

The left side of the slide features a decorative graphic consisting of several vertical bars of varying heights and widths, and a cluster of five teal circles of different sizes. The largest circle is at the top left, with four smaller circles arranged below and to its right.

Tinto, Bourdieu, and Poststructuralism: Oh My!

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Outcomes

- Understand a framework for viewing student persistence and retention
- Understand how issues of identity may impact persistence and retention for students who are not from socioeconomically-privileged backgrounds
- Understand how one's own positionality and/or organizational practices may affect retention and persistence for these students



Overview

- Retention and Persistence
- Tinto's Theory of Student Departure
- Socioeconomic Privilege and Social Reproduction
- Bourdieu and Dissonance
- Critical and Postmodern Theories
- Positionality
- Student Interaction/Impact
- Awareness Activities
- Moving Forward



John Dewey

As individuals transact, their histories and experiences are weaved into the context



Activity

- List your defining identities
 - Reflect on the following:
 - The way you see yourself
 - Your interactions with students
 - Your childhood
 - Your interactions with co-workers
 - Other social interactions
- Keep these in mind throughout

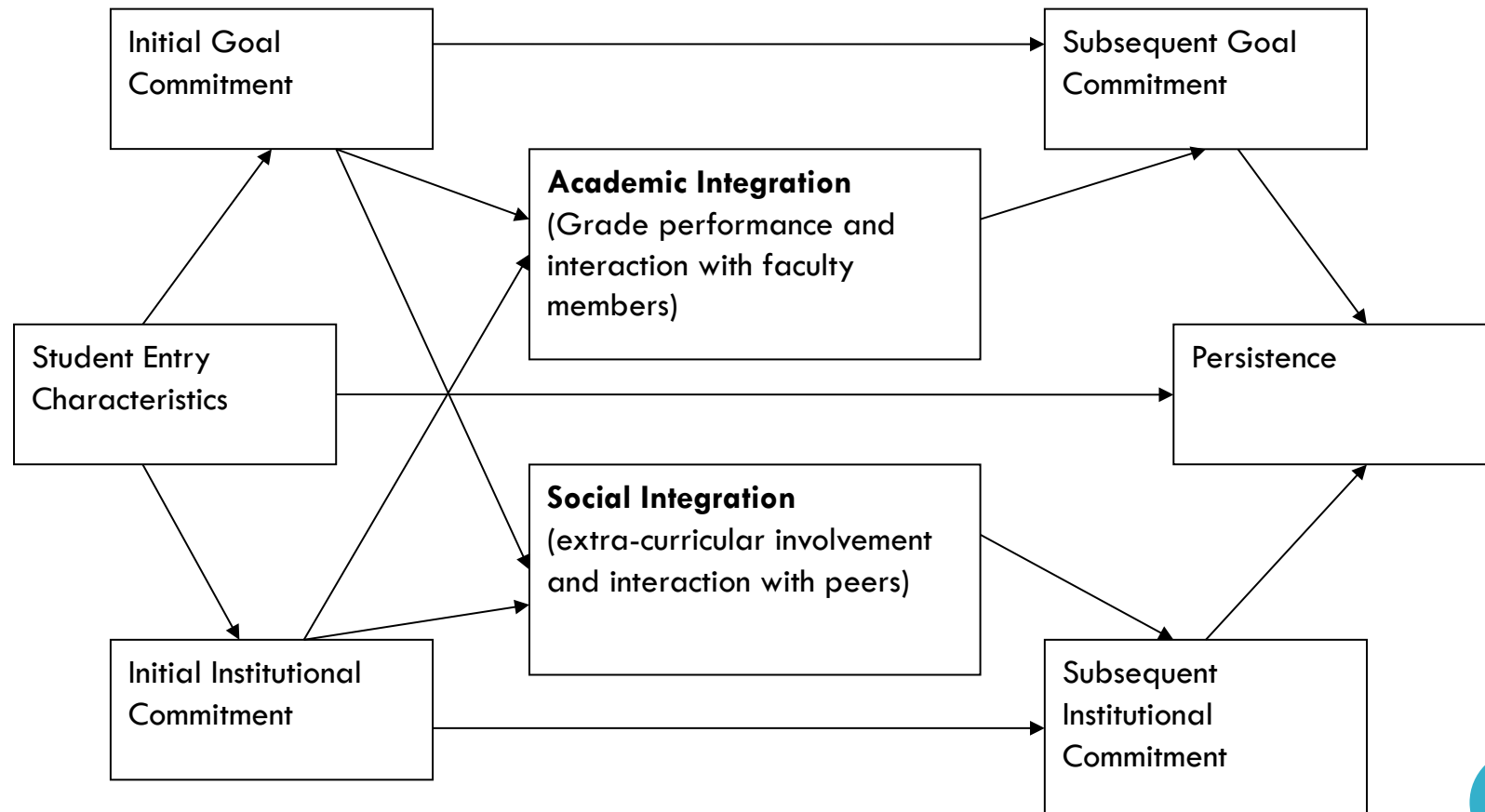


Retention and Persistence: Overview

- **Persistence** refers to a student's ability to remain registered in academic studies while balancing their multiple commitments
- **Retention**, contrasted with departure, refers to an institutions ability to keep a student registered in the institution
- Institutions support student persistence through programs and services and can measure the success of this effort quantitatively through retention numbers
- Few institutions have an intentional plan (Habley and McClanahan, 2004)



Theory of Student Departure: Overview



Model adapted from Braxton and Hirschy (2004)



Theory of Student Departure: Overview

- Departure results from lack of integration:
 - Formal and informal academic fabric
 - Formal and informal social fabric
- Identified as *the* retention paradigm

(Braxton, Milem, and Sullivan, 2000)



Theory of Student Departure: Critiques

- A priori methodology (Attinasi, 1992, cited in Braxton, Sullivan, and Johnson, 1997)
- Studied Demographic: white, full-time students in private, residential American Colleges (Randon, Jalomo, and Nora, 2000; Longden, 2004)
- Need for qualitative theory building (Attinasi (1989; Braxton, Sullivan, and Johnson, 1997; Tucker, 1999; and Zepke and Leach, 2005)
- Assimilationist: integration into the dominant middle- to upper-class institutional culture



Theory of Student Departure: Critiques

- Indeed, Rendon, Jalomo, and Nora (2000) conclude that **“the overall tone of the social/academic integration theory is that individuals, not the system, are responsible for departure”** (p. 144)



Socioeconomic Privilege and Social Reproduction

- Socioeconomic status measures economic and social ranking
 - Education
 - Occupation
 - Income
- Socioeconomically Privileged (SEP) and non-SEP students



Socioeconomic Privilege and Social Reproduction

- Students from non-socioeconomically-privileged backgrounds have lower:
 - Educational aspirations
 - Persistence rates
 - Educational attainment
 - Levels of income post graduation
 - Levels of graduate school attendance post graduation

(Walpole, 1997)



Social Reproduction: Access

- Increased capacity at European institutions did not result in significant increases for non-SEP students (Brennan and Naidoo, 2008)
- HECFE: As university capacity increased, participation increased from SEP students only (Longden, 2004)



Social Reproduction: Access

- 88% of youth with university-educated parents pursued PSE, vs. 68% and 52% (Knighton, 2002)
- 67% of youth pursue PSE when it is perceived as expected by their parents, vs. 34% (Barr-Telford, Cartwright, Prasil, and Shimmons, 2003)



Social Reproduction: Persistence

- 70% of youth whose parents has PSE credential completed, vs. 57% (Barr-Telford, et al.)
- Dropouts are from families with lower levels of education (Lambert, Zeman, Allen, and Bussiere, 2004)
- 21% of youth left PSE studies, whose parents did not value education vs. 14% (who left and parents emphasized value of education) (Lambert, et al.)



Socioeconomic Privilege and Social Reproduction

- “Children from the lower socio-economic classes may be increasingly excluded from postsecondary opportunities, thus leaving them with fewer opportunities for meaningful participation in an economic system that increasingly requires postsecondary credentials for access to well-paying jobs” (p. 103). Without significant change, Canadian society will continue to reproduce a university system that excludes non-SEP students – a system where social mobility is an illusion. (Whitehead, 2006)



Social Reproduction: Persistence and Lack of Research

- Canadian literature offers little insight into persistence for non-SEP student (Parkin and Baldwin, 2009)
- More research is needed to illuminate factors that influence persistence for non-SEP students (Tinto, 2007)



Moving Beyond Integration

- Integration as problematic for students who are not socioeconomically privileged
- Integration focus has not addressed underrepresentation (Walpole, 1997; Lambert, Zeman, Allen, and Bussiere, 2004)
 - Identity dissonance
 - Responsibility on student vs. institution



Bourdieu and Dissonance: Hallmarks

- Individual agency and social structures
- Unmasking power
- Challenging reproduction of hierarchy



Bourdieu and Dissonance: Key Terms

- Field: site of struggle
- Capital: forms of power
- Habitus: learned dispositions
- [(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice*

*note practice as the decision to persist or not in this context



Bourdieu and Dissonance: Framework

- Dominant university habitus
 - Upper- to middle-class white students from families with comfortable to abundant financial resources and where at least one parent has a university education
- SEP students
 - Postsecondary is a normal progression
 - Higher echelon institutions maintain and increase capital
- Non-SEP students
 - University is not normal or expected
 - Lower echelon institutions: less economic capital



Critical and Postmodern Theories

○ Critical Theories

- Goal is social change
- Challenges notions of hegemony (dominance) within society

○ Postmodern Theories

- Focus on power, language, subjectivities (identities), and deconstruction
- Goal is still social change; however, seeks to achieve this end through understanding individual agency



Critical and Postmodern Theories: Advantages

- Allows us to engage in self-reflection, providing us an opportunity to generate theoretical knowledge, thus enabling us to realize truths that are highly subjective
- Increases awareness of contradictions in everyday understandings, thus bringing forward the possibility for social transformation



Critical and Postmodern Theories: Limitations

- Experiences of people are very individualistic
- Difficulty in generating tools or formulae to use these theories in a practical way



Positionality: Definition

- A way of understanding our various positions within society. It is the culmination of our various identities which make us unique. Different aspects of our positionality place us in positions of both power and oppression, given certain contexts. Those who work as change agents must understand their positionality to be effective.

- Adapted from Lather, P. (1991) *Getting Smart: Feminist Research and Pedagogy With/in the Postmodern*



Positionality: Key Concepts

- Awareness of our various identities
- Identities affect our interactions
- Identities place us in positions of both power and oppression
- Understanding our identities can better position us to help others effectively



Student Interactions: Power

- As staff we are agents of our institutions, which immediately places us in positions of power
- However, students may also have experiences and opportunities that were never available to us, which actually puts the students in positions of power (e.g., technology)
- Power is fluid and in any given interaction, both power and oppression are at play by all participants



Student Interactions: Language

- Language is a “key participant” in understanding our subjectivities and power relations
- Our personal foundations (positionality) affect the way we communicate
- Language needs to be accessible (eg. Institutional language)



Positionality: Subjectivities

- Language and power are both affected by our positionality
- These subjectivities are important to make self-evident in working with students
- May affect persistence and retention



Activity

- Think about the information presented earlier about non-SEP student underrepresentation and how this cycle has continued and will continue without significant change
- Given your experience and understanding, how might non-SEP students experience PSE
 - That is, describe their habitus compared to the dominant habitus of the institution



Activity

- Refer to the first activity where you were to write down the different aspects of your positionality, further developing it if necessary
- Reflect on power and language
- Consider how your identities affect power and language and may impact retention and persistence for non-SEP students
 - That is, how you might create a dissonant situation for a non-SEP student



Activity

- Gather in groups of 3 or 4
- Discuss how our multiple subjectivities of ourselves can impact our relationships with students (from the previous activity)
- Discuss institutional practices/policies that may inhibit persistence and retention for non-SEP students
- Discuss moving forward



Moving Forward

- Theoretically
 - More research is needed
- Personally
 - Time to reflect, understand student populations, and our transactions
- Institutionally
 - Social Darwinism
 - Equal Opportunity and Equal Outcomes
 - Policies and practices for non-SEP students
 - Student Engagement as Social Reproduction

