Following Faith Commitments

Adventist Higher Education Transition Theory

Larry D. Burton, Josephine E. Katenga, & Christine Moniyung
Andrews University and Southern Adventist University
Adventist Human-Subject Research Association (AHSRA) Conference
Loma Linda, CA
05.19.17
Background

- 2005 study sponsored by Association of Adventist Colleges and Universities (AACU)
  - Researched Adventist college-bound youth
  - Awareness and perceptions of Adventist higher education

Results
- For college-bound youth in public high schools
  - Low-levels of awareness of Adventist HE
  - Low-levels of contact from Adventist HE (Sauder, 2008)
Background

• AACU Actions
  • System-wide branding
  • Centralized marketing for AACU schools
  • Collaborative enrollment management
  • Targeted recruitment of college-bound Adventist youth in public schools
  • Sponsored a follow-up, two-phase, sequential Quant-Qual mixed methods study, CollegeImpact
  • We are reporting Phase 2, qualitative results today
Purpose of the Study

- Identify the factors or conditions under which public high school graduates transfer to and are successful in Adventist Higher Education
Method - Qualitative

Grounded Theory Design
The Eclectic Approach (Corbin & Strauss, 2015)
Grounded Theory

• To Develop, NOT to test a theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)
• Term “grounded” means that components of the theory come from, or are “grounded,” in the data of the study (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)
• Inductive and abductive reasoning processes are used to move from rich description of specific cases to the conceptualization of general hypotheses (Charmaz, 2014; Corbin & Strauss, 2015)
Participants

• Approximately one-third of the 6125 participants in Phase I volunteered to sit for interviews

• Inclusion criteria:
  • Reported having a positive undergraduate experience in an Adventist university
  • Completed a Bachelor’s degree from an Adventist HE
  • Were still practicing Adventists at the time of study
  • Graduated from a public high school
  • Were not children of church employees
Participants

- 22 interviews conducted (2 not recorded)
- 18 interviews were analyzed and used to construct the theory (2 interviews too poor in quality to transcribe)
- 7 additional participants were added when we checked for representativeness of the theory
- 25 total participants
Participants

Represented 10 NAD Adventist colleges/universities:

- Andrews
- La Sierra
- Loma Linda
- Oakwood

- Pacific Union
- Southern
- Southwestern
- Union
- Walla Walla
- Washington (DC)
Instrumentation

• A semi-structured interview protocol
  (conducted f2f or via telephone)
  1. Reason for choosing college/university
  2. Strongest memories
  3. Support systems
  4. Sense of belonging
  5. Relationships with faculty
  6. Challenges faced
  7. Contributions to success
Data Analysis

• NVIVO 9/10 software package was used to organize and analyze the interviews
• Constant-comparative analysis (iterative) techniques were used with the data as it accumulated (Glaser & Strauss, 1967)
  • Data collection, memo writing, coding, compare to previous cases, compare previous cases to newer
  • **Theoretical sampling**: Creating increasingly nuanced versions of interview protocols based on emerging findings
Data Analysis

• Coding processes were heavily shaped by Charmas (2014) and Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, (2014)
• The research team engaged in memo writing (Charmaz, 2014) and verbal debriefing/discussion throughout the project
  • Helped identify emerging findings
  • Guided theoretical sampling
  • Aided development and refinement of coding structures
Results

Adventist Higher Education Transition Theory
Results

The Central Concern
● Following Faith Commitments

Theory Components
● Transitional Pathway
● Domains of Student Experience
● Timeframe of Transition
Results

Markers on the Transitional Pathway

- Attractors
- Adjustors
- Detractors
- Transitional Tasks
- Anchors
Theoretical Components: Successful Transition to Adventist Christian Universities
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domains of Student Experience</th>
<th>Phases of Student Experience</th>
<th>Theoretical Components</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-enrollment</td>
<td>First Year (Particularly First Semester)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social (Relationships)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family members</td>
<td>Attractors</td>
<td>Adjustors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends</td>
<td>Family support</td>
<td>A network of friends in college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Significant adults</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recruiters/marketers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman orientation</td>
<td>Encountering (academy) cliques</td>
<td>Negotiating an adult relationship with family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community building programs targeting student retention</td>
<td>Living off-campus</td>
<td>Making friends rather than trying to “Break in”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty-student interactions</td>
<td>Age differences (non-traditional students)</td>
<td>Developing a “sense of belonging”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social (Romance)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A pool of singles who are more likely to share your values</td>
<td>Balancing romance and study</td>
<td>Having a serious boyfriend/girlfriend</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>apriori romantic relationships</td>
<td>Developing healthy romantic relationships</td>
<td>Becoming Engaged or Getting Married</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School sponsored social events</td>
<td>Relationship challenges, including divorce</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Domains of Student Experience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases of Student Experience</th>
<th>Pre-enrollment</th>
<th>First Year (Particularly First Semester)</th>
<th>As the Issues Arise (Particularly First Two Semesters)</th>
<th>Generally By the End of the Second Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spiritual</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attractors</td>
<td>Christian environment</td>
<td>Formal, campus spiritual programing</td>
<td>Other students who did not value or support the environment</td>
<td>Deeper relationship with God (Conversion/reconversion/recommitment)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Praying about college decision</td>
<td>Classroom Devotions &amp; Prayer</td>
<td>Incongruences</td>
<td>Personal spiritual engagement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Integration of Faith &amp; Learning</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Evidence of God’s leading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Intellectual</strong></td>
<td>Degrees offered at institution</td>
<td>Introductory courses in the major</td>
<td>Challenges with handling independence</td>
<td>Substantive leadership opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Many responsibilities</td>
<td>Substantive engagement opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Easy to get too busy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Theoretical Components

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theoretical Components</th>
<th>Attractors</th>
<th>Adjustors</th>
<th>Detractors</th>
<th>Transitional Tasks</th>
<th>Anchors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Examples of Markers

Social Domain - Friends
Attractors
Well, I had some friends that . . . took me up to PUC one Sabbath and so I was able to see the area and the campus and I was impressed. I'm a person that likes being out in nature, and even though probably La Sierra College would have been closer for me . . . I liked the more rural environment at PUC.

James Stuart, Pacific Union College, 1970 Theology

Adjustors
I met some older students that did some things to help me out. And they took me under their wing so to speak. So that made it good.

Jason Williams, Oakwood University, 1993 Social Work
Detractors
I do remember initially, when I came, I was thinking all the freshmen would be new and on equal footing, but once I got there, I realized that most of them came from [Adventist high schools], so they already large groups of friends from [there]. So at the very beginning, I remember feeling a little bit out of the loop.

Marsha Lawrence, Union College, 1995 Elementary Education

Transitional Tasks
A lot of kids that went to academy together already knew each other, so it was hard to break into some of those groups. Kind of made friends with the kids that were in my same situation, that had gone to a public high school.

Mary Boyce, Washington Adventist University, 1993 Elementary Education
Anchors

[The most important thing] would probably be meeting my friends, like my closest friends. We all met in the same place, we all started working in the same office. And even now, after we have graduated, and even though they have moved away, we are still really good friends. I would think that that is kind of important to me.

Janet Pereda, La Sierra University, 2011 Fine Arts
Examples of Markers

From Other Domain
Matters of Faith

Attractors

When I decided to go back to school in 99, I was at a point where I wanted more of a Christian influence in my life so it seemed like a proper fit at the time to go to Southwestern.

Lawrence Smith, Southwestern Adventist University, 2003 Broadcasting, 2012 Nursing

Adjustors

Maybe if I had gone to a different school, a public school, I would learn the same ideas, but would want to leave. At La Sierra the teacher showed me I could have these new ideas, these new ways of thinking, without abandoning my faith. I think that’s why, if I did it all over again. I would go to La Sierra.

Eugene Umar, La Sierra University, 2008 Religious Studies
Attractors
Well, my brother-in-law at that time, he suggested that I go there to find a wife. But I looked in the bulletin and far more interested in their theological program, so I ended up falling in love with the idea of studying theology and went there for that reason.
Matthew Carson, Walla Walla University, 1987, Theology

Adjustors
I was a fine arts major. I think that the department, like the faculty there, [were] very supportive and very helpful.
Janet Pereda, La Sierra University, 2011 Fine Arts
Detractors
I remember having a lot of conversations with Adventist students who had been Adventist their whole life, who grew up in the Adventist church, but weren’t necessarily practicing as an adult. And a lot of them had questions as to why I was deciding to become Adventist. Because it would seem like they would start fighting it.

Crystal Hopkins, La Sierra University, 2006 Social Work

Transitional Tasks
Okay. So I would have to say it was at a worship we had, like a required worship we had on Thursdays, you know? I think it was my sophomore year or so. I was kind of going through things like depression and stuff like that. And they had a guest speaker come; well I don’t remember his name or anything. But his stories really touched me and made me realize that life wasn’t so bad, and that God loved us, and it was just a life-changing moment.

Janet Pereda, La Sierra University, 2011 Fine Arts
Meeting my wife was definitely a contributing factor in changing my whole attitude about school and being consistent with my work, trying to do better and all that.

Lawrence Smith, Southwestern Adventist University, 2003 Broadcasting, 2012 Nursing
Matters of Faith

Anchors

And it was during my sophomore year, it was a student week of prayer that I made that adult commitment to the Lord. I had been baptized when I was 13, but to make that adult decision my sophomore year ... Very significant.

Marcy Johnson, Andrews University, 1971 English
Mental Maturation

Anchors

When I was in high school, I felt that I was closed-minded. Narrow-minded, you know? Only talking in black and white. I think the biggest revolution for me [happened] in college. It helped opened up my thinking, came up with new ideas – new ways to look at the same issues. So I think that was my biggest transformation: being more open-minded about engaging with different people who have different beliefs, different ideas.

Eugene Umar, La Sierra University, 2008 Religious Studies
Implications

• Develop action plans to help students deal with Detractors and move through Transitional Tasks
• Provide strategic interventions throughout college experience
• Provide faculty development on the role and importance of faculty in student success and retention
• Review current policies and practices related to new student transition
• Ensure new students have opportunities to develop friendships
Acknowledgements

• Funding for this study was provided by the Association of Adventist Colleges and Universities (AACU)
• Additional funding and support was provided by the Andrews University School of Education and the Andrews International Center for Educational Research (AICER)
• Dr. Jimmy Kijai of Andrews University served as the PI for the CollegeImpact study
• Dr. Vinita Sauder of Southern Adventist University and Rob Weaver of AACU served as the project advisory committee and liaisons for AACU and the research team.
Contact

Professor Larry D Burton
burton@andrews.edu
4195 Administration Dr.
Berrien Springs, MI 49104-0101