Understanding Barriers to Completing a BSN Program: A focus on Hispanic students

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The purpose of this naturalistic study is to examine and understand student experiences perceived as barriers to completing a baccalaureate nursing program. Denzin's Interpretive Interactionism is the framework for this study. This design is appropriate to examine the relationship between persons’ personal troubles and the public systems in place to address personal problems.
Texas A&M University-Corpus Christi is part of a Texas state educational system that includes 11 universities, a health science center, and 7 state agencies.

The mission of the University includes serving and educating the people of South Texas.

The College of Nursing and Health Sciences is the largest school of nursing in the system; admitting students three times a year, 30 – 35% of each cohort self-identifies as Hispanic.
HOME OF THE ISLANDERS
College of Nursing and Health Sciences Demographics

- First generation college students
- Non-traditional college students
- Minority groups other than Hispanics
- Some cohorts have 50-55% of Non-Anglo students
- Second career students
- Military program
Denzin’s Interpretive Interactionism is an interpretive process:

- Framing the research question
- Critical analysis of the existing conceptions of the phenomenon of interest
- Locating the phenomenon in its natural setting and finding multiple examples of it
- Uncovering and reducing the essential elements, structures, and features of the phenomenon
- Relocating the phenomenon back into the social world it came from
The *Breaking the Barriers* video was shown in the Issues course in fall 2011 and the students were to complete a writing assignment about any barriers they experienced while in nursing school.

The course faculty was moved by what the students shared. Students identified specific barriers that had not been identified.

The assignment results was the impetus for the study.
What are the experiences that students perceive as barriers to completing a baccalaureate nursing program?
Hispanics are underrepresented in higher education

Economics is directly related to the type of education sought after high school

Broad categories of barriers that have been identified in the literature include financial pressure, family and community attributes, physical location, and theory-practice gaps

Hispanic populations experience similar barriers to obtaining higher education as other minority groups in the United States and other industrialized countries.
Recruitment for the Study

- First semester students – in the Therapeutic Communication course
- Second through fifth semester students – in the Nursing Issues course
The purpose of the research project is explained to the students in the selected courses by the co-investigator who is not teaching any of the courses.

The students view the video *Breaking the Barriers* produced by the California Institute for Nursing and Health Care. All students see the video whether they choose to complete the survey or not.

The students are given the URL to complete the research questionnaire on Survey Monkey (online). The URL is also posted on the course Blackboard site.
Data Collection - SurveyMonkey

- The completion of the questionnaire provides consent to participate
- Demographic questions
  - Age
  - Semester in nursing
  - First generation college student
  - First college degree
  - If the BSN is your second degree what is your first degree
- Space to include their specific barriers
Finances

“I receive minimal financial aid, which tends to only cover tuition and a portion of books. Exam fees, added materials/resources, alone with personal bills are not covered.”

“Leaving my job as a teacher, having the loss of income and being the main provider for my parents and myself, could I budget and get loans in time.”
Preliminary Findings: Themes

- Finances
- Overwhelming demands of the nursing major
  a) Non-nursing friend not understanding time commitment
  b) Zero “medical experience”
  c) Study habits
  d) Time management
Preliminary Findings: Themes

* Finances
* Overwhelming demands of the nursing major
* Lack of educational preparation for college

“I do not feel that my high school helped me prepare for college at all.”
Preliminary Findings: Themes

- Finances
- Overwhelming demands of the nursing major
- Lack of educational preparation for college
- **Family and significant others**

“My family pressured me to stay home . . . “

“. . . Issues with family that are illegal immigrants, family members that need my help.”

“Throughout my time in the nursing program I have faced many setbacks due to family events (separations, illnesses, etc.) that make focusing on class materials very difficult to manage.”

“Back in home city I have an elderly parent and other is going through hardships which adds to the stressors - traveling back and forth takes a toll on me.”
Preliminary Findings: Themes

- Finances
- Overwhelming demands of the nursing major
- Lack of educational preparation for college
- Family and significant others
- **Culture**

“. . . Believe that a woman’s place is to work a job anywhere acceptable bank, grocery store, restaurant, etc. until she finds a man to take care of her and have babies and raise them.”
Preliminary Findings: Themes

- Finances
- Overwhelming demands of the nursing major
- Lack of educational preparation for college
- Family and significant others
- Culture
- **Personal health problems**
Preliminary Findings: Themes

* Time management
  a) Balancing school and work
  b) Work schedule conflicts

“I have to support myself . . . Therefore, I tend to miss out on tutoring and reviews since they are scheduled during times I work.”
“Another factor of being a first generation college student is the not knowing what to expect of anything. I am the oldest child of our family and I get to experience everything first. I had no idea what I was getting into financially, socially, or anything when I decided to go to college. My parents try to help the best they can but, for the most part they are learning just like me.”
Preliminary Findings: Themes

- Time management
  a) Balancing school and work
  b) Work schedule conflicts
- First-generation college student
- Living on my own for the first time

“My mother is my best friend so moving away from them was heartbreaking. I miss just being around the loudness and craziness when I am in my room and it is silent and I’m alone. I am adjusting to this barrier and trying to embrace the quiet but it is taking time.”
Preliminary Findings: Themes

* Time management
  a) Balancing school and work
  b) Work schedule conflicts
* First-generation college student
* Living on my own for the first time
* Child-care issues

“Clinical times do not match with available child care. Clinical starts the same time early child care opens if you have day clinical or it ends way after child care closes.”
Preliminary Findings: Themes

- Time management
  a) Balancing school and work
  b) Work schedule conflicts
- First-generation college student
- Living on my own for the first time
- Child-care issues
- Perception of the faculty

“The school itself. Not necessarily conflict, but poor communication between faculty members and between faculty members and students.”
Preliminary Findings: Themes

* Time management
  a) Balancing school and work
  b) Work schedule conflicts
* First-generation college student
* Living on my own for the first time
* Child-care issues
* Perception of the faculty
* **Thinking I am alone with these barriers**
Lessons Learned to Date

- The need to be patient with student participation at a lower level than expected
- It is good that this is an ongoing project, data collection will continue each semester through Fall 2013
- The need to recognize the outliers without missing important data
Selected References


