Thinking Across These Three Models: Personal Reflection

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**1. In light of your experience and understanding, does one of these models seem to work more/better for you than the others?  Why or why not?**

Model 3: Psychological Model of College Student Retention would work better for me than the others because it breaks down the student's psyche in a systematic framework that is complimentary to Astin's IEO model. It begins by examining a student's "entry characteristics" including behavior, personality, beliefs, skills, motivation, and most importantly the student's coping strategies. Human beings are capable of overcoming huge challenges if they have a foundation of effective coping mechanisms to deal with negative emotions. This is the aspect that makes Bean and Eaton's model stand out to me. It continues to discuss the institutional environment including the student's social and academic interactions, and it again mentions the "coping process: approach or avoidance". This is the second category that is especially practical in model three because avoiding issues is indeed an option for dealing with difficult situations. If a student is capable of initially identifying a situation where they need to employ coping mechanisms then utilizing appropriate coping mechanisms effectively, they are more likely to be successful in overcoming difficult situations and learn from them. This will propel them towards cognitive development, which I believe is one of the main emotional outcomes of pursuing higher education. On the other hand, the student could choose to avoid the situation rather than deal with it. Doing so will likely affect their overall success in their institutional environment.

 There are clear connections and logical progression from the student's input to their interaction with their institutional environment, to their intent to persist, and finally to persisting. The model displays clear, measurable criteria that could easily translate to an observational study with corresponding data. Its potential for practical usefulness in institutional research is the reason I think it would work the best for me.

**2. What do you observe as similarities/differences across the three models?**

 Each model has a defined structure outlining attributes of a student's input "I", environment "E", and outcomes "O". Each model also addresses persistence as the final decision relating to the outcome. Either the students persist or they don't. Amazingly, all three models of various complexity all boil down to this one characteristic. After reading the lesson, I must agree that attaining a degree is not the only "successful" outcome for higher education students. Personal, emotional, and intellectual growth, or regression, could be outcomes of higher education. In life or education, one must show persistence to attain a positive outcome.

 I also think it is intriguing that models one and three specifically mention institutional commitment as a precursor for persistence to graduation. This indicates the importance that the authors have placed on the environment because an individual will only become committed to an environment if the environment shows some affinity for the individual. The emphasis on "faculty interaction" and "faculty culture" in models one and two is also an interesting similarity because faculty culture can be collaborative and supportive or competitive. This culture will rub off on the students for better or worse, and it will contribute strongly to a student's sense of belonging at the university. A naturally competitive student might not feel challenged at a largely collaborative university, whereas the opposite could be true for a student who enjoys cooperation and collaboration.

 The similarities I mentioned above show the crossover between the models and highlight key environmental factors that influence outcomes.