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A CROSS CULTURAL SURVEY OF STUDY HABITS AND USE OF CAMPUS SERVICES BY EOPS AND NON-EOPS COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS

A Project

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State University,

San Bernardino

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Social Work

by

Diane Mitzenmacher

June 1996

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# ABSTRACT

The following study surveyed 111 community college students to identify patterns in study habits and use of services to examine whether differences exist between ethnic backgrounds or grade point averages, in the utilization of skills or services. Findings indicate that there are cross cultural differences in study hours per week, and that campus services, tutoring and the mentor program, are underutilized. Recommendations for future studies include workshops for students who are identified as academically challenged, as well as implementing small group tutoring.

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### INTRODUCTION

There has been a great deal of discussion regarding the underrepresentation of minorities in college. More than ever college students, especially minority groups, are depending on alternative funding sources, such as scholarships, grants and government loans to offset the high price of education today. An increasing number of these students are losing their government funding for higher subsequently dropping out of college.

The Encyclopedia of Social Work (1995) reported that in 1990, 22 percent of White students, 12 percent of African-Americans, and 11 percent of Hispanics completed four years of college. Many of those students depend on financial aid, yet find that they are unable to sustain the minimum grade point average. "The college completion rate for African-Americans is about half that of Whites. Although several reasons have been offered for the decline among African-Americans, the reduction in financial aid has been considered the most important."

The Higher Education Act, passed in 1965 by the Federal Government, was designed to provide equal access to postsecondary education for disadvantaged or minority students. Financial aid made admission to college a reality for minority groups, but academic unpreparedness contributed

to the high rate of attrition resulting in their continued underrepresentation (Levin & Levin, 1991).

Administrators around the country began to search for academic interventions that would decrease the attrition rate and increase both the student's ability to remain in college and to be successful (Hood, 1992 and D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993). In fact, almost every college in the country is concerned with the attrition rate of minority students and has a "program" to reverse this pattern. The assumption in implementing a program is that one knows what problems exist. Reality is, that while colleges report their programs as successful, they have been unable to show "why" and "how". This results in programs that are impossible to duplicate on other campuses (Levin & Levin, 1993).

One program that emerged out of the Higher Education Act was the Extended Opportunity Program & Services (EOPS), established in 1969 by the state legislature (CA. Administrative Code, 1987). EOPS provides low-income, educationally disadvantaged community college students with support services, above and beyond those offered by the college, that will help students enroll and succeed in postsecondary education. EOPS programs are offered in 106 of California's 107 community colleges.

In the Fall of 1995, the Board of Governors reported, "Currently EOPS students make up approximately 13.2 percent of the full-time California community college population. The success rate of EOPS students is reflected in their retention rate of 82 percent which is well above the non-EOPS rate of 54 percent (Campus Newsletter, 1996). EOPS offers academic and support counseling, and financial assistance through formally structured program components.

Applicants to the program must meet the following criteria as dictated by Title V of the California Administrative Code (revised, 1987):

- 1. California resident who qualifies for financial aid.
- Enrolled as a full-time student (i.e., 12 semester units).
- 3. Not have completed more than 70 units of degree applicable college work, or 6 terms.
- 4. Be educationally disadvantaged as determined by the EOPS director (i.e., not completed high school, graduated with a 2.5, or below, GPA, unable to meet minimum Math/English requirements, or been previously enrolled in remedial education).

5. Maintain a minimum 2.0 grade point average.

The focus of this inquiry was to determine what, if any, differences exist between EOPS students who maintain their grade point averages and those who do not, so that specific interventions can be implemented to keep this population in college. A third group of non-EOPS students with grade point averages of at least 3.0 was added to explore differences in study skills from their EOPS counterparts.

Community college students come from all walks of life. The literature discusses the demographics of students and the skills deemed necessary to be successful in college. Studies indicate that 42% of college students are over the age of 25, and that the average age, in 1987, was 32 (Endorff & McNeff, 1990). A majority of community college students in EOPS programs graduated from high school (approximately 61%), some obtained a GED, many dropped out of high school (approximately 30%), returning now to complete their education (Educational Evaluation Assoc., 1995). Studies show that women are enrolling at a faster rate than men and the attainment of advanced degrees for those women is increasing (Scandia National Labs., 1993).

Ethnicity has been a topic of research in the attempt to project who will be successful in college and who will not. In 1990, the general population of college minority students was reported to be 10-30 percent (Apps, 1990). The percentage of minority students in EOPS, in the 1994-95 academic year, ranged from 46.7-94 percent, depending on geographic location (Educational Evaluation Assoc., 1995).

Certain ethnic groups have been stereotyped in relation to their academic achievement. According to Peng and Wright (1994) Asian students "do better" in school than other minorities because they spend more time studying and less time watching television. Their study correlated five ethnic groups in hours of studying and hours of television. The average weekly hours of spent studying were: Asians=6.81, Caucasians=5.66, Black=5.19, Hispanic=4.75, and Native American=4.73. The number of hours watching television per week were: Black=26.69, Native American=22.74, Hispanic=21.99, Asian=20.64, and Caucasian students reportedly watched 20.34 hours of TV per week. Asian students were said to utilize study groups more frequently than other ethnic groups, however, Peng and Wright provided no support for the statement.

A 1984 study by Hall, May and Allen found that African-American women have higher grade point averages than their male counterparts, yet no reason was given for the difference. Both genders were found to have lower grade point averages than Caucasian men and women doing similar college work.

The lack of literature available on Hispanics and Native Americans in college made it apparent that there is a need for research to be done with these populations. In the community college where this study took place, Hispanic

students numbered 4,194, comprising over 25% of the student population in 1992, which was an increase of 3% from the enrollment in 1991 (District Annual Report, 1993).

The second section of the literature explores the skills deemed necessary to be a "successful" college student.

Entwhistle (1977) reported that students with good grades in high school who were well-organized in their study skills, studied more than three hours per day, and planned to continue their education were more likely to be successful. The problem with this research is that Entwhistle did not define many of his terms or discuss how he reached his conclusions, therefore making the study impossible to duplicate. Skills also reported as being effective in determining the success of a college student include taking/reviewing notes, not "cramming" for exams, studying in groups, and the utilization of tutors, instructors, and mentor programs available on campus.

Reviewing notes within 24 hours, and every few days thereafter has been determined to be a very useful study tool. Learning to take notes which are focused vs. writing lectures verbatim, will help students to prepare for tests more efficiently (Ellis, 1991). While "cramming" for tests is found to be necessary at times, most authors agreed that

it is an ineffective way to learn (Ellis, 1991 and Longman & Atkinson, 1991).

Tutoring, using a small group approach, has been identified as the most effective use of college resources. However, most campuses continue to utilize the "one on one" method (Levin & Levin, 1991). Blanc, et. al. (1983) found that at-risk minority students who received additional instruction on a weekly or biweekly basis obtained course grades averaging one grade point higher than their counterparts who received no additional instruction.

Instructors and the availability of mentors was consistently stressed throughout the literature as the most important component of student success, especially with women and minority students. According to a student survey, instructors being approachable and providing students with progress reports were deciding factors in whether a student remained in a class, or in college itself (Ramsden, 1979).

The availability of, and encouragement to utilize, mentorship programs is the final component of successful students. The need for female and minority mentors is imperative. "The single most important factor in the retention of a minority student is the person who acts as a mentor to the student." (Hall & Allen, 1983). Hall and Allen also found that students report higher satisfaction with mentors of the same race and gender. The need for

mentors was found to be critical in the case of women who are balancing school, work, and family. In 1992, only 60% of females, compared to 97% of males, had same-sex mentors (Hall & Allen, 1992).

Finally, and regrettably, the literature indicates that students with grade point averages under 2.0 rarely attempt to utilize the services provided by tutors, instructors, or mentors (Levin & Levin, 1991). "Students at risk are, in a sense, students who won't risk. They do not take the risk to learn because they have little hope for success." (Curwin, 1994).

#### METHODS

The inquiry into student study habits utilized a post-positivist, anonymous, survey which allowed students to identify both their study skills and use of campus services. The results of the survey were used to identify what, if any, correlation exists between study habits and use of campus services among community college students. The major focus of the inquiry was on EOPS students, a random sample of non-EOPS students were also surveyed to determine if differences exist outside of the program.

Students were identified and grouped by their grade point averages as of Fall 1996. The first group of students were 2.0 and under EOPS students, the second group were 3.0 and above EOPS students and the third group were 3.0 and

above general population students. The EOPS groups were asked during their mandatory mid term interview to participate in the anonymous study, the non-EOPS students were mailed surveys from a random sample list generated by the college's main computer.

Correlations were studied by variables including group, age, gender, income, ethnicity, major, number of hours the student spent studying, how the student studied in the past, whom they study with, and the utilization of campus services designed to assist students in being successful (i.e. tutors instructors and, mentors). It was anticipated that the outcome of the study would provide needed information to begin exploring programs to increase the study skills and use of campus services of the 2.0 and below EOPS students in danger of losing their financial aid.

#### SAMPLING

The EOPS students were a convenience sample as they had already been identified, and their numbers were not large enough to draw a random sample. The non-EOPS students consisted of a random sample generated by the computer system at the college. From that random sample, 100 names were randomly selected and anonymous surveys were mailed. The entire sample consisted of 112 respondents, one individual did not complete the survey and was dropped from the statistical results, which left 111 total participants.

## PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

The anonymity of each participant was protected as the only mark on the survey was a color code, so the researcher could assign respondents to their group. Group 1 were EOPS students with a grade point average of 2.0 and under, Group 2 were EOPS students with a grade point average of 3.0 and above, and Group 3 consisted of non-EOPS students with grade point averages above 3.0

The first sheet of the survey consisted of a letter describing the purpose of the survey and, in bold type, requested the students <u>NOT</u> put any identifying information on the survey. The EOPS students were provided with a closed box to place their completed surveys, which protected them from being read by others in the EOPS Center.

Due to the complete anonymity of the survey, signed consent was waived as it was determined to be, by its very nature, compromising to the participants. The first page of the survey informed participants that their voluntary return of the survey would be used as informed consent. A debriefing statement was not provided to participants as the researcher did not know who participated.

# SURVEY RESULTS

196 students were identified as being eligible to participate in the survey. Of the 196 surveys sent, 111 students participated in the study. Students in the study were primarily female (70%). Students ranged in age from 18 to 71, with the average age being 30. Six categories were available for students in the identification of ethnicity; the Hispanic population ranked number one with 27%, Caucasians were next with 26.8%, Asians at 17.9%, African-Americans at 16.1%, and 1 Native American(.9) participated. 11.8% of the students did not answer the question pertaining to ethnic background.

Ethnic breakdown within each group showed that the 2.0 and under EOPS students (N=22) consisted of no Caucasians, 6 African-Americans, 5 Asians, 9 Hispanics, and 2 students who did not respond. The group of EOPS students with grade point averages of 3.0 or above (N=56) consisted of 6 Caucasians, 8 African-Americans, 16 Asians, 1 Native American, 19 Hispanics, and 6 students who did not answer. Finally, the 3.0 and above General Population students (N=33) consisted of 24 Caucasians, 2 African-Americans, 1 Asian, 3 Hispanics, and 3 students who did not answer the question.

TABLE 1 ETHNIC BREAKDOWN by GROUP				
Ethnicity	2.0 EOPS	3.0 EOPS	NON-EOPS	Total
Caucasian	0	6.	24	30
African- American	б	8	2	16
Asian	5	16	1	22
Native- American	0	1	0	1
Hispanic	9	19	3	31
No Answer	2	6	3	11
Total	22	56	33	111

The incomes of the students ranged from under \$10,000 per year to over \$40,000 per year with the majority of students reporting income under \$10,000 (44.6%). 10.7% of the students did not respond. In regard to receiving financial aid from the government, 58.9% of the students stated "yes" they did receive some form of assistance, this response was anticipated by the researcher as EOPS is a program that targets lower income students.

An overwhelming majority of students were returning to college after at least a year away from school (75.9%), and 95% of the students stated intent to continue their education after leaving the community college.

When asked a question pertaining to their high school years, 81.3% reported graduating from high school, 7.1% did not complete, and 11.6% did not answer the question. High school study habits were also included in the survey, to

determine if habits change over time. 49.1% of the students reported passing high school easily with a minimal amount of study time, 1.8% reported that they struggled through with a great deal of studying, and 11.6% of the respondents did not answer the question.

High school habits were examined in relation to the responses given for current hours of study per week. Students who reported passing high school easily, with minimal studying were equally distributed in their current habits; 28 students reported studying less than 8 hours per week and 28 reported studying 8 hours or more. Students who reported that they passed easily through high school with a maximum amount of studying totaled 26. Twelve of those students study less than 8 hours per week, while 14 study Students who struggled through high school with more. minimal studying seem to be repeating that pattern as only one student reported studying between 8 and 11 hours per week while the remaining students studied less. Two students reported that they struggled through high school with a great deal of studying. One of those studies 4-7 hours and the other student reports 12-16 hours of study per week. The students who identified themselves as having dropped out of high school were equally distributed in their studies with 2 studying less than 8 hours per week and 2 studying more than 8 hours per week.

When explored by groups, the breakdown of study hours is as follows: Group 1 (EOPS students under 2.0), 13 students reported studying less than 8 hours per week and 8 students reported 8 hours or more of studying per week. Group 2 (3.0 and above EOPS students), 21 students in this group reported studying under 8 hours per week. 35 of the students with a GPA of 3.0 or better study more than 8 hours per week, 16 of those reported studying 12 hours per week, and 9 students study 17 or more hours per week. Group 3 (3.0 or above General Population students) reported that 21 students study less than 8 hours per week and 12 study more than 8 hours per week.

TABLE 2	GROUP	BREAKDOWN by	STUDY HOURS	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
STUDY HOURS					
GROUP	0-3	4-7	8-11	12-16	17+
2.0 EOPS	4	9	5	2	1
3.0 EOPS	6	15	10	16	9
Non EOPS	3	18	8	3	1
Total	13	42	23	21	11

The four major ethnic groups that responded to the survey were Hispanics, Caucasians, Asians and African-Americans. The majority of African-American and Caucasian students reported studying under 8 hours per

week, while the majority of Asian and Hispanic students reported studying more than 8 hours per week.

	··········					
TABLE 3 STUDY HOURS by ETHNICITY						
	Caucasian	African- American	Asian	Hispanic	Total	
0-3	3	5	0	3	. 11	
4-7	14	6	6	12	38	
8-11	5	1	4	10	20	
12-16	5	3	7	4	19	
17+	3	1	5	2	11	
Total	30	16	22	31	99	

Students had eight categories from which to identify their majors, including Social/Behavioral Sciences, Math and Science (hard sciences), Liberal Arts, Computers, Nursing/Radiology Technician/Pre-Medicine, Business, Automotive Technician, and General Education. Two students did not answer the question and any answer that did not fit the above categories was placed in "other".

As anticipated in a community college setting, no major stood out among the group although, Social/Behavioral Sciences and Nursing were the most frequent responses, followed by Liberal Arts and General Education.

Students were asked to answer a number of questions about their current study habits, the skills they use, and their utilization of instructor, tutoring, and the mentorship program on campus. The majority (75%) of the students reported studying alone, while only 14.3% studied in a group. The place that most students studied was at home, followed by the library and then other locations on campus. All of the students reported taking notes in class, but only 52.7% of the students reviewed their notes within 24 hours. Most students highlighted important information in their notes and texts (95%), while only 45% rewrote their notes. In regard to taking exams, 53.6% of students "cram" the night before and 58% reported that they felt calm prior to the examination.

Three-fourths of the students reported that they utilize their instructors and all but 4 of those students stated that the instructor was helpful. When asked if instructors provided progress reports throughout the semester, 67% of the students stated they did not.

Only 8 of the 111 students surveyed had utilized the mentorship program on campus, 5 females (2 African-American and 3 Hispanic), and 3 males (2 Asians and 1 Hispanic). Six of the students reported that their mentor was very helpful. A number of respondents wrote on their questionnaire that

they didn't know the college had such a program, and if they had known, they would have utilized the service.

Tutoring appeared to be underutilized on campus as only 38% of students reported using tutors. The two subjects most often indicating a need for tutoring services were Math and English. The most frequent number of tutoring sessions identified by the students was 1-3 (with 21 respondents) 16 times while at the college. All students surveyed met with a tutor individually, as group tutoring is not available on campus. EOPS students were 7 times more likely to have worked with a tutor than non-EOPS students. Fifty percent of the students with grade point averages of 2.0 and under reported that they have received tutoring during college. **DISCUSSION** 

The results of the survey suggest that some differences do exist in the study habits of community college students in the areas of ethnicity and current academic standing (grade point average). A slight majority of Asian students do report studying more hours per week than other ethnic groups.

A 2x2 Chi Square shows the significance as p=<.01, when Asian students are compared to non-Asian students using the variable "study hours" and the time settings of 11 hours or less and 12 hours or more.

TABLE 4 CHI SQUARE		ASIANS X NON-ASIANS STUDYHOURS		
P=<.01	STUDY 11 HOURS OR LESS	STUDY 12 HOURS OR MORE	TOTAL ROWS	
ASIAN	10	12	22	
NON-ASIAN	60	18	78	
TOTAL COLUMNS	70	30	100	

The highest concentration of Asian students were found in the EOPS group of students who have a grade point average of at least 3.0 (As seen in Tables 1 & 3). Of the 3 males in the study who reported having had a mentor, 2 of them were Asian, however, no Asian females had utilized this service.

Additional research is clearly indicated in regard to Hispanic college students. Of those who have utilized the mentorship program on campus, Hispanic students comprised 50% of them. This population also reported the second highest number of study hours per week (Table 3), and comprised over one-half of the women who had utilized mentors. As stated in the introduction, the Hispanic population has the fastest growing enrollment of all minority groups at the community college level, which also indicates a need for future studies with this group.

African-Americans were also underrepresented as the total number of participants from this group was 16, of

which only 3 were males. Future studies on this group may need to be done individually to determine if grade point average and the loss of financial aid explains the high attrition rate of African-American males.

Tutoring services tend to be used by the EOPS students to a greater degree than by the general population students. Over 50% of the EOPS students reported using tutors at least once. Instructors were found to be available to their students, and students reported using the instructor when having problems. However, instructors did not rate well in keeping their students posted on progress during the semester. Providing progress reports, periodically through the semester, was shown in the literature to be a positive reinforcement for students, and it might help identify students who need additional services.

A great need was seen for an increase in utilizing the mentor program on campus. One of the suggestions coming out of the survey was to promote the program on campus and especially in the EOPS center. At least three students applied for the program upon completing their surveys. The literature stressed the importance of students having someone assist them in negotiating college.

While the survey had the limitation of a small sample size, which made statistical significance difficult in many

areas, the information provided some direction for future studies.

### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

The first recommendation is to develop a small group approach to tutoring for EOPS students. This would not only be more cost effective for the program, but would provide a better mode of instruction, according to the literature. The study that group tutoring would generate is in determining if students who participate can increase their academic performance and grade point averages above those students who opt for individual tutoring, or none at all.

A second study would be to develop workshops for incoming EOPS students to educate them on the services available on campus, encourage them to develop study groups, and perhaps to develop a "buddy" system with established EOPS students. The workshop would also give staff an opportunity to identify students who may have academic difficulties thus increasing the chance early interventions.

Periodic workshops could be offered throughout the semester on specific topics including test anxiety, research writing, preparation for students who are required to take lab sciences (particularly nursing students). Measurements of student grade point averages and retention numbers could be used to determine effectiveness of the workshops.

Early detection of academically challenged students and utilization of the campus mentoring program would be another area to be studied. The ability to network across campus would be one way to increase awareness of both programs.

Finally, as stated earlier, there is a need to focus a study on the Hispanic and African-American populations in the community colleges. Specific groups, workshops or seminars could be developed to support and encourage these populations in their pursuit of higher education. The groups could be further defined by separating genders and having a same gender/race instructor, or counselor as a facilitator and measuring retention rates after one year. IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIAL WORK

This country spends millions of dollars each year to build correctional facilities to house the increasing criminal population, largely consisting of the poor and minorities. Forensics is becoming one of the fastest growing social work opportunities. Social workers work primarily with minority, underprivileged clients who become caught up in a system they don't understand, but quickly learn to "work".

If we could keep this population in school and provide them with access to a future, perhaps we could decrease the spending we do on "correcting" them when they create a "future" society doesn't agree with.

The implications of this survey, and subsequent research, is that an increased emphasis would be placed on the students who are at high risk for dropping out of college. Students who are unable to maintain eligibility for government financial assistance, consisting primarily of minorities who are economically and academically challenged, are losing their opportunity to pursue higher education in this country. Social workers can only assist clients they have access to. By keeping these students in school, we will have future opportunities to work with this population in a positive environment.

# APPENDIX A

# Survey Questionnaire

### DEMOGRAPHICS

1. AGE:

2. GENDER: M F

3. ETHNIC BACKGROUND:

4. MARITAL STATUS: a.SINGLE b.MARRIED c.DIVORCED d.WIDOWED e.LIVING WITH PARTNER

5. DO YOU HAVE CHILDREN AT HOME?\_\_\_\_\_ IF SO, HOW MANY?

6. ARE YOU EMPLOYED? HOURS PER WEEK?

7. ANNUAL HOUSEHOLD INCOME: a.LESS THAN \$10,000 b.\$10,000-\$20,000 c.\$20,000 \$30,000 d.\$30,000 \$40,0000 e.ABOVE \$40,000.

8. DO YOU RECEIVE GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE (financial aid, loans, grants)?

9. ARE YOU A RETURNING STUDENT (at least one year away from school)?

10. AVERAGE NUMBER OF SEMESTER UNITS: a.1-6 b.7-11 c.12-16 d.17 or more.

11. DO YOU PLAN TO CONTINUE YOUR EDUCATION AFTER COMMUNITY COLLEGE?

12. WHAT IS YOUR CURRENT MAJOR?

## PAST STUDY HABITS

13. IDENTIFY YOURSELF AS A HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT: a.PASSED EASILY WITH MINIMAL STUDYING. b.PASSED WITH MAXIMUM STUDYING. c.STRUGGLED WITH MINIMAL STUDYING. d.STRUGGLED WITH MAXIMUM STUDYING. e.DID NOT COMPLETE HIGH SCHOOL.

#### CURRENT STUDY HABITS

14. AVERAGE NUMBER OF HOURS YOU STUDY PER WEEK: a.0-3 b.4-7 c.8-11 d.12-16 e.MORE THAN 16.

15. WHERE DO YOU STUDY MOST OFTEN? a.HOME b.LIBRARY c.WORK d.SCHOOL e.OTHER

16. DO YOU MOST OFTEN STUDY ALONE?

17. IF YOU STUDY WITH OTHERS, HOW MANY? a.1 b.2-4 c.5-7 d.8 or more.

# NOTE TAKING

18. DO YOU TAKE NOTES IN CLASS?

19. DO YOU REVIEW YOUR NOTES WITHIN 24 HOURS?

20. DO YOU REWRITE YOUR NOTES?

21. DO YOU HIGHLIGHT IMPORTANT INFORMATION?

#### TEST TAKING

22. DO YOU FEEL CALM AND CONFIDENT DURING AN EXAM?

23. DO YOU "CRAM" FOR EXAMS THE NIGHT BEFORE?

# USE OF RESOURCES

24. HAVE YOU UTILIZED THE TUTORS ON CAMPUS?

26. HAVE YOU UTILIZED THE INSTRUCTOR WHEN EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTY IN A CLASS?

27. IF YES, WAS THE INSTRUCTOR HELPFUL?

28. DO YOUR INSTRUCTORS GIVE PROGRESS REPORTS THROUGHOUT THE SEMESTER?

29. HAVE YOU EVER PARTICIPATED IN THE MENTOR PROGRAM ON CAMPUS?

30. WAS YOUR MENTOR HELPFUL?

# ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

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