

Understanding Financial Pressures on the Experiences of Community College Students



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Agenda



- Overview of the study
- Large group discussion
- Implications for your work
- Wrap up



Purpose of the Study



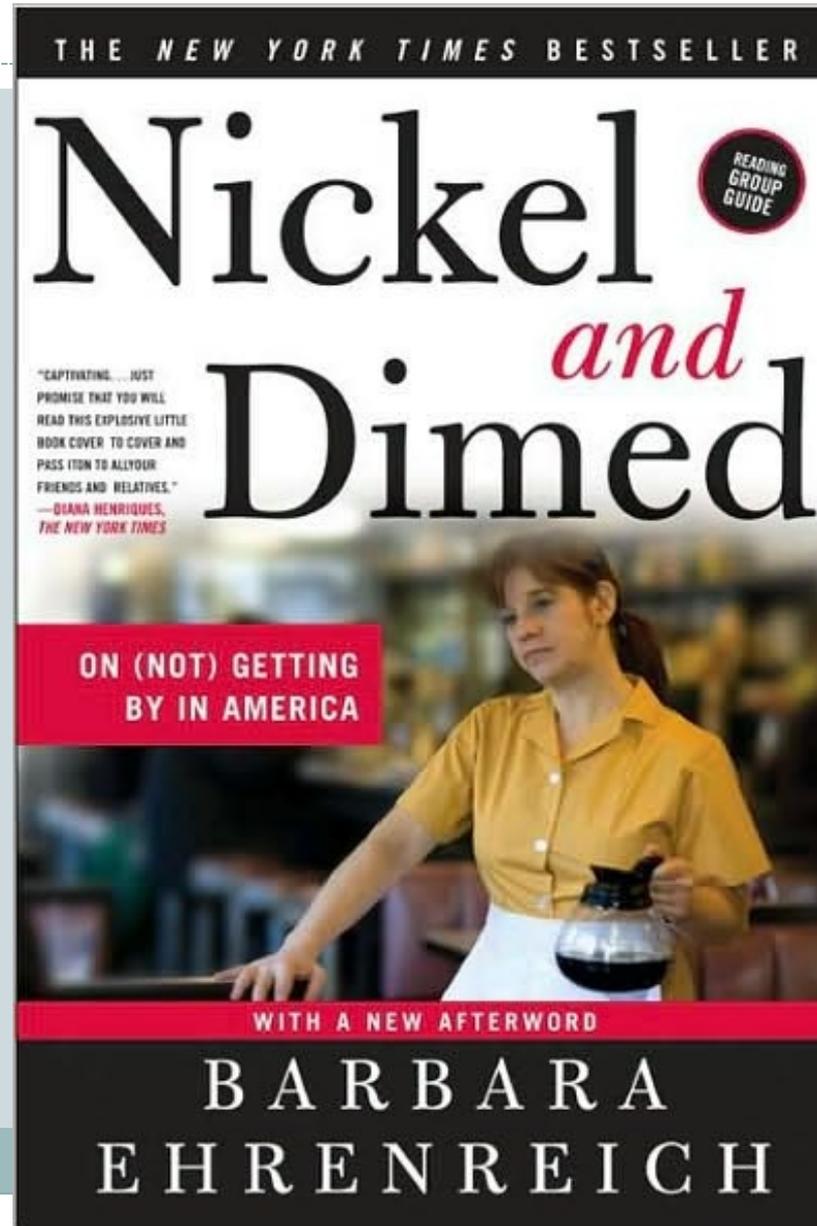
Purpose was to investigate financially strapped community college students, their academic and social engagement at their institutions and success in terms of persistence and transfer to a 4-year institution

Research Questions



- How does significant unmet financial need impact community college students persistence in college, academically, socially, and financially?
- How do these students make choices about involvement and engagement within college?
- By making the choices they make, how does it affect the student's college experiences?

A Backdrop to Understanding Financial Pressures



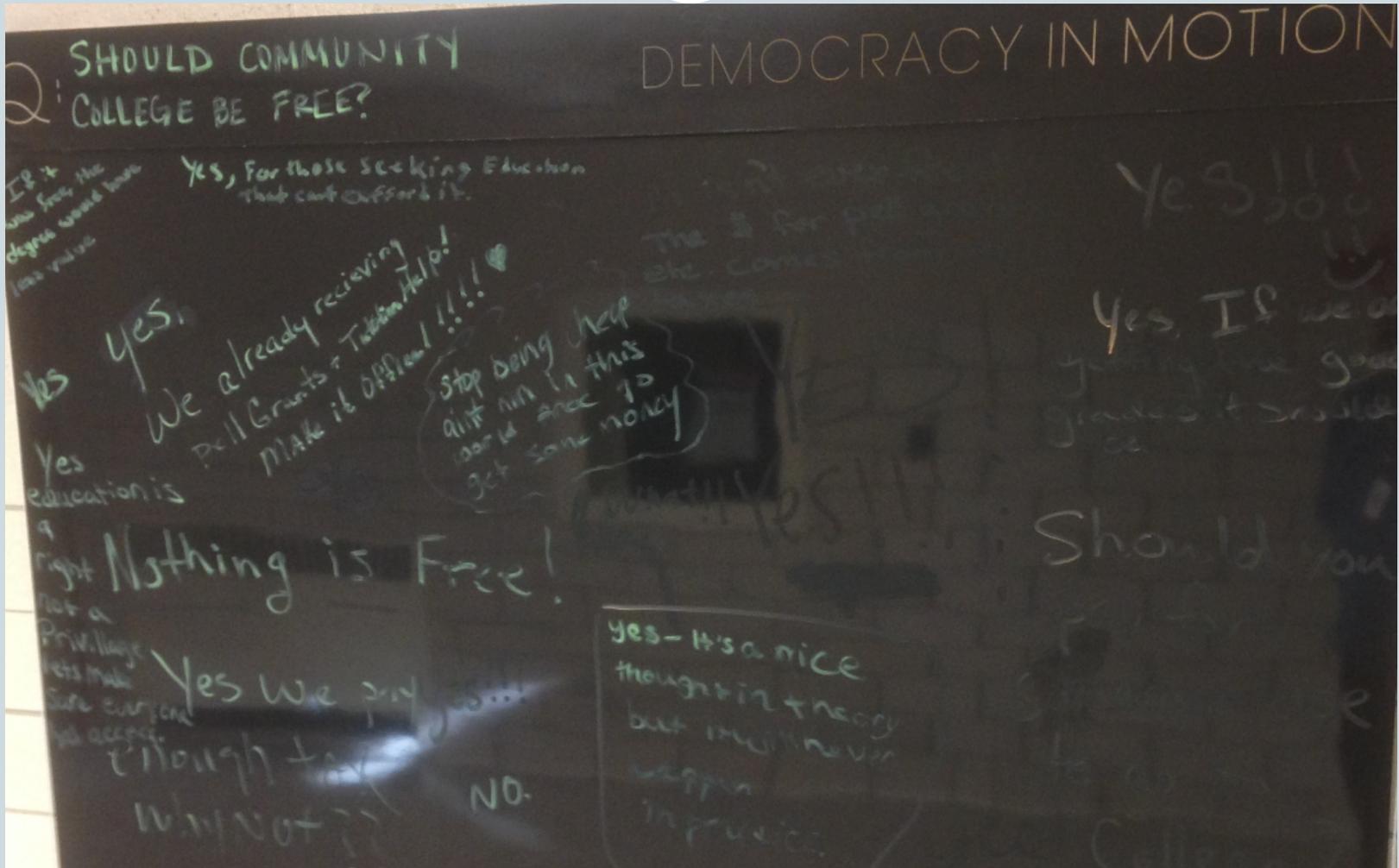
Literature



- **Jill Biden's Work to Promote the Community College**
 - Deruy, E. (2016, October 27). Jill Biden's push to make community college free. The Atlantic.
<https://www.theatlantic.com/education/archive/2016/10/jill-biden-looks-to-cement-her-community-college-legacy/505532/> Photo Credit: Kevin Lamarque / Reuters
- **Obama 2020 Vision:**
 - To have the world's largest share of college graduates
- **The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS)**



Community College Students Respond



Grabbed from the Headlines



- Bahrapour (2014). **More college students battle hunger as education and living costs rise.** The Washington Post.
- Hillard (2012). **College students hide hunger, homelessness.** www.npr.org
- Abdul-Alim (2016). **Juggling act.** *Diverse Issues in Higher Education.* www.diverseeducation.com
 - “Many low-income community college students struggle with balancing a full courseload and working to take care of financial responsibilities outside of school” (p. 10)

The Need and Meaning of Work as a Student



● **Obviously financial obligations, but sometimes to not have loans, for experience, future salary considerations, and for ego sheltering.**

- Tannock & Flocks (2003). "I know what it's like to struggle": The working lives of young students in an urban community college.
 - ✦ The importance of the identity as a "student" while working in low-end jobs.
- Titus (2010). Understanding the relationship between working while in college and future salaries.
- Lewis (2010). Job fare: Workplace experiences that help students learn.
- Lynch, Gottfried, Green & Thomas (2010). Using economics to illuminate the dynamic higher education landscape.
- Levin, Montero-Hernandez & Cerven (2010). Overcoming adversity: Community college students and work.
- Park & Sprung (2013). Work-school conflict and health outcomes: Beneficial resources for working college students.
- Cochrane & Szabo-Kubitz (2016). On the verge: Costs and tradeoffs facing community college students.

Academic and Social Engagement



Grades

- McCormick, Moore & Kuh (2010). **Working during college: Its relationship to student engagement and education outcomes.**
- Differentiation in on/off campus work. OC more related to better GPA for full time 1st year students, if working 10 hours or less, somewhat less so for 20 hours OC. Off campus work more negatively related to GPA.
- Levin, Montero-Hernandez & Cerven (2010). PT CC work more related to persistence (grades \geq C)

Campus Community

- Soria & Stebleton (2013). Social capital, academic engagement, and sense of belonging among working-class college students.
- Flowers (2010). Effects of work on African American college students' engagement.

Enculturation with Faculty/Higher Ed Culture

- Soria & Stebleton (2013).
- McCormick, Moore & Kuh (2010).
- Umbach, Padgett & Pascarella (2010). Impact of working on undergraduate students' interactions with faculty.



Transferring to a 4-Year from Community College: **#shepersisted**

- **Persistence and dreams of upward mobility**
 - Okun, Ruehlman & Karoly (1991). Application of investment theory to predicting part-time community college student intent and institutional persistence/departure behavior.
 - Levin, Montero-Hernandez & Cerven (2010).
 - ✦ **“Working part time does not appear to have the same detrimental effects as full-time work on persistence for community college students[...] among those who work part time, there is a higher level of college persistence (59.2%) than for those who did not work at all”** (p. 52) However, “only 44.1% of CC students working FT persist relative to 61.6% of 4-yr college students working FT” (p. 52).
 - Lightweis (2014). The challenges, persistence, and success of white, working-class, first-generation college students.
 - Juskiewicz (2015). *Trends in community college enrollment and completion data, 2015*.
 - Nielsen (2015). "Fake it 'til you make it": Why community college students' aspirations "hold steady".

Transferring to 4-Yr from CC: **#shepersisted**



- **Persistence and dreams of upward mobility**
- LaSota & Zumeta (2016). What matters in increasing community college students' upward transfer to the baccalaureate degree: Findings from the Beginning Postsecondary Study 2003-2009.
 - Suggested few state transfer agreements or community college characteristics were sig. related to upward transfer w/in 6 years but...
 - **Student characteristics related to upward transfer:**
 - ✦ Intention for upward transfer at entry
 - ✦ Attend full time
 - ✦ Work between 1-19 hrs/week
 - ✦ Declaring a transfer-oriented major in STEM, Arts & Social/ Behavioral Sciences, or Education

Our Study



- Interviewed 9 men and 11 women across 2 institutions
- Each student was interviewed twice – one during their first semester and one close to the end of the semester

Participants



- First time, first year (18-24)
- Intention to transfer
- All receiving financial aid (no dependents)
- Full time student with a part time job – job varied from campus to off campus work
- Administered a survey to targeted courses – 55 students completed, invited 35 and 20 agreed to participate

Data Collection



- First interview- face to face, open ended, semi structured
- Each lasted approximately 60 minutes
- Follow up interview was conducted via the phone and lasted 5-10 minutes - the goal was to find out if their plan was to return a 2nd year to the college - all were planning to return

Analysis



- **Phenomenological study** – phenomenon was the experience of being financially strapped in college –balancing academic, work, and college experience
- Constant, comparative technique used with interview transcriptions

Findings



- **Value of the degree**
 - **Balancing school and work**
 - **Resources on campus**
 - **Conflict about role in college**
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Reflection and Application



- **What are you seeing in the population of students you work with?**



Reflection and Application



- **What does this mean for your work?**



For the Benefit of the Whole...



- Reporting out
- Implications for your work
- How do I take this back to my campus?

Questions?



Thank you!