Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal – Vol.6, No.8
Publication Date: Aug. 25, 2019
DoI:10.14738/assrj.68.6897.
Musamali, K. (2019). Advancing College Success Using a Transition Model. *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal,* 6*(8)* 430-443.

Advancing College Success Using a Transition Model

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ABSTRACT

While 50 years of research has increased our knowledge and understanding of retention, improvements in college completion have remained marginal. Nearly half of the high school students who enter postsecondary institutions do not graduate from college and dropout within the first two years. Many students who fail to graduate drop out after completing three-quarters of their degree program. Studies show that students chose to stay, change, or drop out of their courses at transition points of the college education lifecycle. This paper examines the challenges to college completion and proposes an integrated model to leverage transitions for college success.

Keywords: transition model, adjustment, adaptation, college success

INTRODUCTION

While researchers concur that managing student transitions is critical to college retention, transitions remain an undertheorized concept in higher education (Briggs, Clark, & Hall, 2012; Gale & Parker, 2014; O'Donnell, Kean, & Steven, 2016; Tinto, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2017). A transition is an adaptive process triggered by a change event, and retention is the continued enrollment of students at an educational institution (National Student Clearing Research Center [NSCRC], 2017; Schlossberg, Goodman, & Anderson, 2012). Adaptive processes comprise periods of disruption, reorganization, integration, and internalization (Musamali, 2018). Transition management is essential to facilitate successful adaptive outcomes (Bridges & Bridges, 2016; Schlossberg et al., 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Attending college is a critical period for high school graduates and helping students navigate the transition process is essential to postsecondary success. However, studies showed that while managing college transitions of high school graduates facilitated first-year retention rates, it failed to prevent future student departures (Tinto & Pusser, 2006). Nearly half of high school students who transitioned into postsecondary institutions dropped out and failed to graduate (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Hall, 2017). Moreover, student departures occurred at transition points beyond the college freshman year (Mabel & Britton, 2018).

Researchers agree that helping students manage transitions through their educational career supports college completion (Matheson, Tangney, & Sutcliffe, 2018; Morgan, 2012). However, a review of the literature revealed that while many researchers examined first-year college transitions, few examined student transition from admission to graduation (Coertjens, Brahm, Trautwein, & Lindblom-Ylänne, 2017; Matheson et al., 2018; Morgan, 2012; U.S. Department of Education, 2010; Valentine, Hirschy, Bremer, Novillo, Castellano, & Banister, 2009). Although transition management is vital to the college success of first-year students, more research is needed to examine student transitions at different points of the 4-year college education life cycle.

This paper examines leveraging student transitions to facilitate college completion. Discussed are the phases of transitions from admission to graduation. Kennedy's Integrated Transition (KIT) model presents a framework for leveraging transitions to facilitate college success. Examined next is the importance of managing college transitions through an educational lifecycle.

IMPORTANCE OF MANAGING COLLEGE TRANSITIONS

Marginal completion rates and an increased number of students entering postsecondary institutions have led to a growing interest in college transitions (Matheson et al., 2018). Students entering high education institutions face new experiences filled with uncertainty and challenging expectations (Terenzini, Rendon, Upcraft, Millar, Allison, Gregg, & Jalomo,1994). They encounter difficult transitions that compel them to make decisions about changing, staying, or dropping out of educational courses (Omachinski, 2014). Managing transitions is vital to student success and college completion outcomes (Gale & Parker, 2014; Matheson et al., 2018; O'Donnell et al., 2016, Tinto, 2006; Yair, 2009).

Transition Phases

Three phases characterize college transitions. They include *moving-in, moving-through, and moving-out* (Bridges & Bridges, 2016; Lizzio, 2011; Matheson et al., 2018; Schlossberg et al., 2012). The *moving-in or encounter phase* refers to the beginning of postsecondary education. For many students, the commencement of college marks a major life transition (Brooks & Dubois, 1995; Gray, Vitak, Easton, & Ellison, 2013). College transitions disrupt a familiar way of life and demand significant shifts in routines, roles, and relationships (Matheson et al., 2018; Schlossberg et al., 2012). Studies showed that transition demands in the *moving-in* phase led to a large number of student departures. Thirty percent of first-time, full-time student departures occurred in the freshman year (Atlas, 2018). Many students who failed to complete postsecondary studies dropped out before their sophomore year (Atlas, 2018; Hall, 2017; Mabel & Britton, 2018; Tinto, 1987).

A *moving-through phase* refers to the transition of students into their junior year. A review of the literature revealed that while a large number of departures occurred before the sophomore year, students continued to leave college through junior and senior years (Hall, 2017; Mabel & Britton, 2018). More than 40% of students who failed to earn a college degree dropped out after their sophomore year (Mabel & Britton, 2018; Shapiro, Dundar, Yan, Harrell, Wild, & Ziskin, 2014). Student departures continued through the *moving-out or exit phase,* a period that marks the beginning of a college to career transition. An estimated 33% of all college dropouts left after completing three-quarters of their degree program (Mabel & Britton, 2018).

Although student departures occur in all three transition phases, studies primarily focused on the *moving-in phase*. High school graduates transitioning into postsecondary institutions received more research attention compared to community college graduates, or returning adult learners entering four-year institutions (Bahr, Toth, Tirolf, & Masse, 2013; Gale & Parker, 2014; Zafft, Kallenbach, & Spohn, 2006). Similarly, students in the *moving-out* transition phase received little research attention (Lipshits-Braziler, Braunstein-Bercovitz, & Kapach-Royf, 2018; Wang, 2013). However, it is important to note that more student departures occurred in the *moving-in* phase.

Student Departures

Student departures provide insight into factors that influence college transitions. Contributing factors to student departures vary in each transition phase (Mabel & Britton, 2018; Matheson et al., 2018; Tinto, 2006; Valentine et al., 2009). While disruptions to customary practices

influence departure decisions in the *moving-in phase*, challenges to academic coursework are critical to departure decisions made in the *moving-through* and *moving out* phases. Studies showed the decision to stay, change, or drop out of a rigorous course increased with uncertainty about the future and the pressure to declare a major (Hall, 2017). Working more hours to meet financial hardships or family obligations increased the likelihood of student departures. Other contributing factors include a diminished sense of belonging and a perceived lack of support.

Although in the past 50 years research on college retention has grown exponentially, student departures remain persistently high (Fong, Davis, Kim, Kim, & Marriott, 2017; Kang & Wang, 2018; Lane, 2018; Metz, 2002; Tinto, 2006; Tinto & Pusser, 2006). The growth in knowledge and understanding of postsecondary attrition has only resulted in marginal improvements in retention, persistence, and college completion rates (Tinto, 2006). The need to reexamine our approach in facilitating college success is essential and long overdue.

While there are numerous models designed to support student retention and facilitate college success, most models focus on high school to college transitions (Briggs et al., 2012; Matheson et al., 2018). In contrast, the KIT model presents a framework to manage student transitions from admission to graduation. The framework facilitates adjustments by systematically identifying disruptions and reorganizing activities in ways that meet the demands of a change event. Adaptation is facilitated by assisting students to integrate college experiences and incorporate expectations demanded by new routines, roles, and relationships. The KIT model provides a more comprehensive approach to support and manage student transitions. Discussed next are conceptual and theoretical frameworks.

CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Transition models are primarily conceptualized using contextual, developmental, lifespan, and transition theories (Schlossberg et al., 2012). Education researchers use theories from disciplines of psychology and sociology to conceptualize student transitions (O'Donnell et al., 2016; Schlossberg et al., 2012). The disciplines provide a robust theoretical framework for conceptualizing college transitions. Researchers examine personal, social, and psychological factors to explain the transition process (O'Donnell et al., 2016). Identity development that includes complex interactions between students and institutional contexts form the basis of college transition studies (Briggs et al., 2012).

The KIT model is grounded in social constructionist and transition theoretical frameworks (Berger & Lackmann, 1966; Meleis, 2015; Rosen & Kuehlwein, 1996; Schlossberg et al., 2012). The social constructionist theory states that reality is created and maintained through relationships. In other words, everyday reality is generated and supported by our social interactions (Berger & Lackmann, 1966; Rosen & Kuehlwein, 1996). Transition theorists posit that change events trigger the need for adaptation (Bridges & Bridges, 2016; Meleis, 2015; Schlossberg et al., 2012).

The KIT framework defines a transition as an adaptive response to a new or unaccustomed experience (Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018). Transition is a process characterized by periods of disruption, reorganization, integration, and internalization (Musamali, 2018). The process entails constructing new narratives, restructuring assumptions, modifying behavioral practices, and developing relationships (Bussolari & Goodell, 2009; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018; Kralik, Visentin, & Van Loon, 2006; Schlossberg et al., 2012). Discussed next is the model's application in managing college transitions.

FACILITATING COLLEGE SUCCESS USING THE KIT MODEL

While researchers concur that managing student transitions is critical to college retention, many agree that managing transitions from admission to graduation is essential for college success (Gale & Parker, 2014; Lizzio, 2011; Matheson et al., 2018; O'Donnell et al., 2016; Omachinski, 2014). Although there are numerous transition models designed to facilitate college success, few provide a comprehensive and systematic approach to support student transitions from acceptance to completion (Briggs et al., 2012; Lizzio, 2011).

The KIT model presents a more comprehensive approach to facilitate and leverage transitions for student success. Its framework addresses transition challenges beyond identity development and induction. In addition to student integration, the KIT model includes internalization as an essential element of the transition process. In contrast to most college transition models, KIT's framework is designed to support student transitions at different points of the educational life cycle, including the *moving-in, moving-through, and moving-out* phases.

College transitions are disruptive and dislodge students from habitual academic, cultural, and social practices (Compas, Wagner, Slavin & Vannatta, 1986; Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018; Matheson et al., 2018; Pascarella, Pierson, Wolniak & Terenzini, 2004; Tierney & Jun 2001). Successful student transitions result in adjustment and adaptation to new academic, cultural, and social expectations. However, effective transition management requires an understanding of the transition cycle, as discussed next.

THE TRANSITION CYCLE

As shown in figure 1 below, the KIT transition cycle comprises of adjustment and adaptation phases. Disruptions to habitual assumptions and practices initiate a transition cycle (Bridges & Bridges, 2016; Schlossberg et al., 2012). Discomfort and distress triggered by disruptions from a change event prompt the need for adjustments. The purpose of an adjustment is to help manage interruptions to habitual practices and stabilize function in a changing situation. Transition cycles begin with adjustment and end with adaptation to new experiences (Bridges & Bridges, 2016; Bussolari & Goodell, 2009; Kralik et al., 2006; Schlossberg et al., 2012).

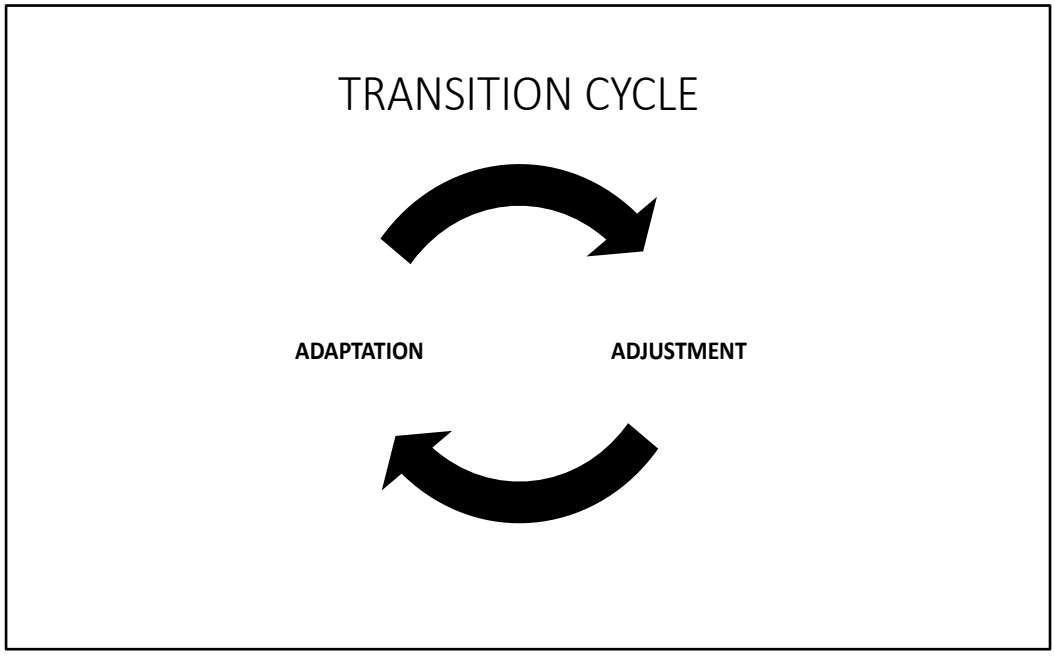

Figure 1. A transition cycle depicting adjustment and adaptation process

College transition cycles begin with disruptions to a student's usual way of life (Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018; Matheson et al., 2018; Terenzini et al.,1994). Discomfort and distress initiate the need for an adjustment to unfamiliar experiences and expectations. Successful transitions result in an adaptation to new college experiences. Discussed next are roles of adjustment and adaptation in the KIT model's framework.

Adjustment and Adaptation

Adjustments are temporary measures taken to manage disruptions from a change event (Bussolari & Goodell, 2009). The discomfort and distress associated with disruptions signal a need for psychological and behavioral adjustments (Kralik et al., 2006). The process includes an assessment and reorganization of habitual practices. Adjustments facilitate function in a changed situation and set the foundation for successful adaptation (Bridges & Bridges, 2016; Kralik et al., 2006).

Adaptation is a transformative process and the primary goal of a transition (Bridges, 2001; Bussolari & Goodell, 2009; Kralik et al., 2006; Schlossberg, 1981). It restores balance and establishes a lasting sense of stability (Bussolari & Goodell, 2009; Senesac & Roy, 2015). At the end of an adaptation process, newly acquired assumptions and practices are integrated and internalized into a way of life (Bridges, 1980; Bussolari & Goodell, 2009). Adaptation is complete when cognitive, emotional, and behavioral activities are synchronized with the realities of a new experience (Kralik et al., 2006). Effectively managing adjustment and adaptation processes is essential for successful transition outcomes (Bridges & Bridges, 2016; Bussolari & Goodell, 2009; Schlossberg et al., 2012).

While managing college transitions for successful student outcomes is essential, managing the transition process is critical to advance desired outcomes. Leveraging the transition process entails understanding deconstruction and reconstruction activities. Presented next are activities of the transition process, including deconstruction and reconstruction activities.

THE TRANSITION PROCESSES

In the KIT model, the transition process comprises deconstruction and reconstruction activities (Musamali, 2018). Shifts in habitual routines, roles, and relationships characterize the transition process (Schlossberg et al., 2012). Routines define uninterrupted and unproblematic operating procedures that facilitate effective functioning (Duhigg, 2014). They preserve a stable internalized reality and provide a sense of well-being (Berger & Lackmann,1966; Heintzelman, & King, 2018). Roles are engagements with our surroundings that provide meaning to interactions and affirm a sense of self, while relationships are the connections we have with others (Oatley, 1990; Talley, Kocum, Schlegel, Molix, & Bettencourt 2012). Figure 2 below depicts the model's transition cycle, processes, and elements.

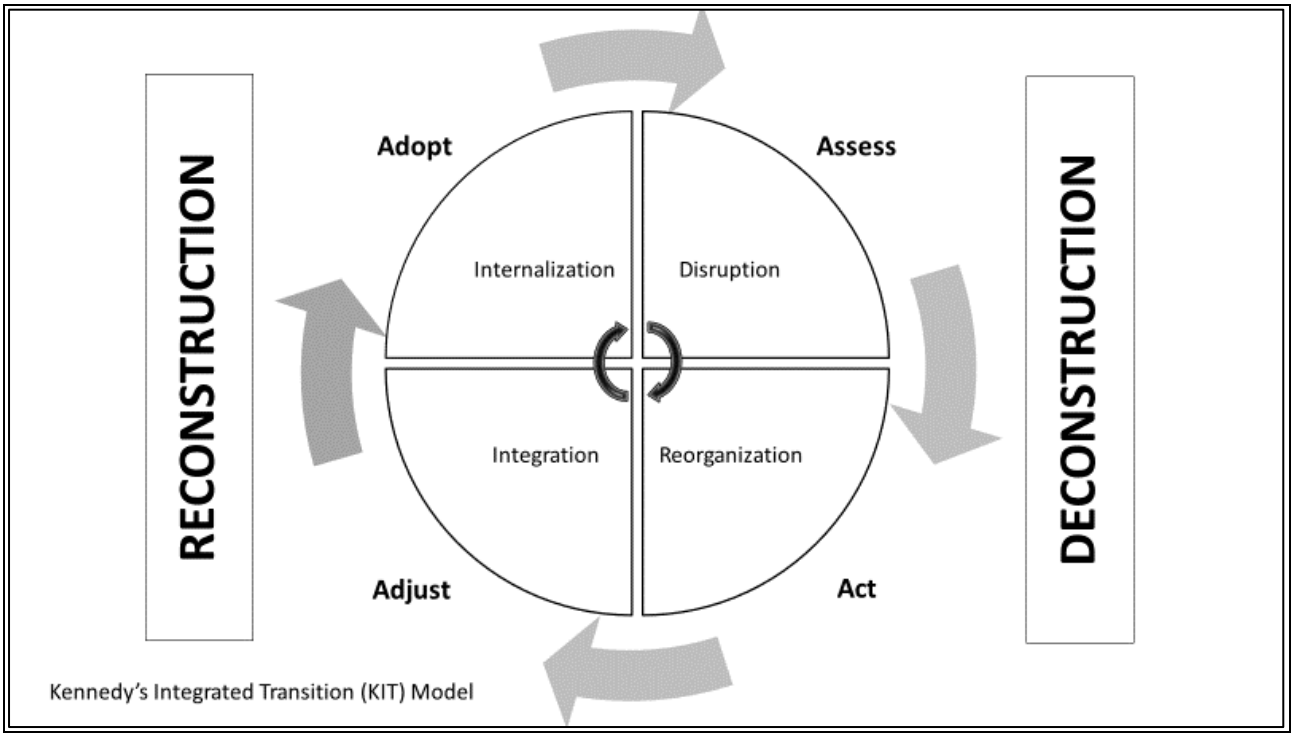

Figure 2. KIT Model elements and processes

Deconstruction

Deconstruction activities include assessing disruptions to habitual assumptions and reorganizing customary practices impacted by a change event (Bussolari & Goodell, 2009; Rosen & Kuehlwein, 1996; Schlossberg et al., 2012). Assessing disruptions entails unpacking assumptions while reorganization is the reassembling of practices (Bridges & Bridges 2016; Freedman & Combs, 1996; Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018; Monk, Winsdale, Crocket & Epston, 1997). The deconstruction process includes reconciling comfortable and uncomfortable experiences (Bussolari & Goodell, 2009). Deconstruction reveals assumptions, narratives, and practices that need reconstruction (Bussolari & Goodell, 2009; Rosen & Kuehlwein, 1996).

College transitions challenge students to deconstruct their experiences. Students are challenged to reexamine established assumptions and reorganize customary practices. They assess inconsistent assumptions and reorganize practices to accommodate new roles, routines, and relationships. Deconstruction is the first phase in the college transition process. It sets the stage for reconstructing habitual practices to meet the expectations of a new experience. In sum, deconstruction helps students identify assumptions and practices that are inconsistent with new experiences and in need of adjustment, setting the stage for reconstruction. Discussed next is the reconstruction process.

Reconstruction

Reconstruction is the beginning of a transformative process in the adaptation phase (Kralik et al., 2006; Rosen & Kuehlwein, 1996). The process entails integrating changed practices and internalizing new assumptions. In the reconstruction phase, restructured assumptions and practices are adopted to meet the needs of a new experience. Subsequently, the experience is incorporated as a valued narrative of one's self-identity (Bridges, 2001; Bussolari and Goodell, 2009; Kralik et al., 2006). Accepted new ways of thinking, feeling, and behavior symbolizes the end of a reconstruction process (Zittoun, 2006).

In college transitions, the process of reconstruction also includes integration and internalization. Students integrate and internalize experiences to facilitate functioning in a new

college environment. They restructure habitual assumptions and behaviors to accommodate new academic, social, and cultural expectations. Managing deconstruction and reconstruction activity is essential to successful transition outcomes. The process includes managing elements of disruption, reorganization, integration, and internalization.

ELEMENTS OF DECONSTUCTION AND RECONSTRUCTION

Disruption

Every change event triggers a transition, and all transitions start with disruptions to a status quo (Bridges, 1980; Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018; Schlossberg et al., 2012). Disruptions are unsettling interruptions to established sense-making processes and practices (Kralik et al., 2006). They interfere with the functioning of one's habitual routines, roles, and relationships (Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018; Pogosyan, 2016; Schlossberg et al., 2012). Assessing disruptions is a critical starting point for managing transitions in the KIT model.

Although disruptions signal the need for an adjustment, the intensity of a disruption dictates the measures and resources needed to make a successful adjustment (Schlossberg et al., 2012). To assess the severity of interruptions generated by a change event, the KIT model categorizes disruptions into low, moderate, and high-intensity levels as discussed next.

Low-Intensity Disruption (LID). A low-intensity disruption (LID) causes a slight interruption to everyday assumptions with minimal inconvenience to habitual practices (routines, roles, and relationships). Adjusting to LID is less challenging and requires few coping resources. LID demands minimal cognitive, emotional, and behavioral adjustments. Waking up at the crack of dawn for a favorite yoga class may interrupt one's sleep cycle but causes minimal disruptions to one's assumptions and behavioral practices. LID demands marginal cognitive, emotional, and behavioral adjustments compared to moderate-intensity disruptions.

Moderate-Intensity Disruption (MID). Moderate intensity disruptions (MID) are interruptions that significantly challenge established assumptions and unsettle habitual practices. MID requires substantial coping resources and demands considerable cognitive, emotional, and behavioral adjustments. Notably, MID is experienced by students who leave the comfort of their homes for the first time to attend college. Disruptions caused by college transitions are particularly challenging and intense for first-generation and low-income students (Gibbons, Rhinehart & Hardin, 2019; Pascarella et al.,2004).

High-Intensity Disruption (HID). High-intensity disruptions (HID) are severe interruptions that acutely impact assumptions, routines, roles, and relationships. They critically unsettle established assumptions and accustomed behaviors. HID requires considerable amounts of coping resources and demands significant cognitive, emotional, and behavioral adjustments. An example of HID is the loss or diagnosis of a loved one with a terminal illness (Miller, 2010; Walsh, 2016).

Categorizing disruptions by intensity level is a key feature in the KIT model. However, it is critical to note that disruptions caused by change events are fluid. A change event can trigger new disruption or function as part of a current disruption. For example, choosing to attend college across the country for a scholarship opportunity may stabilize a student's financial situation but disrupt their social support system. Similarly, moving across the country to attend college may result in a cultural dislocation that simultaneously provokes social, academic, and emotional disruptions. Change events that occur congruently or in proximity can trigger concurrent disruptions.

Although categorizing disruptions by intensity level facilitates transition management, people experience disruptions differently. For instance, individuals experiencing a similar change event could report different intensity levels. While a 64-year-old man who is laid off from his job may welcome the change event as early retirement and categorize his experience as a low-intensity disruption, a younger person may classify the same experience as a moderate intensity disruption. The KIT model uses self-evaluation reports to assess disruption intensity.

Ultimately, disruptions render an individual's problem-solving mechanisms ineffective (Brammer & Abrego, 1981; Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018; Schlossberg, 1981; Schlossberg et al. 2012). In a change event, disruptions render habitual assumptions and practices inefficient, leading to feelings of discomfort, anxiety, and helplessness (Moo, 2013). Disruptions initiate the need for adjustments to facilitate effective functioning in new situations.

Reorganization

Reorganization activities include reassembling assumptions and modifying behavior to meet the demands of a new experience. Reorganization helps manage disruptions and lays a foundation for reconstruction (Kralik et al., 2006; Moos, 2013). Assumptive practices are realigned to facilitate effective functioning in a new situation (Moos, 2013; Newman & Newman, 2018; Zittoun, 2006). Reorganization marks the beginning of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral restructuring (Bridges & Bridges, 2016; Grimell, 2018; Livneh & Antonak, 2005; Waller, 2014).

Reorganizing is an essential and critical activity in the college transitions process. Students entering postsecondary institutions are often challenged to reassemble established assumptions and modify habitual behavior to meet the demands of a new experience. The high school to college transition experience entails reevaluating assumptions and reorganizing behavioral practices to meet new expectations (Venezia & Jaeger, 2013). Returning adult learners experience the challenge of reorganizing academic, family, and work schedules to meet the demands of attaining a college education (Giancola, Grawitch, & Borchert, 2009).

Reorganization begins with an acknowledgment that a different approach is needed to meet the demands of a new experience (Kralik et al., 2006). Students transitioning into postsecondary institutions experience many situations that call for a new approach. For instance, students are often surprised by the level of autonomy afforded in postsecondary institutions. In contrast to the high school experience where student activities are structured and supervised, college students are responsible for structuring their activities, including choosing courses and preferred class times. While many first-year students' welcome autonomy in college, the shift in educational responsibility requires a higher level of self-management. Students are compelled to adjust their cognitive, motivational, and behavioral approach to meet the needs of the new experience and to enhance their college success.

The process of reorganization is particularly challenging to disadvantaged students. Many are first in their families to attend college. The students are often from underrepresented minority and low-income backgrounds. Marginalized students tend to be less informed about college expectations. Often, they are inadequately prepared to cope with disruptions to habitual practices and challenged by the process of reorganization associated with the college experience.

In sum, college transitions are disruptive experiences that require a realignment of assumptions and habitual practices. The KIT model's deconstruction process provides a framework for identifying and assessing disruptions. The reorganization of activities

restructures assumptions and behavior to meet the demands of a new experience. Deconstructing students' college experience is critical to successful transition outcomes. The process sets the stage for integration and reconstruction activity.

Integration

Reconstruction starts with integration and is the beginning of an adaptation phase. The process of integration includes reconciling elements of past and present experiences (Janusz & Walkiewicz, 2018; Rosen & Kuehlwein, 1996). Realigned assumptions and practices are merged to meet changed expectations and facilitate functioning in a new environment. The process preserves assumptions and practices that produce positive outcomes while discarding those that generate negative experiences (Brammer & Abrego, 1981). Integration activities reconcile experiences to create a congruent, cohesive, and consistent narrative, setting the stage for internalization (Berger & Lackmann, 1966; Zittoun, 2006).

Integration is critical in college transitions (Gray et al., 2013; Matheson et al., 2018; Tinto, 2006). Students in postsecondary institutions often face the challenging task of integrating new academic and social experiences. A perceived sense of belonging and an inclusive campus environment, with a student-centered focus, facilitate student integration (Hurtado, Saenz, Espinosa, Cabrera, & Cerna, 2007; Lane, 2018).

Improving integration on a college campus requires providing a supportive and safe space where students can comfortably reconcile past and present experiences (Wilcox, Winn, & Fyvie-Gauld, 2005). Studies show that staying connected to past experiences facilitates transition and persistence outcomes (Tinto, 2006). Students who successfully integrate into postsecondary institutions are more likely to persist and graduate (Hausmann, Schofield, & Woods, 2007; Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

The process of integration is particularly challenging for disadvantaged students (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Tinto, 2006). Over 40% of college dropouts are first-generation students (Atlas, 2018). Often, first-generation students are challenged by the process of forming new identities, restructuring established assumptions, and changing habitual practices. They feel less connected to college campuses and lack a sense of belonging that is essential for successful transition outcomes (Hall, 2017; Mabel & Britton, 2018).

TRIO programs supporting first-generation students on college campuses are an example of support systems that provide comfortable spaces for students to reconcile past and present experiences. The programs provide a sense of belonging and practice student-centered approaches that are essential in facilitating integration. Similar programs can be developed by postsecondary institutions to facilitate the integration of students from different populations on college campuses.

In sum, establishing structures to prepare students for college integration reflects an institution's support for successful transition outcomes. Providing a safe environment where students can comfortably reconcile experiences demonstrates the institution’s commitment to inclusion. Facilitating integration is essential for successful student adaptation and improves college outcomes. Internalizing new assumptions and practices as an integral part of one's value system completes the adaptation phase.

Internalization

Internalization signals an end to the reconstruction process. It is a transformative process that completes the adaptation phase. Internalization restores balance and provides a lasting sense

of stability in a new situation (Bussolari & Goodell, 2009). Its process entails introjecting new assumptions and stabilizing changed practices (Berger & Lackman, 1966). Internalization ends when new assumptions are incorporated as an integral part of one's value system and changed practices become a standard operating procedure (Deci, Eghrari, Patrick, & Leone, 1994; Deci & Ryan, 2008).

In the KIT model, internalization also concludes the transition cycle. A successful cycle is realized when "…feelings of distress are replaced with a sense of well-being and mastery of a change event" (Kralik et al. 2006, p. 321). Adaptation to new routines, roles, and relationships mark an end to internalization while a restored, stable, and valued self-identity symbolizes the successful conclusion to a transition process (Bussolari & Goodell, 2009; Schlossberg et al., 2012).

In college transitions, internalization entails adopting new cultural, social, and academic expectations (Pascarella et al., 2004; Tierney & Jun 2001; Terenzini et al., 1994). Students adapt to their new college environment by restructuring assumptions, modifying expectations, and incorporating changed behavioral practices. Internalizing college cultural norms and expectations facilitates adaptation.

Adaptation is challenging to marginalized students (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Gibbons et al., 2019). Many college students from disadvantaged backgrounds are unfamiliar with the cultural norms in higher education settings. A lack of exposure and inexperience with postsecondary expectations make it difficult for students to reconcile inconsistencies between home and college cultures (Darling & Smith 2007). Gaps in expectations present barriers to internalization and impede the adaptation process. Bridging the gaps between students' past and present cultural experiences is essential to facilitate internalization.

Additional barriers to student adaptation include the lack of support and negative perceptions of institutional bureaucracies. Studies showed that facilitating successful student adaptation require campus-wide supportive administrative structures and transition systems Kuh, Kinzie, Buckley, Bridges, & Hayek, 2006). Often, disadvantaged students feel marginalized by administrative bureaucracies and unsupported by faculty, staff, and peers. Positive interactions with peers, faculty, staff, and administrators are essential to successful adaptation outcomes (Briggs et al. 2012; Darling & Smith 2007).

In summary, internalization is an essential element in college transitions. It incorporates new experiences as an integral and valued part of one's self-identity and enables students to function effectively in postsecondary settings (Gale & Parker, 2014; O'Donnell et al., 2016; Tinto, 2006). Studies show that transitions can be leveraged to facilitate college success (Briggs et al., 2012; Gale & Parker, 2014; Hall, 2017; Mabel & Britton, 2018; O'Donnell et al., 2016; Tinto, 2006; U.S. Department of Education, 2010). However, a systematic and more comprehensive approach is needed to manage student transitions for better college outcomes.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This paper examined and presented the KIT model as a framework for managing student transitions and advancing college success. The model presents a systematic approach to facilitate transitions at different points of a college educational lifecycle. Discussed were the process of deconstruction and reconstruction, including elements of disruption, reorganization, integration, and internalization. The KIT model presents a structured, systematic, and more comprehensive approach to leveraging transitions for college success.

Key elements of the KIT model include disruption intensity levels and the internalization process. Disruptions are at the core of every transition experience. Categorizing disruptions by intensity is a significant feature of the KIT model. The level of disruption determines the corrective measures and resources needed to make a successful adjustment. The KIT model is designed to assess low to high-intensity disruptions. Assessing disruptions provides useful information for managing transitions successfully.

Internalization completes the transition cycle. The process of internalization incorporates changes demanded by a new experience into an integral and valued part of one's self-identity. Many college transition models address student integration but fail to address internalization as an essential element of the transition process. In contrast, the KIT model includes internalization as a vital element of the transition cycle. The transformative process facilitates adaptation by restoring effective functioning and establishing a lasting sense of stability in a changed situation.

Although the KIT's model provides a more comprehensive approach to transition management, it does not exclusively account for successful transition outcomes. The model is only one of many approaches that can be utilized to facilitate successful transition outcomes. Multiple systemic factors, including coping behavior and social support systems, contribute to successful transitions. Furthermore, researchers concur that successful college transitions require institutional engagement, support, and commitment (Demetriou & Schmitz-Sciborski, 2011; Tinto & Pusser, 2006).

In postsecondary education, the lack of clearly defined and shared terminology impedes effective transition management. Transition lacks a clear or shared definition across higher education institutions. Some define transition as a student's progression through the first two years of postsecondary education while others refer to specific periods of an educational life cycle (Lizzio. 2011; Matheson et al., 2018; Omachinski, 2014; Valentine et al., 2009). The lack of a clear definition presents a challenge in identifying an appropriate transition management approach (O'Donnell et al., 2016; U.S. Department of Education, 2010).

Additionally, transitions are conceptualized in broad categories that include induction, development, and becoming (Gale & Parker, 2014; O'Donnell et al., 2016). Induction signifies a period of adjustment, development refers to stages of maturation and becoming denotes a series of transformative lived reality and subjective experiences (O'Donnell et al., 2016). While all three approaches are essential, conceptualizing transition in such broad terms makes it difficult to advance transition management research.

In sum, the KIT model provides a framework that can be utilized to manage transitions and facilitate student success. It offers a more comprehensive approach to manage student transitions in the *moving-in, moving-through, and moving-out* phases of the college educational life cycle. Although the model aims to advance retention and college completion, coping behavior, social support systems, and institutional commitment are critical factors in advancing student success.

In conclusion, the ever-changing educational needs of students will always demand new approaches to college success. Nevertheless, transition management will remain a critical factor in advancing retention, persistence, and graduation. Regrettably, transitions remain an undertheorized concept in college success studies (Gale & Parker, 2014; O'Donnell et al., 2016). More empirical research is needed to examine the impact of transition models in advancing student success.

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