

## **Dissertation Critique**

### **Chapter 1: Introduction and Purpose of the Dissertation**

*An Examination of Academic Advising Style Preference in Undergraduate Students* is a dissertation written by Elizabeth Kendrick Yarbrough of Auburn University in 2010. Ms. Yarbrough's Problem Statement addressed only the "insufficient measurement of prescriptive-developmental advising as a single dimension continuum" and indicates that the study "investigated whether prescriptive and developmental approaches should be measured as separate constructs" (p.4). The Purpose of the Study further noted that she studied student advising preferences and how student college readiness affected advising preference.

The first purpose is confusing because it seems to state additional research that is not included in the title of the dissertation. Although this topic seems worthy for research, I think the purpose would have been clearer when more focused on the actual student preferences.

There is sufficient background information on various opinions regarding advising styles and how the techniques relate to leadership theory and student development in general. Yarbrough also addresses the significance of the advisor-student relationship as "the only structured activity on campus in which all students have the opportunity for on-going, one-to-one interaction with a concerned representative of the institution" (p. 1).

### **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

The Literature Review includes information regarding the prescriptive and developmental advising styles along with Shane's advising typology of advising situations including the informational, explanatory, analytic, and therapeutic levels (p. 12-13) but fails to address other advising styles such as intrusive advising. Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership

Theory, Chickering's Theory of Identity Development, Perry's Theory of Intellectual and Ethical Development, Baxter Magolda's Epistemological Reflection Model and Howard's Adaptive Counseling and Therapy are also reviewed. Although these theories are related, they address a wide area and the review lacks support of education and advising theories.

The flow of the literature review seems a little disorganized. Situational leadership is addressed early and later addressed in more detail. The literature review is not summarized at the end of the chapter.

### **Chapter 3: Methods**

There were three hypotheses tested. Hypothesis 1: The Prescriptive/Developmental Preferences scale will assess different constructs than the Academic Advising Inventory; Hypotheses 2: College students' advising preference will differ as a function of their academic development; and Hypothesis 3: Readiness for college will be a significant predictor of preference for academic advising style.

The methodology in this study is quantitative, non-experimental survey research. Yarbrough thoroughly describes the multiple surveys used and there was no experimental treatment. Surveys included a demographic survey, a readiness for college survey created by the author, a portion of an academic advising inventory and another survey assessing student preference for prescriptive or developmental advising which was also created by Yarbrough.

There were 119 survey respondents from a college public speaking course who received extra credit for their responses. Students in the selected classes were sent email notifications of the opportunity for extra credit and participation in the survey was voluntary and outside of the classroom. Yarbrough received IRB approval and student consent was the first item required for student completion. The actual survey process for the multiple survey instruments was described

in detail including the order of the surveys in the packet, coding to keep surveys and the time required.

Yarbrough defines the characteristics of the sample, including gender, ethnicity, age, and college level. The study does not state how these students or these classes were chosen.

Yarbrough states that “the sample was overwhelmingly traditional-aged” and selection of a larger population across schools would be more representative (p. 65). The opportunity for bias exists because of the extra credit rewarded as an enticement to participate.

#### **Chapter 4: Findings**

The process for testing each of the three hypotheses was presented with a description of the statistics used. Multiple complex models addressed the inventory scales described in Hypothesis 1 and multiple figures and tables addressed the survey results. Each had accompanying text descriptions. Hypothesis 1 was supported while Hypotheses 2 and 3 were not supported. A brief summary of the findings was included at the end of the chapter.

#### **Chapter 5: Summary, Conclusions, Discussion and Recommendations**

The summary is a concise overview of the purpose of the study and a review of the method and the findings. It is brief and lacks detail. Yarbrough’s conclusions restate the findings of her study without addressing the broader implications of the results. Additional research is presented and several recommendations are made for advising practices; however, some of the recommendations for practice are not the direct results of the survey findings.

Yarbrough recommends several areas for future research. She recommends studying what makes advising satisfactory to a student, the interaction between function and advising style, student perceptions of their own college readiness, development of a measure of college readiness, and the link between college readiness and self-regulation.

## References

- Yarbrough, E. K. (2010). *An examination of academic advising style preference in undergraduate students*. (Doctoral dissertation). Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses. (3430631)