

Increasing Academic Achievement: Student Success in a College and Career Readiness Program

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Introduction

“In a global economy where the most valuable skill you can sell is your knowledge, a good education is no longer just a pathway to opportunity--it is a prerequisite, and yet, we have one of the highest high school dropout rates of any industrialized nation, and half of the students who begin college never finish; this is a prescription for economic decline.”

President Barack Obama, State of the Union Address(2009)

- Local school officials in urban school districts in Texas have been working to solve their complex dropout rate problem by increasing student achievement after having been identified as not making adequately yearly progress (AYP) by federal standards more than four years ago.

(Houston ISD-AEIS reports, 2009)



Purpose

The purpose of my study was to determine if college and career readiness initiatives implemented over a four year period would have a significant enough impact on student achievement and attendance.

Research Questions

R1: What is the impact of student achievement on 11th grade TAKS ELA and Math scores for program participants versus comparison group?

R2: What is the impact of attendance for program participants versus comparison group?

Methodology Overview

Population

- The study focused on a comparison of the achievement and attendance of two successive cohort groups of students to answer research questions.
- The term Cohort was used to describe the approach used by College and Career Readiness participants. A whole grade-level approach was used in program treatments.
- Cohort 1, the experimental group, was comprised of students in an urban school district who participated in pre-college interventions over four year period (DAP).
- Cohort 2, the comparison group, was comprised of students in an urban school district who did not participate in pre-college interventions over four year period, but career track (RHSP).

Research Instruments

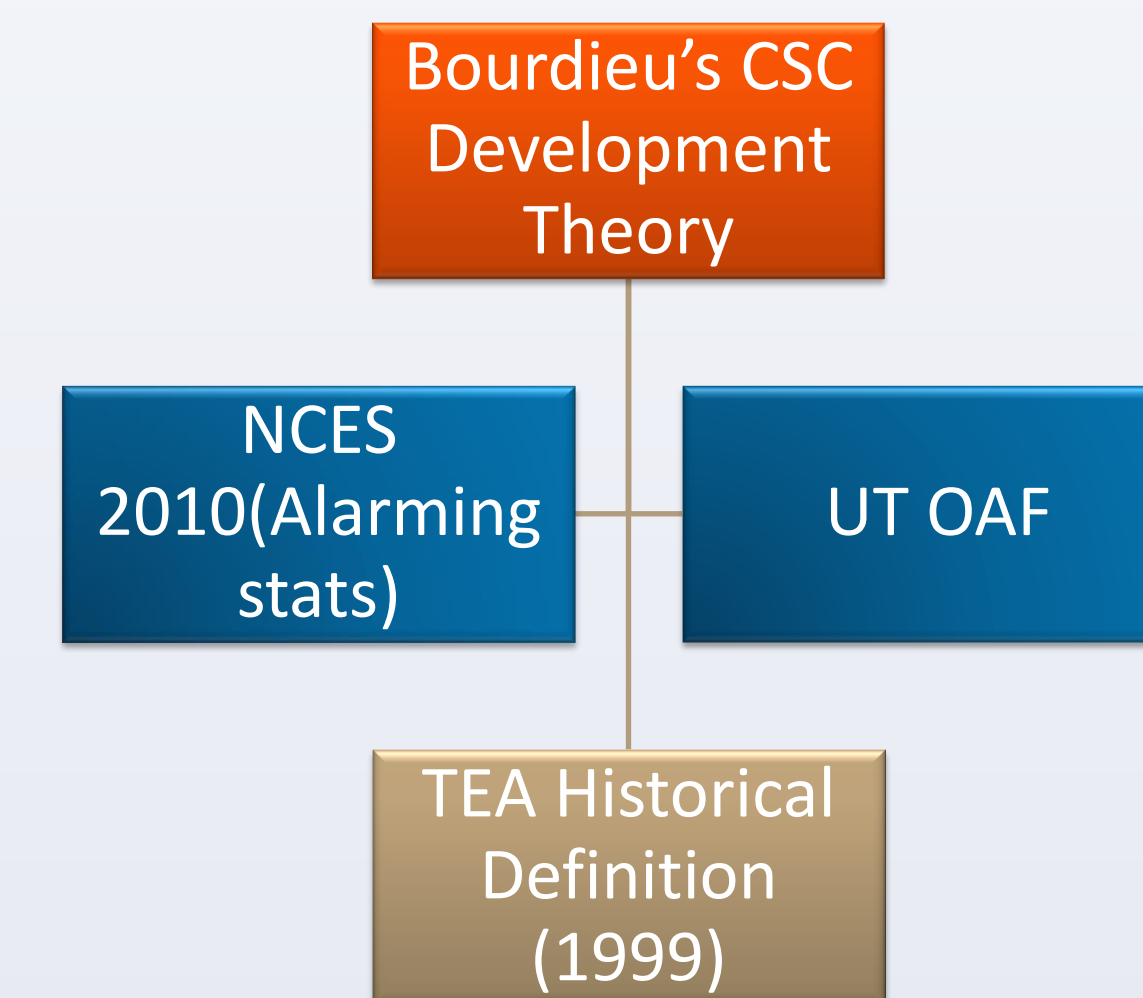
- The researcher utilized historical district data during the 2009-2013 school years.
- The researcher analyzed student data four- year posttests only. The database included data for cohorts sorted by grade level, Exit level achievement scores, as well as economic disadvantage status.
- Instruments also included 11th grade TAKS achievement scores in ELA and Math. Consequently, the researcher extrapolated attendance from database.

Data Collection and Analysis

- Principal Investigator collected 4 archived data sets
- An independent samples t-test was used to examine average achievement scores in reading and mathematics amongst experimental and comparison groups. Likewise attendance was compared for both cohorts after treatments.



Highlights from Literature Review



- Literature review consisted of **more than 75 peer reviewed articles**
- Most researchers involved in studies of at-risk youth's graduation rates cited **Bourdieu's cultural and social capital development theory** as providing a theoretical framework for understanding why intervention programs have a positive impact on college readiness by dealing with underlying factors known to foster the development of social and cultural capital (*i.e. Six degrees of separation*).
- 32.8 % of US Hispanics ages 16- through 24-years-old born outside the United States are considered high school dropouts
- Hispanics born in the United States had lower status dropout rates than immigrant Hispanics (10.5 % and 10.8 % for “first generation” and “second generation or higher,” respectively)
- College and career readiness programs like the one mentioned that target this demographic (at-risk/low SES) must acknowledge this dynamic *(Data from the NCES, 2010)
- University of Texas OAF (2005)-Since 1985 AA & H low high school grad. rates impacted whether or not these groups attended college; Both minority groups have substantially increased this rate over the last 20 plus years
- 1999 marked the year when the state legislature decided to add two groups of students who were exempted from the dropout number. (TEC §25.086, 1999).**

Conclusions in the Literature

- The literature clearly indicated that ***If similar results apply to at-risk youth as well, researchers can focus on interventions that foster the building of social capital (e.g., creating effective interventions to increase student achievement, graduation and completion rates) and affordances or features of the environment in order to enhance social capital among young people.**
- NGA report released in 2009 called Achieving Graduation, noted that Texas is implementing many of the necessary steps recommended to tackle the dropout problem. Consequently state policy makers and the SBOE were charged with implementing at least for actions for increasing graduation rates in Texas:
 - Raise the maximum compulsory and allowable school attendance ages, counting graduation rates in accountability systems, and assigning responsibility for dropout prevention and responsibility;
 - (b)Target at risk youth demographic by creating early warning data systems to identify students who are likely to drop out and supporting efforts to provide students with effective intervention and support;**
 - (c)Create incentives for dropout recovery, employing outreach strategies to reengage dropouts, and establishing re-entry programs;
 - (d) Provide rigorous, relevant options for earning a high school diploma by turning around low-performing schools and awarding credit for performance, not seat time.**

Key References from Lit. Review

Bourdieu, P. (2001). Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology. Dept. of Sociology, Princeton University: New Jersey 08540.

Bourdieu, P. (1977). The Peculiar History of Scientific Reason. *Sociological Forum*, 6(1),3.

Bourdieu, P. (1984). The Peculiar History of Scientific Reason. *Sociological Forum*, 48(9), 18.

Bourdieu, P., & Passeron, J. (1977). Social Capital Theory: Two Concepts. Dept. of Sociology, Princeton University: New Jersey.

Data from the NCES, 2010

Historical Definition of a Drop-Out in Texas, TEC § 39.053 (1999).

NGA, 2009

University of Texas OAF, 2005

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