quality of our conversations. An analysis of the action research project indicated that it does meet the criteria set out by Helen Bradbury and Peter Reason in the *Handbook of Action Research* .

## **Implications**

Beyond providing new knowledge and meeting quality standards, the study contributed to my practice by helping me to transcend a fear of engagement and thereby to be open to the experiences of others.

## **APA Citation**

**Lobo, C.P. (2001). Tellin' it like it is: Disempowerment and marginalization of first generation, low-income college students: A participatory research (Doctoral dissertation, University of San Francisco, 2001). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62 (3), 3010142A.**

## **Author(s)**

Charlene P. Lobo

## **Title**

Tellin' it like it is: Disempowerment and marginalization of first-generation, low-income college students: A participatory research

## **Abstract**

This study examined the origins and outcomes of disempowerment and marginalization in five first-generation, low-income college students who were participants in Student Support Services, a federally funded TRIO program at a large urban commuter state university. Using dialogic introspection and participatory research, the participants reflected on their experiences in the areas of disempowerment, marginalization, educational equity, oppression and the needs and concerns of first-generation low-income students. Generative themes fell into three areas: creating conditions for learning; silencing the voice; and resistance, persistence and hope. Themes that created negative experiences for the students included disparities between academic and personal cultures, lack of preparation and community, and the inability of faculty and staff to work with students from diverse backgrounds. These factors led to a feeling of lack of safety and a loss of voice and sense of self. The findings also highlighted the students' understanding of the importance of education, support, and hope in their lives as well as the imperative to share their knowledge with others. Necessary conditions for the success and empowerment of first-generation low-income students include a strong support system in the form of programs specifically targeting the population, as well as a faculty and staff that are aware of their needs and concerns. Future research should consider origins of disempowerment of students who successfully complete college as well as the development of goal-directed behavior; and the impact of traumatic events on the academic success of first-generation low-income students. Future research can be replicated with Upward Bound and Educational Talent Search students, two TRIO populations that graduate to become SSS students.

## **Research question**

- 1) How are first-generation, low-income college students disempowered and/or marginalized at the university?
- 2) How has the experience of being disempowered/marginalized affected first-generation, low-income college students?
- 3) What do the experiences of the first-generation, low-income college students reveal about the conditions of the university and in which they live?
- 4) In what ways will the students be able to adapt to their environment at the university?
- 5) What are their recommendations for action?

## **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Student Support Services

## **Method / Research Design**

The researcher used qualitative, participatory research. Participants were students at San Francisco State University. Five co-participants who were active in the Student Support Services. Students participated in dialogues, which had introductory questions, but did not constrain a student's freedom to speak his or her mind. A second dialogue followed the first for participants to read and assess what had been stated previously. The students were also asked to write autobiographies on their personal life and college experience. Students were provided 11 questions to answer within their autobiography.

### **Analysis**

Through the analysis the individual dialogue became a reflection of the societal fabric from whence the dialogue first comes, and then answers to the research questions were derived. The first dialogue generated clarity and an understanding of what was highly significant to participants. Finding the generative themes in that dialogue led to the second dialogue, which allowed for further clarification.

### **Key Findings**

The following themes emerged in response to the research questions: 1) Creating the conditions for learning; 2) Silence, and 3) Resilience and persistence. These three themes found significant barriers for first-generation due to differences between academic culture and the participant's culture, a lack of preparation and perceived options, a lack of community and support networks, an inability of faculty and staff to work with diverse populations, a lack of safety, and a feeling of a loss of voice and sense of self. When examining resilience and persistence the author determined that first-generation students needed greater support from both faculty and peers. Participants stated the importance of SSS and its ability to create a supportive classroom environment.

### **Implications**

The findings suggest that the co-participants found themselves in an environment that challenges their worldviews and ways of being. In order to meet those challenges, the co-participants have learned to develop positive coping mechanisms such as forming networks, working collaboratively with others, and accessing programs that can provide support, as well as engaging in goal-oriented attitude and behavior. The coping mechanisms served to provide the students with a means of building positive self-esteem, thus promoting resilience, persistence, and hope.

## APA Citation

**Johnson-Osho, L.A. (2002). Relationship between at-risk students' perceptions and academic performance and the role of advisors (Doctoral dissertation, Roosevelt University, 2001). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62 (8), 3023393A.**

## Author(s)

Lorie Johnson-Osho

## Title

Relationship between at-risk students' perceptions and academic performance and the role of advisors

## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to explore at-risk students' perceptions of their potential for academic achievement in higher education and to examine why they have arrived at these perceptions. The study also examined how advisors use their position of leadership to influence at-risk students.

The data for this investigation was collected from 25 students enrolled in a study skills development course at a private urban university located in a large metropolitan city. The subjects were participants in the Student Support Services program, which is funded through TRIO. TRIO programs were enacted through Title IV of the Higher Education Act to provide outreach and support services to low-income and first-generation students. There were also four university advisors that participated in the study.

The research design of the case study utilized qualitative techniques to gather data to respond to the research questions. This also included collecting reports on the students' completion of assignments, course attendance, tutorial sessions, and number of meetings with the advisor. In addition, students participated in a tape-recorded interview conducted by the researcher. The researcher also conducted tape-recorded interviews with four academic advisors at the university to assess the advisors' perceptions of their role in assisting at-risk students.

The study found that at-risk students' perceptions of their potential for academic achievement are optimistic. An analysis of the data revealed hopeful and expectant attitudes from the students concerning their potential for academic achievement. The students also indicated that their advisors were instrumental in providing them with information, motivation, and were role models.

The advisors in the study indicated that they frequently use their leadership skill by forming an influential relationship to motivate students to achieve. In addition, they monitored the students' grades, decision-making ability and communication skills as a way of assessing the students' overall growth and development at the university.

## Research question

1. What are at-risk students' perceptions of their potential for academic achievement?
2. How does the academic behavior of at-risk students support their perceptions of their potential for academic achievement?
3. What are at-risk students' perceptions of the influence of advisors on their academic performance?
4. How do student advisors believe they use their position of leadership to influence the academic performance of at-risk students?

5. How do student advisors assess if the academic performance of at-risk students is being influenced under their leadership?

## **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Student Support Services

## **Method / Research Design**

The data for this investigation was collected from 25 students enrolled in a study skills development course at a private urban university located in a large metropolitan city.

## **Analysis**

The research design of the case study utilized qualitative techniques to gather data to respond to the research questions. This also included collecting reports on the students' completion of assignments, course attendance, tutorial sessions, and number of meetings with the advisor, as well as tape-recorded interviews conducted with students and four academic advisors at the university to assess the advisors' perceptions of their role in assisting at-risk students.

## **Key Findings**

The study found that at-risk students' perceptions of their potential for academic achievement are optimistic. An analysis of the data revealed hopeful and expectant attitudes from the students concerning their potential for academic achievement. The students also indicated that their advisors were instrumental in providing them with information, motivation, and were role models.

The advisors in the study indicated that they frequently use their leadership skill by forming an influential relationship to motivate students to achieve. In addition, they monitored the students' grades, decision-making ability and communication skills as a way of assessing the students' overall growth and development at the university.

## **Implications**

Implications cannot be generalized.

The results of this study indicate that at-risk students enroll in the university with the belief that they can graduate from the institution. Yet, they are cognizant of their need for academic support and involvement by the university's administration and faculty. As universities continue to open the doors to students who may lack in academic preparation, attention must be given to increasing the level of academic performance in these groups. Advisors can be instrumental in increasing academic performance levels by using their leadership skills and influence through establishing relationships with at-risk students.

The researcher suggests: making effective time-management and decision-making a part of the study skills curriculum; monitoring academic behavior and put an early alert system in place; actively provide guidance and information; create opportunities for students to engage with peers; have students use office hours or ask faculty for more flexibility in availability; expand academic services; create greater awareness of support services; establish stronger relationships with faculty to gain an increase in student support referrals; remove stigma from programming; and expand contact and relationships with students. Future research should explore: compare student's perspectives of advising with advisor's perspectives; how the faculty influences the academic performance of at-risk students; how university students make decisions about career choices and degree completion based on their academic performance; at-risk students' approaches to self-monitoring and regulation of academic behavior; and the effects and outcomes of academic failure on student behavior

**APA Citation**

**Penalber, E.L. (2005). The effectiveness of student support services at a research extensive university in the South. (Doctoral dissertation, Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, 2005). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 66 (07), 3184090.**

**Author(s)**

Eric Lyle Penalber

**Title**

The effectiveness of student support services at a research extensive university in the South

**Abstract**

The primary purpose of this study was to determine the influence of level of participation in services provided by the Student Support Services (SSS) Program on the grade point average, retention, and the six-year graduation rate of first-time entering freshmen who also entered the SSS program at a research extensive university in the South. Participants in the study were one hundred, fifty-two (152) SSS students who entered this university in the fall of 1996 and fall of 1997.

Tinto's (1987) longitudinal model of institutional departure was used as the conceptual framework for this study. Services provided by the SSS program were examined to determine whether they were academic (formal) and social (informal) and if student participation encouraged integration in the university, thus decreasing the rate of departure among study participants.

A computerized recording form designed by the researcher was used to collect data for this study. Those specific variables that were measured were selected based on the review of related literature and the information that was obtainable from the University's undergraduate admission and student records data bases. Information from the data bases was downloaded into a file and was systematically organized. All of the information collected for this study, both personal and academic, was collected unobtrusively from the data bases.

Findings indicate that peer mentoring, tutoring, counseling, and study skills training were provided to participants in the study group, and that hours earned and hours carried each semester significantly impacted student grade point averages. The mentoring and study skills services provided by SSS, as well as cumulative hours earned and high school academic grade point averages, influenced student retention for the 5 semester of enrollment. Both sixth and seventh semester retention was positively affected by the cumulative number of hours students had earned prior to the semester under investigation. Results of this study also indicated that those students who successfully earned more credit hours each semester were more likely to continue postsecondary education until they were graduated.

As a result of the findings of the study, the researcher recommends that administrators and counselors of the SSS program carefully examine the high school academic GPAs of students enrolled in the program to assist in identifying students who are at greater risk of unsatisfactory academic performance. The researcher recommends SSS staff work closely with participants to develop a degree plan which includes an outline of the courses (hours carried) for which each student will enroll each semester. Program administrators should also investigate the possibility of expanding the study skills program beyond the first year for the potential beneficial effect on student retention.

**Research question**

The following research questions guided the study and constitute the tasks engaged in:



1. What were the characteristics of entering freshmen who enrolled in the Student Support Services (SSS) program at a research extensive university in the South during the 1996 and 1997 fall semesters?
  - a. Age
  - b. Gender
  - c. Ethnicity
  - d. ACT scores
  - e. Academic high school grade point average (GPA)
  - f. Home parish
  - g. Whether they reside on or off campus
  - h. Academic college of enrollment
  - i. Hours attempted each semester
  - j. Hours earned each semester
2. What was the level of participation in the services provided (e.g.: tutoring, study skills, counseling, etc.) by the Student Support Services (SSS) Program at a research extensive university in the South among first-time, entering freshmen who enrolled in the SSS program during the 1996 and 1997 fall semesters?
3. What is the impact of the level of participation in selected SSS program services among fall semester 1996 and 1997 first time, entering freshmen on academic success as measured by both semester and cumulative grade-point averages at the end of each semester of their enrollment in college when the factor of standardized test scores, as measured by composite ACT score, is controlled?
4. What is the impact of the level of participation in selected SSS program services among fall semester 1996 and 1997 first-time, entering freshmen on academic success as measured by retention? Retention is defined as whether or not the student was enrolled on the 14th class day of each semester of the six-year period from the date of his/her first enrollment in the university. For the purpose of this study, students who are graduated prior to the end of the six-year period will be counted as retained when the academic factor of standardized test scores as measured by composite ACT score is controlled.
5. What is the impact of the level of participation in selected SSS program services, among fall semester 1996 and 1997 first-time, entering freshmen on academic success as measured by degree completion when the academic factor of standardized test scores as measured by composite ACT score is controlled? Degree completion is defined as whether or not the student was graduated with a baccalaureate degree within a period of six years.

### **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Student Support Services

### **Method / Research Design**

152 full-time students enrolled at the university who entered as first-time freshmen during the fall semesters of 1996 or 1997 and enrolled in the Student Support Services (SSS) program upon entrance to the university. A computerized recording form, designed by the researcher, was used to collect data in this study.

### **Analysis**

Those specific variables that were measured were selected based on the review of related literature and the information that was obtainable from the University's undergraduate admission and student records databases. Information from the databases was downloaded into a file and was systematically organized. Means and standard deviations were used to describe subjects on variables measured at an interval or higher level of measurement. This was followed by regression analysis.

## **Key Findings**

Findings indicate that peer mentoring, tutoring, counseling, and study skills training were provided to participants in the study group, and that hours earned and hours carried each semester significantly impacted student grade point averages. The mentoring and study skills services provided by SSS, as well as cumulative hours earned and high school academic grade point averages, influenced student retention for the 5 semester of enrollment. Both sixth and seventh semester retention was positively affected by the cumulative number of hours students had earned prior to the semester under investigation. Results of this study also indicated that those students who successfully earned more credit hours each semester were more likely to continue postsecondary education until they were graduated.

## **Implications**

The factors that had the greatest impact on the academic performance of SSS students were the number of credit hours earned, the high school academic GPA, and number of credit hours carried. This conclusion is based on the following findings of the study: (a) Number of credit hours earned entered each of the regression analyses that examined student GPA as statistically significant explanatory factors with percentages of variance explained of 20, 42, and 40 respectively for the models which regressed first semester GPA, first year cumulative GPA, and second year cumulative GPA on the specified independent variable measures. (b) High school academic GPA also entered each of these three models as statistically significant factors with percentages of variance explained of 11, 6 and 6. (c) The number of credit hours carried entered each of the models examined as significant factors with percentages of variance explained of 8, 5, and 11.

Based on this conclusion and these findings, the researcher recommends that administrators and counselors of the SSS program carefully examine the high school academic GPA's of students enrolled in the program to assist in identifying students that are at greater risk of unsatisfactory academic performance. In addition, the researcher recommends that the SSS staff carefully monitor the course loads of students in the SSS program with greater emphasis placed on assisting students with the selection of optimum hours of enrollment. Since the number of hours carried negatively impacted academic success (as measured by GPA) while the number of hours earned positively impacted academic success, care should be taken in the advising process to ensure that students are enrolled in only courses for which they have the requisite background needed for success.

Finally, the researcher recommends that further research be conducted to more thoroughly examine the relationship between these measures and academic performance. While these findings are consistent with previous research regarding the nature of the association with high school academic measures, the connection between hours earned and carried and academic performance has little basis in the research literature. Potential areas of implication for this research include changes in definitions of full-time study and establishment of course load guidelines for participation in the SSS program.

## **APA Citation**

**Bailey, B.C. (2005). Impact of the West Virginia University Student Support Services/TRIO Program from 1998-2004. (Doctoral dissertation, West Virginia University, 2005). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 66 (04), 3170907.**

## **Author(s)**

Barbara Copenhaver Bailey

## **Title**

Impact of the West Virginia University Student Support Services/TRIO Program from 1998-2004

## **Abstract**

Institutions of higher education are facing more challenges today than ever regarding student retention and graduation rates. Graduation rates in higher education have been declining over the past several years. Because of this, many institutions are becoming increasingly interested in the needs of special populations in an effort to retain them at higher rates. One of these special populations is first-generation, low-income college students. The federal TRIO grant, Student Support Services (SSS) program is funded by the United States Department of Education to serve this population to increase their graduation rates.

The purpose of this study was to examine the West Virginia University (WVU) SSS/TRIO participants' graduation rates and academic performance (GPA) upon graduation as compared to eligible non-participants and non-eligible students entering as first-time, full-time freshmen at WVU during the fall semesters of 1998 through 2003. This study also examined if attributes identified including age, ethnicity, gender, high school GPA, state residency, and ACT/SAT scores appeared to have an impact on graduation rates or academic performance (GPA) upon graduation of the three groups.

Data were collected in collaboration with WVU Admissions and Records and were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Descriptive statistics were used to report the participants' profile using the identified attributes. Chi square was used to analyze differences in graduation rates among the three groups. Analysis of variance was used to ascertain if there was significant difference among the groups in academic performance (GPA) upon graduation. Discriminant analysis was used to determine impact of identified attributes on graduation rates, and multiple regression analysis was used to determine impact of attributes affecting academic performance (GPA) upon graduation.

A significant difference was found in six-year and five-year graduation rates with no significant difference identified for four-year rates among the groups. A significant difference was identified in academic performance (GPA) upon graduation among groups. It was noted that attributes identified in this study did have an impact on graduation for all groups. It was also found that attributes identified did have an impact on academic performance (GPA) upon graduation for all groups.

## **Research question**

The following research questions were formulated to guide this study:

1. What is the profile including age, ethnicity, gender, high school GPA, state residency, and SAT/ACT scores of West Virginia University first-time, full-time freshmen that elected to participate in the Student Support Services/ TRIO program compared to that of eligible non-participants and non-eligible students entering in the fall semesters of 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003?
2. What is the difference in the graduation rates of the West Virginia University Student Support Services/TRIO participants compared to that of eligible non-participants and non-eligible students entering in the fall semesters of 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003?

3. What is the difference in academic performance (GPA) upon graduation of the West Virginia University Student Support Services/TRIO participants compared to that of eligible non-participants and non-eligible students entering in the fall semesters of the 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2002, and 2003?
4. Which of the attributes identified including age, ethnicity, gender, high school GPA, state residency, and SAT/ACT scores appear to have an impact on the graduation rates of Student Support Services/TRIO participants, eligible non-participants, and non-eligible students?
5. Which of the attributes identified including age, ethnicity, gender, high school GPA, state residency, and SAT/ACT scores appear to have an impact on academic performance (GPA) upon graduation of Student Support Services/TRIO participants, eligible non-participants, and non-eligible students?

### **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Student Support Services

### **Method / Research Design**

In collaboration with the West Virginia University Office of Admissions & Records, the West Virginia University student information database of official records was accessed and data for the two control groups were collected. Student Support Services provided Admissions and Records with the program participants' student identification numbers for the 250 freshmen entering the program in the fall semester of the six academic years being studied. The researcher used an appropriately sized sample that was randomly selected within each of the six cohort years for each group; eligible non-participants and the non-eligible students.

### **Analysis**

The data collected by the Office of Admissions & Records using the identified parameters and boundaries were then analyzed by the researcher using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The researcher used descriptive statistics; Chi Square, analysis variance, and discriminant analysis.

### **Key Findings**

Findings showed that West Virginia University Student Support Services participants enter college at a slightly older age than do eligible non-participant or non-eligible student groups. Additionally, West Virginia University Student Support Services program has larger percentages of participants who are minorities, female, and West Virginia residents than the eligible non-participant or non-eligible student groups. West Virginia University Student Support Services participants also enter college with lower high school GPAs and slightly lower scores on their ACT/SAT tests than the eligible non-participant or non-eligible student groups. The non-eligible students have higher graduation rates than do Student Support Services and eligible non-participant groups. This finding is in line with the current research that indicates that first-generation, low-income college students graduate at lower rates than their counterparts. Also, the Student Support Services group had a lower average GPA upon graduation than do the other two groups. Given that the Student Support Services group entered college with lower high school GPAs and lower ACT/SAT scores than the other two groups, this conclusion could be expected. It is unclear if any of the chosen variables have a cause/effect relationship on the graduation rates for the three groups in this study. This would support the current research reviewed in Chapter II that indicates that support services or specific variables cannot be linked to college graduation rates or grade point averages.

### **Implications**

The researcher suggests the following recommendations: appropriate evaluation and assessment of the components of the program in place in order to continue to make improvements in the services and information gathered in this study should be appropriately communicated to groups and individuals that might find the data useful such as United States Department of Education, Council on Education, West Virginia Association of Educational Opportunity Program Personnel, and West Virginia University Student Affairs. In addition to the above recommendations, several possible research studies have been identified that might contribute additional data to the research on first-generation, low-income college students. This research could contribute information on TRIO programs and more specifically the West Virginia University Student Support Services program. These suggestions for further studies are a qualitative study of the West Virginia University Student Support Services participants to identify the participants' perception of the extent to which they feel they have been assisted by the program and level of utilization (low, moderate, high) of program services; a study focused on the impact of the West Virginia PROMISE scholarship on the change in student profile and graduation rates should be conducted; six-year graduation rates of the three groups in this study should be continued to further identify patterns or trends; and interview students who do not return to college to identify those who stop-out, drop-out, or fail-out should be conducted.

## **APA Citation**

**Andrepoint-Warren, K. (2005). Advising perceptions in Student Support Services. (Doctoral dissertation, Louisiana State University and Agricultural & Mechanical College, 2005). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 66 (11), 3199768.**

## **Author(s)**

Kim Andrepoint-Warren

## **Title**

Advising perceptions in Student Support Services

## **Abstract**

This study seeks to understand the perceptions of advisors and students about the TRIO Student Support Services they provide or receive, with particular attention to how their perceptions relate to best practice theories of developmental and prescriptive advising behaviors. By comparing the perceptions of stakeholders to the theory behind the services, a better understanding of the current advising practice of Student Support Services (SSS) is obtained. Data for this study were derived from the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI), a compilation of both advisors' and students' perceptions of services in SSS. Observations and quantitative data were used in this study.

Five advisors and 25 students from three institutions participated in this study. Advisors and students overwhelmingly perceived developmental advising in observed advising sessions; however, advisors' and students' scores widely ranged. Advisors tended to over score their advising behavior and students tended to underscore their advisors' advising behavior. Inconsistencies were detected of perceptions of topic/activity frequency between advisors, students and me. Students also reported being very satisfied with the advising services they received in the SSS programs.

Results of this study can be used to: 1) identify optimum advising behaviors in Student Support Services; 2) raise the importance and recognition level on the differences and similarities of advisor and student perceptions of services which can and do have an impact on the creation of advising policies; 3) recognize and understand kinds of discrepancies and homogeneity of advisor and student perceptions of advising services to assist and support the needs of disadvantaged students; 4) assess, design or revise advising training programs for SSS advisors and possibly for campus-wide advisor training programs as well.

## **Research question**

This qualitative study is designed to gain an understanding of the methods TRIO Student Support Services advisors use in their advising sessions with at-risks students and their and their advisees' perceptions of the adequacy of those behaviors in advising sessions. Since the proposed study is designed to illuminate the perceptions of advisors and students independent of one another, the research questions guiding this study are:

1. To what extent and in what ways do Student Support Services advisors employ developmental and prescriptive advising in their work with students?
2. What are Student Support Services advisors' perceptions of how they advise Student Support Services students?
3. What are Student Support Services students' perceptions of how they are advised by Student Support Services advisors?
4. What are the consistencies and inconsistencies among perceptions of advising type?

## 5. How does perception of advising type affect students' satisfaction?

### **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Student Support Services

### **Method / Research Design**

Data for this study were derived from the Academic Advising Inventory (AAI), a compilation of both advisors' and students' perceptions of services in SSS. Five advisors and 25 students from three institutions participated in this study. The researcher applied a mixed method research design employing both personal observation of advising sessions and a survey instrument given to participants after the advising sessions.

### **Analysis**

In order to take into account various features of how students and advisors interact during their sessions, the researcher observed students and advisors during advising sessions. The researcher related the advisor and student behavior that he witnessed to the behaviors indicated as optimum in the advising instrument, Academic Advising Inventory (AAI). After the individual advising sessions, he distributed the AAI to students in order to get their perceptions on how they were being advised. After all the sessions were observed (waiting until this point to avoid impacting advisor behavior), the researcher distributed the AAI to advisors, in order to gain their perceptions on how they are advising students. The researchers used tape-based analysis, observations, and debriefings.

### **Key Findings**

Advisors and students overwhelmingly perceived developmental advising in observed advising sessions; however, advisors' and students' scores widely ranged. Advisors tended to over score their advising behavior and students tended to underscore their advisors' advising behavior. Inconsistencies were detected of perceptions of topic/activity frequency between advisors, students and me. Students also reported being very satisfied with the advising services they received in the SSS programs.

### **Implications**

The results can aid educators in both understanding how advising behaviors and perceptions could impact future policies and by possibly providing additional services to assist and support disadvantaged college students. For example, particular results could be used to assess how advisors could provide more developmental approaches to advising. This could lead to a reassessment of the number of students each SSS advisor is assigned, taking on a different approach to advising, providing training for advisors in developmental advising theory, and creating additional services or expanding existing ones to address the advising needs of the at-risk student population. Educators could also use these results to create new or revise existing advising services for the general student population. Results, specifically those relating to satisfaction and those regarding the similarities and differences of developmental advising perceptions, could help advisors develop new skills and knowledge that were not previously required (OíBanion, 1972).

The researcher suggests that future researcher should explore: advising at-risk students (defined as low-income and first-generation students); replication studies at other higher education institutions and at other SSS programs; satisfaction studies that define the scope of the advising activities first, then ask students' opinions on the advising activities should be done in the future to give a more accurate picture of student satisfaction; retention studies regarding at-risk students and the role advising plays in retention; different types of SSS program evaluation studies on each component of the program; qualitative research is needed regarding SSS and advising; and new or revised instruments to evaluate advising programs and behaviors need to be developed

**APA Citation**

**Noble, L. (2007). Evaluating a College Developmental Reading Program: Recommendations for Improvements. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Delaware, 2008). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 69 (01), 3291725.**

**Author(s)**

Lanetia (Sam) Noble

**Title**

Evaluating a College Developmental Reading Program: Recommendations for Improvements

**Abstract**

The purpose of this project is to evaluate the current methods and materials that are being used in the reading and study skills sections of a college developmental reading course supported by the Act 101 Program of Pennsylvania and Student Support Services, a federal TRIO Program. Both programs help under prepared students prepare for college. Further, it will provide research-based suggestions that can help instructors select methods and materials that may improve reading abilities for students in the program. The recommendations will have particular applicability since instructors for this program change frequently and are often part-time faculty with little experience or education in teaching developmental reading to college students.

To guide the recommendations offered, research literature is used to synthesize practices that often improve the reading abilities of developmental students and apply them to this particular program. These practices can be used for faculty development and to help new instructors become familiar with the methods and materials that have utility for college developmental readers.

The project is presented in three chapters. The first chapter contains a literature review that identifies several important areas of research that examine the nature of college developmental reading and look at theories concerning methods for improving students' reading abilities. The second chapter will describe the developmental reading methods and materials presently being used in this program and the content and instructional strategies that presently support the formation of reading abilities. The third chapter presents materials and methods that tend to improve developmental students' reading abilities and suggestions for how they might be applied to this program

**Research question**

1. What is the nature of developmental education?
2. How can developmental students' reading abilities be improved?

**TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Student Support Services

**Method / Research Design**

Participants are in the Act 101 Program of Pennsylvania and Student Support Services. The researcher used qualitative research methods through interviews, observations, and a questionnaire.

**Analysis**

The researcher used qualitative coding to identify common themes. The researcher reread coding categories, both expanding and refining them. The researcher reread all the field notes, memos, snapshots, interviews, written questionnaires, and the information about the Accuplacer.



## **Key Findings**

The four key findings of the study are: students need self-management and study skills; students need to develop a better vocabulary; the instructor needs greater information about students and students need information about themselves as students for greater self understanding; and students need to be engaged in motivational reading experiences and develop an interest in wide reading with authentic materials.

## **Implications**

Improved study skills will help students feel more integrated into the college community because they know what is expected of college students and what they must do to be successful in their courses. The best methods and materials for teaching study skills use a direct application of the skills to materials that the students need to learn. Self-management skills also need to be applied to students' real and anticipated problems. Similarly, vocabulary instruction has little effect unless it is related to words students need to know. The methods suggested for supporting reading also suggest materials that have utility and interest for the reader. The more students read, the better their receptive and expressive vocabularies become and the more information they gather to support instruction. Practices suggested by the researcher were: students need to improve computer literacy skills; time management instruction should help students find time when they can read or listen to materials for information and enjoyment; increased collaboration with the library to introduce students to materials that can be read for enjoyment or personal interest; hire a reading instructor who will be willing to return over the summers; and the entire staff and faculty should be encouraged to share with students their own love of reading and the materials they like to read.

**APA Citation**

**Krause, S. (2007). A Case Study of TRIO Student Support Services Programs for Nontraditional Students at Selected Midwestern Universities. (Doctoral dissertation, University of South Dakota, 2008). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 68 (09), 3284744.**

**Author(s)**

Sharlen Krause

**Title**

A Case Study of TRIO Student Support Services Programs for Nontraditional Students at Selected Midwestern Universities

**Abstract**

The purpose of this case study was to examine the qualities of Federal TRiO Student Support Services tutorial programs for nontraditional students at selected universities and colleges in the Midwest region. The participants in this study were four Federal TRiO Student Support Services programs within the Midwest region that served a large number of nontraditional students. Identified directors, administrators, and selected faculty were contacted by telephone to obtain permission to conduct this study about their program and services.

The data collected in this study provided important information on how universities and colleges developed a tutoring program that supported nontraditional students for TRiO programs under the Federal guidelines and what these programs look like. Specific findings were: (a) all four programs were set up to meet federal guidelines; (b) all four programs received similar levels of funding and served about the same number of nontraditional students; (c) the types of support services included individual teaching, mentoring, one-on-one advising sessions, and group activities; (d) three types of group learning services were offered, workshops, group tutoring, and supplemental instruction; (e) faculty involvement and quality staff were the key component of a successful program; (f) communication of the program objectives to administrators, faculty, and staff was paramount to the success of the program; (g) the greatest strength of the programs was a committed, caring staff; and (h) the greatest challenge of the programs was funding.

**Research question**

1. What were the experiences of directors, administrators, and faculty with Federal TRIO Student Support Services programs for nontraditional students?
2. How did directors, administrators, and faculty of Federal TRIO Student Support Services programs in the region perceive the program based on:
  - a. Size of the institution?
  - b. Mission of the institution?
  - c. Academic programs or focus?
3. What experiences did directors, administrators, and faculty have in developing services needed for nontraditional students?
  - a. How were these needs determined?
  - b. How were the programs designed and implemented?
4. What were the experiences and perceptions of the administrators, faculty, and staff regarding the effectiveness of tutoring services offered in Federal TRIO Student Support Services programs at their institutions?

- a. How did they define the population?
- b. How did they define their needs (meeting the needs of the population?)
- c. What were the measures of success?

## **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Student Support Services

## **Method / Research Design**

The researcher used qualitative methods through case study. The participants in this study were four Federal TRiO Student Support Services programs within the Midwest region that served a large number of nontraditional students. Identified directors, administrators, and selected faculty were contacted by telephone to obtain permission to conduct this study about their program and services.

## **Analysis**

Creswell's (2003) six-step method for data analysis to ensure that data was carefully examined using a systematic and organized procedure. Creswell's (2003) six steps involve: preparing and organizing data, reading data, subsequent coding of data into specific categories, generating appropriate descriptions or themes, conveying descriptions into narratives and interpreting data.

## **Key Findings**

Specific findings were: (a) all four programs were set up to meet federal guidelines; (b) all four programs received similar levels of funding and served about the same number of nontraditional students; (c) the types of support services included individual teaching, mentoring, one-on-one advising sessions, and group activities; (d) three types of group learning services were offered, workshops, group tutoring, and supplemental instruction; (e) faculty involvement and quality staff were the key component of a successful program; (f) communication of the program objectives to administrators, faculty, and staff was paramount to the success of the program; (g) the greatest strength of the programs was a committed, caring staff; and (h) the greatest challenge of the programs was funding.

## **Implications**

Findings of the study implied that: nontraditional students can be served by TRIO programs; learning services need to foster group and individual learning as well as formal and informal learning; staff of Student Support Services programs is critical to the quality and acceptance of the programs across the campuses; and faculty and administrator participation and involvement define the quality of the program. Practices suggested by the researcher were: institutions must provide a wide range of programs and services to offset challenges for nontraditional students; programs and courses must be designed to meet the social, psychological, and academic needs of the adult learner; and specialized workshops, tutoring, and mentoring programs need to be designed and implemented. Future research should examine: a post-services satisfaction study; a quantitative study conducted on nontraditional, low-income, first generation students that focuses on retention rates; and a quantitative study conducted on nontraditional, low-income, first generation students that focuses on the measured improvement in regard to grades.

**APA Citation**

**Davis, P.A. (2008). A Formative Evaluation of the Student Support Services TRIO Program for Low Income and First Generation College Bound Students Self-Efficacy at Butte-Glenn Community College District. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, 2009). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 69 (09), 3325179.**

**Author(s)**

Patricia Ann Davis

**Title**

A Formative Evaluation of the Student Support Services TRIO Program for Low Income and First Generation College Bound Students Self-Efficacy at Butte-Glenn Community College District

**Abstract**

The primary purpose of this study was to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of the TRIO Student Support Services program at Butte College, a federally funded program to aid low income, disabled and first generation college students. The study will present suggestions for increasing the self-efficacy of the TRIO students and for improving the retention and transfer rates for these students to four-year institutions.

Data were collected through a Likert self-efficacy questionnaire sent to 140 TRIO students, two randomly chosen campus classes of 77 non-TRIO students, a tabulation of responses of 53 randomly chosen applications of TRIO students that included a Personal Needs Assessment, interviews with the Butte College TRIO Director and Assistant Director, faculty, staff, eight TRIO students, three former TRIO students, a review of federal TRIO and other government documents, and a literature review of student retention, remediation, and self-efficacy.

The TRIO application and Personal Needs Assessment results indicated a large number of students were between 16 and 25, female and Caucasian, 61% of students self-identified that they lacked academic preparedness and educational and/or career goals, close to 50% of mothers and fathers completed high school, 72% of the students didn't work or worked less than 19 hours, 77% applied for financial aid and 91% said their taxable income was \$15,000 or less per year.

The qualitative study results identified through the interviews with TRIO students, TRIO administrators, faculty and staff that the interventions of personalized attention and support helped the students stay accountable and keep on track. The Likert Self-Efficacy questionnaire found similar results for both TRIO and non-TRIO students. This may have been due to student academic experience and support TRIO students received prior to applying, as most students started TRIO in their second year of college. The TRIO program serves a very small number of eligible applicants due to limited funding resources. However, the student support services the campus and the TRIO program offer to students is considerable. Promoting a campus-wide climate with all departments, faculty, staff and administration, taking steps to promote student retention and transfer is paramount to student success. Whether it is offering a first-year life skills courses to help students with acclimating to college and life management skills, offering classes to all students using a variety of methods to actively engage students, offering supplemental instruction to peer tutors, or learning communities, it is imperative that students come first and we all take the responsibility to connect with students, build relationships, assist with resources and support students in their academic and personal life skills for student self-efficacy, retention and transfer.

**Research question**

1. What are the attributes of a successful TRIO student vs. an unsuccessful TRIO student regarding college completion?
2. How does poverty affect TRIO student success?
3. How does goal setting assist TRIO student success?
4. What external resources do TRIO students bring or not bring to school to be successful?
5. What intervention tools and resources do instructors and TRIO administrators have access to as well as need?
6. How can Butte-Glenn Community College District increase student retention in the TRIO program?
7. How can Butte-Glenn Community College District increase student success in the TRIO program?
8. What are the strengths of the TRIO program at Butte College?
9. What are the weaknesses of the TRIO program at Butte College?
10. How can the TRIO program be improved at Butte College?

### **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Student Support Services and other TRIO programming

### **Method / Research Design**

Data were collected through a Likert self-efficacy questionnaire sent to 140 TRIO students, two randomly chosen campus classes of 77 non-TRIO students, a tabulation of responses of 53 randomly chosen applications of TRIO students that included a Personal Needs Assessment, interviews with the Butte College TRIO Director and Assistant Director, faculty, staff, eight TRIO students, three former TRIO students, a review of federal TRIO and other government documents, and a literature review of student retention, remediation, and self-efficacy.

### **Analysis**

Creswell's (2003) six-step method for data analysis to ensure that data was carefully examined using a systematic and organized procedure. Creswell's (2003) six steps involve: preparing and organizing data, reading data, subsequent coding of data into specific categories, generating appropriate descriptions or themes, conveying descriptions into narratives and interpreting data.

### **Key Findings**

The one-on-one TRIO student interviews indicated that students immediately responded to the question of how the TRIO program and staff have been a tremendous support to them by helping them focus on their career interests, on issues and solutions for financial aid, the creation of an Education Action Plan that includes student driven goals to reach the EAP, and information or referral to counseling to establish courses needed to efficiently reach their transfer goal. From the student interviews, the researcher saw a definite pattern of students checking in with TRIO staff to talk or hang out and think of the people and place as family and home-away-from-home.

The strengths of the program are the services "Ask Me?" a volunteer organized, strategically placed information tables across campus during the first week of the semester, to answer questions, give directions to classes, etc.; and the "Early Alert" program. The weakness of the TRIO program was the

limited financial resources available to the program.

### **Implications**

Emotional resources help one persist despite the newness of experiences. We can role model for students and help to give them the tools to increase their emotional resources. We can give students the skills they are lacking, reading, writing and the ability to do math, so they can mentally be able to retrieve information to help themselves. We can give them a support system, by sharing resources that are available, depending on their need. Practices suggested by the researcher are making goals understandable and explicit; demanding, but still attainable; increase financial resources so they can directly increase resources to the students, campus-wide dialogue and activities need to ensure community, adding a service learning/volunteer experience component for several reasons, and developing for students a peer, staff, alumni or community mentor relationship program. Best practices nationwide must be researched further along with the self-efficacy of TRIO students, the cost/benefit ratio of expanding more personalized and accountable services, different uses of staff, and understanding how students succeed within a specific institution.

## **APA Citation**

**Yousif, L. (2009). Enrollment, Attrition, Retention, and Degree Completion Among First-Generation College Students: An Evaluative Analysis of the Modesto Junior College TRIO Program (Doctoral dissertation, Clemson University, 2009). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 70 06, 3360168.**

## **Author(s)**

Layla Yousif

## **Title**

Enrollment, Attrition, Retention, and Degree Completion Among First-Generation College Students: An Evaluative Analysis of the Modesto Junior College TRIO Program

## **Abstract**

TRIO academic services is an organization devoted to providing support to students identified as first-generation in their family to have completed 4-year college degree and meeting income guidelines established by the U.S. Department of Education. The support comes in the form of identifying promising students, preparing them for college level curriculum, and providing information on admissions, financial aid opportunities, tutoring and general academic counseling support. The goal is not only to integrate less advantaged students into the higher education system, but to provide them with the tools and orientation they need to move towards achieving economic independence, self-sufficiency and becoming productive contributors to society. Mixed method research design which included quantitative (TRIO end of the year student survey) and qualitative (Focus groups). The quantitative data was collected on 253 TRIO/SSS MJC students between academic years 2005 and 2007. Student status, academic performance, retention, attrition, as well as demographics (gender, age, ethnicity. Data was analyzed statistically using three parametric statistical method examined the relationships between students' gender, age, ethnicity, degree status, GPA, and time lapse period before accessing TRIO counseling services. The analysis revealed that several factors play a role in predicting student success, such as age (non-traditional students over 30 tend to do better than younger students). Financial aid for this group, access to financial assistance is critical for facilitating and supporting the academic process of the student. A comparison of determined financial need versus actual award amount received, suggested that only one fourth (26.9%) of the students received the full projected amount of financial need, while (41.5%) did not. Services received many students waited a long time-one year or more before accessing TRIO services and those who waited longer did less well in school. The second (qualitative) analysis consisted of two focus groups. The themes patterns that emerged in the qualitative analysis were gender & GPA; Age difference & GPA; degree of access to student services and GPA; degree of access to student services & degree outcome. The focus groups provided the personal experiences that impacted the retention and attrition rates of students. The qualitative research design confirmed the quantitative findings, which included counseling services as being the most important factor that influenced student success in TRIO/SSS at Modesto Junior College.

## **Research question**

1. To what extent is the level of student support services received associated with academic outcomes (GPA, attrition, retention, degree completion, transfer) among TRIO students?
2. To what extent is counseling services associated with academic outcomes (GPA, attrition, retention, degree completion, transfer) among TRIO students?

## **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

### **Method / Research Design**

The researcher used a mixed method research design, which included quantitative (TRIO end of the year student survey) and qualitative (Focus groups) data. The quantitative data was collected on 253 TRIO/SSS MJC students between academic years 2005 and 2007. Student status, academic performance, retention, attrition were collected as well as demographics such as gender, age, ethnicity.

### **Analysis**

Data was analyzed statistically using three parametric statistical method and examined the relationships between students' gender, age, ethnicity, degree status, GPA, and time lapse period before accessing TRIO counseling services. The second (qualitative) analysis consisted of two focus groups. The themes patterns that emerged in the qualitative analysis were gender & GPA; Age difference & GPA; degree of access to student services and GPA; degree of access to student services & degree outcome.

### **Key Findings**

Based on the data analysis of this study, data showed that: (1) Student Support Services are very important aspect of students' academic achievement in college; (2) counseling services are huge impact to students' academic performance, graduation, and transfer to four-year institution; (3) older non-traditional students over the age of 30 tend to do better academically compared to traditional aged younger students; (4) women have higher GPA compared to their male counterparts; (5) students whose financial aid need was met did do better in school compared to those whose financial aid need was not met; students' who waited for 1 year or more before accessing the TRIO services did not do as well in school compared to those that accessed the TRIO services as soon they entered their first semester of school; (6) female students were more motivated, desired education more, and dedicated to their educational goals, which resulted in higher GPA compared to the male student; (7) older non-traditional students earned higher GPA then their younger counter parts; (8) degree of access to student services and GPA indicated that counseling services were critical to students' educational accomplishments, and (9) the degree of access to student services and degree outcome findings showed that students felt comfortable coming into the TRIO office and asking for support.

### **Implications**

We need to have better outreach services for students to help them maintain and complete their educational goals. Financial aid is a needed service according to the quantitative data; however, it did not show a significant in the qualitative analysis. In both the quantitative and qualitative findings counseling services was a significant factor for students to succeed. Counselors in general are critical to students' retention and academic outcome. Counselors are needed not just in college but also, in younger grades such as elementary, middle, and high school level. In the California school system, counselors are not considered a priority and budget is an issue. However, without counselors student will not be able to succeed either grade such as K-12 or college level. There are so few counselors in the school system that students do not get that rapport build with counselor due to too many students to a counselor ratio. At MJC, the counselor to student ratio is one thousand to one, so many students don't get the opportunity to receive that service due to lack of counselors in our school system. Modesto Junior College needs to hire more counselors by expanding the services needed. Other implications would be to have peer support services such as current students helping perspective students. The researcher suggests that future research should examine motivational speakers as part of the services offered; specifically speakers that are working to have people in specific career field. Mentoring relationship is another resource that students can use to succeed academically. The mentoring relationship needs to be further researched or explored especially with faculty mentors. Future research should involve the TRIO/Pre-college programs, which should be available at more local high schools to help motivate students to think about attending college.



**APA Citation**

**Sanchez, M.C. (2010). Effectiveness of Student Support Services Programs at California Community Colleges (Doctoral dissertation, California State University at Fresno, 2011). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 71 (10), 3424363.**

**Author(s)**

Mark Christopher Sanchez

**Title**

Effectiveness of Student Support Services Programs at California Community Colleges

**Abstract**

Historically, first-generation, low-income, and students with disabilities have had very high attrition rates at California Community Colleges and institutions of higher education in general. Based on figures compiled by the National Center for Educational Statistics in 2004, 4.5 million low-income, first-generation college students comprise approximately 24% of undergraduate students in the United States. According to research, low-income, first-generation college students were nearly four times more likely to leave higher education after the first year than students who had neither of these risk factors. Furthermore, six years later, nearly one-half (43%) of low-income, first-generation college students had left college without earning degrees (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2004).

Student Support Services (TRiO) programs are designed to assist first-generation college going, low-income, and students with disabilities with gaining the academic and self-advocacy skills necessary to persist towards an educational goal, 2-year degree completion, transfer to a 4-year university, and/or completion of a certificate program. Services provided to student program participants included: academic counseling, financial assistance, transfer preparation, study skills, test-taking strategies, university visits, major and career exploration, cultural activities, and peer academic tutoring.

The purpose of this study was to determine if students who participated in Student Support Services (TRiO) programs at California Community Colleges were more likely to persist and complete an educational goal compared to non-program counterparts with similar demographic backgrounds.

As a growing trend of first-generation college-going, low-income, and students with disabilities are enrolling at California Community Colleges, it is important to understand how this population of students is experiencing our institutions of higher education. More importantly, it is critical for college administrations and leaders to understand the importance of creating a culture of success at their institutions by which all students will have the support and advocacy to realize their academic and personal goals.

**Research question**

1. Do Student Support Services make a difference in student academic achievement rates measured by certificate completion, persistence to graduation, 2-year degree completion, and transfer to a 4-year university between Student Support Services (TRiO) program participants and general community college students?
2. Is there a measurable difference in certificate completion, persistence to graduation, 2-year degree completion, and transfer to a 4-year university across each of the participating community college Student Support Services (TriO) programs and general community college students?

## **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Student Support Services

### **Method / Research Design**

The researcher used a non-experimental research design; California Community College students from low-income, first-generation college-going and students with disabilities backgrounds were the participants; There were two student comparison groups: (1) low-income students, who received financial aid, and who were not participants of the Student Support Services (TRiO) programs in academic year 2004-2005; (2) students enrolled at the community colleges who identified themselves as first-generation college going based on information the students reported on their admissions application, not enrolled members of the Student Support Services programs; the total number of those students who received Student Support (TRiO) services equaled 121 students (N=121); general college population students or those students who did not receive Student Support (TRiO) services equaled 6,799 students (N=6,799); the researcher gathered longitudinal data of community college students enrolled in a Student Support Services (TRiO) program during the 2004-2005 academic year; the researcher focused on 1) certificate completion; 2) persistence to graduation rates; 3) 2-year degree completion; and 4) transfer to 4-year university rates; additional demographic measures were also gathered from the Student Access Database used by the community colleges to track student performance measures for comparisons and trend analysis.

### **Analysis**

Student level raw data was gathered for 7,015 individual students records at each of the two California community colleges were reported from the Access databases and transmitted from Microsoft Excel spreadsheets; Gathered data was analyzed using the SPSS 16.0 application with a level of significance ( $p < .001$ ) for social science was used for the statistical tests; descriptive statistics for the demographic variables were recorded; frequencies and percentages were recorded for the independent variables: campus affiliation, gender, ethnicity, financial need, academic need at time of enrollment, and enrollment status; Chi-Square Test of Independence was used for the dependent variables of certificate of completion, 2-year degree attainment, and transfer to a 4-year university; Chi-Square Test of Independence identifies deviations of observed frequencies from expected frequencies; Group dependent and independent variables were measured in this analysis.

### **Key Findings**

Based on the data analysis of this study, data on student persistence suggested that students who enrolled and participated in Student Support (TRiO) services at Evergreen Valley College and Fresno City College had a higher rate of persistence than general college population students who did not receive Student Support (TRiO) services. Furthermore, the data suggested that students who enrolled and participated in Student Support (TRiO) services at both colleges had a higher rate of 2-year degree completion, as well as transfer to a four-year institution than their non-program counterparts. Regarding certificate of completion rates, students who enrolled and participated in Student Support (TRiO) services at Evergreen Valley College and Fresno City College were more likely to complete a certificate program compared to those students who did not receive Student Support (TRiO) services at both colleges.

### **Implications**

As a growing trend of first-generation college going, low-income, and students with disabilities are enrolling at California Community Colleges, it is important to understand how this population of students is experiencing our institutions of higher education. More importantly, it is critical for college administrations and leaders to understand the importance of creating a culture of success at their institutions by which all students will have the support and advocacy to realize their academic and personal goals. The researcher suggests a variety of practices such as: (1) a structured freshmen year

experience to help students adjust to and integrate into the institution; (2) an emphasis on academic support; (3) an active and consistent approach to advising; (4) a plan to promote participation; and (5) a strong presence on campus. The researcher suggests that future research should examine: (1) institutional specific characteristics; (2) program assessment; and (3) TRIO programming on other college campuses.

## **APA Citation**

**Kelley-Hall, C. (2010). The Role of Student Support Services in Encouraging Student Involvement and its Impact on Student Perceptions and Academic Experiences (Doctoral dissertation, Clemson University, 2010). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 71 (05), 3402531.**

## **Author(s)**

Caren Kelley-Hall

## **Title**

The Role of Student Support Services in Encouraging Student Involvement and its Impact on Student Perceptions and Academic Experiences

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to explore the role of Student Support Services (SSS) in encouraging student involvement and its impact on student perceptions and academic experiences in three technical colleges in upstate South Carolina. By examining Alexander Astin's theory of student involvement in the services provided by the program, a better understanding of the existing functions of SSS may be obtained. The study may offer information to increase knowledge and awareness about the college experience for a diverse group of college students. It is hoped that the study will help to better understand unique experiences of SSS participants and how to create better ways of meeting their needs.

In order to explore the role of SSS qualitative methods were employed to conduct this research within the population of three Student Support Service programs housed in South Carolina's upstate technical colleges. Focus groups were conducted in the spring of 2009 with a total of 100 students. Transcripts of the focus groups were thematically analyzed for this study. Findings revealed evidence that supports Astin's student involvement theory and Tinto's student retention model and the impact that the SSS Program has on participant student involvement, student perceptions and academic experiences. The impact of involvement is multifaceted because it influences the program participants' certainty of choice of major, helped focus students on attainment of their goals and careers, willingness to stay in school, and improved overall academic experiences.

In terms of academic experiences, program participants reported high levels of satisfaction with their grade point averages, advising services, improved test scores, cultural enrichment, transferability, confidence, and overall program experiences. In terms of barriers to student success that were discussed, students were much more likely to discuss barriers that were outside of their control, such as the lack of facility space.

Results of this study may contribute to the existing research concerning student involvement in Student Support Services. The findings may be used to help improve services rendered and provide much needed high quality educational programming for academically disadvantaged students. The results may contribute to the understanding of how student perceptions and experiences may impact future policies as well as the restructuring of other academic support programs based on student involvement. This research may also help analyze and identify best practices of upstate South Carolina's Student Support Services program which may be used to benchmark evaluations to assess services provided and program effectiveness.

## **Research question**

1. What is the role of the Student Support Services program in connection to student involvement and its impact on academic achievement according to 2008- 2009 Student Support Services program participants in three technical colleges of upstate South Carolina?

2. What Student Support Services Programs practices appear most important in determining academic achievement and student satisfaction?
3. According to the 2008- 2009 Student Support Services program participants, what are the perceptions of program's effectiveness?

## **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Student Support Services

## **Method / Research Design**

Focus groups were used to determine themes; The 100 subjects were Associate in Science (AS) and Associate in Arts (AA) students who were enrolled and participated in the 2008-2009 academic year Student Support Program (SSS) in three technical colleges of upstate South Carolina.

## **Analysis**

The research study used a qualitative thematic analysis. A thematic analysis approach included the formation and application of codes to data collected from video footage, policy and procedure documents, interview transcripts, and field notes (Gibson, 2006).

## **Key Findings**

Several primary themes or categories were discovered: (1) active participation in the Student Support Services program did positively impact students' collegial experience, academic achievement, and motivation to stay in school; (2) one of the keys to having the Student Support Services program meet the needs of its students and achieve program objectives is high participation in meeting consistently with the Student Support Services counselor, participation in phone, web, and group advising, participation in all of the program activities and workshops, participation in program assessments, and use of the computer labs; (3) students reported that they have a positive perception of the Student Support Services program in respect to program's role and effectiveness; (4) the program supports diverse learning styles and provides high-quality instructional activities, tutorial resources, and addresses study habits; (5) the Student Support Services program orientation and handbook helped students to feel at ease about entering college, finding their classrooms, meeting their instructors, completing the financial aid packet, and transferring into a 4-year institution; (6) the students felt that the program could benefit from having larger tutoring spaces, or an entire building for programming. Several students reported that the program could benefit from offering more loaner laptops and access to take CD-ROM programs that correspond to their class assignments home; and (7) many of the participants enjoyed the workshops and extracurricular activities, and felt that the program could benefit more by offering additional sessions. The workshops and extracurricular activities helped to create a family-like bond and closeness between program participants.

## **Implications**

The findings may be used to help improve services rendered and provide much needed high quality educational programming for academically disadvantaged students. The results may contribute to the understanding of how student perceptions and experiences may impact future policies as well as the restructuring of other academic support programs based on student involvement. This research may also help analyze and identify best practices of upstate South Carolina's Student Support Services program which may be used to benchmark evaluations to assess services provided and program effectiveness.

# Ronald E. McNair Post baccalaureate Program

## APA Citation

Carrera, S.R. (2002). An Evaluation of the Mentoring Component in the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program: A National Sample. (Doctoral dissertation, Texas Tech University, 2002). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 63 (06), 3056062.

## Author(s)

Stephanie Renee Carrera

## Title

An Evaluation of the Mentoring Component in the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program: A National Sample

## Abstract

A mentoring relationship can be one of the most powerful experiences of a protégé's personal and career development. Research has shown that undergraduate students who are mentored report increased goal achievement, and professional and career development (Jacobi, 1991). Based on Kram's (1983, 1985) theory, mentoring relationships provide psychosocial (e.g., role-modeling, acceptance) and career-related (e.g., sponsorship, challenging) functions. The Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program was established to assist first-generation to college, low-income, and underrepresented students prepare for doctoral study. The mentoring component of the McNair Program is designed to assist students in various areas, such as participating in faculty research projects and learning about the graduate school experience. Although there are over 100 McNair programs nationwide, little empirical research has been conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of these programs. Further, research on the mentoring aspect of the McNair program has been limited and typically focuses on qualitative methodology. Some research has indicated that through the mentoring experience, McNair Scholars enhanced their research skills, increased their professional contacts, and learned about conferences and professional organizations (Esler, 1998).

The purpose of this study was to examine the mentoring program within the Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program using a national sample. Participants included 104 students who were McNair Scholars during the past year. McNair Scholars from several TRIO programs across the nation were asked to participate. It was hypothesized that Kram's (1983, 1985) mentoring functions would positively contribute to the effectiveness of the McNair mentoring program. The measures of effectiveness were based on the goals and objectives of the McNair program and included intention to attain a doctoral degree, awareness of the graduate school experience, knowledge of research, and knowledge of professional organizations and conferences. Canonical correlations were used to test this hypothesis. In addition, exploratory analyses (MANCOVAs) were conducted to examine gender and ethnic differences, and to examine cross-sex/ethnicity versus same-sex/ethnicity differences, in mentoring effectiveness and mentoring functions. Results indicated that (1) psychosocial and career mentoring functions were associated with increased mentoring effectiveness in terms of knowledge of graduate school, research, and professional organizations and conferences, (2) no gender differences were found in perceptions of mentoring functions, (3) no gender differences were found in the level of mentoring effectiveness, (4) no differences were found in mentoring functions and in cross-sex versus same-sex mentoring relationships, (5) no differences were found in effectiveness of faculty mentoring in cross-sex versus same-sex mentoring relationships, (6) no ethnic differences were found in perceptions of mentoring functions, (7) no ethnic differences were found in the level of effectiveness, (8) McNair

Scholars who were ethnically different from their faculty mentors perceived more psychosocial mentoring functions compared to McNair Scholars who shared the same ethnic background with their mentor, and (9) no differences were found in effectiveness of faculty mentoring in cross-ethnicity versus same-ethnicity mentoring relationships

### **Research question**

1. How do protégés rate the level of general effectiveness of the McNair mentoring program?
2. What type of mentoring functions are experienced in a faculty mentoring relationship?
3. What is the level of satisfaction with the McNair mentoring program?

### **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program

### **Method / Research Design**

The researcher used a national sample of 15 schools and 104 students who were McNair Scholars within the past year. (29% Return Rate). The researcher used a questionnaire, a Background Inventory (survey), a Five-Point Response Scale (survey), and a 21-Item Paper and Pencil Scale

### **Analysis**

The researcher used canonical correlations and exploratory analyses to test the hypothesis. Exploratory analyses were used to break-up the results by race and/or gender.

### **Key Findings**

Findings showed that psychosocial and career mentoring functions were associated to effective mentoring; Results indicated that (1) psychosocial and career mentoring functions were associated with increased mentoring effectiveness in terms of knowledge of graduate school, research, and professional organizations and conferences, (2) no gender differences were found in perceptions of mentoring functions, (3) no gender differences were found in the level of mentoring effectiveness, (4) no differences were found in mentoring functions and in cross-sex versus same-sex mentoring relationships, (5) no differences were found in effectiveness of faculty mentoring in cross-sex versus same-sex mentoring relationships, (6) no ethnic differences were found in perceptions of mentoring functions, (7) no ethnic differences were found in the level of effectiveness, (8) McNair Scholars who were ethnically different from their faculty mentors perceived more psychosocial mentoring functions compared to McNair Scholars who shared the same ethnic background with their mentor, and (9) no differences were found in effectiveness of faculty mentoring in cross-ethnicity versus same-ethnicity mentoring relationships

### **Implications**

The results of this evaluation may be beneficial to McNair administrators nationwide as they are considering modifications to their mentoring program design. Based on the results found in this study, it seems that protégés were benefiting from same-sex and cross-sex mentors. This outcome is advantageous to students in traditionally male and female dominated departments. McNair staff may not need to be concerned with matching protégés with a same-sex mentor because this study found similar types of mentoring being provided and similar levels of effectiveness in terms of intention to earn a doctoral degree, and knowledge of graduate school, research, and professional organizations and conferences.

Future research may want to consider the use of a comparison sample to examine more benefits to mentoring. Second, a pre-test/post-test or time-series design was not utilized in this study making it

difficult to assess potential changes over time. Further, longitudinal data would be helpful to determine if protégés continued to benefit from the mentoring relationship after a longer period of time. Another direction for future research to take would be to examine the potential advantages in using a different experimental design. Also, future research may investigate the individual components within psychosocial and career functions to evaluate if there are more accurate ways to measure this construct.



**APA Citation**

**Hallock, V.H. (2003). Perceptions of the Professoriate: Anticipatory Socialization of Undergraduate Students from Underrepresented Groups. (Doctoral dissertation, Syracuse University, 2003) *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 64 (02), 3081643.**

**Author(s)**

Virginia Hilton Hallock

**Title**

Perceptions of the Professoriate: Anticipatory Socialization of Undergraduate Students from Underrepresented Groups

**Abstract**

This qualitative study explored the perceptions of academic culture and faculty life of undergraduate students from underrepresented groups who aspired to the professoriate. This research examined how seventeen students participating in Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate or Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Programs understood and experienced academic life, how they came to see themselves as prospective faculty members, and how they interpreted and negotiated perceived norms of the academy. Interviews, participant observation, and document analysis provided data for the study.

All the students participating in this study articulated an interest in being faculty members in higher education; however, only two aspired to traditional, tenure-track faculty positions. Others envisioned faculty work as something to do in addition to other professional work, after other careers, or in retirement. I examine the implications of their understanding of and plans for academic work.

The study also explored how participants developed an interest in and commitment to academic life in the course of exploring their academic identities and career plans. In aspiring to the professoriate, participants believed that they could create changes in the curriculum and cultures of the academy, and these changes would be shaped by their life experiences and multiple social perspectives.

Participants' saw diversity, meritocracy, and politics as salient features of academic culture. They challenged ideas of diversity and meritocracy that present these values as discrete, and often competing, norms. They discussed how merit, diversity and politics function together in academic cultures that espouse meritocracy but are nested in broader societal and institutional environments characterized by discrimination and bias. They also described strategies of "separating the personal" as ways to navigate academic environments.

Those who craft academic careers must reconcile anticipated contributions, benefits, and challenges related to the work with personal interests and commitments. The findings of this study inform theoretical understandings of such academic integration by analyzing the complexity and variety of anticipatory socialization experiences. With a better understanding of the experiences and perceptions of prospective faculty, members of the academic community can be more intentional, explicit, and equitable in socializing diverse groups of students to the professoriate.

**Research question**

1. What does AGEP and McNair scholars believe it means to be a faculty member or professor? What are the participants' perceptions of faculty roles and responsibilities? What do they expect their careers in

the academy to look like? What do they see as the benefits and challenges of graduate education and faculty life?

2. How did participants develop an interest in and commitment to academic life? What motivates students to pursue academic careers? What experiences or activities shaped their aspirations? What experiences or activities influenced their understanding of faculty life or academic cultures? What is the relationship among students' social identities and personal commitments and their aspirations to and understanding of the professoriate?
3. What are participants' perceptions of academic cultures? What do they see as significant norms, values, or structures of academic cultures? How have they interpreted messages about professional standards or expectations?

### **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program

### **Method / Research Design**

17 students who were participating in Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate or Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Programs from 11 schools. (3 primary sites)

### **Analysis**

The researcher used qualitative coding (NUD\*1<sup>st</sup> 4 software program) through interviews, participant observation, and document analysis

### **Key Findings**

Findings showed that these students were not interested in full-time, tenure-track positions, as they showed more of a desire of being part-time faculty who could focus on teaching and advising. Participants recognized discrimination and institutional bias within the academy, but saw faculty work as a way to pursue their intellectual interests, create a balanced life, and do meaningful work.

Participants' saw diversity, meritocracy, and politics as salient features of academic culture. They challenged ideas of diversity and meritocracy that present these values as discrete, and often competing, norms. They discussed how merit, diversity and politics function together in academic cultures that espouse meritocracy but are nested in broader societal and institutional environments characterized by discrimination and bias. They also described strategies of "separating the personal" as ways to navigate academic environments.

### **Implications**

Thus far in their socialization to the professoriate, study participants had learned a great deal about the norms and values of the academy. They perceived a variety of tension between individual and community interests, but their navigation of academic and socialization experiences revealed complex patterns of integrating and separating these interests. This study was not intended to be an evaluation of the AGEP and McNair programs in general or at their host institutions. However, the experiences and expectations of program participants can inform our efforts to diversify the professoriate and improve program practices.

Additional fieldwork, as with case studies of programs, would include input from a broader range of program participants, including those who did not have time to coordinate an interview or those who chose not to pursue graduate education or faculty life.

**APA Citation**

**Exstrom, B.K. (2003). A Case Study of McNair Program Participant Experiences. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Nebraska, 2004) *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 64 (12), 3116571.**

**Author(s)**

Bruce K. Exstrom

**Title**

A Case Study of McNair Program Participant Experiences

**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to analyze the reported experiences from four participants in a particular TRIO Project at a large Midwestern college. Data were collected through a qualitative research process that had participants describe their academic and socially related experiences while enrolled at a Midwestern college. The context of family, social, and academic influences were analyzed and the following themes emerged: (1) Multiple Locations: The participants of the study had all moved from place to place through their childhood or had enrolled in multiple colleges. (2) Let Steam Off: The participants revealed that they needed a place to vent their anger and frustrations with personal and academic life. (3) Independence: The subjects of the study were all independent and had developed an attitude of non-trust of others, and were self-described loners and did not take part in the campus social life. (4) A Better Life: The interviewees were all self-motivated to succeed in higher education, and had a simple and realistic goal of having a better life than they had before.

The findings are significant in that in a time of many cutbacks in federal and state funding for higher education, the need is increasing for financial aid, along with counseling for personal challenges that lead to high attrition rates for first-generation, low-income students. The findings provide college administrators, state legislators, and tax payers with information regarding the difficulties of these under-represented students in postsecondary education and the need to continue college opportunities for everyone.

**Research question**

1. How do student participants in a large Midwestern university TRIO program describe their academic and socially related experiences?

**TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program

**Method / Research Design**

Four participants in a particular TRIO Project at a large Midwestern college. Data were collected through a qualitative research (interviews, observations, and field notes) process that had participants describe their academic and socially related experiences while enrolled at a Midwestern college.

**Analysis**

The transcribed interviews were coded to aid interpretation and understanding. Researcher notes, personal journal, and observations were recorded to document personal thoughts and ideas as interviews progressed....The detailed descriptions were analyzed and categorized resulting in emerging themes. Coding was based on common words, phrases, or entire paragraphs.

**Key Findings**

The context of family, social, and academic influences were analyzed and the following themes emerged:

(1) Multiple Locations: The participants of the study had all moved from place to place through their childhood or had enrolled in multiple colleges. (2) Let Steam Off: The participants revealed that they needed a place to vent their anger and frustrations with personal and academic life. (3) Independence: The subjects of the study were all independent and had developed an attitude of non-trust of others, and were self-described loners and did not take part in the campus social life. (4) A Better Life: The interviewees were all self-motivated to succeed in higher education, and had a simple and realistic goal of having a better life than they had before.

### **Implications**

The findings are significant in that in a time of many cutbacks in federal and state funding for higher education, the need is increasing for financial aid, along with counseling for personal challenges that lead to high attrition rates for first-generation, low-income students. The findings provide college administrators, state legislators, and tax payers with information regarding the difficulties of these under-represented students in postsecondary education and the need to continue college opportunities for everyone. The research suggests that future research examines: the need to develop a sense of community or family while students are enrolled in college; and how to invite students into a relationship, rather than a workshop or mentoring program to enhance academic achievement.

## **APA Citation**

**Williams, E.G. (2004). Academic, Research, and Social Self-Efficacy Among African American Pre-McNair Scholar Participants and African American Post-McNair Scholar Participants. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 65 (09), 3147764.**

## **Author(s)**

Eric G Williams

## **Title**

Academic, Research, and Social Self-Efficacy Among African American Pre-McNair Scholar Participants and African American Post-McNair Scholar Participants

## **Abstract**

College enrollment and graduation rates for African Americans remain lower than enrollment and graduation rates for middle and upper-class White students. The lower enrollment and graduation rates have an effect on the number of African American students who pursue the Ph.D. and other research doctorate degrees.

In order to increase the number of African Americans and other underrepresented students in the Ph.D. pipeline, the United States Congress passed legislation that created the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program (McNair Scholars Program) in the mid-1980s. The purpose of the McNair Scholars Program is to prepare college students for doctoral studies and careers in academia through involvement in summer research internships and other scholarly activities. One way in which this program may prepare students is through the development of students' academic, research and social self-efficacy. To date, however little research has been conducted to see if the McNair Scholars Program has an effect on African American students' levels of self-efficacy.

The purpose of this study was to compare levels of academic, research and social self-efficacy among African American pre- and post-McNair Scholar participants. Levels of self-efficacy were analyzed by McNair participant status (pre-McNair and post-McNair), gender, college and grade point average. The study employed a national sample of African American pre- and post McNair Scholar Program participants. Data were collected using the Graduate Education Self-Efficacy Scale (GESES), a 57-item instrument designed specifically for this study. Items for the survey were developed utilizing existing literature on academic, research and social self-efficacy.

Results revealed significant differences in academic, research and social self-efficacy between African American pre- and post-McNair Scholar Program participants. There were no significant differences by gender on academic, research or social self-efficacy. Neither were significant differences found by college grade level on academic or social self-efficacy. There were, however, significant differences based on college grade level on research self-efficacy.

There were also significant interaction effects between gender and college grade level on academic, research and social self-efficacy. The results suggest that participating in the McNair Scholars Program raises levels of academic, research and social self-efficacy among African American college students.

## **Research question**

1. What are the levels of academic self-efficacy, research self-efficacy and social self-efficacy among African American pre-McNair Scholar Program participants and African American post-McNair Scholar Program participants?
2. Are there significant differences in the levels of academic self-efficacy, research self-efficacy and social

self-efficacy among African American pre-McNair Scholar Program participants and African American post- McNair Scholar Program participants?

3. Are there significant differences in the levels of academic self-efficacy, research self-efficacy and social self-efficacy among African American pre-McNair Scholar Program participants and African American post- McNair Scholar Program participants by gender and college grade level?

### **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program,

### **Method / Research Design**

The study employed a national sample of African American pre- and post McNair Scholar Program participants. Data were collected using the Graduate Education Self-Efficacy Scale (GESES), a 57-item instrument designed specifically for this study. Items for the survey were developed utilizing existing literature on academic, research and social self-efficacy. 156 McNair Scholars Program were invited, 61 participated, 1082 surveys mailed out, 643 returned, 624 useable, 300 African Americans, 58 percent response rate.

### **Analysis**

The researcher used various Likert-Type Scales. Data were collected using the Graduate Education Self-Efficacy Scale (GESES), a 57-item instrument designed specifically for this study. Items for the survey were developed utilizing existing literature on academic, research and social self-efficacy. Descriptive statistics through means, standard deviations, and ranges of scores; multivariate analyses of variance (MANOVAs); and a 3 x 2 MANOVA.

### **Key Findings**

Results revealed significant differences in academic, research and social self-efficacy between African American pre- and post-McNair Scholar Program participants. There were no significant differences by gender on academic, research or social self-efficacy. Neither were significant differences found by college grade level on academic or social self-efficacy. There were, however, significant differences based on college grade level on research self-efficacy.

There were also significant interaction effects between gender and college grade level on academic, research and social self-efficacy. The results suggest that participating in the McNair Scholars Program raises levels of academic, research and social self-efficacy among African American college students.

### **Implications**

By implementing programs that help to increase self-efficacy, campuses may be able to better enhance success among students. The researcher suggests that: McNair administrators, especially those at newer programs may want to provide students with more of the experiences that increase academic, research and social self-efficacy; to increase academic self-efficacy, administrators should concentrate their efforts on activities such as graduate admission test preparation; requiring participants to attend workshops on test preparation might increase their confidence so that they can score well enough to be admitted to a graduate program; time management is another aspect that McNair administrators should integrate into their programs in order to influence academic self-efficacy; McNair administrators should continue to provide faculty-guided research opportunities to participants; McNair administrators should implement a research methods component to the program.; sponsor social events in which faculty and students interact with one another; encourage students to attend professional conferences with their mentors; encourage students to attend conferences, research symposiums, and other academic events and present their research to an audience of professionals and peers; and faculty may want to provide opportunities

for out of class interactions with African American and other McNair students. Future research should explore: the levels of self-efficacy of former McNair students currently enrolled in graduate programs to see if the effects of the program last over time; self-efficacy and its' correlation to subsequent enrollment and completion of graduate school; and a comparison between levels of self- efficacy between McNair program participants and students who were selected for the program but who decided not to participate.

## **APA Citation**

**Bryson, K.M. (2005). Telling the Success Stories of McNair Scholars Program Graduates: An Arts-Based Approach. (Doctoral dissertation, Saybrook University, 2005). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 66 (01), 3162686.**

## **Author(s)**

Karen Mueller Bryson

## **Title**

Telling the Success Stories of McNair Scholars Program Graduates: An Arts-Based Approach

## **Abstract**

McNair Scholars are high achieving students from low-income first generation (LIFG) and underrepresented (UR) backgrounds, who participate in a two-year program of research, scholarship, mentoring and cultural activities designed to prepare them for graduate studies. This study examined the barriers and bridges to the success of some of the graduates of this program as well as their suggestions for program improvement.

Twenty-one McNair graduates of the University of South Florida participated in the study. Nineteen of the participants were classified as Black (five males and six females were of Caribbean descent; one male was of African descent; and one male and six females were African American), one participant was classified as Latina (of Puerto Rican descent) and one male was classified as White (European American). The participants' ages ranged from mid-20s to mid-40s. Narrative data were gathered from participants through in-person or email interviews. Qualitative research analysis techniques were used to develop themes. A Readers Theater script entitled *Certain Expectations* presents the results using an arts-based approach.

Participants reported they were most challenged by racism; feeling different; having their abilities underestimated; feeling discounted or dismissed; academic difficulties; and problems with finances. They overcame these challenges through faith and prayer; determination, persistence and a positive attitude; the support of family and friends; participation in university support programs; and securing additional finances.

The external factors that most contributed to participants' success included their families; God; university support programs; smart friends, and professionals of color who paved the way. The internal factors that most contributed to their success included hard work, motivation, and persistence.

Participants were all positively influenced by their involvement in the McNair Program. Some of the most consistently reported influential factors included receiving information about graduate school; research activities; a supportive and nurturing environment; a positive family atmosphere, mentorship opportunities, and information about career opportunities. Students also reported opportunities for travel as an important influence since it provided them with a greater awareness of the many options available to them beyond what they were already familiar with. Suggestions for program improvement are presented.

## **Research question**

1. What obstacles do McNair graduates believe posed challenges to them as they pursued higher education and how did they overcome those obstacles?
2. Which factors do McNair graduates believe contributed to their success?



3. How were McNair graduates influenced by their cultural background and family of origin?
4. How do McNair graduates believe their participation in the McNair program influenced them?

### **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program

### **Method / Research Design**

Narrative data were gathered from participants through in-person or email interviews. Twenty-one McNair graduates of the University of South Florida participated in the study. "Nineteen of the participants were classified as Black (five males and six females were of Caribbean descent; one male was of African descent; and one male and six females were African American), one participant was classified as Latina (of Puerto Rican descent) and one male was classified as White (European American)."

### **Analysis**

The research used qualitative data reduction through coding for themes and created play scenes through transcripts and interview narratives

### **Key Findings**

Participants faced many challenges such as racism, feeling different, having their abilities underestimated, feeling discounted or dismissed, academic difficulties, and financial trouble. These challenges were overcome through many external and internal factors. Participants cited family support, spirituality, university support programs, smart friends (peer influence), and professionals of color as external factors that contributed to their success. The internal factors pointed out by participants that influenced their success were resiliency/persistence, hard work, and motivation.

Participants were all positively influenced by their involvement in the McNair Program. Some of the most consistently reported influential factors included receiving information about graduate school; research activities; a supportive and nurturing environment; a positive family atmosphere, mentorship opportunities, and information about career opportunities. Students also reported opportunities for travel as an important influence since it provided them with a greater awareness of the many options available to them beyond what they were already familiar with.

### **Implications**

The researcher suggests that future research examines: female students succeeding despite the traditional sex role beliefs held by their families and female students succeeding despite sexist attitudes encountered in male dominated fields of study; the reasons for dissatisfaction with the mentoring program or may try to uncover more specific reasons why some students chose not to participate in this study; and the reasons for dissatisfaction with the mentoring program or may try to uncover more specific reasons why some students chose not to participate in this study. Although there were few complaints about the McNair Program, those students who made recommendations for improvement believed the McNair Program should have some kind of alumni networking system, allow for program participants to have contact and informal mentoring by alumni and allow for program participants to have more contact with professionals, besides professors, in their career fields as well as having more opportunity for interaction with graduate students of color. McNair program administrators may also want to consider implantation of graduate student mentoring, in which McNair participants are mentored by graduate students, who could serve as role models, as well as sharing their experiences with McNair scholars.

## **APA Citation**

**Mendoza, M.A. (2005). Enabling Pedagogy: Mentoring Undergraduate Researchers Writing in the Remodeled Margin. (Doctoral dissertation, New Mexico State University, 2005). Dissertation Abstracts International, 67 (02), 3208671.**

## **Author(s)**

Margaret Anne Jendro Mendoza

## **Title**

Enabling Pedagogy: Mentoring Undergraduate Researchers Writing in the Remodeled Margin.

## **Abstract**

This dissertation examines coordination of power, knowledge, and discourse in education, focusing on how historically underserved but successful college students learn to use the power of their intellect and the power of the discourse of their discipline through interaction with faculty mentors during apprenticeships in knowledge making. Participants were low-income and first-generation or underrepresented juniors, seniors, and a graduate student designated as McNair Scholars and their faculty mentors engaged in research. The purpose of the study was to see how the process of academic mentoring influenced acquisition of the discourse of the disciplines.

Data for four case studies were gathered through observation and audio taping of student/mentor meetings and semistructured interviews. Units of analysis were determined and "markers" of each utterance's position ("inside" or "outside") were defined. A database was designed for preliminary analysis of the coded transcripts. Each unit of analysis was also analyzed for the action in the talk. Actions were entered in the database and were explored as emergent themes. The qualitative phase of the analysis included extensive case journaling, thematic freewriting, and discourse analysis.

Statistical analysis suggests two categories of mentoring actions: supplemental and enabling. Supplemental actions are monologic and are often used in classrooms; enabling actions are dialogic, requiring the give and take of conversation. Those used most frequently were translation, elicitation of information, and validation. Student action categories were participatory actions (classroom activities such as reading, taking notes, or composing text) and engaged/enabled actions (which took place through being a partner in a dialogue). Qualitative analysis suggests that, beneath the surface work of teaching and learning to conduct research in a discipline, mentors were teaching and students were learning a new coordination of power, knowledge, and discourse. That reorganization seems to begin with an authorizing act---being mentored---and progresses as students learn to act in authorized ways, to interrogate everything and to be explicit as they gain validation. This dissertation, written in a narrative style, is a hybrid form of research writing addressing issues of learning to teach and to write in a remodeled margin while contributing to the work of remodeling.

## **Research question**

1. How does academic mentoring affect the ways scholars read, write, and speak within the disciplines?
2. How are learning/teaching conversations different from traditional methods of instruction?
3. What forms do one-on-one learning and teaching discipline-specific discourse take?

## **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program

## **Method / Research Design**

The researcher used qualitative methods through four case studies, semi-structured interviews, observations, and audiotaping of student/mentor meetings. The participants were four female McNair fellows at LGU and their faculty mentors

### **Analysis**

The researcher used qualitative coding for themes, comparisons between spoken and written word. Units of analysis were determined and "markers" of each utterance's position ("inside" or "outside") were defined. A database was designed for preliminary analysis of the coded transcripts. Each unit of analysis was also analyzed for the action in the talk. Actions were entered in the database and were explored as emergent themes. The qualitative phase of the analysis included extensive case journaling, thematic freewriting, and discourse analysis

### **Key Findings**

Qualitative analysis suggests that, beneath the surface work of teaching and learning to conduct research in a discipline, mentors were teaching and students were learning a new coordination of power, knowledge, and discourse. That reorganization seems to begin with an authorizing act---being mentored--and progresses as students learn to act in authorized ways, to interrogate everything and to be explicit as they gain validation.

### **Implications**

It may be necessary to rethink the forms that learning takes, certainly how (and why) learning is measured.

## **APA Citation**

**Leichnetz, R. (2005). Self-Identification of Non-Cognitive Factors That Lead to Educational Success. (Doctoral dissertation, University of the Incarnate Word, 2006). Dissertation Abstracts International, 67 (02), 3206058.**

## **Author(s)**

Roberta Leichnetz

## **Title**

Self-Identification of Non-Cognitive Factors That Lead to Educational Success

## **Abstract**

This study utilized an ethnographic case study design methodology using in-depth interviews as the primary research strategy. The focus was on the participants' perceptions of their experiences in the educational system, the meanings they gave and how they evaluated their experiences as they moved through that system. The study was conducted on the campuses of two small universities in the southwest United States. The participants were members of the McNair Scholars Program on these campuses.

As the need for post-secondary education increases, issues of retention continue to be of importance, especially among minority populations in the U.S. The focus on "at-risk" students has stimulated discussion on how to keep these students from dropping out, concentrating on students who succeed despite the odds against their success. These students are often low-income first-generation students who have minimum preparation for college coursework and no role models for college success within their families. While academic efficacy is often associated with school success, other non-cognitive factors such as persistence, self-efficacy, resiliency, and social support, have also been identified as factors in students' success.

Four dominant themes emerged from the analysis of the interviews conducted: internal factors, external/social factors, resiliency factors, and relationship and responsibility to others. All of the participants identified persistence as an important factor in their educational success. Mentoring and having a support network was mentioned the most often by the participants as being of significant value in their educational success. Resiliency and giving back to others were also identified by the participants in relationship to other factors.

## **Research question**

1. What are the non-cognitive factors that the participants recognize as important for their academic success?
2. What are the social and cultural as well as psychological and contextual factors that they identify as being significant?
3. What are the external and/or internal dynamics that seem to contribute to success for these students?
4. How do they describe these elements that contribute to their success?

## **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program

## **Method / Research Design**

The researcher used an ethnographic case study design methodology through in-depth interviews. The participants were seven college students at two small universities in the southwest United States.

### **Analysis**

The researcher used qualitative coding for themes and used debriefing sessions to assure accuracy

### **Key Findings**

Findings showed that both internal and external/social factors (persistence, being self-directed, having long-range goals, and having a support structure such as family support or a mentor) were important contributors to their educational success. Other minor themes that emerged were resiliency factors and relationship and responsibility to others. Methods of how one overcame obstacles and the desire to help others achieve began to emerge throughout the interview process. Mentoring was overwhelmingly the most significant experience for the participants in this study, and one of the most substantive findings of the study. While all of the participants in this study were in a program that provided them with mentoring experiences, not all were as positive as the four participants who asserted that they were going to mentor others in the future.... While it is impossible to draw conclusions from the results here, the study does indicate that, for the participants in this study, there is a positive pairing of the experience of having good mentors and then having a positive mentoring experience with the desire to continue the practice in the future.

### **Implications**

If a school wants its students to go forth and do good deeds, then it must make sure that the students have a positive mentoring experience so that they will want to mentor others.... Due to the fact that study was limited to only seven participants it is difficult to draw any hard conclusions. The researcher's recommendations for future research include the following: use a larger and more diverse sample size; gender themes must be explored further; since mentoring was mentioned often by the participants of the study, it would be interesting to look at this aspect of the non-cognitive factors that lead to college success and study further its impact on student success; a before-and-after study on views of mentoring with a group of students when they enter college and when they graduate could reveal how well and what types of mentoring actually work on a campus; follow-up with students who stated a desire to mentor other students and see if they follow through; and determine if students who participate in mentoring programs, mentor post-graduation.

## **APA Citation**

**Payne, T.H. (2006). Perceptions of First-Generation College Students: Factors that Influence Graduate School Enrollment and Perceived Barriers to Attendance. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Alabama, 2006). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 67 (07), 322320.**

## **Author(s)**

Tracy Hodges Payne

## **Title**

Perceptions of First-Generation College Students: Factors that Influence Graduate School Enrollment and Perceived Barriers to Attendance

## **Abstract**

Much of the available literature on first-generation college students focuses on pre-college experiences, two-year institutions, or retention at the baccalaureate level. Much less information is available about these students at the graduate level other than they are attending at lower rates than their peers. The purpose of this study was to examine what motivates first-generation students to want to attend graduate school, what they perceive as potential barriers, and what critical incidents have shaped their perceptions of graduate school.

A researcher-constructed survey was distributed to participants in McNair Programs throughout the southeastern United States, with a return rate of 68% (n=124). Presented motivators and barriers were rated and ranked by participants. Open-ended questions requested critical incidents that helped shape perceptions of attendance (motivation), non-attendance (barriers), and attitude in general toward graduate school. Significant differences for motivators and barriers were examined and found based on race, gender, and academic performance (GPA), but not for academic classification.

Comparing the ratings, rankings, and critical incidents, results of this study suggest that career goals, self-motivation, and family are motivators for first-generation students. However, there is some discrepancy about what motivators are the strongest. Additionally, these students overwhelmingly perceive lack of financial resources, low academic grades and scores (graduate admission exams), and academic burnout as potential barriers to graduate school. Suggestions are offered for how programs and institutions can assist these students in preparing for graduate school, particularly through strong connections to campus.

## **Research question**

1. What factors motivate first-generation college students to aspire to attend graduate school?
2. Are there any significant differences based on these motivators with respect to the following demographic variables: (a) race, (b) gender, (c) academic classification, or (d) academic performance?
3. What factors do first-generation college students perceive as potential barriers that might prevent them from attending graduate school?
4. Are there any significant differences based on these barriers with respect to the following demographic variables: (a) race, (b) gender, (c) academic classification, or (d) academic performance?
5. What critical incidents in the lives of first-generation college students have influenced their perception of graduate school related to attendance, non-attendance, or to their attitude in general?

**TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program

**Method / Research Design**

The participants were 124 McNair Fellows from 8 Southeastern States (12 of 25 programs administered the survey). The researcher constructed a survey with a 68% response rate (n=124)

**Analysis**

The researcher used a non-experimental cross sectional design with descriptive statistics.

**Key Findings**

Findings showed that top motivations chosen by students were career opportunities, self-fulfillment, self-motivation, financial stability, and to make parents proud. Some students wrote in to help others achieve and become aware within the community (many others were written in as well). Top potential barriers to graduate school chosen were lack of financial resources, low academic grades and scores (graduate admission exams), and academic burnout. Some students wrote in if my mother gets sick, adult/student responsibilities, and writing abilities as potential barriers. Critical incidents that shaped perceptions of graduate school were the McNair Scholars Program, professors and research mentors, and hearing of negative experiences in graduate school.

**Implications**

Practices suggested by the researcher were: to increase interactions with peers and faculty who have common demographics in hope to create a greater sense of belonging and integration to the campus; create greater assistance with academic and career decisions. A more personalized or holistic approach; create greater access to information on financial aid; regularly monitor undergraduate Grade Point Average; ensure that they are taking courses aligned with graduation and access to graduate school; require seminars on time management, stress reduction, and organization skills; and involve family members. Future research should consider: surveying a more diverse population of students, both McNair participants as well as other first-generation college students who are not McNair participants; extend study to a national sample, as opposed to just regional; compare results to non-first generation students' graduate school motivators and barriers; and include an interviewing component to get a holistic view of issues specific to first-generation students.

**APA Citation**

**Acker-Ball, S.L. (2007). A Case Study of the Influence of Family on First Generation College Students' Educational Aspirations Post High School. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Maryland at College Park, 2007). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 69 (02), 3297326.**

**Author(s)**

Shawna L. Acker-Ball

**Title**

A Case Study of the Influence of Family on First-Generation College Students' Educational Aspirations Post High School

**Abstract**

The purpose of this study is to examine how factors in the home environment (hereby referred to as habitus) (Bourdieu, 1977) impact the educational aspirations of first-generation college students who are participants in an academic achievement program designed to meet the needs of first-generation and underrepresented students (Ronald E. McNair Post-Baccalaureate Achievement Program). This study examined family characteristics such as educational and cultural practices, academic awareness, social class position and parental expectations to determine if they have an impact on student aspirations. The primary research question to guide this study is, "What is the influence of family on first-generation college students' educational aspirations post high school?"

This study sought to determine how families that were from traditionally underrepresented populations (low SES, ethnic minorities, single parent home, etc.) in post-secondary education were able to influence the aspirations of their children to attend college. Put differently, the study sought to understand the amount of exposure that each student had to the collegiate experience, the arts, financial information, and other cultural and social events. This study focused on what happened in the homes of the participants that provided the requisite skills, attitudes and behaviors that would serve as a source of motivation to aspire to college.

**Research question**

1. What is the influence of family on first-generation college students' educational aspirations post high school?
2. Does family contribute to a child's attitude toward education?
3. How does family affect students' attitudes toward education?
4. What educational or cultural practices do the family engage in that impede or enhance the student's academic awareness?

**TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program

**Method / Research Design**

The researcher used a case study. The participants were nine (9) volunteering McNair Scholars at the University of Maryland who showed signs of success.



## **Analysis**

The researcher used qualitative coding for themes; data managing, reading/memoing, describing, classifying, interpreting, and representing and visualizing.

## **Key Findings**

Findings showed that parental expectations and the pressure to succeed emerged throughout the interviews. Parental involvement and parental encouragement provided the essential support necessary to encourage first-generation students' educational aspirations. It appeared that regardless of family background and SES, the expectation for participants to receive a college education was expressed within the majority of homes. Understanding the participant's home environment is key to identifying the knowledge, skills and dispositions that were demonstrated or taught within the home.

## **Implications**

Practices suggested by the researcher were: state and local governments, as well as school systems, could produce guides and supplementary training for parents to assist their children with homework and expose parents to the realization that their children can go to college (Eccles & Harold, 1993); programs designed to assist parents can be executed through community organizations without having to drastically increase school duties and responsibilities; greater counseling resources must be incorporated by the schools to ease the duties that are performed by guidance counselors; class field trips to various career and education options; earlier intervention to initiate social capital that students ordinarily would not have been exposed to (Cabrera et al., 2006; Cabrera, La Nasa, 2001); and intervention strategies that seek to increase college participation need to include various components, such as school and home based resources in order to create an interconnectedness among them. Further research is necessary to fully understand the matriculation decisions of first-generation students based on parental and family influence and how it impacts their career and social mobility as well as their earning potential. Persistence, degree attainment and early career labor market outcomes of first-generation students should also be examined. Finally, additional research is also needed to compare first-generation students' characteristics to continuing-generation students' characteristics, such as demographics, academic preparation, college expectations, etc.

## **APA Citation**

**Beal, R.Y. (2007). "You mean they'll pay me to think?" How low income, first generation and underrepresented minority McNair students construct an academic identity as scholar. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Colorado at Boulder, 2007). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 68 (07), 3273744.**

## **Author(s)**

Ramona Yvette Beal

## **Title**

*"You mean they'll pay me to think?"* How low income, first generation and underrepresented minority McNair students construct an academic identity as scholar.

## **Abstract**

This dissertation reports findings from a case study of the McNair Scholars program at Redstone University, a federal TRIO program designed to motivate and encourage students who are from low income, first- generation families, or from underrepresented minority groups to attend and complete the doctorate. It was combined with an auto-ethnography of my early tertiary schooling experiences through my successful attainment of a PhD. The conceptual framework encompassed cultural difference, symbolic interaction and literacy theoretical perspectives. This orientation allowed critique of the complex web of factors student encountered on personal, interpersonal, professional and structural levels. Participants were studied to understand their development of an academic identity while participating in the program and after they exited the program. Qualitative data methods include long interviews with alumni, students, faculty, course instructors, program alumni, three semesters of seminar observations and students weekly electronic reports collected from the 2003 entering cohort of mostly junior undergraduates.

## **Research question**

1. What factors are conducive to the development of a scholarly identity?
2. What skills do McNair students need to acquire in order to become scholars?
3. What linkages (if any) do students make to their cultural heritage in the process of becoming scholars?
4. In what way does the student's race/ethnic or cultural identity impact her or his development of an academic identity as scholar?

## **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program

## **Method / Research Design**

The researcher used qualitative data methods which included long interviews with alumni, students, faculty, course instructors, program alumni, three semesters of seminar observations and students weekly electronic reports collected from the 2003 entering cohort of mostly junior undergraduates.

## **Analysis**

Both deductive and inductive analysis was used in the study, the former to guide analysis of the program structure on the students' experience. Inductive analysis was used to understand what the academic learning experience was and how students interpreted it and folded academic skills, behaviors, resource management, and practice into their learning process in the classroom, with their research team of

advisors and with instructors.

Vignette analysis, conveyed as realistic, confessional and impressionistic tales, offered a comprehensive depiction of the typical experiences, activities, acts and events program scholars engage in as a way to “present a forceful and succinct...authentic cultural representation[s]” (LeCompte & Schensul, p. 181).

## **Key Findings**

This dissertation examined the factors conducive to the development of a McNair scholar’s identity, skills needed for McNair students to become scholars, linkages made by McNair scholars to their cultural heritage, and how race/ethnic or cultural identity impact their development of an academic identity as scholar. Findings showed that factors that affected students’ development of a scholarly identity included: academic preparedness, personal barriers such as financial issues; cultural influences such as social and economic class and; academic needs such as learning discourse practices. The McNair Scholars Program focused on the development of academic skills for success in higher education teaching and research careers. These skills were separated into academic literacy, inquiry training, and development of academic voice, professional voice, anticipatory socialization, imaginative rehearsal, and interpersonal interaction. The researcher broke linkages made to cultural heritage into race matters (stereotype threat/internalized racism), habitus, professional orientation, working class cultural roots, and first-generation roots. Also, it was seen that cultural incompatibility was the source of mismatches, miscommunication, and misunderstanding between students, the university, and its agents. These themes were structural barriers (academic capital/literacy practices), social reproduction (cultural capital), racial, ethnic, and cultural identity factors, and educational/cultural hegemony.

## **Implications**

The University must acknowledge that these students are not the same as the average, mainstream university student because their experiences, background, training, resources vastly different. Therefore, they perceive things differently, assess the world differently, manipulate ideas and resources differently, not worse or badly just differently and their ideas, resources and worldview was different. To bridge the cultural gap, academic coaching must make the rules of interaction, dialogue, and practice explicit to this group because they are not in the same cultural frame of mind to pick up on the subtitles long term participants know implicitly-due to prolonged exposure (Lovitts, 2005; Beegle, 2004).

Proactive approaches to invest capital in education now, through co-seminar bridge programs shrink the educational knowledge gap created by poorly delivered or truncated curricula. Specific teaching strategies taught by experts in working with gifted, talented students, many of who also struggle with disabilities, are sorely needed. The historical dearth in education investment can no longer be ignored; rather it must be tackled aggressively and with conviction. The researcher suggests the implementation of: culturally sensitive interaction styles; changes in institutional and individual perspectives; openness to new voices; a supportive community; confrontation of University ignorance of real student and program needs; and recognition of racist institutional and societal context.

**APA Citation**

**Derk, A.M. (2007). Highlighting Hope: An exploration of the experiences of West Virginia University McNair Scholars. (Doctoral dissertation, West Virginia University, 2007). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 69 (01), 3298546.**

**Author(s)**

Angela Marie Derk

**Title**

Highlighting Hope: An exploration of the experiences of West Virginia University McNair Scholars

**Abstract**

This study focuses on individual development and transformation of West Virginia University (WVU) McNair scholars as they exist in numerous realities. These scholars are first-generation/low-income students and/or minority students that wish to obtain their terminal degree. McNair scholars begin as undergraduate students ensconced within the educational community of the McNair Scholars Program (MSP) at WVU then independently enter graduate school programs throughout the nation. The WVU McNair scholar Program is one of over 170 national McNair programs within American higher education. This research, a phenomenological ethnography, provides a glimpse into the lives of the many students served via the MSP and records their perspectives that may benefit both the modern student as well as contemporary educators.

I, a MSP Graduate Assistant and WVU McNair alumna, interviewed twenty-one WVU McNair scholars along with the WVU MSP director and assistant director. Each scholar received their undergraduate education at WVU and many have now entered graduate school throughout the nation. This is a qualitative study; in addition to personal interviews of a purposeful sample it also incorporates document analysis and observation of students and events throughout an academic year.

**Research question**

1. What affect does the MSP have on the personal lives of McNair Scholars?
2. Does the MSP provide cultural enrichment opportunities to help develop the whole student?
3. Does the MSP promote academic excellence for McNair Scholars?

**TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program,

**Method / Research Design**

The researcher used a phenomenological ethnography and interviewed twenty-one WVU McNair scholars along with the WVU MSP director and assistant director; document analysis; observations of students and events.

**Analysis**

Qualitative coding for themes; read each document and interview entirely, then during the second reading of each made notes of emergent themes and through constant comparison identified the similarities. This process allowed general themes to emerge, which depicted the experiences of the participants, along with the formal messages they received from the MSP. Although this research, being

phenomenological, focused on direct student quotations about their various experiences, majority of the emerged discussion themes were also identified during document analysis and could be further explored in future research.

### **Key Findings**

Findings uncovered the emerging themes of personal benefits of program services, faculty mentors and professional modeling, family backgrounds along with issues of a dualistic existence, student determination, student diversity including race, poverty, and being a first-generation student when asked of what affect does the McNair Scholars Program have on the personal lives of the participants. When asked about cultural enrichment provided by the McNair Scholars Program, themes emerged such as leadership, issues of class and poverty, and empowerment, which revolved around knowledge, exposure, and an increased awareness of self and others. The final question of does the McNair Scholars Program promote academic excellence had the emergence of themes such as the educational community, educational preparation, language of the academy, educational focus and support, and program recommendations. Students suggested less time in the classroom, more time in the library, and more time for interactive learning opportunities.

### **Implications**

By sharing the insight and opinions of 21 WVU McNair scholars, the researcher hopes to highlight a truly diverse student population, each with unique qualities as well as similarities. Future research should look to formulating a central database to inform each of the 179 MSP of each program's design. This would also be beneficial for conducting quantitative endeavors to better analyze if certain program designs seem to relate to greater success for the McNair scholars in graduate school. For additional future research regarding MSP's and McNair scholars, it would be beneficial to deeper analyze the impact of the individual sections of the program. For example, complete studies could be conducted regarding: cultural exposure, professional development, poverty and higher education, first generation college McNair scholars compared to non first generation college McNair scholars, as well as the relationships and impacts of the faculty mentors with the scholars.

**APA Citation**

**Greene, K.V. (2007). Alumni Perceptions of the McNair Scholars at Kansas Universities. (Doctoral dissertation, Kansas State University, 2007). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 68 (07), 3274485.**

**Author(s)**

Kathleen Veronica Greene

**Title**

Alumni Perceptions of the McNair Scholars at Kansas Universities

**Abstract**

This study investigated the strengths and weaknesses of the McNair program at the three Kansas Regents institutions. The population included 259 former McNair program participants from Kansas State University (KSU), the University of Kansas (KU), and Wichita State University (WSU) who graduated with baccalaureate degrees between 1996 and 2004. These alumni were asked to complete a two- part survey. Part one collected data on McNair alumni perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the program on a thirty- three item, five-point Likert scale. Additionally, part one collected data on McNair alumni recommendations regarding the amount of emphasis that should be placed on program services and activities. Next, part two collected selected demographics. This provided useful data to examine how selected demographics relate to program perceptions.

One hundred and thirty-seven of the 259 McNair alumni completed the survey.

Overall, the results of the data suggested that they perceived the services and activities to be more of a strength than a weakness. Also, the recorded comments by the alumni indicated that their experiences as McNair scholars were positive.

McNair scholar alumni recommended providing more assistance with how to interview prospective faculty mentors, obtain financial assistance, and stay abreast of resources that would increase the number of McNair scholars enrolling in graduate school and completing a graduate degree.

Further study is recommended to survey McNair alumni who have completed doctoral degrees regarding the need for services that would help strengthen areas that were perceived to be weaker than others. These areas include “Enrollment in a Graduate School Program Leading to a Doctorate Degree” and “Selecting and Working With a Faculty Mentor”. Additionally, further study is recommended to investigate how alumni differ in their perceptions of the strengths and weaknesses of the McNair Program by major field of study.

**Research question**

1. What are the perceptions of McNair alumni regarding the strengths and weaknesses of the six primary program factors listed below?
  - Academic Research Workshops;
  - Selecting and Working With a Faculty Mentor;
  - Graduate Record Examination (GRE) Preparation;
  - The Summer Research Internship;
  - Academic Support Services;
  - Enrollment in a Graduate School Leading to a Doctorate Degree.
2. What are the perceptions of McNair alumni regarding the strengths and weaknesses of other program

factors, such as availability of, and assistance from, the faculty mentor, and the amount of the stipend provided to McNair Scholars?

3. Are there differences among McNair alumni perceptions related to gender, race, and ethnicity about the six program factors?
4. Are the national program eligibility criteria reflected in the following data collected from Kansas Universities McNair Scholar alumni?
  - First-generation college status
  - Family income status
  - Race and ethnicity
  - Grade Point Average (at time of graduation)
  - Other colleges attended
  - Major field of study
5. What were the perceptions and attitudes of McNair Scholar alumni towards getting an education?
  - Perceptions about being a McNair Scholar
  - Attitude towards getting an education prior to earning an undergraduate degree
  - Attitude towards getting an education after earning a college degree

### **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program

### **Method / Research Design**

One hundred and thirty-seven of the 259 McNair alumni from Kansas State University (KSU), the University of Kansas (KU), and Wichita State University (WSU) (graduated between 1996 and 2004) completed the survey. 53 Percent Response Rate

### **Analysis**

Simple frequency distributions of the data were first examined. The univariate analysis gave way to bivariate analyses that involved simple cross tabulations and t-tests for differences between means. The reliability of the scaled measures were tested using Cronbach's alpha reliability coefficient. The multivariate measure used was analysis of variance (ANOVA), and in cases where there was a significant finding, post-hoc tests were conducted.

### **Key Findings**

Findings showed that alumni perceived the McNair program as to be more of a strength than a weakness. Alumni valued mentorship and stipends as the program's biggest strengths. McNair scholar alumni recommended providing more assistance with how to interview prospective faculty mentors, obtain financial assistance, stay abreast of resources that would increase the number of McNair scholars enrolling in graduate school and completing a graduate degree, and include alumni in efforts to promote the program to students, administration, and legislatures.

### **Implications**

The current study is beneficial in providing an understanding of the strength and weaknesses of the services and activities as perceived by Kansas McNair

Scholars. In fact, other states in addition to Kansas are urged to produce related studies.

This would provide a better understanding of the effectiveness of the program as perceived by McNair alumni beyond the state of Kansas. Also, this sort of study would be helpful to those evaluating the need for the program on a national and local level.

The researcher suggests that the program: provide more instruction to assist program participants in acquiring an understanding of how to interview prospective faculty mentors; collaborate with graduate school faculty to provide McNair scholars with appropriate questions to ask prospective mentors; facilitate mock interviews with McNair scholars; provide each scholar with written guidelines on how to interview prospective mentors; intensify efforts to assist program participants to obtain financial resources for graduate school; provide each scholar with a handbook on how to obtain financial resources for graduate school; collaborate with the graduate programs that are in the scholars' major field to obtain graduate school funding; strive to enhance all of the program services and activities that would result in increasing the number of McNair scholars enrolling in graduate school and completing a doctorate degree; continuously assess the program's success in accomplishing its purpose; continue to work on obtaining the federal, state, and institutional commitment necessary for the program by reporting the need for it and its successes; and intensify efforts to involve McNair alumni in promoting the program to prospective McNair scholars, administrators, faculty, state and national legislators. Future research should use a survey and/or interviews which ask McNair alumni who have completed a doctoral program to give their view of how the program services and activities can be further strengthened. Other areas for future research to consider are: replicating the current study once McNair alumni have completed a doctoral program; and looking at the careers of Kansas McNair alumni after earning a doctoral degree.



**APA Citation**

**Spears, J.M. (2007). Experiences of Low-Income Students' Transitions to Graduate School. (Doctoral dissertation, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, 2007). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 69 (01), 3291650.**

**Author(s)**

Julia Marie Spears

**Title**

Experiences of Low-Income Students' Transitions to Graduate

**Abstract**

In this study, I examined the experiences of low-income students' academic and social transition during their first year of graduate school. The seven participants in this study were a part of a graduate school preparation program (GSPP) at a Midwestern research university where undergraduate research was a mandatory component. Participants took part in undergraduate research during the summer of 2005 and enrolled in graduate school in the fall of 2006. Several theories influenced this study. These include critical theory, graduate school socialization theory, identity development theory, and self-authorship theory. A qualitative approach was used to gather detailed data from the participants. Data collection included a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with each participant and analysis of GSPP documents. All of the data collected were carefully coded, looking for common themes and patterns.

For these low-income students, their first year of graduate school was marked by the interplay between social and academic transitions. Even though all students experience insecurity and anxiety as they begin graduate school, low-income students' experiences are compounded by other insecurities as well. Additionally, these students experienced isolation, which further complicated their graduate school socialization process. Understanding the varied needs of low-income students as they begin their graduate studies helps university program administrators, student affairs professionals and faculty to better support these students so that they complete degrees.

**Research question**

1. How do low-income students describe their academic transition to graduate school?
2. How do low-income students describe their social transition to graduate school?
3. How does participation in a GSPP affect low-income students' academic and social transition to graduate school?
4. What are the salient dimensions of identity that influence the transitional experience?

**TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program

**Method / Research Design**

The researcher used a qualitative design. The participants were seven (7) students in the graduate school preparation program (GSPP) at a Midwestern Research University. Data collection included a series of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with each participant, one focus group with four of the seven participants, analysis of GSPP documents, and observations of these seven students as they interact with

their colleagues and peers in the GSPP. The bulk of the data, however, comes from the interviews.

### **Analysis**

In exploring the data gathered in GSPP files and the interview transcripts, the researcher developed codes to identify issues and themes common to my participants. All of the data collected were carefully coded, looking for common themes, patterns, and categories. The researcher used several types of codes in analyzing the data. The researcher examined the transcripts and assigned various code directly to chunks of text. During this phase of coding, the researcher primarily used descriptive and interpretive codes.

The researcher used content analysis to review the documents and archival data the researcher received from the GSPP. Similar to the interview data, the researcher assigned codes to information in the different GSPP documents, which included evaluations of the summer research experience, graduate school admission essays, and GSPP program applications, observations and interview notes. Through content analysis, the researcher examined when, where, and under what conditions themes emerged in the documents (Ryan & Bernard, 2000).

### **Key Findings**

Findings showed that students constantly negotiated between their true self and the self that they felt would be accepted by society. When the participants' described their academic experiences in graduate school the researcher found that they struggled to make connections, recognize a culture of power, and perform "good student" roles. Socially, students felt as though they were outsiders within their own family. Also, the researcher found disconnect between the knowledge gained and practiced in the GSPP and the application of that knowledge in graduate school.

### **Implications**

Based on the comments and experiences of the women in the study, there are several things institutions could do to support the success of low-income students as they transition into graduate school. These could be done as part of GSPP program or as part of more formal orientation/mentoring programs for new students. The researcher suggests: that student and academic affairs professionals should offer continuous mentoring and support to students as they continue their education in graduate school; institutions could provide more formal orientation programs for new graduate students; institutions could provide all new graduate students with a peer mentor, institutions should provide financial support to ALL students to ensure feasibility of being able to manage the financial implications of going back to school; GSPP's need to do more to help low-income students to understand the cultural isolation that they might face in graduate school; GSPP's need to provide additional opportunities for students to talk about the ways class influences their perception of themselves and others; and GSPP's should provide bridge experiences that engage students with working class faculty and graduate students to talk about how to manage the transition. Future Research should examine: how the variations in institution type, location and size, influence the students' transition; the relationships between low-income students and their families; the participants' faculty mentors; longitudinal data is needed to truly examine the transitional experience of the participants; and include students from other social classes and compare their experiences during the graduate school transition.

**APA Citation**

**Olive, T. (2009). Desire for Higher Education in First-Generation Hispanic College Students Enrolled in the McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program. (Doctoral dissertation, Saybrook University, 2009). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 70 (08), 3368984.**

**Author(s)**

Tamara Olive

**Title**

Desire for Higher Education in First-Generation Hispanic College Students Enrolled in the McNair Post Baccalaureate Achievement Program

**Abstract**

Empirical studies have examined first-generation college students, individuals whose parents have not attended college. Their personality characteristics, cognitive development, academic preparation, and performance have been topics of research. However, there appears to be little in the literature exploring the motivation of these individuals to seek higher education. The purpose of this study was to conduct a phenomenological examination of the desire to attend college among first-generation Hispanic students enrolled in the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program, a federally funded TRIO program designed to increase the attainment of terminal degrees by students from underrepresented segments of society. As there are few studies examining students enrolled in the McNair Program, this research offers insights regarding the desire for advanced higher education among these individuals.

One-hour taped interviews were conducted with five volunteer participants enrolled in the McNair Program at a Texas university designated as a Hispanic-serving institution. Meaning units and constituents were extracted, and a general structure was developed using the descriptive phenomenological method (Giorgi, 1985). This general structure resulting from the phenomenological analysis confirms the impact of postbaccalaureate programming and identifies the roles of resilience, previous success, awakened awareness, comfort in the academic environment, a need to contribute to others or to society, a break with tradition, a process of self-discovery, and the influence of valued individuals in facilitating a desire for higher education.

**Research question**

1. What is the experience of the desire for higher education in Hispanic first-generation college students enrolled in the Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program?

**TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program

**Method / Research Design**

The research used a phenomenological research design through one-hour taped interviews that were conducted with five volunteer participants enrolled in the McNair Program at a Texas university designated as a Hispanic-serving institution.

**Analysis**

The interviews were transcribed verbatim and examined as written descriptions. The method of analysis consists of the following four steps outlined by Giorgi (1985; all steps are

performed within the attitude of the phenomenological reduction):

1. One reads the entire description in order to get a general sense of the whole statement.
2. Once the sense of the whole has been grasped, the researcher goes back to the beginning and reads through the text once more with the specific aim of discriminating “meaning units” [shifts in meaning as perceived by the researcher] from within the phenomenological reduction, a psychological perspective, and with a focus on the phenomenon being researched.
3. Once “meaning units” have been delineated, the researcher then goes through all of the meaning units and expresses the psychological insight contained in them more directly. This is especially true of the “meaning units” most revelatory of the phenomenon under consideration.
4. Finally, the researcher synthesizes all of the transformed meaning units into a consistent statement regarding the subject’s experience. This is usually referred to as the structure of the experience and can be expressed at a number of levels. (p. 10)

### **Key Findings**

The findings show the impact of post-baccalaureate programming and identifies the roles of resilience, previous success (self-efficacy), awakened awareness, comfort in the academic environment, a need to contribute to others or to society, a break with tradition, a process of self-discovery, and the influence of valued individuals in facilitating a desire for higher education.

### **Implications**

Because only 1,370 of the total 26,917 doctorates awarded in the United States in 2006 were granted to individuals identified as Hispanic (Hoffer et al., 2007), it is important to gain understanding regarding the dynamics within Hispanic individuals that contribute to the commitment and pursuit of a terminal degree. In addition, because there are higher rates of enrollment in graduate school for McNair alumni as compared with undergraduates overall (Norfle & Mortenson, 2002), it is vital to continue to support this type of postbaccalaureate programming in higher education settings.

The researcher suggests that: personal, social, and academic needs of students must be addressed in order to encourage a desire for higher education; the power of teachers and counselors in mentoring and advising must not be underestimated, and opportunities for developing mentoring relationships should be provided; it is important for the school systems to assist families in creating new traditions that incorporate proeducation identities; schools must not only inform regarding higher education, they must promote the concept of delaying gratification in order to reap greater benefits to self and others through higher education; courses such as advanced placement, higher level secondary coursework, and gifted and talented courses should be promoted and reflect appropriate representation among Hispanic students; institutional neglect can powerfully affect the desire for higher education. Because it has been demonstrated that tracking of students due to limited English language proficiency negatively impacts college enrollment, and that proficiency in early childhood facilitates academic achievement, schools should approach bilingual education more aggressively and avoid prolonged tracking; there should be no placement in special education classes due to limited English language proficiency; vocational educational tracks must not be considered the primary option for those students of minority status; schools should provide adequate opportunity for those students without familial role models for higher education to exercise their intellectual curiosity, demonstrate their competence, participate in enrichment activities, and operate within a supportive environment; for those students and families who have been marginalized through issues of immigration or other challenging circumstances, outreach programs should be developed and initiated to address needs relevant to the success of the students within the academic environment; and because Hispanic college students verbalize the personal importance of similar culture or ethnicity in faculty instructors and advisors, universities’ faculty demographics should reflect ethnic diversity. We must provide them. Future research should examine the desire for higher education. The current study examined the first group of students at their university to

be enrolled in the McNair Program. It might be helpful to examine these students from a longitudinal perspective and interview them as they progress through their graduate and doctoral studies. It is imperative to learn, as stated previously, what works and what is needed in order to improve programming approaches. Qualitative studies can provide such information. Also, a phenomenological study examining the desire for higher education as a professional choice might offer discoveries that could facilitate new directions in university departmental approaches.

**APA Citation**

Farro, S.A. (2009). *Achievements and Challenges of Undergraduates in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics in the Ronald E. McNair Program*. (Doctoral dissertation, Colorado State University, 2010). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 70 (11), 3385152.

**Author(s)**

Samantha Anne Farro

**Title**

Achievements and Challenges of Undergraduates in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics in the Ronald E. McNair Program.

**Abstract**

This dissertation is comprised of two studies and is about understanding the challenges, choices, aspirations, and perceptions of successful, underrepresented undergraduates in STEM fields. Study 1 compared self-perceptions of academic ability and academic performance of female and male undergraduate science and engineering students from underrepresented ethnic and socioeconomic groups, upon admission in (Time 1) and graduation from (Time 2) the McNair Mentorship Program. Female and male students were similar in regard to academic performance. However, at Time 1, women were significantly more likely than their male peers to describe themselves as academically weaker. Upon graduation from the McNair Program, women's perceptions of their academic skills were on par with those of men. Students with double minority status (i.e. by sex, ethnicity, generation in college, or income) had more negative self-perceptions of academic skills, as well as lower performance on standardized tests.

Overall, these findings suggest that one barrier for women in STEM education is lower confidence. However, over time female McNair students in STEM increased their self-perception of academic competence. This study's findings also indicate that multiple minority status may have a cumulative negative impact on academic self-perceptions and academic performance. Study 2 focused on the experiences of high-achieving, female undergraduates from disadvantaged backgrounds who are majoring in engineering, physical, or life science. Interviews about educational choices and career aspirations were collected in written form upon admission to (Time 1) and graduation from (Time 2) the McNair Mentorship Program. Students' timing of educational and career decisions, motivations, parental expectations and involvement in educational and career planning, career exploration, and career aspirations were qualitatively analyzed longitudinally and across disciplines. Insights about educational choices and career aspirations are shared and recommendations are given for future research to improve career counseling to support disadvantaged women in STEM fields.

**Research question****Study 1**

1. Do differences exist in self-perceptions of ability or performance between high-achieving, underrepresented female and male students enrolled in the McNair Program?
2. Do self-perceptions of ability and performance change from Time 1 to Time 2 for high achieving, underrepresented students?

3. Do differences exist in self-perceptions of ability or performance between underrepresented students with single versus multiple risk factors of first-generation or low-income status and ethnic minority status?

## Study 2

1. When are women choosing to pursue science and engineering focused education?
2. What role, if any, do parents have in the educational and career decisions of women who choose science and engineering focused education?
3. Do women who choose science and engineering focused education explore other career options?
4. What future aspirations do women who choose science and engineering focused education hold and how committed are they to career goals?
5. Do differences exist in the career decision-making process for women in male-dominated fields such as physical science and engineering compared to women in life science?

## TRIO program(s) or students involved

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program

## Method / Research Design

### Study 1

Students' timing of educational and career decisions, motivations, parental expectations and involvement in educational and career planning, career exploration, and career aspirations were qualitatively analyzed longitudinally and across disciplines through the use of interviews. Participants in this study were STEM students enrolled in the McNair Program between 1995 and 2006 at a large Mountain West university ( $N = 111$ ). Students met criteria for the McNair program if they were female (61% of the sample), ethnic minority (40% Latino, 8% African American, 13% other minority), first-generation (80%), or had low-income status (80%). On average, participants met three of these four criteria. The participants' modal age was 20 years (range = 15 to 53).

### Study 2

Participants' written responses to eight questions from The Identity Status Interview (see Appendix A) were analyzed. Questions focused on identifying timing of important decisions, previous career exploration, parental expectations and involvement in career planning, motivations for pursuing science or engineering focused education, commitment to career goals, and identifying career goals and future aspirations. The sample for this study consisted of female undergraduate students ( $N = 75$ ) who were majoring in engineering, physical science, or life science and enrolled in the McNair Program between 1996 and 2006. All eligible students participated in this study but, due to incomplete Time 2 data, 53 could not be included in analyses.

## Analysis

### Study 1

*Critical thinking.* The Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Appraisal (WGCTA; Watson & Glaser, 1994) was administered to students at Time 1 ( $n = 122$ ) and at Time 2

( $n = 34$ ). It is a widely-used measure that consists of various scenarios that measure five aspects of critical thinking: inferences, recognition of assumptions, deduction, interpretation, and evaluation of arguments. The 40 items on Form S, which yield a total score (range = 0-40), are responded to with a two-alternative, multiple choice format that

## Study 2

Participants' written responses to eight questions from The Identity Status Interview (see Appendix A) were analyzed. Ethnographic content analysis (ECA) was used for analysis of the interview reports (Altheide, Coyle, DeVriese, & Schneider, 2008). ECA is a qualitative strategy that focuses on the discovery of meaning of a phenomenon, in this case the educational choices and experiences of women in science and engineering education (Altheide, 1987; Altheide, et al.; Fetterman, 1989).

In order to identify emergent themes, several coding steps were taken to describe, document, verify, and understand the meaning of the interview narratives. In this study, multiple rounds of open coding were completed using constant comparison. A total of 581 final open codes were generated to describe each unit of information in all interviews. The next step in coding, called axial coding, determined conceptual relationships among the codes. For the axial coding phase, the author examined the 581 open codes and arranged them into categories, with broader categories being induced from the more specific open codes. Additionally, once the last round of axial codes was complete, data were separated by major for Time 1 and Time 2 interviews. The final step in coding was the selective coding phase. The selective coding phase provides the final thematic structure for this study.

## Key Findings

This dissertation involved two studies. The first study examined the change in self-perceptions of academic ability and academic performance of male and female science and engineering students from underrepresented ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds at the point of entry into the McNair Mentorship Program compared to graduation. Findings showed that prior to the McNair Mentorship Program males and females had a similar academic performance. Upon entering the program these women were significantly more likely than males to claim a weaker academic ability. By the end of the program females were at the same (higher) level as males in perception of their academic skills. Another finding of the study was that students with double minority characteristics had more negative self-perceptions of academic ability. Over time, participants in the McNair Mentorship Program women in STEM increased their self-perceptions of academic ability.

The second study examined educational choices and career aspirations of high-achieving female STEM majors from disadvantaged backgrounds at the point of entry into the McNair Mentorship Program compared to graduation. Findings showed that women majoring in the physical sciences or engineering reported making education and career decisions before women majoring in the life sciences. Also, for both groups women had family support, but their families were uninvolved in educational and career planning. Both groups reported enjoying learning and wanting to help the world as reason for career choices. As for after graduating from the McNair Mentorship program women in physical science and engineering had more of a vague idea of future aspirations than those in the life sciences.

## Implications

### Study 1

Female students' lower academic confidence may act as a barrier for women persisting in STEM fields, even if the women are successful and high-achieving (Goodman et al, 2002; Nauta et al., 1999). Therefore, interventions that focus on addressing women's academic confidence in STEM, not only their academic



skills, are critical to meeting their unique educational needs and encouraging their persistence and success in STEM. In sum, the McNair Program and others like it may offer critical and needed support for talented, underrepresented students in the United States. Supporting the needs of these students is important and could ultimately lead to gains in social capital for society in general and the STEM disciplines in particular.

The researcher suggests that future research to expands on the current research by using male and female underrepresented and majority students in science and engineering as a control sample for comparison. It would also be helpful to conduct pre- and post-assessment of each separate component in the McNair Program in order to determine specifically which one or combination of components in the McNair Program are most effective for addressing the specific and unique needs of women and students with multiple risk factors.

## Study 2

The overall implication of this study is that women in male-dominated education fields such as physical science and engineering have both similarities and differences from women in life science where woman are more well represented. Parental support, autonomous career planning, enjoyment of learning, wanting job security, humanitarian interests, and career exploration were similar for both WIPSE and WILS. However, timing of education and career decisions were later, future aspirations were less clear at graduation, commitment to goals was higher, and stress was higher for WIPSE than WILS. Therefore, interventions to support women in all STEM education programs could benefit from including components such as: assisting in career planning, fostering enjoyment of learning, providing information about job opportunities, connecting application of STEM to socially conscious and humanitarian issues, and providing career exploration opportunities. However, interventions that aim to specifically support the unique needs of women in male-dominated STEM fields must be more comprehensive. For example, WIPSE from this study became more indecisive about their careers over time and may benefit from efforts that assist in this area. Additionally, WIPSE indicated struggling with higher stress levels and could benefit from learning stress-management skills. Future research focused on high-achieving women facing multiple obstacles is particularly valuable because these students can provide an insider's perspective on how they have successfully overcome obstacles.

**APA Citation**

**Chase, S.M. (2010). First-generation faculty: A phenomenological exploration of their motivations for mentoring first-generation students (Doctoral dissertation, University of Northern Colorado, 2010). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 71 (08), 3415986.**

**Author(s)**

Sarah M. Chase

**Title**

First-generation faculty: A phenomenological exploration of their motivations for mentoring first-generation students

**Abstract**

Research indicates that students from first-generation and low-income backgrounds persist and graduate from college at lower rates than their non-first-generation peers. Institutions of higher education can create more welcoming and success-promoting environments for first-generation students by helping them connect with faculty, particularly through mentoring relationships. This research explored the motivations of faculty from first-generation backgrounds who mentored first-generation college students within the federally-funded Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Achievement Program. Informed by constructivist epistemology and transcendental phenomenological theory as well as Bourdieu's (1986) theory of cultural capital, the phenomenon involving the transition into academe for such first-generation faculty was also explored. Six faculty participants were purposefully selected through contact with McNair program administrators at a doctoral research extensive university in the Rocky Mountain region enrolling a significant proportion of students from primarily rural areas and first-generation, low-income backgrounds. The five primary themes include: illustrations of teaching and mentoring, first-generation status, inspirations for mentoring, strategies for mentoring, and challenges in academe. These themes were further organized by corresponding subthemes and several recommendations for practice are discussed. These include assessing the needs and expectations of McNair faculty mentors and scholars, encouraging peer mentoring networks, inviting seasoned McNair mentors to orient new mentors, acknowledging the importance of mentoring in faculty tenure and promotion decisions, thoughtfully assessing existing student services prior to implementing new ones, and providing opportunities for faculty and students to share their stories. In its entirety, this research provides a deeper understanding of the experiences of and challenges faced by faculty from first-generation backgrounds.

**Research question**

Electronic copy unavailable

**TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Ronald E. McNair Postbaccalaureate Program

**Method / Research Design**

Electronic copy unavailable

Six faculty participants were purposefully selected through contact with McNair program administrators at a doctoral research extensive university in the Rocky Mountain region enrolling a significant proportion of students from primarily rural areas and first-generation, low-income backgrounds.

**Analysis**

Electronic copy unavailable

**Key Findings**

The five primary themes include: illustrations of teaching and mentoring, first-generation status, inspirations for mentoring, strategies for mentoring, and challenges in academe. These themes were further organized by corresponding subthemes and several recommendations for practice are discussed. These include assessing the needs and expectations of McNair faculty mentors and scholars, encouraging peer mentoring networks, inviting seasoned McNair mentors to orient new mentors, acknowledging the importance of mentoring in faculty tenure and promotion decisions, thoughtfully assessing existing student services prior to implementing new ones, and providing opportunities for faculty and students to share their stories. In its entirety, this research provides a deeper understanding of the experiences of and challenges faced by faculty from first-generation backgrounds.

### **Implications**

Electronic copy unavailable

# Upward Bound

## APA Citation

**Dalpes, P.M. (2001). Reflections of First-Generation, Low-Income, Puerto Rican College Students on the Impact of a High School, Upward Bound Program on Their Ability to Succeed in Post-Secondary Education. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Massachusetts, Amherst, 2001). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62 (04), 3012126.**

## Author(s)

Paulette Marie Dalpes

## Title

Reflections of First-Generation, Low-Income, Puerto Rican College Students on the Impact of a High School, Upward Bound Program on Their Ability to Succeed in Post-Secondary Education

## Abstract

Although the federally funded TRIO Program entitled Upward Bound has been in existence for over thirty years and numerous federally and privately funded studies have been conducted about the hundreds of programs available throughout the nation, there has been relatively few investigations involving qualitative research approaches. Additionally, despite the fact that first generation college students, the primary target population for Upward Bound Programs, are most likely low-income and Latino, few studies have sought data directly from these target groups about their experience in Upward Bound. In this regard, the data gathered and reported in this qualitative education evaluation research study is unique.

Twelve former first-generation, low-income, Puerto Rican Upward Bound students who had completed at least one year of college were interviewed for this study. The interviews utilized a protocol from a twenty-five year old study that also interviewed Upward Bound students (Bemak, 1975). The purpose of this inquiry was to investigate how first generation, low-income, Puerto Rican college students evaluate the impact of their participation in a high school Upward Bound program on their academic preparation for college, self-perceptions, family and social relationships, future educational goals, and ultimately their post-secondary success.

The findings of this study shed light on the impact Upward Bound has upon first-generation, low-income, Puerto Rican students who have succeeded in post-secondary education. Data from the study indicate that the services and support provided by Upward Bound effectively intervenes in the unique struggles of first generation, low-income, Puerto Rican students who are at great risk for educational access and attainment. Reflections of former Upward Bound students inform the field of education regarding the impact of college preparatory programs on students who face the most difficult barriers in college completion. This research identifies practices that contribute to post-secondary success and uses the words and ideas of first-generation, low-income, Puerto Rican students as a guide to the implementation of future support services.

## Research question

1. How do first-generation, low-income, Puerto Rican, college students who participated in an Upward Bound program during high school evaluate the impact of the Upward Bound program on their lives, specifically with respect to their academic performance in high school and preparation for college, self-perception, family and social relationships, and their future educational goals?

2. How do first-generation, low-income, Puerto Rican, college students evaluate the impact of the Upward Bound program on their ability to complete a post-secondary education?
3. What recommendations do first-generation, low-income, Puerto Rican, college students have for the Upward Bound program to better prepare future students to complete a post-secondary education?

### **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Upward Bound

### **Method / Research Design**

Twelve former first-generation, low-income, Puerto Rican Upward Bound students who had completed at least one year of college were interviewed for this study. The interviews utilized a protocol from a twenty-five year old study that also interviewed Upward Bound students (Bemak, 1975).

### **Analysis**

Coding categories were distinguished as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1992). Emergent patterns, themes, categories and topics as they relate to the research questions and the interview guide were identified through a process of inductive analysis (Patton, 1990). Computerized analysis assisted the overall integration of the data and was conducted utilizing Ethnograph 5.0.

### **Key Findings**

The key findings of the study were: Upward Bound improved student attitudes and motivation towards academics in high school; the Upward Bound summer program improved academic skills and confidence in high school; Upward Bound provided racial diversity and decreased isolation felt as a Puerto Rican, college bound, high school student; involvement in Upward Bound improved high school grades; Upward Bound provided guidance and support to explore and select their career path and college major; Upward Bound assisted with all aspects of college selection, application, acceptance and financial aid; Upward Bound provided life skills development, exposure to diversity and the summer residential program to prepare students for college; Upward Bound encouraged high school college preparatory curriculum and provided academic skill development for college success; and overall Upward Bound improved self-esteem and self-confidence.

### **Implications**

Data from the study indicate that the services and support provided by Upward Bound effectively intervenes in the unique struggles of first generation, low-income, Puerto Rican students who are at great risk for educational access and attainment. Reflections of former Upward Bound students inform the field of education regarding the impact of college preparatory programs on students who face the most difficult barriers in college completion.

**APA Citation**

Thayer, S.W. (2007). *The Impact of a TRIO Upward Bound Program on the Academic Achievement of African-American Male Students..* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, 2007). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 68 (04), 3261806.

**Author(s)**

Scott William Thayer

**Title**

The Impact of a TRIO Upward Bound Program on the Academic Achievement of African-American Male Students.

**Abstract**

The TRIO Upward Bound program has been in existence for over 40 years. The program is a federally funded pre-college program, which supports the persistence and retention of low-income, potential first-generation students as they prepare for college. The TRIO programs have assisted thousands of students in their preparation and transition to higher education. An evaluation of the federal TRIO programs was completed and indicated that the program was “ineffective” in meeting its stated goals of preparing students for higher education. This conclusion contradicts previous evaluations of the TRIO Upward Bound programs.

Research has shown that having access to college information and resources is important for students to gain access to higher education; yet African-American males continue to have disproportionately high drop-out rates from high school as compared to other ethnic groups in Los Angeles, CA. This ethnographic case study researches the impact of a TRIO Upward Bound program on the academic achievement of African-American male students.

The research questions for this study were: How does the acculturation and assimilation process affect the academic achievement of African-American male students in high school and what factors contribute to their academic achievement; and how does participation in the TRIO Upward Bound program affect academic achievement and perception for success of African-American male students in preparing for higher education? Data was collected at the University of Southern California. Twenty (20) African-American male students participating in the TRIO Upward Bound program were interviewed for 45-80 minutes. Five focus groups were conducted with African-American male program participants as well as with the TRIO Upward Bound staff members. Eight observations took place during the study of the African-American male students while they participated in TRIO program activities.

**Research question**

1. How does the acculturation and assimilation process affect the academic achievement of African-American male students in high school and what factors contribute to their academic achievement?
2. How does participation in the TRIO Upward Bound program affect academic achievement and perception for success of African-American male students in preparing for higher education?

**TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Upward Bound

**Method / Research Design**

The researcher used an ethnographic case study through interviews and focus groups. The participants

were twenty (20) African-American male students who were enrolled in high school and had participated in the USC South Central Upward Bound program during the 2005-2006 year.

### **Analysis**

Analysis in the responsive interviewing model proceeds in two phases. In the first, you prepare transcripts; find, refine, and elaborate concepts, themes and events; and then code the interviews to be able to retrieve what the interviewees have said about the identified concepts, themes and events (Rubin & Rubin, 2005, p. 201).

Through transcribing, focus groups and follow-up questioning from the participants, the researcher identified common themes among the experiences of the participants. The researcher conducted eight observations in the study; (six) one-hour USC South Central Upward Bound class observations and an additional two observations (during breaks from class and participating in cultural activities; TRIO Day and the AIDS walk) to triangulate the data.

### **Key Findings**

In this study, the data illustrates that the TRIO Upward Bound program has a positive impact on the academic achievement of African-American male students. The program provides these students with resources which they utilize (supplemental instruction, test preparation, college going information, summer residential component, Saturday Academies and tutoring) to prepare themselves for college. The TRIO Upward Bound program also provided an oasis for students to learn and be safe with students with similar interests and goals. The program became advocates for the students, with their high school counselors and families, and made them understand the mission of the program and how it benefits everyone involved.

### **Implications**

The loss of these programs would significantly impact the neediest areas (impoverished areas) in the state. The target schools in this study would be effected as well as the other 47,393 low-income, potential first-generation college students who participate in these programs. California also has 17 other "Outreach Programs" supported by the state, but none have the longevity, history or track record of TRIO. Practices suggested by the researcher are: creating individualized educational plans with realistic, challenging goals to accomplish on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, bi-annual and annual basis; expectations for students, parents and staff members should be clearly defined once the student and parent enter the program; participation from the parents; attending all program orientations and the ability for the program to create individual relationships with students by meeting on a weekly basis at the target school site, at the program site, or both sites; a structured learning environment; and cultural exposure tied into the instruction. Future research should examine: the academic achievement of African-American male high school students; stigma of being a good student in the African-American community; what factors affect the attitudes of African-American male students, and at what level do African-American male students become disengaged or disinterested; and college preparation programs to create an on-going "best practices" reference for administrators.

**APA Citation**

**Ghulam, K.T. (2009). Exploring Ethnic and Academic Identity in Resilient African American Students: An In-Depth Analysis of the USC TRIO Program. (Doctoral dissertation, University of Southern California, 2009). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 70 (04), UMI No. 3355256.**

**Author(s)**

Karen T. Ghulam

**Title**

Exploring Ethnic and Academic Identity in Resilient African American Students: An In-Depth Analysis of the USC TRIO Program

**Abstract**

The purpose of this study was to examine the support mechanisms of a college preparatory program known as TRIO at the University of Southern California. The focus was to identify the ways the TRIO summer program supports African American students' ethnic and academic identities. African American students' self-perceptions were analyzed using Garmezy's (1983) theory of resiliency, Phinney's (1989) theory of ethnic identity and Cross's (1971, 1991) theory of Nigrescence. Since resiliency theory refers to the ways in which individuals overcome obstacles in stressful environments, African American participants from low-income backgrounds provided insight on the theoretical emphasis of this study. This naturalistic qualitative study included 15 African American high school participants and 15 staff members of the Upward Bound program. Semi-structured interview protocols were employed to conduct individual interviews in addition to observations and focus groups.

Findings substantiated the theoretical emphasis of external and internal protective factors as essential for the program's implementation of effective strategies that support resilient African American participants. Findings also suggested that participants were provided with opportunities for engaging in reflections on their identities in their academic classes during the six-week summer TRIO program. College preparatory programs must continue to provide activities that promote social bonding and teach life skills while also providing rigorous coursework and high academic expectations to prepare students for success as they navigate through the educational pipeline that leads to college success.

**Research question**

1. What are the self-perceptions of resilient African American students who attend the TRIO program?
2. What components of the TRIO program contribute to students' ethnic and academic identity, from the perspectives of students and staff members?

**TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Upward Bound

**Method / Research Design**

The researcher used a naturalistic qualitative inquiry that consisted of individual interviews, focus groups and classroom observations of African American participants and staff members of the TRIO program. The participants were 15 African American students from the South Central Upward Bound program with primary data collection occurring during the six-week summer program and fall Saturday Academies. Of the 15 participants, there were five tenth graders, five eleventh graders and five twelfth graders consisting of a total of seven female and eight male participants. In addition to these participants, 15 staff members who interact with the African American TRIO participants were included. Seven



resident advisers, two academic advisers, two program administrators, and four teachers provided a wide range of knowledge, input and expertise throughout the data collection phase of the study.

### **Analysis**

Creswell's (2003) six-step method for data analysis to ensure that data was carefully examined using a systematic and organized procedure. Creswell's (2003) six steps involve: preparing and organizing data, reading data, subsequent coding of data into specific categories, generating appropriate descriptions or themes, conveying descriptions into narratives and interpreting data.

### **Key Findings**

Findings substantiated the theoretical emphasis of external and internal protective factors as essential for the program's implementation of effective strategies that support resilient African American participants. The three conceptual categories: Explorations of Ethnic Identity, Cultivation of a Resilient Self, and Fostering a Culture of Success emerged from the experiences, thoughts, feelings and observations of TRIO staff members and students.

Findings also suggested that participants were provided with opportunities for engaging in reflections on their identities in their academic classes during the six-week summer TRIO program.

### **Implications**

The findings of the study coupled with the policy recommendations outlined in this chapter represent a call for an assets-based approach to education, which supports the development of students' self-perceptions, academic achievement and culture. Educators, program administrators and policymakers must work together to ensure that students of color are provided with the essential skills that will help them fulfill their college and career dreams. The current pipeline between high school and college is one that requires educational stakeholders to teach students the social, cultural and academic components that will ensure their success in college. The researcher suggests that Upward Bound programming provide professional development opportunities for TRIO staff members, implement cross-curricular instruction, include culturally-relevant curriculum and instructional resources, and maintain social bonding activities. Future research should examine an in-depth analysis of the theory of code switching and its impact on the ethnic identity and academic success of African American urban youth. Also, researchers may benefit from an assets-based focus on culture through the theoretical lens of cultural integrity as defined by Tierney and Jun (2001). Future researchers may also benefit from studies that examine the effect of ethnic and academic identity among gender-based participant groups. Discussions with participants in this study revealed major differences in peer pressure and potential environmental risks for African American male and female participants.

# UPWARD BOUND MATH/SCIENCE

## APA Citation

**Cowan, C.L. (2002). Social and economic characteristics related to the immediate college transition of recent high school graduates: A study of Southwest Region TRIO participants' college continuation (Doctoral dissertation, University of North Texas, 2002). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 63 (12), 307627.**

## Author(s)

Charisse Lee Cowan

## Title

Social and economic characteristics related to the immediate college transition of recent high school graduates: A study of Southwest Region TRIO participants' college continuation

## Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine whether: 1) Southwest Region TRIO high school students between the years 1991 - 2001 continued to college immediately after high school at rates significantly different than similar population students on national and state levels; and 2) immediate college continuation for this group was a function of social and economic characteristics including race, gender, parental education, and home-care environment. The sample included 414 TRIO program participants from Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Louisiana, and Arkansas. Data on the 414 participants were gathered using an existing database containing demographic and post-secondary enrollment information on study participants. The findings of this study reveal Southwest Region TRIO students during this ten-year period continued to college immediately after high school at rates not significantly different than the national low-income population of students. Results indicate that when compared to all students in the five-state southwest region, the majority low-income, first-generation TRIO population continued to college at rates not significantly different than all-income students in the region. Findings of this study also revealed select social and economic characteristics were not predictors of immediate college continuation for this group. Finally, the study showed out-of-home care environment students continued to college at significantly higher rates than in-home care Southwest Region TRIO students.

## Research question

1. How do college continuation rates of TRIO students from the southwest region between the years 1991 – 2001 compare to the college continuation rates of similar population students nationally and on state levels
2. Among Southwest Region TRIO student participants from 1991 - 2001, is college continuation a function of race/ethnicity, gender, income, parental education/first generation college status, and type of home-care environment?

## TRIO program(s) or students involved

Upward Bound Math and Science (Former Upward Bound and Talent Search participants)

## Method / Research Design

414 Southwest Region Upward Bound Math and Science participants at the University of North Texas; Data for this study were derived from an existing University of North Texas

(UNT) TRIO Center for Student Development database consisting of information pertaining to post-secondary enrollment and achievement of UNT TRIO program participants (low-income, first-generation college, and underrepresented minority students—African American, Hispanic, Native American). Comparison data for low-income and first-generation variables were gathered from the National Center of Education Statistics' annual Condition of Education. Gender and race comparison data were gathered from the Bureau of Labor and Statistics. Also using data from the U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Surveys, the Bureau of Labor and Statistics (BLS) publishes college continuation data annually for recent high school graduates by gender and race/ethnicity.

### **Analysis**

The statistical procedures utilized in this study were descriptive statistics, a test of proportions, and logistic regression.

### **Key Findings**

The findings of this study reveal Southwest Region TRIO students during this ten-year period continued to college immediately after high school at rates not significantly different than the national low-income population of students. Results indicate that when compared to all students in the five-state southwest region, the majority low-income, first-generation TRIO population continued to college at rates not significantly different than all-income students in the region. Findings of this study also revealed select social and economic characteristics were not predictors of immediate college continuation for this group. Finally, the study showed out-of-home care environment students continued to college at significantly higher rates than in-home care Southwest Region TRIO students.

A research finding beyond the scope of the original research questions but with major implications, SW TRIO students in the present study eventually attended college at much higher rates than students nationally. For example, with respect to the single variable of income, low-income SW TRIO students between the years 1991-2001 eventually attended college at a rate of 82% compared to 44% of all low-income students nationally who enrolled in college at some point in time. Southwest Region TRIO students attend college, but the majority of students enroll at a time later than the first fall after high school graduation.

### **Implications**

The results of this study suggest TRIO students from the southwest continue immediately to college upon high school graduation at lower rates than do students nationally. At first glance, these results may raise questions about the ability of federal TRIO programs—instituted almost forty years ago—to equitably increase post-secondary opportunities for traditionally underserved student populations. However, the regional continuation comparison revealed these students continue to college at rates not significantly different from to the general—all-income and all-race—regional population. As there is a great need for these programs in this area, more of these programs should be instituted in the southwest region and select program components should be replicated in schools and social service agencies.

A research finding beyond the scope of the original research questions but with major implications, SW TRIO students in the present study eventually attended college at much higher rates than students nationally. For example, with respect to the single variable of income, low-income SW TRIO students between the years 1991-2001 eventually attended college at a rate of 82% compared to 44% of all low-income students nationally who enrolled in college at some point in time. Southwest Region TRIO students attend college, but the majority of students enroll at a time later than the first fall after high school graduation. Federal TRIO programs must address this trend. Program legislation must focus on strategies or even additional policy programs to assist students in transitioning to college immediately after the high school year because immediate continuation to college increases the likelihood of actual degree attainment (NCES,

2002).

Students in the present study were not served by UBMS during the summer following high school graduation. The results of this study may suggest a need for an additional TRIO program as a separate “summer bridge” serving recent high school graduates who have participated in any of the federal high school TRIO programs.

**APA Citation**

**Preston, S.D, (2009). Investigating Minority Student Participation in an Authentic Science Research Experience (Doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 2010). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 70 (11), 3380983.**

**Author(s)**

Stephanie Danette Preston

**Title**

Investigating Minority Student Participation in an Authentic Science Research Experience

**Abstract**

In the United States, a problem previously overlooked in increasing the total number of scientifically literate citizens is the lack of diversity in advanced science classes and in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields. Groups traditionally underserved in science education and thus underrepresented in the STEM fields include: low-income, racial/ethnic minorities, and females of all ethnic and racial backgrounds. Despite the number of these students who are initially interested in science very few of them thrive in the discipline. Some scholars suggest that the declining interest for students underrepresented in science is traceable to K-12th grade learning experiences and access to participating in authentic science. Consequently, the diminishing interest of minorities and women in science contributes negatively to the representation of these groups in the STEM disciplines.

The purpose of this study was to investigate a summer science research experience for minority students and the nature of students' participation in scientific discourse and practices within the context of the research experience. The research questions that guided this study are:

The nature of the Summer Experience in Earth and Mineral Science (SEEMS) research experience

A. What are the SEEMS intended outcomes?

B. To what extent does SEEMS enacted curriculum align with the intended outcomes of the program?

The nature of students engagement in the SEEMS research

A. In what ways do students make sense of and apply science concepts as they engage in the research (e.g., understand problem, how they interpret data, how they construct explanations), and the extent to which they use the science content appropriately?

B. In what ways do students engage in the cultural practices of science, such as using scientific discourse, interpreting inscriptions, and constructing explanations from evidence (engaging in science practices, knowing science and doing science)?

The following data sources were used in this study: SEEMS curriculum and documentation, interviews with program staff and participants, TRIO program documentation, Upward Bound Math Science (UBMS) promotional material, and audio/video recordings and field notes of students' daily interactions in the research setting. Findings revealed that students who participated in the research experience were able to successfully engage in some cultural practices of science, such as using inscriptions, constructing explanations, and collecting data. Analysis and observations of their engagement demonstrated a need for programs similar to SEEMS to focus on: (1) understanding how students make sense of science as they engage in the cultural practices, and (2) incorporating aspects of students' culture and social practices into the experience.

## Research question

The nature of the SEEMS research experience

1. What are the SEEMS intended outcomes?
2. To what extent does SEEMS enacted curriculum align with the intended outcomes of the program?

The nature of students engagement in the SEEMS research

1. In what ways do students make sense of and apply science concepts as they engage in the research (e.g., understand problem, how they interpret data, how the construct explanations), and the extent to which they use the science content appropriately?
2. In what ways do students engage in the cultural practices of science, such as using scientific discourse, interpreting inscriptions, and constructing explanations from evidence (engaging in science practices, knowing science and doing science)?

## TRIO program(s) or students involved

Upward Bound Math-Science

## Method / Research Design

The researcher used a case study method. Field notes, observations, interviews, and document analysis were analyzed; the participants were four students – three African American women, and one Latino male.

## Analysis

Field note records were recorded on a laptop computer, with ten-minute increments marked for organizational purposes. Following each session, the researcher reviewed the video of the daily activity combining field notes and video notes from the day. Within the context of the analysis, the researcher began with the establishment of preliminary codes, following the grounded theory approach.

The coding process employed throughout this study was an intensive and comprehensive one. Multiple passes at the data sources were employed to exhaust the possibilities of new codes. Further analysis of the preliminary codes resulted in renaming, grouping, and regrouping of similar codes, and the establishment of properties. Upon further analysis, properties were arranged into broader groups or categories

## Key Findings

Analysis of video data and field notes showed that students in the Satellite Meteorology group engaged in a research experience that allowed them to use and strengthen various practices of science. Students did engaged in using MODIS and Google Earth. As ascertained through interviews with these students, the nature of this experience was quite different from their high school science classroom experiences. In sum, through their *hands on* participation in the research group, these minority students were able to engage in certain cultural practices of scientists in the EMS field.

In this case, students participated in studying Meteorology and thus were exposed to the cultural practices within this discipline. While aspects of this experience provided them with opportunities and exposure to science unlike their high school science classes, the researcher is not sure if the direction/approach to this task best suited this particular group of minority students. Because the students enrolled in the experience were seen not to have had the depth of content knowledge needed to

carry out the research experience alone, portions of the experience became heavily didactic, centered on content knowledge acquisition without regard for the experiences they brought to the situation. Observations of the students' daily interactions with their two mentors show repeated instances where the focus is on learning material similar to that taught in an entry level college course. A more appropriate approach to engaging these students in the research experience would incorporate an effort to bring their cultural knowledge and understandings into the experience.

### **Implications**

The findings from this study echo what other researchers have noted about authentic learning programs efforts: program goals need to be carefully examined to assure that active student participation in science research occurs. Situated in the context of a science enrichment program, and similar to other programs that have some focus on providing participants with opportunities to engage in science research, UBMS: SEEMS is structured in a way that places much emphasis and engagement on teaching science content to students engaged in the research experience. What can be implied from the findings within the enacted curriculum of this study is that research mentors did not fully understand the importance of providing these minority students with opportunities to *truly* engage in the research experience by giving them some autonomy within the research group, recognizing and building upon who they were and what they knew as learners. The researcher suggests a variety of practices such as: (1) incorporating aspects of these students as culturally and socially relevant learners; (2) broaden the scope of the SEEMS program to allow exposure to multiple disciplines would allow minority students to gain a better understanding of the many disciplines within Earth and Mineral Science and to grow from being exposed to the cultural practices of these other disciplines; (3) use mentoring to a greater extent; (4) a greater focus on the research experience; and (5) encourage or provide opportunities for the active participation of scientists in high school students' science education and the active role of high school science teachers in higher education science research opportunities.

# VETERAN'S UPWARD BOUND

## APA Citation

Petriccione, L.L. (2001). A Study of Demographic Characteristics and Postsecondary Experiences of Montana Veterans Upward Bound Participants. (Doctoral dissertation, Montana State University, 2002). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62 (10), 3030292.

## Author(s)

Luke Louis Petriccione

## Title

A Study of Demographic Characteristics and Postsecondary Experiences of Montana Veterans Upward Bound Participants

## Abstract

This study addressed the twenty-nine year void of research and information about VUB. It examined selected demographic characteristics of 495 participants of the Montana Veterans Upward Bound project who participated in the project and were placed in postsecondary education. Descriptive statistical methods using demographic variables were used to obtain a participant profile and to determine the relationship of these selected variables to graduation or positive persistence. Two focus groups comprising thirteen former VUB Billings site students were conducted to gain insight on their postsecondary experiences.

Findings of the study indicated that there were strong relationships between independent variables of age, prior educational levels, the type of institution attended, and the final grade point average to graduation. Prior educational levels and type of institution attended were found to have a relationship to positive persistence. Experiences of the academically successful and unsuccessful participants revealed that academic integration variables were least important to their academic success or failure. Academically successful students experienced greater and more positive interactions on the organizational and social levels. They were better able to interact with younger students, the faculty, and the institution as a whole. They attributed greater maturity, acceptance of rules, and the diversity of their military experiences as positive factors to their academic success. Off campus demands were similar for both groups, however successful students were better able to build support networks, to establish stronger commitment to their educational goals, and to view the additional demands of nontraditional students as temporary and worthwhile. Health problems were revealed as a unique variable among those who left college without obtaining a degree.

Conclusions of the study indicated that the Montana VUB provides important and high-quality instruction in academic skill preparation and college survival skills, but needs to better prepare students for fitting into the institution's organizational and social environments. There should also be an emphasis on participant health and external support networks. Finally, there were implications for changes in veterans' benefits and policy, changes in federal financial aid policies, and the urgent need for additional research of VUB tribal college veterans using veterans' benefits.

## Research question

1. Based upon selected background and Project demographic characteristics, how are the Project participants, who entered postsecondary education best described?



2. What is the relationship of selected demographic variables of Montana's Veteran Upward Bound participants who entered postsecondary education to academic success (degree obtainment and non-graduate positive persistence—retention)?
3. What are the important postsecondary experiences that contributed to the academic success or failure as illustrated by Billings program participants?
4. What are the implications of these experiences for improving Project practices?

## **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Veterans Upward Bound

## **Method / Research Design**

It examined selected demographic characteristics of 495 participants of the Montana Veterans Upward Bound project who participated in the project and were placed in postsecondary education. Two focus groups comprising thirteen former VUB Billings site students were conducted to gain insight on their postsecondary experiences.

## **Analysis**

Descriptive statistical methods using demographic variables were used to obtain a participant profile and to determine the relationship of these selected variables to graduation or positive persistence. This was followed by the Chi-Square Test of Independence. For the qualitative methods used in the study the researcher used a tape based method of analysis as suggested by Kreuger (1998).

## **Key Findings**

Findings of the study indicated that there were strong relationships between independent variables of age, prior educational levels, the type of institution attended, and the final grade point average to graduation. Prior educational levels and type of institution attended were found to have a relationship to positive persistence. Experiences of the academically successful and unsuccessful participants revealed that academic integration variables were least important to their academic success or failure. Academically successful students experienced greater and more positive interactions on the organizational and social levels. They were better able to interact with younger students, the faculty, and the institution as a whole. They attributed greater maturity, acceptance of rules, and the diversity of their military experiences as positive factors to their academic success. Off campus demands were similar for both groups, however successful students were better able to build support networks, to establish stronger commitment to their educational goals, and to view the additional demands of nontraditional students as temporary and worthwhile. Health problems were revealed as a unique variable among those who left college without obtaining a degree.

## **Implications**

There were implications for changes in veterans' benefits and policy, changes in federal financial aid policies, and the urgent need for additional research of VUB tribal college veterans using veterans' benefits. The researcher suggests that future research examines: the importance of family and kinships as they relate to tribal participant academic success and grade point averages; the relationship between health, military service, and academic success and failure; a greater holistic picture of students used in the current study through qualitative methods; and the selected variables of Project participants who were unsuccessful.

# TALENT SEARCH

## APA Citation

**Brazzeller, G.M. (2001). Characteristics of Three Federally Funded Talent Search (TRIO) Programs With At Least Fifteen Years of Continuous Service in the Southern California Area. (Doctoral dissertation, Pepperdine University, 2002). *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 62 (11), 3032023.**

## Author(s)

Grenada M. Brazzeller

## Title

Characteristics of Three Federally Funded Talent Search (TRIO) Programs With At Least Fifteen Years of Continuous Service in the Southern California Area

## Abstract

The Office of Education indicates that over 100 million dollars in federal funds are provided to Talent Search (TS) Programs each year. It is important to all stakeholders--the United States Department of Education, TS Program facilitators, program participants, educational institutions, and the community at large--that research determine the characteristics of programs that are continuously funded. Programs that are not continuously funded may profit from examining characteristics of those that are continuously funded.

The purpose of this study was to identify the characteristics of three Southern California TS programs that have been continuously funded for at least fifteen years. While examining only three continuously funded programs does not serve to establish sufficient numbers for generalization, it is an initial exploration of characteristics of such programs.

The data collection process consisted of a survey constructed by the researcher, namely, the TS Administrative/Director survey. It was distributed to and completed by the participating Southern California program directors. The researcher also conducted interviews with both TS Directors and their TS Institutional Supervisors. Finally, the researcher examined program-related materials that were provided by each program administrator.

The results of the study indicated that the characteristics of all three programs were mainly three: (a) director or administrative control of the program, (b) institutional and supervisor support of the program, and (c) program staff commitment. These characteristics were consonant with those identified in the literature. In addition to characteristics of program leadership, institutional support, and staff commitment, director/administrative stability and consistency also played roles in the longevity of the programs.

## Research question

1. According to the Directors of three Talent Search (TS) programs, what is the nature of the following features of continuously funded TS programs: (a) demographics, (b) institutional support, (c) program development/continuation, (d) program supervision, (e) program operation, and (f) program evaluation?
2. According to three TS Program Directors, what is their professional assessment of the TS Program's operation?

3. According to three TS Institutional Supervisors, what is their professional assessment of the TS Program's operation?

### **TRIO program(s) or students involved**

Talent Search

### **Method / Research Design**

The data collection process consisted of a survey constructed by the researcher, namely, the TS Administrative/Director survey. It was distributed to and completed by the participating Southern California program directors. The researcher also conducted interviews with both TS Directors and their TS Institutional Supervisors. Finally, the researcher examined program-related materials that were provided by each program administrator.

### **Analysis**

In order to effectively analyze all of the data that were generated, the researcher began a process recommended by Marshall and Rossman (as cited in Creswell, 1994) as "reduction" and "interpretation."

### **Key Findings**

The results of the study indicated that the characteristics of all three programs were mainly three: (a) director or administrative control of the program, (b) institutional and supervisor support of the program, and (c) program staff commitment. These characteristics were consonant with those identified in the literature. In addition to characteristics of program leadership, institutional support, and staff commitment, director/administrative stability and consistency also played roles in the longevity of the programs.

### **Implications**

The nature of this study was based on the premise that the three TS programs selected were successful because they possessed continuous funding therefore possessing longevity. Although, there were some unique program characteristics that each program displayed, the common characteristics heavily outweighed each program's uniqueness. The researcher suggests that future research examines: a larger number of program samples to create generalizability; other TRIO programs and what characteristics promote program success; leadership styles of both Program Directors and Institutional Supervisors; and the US Department of Education and Congress' perspective on the characteristics of continuously funded TS programs.

