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How Discourse in Public Community College Documents Supports the Learning College Philosophy

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Abstract

How Discourse in Public Community College Documents Supports the Learning College

Philosophy

by

Terri Millison Ackland

MA, Arizona State University, 1993

BA, University of California, Davis, 1990

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Education, Community College Leadership

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Abstract

Since the late 1990s, community colleges have changed strategies to enhance student

success, moving from a traditional faculty-focused teaching model to a student-focused

learning paradigm using O'Banion's 6 college learning principles to define and guide the

learning college model. However, it is unclear how much the model is being used by

community colleges or shared with stakeholders. The learning college model, supported

by transformational language research on decision making and innovative thinking,

provided a conceptual framework for this discourse analysis study. The purpose of this

study was to discover the extent to which the language of the learning college model is

present on publicly available community college webpages. The 17 website samples were

drawn from colleges officially identified as elite learning colleges. Linguistic coding

facilitated by applying the 27 discourse analysis questions developed by Gee to

encompass O'Banion's 6 college learning principles provided evidence of student-

focused learning as a goal at community colleges. Results indicated that learning college

principles were presented by all 17 colleges in the study, represented on different pages

of their websites. Determining transparent and accessible evidence of the learning

college on community college websites provided colleges with a starting point to

consider their procedures and the experiences of their students when determining which

school is best for them to attend. Students at colleges with a clear learning college

mission have the opportunity to collaborate in their learning experiences and to construct

knowledge in ways that enhance student success and goal completion, so identifying the

presence of such schools can change students' college outcomes.

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, who have always upheld my love of education and have supported me in every way. To my mother, who died this summer without seeing my dream fulfilled; to my brother, who always believed; to my father, who is my champion, tutor of algebra, Latin, and music; to children and grandchildren, who keep me centered; and to my husband, whose unfailing support in all things has made my life a continuous wonder.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

In recent years, community colleges have embraced a student-focused, student learning paradigm that seeks to provide opportunities for success beyond those afforded by a traditional faculty-focused teaching model. In this student-focused learning model, O'Banion (1997) presented principles to define and guide the new learning college model. Student-focused learning research has been shared by other community college leaders who seek to inform practice through a learning college mission. At the same time, Kegan and Lahey's (2001; 2009) transformational language studies have provided insight into the effects of language usage in decision making and innovative thinking. By reviewing community college websites, it was possible to determine how much of O'Banion's learning college language appears in discourse targeting prospective students, and the extent to which colleges are displaying language indicative of their student-focused mission. Research by Kegan and Lahey was used to interpret the findings related to learning college language on community college websites. Gee's (2011a; 2011b) discourse analysis toolkit provided tools used to interpret the language data found on selected community college website pages.

In order to align O'Banion's (1997) six learning college principles with Gee's (2011a; 2011b) 27 toolkit questions for performing discourse analysis, a discussion in Chapter 3 shows how learning college language can be discovered on community college websites through discourse analysis. Since Gee's discourse analysis questions look at language from the word or sentence level up through paragraph and larger contextual

levels of analysis, not every question is as applicable to the research. However, while some of Gee's questions do not align perfectly with O'Banion's principles, a rubric showed how discourse analysis revealed information from community college websites in support of student-focused learning. By aligning all of Gee's toolkit questions with O'Banion's principles, the study provides the widest and deepest review of college website data for learning college language and triangulation from various linguistic angles.

In marketing research, Kittle and Ciba (2001) studied colleges for their use of websites as student recruiting tools and found that students access websites as a major method of gathering information about colleges. Using discourse analysis, a close and intentional reading of narrative text, disclosed meaning within the text of college websites and provided a link from the written word to a learning college philosophy of learning. Analysis of discourse provides insight into textual representations of the world and helped to answer the question of whether community colleges provide evidence of a learning college paradigm in their websites.

Background

Community colleges that work in the framework of O'Banion's (1997) learning college philosophy advocate a number of institutional goals for improving student learning. O'Banion's key principles indicate that a learning college:

1. Creates substantive change in the individual learner.

2. Engages learners as full partners in the learning process, with learners assuming primary responsibility for their choices.

3. Creates and offers as many options for learning as possible.

4. Assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities.

5. Defines the roles of learning facilitators by the needs of the learners.

6. Measures success by documented improved and expanded learning for its learners. (p. 47)

Public websites and documents of self-professed learning colleges might be expected to provide evidence of language that supports the mission of community colleges with a focus on student learning. Transparent acknowledgement of learning college principles by colleges helps to foster student engagement in the transition to college and fulfills the role of allowing students the power to make good choices about their education. The goal of this discourse analysis study was to learn whether the discourse in public community college documents supported the learning college philosophy. O'Banion's (1997) learning college principles were linked with Gee's (2011a; 2011b) discourse analysis model and methods to demonstrate the presence of learning college language on community college websites. In the study, I used the power of transformational language in learning college websites (Kegan 1982, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2001, 2009) as the interpretive lens through which to read the website pages.

Because the learning college philosophy has been publicly espoused and lauded by community college leaders and other stakeholders, the expectation was that the language of students-first, avoidance of space-bound and time-bound learning experiences, and teacher-as-facilitator (O'Banion, 1997) would appear frequently in the websites and documents directed at students. Community college data showed evidence of learning college language that supports student-focused learning. Gee's (2011a; 2011b) discourse analysis toolkit provided questions that were applied to the college website data to determine the presence of learning college language.

A rubric linked O'Banion's (1997) learning college principles with Gee's (2011a, p. 195-201) discourse analysis toolkit. Kegan and Lahey (2001; 2009) provided a key to transformational language, the positive language of learning, mutual respect, and communication that appeared in the discourse samples under analysis. The rubric was a guide to the analysis of data, which were gleaned from college website pages and submitted to Gee's analysis to determine the presence of O'Banion's learning college principles.

After publication of the original research in 1997, O'Banion (2007) revisited the learning college philosophy and its move from traditional time/place/role/bureaucracy-bound educational architecture to a new model with suggested changes for student services and teaching and learning functions. Citing 12 colleges participating in the League for Innovation's Learning College Project, O'Banion proposed updating college structures through reorganizing discipline groups, revising workload formulae for faculty,

updating grading systems, overhauling late registration policies, and creating new models for traditional structures overall. These updates to the learning college principles added additional support to student-focused education.

Kegan (1982; 1994) took a psychological stance with the study of mental stages, applying a constructivist-developmental lens to adult learning. Later, Kegan and Lahey (2001; 2009) focused their constructivist-developmental approach to stages of adult development on transformational language research. Their language research provided a lens through which to view learning college research. For example, O'Banion (1989; 1997) was concerned with higher education in the community college and the use of constructivist theory to place learning in context; his work highlighted the importance of adult student learning and methods to improve access and success for students.

Damewood (2011), Small (2010), Reams (2009), and Frost (1998) noted the link between individual adult development theory and the organizational change theory of O'Banion (1997). Gee (2011a; 2011b) provided accessible methods for practical discourse analysis, including document or textual analysis. Taking a student-focused learning focus, O'Banion proposed six learning principles and Gee provided 27 questions to apply to discourse analysis. In this study, these principles and questions were applied to written discourse to determine the extent of student-focused learning at learning colleges. Supported by Kegan and Lahey's (2001; 2009) theory of improving communication through transformational language, O'Banion's learning college

philosophy gave credence to a search of community college documents for evidence of language that could enhance the education of college students.

I applied discourse analysis to the narrative text found on selected websites in order to seek evidence of the learning college on community college websites. Using discourse analysis is a standard, accepted method of pulling meaning from college texts. For example, Ayers (2011) studied the mission statements of community colleges to evaluate the role of the colleges in preparing students to compete in the global workforce. Ayers's analysis of the documents noted that colleges in the study were good at regional development training but not as adept at global economic development. Meyer (2010) reviewed online postings on an education website using content analysis, a form of discourse analysis, to determine whether individual posts tended to resemble writing or the spoken word. Meyer's findings indicated that the written online posts resembled both personal writing, as in a personal journal, and first person spoken speech. Saarinen (2008) also used textual analysis of educational policy statements for their efficacy in empowering action. Benoliel (2006) used linguistic analysis of selected court transcripts to study the interplay of public humiliation of offenders and the severity of their subsequent sentences. In each of these examples, researchers applied discourse analysis to written narratives for specific purposes, narrowing the sample of documents so they were manageable yet sufficient for producing meaningful results for higher education practitioners.

In adopting the learning college philosophy, community colleges conform to O'Banion's (1997) principles, including open discussion of the move to a student-centered paradigm. Community college websites provide a forum for evidence of the colleges' learning college mission and can include specific language to indicate to prospective students that the institution supports such a mission. There were no recent studies to show evidence of the learning college philosophy in publicly available college website documents, such as the home page, about page, mission and vision page, college history page, and president's or chancellor's page.   Little research has been published to document possible learning college language in community college websites. A dearth of related peer-reviewed articles pointed to a lack of research on this topic, yet community colleges continue to promote themselves as learning colleges, without evidence of whether or not website language supports this stance. The expectation of this study was that a college would show evidence of its learning college principles on its website.

Researchers using online sites for data collection are beginning to appear, but this is still a relatively new research approach, so there are few available reports. However, research studies that did not pertain directly to the current study provided templates and ideas for the project. It was difficult to locate studies that matched conceptual framework with evidence in the way that the current study set out to do. There is no single paradigm established over years of research for online data studies and no clear documents or data collection tools to assist novice researchers in their own methodology. The closest similar research was the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA)

study (Jankowski & Makela, 2010), which linked discourse analysis with website data to collect and analyze information on student learning outcomes assessment

My background at a community college, with an emphasis on student-centered learning, suggested the likelihood of learning-centered website language in at least some of the top community colleges that I investigated. At the outset of this study, it was not clear to what extent college personnel have included learning college language and philosophy in their public documents, whether colleges highly rated by their peers are better at including learning college language than other colleges, or what amount of variation might exist among different community colleges. However, O'Banion's (1997) learning college principles have become familiar to community college practitioners, and it seemed likely that learning college language would exist on the most public of community college communication tools, the college websites.

All three strands of this study have been documented and tested separately. The first is O'Banion's (1997; 2007) learning college philosophy, which promotes a student learning focus from a constructivist stance and was adopted by many community colleges. The second strand is Kegan and Lahey's (2001; 2009) work on transformational language and its basis in constructivist-developmental theory; this strand provides a theoretical lens through which to read O'Banion. The third strand is Gee's (2011a; 2011b) multidisciplinary discourse analysis, which was used to analyze evidence of learning college language in community college website documents. Gee's (2011a) 27 questions for discourse analysis provided a multilayered approach to textual analysis and

assisted the researcher in reviewing the data in detail. If the highest rated community

colleges are using learning college language on their websites, it should reflect the

colleges' commitment to embracing and communicating learning college principles.

Learning colleges could communicate these goals to prospective students initially

through college websites to recruit new students and to introduce them to the principles

students might expect to encounter in their learning at the colleges.

The present study is important to monitor the persistence of the learning college

philosophy in community colleges as institutions of higher learning striving to help

students complete their education. Many students find their way to college by way of

official college websites, and the website is often the first indication to a prospective

student of the mission and opportunities offered by the college, including the key learning

college principles (O'Banion, 1997). If the learning college is truly part of community

college learning, its presence should be displayed in the websites and student-targeted

literature of highly valued community colleges. There should be evidence on the selected

websites of O'Banion's (1997) constructivist learning college theory. Key language

components are associated with learning colleges, and the presence of specific language

in college websites provided an example of practicing espoused theory.

The goal of any research study should be centered in theory and methodology, but

educational research should also add to the body of shared knowledge in the field. While

the possibility exists for subsequent application to real world settings to affect practice

and to create positive social change, this study provided evidence of the learning college

mission in college websites and the use of language to promote the learning college. In addition, the study demonstrated a link between constructivist-developmental psychology and constructivist learning theory. This link could provide educators with evidence of particular language as a social change mechanism, such as that which has taken place in community colleges that have embraced the learning college concept. The learning college philosophy is linked to constructivist theory, and evidence discovered through discourse analysis indicated the extent to which there is a student-based learning philosophy in community colleges.

Problem Statement

In 1997, O'Banion published a landmark work detailing the need for the overhaul of community college structure and pedagogy with a focus on student-centered learning. Eighteen years later, though community colleges continue to express pride in their standing as learning colleges, little published evidence existed to show that colleges followed the learning college paradigm. One way to address the gap was to study community colleges' websites to see if these documents demonstrated the learning college philosophy. Kegan and Lahey (2001; 2009) provided evidence of the power of language to create change and their work acted as a lens through which I reviewed website data for this study. However, at the outset of the current study, there was not much evidence to suggest how many community colleges were following the learning college philosophy, particularly through demonstrating it in language on their websites. I discovered learning college language on some websites through discourse analysis, and

this indicated that colleges are truly embracing a student-focused paradigm and that the presence of this new paradigm among highly rated colleges could indicate a major, continued shift in student learning.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to discover the extent to which the language of the learning college (O'Banion, 1997) was present on publicly available community college website pages. Using a discourse analysis, I attempted to determine whether evidence exists of learning college language, as seen through the lens of transformational language theory, in published websites of successful community colleges. If language representative of the learning college (O'Banion, 1997) was present, that indicated continuing adherence to learning college principles at the community college. The data collection methods of extracting particular words and phrases from written text and submitting text to discourse analysis provided evidence of the learning college philosophy and principles in college identity. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by collecting evidence of learning college language, representative of learning college principles, from elite community colleges.

Research Questions

The major question of the study was to what extent does the discourse found on public community college websites provide evidence of the learning college philosophy? In order to answer this question, the three subquestions listed below allowed for closer inspection of the central question of the study.

1.   What kinds of examples of O'Banion's (1997) Learning College

discourse can be found on public community college websites?

2.   How do identified discourse elements align with the student-centered

learning college philosophy's six principles?

3.   In what ways do college websites show a student-centered learning

perspective?

Conceptual Framework

The genesis of this study was my interest in language in general and the common

use of the student-focused language of the learning college by many community college

practitioners. As a conceptual framework, I used constructivist theory and the

transformational language associated with learning college language. Discourse analysis

provided a tool through which to discover evidence of learning college language in

community colleges.

O'Banion's (1997) principles were conceived from a constructivist perspective,

stating that:

> The views of constructivists provide additional building blocks for
>
> creating a foundation for the learning college. In the learning college the
>
> student is responsible for constructing his or her own learning by active
>
> involvement in creating learning opportunities and by direct participation
>
> in the opportunities created. Learners learn best by doing. (p. 85)

Kegan (1982; 1994) applied constructivist-developmental psychology to a number of life situations at work, in education, and in health care settings. Kegan referred to the subject-object distinction that exists in communication, the way in which participants view themselves and others within the interaction. This early research led to collaboration with Lahey (Kegan & Lahey, 2001; 2009) in analyzing language and its role in communication. The later work presented a system for working through language in order to solve problems, make decisions, and apply language to create transformation.

Constructivist-developmental theory is of interest to educators because of its close relationship to linguistics, its use of language examples to provide evidence of learning, and its accessibility to review through discourse analysis. In particular, the learning college philosophy predicts the kinds of language that might be expected on learning college websites, and discourse analysis is useful as a means of analyzing linguistic evidence. Discourse analysis (Gee, 2011a; 2011b) provided a tool through which to directly analyze written documents on self-proclaimed community college websites to determine the extent to which learning college language exists.

A learning organization may be identified by its progression and growth through adapting to new circumstances. The presence of transformational language can be an indicator of a learning organization, including a learning college. By its very nature, transformational language assists individuals and groups in overcoming communication challenges and creating new strategies for learning. Through seeking evidence of transformational language, the highest level in a constructivist-developmental theory, I

noted the presence of learning college language, also expected of higher level colleges. The assumption was that the presence of specific language indicated adherence to the principles implicit in that language choice.

The concepts underlying this study reflect a student-learning worldview and a linguistic perspective. These lenses for the study, in turn, present a picture of my personal interests as a researcher who is both a current community college practitioner and a linguist. Using discourse analysis and capitalizing on my personal strengths of community college experience and linguistics background provided a map to follow in the research process.

One important concept for the study is an understanding of The League for Innovation in the Community College, a consortium of community colleges whose mission is as a catalyst for community colleges:

> The League for Innovation in the Community College (League) is an international, nonprofit association dedicated to catalyzing the community college movement. CEOs from the most influential, resourceful, and dynamic community colleges and districts in the world comprise the League's board of directors and provide strategic direction for its ongoing activities. . . (The League for Innovation in the Community College, 2015, About the League, para. 1).

Colleges in the League for Innovation Alliance include Board Member Colleges, highly rated colleges whose CEOs serve on the League for Innovation Board and from whose websites the data for the study were drawn.

Definitions were also important. Gee (2011a; 2011b), whose discourse analysis methodology was used in the study, defined all discourse as critical discourse, containing aspects of both language and power. Critical discourse analysis (CDA) typically contains several identifying qualities, including multidisciplinary consideration of discourse and social issues, a systematic approach to data analysis, and an attempt to address social wrongs (Fairclough, 2010). Critical discourse analysis derives from multiple disciplines (Wodak & Meyer, 2012) and typically includes a problem orientation and an overt focus on potential researcher intention and possible bias. Linguists (Schiffrin, Tannen, & Hamilton, 2003) agree that a definition of discourse analysis includes at least sentence-level language and beyond (not just words or sounds), a focus on language in practice, and socially relevant issues.

Constructivist theory, on which my research is based, is sometimes conflated with social constructionism (Burr, 2003). The constructivist theory relies upon a critical stance toward received knowledge, specific cultural and historical setting, social processes that sustain knowledge, and the necessary pairing of social action with knowledge. When combined with adult developmental theory, together they provided a unified foundation for the study.

Nature of the Study

According to Creswell (2007), the five major traditions of qualitative research are narrative, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case study. Patton (2002) suggested constructionism/constructivism as an additional consideration in relation to

meaning in language, while Miles and Huberman (1994) discussed semiotics, a type of linguistic analysis to unlock language code in text. Each research paradigm has qualities that match well with particular kinds of studies. However, the current study required attention to language choice within texts, making discourse analysis the preferred format for linguistic analysis of documents. Discourse analysis, neither strictly qualitative nor quantitative research, combines the most salient features of many paradigms, pulling information from narrative texts, examining a phenomenon closely, considering cultural aspects of the study environment, investigating a set of cases for evidence, and using a constructivist-developmental theoretical stance for the study.

Discourse analysis has been described in different ways and through various theoretical or conceptual stances. For example, Schiffrin, Tannen, and Hamilton (2003) defined discourse as one of three categories of language phenomena observed through multiple disciplines:

- Anything beyond the sentence

- Language use

- A broader range of social practice that includes nonlinguistic and nonspecific instances of language (p. 1)

Additional definitions of discourse analysis include Burr's (2003) described discourse analysis as situated language use, either written or spoken, and Fairclough's (2010) definition of critical discourse analysis as having "three basic properties: it is relational, it is dialectical, and it is transdisciplinary" (p. 3). Gee (2011b) introduced discourse

analysis as "the study of language-in-use" (p. 8), and Gee (2011a) created a toolkit encompassing multiple theoretical perspectives to aid researchers in doing discourse analysis. Discourse analysis includes many disciplines, looks at language in context, and often expands to a consideration of the social aspects of language.

Using discourse analysis, I attempted to explore evidence of learning college language in public website documents on community college websites. The presence of specific discourse documented the persistence of the learning college philosophy in community colleges believed to embody it. A review of language on community college websites discovered evidence of student-focused learning, supporting the continued presence and application of O'Banion's (1997) learning college principles.

This study centered on the learning college philosophy, a student-centered paradigm, and its presence on community college websites in the form of specific vocabulary and language. The learning college, while embraced by some universities and other institutions, was born out of the community college movement and has been used principally by community colleges as a paradigm for revolutionizing operational change. O'Banion (1997) encouraged community college practitioners to embrace principles that enhanced student learning. Many community colleges have since adopted the philosophy, and as self-proclaimed learning colleges, focus on student-centered learning, access to education unrestricted by time and place, and the teacher as facilitator, among other principles. This study provided clear triangulation of conceptual framework through

Kegan and Lahey (2001; 2009), method through O'Banion, and analysis through Gee (2011a; 2011b).

I conducted the study using the qualitative research paradigm in the tradition of discourse analysis. The methodology is based on Gee (2011a; 2011b) and a toolkit of questions designed to analyze spoken or written text for evidence of specific linguistic properties. I investigated documents on public community college websites to provide evidence of learning college language (O'Banion, 1997) in public website documents of elite community colleges, as represented in a hierarchy at the League for Innovation in the Community College.

Definitions

Constructivist-developmental theory: This theory holds that individuals construct their own reality through language and experience while progressing through various levels of development (Kegan, 1982;1984).

Transformational language: Language thought to provide evidence for or guidance through levels of adult development. Both constructivist-developmental theory and transformational language theory focus on the individual (Kegan & Lahey, 2001;2009).

The learning college philosophy: A philosophy that provides an extension of individual student focus through a new framework for quality teaching and learning, particularly in community colleges (O'Banion, 1997).

Discourse analysis: A method of analyzing spoken or written text for meanings in context. It also provides researchers with a means of collecting and analyzing linguistic data (Burr, 2003).

Assumptions

The League for Innovation suggests that the Board Colleges, colleges whose presidents serve on the League's Board of Directors, are the elite colleges among colleges in the League. This assumes that League Board Colleges are leaders or models for others with memberships at other levels in the League. The assumption was that the League participants would reflect the views of other colleges, would represent honest reflections of their colleges on their websites, and would be knowledgeable in their online text. Another consideration was that some colleges opt not to be members of the League for Innovation. It is possible that these nonmember colleges provide good learning college missions on their websites, though they are not included in this study.

Underlying the choice of colleges to include in the study was the assumption that a learning college would share its adoption of O'Banion's (1997) principles on its website. It was assumed that colleges would share their adoption of the learning college in public documents because of the positive student-focused, assessment-driven, collaborative aspects of learning college principles and that the website presence indicated actual practice.

Scope and Delimitations

The colleges in this study were limited to those ranked as elite colleges through

the League for Innovation in the Community College. The 17 colleges ranked as the

League's Board Colleges represent the best of community colleges and presented a data

set for seeking evidence of the learning college. While following previous studies which

provided research using a web-based approach, the current work focused on a specific set

of elite community colleges and applied discourse analysis tools to the data set.

Although website information changes often, I determined a timeframe for data

collection, excluding changing web information after the collection was completed.

Limitations

I focused on community colleges considered as elite colleges by their colleagues

in the League for Innovation in the Community College, a consortium of colleges that

supports research and innovation. The findings might be relevant to colleges among elite

community colleges that are considered learning colleges. However, it is possible that

website language focused on student learning might be of value to other educational

institutions with a web presence and a professed adoption of the learning college

philosophy.

Colleges shared some learning college principles, but could, perhaps, not have

shown evidence of a learning college philosophy. Principles were considered in advance

of the data collection phase to include all relevant information. An underlying

assumption of the study was that if learning college language is on a college website, the

college is actually putting the language into practice and functioning as a learning college. O'Banion's (1997) learning college philosophy suggests that successful learning colleges would provide evidence of learning college principles in their websites. Discourse analysis is an effective method to analyze and interpret data obtained from college websites and assumes that the discourse on the websites represents actual practices.

Another potential limitation was my background in linguistic analysis and community colleges. Care was taken to avoid researcher bias through self-reflection and analysis in creating data charts. A common trait of discourse analysis is an overt focus on researcher preconceptions, their potential effect on analysis of the data, and conscious efforts to forestall bias.

Significance

Since the learning college places students in the forefront of the learning environment, it was anticipated that the college websites would include language to indicate a student focus to prospective students. If the colleges studied were among the elite institutions and did not present linguistic evidence of learning college language in their websites, it might be that they are not effectively using their learning college stance to recruit students into a learning-centered environment. It might also indicate that the institutions themselves are not fully embracing organizational learning, which would create change that might filter out into its public persona, as partially represented in college websites.

Summary

Language has a powerful effect upon communication, decision making, and learning. The current study used Gee's (2011a; 2011b) discourse analysis process to determine whether evidence of O'Banion's (1997) learning college philosophy exists on community college websites. I used Kegan and Lahey's (2001; 2009) transformational language theory as a lens through which to review the data collection. If there had been little evidence of the learning college philosophy on elite college websites, a review of O'Banion's learning college principles and reference to these key principles on websites could enhance student decisions to attend community colleges and complete degrees.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Student-based learning is a fundamental element in O'Banion's (1997) learning college philosophy. In order to discover the extent to which learning college language appears in top community colleges that have embraced O'Banion's principles, it became apparent that a good analysis tool would be required. Gee's (2011a) discourse analysis toolkit questions were aligned with O'Banion's principles to seek evidence of the transformational language on college websites, indicative of a learning college mission.

The phenomenon of the learning college has been discussed and identified in community colleges since O'Banion's (1997) seminal work on the importance and creation of a learning college. One might reasonably expect to encounter evidence of the principles of a learning college on the websites of community colleges that espouse the learning college philosophy. Since the website is an avenue of entrance to prospective students, a college's self-representation can have a major influence on a student's choice to apply and register at any college.

I have reviewed O'Banion's (1997) focus on student-centered learning 18 years after the inception of the learning college. As community colleges continue to promote student-centered learning principles, evidence of learning college principles does exist among elite community colleges. Though Kegan and Lahey's (2001; 2009) work demonstrates the power of language and was used as a filter to review O'Banion's work, it was not clear prior to the current study to what extent college websites contained language referring to O'Banion's student-centered learning paradigm.

A learning college might be expected to show evidence of a learning college mission in its language on web documents. Based upon Kegan's (1982; 1994) earlier constructivist-developmental theory and Kegan and Lahey's (2001; 2009) close attention to language in use, the presence of O'Banion's (1997) constructivist learning college language on community college websites indicated the presence of learning college principles at the colleges.

Discourse analysis provided a method by which to collect and analyze data on community college websites. The introduction of discourse analysis as method allowed the work of O'Banion (1997) and Kegan (1982; 1984) to be more easily drawn together with supporting data. Although there are many varieties of discourse and textual content analysis, the current project focused specifically on analysis tools proposed by Gee (2011a; 2011b).

The purpose of this study was to discover the extent to which the language of the learning college (O'Banion, 1997) is present on publicly available community college website pages. I used discourse analysis, which combines the best features of many disciplines and paradigms, to analyze online texts, examine a phenomenon closely, consider cultural aspects of the study environment, and investigate a set of cases for evidence, all while using a constructivist-developmental stance for the study. Investigation of community college websites for evidence of the discourse of the learning college philosophy documented that the learning college philosophy in community colleges continues in the discourse the colleges use to describe themselves to the public.

Synopsis of Current Literature and Chapter Sections Preview

For the purposes of this study, sources were primarily accessed via the Walden University web library portal, available to Walden students. The multidisciplinary database, Academic Search Premier, provided multiple articles and leads. Sources generated from this general database were also supplemented with articles from the Proquest database, containing both Walden University dissertations and those from other colleges and universities. Because there is not a single theory and methodology that unifies the three strands of this study, it was difficult to enter three search terms that would provide a list of related research. However, the primary terms were names of pertinent researchers, such as Kegan, O'Banion, and Gee, to focus on *transformational language*, *the learning college*, and *discourse analysis*, respectively. The search terms *organizational learning* and *student-focused learning* were also applied. The names of primary researchers or topics listed above were sometimes grouped together or paired with the terms *higher education* or *community college*.

In this chapter, I review the conceptual framework of the study, followed by three sections of research on theory, practice, and analysis methods. The first section reviews the learning college principles and their insights into institutional behavior. The second section discusses the use of transformational language theory as a constructivist lens through which to view the language on learning college websites. The third section highlights the use of discourse analysis as the appropriate methodology for the study.

Conceptual Framework

The primary theoretical foundation referenced for this study was constructivism, in particular, O'Banion's (1989; 1997; 2007) learning college philosophy for community colleges. I looked for evidence of O'Banion's six learning college principles in language within college website documents. This research was grounded in the constructive-developmental theory of Kegan (1982; 1994) and Kegan and Lahey (2001; 2009), which couples transformational language with adult learning theory. Gee's (2011a; 2011b) 27 discourse analysis tools provided the methodology for data collection and analysis.

Kegan's (1982; 1994) constructivist-developmental theory assumes that stages of development in children and young adults continue into and throughout adulthood. In later work with Lahey, Kegan (2001; 2009) focused on transformational language as a vehicle for conscious growth and development in adults. Of particular interest to my study is the premise that language can interrupt intended goals, with unintended consequences. That is, the purposeful and mindful use of language can help with problem solving and understanding, and its misuse can be a hindrance to goal completion.

In his early work, Kegan (1982; 1994) extended traditional views of child development to adolescents and adults, theorizing that personal development does not end with childhood but extends through the life cycle. Of particular interest was the subject-object distinction between people in communication, or me-you perspectives (Kegan, 1982). As individuals develop, they begin to perceive the necessity of understanding different perspectives of the same phenomenon in order to work together

with others for goal achievement. Adult learners typically move from a self-oriented subject perspective to an appreciation of the importance of others, an object perspective (Kegan, 1982). In higher levels of development, adults are able to synthesize various ways of thinking to assimilate multiple ways of looking at something. By focusing consciously on the language used in any situation, the mature adult can begin to work through difficulties caused partially by language choice.

In later work, Kegan and Lahey (2001; 2009) provided examples of language use at different developmental levels. As adults proceed through developmental stages, they can use language strategies to learn how to achieve goals. Kegan and Lahey referred to the initial stages of development as internal languages and to the later stages as social languages, indicating growing sophistication and intention in language use. For example, the four internal languages intentionally shift focus from roadblocks to positive resolutions (Kegan & Lahey, 2001). The three social languages follow a similar positive pattern but move from the individual to others in society. With each move through the seven languages, including the four internal and three social languages, the individual gradually constructs purposeful attention to building goal achievement and consensus through carefully chosen language and social agreement (Kegan & Lahey, 2001). The last category, deconstructive criticism, provides a structure for learning similar to that of the learning college (Kegan & Lahey, 2001).

Kegan and Lahey (2009) also provided a link from individual transformation to collective immunity to change, giving assistance to groups in conflict and transition.

Groups were encouraged to set individual and team goals, to take inventory of the current status of a goal, to discover underlying factors that prohibited goal attainment, and to work for resolution. In this way, the tenets of O'Banion's (1997) learning college philosophy might be considered a focus at a college, but the paradigm might not be shared by all involved, and therefore, the language of the learning college might be lacking from its most publicly accessible information portal, the college website.

The learning college philosophy, presented and refined by O'Banion (1997), contains a list of properties or principles evidenced by learning. The expectation was that the top learning colleges, as noted by their elite membership as Board Colleges in the League for Innovation in the Community College, would show evidence of their learning college focus in public documents. College websites contain several typical documents targeting prospective students, and these were used to seek language linking the colleges to their professed philosophy.

The Learning College: Principles and Insights into Institutional Behavior

O'Banion's (1997) learning college philosophy invited all potential learners to participate in a new kind of educational institution, the learning college. Discussions about organizational learning were not new in 1997, but applying organizational learning intentionally to education was revolutionary. Barr and Tagg (1995) differentiated between a traditional instructional paradigm with a teaching mission, and a learning paradigm with a mission to create learning. In the learning paradigm, a college assumes responsibility at both organizational and individual levels for creating and monitoring

learning environments that enhance student learning. The learning college philosophy has been especially adopted by community colleges in their ongoing efforts to provide student-focused learning.

The concept of the learning college prompted research into this new concept. Bosch et al. (2008) sought to define a *learning-centered* college. The resulting themes included such areas as critical thinking, high expectations, and student-focused teaching and learning. The researchers indicated that, although college mission/vision statements often include learner-centeredness or similar terms, there was a question about the presence of quality learning-centered teaching and learning at the institutions. The study showed that students and college faculty and administration shared similar concepts of a learning-centered college. Expectations of high performance by students should be shared with students as they are admitted and oriented to the college community, while high performance strategies should be used to recruit and orient new faculty to create a totally learning-centered community.

Other researchers introduced new terminology that added to the discussion of student-centered learning. Morrone &Tarr (2005) introduced *theoretical eclecticism* as a term to describe using different types of learning support to enhance student success. Morrone and Tarr presented examples from a course to illustrate how the learning paradigm could work in a classroom. These examples included the one minute paper, discussion of complex issues with the entire class, use of lecture primarily to verify information, case study analysis, simulations, and collaborative learning strategies.

Even a decade after the introduction of O'Banion's (1997) learning college principles, Tagg (2010) illustrated that a traditional instructional paradigm was still most like what was used in classrooms, while a learning paradigm was reflective of what practitioners believed they were doing or should be doing in the classroom. Tagg questioned whether true transformation had occurred at colleges after they had adopted a learning paradigm. Tagg supported O'Banion's (1997) work in seeking a true transformation rather than a moderate alteration to current pedagogy.

More recently, Webber (2012) supported Barr and Tagg's (1995) call for a paradigm shift, indicating that a shift from an instructional to a learning paradigm had occurred. Webber cited the importance of learner-centered assessment as part of this shift, following Barr and Tagg, and O'Banion (1997). Webber compared the use of learner-centered assessment in college classrooms in 1993 and 2004, finding the same or higher results for 2004. The conclusion was there was a need to create the right kind of learning environment for assessment of student learning in a learner-centered paradigm.

In a historical view of the learning college movement, Hanson (2007) listed a number of rhetorical devices used by learning college proponents in their encouragement of a revolutionary move from teaching to learning. Hanson discovered discourse shared across many texts to indicate a hostile attitude of learning colleges towards traditional education and definition of education as an economic product rather than as a process. The way language is used to present concepts is important for gaining adherents to, or discouraging them from, new ideas or educational paradigm shifts. For example, Hanson

(2007) cited positive sounding terms from learning college literature, such as "learning, efficiency, and productivity" (p. 548). Hanson suggested that the use of any terminology brings with it certain implications and worldviews. Through discourse analysis of learning college texts, Hanson located a number of phrases and words indicating particular tenets of the learning college movement within the discourse. Hanson found dissatisfaction towards traditional academia among learning college practitioners, who seemed to define education as product over process. Hanson suggested a return to more traditional language about the nature of public education, and while in disagreement with some learning college ideas, clearly recognized the power of language to sway decisions and the utility of discourse analysis to discover the nuances of that language.

Other researchers have also studied the presence, acceptance, and persistence of the learning college at particular community colleges. For example, Weidner (2008) studied the acceptance of the learning college philosophy by community college staff support employees. Mohni (2008) reviewed faculty and administrator perceptions, as the learning college was adapted to the college environment. Ray (2008) analyzed faculty attitudes toward the adoption of the learning college at their institutions.

Faculty can be a vital support for adoption of the learning college at an institution. Ray (2008) studied faculty at Diamond Technical Community College to determine why faculty would or would not choose to support a move to adopting a learning-centered philosophy. Without an understanding of faculty motives, community college leaders might have difficulty motivating them to accept an institutional change to becoming a

learning college. Looking at factors leading to faculty choice for or against adopting a learning-centered philosophy at a community college, Ray reviewed O'Banion's (1997) six fundamental principles of a learning college and, in part, discovered the importance of faculty buy-in rather than external pressure to support a learning college philosophy. Ray effectively reviewed learning college adherents, including O'Banion, to provide a good summary/synthesis of the learning college.

As colleges began to adopt the learning college principles, they revisited O'Banion (1997). Mohni (2008) was interested in the adoption of the learning college principles at Iowa community colleges. A quantitative survey was used to gather perceptions of faculty and administrators regarding O'Banion's (1997) learning college principles and their implementation at the community college. Emergent themes important to respondents included a strong organizational structure and renewed commitment to learners as evidenced by a strong program of student learning outcomes assessment. Mohni discussed potential study limitations, including the fact that faculty and administrators most in favor of adopting a learning-centered approach would be those who responded to the surveys, thus possibly skewing the data. Echoing O'Banion's insistence on clear definitions of terms and the need for O'Banion's definitions of a learning college, Mohni also discussed the theory of constructivism as compatible with the learning college philosophy.

A study of a college moving to become a learning-centered institution (McPhail, Heacock, & Linck, 2010) included the importance of factors such as a robust assessment

system for the college and clear information sharing about the nature of the learning college. Incorporating O'Banion's (1997) learning college principles with its own mission, a college system moved to a learning-centered focus. In this situation, strong leadership and vision were important to support innovation and to share the vision with the larger community.

In a qualitative case study, Brackin (2012) sought faculty and administrator perceptions of a college in transition to becoming a learning-centered college. Brackin collected data and organized it into categories representing a learning-centered college. These categories included clear institutional direction, commitment, widened perspective, role definition, learning outcomes assessment, processes within the institution, a higher order level of learning, faculty as facilitators rather than as teachers, and students sharing the responsibility for their own learning. Brackin found it important, based upon the data, to share with stakeholders through college documents the learning-centered concepts that had been adopted by the institution.

Student-focused learning has been a continuous topic of discussion in the 20 years since O'Banion (1997) and others encouraged a shift from traditional teaching pedagogy towards a more collaborative and constructivist classroom. Mostrom and Blumberg (2012) defined learning centered teaching as consisting of three main characteristics or behaviors. The first is moving the responsibility for learning towards students, with faculty as facilitator and student as active learner constructing knowledge. The second characteristic of learning centered teaching is providing students multiple opportunities

and formats to engage with the material and to contextualize it. The third component of learning centered teaching is recursive, formative feedback for students to help them continue towards mastery of the course material.

One way to ensure that students are receiving quality teaching is to test academics' ability to gain from training. A study of the benefits of teacher training (Coffey & Gibbs, 2000) indicated that training could benefit academics in their classroom teaching. However, it was difficult to determine whether new training or years of teaching experience played the greater role in teachers' gains. However, the study included a focus on qualities, such as group work, rapport, and enthusiasm, indicating that student focus was important for improving teaching.

In a study of learner-centered assessment, Webber (2012) compared faculty members' use of student-centered assessments in 1993 and again in 2004. The results varied according to sociocultural groups and institutional types, but faculty showed the same or higher usage of the new techniques over time. This indicated that at least some faculty were embracing an institutional learning college paradigm and applying it in their course assessments of student learning. If correlations can be drawn between courses with learning centered assessments and student success, student enrollments in these classes could increase. In addition, part time faculty, who used the new assessment techniques less than full time faculty, could be mentored and assisted to provide students with great learning opportunities that could foster increased institutional success.

Just as part time faculty may apply learner-centered assessment to a smaller extent than full time faculty, student assessment results can vary across cultural lines. Marambe, Vermunt, and Boshuizen (2012) studied the learning patterns of higher education students in Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and The Netherlands. Not surprisingly, students varied in their use of metacognition, learning methods, and perspectives on learning. Evidence showed that it can take time for students to adapt to new strategies and perceptions of the learning process, but that a cultural shift is possible, even in very different cultures.

Even though a shift to learning based pedagogy can take time, students can make the gradual shift to the new paradigm. Student-focused learning can be aligned with institutional quality assurance guidelines to produce changes in the quality of student learning. In a university study (Barrie, Ginns, & Prosser, 2005) researchers learned that student learning experiences showed improvement over time with a more student-focused teaching and learning perspective. Such survey areas as clear goals and standards or good teaching and appropriate assessment showed improvement as the university encouraged a cultural shift from teacher-focused to student-focused learning. The move to a learner-focused curriculum and assessment process showed promise for learning college principles.

As students spend more time in classes, their perspectives on the learning experience of effective teaching can shift. In an 8-year study of graduate students (Hill, 2014), students rated teaching effectiveness. Teachers were evaluated by students on their perceived competence, student relationships, and attitudes towards the teaching and

learning process. Graduate students in the study were impressed with teachers who appreciated what students brought to the classroom as they constructed knowledge for themselves. Students should not only learn new information in their courses but should experience transformation as they acquire new perspectives. In another study, Brew and Ginns (2008) found a link between a faculty focus on the scholarship of teaching and learning, and improved course experiences of students. Scholarship of teaching and learning includes high levels of student-focused learning and inquiry or activity based coursework, which translated into better learning experiences for students.

Studies continue to show the presence of critical information about colleges on their public websites. For example, Ayers (2011) analyzed 421 mission statements from community colleges for discourse evidence of economic development in college missions. While the discussion centered on global and sociopolitical matters, the study demonstrated the effective use of discourse analysis and the results as a textual representation of the college culture on the college website.

Simoes and Soares (2010) examined the choices for college-bound students and the sources of information that informed their decisions. The study focused on the decision period for students prior to enrolling in a particular college. Findings indicated that the institution's website was among the top three most accessed data sources used by students. Students considering college options used the Internet as a major source of information to inform their decision, with some variation of amount of use depending upon students' proposed programs of study.

One implication of this study (Simoes and Soares 2010) was the need to focus on marketing to prospective students, recognizing the potential importance of the college website as a primary tool to attract students. The college's reputation for academic excellence was also a factor in college choice, so marketing should capture and positively reinforce these points on websites. If a college wishes to be acknowledged as a learning college, its website might reference the learning college principles as a means of recruiting students.

Students choose a specific college for a variety of reasons, and there are diverse opportunities from which to choose. Because of a decline in some places of traditional college students and increased competition for students by selective institutions, it is important to clarify how students decide which college to attend. Tavares and Ferreira (2012) sought to discover the implications of how colleges attract new students and then manage access and retention. Research questions asked what attracted students to seek higher education and which factors ranked higher in encouraging students in their institutional choice. Students in the study claimed career preparation, earning a degree, and creating life choices as main factors in attending college. In choosing a specific college, students were concerned about the institution's reputation in academics, the major of choice, and proximity to home.

Although students of all ages make up college enrollments, the majority of new college students come to college from high school. A national study of high school students (Engberg & Wolniak, 2010) found that high school culture affects students'

attendance and outcomes at 2 and 4 year colleges. Students were influenced by their college preparation, socioeconomic status, and partnerships to bridge the high school to college gap. The topic is important in light of the political environment and focus on improving college access to all who seek it. One goal of the study was to determine which high school factors might influence high school students to seek admission to college. Another goal of the study was to provide information to stakeholders in roles that could increase college enrollment.

Race did not seem to be a determinate of enrollment (Engberg & Wolniak, 2010), while socioeconomic status did appear to be directly linked to enrollment, and affordability was a factor in eschewing 4 year colleges. Factors that were most influential in college enrollment were grades and math achievement, encouragement by others, especially peers, and college bridge opportunities. Researchers hoped to further test the influence of the teaching and learning environment upon college decisions. Policy makers will continue to be plagued by the need to decide how to support students in their college-bound decisions. Among several recommendations was the opportunity for college students to participate in service-learning and high school-to-college partnerships meant to prepare for and influence college attendance.

Students are motivated by various factors to attend college. A study (Kember, Ho, & Hong, 2010) measured students' motivation to choose a particular college or program when already enrolled at the college. Researchers reviewed motivation along several lines, including a sense of inclusion at the college and individual student goals. A

number of factors can continue to influence students' retention at school and even affect their choice of a major. Personal goals, balanced by financial considerations, were also mitigated by family encouragement and expectations. A sense of belonging in the community, the right fit, was also a major factor for choice.

Students often respond to a sense of community and inclusion as factors in college retention. Söderström et al. (2006) reviewed the concept of community in the environment of online education. They found that participants in online classes shared communion, exchange of ideas, and ideals. This definition of the term community pointed to possible changes in distance education. The researchers saw this splintering of definition into several categories of community as more than a semantic issue, and more of a situation for informing pedagogy.

Constructivism has played a large role in student-focused learning research in recent decades. As students participate more fully in learner-centered experiences, they begin to create their own learning strategies, structures, and perspectives. Though some research exists, none has yet effectively demonstrated the presence of O'Banion's (1997) learning college principles on community college websites.

Kegan and Lahey: Languages for Learning

O'Banion's constructivist stance on learning theory is supported by Kegan's (1982) early work in adult development, which eventually became the construct of the Evolving Self and Orders of Consciousness, starting with two major ideas about the nature of adult human development. Kegan described developmentalism as systemic

evolution through periods of change and stasis, and constructivism as the idea that reality is constructed by people. His ingenuity was to create a unified idea of constructive-developmental adult human development.

To clarify the theory of the evolving self and orders of consciousness, Kegan (1982) described the subject-object relationship, the ways humans situate themselves in reality in comparison with others throughout life. As humans develop, their situation as subject or object changes depending upon where they are in the orders of consciousness: incorporative balance, impulsive balance, imperial balance, interpersonal balance, institutional balance, or interindividual balance. Each of these relationships is part of a continuum of stages through the lifespan.

In continuing to develop a theory of constructivism and developmentalism, Kegan (1994) added new insight to the continuum of life stages with three principles that humans use to organize experience as they move through life, and a focus on four orders of consciousness needed to overcome challenges in their psychological development. First, the three mental organizing principles Kegan called the principle of independent elements, the principle of the durable category, and the principle of cross-categorical knowing, seen in young children, those between ages 7 and 10, and teens, respectively. These mental organizing principles helped to explain the changing subject-object relationship through various developmental stages. Here, object is defined as elements of knowing that a person can "…reflect on, handle, look at, be responsible for, relate to each other, take control of, internalize, assimilate, or otherwise operate upon"; subject is

defined as elements of knowing that a person is "…identified with, tied to, fused with, or embedded in" (p. 32). The three principles are closely interconnected, yet the subject-object distinction may change over time as an individual moves toward a higher level ordering of consciousness. Children who begin with self-interested experience of the world move to a concept of durable experiential categories, and eventually to cross-categorical knowledge.

As children and teens develop the organizational principles just discussed, they are also moving through Kegan's (1994) orders of consciousness. The first order, social perception, includes early sensations and attempts to comprehend cause-effect relationships among the independent elements of the first organizing principle. The second order, point of view, employs the durable categories of the second organizing principle to provide the capability of personal role creation and relationships with others. The third order, mutuality/interpersonalism, works with the cross-categorical knowledge of the third organizing principle to create the abstract thinking necessary for clearer understanding of mutual roles. The fourth order of consciousness, institution, creates awareness of multiple roles, leading to a clear personal ideology. Kegan has continued to add other orders of consciousness, such as a fifth order, interinstitutional, which is seen as essential for effective communication.

Based upon Kegan's foundations (1982;1994), Kegan and Lahey (2001) described a set of communication strategies which they called "languages" to assist people in overcoming their resistance to moving beyond the early stages to the institutional and

interinstitutional levels of development. The goal was to assist adult learners with better organizational knowledge and the ability to apply experience in work and educational settings. Kegan and Lahey (2009) further adapted these languages to make them more useful and applicable.

Some researchers have considered applications for Kegan and Lahey's (2001; 2009) work. Damewood (2011) made note of the merging of adult development and organizational change theory in Kegan and Lahey (2001; 2009) to be used in order to overcome personal or corporate resistance to change. Because their work included the areas of change theory, a new approach to change management, and methods to diagnose personal resistance to change, Damewood suggested that Kegan and Lahey made tremendous contributions to business and industry and to academia through their useful and applicable research. In fact, the learning college philosophy is all about changing traditional mindsets and creating a change movement.

Others have referred back to the earlier work of Kegan and its applicability to modern life situations. Demetrion (1997) agreed that Kegan's (1994) theory was particularly appropriate for understanding and coping with the complex interactive demands of modern society. Demetrion focused on Kegan's (1984) discussion of modern workplace demands, including the need to be self-inventive, not waiting for others always to set the pace, but working towards a personal vision and self-responsibility. In the modern world, we must be more than apprentices; we must become adept at what we do, and we must realize the interactivity involved in any complex activity. It is this language

of interactivity which closely aligns Kegan's theoretical stance with the philosophy of the learning college. The need for both autonomy and guidance illustrates precisely the place where many community college students find themselves in their learning process moving from the third to the fourth order of consciousness. The community college, especially the learning college, can provide students that place for both support and challenge when they need it in their adult development cycle.

Kegan's (1982) theory has often been used to describe and understand what takes place in the institutional learning setting. Kegan's Orders of Consciousness (Love & Guthrie, 1999) reviewed Kegan's development theory and its place in the curriculum of change. Kegan's subject-object distinction, the difference between what is integrally within us and what we have outside us available for reflection, is key to understanding Kegan's theory. The primary importance to undergraduate college students, such as those who attend community colleges, is in the transitions between the second and third orders of personal and mutual roles, and between the third and fourth orders of mutual and multiple roles.

Though understanding the orders of consciousness may seem challenging, several assumptions support and explain the working of the orders of consciousness. The focus is on constructing experience, organizing learning, changing subject-object relationships, and the idea that each subsequent order builds upon those preceding it. In the movement from second to third order, college students might need assistance in developing abstract thinking, while in moving from the third to the fourth order, students could additionally

require self-authorship. College professionals must provide bridge building for students to assist them in their ongoing knowledge transformation. In order to engage students, we must be able to understand them and their current adult developmental needs.

Kegan and Lahey's (2001) transformational language research moved the discussion from adult development to applied use of language in individuals and in institutional settings. In a cogent and coherent discussion of Kegan's (1982; 1994) early work and Kegan and Lahey's later work, Rosenberg (2006) sorted out the differences between informational learning, which occurs during Kegan's first three orders of consciousness, and transformational learning, which is found in the latter two orders. In the fourth order, individuals become increasingly autonomous and in the fifth, they are able to integrate the many value systems they have created in the fourth order, creating a synthesis of their own and others' ways of being in the world.

Many researchers have attempted to define and clarify Kegan and Lahey (2001). Rosenberg (2006) discussed Kegan and Lahey's languages for transformation, grouping them into two main types. The first four languages were primarily for sorting out mental understandings of the world and the last three for working through social arrangements. Using Kegan (1982) as one approach to transformative learning, Rosenberg discussed the important move from the third order to the fourth. In the fourth order, one finds self-authoring and independence based upon personal value systems of the kind expected in college students. Of special importance is the student's ability to move from subject to

object, holding up inner assumptions for veracity and challenging currently held assumptions to the evidence of one's own and others' value systems.

Kegan and Lahey's (2001) language and communication research applies easily to the world of work. Small (2010), in a study of workplace communication, agreed with Kegan and Lahey that leaders should model transformational language to support and encourage positive organizational change. Using Kegan and Lahey's model, leaders can provide an example and expectations when an organization is undergoing change, as in the adoption of the learning college philosophy at a community college. The better their communication skills, the more likely it is that leaders can encourage others in a productive, collaborative climate. Small pledged to apply transformational language in the workplace to support the organization's mission.

Though there are clear workplace applications of Kegan and Lahey's (2001) theory, there are also practical uses for educational institutions. Reams (2009) provided an application project with a class of students in order to use and test the efficacy of processes described by Kegan and Lahey. Because there tends to be anxiety toward and immunity against change in large systems, transformational language theory seeks to provide impetus towards teamwork and understanding of ultimate personal or institutional goals. These goals are especially important in education and academia, and could be supported through the use of applied transformational language theory. A different review (Immunity to change…, 2009) reminds readers of the three parts in Kegan and Lahey (2009), describing how to understand change, how to overcome

immunity to change by individuals or groups, and how to participate through application of Kegan and Lahey's methods to promote individual and collective change. In terms of practice, changing an educational entity from more traditional methods of education to a learning institution perspective requires agreement to overcome previous prejudices and systems in order to achieve growth and change.

How can Kegan and Lahey's (2001; 2009) research be linked in a practical way to the working and learning environment of education in general and the community college in particular? Grabinski (2005) considered the effectiveness of particular learning environments on adult development, citing Kegan (1982) and others as background. Adults continue to learn, grow, and develop over their lifetime, and this learning can be fostered beginning early in childhood development and throughout the adult years. Mirroring O'Banion's (1997) call for education that is less space-and-time-bound, Grabinski suggested that the psycho-social context for learning is an important part of learning and should not be restricted in terms of the possibilities of space and time. Teachers and school administrators need to be aware of how adults learn, including awareness of the whole person, not just as a student learner. In addition, the physical learning environment is important to the adult learner. This could have implications for online learning or even for learning about a prospective institution through the web.

In a study of universities in the midst of change, Frost (1998) examined the work of theorists, including Kegan (1982; 1994), whose writing presumed that conflict and transformation go hand in hand. As a discourse community, the work setting provides an

opportunity to understand why we do not always proceed with change as planned. There may be a fundamental assumption standing in the way of proposed or vocalized change, as in a move to the learning college. College leaders might proclaim their institution to be a learning college and perhaps even self-validate this on the website, yet not fully embrace or practice learning college philosophy and standards. Frost advocated that educational institutions work to understand why proposed change does not always occur, using language as a means to resolve differences and move forward.

Transformational language has multiple uses, in the workforce, in education, in psychology, and elsewhere. While Kegan and Lahey's (2001) language research has been applied to many disciplines, such as counseling, workforce development, or social work, it has been especially useful in educational research. Erickson (2007) studied instructors in Learning in Retirement (LRP) programs. The focus was on the intersection of constructive-developmental and transformative learning. In the LRPs, peer instruction and peer learning were emphasized, and thus the role of teacher and student were easily conflated. Students who graduate up to peer instructors must exhibit some of Kegan's (1982; 1994) developmental levels in order to perform the tasks of an instructor to the satisfaction of their former peers. The study used interviews and a Kegan-constructed instrument to determine evidence of transformational learning in the move from student to peer instructor. Discourse analysis was applied to determine where the participants were in the template. The student begins as a socialized self who depends upon the values of others, moves through becoming a self-authorized self, with more confidence

and self-authority, and ultimately becomes a self-transformed person, who recognizes connections with others.

After conducting the interviews for the study, Erickson (2007) used coding to do content analysis. The findings indicated that where the interviewees were in the system (socialized self, self-authorized self, or self-transformed self) depended in part upon their meaning-making sophistication, abilities and potential. Erickson (2007) stated, "Overall, the study findings suggest that the *how* of meaning making, constructed within developmental limits and potentials, must be more fully examined as part of understanding the relationship of transformational learning and development (p. 76)." In the meantime, an understanding of the values inherent in different developmental stages could guide community college professionals in creating websites that embrace learning college principles and invite potential learners.

Self-reflection is an integral part of Kegan's (1982; 1994) theory. Grossman (2009) reiterated Kegan's view that self-reflection is difficult, requiring transformational thinking in order to learn and reflect for oneself, rather than just learning what we perceive others wish us to learn and think. This kind of mentoring towards self-reflection and transformation requires patience on the part of the educator. Students must be able to express their own ideas, which may differ from those of others, but are clear evidence of growth and learning.

Language studies have broadened to incorporate digital communication. Domingo (2014) investigated the social context of language in digital space and the

various discourse groups to which students belong. Because of the likelihood that students identify with a number of discourse communities, coupled with the ubiquity of digital communication, technology plays an expanding role in making meaning for students in online environments. Paying attention to online texts and the multiple literacies of youth involves creating a sense of community and being in the right place in online communities of discourse.

High school students use varied input to consider whether and where to attend college. Lang (2009) studied the choices of high school students in college application to either community college or university. Students did not tend to consider eventual transfer as a decision maker in their first choice of college, but instead chose colleges primarily on the basis of high quality programs that were offered and the students' own career plans. Students' choice to attend community college was partially dependent on the education level of parents and on factors such as socioeconomic status. Those who might later transfer to another college or university were less concerned with the specific community college and more interested in the choice of programs at that institution. If, as Lang suggested, community college students often do not see themselves as eligible to attend a university, the impetus is on community colleges to recruit students in terms of programs or other options available at a particular college.

For the purposes of the current project, Kegan and Lahey's (2001; 2009) transformational language theory was used as a lens to interpret evidence, if present, of learning college language on community college websites. The constructivist stance

linked Kegan and Lahey's theory to O'Banion's (1997) learning college principles. No previously accessible research has yet attempted this search.

Gee: Discourse Analysis for College Websites

Self-reflection is an important part of the learning process in the learning college. Ayers (2009) asked community college administrators to supply narratives with their own interpretations of situations that challenged their personal values. Discourse analysis was employed to evaluate the narratives and determine findings, and several findings were discovered. First, there were contradictions between personal values and those of supervisors. Second, administrators either agreed with or resisted the situation. Third, several styles of working through the situation were evidenced by the administrators. The data collected through questionnaires were coded according to discourses, or meaning-making in the experience; genres, or methods used to navigate the experience; and styles, or three main ways the administrators were categorized according to their behavior in the situation.

Discourse analysis methodology provides a vehicle to understand data, and discourse analysis studies appear in many varieties. Meltzer (2000) used discourse analysis to evaluate interviews with school principals who worked during the 1900s. In this study, Meltzer investigated the self-identity of the principals as evidenced by their use of metaphors, stories, and descriptions. Through study of these interviews using discourse analysis, Meltzer gained insight into the context in which language helps to construct personal identity.

Meltzer's (2000) article is an example of the use of discourse analysis as a

recognized tool for analyzing and understanding cultural phenomena. Its use in

dissertation writing emphasizes the effectiveness of linguistic analysis in categorizing and

organizing factors represented by language. In this paper, Meltzer (2000) found that

using discourse analysis as methodology provided evidence for the construction of self-

identity and its interaction with factors in the culture. This is not unlike using discourse

analysis to explain identity of colleges through their websites and the relationship of

potential students to the individual colleges, based upon college website documents.

Meltzer's (2000) work sought to define concepts across multiple sites where the

concepts might mistakenly be assumed to be the same but might have different

interpretations across various sites. The primary goal was to work with self-identity

around concepts and roles within educational institutions. Discourse analysis allowed for

investigation into a number of factors leading to role identity. Meltzer referenced other

studies specifically using discourse analysis for self-identity of educational

administrators.   One important aspect of Meltzer's work was self-focus on the

researcher, exerting a conscious effort to remember the researcher's role as the process

and product melded into a whole. Meltzer looked for common and contrastive features in

the discourse analysis, a consideration that can also be applied to similarities and

differences among community colleges that are all, purportedly, learning colleges.

Meltzer also insisted on calling the research a descriptive study using discourse analysis,

not an attempt to explain all of the findings or to create value judgments based upon the

analysis. Meltzer found that discourse analysis could provide evidence of sociocultural construction of concepts.

The question of how discourse analysis provides valid semantic information sometimes emerges. Semantics plays a serious role in education, including the use of terms to create meaningful searches in digital libraries. Gahegan et al. (2007) sought to use formal description or ontology to define terms for library searches. They found that creating learning objects through semantic description allowed for better information for the consumer. Even though concepts had similar names, there were also understood roles attached to concepts, so that word or phrase meanings could lead to concept maps to link similar meanings or ideas and to provide a means to attain personal goals.

In addition to marketing for recruitment of new students, research shows that ongoing learning can be enhanced by elements of discourse in an online setting. Han and Hill (2006) applied discourse analysis to different discourse types, including "goal setting, reflection, connection, original reformulation, and redirection (p. 29)." The influence of Internet and online interaction on culture has implications for interaction and for knowledge-building as described by constructivists.

While learner-centered pedagogy has been a recently acknowledged factor in education, e-learning especially promises some autonomy for individual learners and should be considered in designing learning. Different learning styles should be recognized in online environments (Yalcinalp & Gulbahar, 2010). Institutions would do well to avoid a strict one-way pattern of learning opportunities and should encourage

students with personalized learning. In revising online language, semantics becomes an important focus.

One area of student interaction is in online discussion forums, where they exchange ideas and enter into discussions. Web designers have recognized the need to focus on semantic association of terms with meanings (Yanyan, Mingkai, & Ronghuai, 2009), creating coherence, relations between ideas, and socially-based information. Information must be provided clearly and coherently for ease of discovery by students. Semantic search capabilities on a website could help students understand the meaning of terms used by the college.

Colleges and universities create a persona, brand, or recognizable public image of their institution. Stier & Börjesson (2010) applied discourse analysis to self-presentations of international universities within their public documents, such as mission statements, and found five commonalities among the university statements. While their primary focus was on discourse strategies used in university documents on their internationalization efforts, and the political effects of these self-descriptions, the five common threads showed some common ground among the universities in the study. The universities all projected themselves as catalysts, as magnets, as success stories, as moral strongholds, and as melting pots.

The factors that separate and elevate individual colleges are often found in their foundational documents. Abelman and Dalessandro (2008) reviewed institutional mission and vision statements of a national sample of colleges, applying content analysis to the

data to get a sense of institutional vision at community colleges. Results were compared across community colleges and other public and private colleges and universities. Community colleges in the study were all found to have posted mission statements, and two thirds of them also included vision statements. Results for mission and vision statements were lower for the other colleges investigated. While software was used to perform the analysis, limitations included a lack of natural language processing for overall comprehension and interpretation of the data. Use of discourse analysis would have helped to avoid this limitation.

One study in particular provided a template for the current research study, the National Institute for Learning Outcomes Assessment (NILOA) study (Jankowski & Makela, 2010) on student learning outcomes assessment. The NILOA study applied discourse analysis to online websites to discover student activities specifically targeted to assess outcomes. "Examining institution websites *shows* us what colleges and universities are communicating about those activities via their websites, thus providing an estimate of institutional transparency (Jankowski & Makela, 2010, p. 3)." This report from a respected educational agency indicated that institutional websites were good sources for research demonstrating the activities of colleges. Study results indicated that informational transparency, online communication, and typical audience could be revealed through the study of websites. The NILOA study questions regarding what colleges were sharing via their institutional websites were quite similar to those employed for the current study.

The NILOA study (Jankowski & Makela, 2010) findings included discrepancies between chief academic officers' accounts of student learning assessment versus what could actually be located on college websites in departments or other subareas. Another important finding was that websites tended to post similar information on several sites on the webpage, possibly indicating an institutional decision to choose these examples to use them as evidence throughout the website, with similar language. Institutions tended to use similar types of evidence on their web pages. There was some difference between the information posted on externally-accessed web pages, such as those for prospective students, and the more detailed information on internally-accessed web pages, such as those used by staff, faculty, and current students. This might indicate that care could be taken to include information for prospective students to encourage them to attend the institution. Information tended to be found on prototypical portions of the website and included specific types of information.

The NILOA (Jankowski & Makela, 2010) study conclusions indicated that, though including student learning outcomes assessment information on websites could be challenging, the website should be used as a place to highlight and celebrate such activities. The current study used similar questions and sought data on similar pages of college websites, such as mission, vision, and other documents, with a focus on the use of particular language.

Discourse analysis (Barton, 2002) is applicable to many fields, including the use of language in institutional settings. Discourse analysis shows links between texts and

the contexts in which they exist. At the heart of discourse analysis is the consideration of linguistic elements, such as phonology, syntax, semantics, and the context of the language act. In the current study, semantics and context are the primary focus, and Gee (2011b) provided perhaps the best description of meaning in discourse analysis:

> Meaning arises when any symbol (which can be a word, image, or thing) 'stands for' (is associated with) something other than itself… People use certain information or conventions to identify what a symbol stands for. People can treat an object [sic]…as symbols so long as they agree on the concept (idea, interpretation, conventions) that ties them to what they stand for… (p. 209)

Discourse analysis, as seen through the studies cited above, is a useful methodology to pull together the strands of transformational language and the learning college through close evaluation of language. As a doctoral student, I have been reading Kegan (1982; 1994) for some time and found Kegan's earlier work and later collaboration with Lahey (2001; 2009) to be compelling and useful in the search for meaningful interaction in higher education and adult learning. At the same time, as a community college practitioner, I was aware of the implications of the learning college and of the manner in which colleges present themselves as adherents of learning college principles to prospective students. Gee's (2011a) discourse analysis toolkit provided a methodology to seek O'Banion's (1997) learning college philosophy in a study unlike any that have been located in the literature.

Summary and Conclusions

The conceptual foundation consistent throughout the research is the constructivist-developmental theory of Kegan (1982; 1994) and its extension of learning to the adult learner. From this background in adult development, Kegan and Lahey (2001; 2009) proposed transformational language theory that evolved from Kegan's early work and suggested the presence of particular kinds of language application in progressively higher stages of adult learning. A number of studies have added to the body of knowledge from Kegan and Lahey, and there are numerous reports of the practical applications of their work.

Some studies have focused particularly on the convergence of transformational learning and the workplace. Damewood (2011) and Demetrion (1997) supported Kegan's (1982; 1994) influence in joining adult development to organizational learning and the challenges of the modern world. Rosenberg (2006) also noted the differences between traditional informational versus transformational learning, while Small (2010) studied the importance of applying transformational language to the workplace.

Others have found practical applications of Kegan's (1982; 1994) theory to educational settings. Reams (2009) and Grabinski (2005) considered goal setting and learning environments, while Frost (1998) noted the presence of conflict in the growth and change associated with true transformation, and Grossman (2009) reiterated the importance of self-reflection in the process of transformation. Erickson's (2007) study

focused on developmental learning stages in adult instructors in a retiree training program.

O'Banion (1997; 2007) introduced and expanded upon the learning college philosophy and its presence in community colleges. This new approach to adult learning has created opportunities for colleges to improve individual learning, and many colleges have adopted learning college standards to extend individual learning to organizational change. Barr and Tagg (1995) introduced proto-learning college concepts, differentiating between instructional and learning paradigms. Morrone and Tarr (2005) illustrated an application of the learning paradigm to a classroom, while Tagg (2010) found that an assumption of the presence of the learning college did not necessarily indicate its adoption. Webber (2012) supported learning centered institutions, especially on the importance of effective assessment of student learning.

Various studies focused on learning college language. Hanson (2007) suggested rhetorical devices to promote the learning college, while other studies reviewed learning college adoption in institutions from different perspectives. Weidner (2008) considered support staff employees' response to the learning college, while Mohni (2008) and Ray (2008) tested faculty and administrators' attitudes toward the adoption of learning college principles.

In order to tie a theoretical perspective to the learning college philosophy, discourse analysis provides an effective data collection and evaluation methodology. There are many applications of discourse analysis, such as Ayers's (2009) study of

college administrators' narrative responses to challenging situations, Meltzer's (2000) research on school principals' self-identity, and Stier and Börjesson's (2010) review of universities' self-presentation on their websites. Abelman and Dalessandro's (2008) analysis of college mission statements is listed as an example of the ways in which discourse analysis would have improved the data conclusions of their study. The NILOA study (Jankowski & Makela, 2010) provided perhaps the best example of discourse analysis applied to a study of community college websites.

In an effort to determine whether there is evidence of the language of the learning college on community college websites, it was necessary to formulate a plan for capturing and evaluating the data. Because of my own background in language and linguistics, I chose discourse analysis as a means of analyzing the data. It was important to select from various forms of analysis and to use tools that would provide a fair assessment of language contained in community college documents.

In Chapter 3, I share details about plans for data collection and analysis. Based upon constructivist theory and learning college principles, the data provided meaningful information for community college practitioners as they review their web documents to provide a clearer representation of their institutions as learning colleges. Gee's (2011a; 2011b) discourse analysis process and methodology gave structure to the study.

Chapter 3: Research Method

The purpose of this study was to discover the extent to which the language of the learning college (O'Banion, 1997) is present on publicly available community college website pages. Discourse analysis is a method for seeking meaning in written or spoken language. It provided an opportunity to analyze written website texts for the purpose of discovering information at word, sentence, and context level.

Using discourse analysis as methodology, I attempted to determine whether evidence of learning college language and principles, as seen through the lens of transformational language theory, exists in published websites of successful community colleges. The presence of learning college language (O'Banion, 1997) indicated continuing adherence to learning college principles at the community college. The data collection methods of extracting words and phrases from written text and analyzing them with discourse analysis provided evidence of the learning college philosophy and principles in college identity.

This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by presenting evidence of learning college principles in published documents from elite community colleges. This documents the ongoing use of learning college principles at community colleges and the perseverance of the learning college philosophy nearly 2 decades after the publication of O'Banion's (1997) philosophy.

Research Design and Rationale

Through this study, I sought evidence of the presence of the learning college principles through the analysis of language on community college websites. I asked the major question: To what extent does the discourse found on public community college websites provide evidence of the learning college philosophy? In addition, three subquestions provided detailed evidence to support the main question:

1. What kinds of examples of O'Banion's (1997) learning college discourse can be found on public community college websites?

2. How do identified discourse elements align with the student-centered learning college philosophy's six principles?

3. In what ways do college websites show a student-centered learning perspective?

Kegan and Lahey (2001; 2009) proposed that language can be transformational, creating opportunities for enhanced communication and agreement among individuals or groups. Transformational language theory can apply to a group of elite community colleges to determine whether their public websites include the language of the learning college, embodying some or all of O'Banion's (1997) six learning college principles. In order to determine the extent of learning college language on community college websites, discourse analysis, defined as situated language use, either written or spoken (Burr, 2003), was applied to college website documents. In this study, discourse analysis (Gee, 2011a; 2011b) was used to analyze specific texts from the college websites to

determine the presence or absence of learning college language indicative of O'Banion's learning college principles.

Role of the Researcher

As a student at a Midwestern community college in the 1970s and an employee at community colleges in California and Arizona since 1985, I support the community college system and can see its benefits to students. Having attended several universities, I am able to compare the quality of education at community colleges and universities, with community colleges faring well in the comparison. The advent of the learning college has strengthened my support for community colleges.

In addition to a vested interest in community colleges and their vital contributions to education in the United States, I have a lifelong fascination with languages and linguistics. This began at an early age when I was encouraged, on the basis of English and writing grades, to study Latin, which I did throughout junior high and high school, with my father as tutor, learning Latin along with me. In college, I studied French, Italian, Mandarin, and Spanish and have a minor in Spanish. Later, I had the opportunity to study Native American languages, both Natchez, a part of my family heritage, and Tohono O'Odham, a language of Arizona and the subject of my master's thesis.

Through encouragement from professors at Walden University, I was able to create a dissertation project combining my interest in community colleges and linguistics. To that end, I began thinking about the project and perused websites to see if I might create a paper linking both subjects. I was careful to consider how I might approach such

a study, including paying attention to my own personal knowledge of the subject, an assumed audience for the study, my own visceral response to reading the websites, the assumed goal of the website authors, the use of persuasion and the language of power, and even vestiges of learning college or transformational language. This browsing of websites and discussions with mentors aided me in crafting a project that would satisfy two areas of importance in my student and career lives, while fulfilling the social change focus of Walden University.

I used comparative charts to track similarities and differences among 17 community colleges considered elite Board Colleges by a community college consortium, The League for Innovation in the Community College. Efforts were made to avoid personal bias by including self-reflection in the raw data charts. Two degrees in linguistics add credence to the analysis, and a career of nearly 3 decades in community colleges provided a background into the mission and unique challenges of community college learning.

Methodology

The research method for this study was discourse analysis, applying several types of textual analysis to written texts (Gee, 2011a; 2011b). Burr (2003) cited several types of discourse analysis traditionally used in research. Conversation analysis is used primarily for spoken conversation, so it was not suited to the current project, in which I analyzed written texts. Foucauldian discourse analysis (Burr, 2003) is used to look at discourses, subjectivity, and power relations, so it is partially applicable, though this study's focus

was not primarily on unequal power relationships. Discourse analysis in discursive psychology, which is used for questions related to identity and subjectivity, was applicable to the current study. Interpretive repertoires, emerging from discursive psychology, are often used as toolkits to construct individual accounts, especially in analyzing institutional language templates found in public documents, though this study's focus was on the analysis of groups rather than individuals.

I looked for connections to constructivist-developmental adult learning theory (Kegan, 1982, 1994; Kegan & Lahey, 2001, 2009) in the language used in specific community college website documents for a subset of community colleges, the elite Board Colleges in the League for Innovation in the Community College. For example, though various kinds of language might be found in the college documents, analysis in this study focused on learning college terminology (O'Banion, 1997).

Table 1

Examples of Learning College Terminology and Deconstructive Language

Learning College Terminology (O'Banion, 1997)	Deconstructive Language (Kegan & Lahey, 2001)
Critical thinking	Consider various perspectives
Student-focused teaching and learning	Put learning in context
Faculty as facilitators	The person in charge does not always have the right answers.
Substantive change	Expect transformation

(Table Continues)

Learners as partners in learning process	Shared learning experience
Learners have responsibility for learning choices	Many perspectives
Many options for learning/ Collaborative learning opportunities	Opportunities for group and individual learning

Gee's (2011a; 2011b) discourse analysis methods were applied to college documents to analyze them for various discourse practices. For example, different grammar tools tend to highlight some topics in a discourse over others, to treat individuals' identities differently, to change social group relationships, and to seek typical narratives for the specific environment of the higher education institution. Each of these may indicate the presence of transformational language and the learning college philosophy.

I used discourse analysis to focus on the subtle nuances of language in a way that numbers and statistics in either a traditional qualitative or a quantitative study could miss. Discourse analysis, with roots in linguistics, was best suited the purpose of the study, which was to determine evidence of particular language on college websites to seek evidence of transformational language and learning college discourse. A case study of college students' experiences with the websites could have provided an interesting, albeit different, study, but the purpose of this study was to seek written evidence of particular language.

Participant and Document Selection

I served as the primary researcher in examining the website data. Documents to be analyzed were identified from 17 community colleges that are Board College members of the League for Innovation in the Community College, a community college research and advocacy group. This elite group of community colleges is held up as exemplars of excellence for other community colleges and might be expected to show evidence of learning college principles on their websites.

The primary documents that I examined included each college's mission and vision statement, its student welcome or about page, its college history page, its president or chancellor's welcome page, and its home page. These are typical pages on community college websites and tend to hold information about the college's principles of education and its outreach to and opportunities for prospective students. I analyzed each college data set using 27 questions, which provided a robust set of data. While college websites and their guiding documents often constitute a tool for marketing the college and its services, mission and vision statements contain primary goals for the institution.

<div align="center">

Instrumentation

</div>

For each of the documents analyzed, various factors were considered as language data were subjected to discourse analysis tools from Gee's (2011a; 2011b) toolkit. I reviewed the texts for language representative of the learning college and possible evidence of deconstructive transformational language. Each sample was submitted to Gee's tools (2011a, p. 195-01) and compared with learning college terminology. I

completed additional analysis to provide results from each college and a synthesis of results from all colleges.

Data Collection

The sample included the 17 Board Colleges within the League for Innovation in the Community College, considered the most prestigious community colleges in the United States, and most claiming to be learning colleges. The League is a consortium of education professionals concerned with quality in community college teaching and learning. Published documents on the websites of each college, including mission and vision statements and student welcome pages, were collected and read to glean language related to O'Banion's (1989; 1997; 2007) learning college philosophy. In general, each college tends to publish at least a mission/vision/values document and an about us or history page on their college's website. It is sometimes the case that particular kinds of information is included on other pages on a community college website. Data that appeared as an indication of possible outliers were considered for possible inclusion within the frame of the study.

Documents used for analysis were taken directly from the colleges' public websites and included president or chancellor's welcome statements, mission and vision statements, home pages, about pages, and college history pages. These are common web pages on college sites and can provide information about the colleges' guiding principles. Because the colleges in the study may each offer multiple pages for analysis, this entailed collection and analysis of at least five pages of text for each institution. The nature of

Gee's (2011a) toolkit moves from the level of individual words to larger data chunks and with all 27 toolkit questions applicable to each document, this comprised a large data set for analysis.

Matching sample size to expected outcomes of the data provided multiple choices, but relying upon the conceptual framework and my personal strengths it was possible to balance expectations of depth with the number of colleges selected for the sample. Beginning with the entire set of 17 colleges provided both a possibility for generalizing outside of the study and an in-depth focus on the data. In order to learn more about the presence of O'Banion's (1997) learning college philosophy in community college websites and public documents, and working within Kegan and Lahey's (2001; 2009) constructivist-developmental theory, I decided to use a reasonable sample of 17 Board Colleges for the study. All 17 community colleges included the expected documents on their public websites, but had documents been missing from any of the websites, I was prepared to include the omissions in the discussion, since missing data or informational gaps would have been considered as relevant in discourse analysis.

Data were collected online directly from the websites of the Board Member community colleges. The documents, including home page, about page, mission and vision page, college history page, and President's or Chancellor's welcome page, were collected from each of the 17websites. I used tables to compile the collected data for each college and compiled summary tables.

Data Analysis Plan

There were two objectives for the data analysis. The first was a search for language representative of the learning college philosophy, which includes language such as learner-centered instruction, student learning outcomes, and nontraditional learning environments. Second, I examined the documents for higher levels of transformational language. Comparative charts allowed me to locate patterns across all college documents reflective of the learning college philosophy. In addition, the study looked for transformational language consistent with constructivist-developmental theory (Kegan, 1982; 1984; Kegan & Lahey, 2001; 2009) within examples of learning college language. Gee's (2011a; 2011b) toolbox of discourse analysis methods was applied to collected data.

Gee (2011b) described discourse analysis as a way to collect and analyze language-related data using a toolbox (2011a) of questions for textual analysis. The 27 questions of the toolbox are broken down into four categories. The first group, Language and Context, employs a microlevel view of linguistic data situated within culture, while the second group, Saying, Doing, and Designing invokes the performative nature of language through grammatical structures of meaning. The third group of questions, Building Things in the World, refers to the constructive or destructive nature of language in particular settings, such as institutions. The fourth group of questions is a macroview of language, using five questions from different social behavioral theoretical perspectives to create a bird's eye view of the data. These five questions, Five Theoretical Tools, are

the most important of the 27 for this particular data set, pulling together a number of

approaches for a unified view of the data.

Table 2

Alignment of Gee's Discourse Analysis Tool Kit with O'Banion's Learning College
Principles

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions For any communication….:
1) Creates substantive change in the individual learner.	23) The Situated Meaning Tool	Ask of words and phrases what situated meanings they have…What specific meanings do listeners have to attribute to these words and phrases given the context and how the context is construed?
	24) The Social Languages Tool	Ask how it uses words and grammatical structures (types of phrases, clauses, and sentences) to signal and enact a given social language. The

(Table Continues)

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions
		For any communication….:
		communication may mix two or more social languages or switch between two or more.
2) Engages learners as full partners in the learning process, with learners assuming primary responsibility for their choices.	1) The Deixis Tool	Ask how deictics [referring language] are being used to tie what is said to context and to make assumptions about what listeners already know or can figure out.
	2) The Fill In Tool	Ask: Based on what was said and the context in which it was said, what needs to be

(Table Continues)

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions
		For any communication….:
		filled in here to achieve clarity?
	3) The Making Strange Tool	Try to act as if you are an "outsider." What would someone…find strange here…if that person did not share the knowledge and assumptions, and make the inferences, that render the communication so natural and taken-for-granted by insiders?
	4) The Subject Tool	Ask why speakers have chosen the subject/topics they have and what they are saying about the subject.
	5) The Intonation Tool	Ask how a speaker's intonation contour contributes

(Table Continues)

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions
		For any communication….:
		to the meaning of an utterance. In dealing with written texts, always read them out loud and ask what sort of intonation contour readers must add to the sentences to make them make full sense.
	13) The Context is Reflexive Tool	When you use the Fill in Tool, the Doing and Not Just Saying Tool, the Frame Problem Tool, and the Why This Way and Not That Way Tool, and all the other tools that require that you think about context…always ask yourself:

(Table Continues)

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions
		For any communication….:
		a) How is what the speaker is saying and how he or she is saying it helping to create or shape…what listeners will take as the relevant context?
		b) How is what the speaker is saying and how he or she is saying it helping to reproduce contexts like this one…helping them to exist through time and space?
		c) Is the speaker reproducing contexts like this one unaware of aspects of the context that if he or she thought about the matter consciously, he or she would

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions
		For any communication….:
		not want to reproduce?
		d) Is what the speaker is saying and how he or she is saying it just, more or less, replicating…contexts like this one, or, in any respect, transforming or changing them?
	22) The Topic Flow or Chaining Tool	Ask what the topics are of all main clauses and how these topics are linked to each other to create (or not) a chain that creates an overall topic or coherent sense of being about something for a stretch of speech or writing. Ask…how people have signaled that

(Table Continues)

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions For any communication….:
		they are switching topics and whether they have "spoken topically" by linking back to the old topic.
3) Creates and offers as many options for learning as possible.	7) The Doing and Not Just Saying Tool	Ask not just what the speaker is saying, but what he or she is trying to do, keeping in mind that he or she may be trying to do more than one thing.
	16) The Identities Building Tool	Ask what socially recognizable identity or identities the speaker is trying to enact or to get others to recognize…Ask, too, how the speaker is positioning others, what identities the speaker is

<div align="right">(Table Continues)</div>

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions For any communication….:
		"inviting" them to take up.
	17) The Relationships Building Tool	Ask how words and various grammatical devices are being used to build and sustain or change relationships of various sorts among the speaker, other people, social groups, cultures, and/or institutions.
	21) The Sign Systems/Knowledge Building Tool	Ask how the words and grammar being used privilege or de-privilege specific sign systems (…e.g., technical language vs. everyday language, etc.) or different ways of knowing and believing, or claims to

(Table Continues)

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions For any communication….:
		knowledge and belief.
	25) The Intertextuality Tool	Ask how words and grammatical structures (e.g., direct or indirect quotation) are used to quote, refer to, or allude to other "texts" (that is, what others have said or written) or other styles of language (social languages). Does intertextuality go so far as to be an example of missing or switching between voices or styles of language (social languages)?
4) Assists learners to form and participate in collaborative	15) The Activities Building Tool	Ask what activity (practice) or activities (practices) this communication is building or

<div align="right">(Table Continues)</div>

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions
		For any communication….:
learning activities.		enacting…what social groups, institutions, or cultures support and set norms for whatever activities are being built or enacted.
	19) The Connections Building Tool	Ask how the words and grammar being used in the communication connect or disconnect things or ignore connections between things…Ask…how the words and grammar being used in a communication make things relevant or irrelevant to other things, or ignores their relevance to each other.
	20) The Cohesion Tool	Ask questions like: How does

(Table Continues)

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions
		For any communication….:
		cohesion work in this text to connect pieces of information, and in what ways? How does the text fail to connect other pieces of information? What is the speaker trying to communicate or achieve by using cohesive devices in the way he or she does?
5) Defines the roles of learning facilitators by the needs of the learners.	6) The Frame Problem Tool	After you have completed your discourse analysis…see if you can find out anything additional about the context in which the data occurred and see if this changes your analysis.

(Table Continues)

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions For any communication….:
	8) The Vocabulary Tool	Ask what sorts of words are being used in terms of whether the communication uses a preponderance of Germanic words or of Latinate words. How is this distribution of word types functioning to mark this communication in terms of style (register, social language)?
	9) The Why this Way/Not That Way Tool	Ask why the speaker built and designed with grammar in the way in which he or she did and not in some other way…How else could this have been said?

<div align="right">(Table Continues)</div>

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions For any communication….:
	10) The Integration Tool	Ask how clauses were integrated or packaged into utterances or sentences. What was left out and what was included…? What perspectives are being communicated by the way in which information is packaged…?
	11) The Topics and Themes Tool	Ask what the topic and theme is for each clause and what the theme is of a set of clauses in sentences with more than one clause.
	12) The Stanza Tool	Look for stanzas and how stanzas cluster into larger blocks of information.

(Table Continues)

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions For any communication….:
	14) The Significance Building Tool	Ask how words and grammatical devices are being used to build up or lessen significance (importance, relevance) for certain things and not others.
6) Measures success by documented improved and expanded learning for its learners.	18) The Politics Building Tool	Ask how words and grammatical devices are being used to build (construct, assume) what count as social goods and to distribute these to or withhold them from listeners or others.
	26) The Figured Worlds Tool	Ask what typical stories or figured worlds the words and phrases of the communication are assuming and inviting

(Table Continues)

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions
		For any communication….:
		listeners to assume. What participants, activities, ways of interacting, forms of language, people, objects, environments, and institutions, as well as values are in these figured worlds?
	27) The Big "D" Discourse Tool	Ask how the person is using language, as well as ways of acting, interacting, believing, valuing, dressing, and using various objects, tools, and technologies in certain sorts of environments to enact a specific socially recognizable identity and engage in one or more socially recognizable

(Table Continues)

O'Banion's Learning College Principles	Gee's Tool Kit Questions:	Descriptions of Gee's Tool Kit Questions
		For any communication….:
		activities. Ask…what kind of person (what identity) is this speaker or writer seeking to enact or be recognized as. What sorts of actions, interactions, values, beliefs, and objects, tools, technologies, and environments are associated with this sort of language within a particular Discourse?

These questions (Gee, 2011a) are at the heart of my research and reveal the interdisciplinary nature of discourse analysis. For example, a question about situated meaning, that is specific meanings in context, comes from cognitive psychology. A question about social languages, that is, how personal identity, social register, or other factors contribute to humans' carrying out of specific behaviors, draws from the field of sociolinguistics. A question about intertextuality, that is, overt references to other texts or a mixing of languages or voices, comes from the study of literary criticism. A question about figured worlds, that is, theories or models of what might be considered

"typical" or "normal," comes out of psychological anthropology and focuses on cultural interpretations of language.

The most important of the macrolevel theoretical tools is Big D Discourse, that is, a focus on primary and secondary discourses, acquired particularly in institutions, such as community colleges. Gee (2011b) described Big D Discourse as follows:

I use the term "Discourse," with a capital "D," for ways of combining and integrating language, actions, interactions, ways of thinking, believing, valuing, and using various symbols, tools, and objects to enact a particular sort of socially recognizable identity. (p. 29)

The Big D Discourse tool combines the above theoretical approaches with philosophy for a view of socially enacted and situated language.

Issues of Trustworthiness

The expectation that colleges in the study would present evidence of learning college language was met. Colleges did show a clear learning college philosophy on their websites. Preconceptions of categories that might appear in the data did not need to be expanded because there were no unanticipated results. There were enough colleges in the sample to provide a rich data set, and the colleges all had the necessary website documents for the study. My own background in community colleges caused me to take care to avoid undue bias.

I applied a tool constructed to share criteria for data collection and analysis equally to all colleges. Maxwell's (2005) validity tests, especially clear comparisons of

data sets, were used. Creswell's (2007) negative case analysis helped to explain possible outliers in the data. In addition, a clear statement of researcher background prevented bias through a demonstration of quality through previous experience. Gee's (2011a) 27 discourse analysis questions provided a toolkit of multiple data factors to act as an additional validity test.

In traditional research studies, a number of factors provide the best possible test of validity and reliability of the data and research findings. It is essential that the analysis be credible, dependable, confirmable, and transferable. In the case of discourse analysis, the methodology may be primarily qualitative or quantitative in nature, and thus, may apply standard tests to the analysis. However, discourse analysis differs in moving away from positivism to social constructivism, in which there is no final empirical answer, but multiple possibilities that may change with social influences and interactions (Burr, 2003). A number of factors contribute to the trustworthiness of research, including the truth in the data, the truthfulness of the people involved in the data, and the appropriateness or social context in which the text is situated (Fairclough, Jessop, & Sayer, 2010). In addition, the typical qualifiers of validity and reliability must be viewed through the scope of current completeness of the data, with an understanding that in a social context, no data set can ever be completely objective (Wodak & Meyer, 2012).

Wodak and Meyer (2012) reviewed various methods to establish reliability, validity, and other characteristics of discourse research. Conscious attention and checking for personal bias is essential, and triangulation of sources across methods,

theories, and other factors can also be valuable. They suggested applying triangulation to context:

- The immediate, language or text-internal cotext and codiscourse

- The intertextual and interdiscursive relationship between utterances, texts, genres, and discourses

- The extralinguistic social variables and institutional frames of a specific "context of situation"

- The broader sociopolitical and historical context, which discursive practices are embedded in and related to (p. 31)

My study looked at language in context, considered various documents across institutions, and paid attention to social contexts, including my interaction in the study.

A qualitative study must provide evidence of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Each proof mirrors to some degree quantitative standards but is appropriate for qualitative research. For example, credibility is similar to a description of internal validity and must provide evidence that the study is believable. The current study used Gee's (2011a) discourse analysis toolkit, which provided questions ranging from word level to context level linguistics. The large number of questions over many levels provided triangulation of data, and the collection of data from all of the relevant community college websites provided for saturation.

Transferability is a kind of external validity, which can be provided by strong analysis of the discourse and the use of a subset of community colleges chosen from

across the United States as a data set and representing varieties of colleges, such as rural

vs. urban, multi-campus vs. single campus, and so on. Dependability, which is like

reliability in a quantitative study, cycles back to the triangulation of questions as in

credibility checks. Data can be tied together by using a standard set of learning college

and transformational language principles to check the data. Confirmability, similar to

quantitative objectivity, was reached in the current study through the use of multiple,

reflexive tools to confirm the data in multiple ways. In addition, my experience as a

linguist with comprehensive knowledge of community colleges contributed to the

discourse analysis process of charting the data.

One way to validate discourse analysis is through triangulation of the data, using

data from a number of sources to compare similar texts across data sources. The

researcher looks for confirmation or agreement in general among the sources (Heller,

2003). In place of more traditional qualitative analysis, discourse analysis applies four

tests to assure validity and trustworthiness, including convergence, agreement, coverage,

and linguistic details (Gee 2011b). First, in answering the questions posed in the analysis,

the analyst seeks convergence in the answers to most of the questions. Second, the

answers to the discourse analysis questions should show agreement and recognition of

how the social language in the study functions in its settings. Third, the data can also be

more trustworthy when it provides coverage of the available data, even possibly

predicting similar results for similar situations. Fourth, tying the analysis to linguistic

details of the text provides a spectrum of levels from word or phrase level to sentence, paragraph, or pragmatic contextual level (Gee 2011b).

There are different theoretical stances in discourse analysis, but many of these adhere to the principal of triangulation to include theory, method, observation, and a consideration of pertinent background information in the analysis (Reisigl & Wodak (2012). This approach to triangulation is based upon the immediate text, the relationships between parts of the text, the social or situational context of the text, and the social or historical context of the discourse.

Another way to approach validity through triangulation is to apply a number of tasks to the text under analysis. For example, in sorting through the data, the analyst can keep in mind the significance of the data, the practices involved, the identities of the people affected, the effects of the data on social relationships of those involved, the politics of how social good is distributed, the connections of people to each other or to the situation, and the accessibility of sign systems or social languages (Gee 2011b). These parts of a good discourse analysis are embedded in Gee's (2011a) discourse analysis toolkit. Thus, the discourse analysis was considered relevant to the context of the texts themselves and to the portions that were most meaningful in answering the research questions. Gee's (2011a) toolkit contains 27 questions, but ultimately some were more meaningful than others to compare with O'Banion's (1997) learning college principles in order to answer the study's research questions. The discourse analysis approach provided a credible and dependable study using triangulation, confirmable in

part through additional testing, and transferable to similar situations or institutions. It must be understood, though, that discourse is a social construct in an ever changing context, so subsequent studies will likely uncover new or different information leading to divergent conclusions dependent upon the research questions.

No ethical concerns were apparent in the study. Because discourse analysis was applied to published documents on publically accessible websites, the information was in the public domain and available to anyone interested in learning more about community colleges.

This study did not involve human subjects. However, care was taken throughout the process to ensure vigilance against violations of any ethical concerns that could arise. I referred to colleges in general as a group of Board Colleges in the League for Innovation in the Community College, and specific colleges were not named or associated with particular data.

Summary

This study provided evidence of the learning college at institutions espousing the learning college philosophy. If highly regarded community colleges are learning colleges, they were expected to show evidence of that allegiance on their websites through the presence of learning college principles (O'Banion, 1997). Students need to know what to expect when they are admitted to an institution of higher learning, and colleges need to be sure that they have aligned their foundational documents with current practice.

In a national study on innovation conducted by the League for Innovation in the Community College and funded by MetLife foundation (O'Banion, Weidner, & Wilson, 2010), recipients of innovation awards were college employees embodying community college values in conjunction with their own goals to contribute to positive change. At the heart of innovation projects were the need to "Improve student learning, …Improve an existing system, process, practice, procedure, …Improve student retention or attainment, …(and/or) Meet a community need" (p. 18-19). The study sought to continue the goals of learning college practitioners in recruiting and retaining students in a learning-centered environment.

The study may prove important to students, community college practitioners, and college stakeholders. Harris, Rousef-Baker, and Treat (2002) emphasized the critical need for community colleges to research and document learning, for faculty to create and nurture a culture of learning, and for institutions to place learning first. These are learning college principles that can be seen on community college websites.

 If a community college wishes to continue providing first class education to students, it is necessary for all involved in the process to be aware of the promise and expectation of the unique higher learning opportunity promised by community colleges. If students are able to detect a student-centered learning focus at a college, they might be persuaded to attend that college. If the college website does not provide evidence of a learning college philosophy—the public representation of its goals and commitments— one might wonder whether it actually does follow that philosophy. The language of a

college website might persuade undecided students to attend college, to begin a journey towards educational completion, and to give back to society through employment, volunteerism, or other endeavors engendered by college learning. On the other hand, the website might not be inviting and it might not indicate that the institution follows the learning college philosophy.

By increasing quality educational offerings to a diverse student population, the learning college can continue to increase the number of college students and potential graduates. A website with clear indications of a learning college philosophy can increase student participation. With increased student enrollment comes the possibility of increased student goal completion.

Students often self-report the ways they have grown and changed as a result of receiving a college education. As they become part of a learning college environment, they may learn to become part of the larger community and use their experience to create positive social change. Students who complete college in a learner-centered environment should be ready to enter the world of work and community and give back to incoming learners as a result of their college education.

As society moves from an industrial to a knowledge model, (Treat, Kristovich, & Henry, 2004), learning colleges will need to rely upon knowledge management systems to track and assess information. A learning college will need methods to manage the flow of information, use continuous environmental scans to understand its own organizational culture, and use employee driven systems. My study, with its focus on learning college

website data, provides encouragement to colleges to monitor and adapt web information to attract students to a true learning college experience.

A positive public image of the community college is important to continue the broad mission of this unique institution. As students and other stakeholders become aware of what the community college has to offer, they may be more inclined to take advantage of available developmental education, transfer education, or workforce development opportunities. Each student who sees the promise of transformation and student-centered learning may add to the number of certificate and degree graduates who take their position in the workplace, so clear representation of each college's advantages is important in the initial recruitment of prospective students.

The learning college movement began as a revolution that has become an evolution (Roueche, Kemper, &Roueche, 2006). The ongoing transition from a teaching to a learning focus will continue to depend upon strong leadership among faculty and administration, adequate resources to encourage participation, and open communication channels in the evolution of the learning college. The results of this study showed evidence of the evolution to the online presence of learning college principles.

Chapter 4: Results

Seeking Evidence of the Learning College at Community Colleges

I conducted this study according to the methodology proposed in Chapter 3 of this paper. The research focused on a search of published online documents to determine the presence and extent of learning college language in prestigious community college websites (See Walden University Institutional Review Board approval #04-24-15-0018692). The results and implications of this study are discussed here and in the following chapter.

The purpose of this study was to discover the extent to which the language of the Learning College (O'Banion, 1997) is present on publicly available community college website pages. I sought this information, gleaned from a set of 17 elite community colleges, members of The League for Innovation in the Community College Board Colleges, to inform the ongoing nature of learning college principles and to determine the accessibility of these basic tenets on the community college websites. Research questions provided the initial vehicle for scanning the websites for evidence of learning college language.

Research Questions

The major question of the study was to what extent does the discourse found on public community college websites provide evidence of the Learning College philosophy? The subquestions included the following:

1. What kinds of examples of O'Banion's (1997) Learning College discourse can be found on public community college websites?

2. How do identified discourse elements align with the student-centered learning college philosophy's six principles?

3. In what ways do college websites show a student-centered learning perspective?

This chapter contains descriptions of the study setting and demographics, as well as data collection, data analysis, and any discrepant cases. It revisits issues of trustworthiness covered in earlier chapters and provides a discussion of results and a summary of answers to research questions as a transition to Chapter 5.

Setting

The setting for the research used published website documents of 17 elite community colleges and did not involve interviews or surveys with human subjects. Therefore, aside from maintaining some anonymity of individual colleges insofar as it was possible, no participants were influenced by the process. I was able to glean the desired data directly from website pages at each community college and did not need additional budget, personnel, or other assistance to conduct the research. There was no trauma or other negative influence upon the colleges under review.

There were differences in which web pages at each college contained the majority of learning college language; much of the data resided on about pages, mission and vision

pages, or President/Chancellor welcome pages. Some information came from college history pages or home pages, although in many cases the home pages did not have the pertinent data on them and instead contained links to possible data sources. Even with the variation among colleges, the data were located somewhere on the college websites within the five pages chosen for this study.

Demographics

The colleges in the study were the 17 Board Colleges, members of the League for Innovation in the Community College, a consortium of community colleges dedicated to fostering and furthering the cause of community college education. The Board Colleges are highly valued and respected within the organization, and the president or chancellor of each Board College serves on the Board of the League for Innovation. The colleges were diverse, representing both urban and rural settings, one or multi-campus institutions, large colleges mirroring the size of four-year institutions, and colleges in different regions of the United States and Canada.

Data Collection

I reviewed online website data from 17 community colleges, Board College members of the League for Innovation in the Community College. I downloaded specific publically available general introductory pages and saved in them in both paper and electronic formats for each institution, including home page, about page, mission and vision page, college history page, and President or Chancellor's welcome page. In some cases, these typical pages varied slightly from the majority, but most websites contained

some semblance of these pages, even if differently identified on the website. My focus was restricted to the front pieces most available to the general public perusing the websites. I used only the front pages of the institutions at large and did not pursue pages pertaining to individual departments or programs.

In some cases, the colleges are multicampus districts, with campuses and centers throughout their respective regions. I held the assumption that the main college websites containing college mission and vision statements were representative of the various campuses and centers affiliated with the colleges. I presumed that the main and satellite campuses would share the same general mission and vision as charged by their accrediting agencies.

I placed the information from the websites into a template containing the six learning college principles of O'Banion (1997), after searching each webpage for language contained within the learning college principles. Then I aligned the six principles and website data with discourse analysis questions from Gee's (2001a; 2001b) toolkit, creating a chart with learning college principles, website language reflecting learning college language, and the specific discourse analysis questions used to consider the data. I considered each data set for the colleges against the study's research questions and examined the data for any discrepant cases. The data collection process mirrored the plan outlined in Chapter 3, and some of the colleges presented unanticipated data as early adopters of the learning college principles as foundational members of the League for Innovation's Vanguard College project.

One of the main differences between college websites was ease of accessibility of data on the sites. The study reviewed the following web pages, if available, for each college: home page, about page, mission and vision page, college history page, and President or Chancellor's welcome page. Some college sites had webpages arranged so that only one mouse click was needed to locate a particular page. Others needed a more thorough search, using key words or involving several mouse clicks to reach the data.

The webpages also tended to yield different amounts of information. The home pages, for example, often consisted of many links to other pages, so that no substantive information was found directly on the home page. On the other hand, colleges' about pages, and mission and vision pages, tended to hold the most learning college data. College history pages had some data, and often president's or chancellors' pages included some learning college language. Although not all pages included the term, "learning college," most had some reference to student-centered learning, individual learning, or other terms associated with the learning college.

Data Analysis

During the course of analyzing the data set, I sought answers to the research questions by aligning the learning college principles with data from each website. I also further analyzed the data for each principle by using related questions from Gee's toolkit for discourse analysis (2001a; 2001b). I chose to analyze and present the data by organizing it around O'Banion's (1997) six learning college principles.

I went through the data college by college, looking at each of the five web pages for each college. Using Gee's (2001a; 2001b) toolkit for discourse analysis process, I took an overarching look at the six principles and synthesized how the colleges' information was related. I chose criteria for a strong match between the institution's discourse and the learning college principles, for a moderate match, and for a weak or no match. I also looked at differences in which web pages at each college contained the majority of learning college language; much of the data resided on about pages, mission and vision Pages, or presidents' or chancellors' welcome pages.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

Beginning just after Institutional Review Board approval from Walden University, I began data collection and adhered to the strategies to assure trustworthiness outlined in Chapter 3. Credibility was supported through the use of Gee's (2001a; 2001b) 27 questions for discourse analysis, which provided a method to survey language data from word level through contextual level, and the number of colleges in the study provided saturation of the data. For Gee (2011b), trustworthiness includes convergence, agreement, coverage, and linguistic details. Answers to the 27 questions in Gee's discourse analysis model showed signs of convergence in multiple answers across the 17 colleges. Answers to the discourse analysis questions demonstrated agreement through the use of social language in the website settings. The data included coverage of a range of linguistic questions for all the colleges in the study, with similar results for similar web

pages. The analysis also included linguistic details at the word or phrase level through sentence, paragraph, and contextual levels.

Each bit of data taken from the websites and aligned with O'Banion's (1997) learning college principles was subjected to analysis with Gee's 27 questions. In addition, an updated version of Gee's toolkit questions (2014) added an additional question for consideration. This question will be considered as an additional way to analyze the data in the future.

Transferability is not possible to other institutions because the study focused only on the 17 Board Colleges of the League for Innovation. However, the colleges in the study represented various demographics, such as urban vs. rural, and included colleges scattered across the Northern Hemisphere, presenting a cross section of colleges. No additional colleges were added to the list during the research process, and no colleges were removed from the list, which would have occurred as a result of a college president no longer acting as a Board College member at the League for Innovation.

I established dependability through triangulation of data collected with a large list of 27 questions from the discourse analysis toolkit. I confirmed learning college and transformational language principles in the data. The study methodology faculty provided ongoing guidance on method and data analysis throughout the research process.

Confirmability occurred through the use of many reflexive tools and questions to seek answers to similar questions in various ways. In addition, my own background in both community colleges (as a former graduate and decades long employee) and in

linguistics (as a recipient of both undergraduate and graduate degrees in linguistics) provided additional insight into the data and analysis. The process was iterative, with many cross-checks throughout. For example, I revisited the data multiple times, and the charts aligning O'Banion's (1997) six principles with learning college data from the websites were sources of multiple double checks. I reviewed the data individually with a raw data chart for each college, compared findings against the study research questions, and once again reviewed O'Banion's six learning college principles.

In order to provide multiple ways to ensure trustworthiness, I maintained a researcher's journal. In April 2015, I downloaded and saved files of the pertinent community college website documents and found that the college sites tended to contain similar pages, including home page, about page, mission and vision page, college history page, and president or chancellor's welcome page. In early May, I shared my data collection and analysis to date with the dissertation committee methodology member to check the process and made decisions about how to address colleges with multiple campuses or with any special attributes that might affect the data. I also worked with the dissertation committee content member to discuss additional articles pertaining to the research. Because of the opportunity for discussion and analysis with the methodology committee member, I was able to improve my analysis during the entire process, and the content committee member helped me stay true to the literature and the research. In addition to the guidance of the committee, Dr. Gee of Arizona State University

graciously allowed and encouraged me to use his discourse analysis methodology for the dissertation.

After an initial analysis of the data, I placed the data elements into individual charts, one for each of the 17 colleges, aligning learning college principles, the website data, and the questions to be used for discourse analysis. Reviewing each college's data in process helped to clarify the analysis method, including expanding search terms for a richer data set. I prepared five colleges' data in a combined chart to review initial findings and to share with the dissertation committee members for discussion.

In mid-May, I continued the downloading and analysis of website data from all 17 colleges. All schools contained evidence of learning college language, but each college had some individual differences from the others. Each of the steps in the research process added to the level of trustworthiness of the study.

Findings

An accessible way to approach the website data and to compare the 17 colleges was to align the data for each college with each of the six learning college principles and later to subject the raw data to discourse analysis questions. I listed key indicators for each of the six principles and analyzed the data from each college on a chart for each principle. In some cases, a college might have strong, moderate, and weak evidence, or some combination of the three. In determining the strength of the data supporting a principle, I considered each college one by one. The strongest possible data placed the college in the strong category, though a college could also have additional moderate

and/or weak evidence. In that case, the strongest category present in the college's data indicated the highest level of evidence for that college and that principle.

To indicate outcomes for Principle 1 (O'Banion, 1997): Creates substantive change in the individual learner, I chose criteria for sorting the data into three categories. For example, for Principle 1 strong evidence cited learning college principles directly, mentioned the learning college, or referred to student-centered learning or individual student success. Moderate evidence cited student success or student achievement of goals. Weak evidence mentioned learning in general, but did not specifically reference either the learning college or student-centered learning.

Principle 1 (O'Banion, 1997) may be the simplest, most inclusive descriptor of the intent of the learning college; that is, that each individual student learner undergo measurable change during the learning process. With the learning college, the learner is in focus; the colleges in the study showed varied evidence of putting the learner first and being a catalyst for growth and change in each student. Principle 1 is a statement that underlies the succeeding principles and sets the learner as primary in the learning process.

Eleven colleges had strong data as their highest level of evidence for Principle 1 (O'Banion, 1997), directly citing the learning college on their webpages or mentioning student-centered learning or individual student success. Six colleges referred to student success or goal achievement, providing moderate support as the highest level of evidence for commitment to learning college principles. Most colleges at least referred to learning on their websites, but with relatively weak links to the learning college. All of the

colleges had either strong or moderate evidence as their highest level of evidence for Principle 1.

Five of the 17 colleges in the study were part of the League's Vanguard program, which was a consortium of colleges within the League for Innovation colleges that were early adopters of the learning college philosophy. However, only two out of five colleges clearly demonstrated their Vanguard membership in an easily accessible place on the college websites. These two had special pages devoted to the Vanguard project, while two other colleges made no explicit reference to being Vanguard colleges, and one college's website mentioned having a special Learning Success Agenda.

I subjected the data extracted from college websites and aligned with the six Learning College principles to related discourse analysis questions. For example, Principle 1 (O'Banion, 1997), creates substantive change in the individual learner, was aligned with two of Gee's (2011a) 27 discourse analysis questions or tools to provide additional insight into the language discovered on the websites. The data supported Principle 1 through situated meaning within the text by citing learning as a central mission with many learning opportunities for diverse students. The colleges were focused on serving the personal and individual needs through access and the promotion of democratic ideals. The colleges stated that they created cultures of achievement and goal acquisition, including lifelong learning.

The data also supported Principle 1 (O'Banion, 1997) through analysis of particular social languages demonstrated within the grammar. The colleges tended to use

academic jargon in lengthy, multi-clausal sentences, denoting a higher educational, prestige environment. These long passages were tempered, however, with positive, encouraging statements about accessibility, affordability, diversity, inclusiveness, and quality of the learning. The language tended to be formal with some colloquial statements, mostly "we/you" invitations to become students.

For Principle 1's charge (O'Banion, 1997) to create change in learners, the discourse analysis found definitions of phrases related to learning opportunities for prospective students, as well as the use of formal language expected for college students combined with encouraging statements of welcome. This confluence of formal academic jargon with embedded definitions of terminology is a concrete example of the charge in Principle 1 to encourage substantive change in learners. The expected academic language is present, but along with it definitions and examples to help the student move to the higher expectations of a college student.

For Principle 2 (O'Banion, 1997), engages learners as full partners in the learning process, with learners assuming primary responsibility for their choices, strong evidence included language indicative of learners as full partners in the learning process. Moderate evidence showed learners as carrying primary responsibility for the learning process, while weak evidence demonstrated learners as having some part of the learning process.

Principle 2's focus (O'Banion, 1997) on responsible learner engagement was well supported by 13 colleges with strong evidence of learners as full learning partners

and four colleges with moderate evidence as their highest level of learners carrying the primary responsibility for learning. All of the colleges had either strong or moderate levels of supporting evidence for Principle 2, engagement of learners with strong responsibility in the learning process.

Principle 2 (O'Banion, 1997), engages learners as full partners in the learning process, with learners assuming primary responsibility for their choices, has a clear focus on learners and aligns with seven of Gee's (2011a) discourse analysis questions. For example, an examination of deixis (referring language), showed that the colleges referred to democratic ideals, student engagement, and partnerships, employing second person "you/your" statements and lists of values and college goals. In some cases, definitions of terms were embedded or nested within a passage to provide clarity, while many colleges also referred often to individuals and community members. Learning was a common thread throughout.

Additional information to clarify context provided some support for Principle 2 (O'Banion, 1997). In many cases, academic terminology was defined in context, and students were sometimes directed to visit Advising or other student services departments for more information.   This evidence of learning college principles demonstrated the helpful website comments that referred inquiring students directly to the appropriate departments for additional assistance, empowering students to participate actively in the learning process.

Alignment with Gee's (2011a; 2011b) discourse analysis methods also indicated that an outsider with little or no background or shared assumptions in academics should be able to comprehend the information presented on the college websites. For the most part, terms were defined or exemplified, so that the meaning of *democratic ideals*, *student engagement*, and *competencies* was fairly clear, often with definitions in the passage. However, it might be a good idea for institutions to spell out even commonly used acronyms, or regularly appearing terms like *innovation* and *stewardship*. Students might want to learn a bit more about *accreditation* and its importance to them as well.

Additional support for Principle 2 (O'Banion, 1997) came from seeking to understand the reason for including certain topics and also what, exactly, is being said about the subject in the discourse. Much of the language was positive and likely part of the colleges' recruitment strategies. There was a strong focus on student success with help from academic and student services departments. The colleges used a number of terms often: *student success*, *teaching and learning*, *access*, and *flexibility*. Another consideration was how a speaker's or reader's perceived intonation contour adds meaning to the text. Many of the data excerpts were declarative or imperative, and sometimes even used performative verbs to indicate currently ongoing activities. The colleges often used dashes and definitions within sentences, or lists, to help make meanings clear.

In the examination of context clues during the analysis, I found that context clues helped to clarify the meaning or create a context that exists through time and space or is changed by the manner in which the information is stated. Many of the colleges used

trigger words like *ideals* to help students refer back to prior understandings of the terms. Current and future opportunities were indicated through the use of present and present perfect tenses. Values and goals statements were often repeated on various website pages with references to helping the larger community or society in which the student is embedded.

I found data in alignment with the concept of chaining or relatedness among topics. Topic chains appeared to be easy for students to follow. The colleges tended to use some common or repeated terms and similar sentence structures to provide parallel ideas. Many passages began with main topics and supported them with clear supporting details. Colleges often began by describing a service or opportunity and followed up with how-to details, moving from what to how. The discourse analysis questions supported Principle 2's focus (O'Banion, 1997) on responsible student engagement in their own learning. College websites tended to use referring language, clear roadmaps for student navigation of the educational experience, and context clues for support.

Principle 3 (O'Banion, 1997) promotes multiple opportunities for learning. Strong evidence for this addresses technology options that transcend standard time-bound and place-bound learning options. Moderate evidence presents varied programs for learners and multiple completion options, such as degree and certificate availability. Weak evidence shows some presence of assistance for students but does not directly address learning options.

In Principle 3, O'Banion (1997) proposed multiple learning options for students, and ten colleges had strong support as their highest level of evidence for technology options for students. There were five colleges with moderate evidence as their highest level for varied programs or completion options for learners. Two colleges provided only weak evidence for available student assistance. Seven colleges contained both strong and moderate levels of evidence.

Principle 3 (O'Banion, 1997), creates and offers as many options for learning as possible, aligns with five of Gee's (2011a) questions. Sometimes, what the writer is saying may be different from what they are attempting to accomplish through the text. Colleges provided multiple examples of this, not only describing opportunities but prompting students to consider participating in them. For example, colleges encouraged students to understand academic privacy law, or how to take advantage of personalized learning opportunities and learning experiences available outside of the classroom. The colleges created positive images of partnerships and inclusiveness supported by student services as students seek to achieve their goals. There was also support for Principle 3 in the social identities that the text is attempting to build for both writer and reader. Some colleges used technology savvy references, while others focused on student power, choice, and autonomy. Students were encouraged to participate in a multicultural and diverse college environment as they work together for social change. Students were encouraged to achieve their goals with expert teachers in world class institutions.

Additional support for Principle 3 (O'Banion, 1997) came from a review of how relationships might be changed or maintained among stakeholders in the institution. Colleges emphasized student-faculty teamwork and strong student services. Students were invited to participate in personal relationships within the institution and outside affiliations. Community relationships and stewardship were encouraged. Sometimes grammatical constructions can create privilege for those with similar or different language (technical or personal registers) and belief systems. Students might not yet be familiar with differing knowledge delivery systems or seminar formats. Most websites, however, did use inclusive language and indicated learning as a privilege that could improve one's quality of life. Some colleges expressed lofty value systems but welcomed all comers. More support for Principle 3 came from consideration of intertextuality, quotes, or references to other areas of knowledge, such as links to additional information, and differences in personal or academic social languages. There were references to the social value of a college education and lifelong education. Links to the community were also encouraged.

Principle 4 (O'Banion, 1997) focuses on collaboration and participation. Strong evidence contains clear language about collaboration. Moderate evidence indicates the presence of service learning opportunities or the availability of student clubs and organizations. Weak evidence shows some mention of other working and learning opportunities.

Principle 4's focus (O'Banion, 1997) on learner collaboration was well supported by 15 colleges with strong evidence of collaborative learning activities. Two colleges presented moderate evidence as their highest level of support for student participation in college clubs and organizations, or in service learning projects. All colleges had either strong or moderate evidence to support Principle 4.

Principle 4 (O'Banion, 1997), assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities, aligns with three of Gee's (2011a) questions. In seeking activities, institutional practices, or norms that are encouraged or supported, the evidence indicated that some colleges relied upon constructionism for students to build their own learning, often for the workforce, and in an environment of social inclusion. Partnerships of all kinds, built over a long period of time, exemplified student collaboration. Innovation and learning-centered opportunities for learning were offered.

Colleges also aligned with Gee's (2011a) focus on building connections through grammatical connections within the text or relevance between elements in the communication. Many colleges employed parallel grammatical structure in lists or sentences to outline the "what" and then detail the "how" for students to understand the strategies to achieve their goals. Learning, respect and teamwork were common themes underlying student transformation and success. Colleges used personal pronouns like "we" and "you" to create intimacy while simultaneously encouraging global and community engagement. Additional support for Principle 4 (O'Banion, 1997) was provided through grammatical evidence of connections between information excerpts.

Colleges used alliteration and definitions or examples in text to create connections. Opportunities and staff support for students were connected to learning and student success. There was ample evidence of personal connections for students and for engagement outside of the classroom.

Principle 5 (O'Banion, 1997) seeks alignment of teaching and other facilitation of learning to the learners' needs. Strong evidence prioritizes the roles of learners, while moderate evidence highlights facilitators' roles. Weak evidence refers to the needs of outside stakeholders.

Principle 5 (O'Banion, 1997) focuses on the role of teaching and learning experts addressing students' needs for learning. All colleges but one provided strong evidence for attention to learners' needs. One college showed moderate evidence as the highest level of evidence in its attention to learning facilitators' roles in the learning process.

Principle 5 (O'Banion, 1997), defines the roles of learning facilitators by the needs of the learners, aligns with seven of Gee's (2011a) questions. After a review of context clues that might change the analysis, the data indicated that colleges cited democratic ideals, particularly in positive mission and vision statements, and some colleges had links to pages that focused on student success. Another area of support for Principle 5 was the use of primarily Latinate language rather than Germanic, signaling a higher register, academic language, including jargon specific to college.

Of particular interest to Principle 5 (O'Banion, 1997) is the way in which learning is based upon learners' needs and supported by learning facilitators. Discourse analysis

provided insights into how information is packaged on the college websites, for example, how a text has been crafted in a certain way rather than being written differently. The colleges used the formal jargon of higher education, sometimes employing future tense to indicate ongoing opportunity. Sometimes the language used "we" and "our" to create intimacy and the school names were repeated often for recognition in the text. Colleges indicated their hope to complete the needs of students and to address the whole person.

Other data derived from Gee's (2011a) discourse analysis questions revealed main topic and thematic support in multi-clause sentences. Many colleges focused on learning, student success, and meeting student needs, followed by information on how these goals could be reached. Learner-centeredness and college access were also common topics. A deeper look at how phrases and clauses are combined to create longer texts showed that the colleges used complex sentence structures, parallel structure, and lists to combine ideas. They often listed a main idea first and then supported it with details in the same paragraph.

Gee's (2011a) discourse analysis found evidence of the ways information was packaged into stanzas or clustered portions of information. Colleges presented information in groups of phrases, clauses, or bulleted lists, often with parallel structure in noun or verb phrases. Grammatical ordering also emphasized certain ideas over others. Many colleges listed learning or student success as their main focus, with information about the college mission and how it is accomplished. Colleges also foregrounded values or goals statements. By providing clear vocabulary and navigation through the text,

colleges supported Principle 5 (O'Banion, 1997) and the importance of supporting students' needs.

Principle 6 (O'Banion, 1997) promotes measurement of continuous improvement in learning. An example of strong evidence would include the topics of measurement and continuous improvement. Moderate evidence presents data of improved or expanded learning. Weak evidence mentions learning in general or student success.

Principle 6 (O'Banion, 19979) focuses on documented learning improvement. Eleven colleges had strong evidence for measures or assessment of learning and of continuous improvement. Five colleges had moderate evidence as their highest level of improved or expanded learning for students, while one college had weak evidence as its highest level for learning or student success in general. Sixteen of the colleges showed high or moderate as their highest levels of evidence to support Principle 6.

Principle 6 (O'Banion, 1997), measures success by documented improved and expanded learning for its learners, aligns with three of Gee's (2011a) questions. For example, discourse analysis revealed grammar that points to evidence of social goods and their distribution. Colleges often referred to their egalitarian stance as they worked to help all students achieve their goals. Students were often encouraged to participate in transformation to citizenship and community building. Everyone in the process was considered to have an impact on learning. Analysis also sought typical stories that are assumed as a result of the text. Colleges described the world of college and opportunities beyond the college experience. Student success and positive learning environments were

assumed for prospective students. Colleges also referred to prosperity, sustainability, and global accountability as a result of earning a college education.

A final discourse analysis question looked at Big "D" Discourse (Gee, 2011a), the ways language and cultural technologies present particular social identities. Colleges suggested that learning, success, and a new identity based upon democratic ideals could await prospective students. College students could expect to thrive in a workforce culture or in society at large as part of a community of learners. There was less evidence of Principle 6's assessment or accountability in this section than anticipated (O'Banion, 1997), but colleges did support student transformation and growth.

The colleges in general provided evidence of website language that might be expected of a learning college. Each principle (O'Banion, 1997) had multiple instances of confirming data. The data supported the three study research questions and did not discover nonconforming data, though there was minor evidence of discrepant cases with weak support.

Support for Learning College Principles

The six principles of the learning college (O'Banion, 1997) were strongly represented in the data set, most notably in the occurrence of all three levels of evidence—strong, moderate, and weak—in many of the colleges. The presence of learning college language in the website data indicated that the learning college is still present at those colleges. This is especially interesting upon closer examination of the colleges and the variety that they represent.

The 17 colleges in the study were primarily urban, located in widespread areas of the United States and Canada. Two of the colleges could be considered both urban and suburban, given the locations of their campuses. There were no rural colleges among the 17 Board Colleges, perhaps because rural colleges tend to have fewer students and less financial opportunities than colleges located in larger cities with the possibility of greater tax revenue support and opportunities for large scale initiatives. Colleges were dispersed among various geographical locations. There were five colleges in the Midwest, four in the West, three in the South, and two each in the East and Northwest, with one college in Canada.

In addition to showing the presence of all six principles (O'Banion, 1997) at all three levels—strong, moderate, and weak—the data presented varying levels of support for each principle and for each college. On the whole, colleges appeared to be doing well in their online support of the learning college. The next two tables show numerical results for the six principles and for each college. The first table shows support for the learning college by the six principles, counting only the highest level of support at each college—strong, moderate, or weak—for the chart.

Table 3

Support for Learning College by Principles

Principle	Strong	Moderate	Weak
Principle 1: Creates substantive change in the individual learner.	11	6	0
Principle 2: Engages learners as full partners in the learning process, with learners assuming primary responsibility for their choices	13	4	0
Principle 3: Creates and offers as many options for learning as possible.	10	5	2
Principle 4: Assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities.	15	0	2
Principle 5: Defines the roles of learning facilitators by the needs of the learners.	16	1	0
Principle 6: Measures success by documented improved and expanded learning for its learners.	11	5	1

Table 3 shows that, while none of the principles was strong for all 17 colleges, Principles 4 and 5 were strong for 15 and 16 colleges, respectively, and Principle 2 was strong for 13 colleges. Principles 1 and 6 were strong for 11 colleges, and Principle 3 had only 10 colleges in the strong category.

The principles also had colleges with moderate evidence as their top level of support. For example, Principle 1 had six colleges at the moderate level, and Principles 3 and 6 had five colleges each at the moderate level. Principle 2 had four colleges with support at the moderate level, while Principles 4 and 5 had moderate support from zero and one colleges, respectively. Only three of the principles had weak evidence as their top level of support from the colleges. Principles 3 and 4 had two colleges with weak support as their highest level, and Principle 6 had only one college with weak level as the highest level of support.

There was strong support for all six principles, with a range of 16/17 to 10/17 colleges showing evidence of strong support for the principles. There was moderate support for all six principles, with a range of 6/17 to 1/17 colleges showing moderate support for the principles. There was weak support for two of the principles, with a range of 2/17 to 1/17. The preponderance of evidential support of the principles was in the strong and moderate categories, with a combined range of 17/17 to 15/17 of the colleges at the top two levels of evidence.

The next table shows levels of support for the principles by institution. For example, College 1 had strong support for all six of the principles.

Table 4

Support for Learning College by Institution

College	Strong	Moderate	Weak
College 1	6	0	0
College 2	6	0	0
College 3	3	1	2
College 4	5	1	0
College 5	5	1	0
College 6	2	4	0
College 7	5	1	0
College 8	2	1	3
College 9	4	2	0
College 10	4	2	0
College 11	5	1	0
College 12	3	3	0
College 13	5	1	0
College 14	3	3	0
College 15	6	0	0
College 16	6	0	0
College 17	6	0	0

Table 4 displays the evidence by looking at each college. Five of the colleges supported all six principles at the strong level, and five of the colleges had strong support for five principles each. Two colleges showed strong support for four principles each, and three colleges showed strong support for three principles each, with only two colleges showing strong support for two of the principles. Twelve colleges had moderate support for from four to one of the principles, and only two colleges had weak levels of support for the principles. Even the colleges with weak levels of support still had support at the strong or moderate levels for other principles.

The major question of the study was to what extent does the discourse found on public community college websites provide evidence of the learning college philosophy? The college websites provided extensive evidence of learning college language on their website pages, both through data collection and discourse analysis. Each research question, outlined below, considered specific evidence.

Research Subquestion 1

Research subquestion 1 asked what kinds of examples of O'Banion's (1997) learning college discourse can be found on public community college websites? Examples of learning college discourse on the websites ranged from clear references to O'Banion's learning college principles to other language representative of the learning college, to little or no related language. These references represented strong evidence, moderate evidence, or weak or no evidence of the learning college.

Each of the principles (O'Banion, 1997) indicate examples of learning college discourse in all of the colleges' collected website data, with strong, moderate, or weak evidence, or a combination of the three levels. Two colleges were possible outliers, with low overall tallies for evidence of learning college language. The two lowest scoring colleges did however show evidence of strong, moderate, and weak support for learning college principles. All 17 institutions contained strong evidence on their websites of strong, moderate, weak, or a combination of the three levels, and none of the colleges lacked multiple instances of learning college language. The remaining two research questions answered specific areas of subquestion 1, including how the website data aligned with the learning college principles and whether there was evidence of a student learning-centered perspective at the colleges. In looking at the individual colleges, all but two had combined strong and moderate support for all six principles.

Research Subquestion 2

Research subquestion 2 asked how do identified discourse elements align with the student-centered learning college philosophy's six principles? The data collection was done by aligning the six learning college principles (O'Banion, 1997) in columnar fashion, with language excerpts taken directly from the college websites in an adjacent column. This method allowed me to search the raw college website data using learning college terminology, and then submitting the data to discourse analysis. Research subquestion 2 asked for alignment of the discourse on the websites with O'Banion's learning college principles. The results indicated learning college language that aligned

with each of the six principles for all 17 colleges. Further data analysis using Gee's (2011a; 2011b) discourse analysis model showed alignment of the website language with the learning college principles. Fifteen of the colleges showed combined strong and moderate support for all six principles, with only two at weaker levels of support.

Principle 1 (O'Banion, 1997) creates substantive change in the individual learner. Strong evidence included reference to learning college principles, the learning college, or student-centered learning. Moderate evidence mentioned student success or goal achievement. Weak evidence mentioned learning. The data in the Principle 1 chart showed repeated references to transformation, individual student success, teamwork, and assistance for individual goal attainment.

Principle 2 (O'Banion, 1997) engages learners as full partners in the learning process, with learners assuming primary responsibility for their choices. Strong evidence considered full partnership of students in their own learning. Moderate evidence mentioned learners as responsible for their own learning. Weak evidence made some reference to learner responsibility. Principle 2 included partnerships, the importance of student engagement, and real-world work experiences to give students personal responsibility for their learning.

Principle 3 (O'Banion, 1997) creates and offers as many options for learning as possible. Strong evidence included technology applications for learning in times and places that are convenient for students. Moderate evidence shared options for learning and goal completion. Weak evidence showed availability of student assistance. Principle

3 included online and other alternative learning modalities, lists of degree and certificate offerings, and specialized learning environments for students.

Principle 4 (O'Banion, 1997) assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities. Strong evidence referred to collaboration, and moderate evidence provided examples of student clubs or service learning availability. Weak evidence cited miscellaneous options. The data supported collaboration, student engagement inside and outside the classroom, and workforce development opportunities.

Principle 5 (O'Banion, 1997) defines the roles of learning facilitators by the needs of the learners. Strong evidence referred to learners' roles, while moderate evidence noted facilitators' roles. Weak evidence placed other stakeholders' needs in focus. Principle 5 data showed a clear hierarchy of students' needs, faculty and staffs' roles, and attention to outside stakeholders in working-learning partnerships.

Principle 6 (O'Banion, 1997) measures success by documented improved and expanded learning for its learners. Strong evidence placed continuous measurement of improvement as a priority. Moderate evidence showed expanded opportunities for learning. Weak evidence referred to student success or learning opportunities. Principle 6 data indicated that colleges say they are measuring outcomes and offering multiple options for learning.

Research Subquestion 3

Research subquestion 3 asked in what ways do college websites show a student-centered learning perspective? The websites used language congruent with that of

student-centered learning; this data was gleaned by examining the answers to Gee's

(2001a; 2001b) 27 discourse analysis questions, listed in the third column of the raw data

analysis charts.. For example, one college includes a special web page describing "The

Engaged Student" as one who "participates in class discussions, initiates conversations

with professors, utilizes student services such as tutoring, attends New Student

Orientation, and participates in service learning, campus events and student clubs and

organizations"   For this college, "student success comes first."

Each college contained language pertaining to the individual learner's success and

to a student-centered perspective. Principle 1 (O'Banion, 1997) alludes to change in the

individual learner, and Principle 2 refers to learner engagement and personal

responsibility. Principle 3 looks for multiple learning options, and Principle 4 seeks

collaborative learning options for students. Principle 5 places the needs of individual

learners first and focuses learning facilitators' roles on those students' needs. Principle 6

focuses on measuring student success through improved learning documented for

learners. In this way, each of the data sets provides strong, moderate, and weak evidence

for all six learning college principles, which all refer directly and indirectly to student-

centered learning.

Principle 1 (O'Banion, 1997) promotes the creation of substantive change in the

individual learner. The data for this principle included references to student-centered

learning and partnerships meant to advance students' ability to be successful in their

individual goal achievement. Principle 2 calls for student engagement in partnership with

and responsible to the learning process and learning facilitators. The data indicated evidence of student participation, partnerships, and ethical behavior.

Principle 3 (O'Banion, 1997) calls for a variety of learning options for students. In this section, there were multiple examples of online and other technology options, as well as many types of degree or certificate options, all meant to create many learning opportunities for a diverse student population. Principle 4 promotes collaboration, and there were many examples of partnership opportunities, collaboration, and ways to support student- centered learning opportunities.

Principle 5 (O'Banion, 1997) considers facilitators' roles as primary to fulfilling learners' needs, and the data provided evidence of responding to learners and of the responsibility of college employees to address students' needs. Principle 6 promotes accountability and measurement, with data that contained examples of assessment and continuous improvement. The data supported all six of O'Banion's learning college principles.

Summary

Student-centered learning continues to be on the forefront of community college teaching and learning. Seeking information on college websites has proven fruitful in providing evidence of the learning college nearly 20 years after O'Banion's (1997) landmark work. It is not simply that the principles of the learning college continue to live on community college websites. The importance of finding support for the six principles on publicly available websites is that student-centered teaching and learning are still a

vital part of higher education, and in public institutions with a history of open access for students with a wide variety of needs and educational goals, often without the means to attend highly competitive universities.

Each of the six learning college principles (O'Banion, 1997) was present on all 17 of the college websites in this study, and all of the 17 colleges provided multiple instances of supportive data. Not only did the majority of the colleges have high levels of learning college language, the discourse analysis to which language excerpts was subjected supported the initial findings. If the 17 elite Board Colleges of the League for Innovation in the Community College, seen as models of innovation and excellence, show a continued reliance on learning college principles, it bodes well for other community colleges that aspire to educational excellence.

The collected and analyzed data confirm the evidence of learning college language and student-centered learning in answer to the current study's research questions. The data set contains evidence of transformational language as described by Kegan and Lahey (2001), with specific reference to a productive community and to collaboration in all of the colleges in the study. Chapter 5 will provide a summary of the ongoing academic discussion about student learning and college or goal completion. I will present conclusions about the data and its implications for community colleges specifically and for general social change.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The Learning College

The purpose of this study was to discover the extent to which the language of the learning college (O'Banion, 1997) is present on publicly available community college website pages. The assumption was that because many community colleges adopted or encouraged learning college principles, the college websites should show some evidence of O'Banion's six principles:

1.   Creates substantive change in the individual learner.

2.   Engages learners as full partners in the learning process, with learners assuming primary responsibility for their choices.

3.   Creates and offers as many options for learning as possible.

4.   Assists learners to form and participate in collaborative learning activities.

5.   Defines the roles of learning facilitators by the needs of the learners.

6.   Measures success by documented improved and expanded learning for its learners. (p. 47)

I focused on the 17 highly regarded Board Colleges of the League for Innovation in the Community College. The League is a consortium of community colleges that supports and enhances learning and innovation. The Board Colleges are those whose college presidents serve on the League's board, and the 17 colleges in the current study are among the most highly regarded of the League's membership. If the elite colleges in

the consortium are truly following learning college principles (O'Banion, 1997), they should be expected to show evidence of these principles on their websites.

The nature of the study necessitated a unique methodology, and I selected discourse analysis as a good vehicle to align the six learning college principles (O'Banion, 1997) with the language of website pages. Gee's (2011a; 2011b) discourse analysis questions and method provided a way to review the raw data from many perspectives. I subjected the data set to a review of word level, sentence level, and contextual analysis with a variety of questions looking at the pragmatic and social meanings of the collected data.

The 17 community college websites provided ample evidence of learning college language (O'Banion, 1997) on the five pages examined for each college: home page, about page, mission and vision page, college history page, and president's or chancellor's welcome page. The idea of colleges having missions or of how to access certain services was not always clearly articulated in the opening pages of a website. Students new to college may coincidentally discover mission and vision pages on college websites, but they might not have been aware up to the time of discovery that succinct descriptions of the college mission are so clearly delineated. At the same time, links to various college services are not always labeled in a straightforward way to clearly indicate to a new student, "This is where you will find out how to receive Academic Advising to help you choose your first classes."

I searched web pages for learning college language, words, and phrases (O'Banion, 1997), and found evidence to support the existence of the six principles on the websites. For each of the six learning college principles, I created parameters for strong evidence, moderate evidence, and weak or no evidence. All of the colleges showed varying levels of evidence, proving the existence of learning college language on the websites of elite community colleges. The evidence I presented in Chapter 4 is a major finding of strong support for learning college principles on the college websites in the study. The data charts in Chapter 4 show that learning college language was supported by evidence collected directly from the college websites and subjected to additional consideration through in-depth discourse analysis.

The data collection and analysis methods employed in Chapter 4 allowed for close scrutiny of the website data and confirmed the presence of learning college language on the college websites. Parameters for the data came directly from O'Banion's (1997) list of six learning college principles, and the principles were supported in their support of the growth and change that take place as a result of student learning, the role of facilitators and other partners in the learning process, and the importance of collaboration, partnerships, and student engagement. Each of the learning college principles was supported by data that indicated the inclusion of learning college language on the college websites.

Analysis of Principles 1 through 6 (O'Banion, 1997) indicated that five of the six were supported at high levels of evidence. The colleges showed strong support for the

six principles, ranging from 16 out of 17 to 10 out of 17 colleges at the highest level of

support. The majority of the colleges also supported the learning college at the moderate

level, ranging from six out of 17 to zero out of 17. These numbers for moderate support,

when combined with numbers for strong support, show a combined level of sufficient

support for the learning college. Weak support for principles occurred in a range of 2 out

of 17 to 0 out of 17 colleges. Analysis of learning college principles by institution

showed that the majority of the colleges had combined support of all six principles at the

strong and moderate levels, with only two colleges as possible outliers, tending toward

the moderate and weak end of the spectrum.

Interpretation of the Findings

The findings confirm the existence of learning college language (O'Banion, 1997)

on the websites of elite community colleges that would be expected to conform to the

concept of the learning college. The data confirm concepts discussed in Chapter 2,

including the usefulness of analyzing websites or other online sources and provide real

evidence of learning college principles on community college websites. The data in this

study were derived from 17 college websites and discourse analysis via a 27 question

toolkit (Gee, 2011a) to provide a full set of evidence. The documented evidence from

websites, aligned with learning college principles and supplemented by discourse

analysis, answers and supports the original research purpose and questions.

A number of research articles have described the value of discourse analysis in

evaluating website data. For example, Ayers (2011) studied community college mission

statements, Meyer (2010) reviewed online postings, Benoliel (2006) reviewed court transcripts, and a study focused on assessing student learning outcomes (Jankowski & Makela, 2010). In each of these instances, discourse analysis was useful in evaluating data online, and this study also discovered relevant data from online data analysis.

A number of studies cited evidence of differences among learning styles of younger, more technologically grounded, students as opposed to their older student counterparts. Cardon and Marshall (2015) studied differences among Generation X and Y students in their use of online communication and social media. Njoku (2015) found that website communication geared toward student-centered learning could expand to other forms of electronic communication. Gallardo-Echenique et al. (2015) defined the term, *Digital Natives,* with nuances for the various levels of website comfort of younger learners who have always been part of a digital society. Gettman (2015) noted the conflation of academic and social communication among younger students. These studies point to the need for additional attention to the content and construction of college websites to help students analyze the benefits of a particular college or learning paradigm.

Some studies noted confusing or possibly untrustworthy websites. Ayers (2015) chronicled changes in online mission statements and Dishman (2015) addressed the issue of unfamiliar jargon on some websites, suggesting that website usability software could assist in updating and refining the sites. Hoover (2015) found that institutional websites often contained unclear information and were confusing to prospective students, and

other studies (Test, et al.,2015) questioned the trustworthiness of website data. Kaushik

(2015) noted that websites often provided useful information but omitted other elements

that might be useful, including updated mission statements, access to the Cloud, and

modern technologies that might appeal to younger audiences.

The clear presence of learning college language (O'Banion, 1997) on community

college websites met the initial assumptions of the study. For example, a major

assumption was that the 17 Board Colleges of the League for Innovation in the

Community College would serve as an elite group of community colleges for the

research. A second assumption was that a learning college would provide knowledgeable

and honest language in sharing its adoption of O'Banion's principles on its website. I

retrieved the language samples from searches using words and phrases in the learning

college principles, and these principles were codified on the websites, not always through

direct reference to the learning college, but with examples of the principles in action.

The research considered the overarching question of the study: What kinds of

examples of O'Banion's (1997) learning college discourse can be found on public

community college websites? In addition to providing multiple examples of evidence of

the learning college, with in-depth discourse analysis to provide specific details of

support, the data answered the three research subquestions.

Research subquestion 1 asked what kinds of examples of O'Banion's (1997)

learning college discourse can be found on public community college websites? I

discovered multiple examples of learning college words and phrases on the college

websites. These included support for all of the six learning college principles in all 17

colleges. All of the colleges presented a combination of strong, moderate, and weak data

for the six principles, and for the purposes of discussion in Chapter 4, I considered the

highest level of evidence for each college in each principle as the most important. The

evidence resided in the strong and moderate categories of support, with all six principles

supported by a range of from 16 out of 17 to 10 out of 17 colleges in the strong category.

A combined total for strong and moderate evidence indicated a range of from 15 out of

17 to 17 out of 17 colleges in support, so even the strong rating of 10 out of 17 colleges

for Principle 3 was bolstered by five colleges with moderate support.

Only two colleges provided examples of weak evidence as their highest level of

support for Principles 3, 4, and 6. These principles (O'Banion, 1997) call for multiple

learning options, collaborative learning, and documented improvement of learning. It is

possible that the evidence was not clear on the two college websites to support these

principles above the weak level. However, because the evidence for these two colleges

was at a level of 15 out of 17 and 16 out of 17 in the combined strong and moderate

categories, these colleges are not outliers. Rather, they represent opportunities for

additional or more clearly accessible information to support Principles 3, 4, and 6.

Research subquestion 2 asked how do identified discourse elements align with the

student-centered learning college philosophy's six principles (O'Banion, 1997)? All 17

colleges in the study referred to learning college principles in the data. Principle 1 sought

transformation in individual learners, and this was supported with combined strong and

moderate evidence for 17 out of 17 colleges by many examples of the learning college and student success. Principle 2 looked for student participation in their own learning and was supported with combined strong and moderate evidence for 17 out of 17 colleges by examples of partnerships and the importance of student responsibility in the learning process. Principle 3 championed multiple ways to access learning, and there was ample support for this principle with combined strong and moderate evidence for 15 out of 17 colleges through technologies and varied access to learning. Principle 4 encouraged collaboration, and the websites supported this principle with combined strong and moderate evidence for 15 out of 17 colleges by a variety of collaborative learning options both in and out of the classroom. Principle 5 focused on the ways that learning facilitators support students' learning needs, and this was supported by combined strong and moderate evidence for 17 out of 17 colleges with examples of roles that learners and teachers/mentors take in supporting student learning. Principle 6 looked for evidence of documenting learning and providing greater educational options. This principle was supported with combined strong and moderate evidence for 16 out of 17 colleges by data showing that institutions measured learning or provided many options to learn. Learning options included access to online courses, opportunities for internships, high school programs, and workforce development programs.

Research subquestion 3 asked in what ways do college websites show a student-centered learning (O'Banion, 1997) perspective? The 17 colleges in the study included information on their websites that directly referenced the importance of student success

and of students' perspectives in the learning process. Discourse analysis questions allowed for in-depth reporting on the language of the websites. All colleges had contextualized and referential language that showed the presence of the learning college on the websites and referenced student-centered learning. As in Research subquestions 1 and 2, the data provided ample evidence of support for the six principles, all of which support student success and a student-centered focus, either directly or indirectly.

There was support for Principle 1 (O'Banion, 1997), which looks for change in individual learners, at combined strong and moderate levels by 17 of 17 colleges. Principle 2, which seeks evidence of student collaboration in their learning, was supported at combined strong and moderate levels by 17 of 17 colleges. There was also support for Principle 3, which looks for multiple learning formats and opportunities, at combined strong and moderate levels by 15 of 17 colleges. Principle 4, which encourages ongoing student collaboration with internal and external entities, was supported at combined strong and moderate levels by 15 of 17 colleges. Support was found for Principle 5, which emphasizes students' learning needs over those of their learning mentors, at combined strong and moderate levels by 17 of 17 colleges. Finally, there was support for Principle 6, which calls for institutional accountability for outcomes and expanded educational opportunities, at combined strong and moderate levels by 16 of 17 colleges.

The study answered the three research subquestions, and the data charts in Chapter 4 show the large amount of learning college data (O'Banion, 1997) found on the

college websites. All 17 colleges in the study had strong, moderate, and weak evidence

to varying degrees, and each college had exemplars of learning college principles. The

large amount of data led to the conclusion that the learning college is alive and accessible

on living documents for prospective and current community college students.

In addition to answering the three research subquestions, the study supports the

three strands of the research. The first was to seek evidence of O'Banion's (1997)

learning college language on community college websites. That has been amply

supported by data in Chapter 4 and discussed in Chapter 5. The second strand was

consideration of Kegan and Lahey's (2001, p. 134-35) conceptual stance of the

importance of transformational language and its alignment with the learning college as

described in Table 1.

The data supported the importance of communication, transformation, and respect

among partners in educational settings as described in the learning college principles

(O'Banion, 1997). These same principles overlap with Kegan and Lahey's (2001; 2009)

stance on deconstructive communication, the highest level of discourse that allows

participants to learn and grow. For example, neither the student nor learning facilitator

has all the answers, but together they can construct learning within a context of

encouragement. This management of growth and learning for both student and facilitator

takes place in an environment of mutual trust and participation.

The third strand of the research was Gee's (2011a; 2011b) discourse analysis

methodology as an effective strategy for making sense of the large data set. This model

allowed the opportunity to study learning college language (O'Banion, 1997) on websites in depth. The discourse analysis also created a method of studying each college's website data closely before attempting an overall analysis.

Discovering a strong, continuing presence of the learning college (O'Banion, 1997) was heartening for me as a community college practitioner, devoted to teaching and learning, and interested in continuous improvement of the learning process. According to the websites, learning, success, and a student-centered perspective remain key factors for the colleges in the study. Though it is not possible to generalize to other colleges, the hope is that colleges might follow the example of elite community colleges and continue implementing the dream of the learning college.

Limitations of the Study

The study was fascinating for me personally, as a linguist with background in data analysis and as a former community college student and a decades long community college practitioner. This personal background provided strength for the study, but also some limitations. For example, I chose to stay at the top level of the websites, not looking in depth at individual departments. It might be interesting to pursue the same questions by drilling deeper into the websites to look for additional support, or perhaps for similarities and differences among departments in the same college or across the institutions.

The study employed Gee's (2011a; 2011b) discourse analysis model to analyze the data, though there are other models and theories of discourse analysis in use by

linguists and other scientists. Some discourse analysis looks for political or power struggles among different groups, while some seek ways to prove that language constructs realities outside of the words on a page. The current project focused on specific words and phrases that aligned with language from the six learning college principles (O'Banion, 1997), then subjected them to close analysis to determine how the language supported the learning college.

I chose to consider the top level of website pages, those available and easily located by any reader. Delving deeper into the websites, such as looking into individual departments or separate campuses in multi-campus districts, would have provided a different set of data outside the scope of this study. The different presuppositions of the search created data compromises, such as staying with the same five common pages for all 17 colleges. The original research assumptions of the presence of learning college language (O'Banion, 1997) were realized, in that these pages provided a great deal of evidence.

I also used a reiterative process, contacting committee members regularly for discussion of the process, and remained faithful to Gee's (2011a; 2011b) process in order to obtain the cleanest possible results. By using Gee's large set of data analysis questions, I was able to work in an environment of trustworthiness as described in Chapters 1 and 4. I also had the opportunity to revisit the data analysis of individual colleges as I compiled the summary.

Recommendations

This study was a good launching pad for additional related research into the presence, efficacy, and future of the learning college (O'Banion, 1997). The data could be studied from other perspectives, and future research may provide information about the usefulness of the research, implications for supporting the ongoing work of community colleges, and whether institutions of higher learning practice what they profess. A later study could apply the same process to other community colleges as members of the Board Colleges of the League for Innovation change over time.

Additional research might consider discourse analysis models aside from Gee's (2011a; 2011b) to provide confirmation for the findings achieved in the current study. These additional studies could apply various discourse analysis models to the same data, which could result in discussions of power/powerlessness in social situations, or in an analysis of the reality of website data in constructing real world events. It might also be useful to conduct surveys or interviews with the colleges in the study, to further determine the extent or awareness of the learning college (O'Banion, 1997) at these institutions. In addition, an updated version of Gee's toolkit questions added an additional question for consideration, and while primarily aimed at spoken communication the new question has some application to written text and could be considered as an additional way to analyze the data in the future (Gee, 2014). The additional discourse analysis question refers to large scale debates at a historical and social level, and could be applied in reference to the learning college model or other models of student learning.

The study is a good starting point for looking at data on other community college websites. It would be interesting to determine whether colleges that are not among the League for Innovation's Board Colleges would show similar levels of learning college language (O'Banion, 1997) on their websites. If other colleges are not indicating adherence to learning college principles, do they use other models for student-centered learning, and how effectively?

Community colleges provide a great service to the majority of beginning college students, with traditional open door policies and access for nearly everyone interested in a college education or other goal attainment. Additional research into the continuing work of the community college and learning college principles (O'Banion, 1997) would add to our knowledge of how students are recruited and become successful at the community college. This kind of study will become increasingly important as accrediting agencies and governmental decisions require more evidence of successful student outcomes.

One last recommendation is to consider the extent to which colleges put into practice the ideals that they profess on their websites. If it is possible to compare promises with actual practices, institutions could review their websites for accuracy and update services accordingly. In any event, colleges must stay current with the information they post on their websites.

Implications

Student-centered learning continues to be on the forefront of community college teaching and learning. President Obama's completion agenda encourages colleges to

promote graduation and transfer to universities, and the American Association of

Community Colleges (AACC) embarked upon a research study in this regard. AACC's

(2012) Final Report on the 21st-Century Initiative Listening Tour contains valuable data

related to increased graduation and initiatives that colleges can undertake to provide

additional student-centered learning opportunities. Part of the AACC report included

research on community colleges around the country. California colleges were interested

in reexamining the goals and mission of community colleges, to move away from older

models and towards new paradigms. New York community colleges require students to

successfully pass a student success course as they enter the college. Washington, D.C.;

Maryland; and Virginia jointly recommended more frequent review of whether or not

degrees and certificates lead students to finding jobs. While the AACC documents do not

refer to the learning college, many of the findings are based upon the importance of

student success.

AACC's Completion Agenda report (2011) identified three areas in which

obstacles block the way for efficient matriculation and completion. One of these areas of

concern is teaching and learning, with recommendations for faculty, students, and the

institution. Faculty were encouraged to move beyond and update traditional pedagogy

and to involve adjuncts in the process. Students were encouraged to become more

accountable for and participative in their own learning. Institutions were advised to

include more faculty development to move from faculty-centered to student-centered

models and to provide increased student services to students, especially for those

attending rural colleges.

AACC's work reminds the reader that caring about student success is not the

unique realm of community colleges or of O'Banion (1997). Yet O'Banion was able to

articulate in a very concrete way six principles that have aided community colleges in

becoming learning colleges. Thus, the study has provided evidence of community

colleges' intent to encourage student success. This push for student-centered learning

and for the learning college principles creates an environment for positive social change.

The impact for social change can be found at societal and global levels. In terms

of society's benefits, an educated populace tends to pass on the values of education to

family and community, with social benefits such as employment capability and less

reliance on social services. In global terms, student-centered and collaborative learning

as promoted by the learning college (O'Banion, 1997) creates an educated population

capable of working with others different from oneself. Community colleges commonly

evince goals for global understanding and education, thus making the learning college

efforts a much larger vehicle for change.

The search for social change in study results is important if done responsibly. In

this case, the implied positive impact of the learning college (O'Banion, 1997) can be

found in higher education in general and in community colleges specifically. Student

success and learner-centered missions are common among community colleges, many of

which are living their articulated mission and aligning the student success motivation

with the expectations of accreditation agencies for student goal achievement and education completion.

The methodology of this study implied a strong conceptual acceptance of the value of in-depth language study through the use of discourse analysis. This kind of research is common in the social sciences in the areas of linguistics and anthropology. Because there are few published discourse analysis dissertations, this study was able to use a different way of approaching the research to obtain a different kind of data than might be discovered in other methods. The benefit of this approach was the ability to look at language at multiple levels, from word through context level, and to apply a number of questions to the data for a deeper look at websites.

One observation for those constructing or updating community college websites would be to take care in word selection, avoiding common, current education buzzwords and employing instead active language with a difference that will encourage students to attend the institution. Most of the colleges in the study used very similar language, much of which was in vogue at the outset of O'Banion's (1997) work, so that the language appeared to have been cut out by the same cookie cutter. How much better for community colleges, going forward, to avoid hiring the same small set of branding organizations and to consider using discourse analysis methods to enhance their website communication.

Conclusion

It is true that in the years since O'Banion's (1997) landmark work, there have been many changes in community colleges. Some community colleges, such as Miami Dade, have been given permission to offer 4-year degrees. Some colleges focus on student-centered learning in initiatives like *competency based education* or *CBE* that allows students credit for past experience and moves all individuals ahead at their own pace. There are new governmental restrictions in students' ability to benefit from continuing education and learners' ability to find gainful employment after reaching their educational goals.

It is possible that the learning college (O'Banion, 1997) has become a mainstream concept. The pioneering Vanguard Learning Colleges fostered in the early 2000s by the League for Innovation in the Community College created models for other community colleges to become learning colleges, demonstrating institutional learning opportunities that have been adopted by colleges. The study sought evidence of the learning college on public community college websites, and the data demonstrated ample evidence and examples of learning college language on the websites of elite colleges of the League for Innovation in the Community College. It is gratifying to see student-centered learning and student success continuing as basic premises in community college mission and vision statements.

Whether directly or indirectly referred to, the principles of the learning college (O'Banion, 1997) are still in effect, and have, perhaps, adapted to change separately from

other models but with positive outcomes in mind. It is good to think that the learning college movement is not just an educational cycle, but will continue, in some form, to influence students to reach their goals in the decades to come. New legislation coupled with innovative thinking by college professionals will direct the course of student-centered learning in the future. The hope is that new strategies and initiatives will include the positive influence of the learning college.

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