Adult Learner Information-Seeking Experiences During the Application Process

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Presentation Overview

o Coming to the Question

o Research Questions

o Literature Review

o Theoretical Framework

o Fieldwork & Data Collection

o Findings

o Questions

Coming to the Question!

o Trio Program supporting adult learners

o Transfer-advising

Research Questions

Primary Research Question:

o How do adult learners' information-seeking behaviors impact the phenomenon of applying to post-secondary institutions from the adult learner perspective?

Secondary Research Question:

o   How do adult learners utilize different forms of capital (social, cultural, etc.) to navigate the application and financial aid process?

o   How do adult learners respond to barriers if and when they encounter them during the application and financial aid process?

Literature Review

Adults in Higher Education

*Adult Learners in a Research University: Negotiating Undergraduate Student Identity (*Kasworm, 2010).

o   Issues with admissions process

o   xenophobic culture and customs towards adult learners

College Choice Models

o **Predisposition phase** is when high school students decide if they would like to continue their education by applying to a college or university.
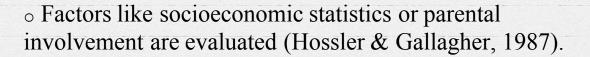
o **Second phase** students gather information about institutions and other college/university related data.

o **Third phase** is when students decide on what school to attend (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

College Choice Models

o Predisposition phase examines background characteristics to predict or explain a student's decision to attend or not attend college.

o Factors like socioeconomic statistics or parental involvement are evaluated (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987).

Extrapolating from Traditionally Aged Students

o   Traditionally aged low-income, minority and or first generation students (Tierney & Venegas, 2009; Venegas, 2006; Perna, 2007).

o   Graduate Student enrollment, access to technology and race/ethnicity (Poock & Berryhill, 2000).

Enrollment by Age

o   18-24 years had a 33 % increase in post-secondary enrollment b/w 2000-2014

o   Projected to increase by 13% b/w 2014 and 2025

(Department of Education, 2017)

Enrollment by Age

o   25-34 year olds had a 35% increase b/w 2000 and 2014
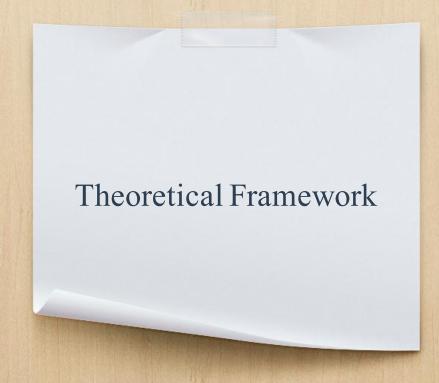
o   Projected to increase by 16% b/w 2014 and 2025

(Department of Education, 2017)

Enrollment by Age

o 35 year olds had a 23% increase b/w 2000 and 2014

o Projected to increase by 20% b/w 2014 and 2025

(Department of Education, 2017)

Theoretical Framework

o   **Comprehensive Model of Information Seeking** Johnson explores how "an individual's information field provides the context for individual information-seeking"(Johnson, 1997).

o   **Social Cultural Reproduction**

Bourdieu's "transfer of […] capital from generation to generation, thus contributing to the reproduction of the existing social order"(Rogosic & Baranovic, 2016).

Participants

- Need to consider age & social roles

- Students are considered minimally, moderately, or highly non-traditional(Choy, 2002).

Field Work & Data Collection

Data Collection

o   Survey was shared via recruitment email

o   Snowball sampling

o   30 students, 8 total interviews

Student Profiles

Name (Alias)	Age	Length of Enrollment	Status	Race/Ethnicity	Gender
Anna	49	3 semesters	Moderately	Caucasian	Female
Jay	31	1 semester	Highly	Asian	Female
Xena	56	1 semester	Highly	Caucasian	Female
R.L.	44	2 semesters	Highly	African American	Male
Joanna	41	1 semester	Highly	Caucasian	Female
Marie	47	1 semester	Highly	Caucasian	Female
Joseline	31	1 semester	Moderately	African American & Latino	Female
Don	65	1 semester	Moderately	African American	Male

Findings

Theme Development

Demographics

o Occupation
  o Dissatisfaction in field
  o Advancing in field
  o Transformative Experience

Xena

"I think that my answer is two-fold I because of the work I do. I'm exposed to HR specialists already that are already degreed. So I understood that I could poke around and that there were some options different kinds of types of programs. That there was an option. Then, I actually Googled. I wanted the top school hat had human resource programs and [blank university] was one of the top"

Income

o   Considerations related to financial aid

o   Understanding Financial Aid Packages
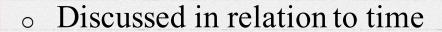
Anna

"Yes, but when we got it, we did not get any money, so I was confused about that"

"The only other thing with FAFSA, was that I applied for scholarships, I did not receive any. So I called [blank] and she explained that these are need-based scholarships. I have a 3.92 and I feel bad I am not qualifying […] They give you a need percentage because of my husband's income, but I do not want to spend all my savings"

Age

o   Discussed in relation to time

o   Point of comparison w/ traditionally aged counterparts

Joanna

"The welcome functions and orientation and all that stuff, and all the hoopla is more to so to speak is more so geared towards the younger people […] I think that's great but for people like me we're not necessarily interested in mixers or parties or whatever it is, it just kind of reminds you that you're not 18"

Types of Capital

o   **Social**
Resources embedded in social relationships or group membership. membership

o   **Cultural**
Familiar with the dominant culture in a society, and especially the ability to understand and use 'educated language" (Sullivan, 2001).

Social Captial-Marriage

o Marriage [is viewed as] an institution that had direct bearing on the improvement, conservation, or dissipation of a family's material and symbolic capital" (Bourdieu, 2002).

o Spouses experience serves as a lens for own experience.

Xena

"I, We did it with my husband. For his schooling."

"Okay. Okay. and you don't have to answer this but why did you decide not to apply for FAFSA for you."

"Actually, wait he didn't qualify, not everybody qualifies right?"

"Yes"

"I think that that is the right answer. Not everyone. I figured I wouldn't qualify."

Comprehensive Model of Infromation Seeking (CMIS)

o Considers how people seek information based on personal and background factors

o Personal/Direct Experience is one of four antecedent factors

o Past experience or experience through members of individual's network

CMIS-Personal or Direct Experience

o Adult learners can draw on past experience of applying to school

o Unique to Adult learners

o Change b/w application cycles?

Jay

"I thought it was interesting that as soon as I hit apply
for financial aid you know he [the admissions
representative]
said there are some scholarships and grants […]
type this in and see what you can get, see
what you qualify for you know. I said I am
single parent I work full-time are these
scholarships really going to apply for me
because at the community college some of
those scholarships you know, I was too old for"

Final Thoughts

o Admissions process is the first interaction w/ student and it shapes future expectations and perceptions

o Challenge assumptions about why the adult learner picked your institution

o Consider areas of difference and similarity b/w adult learners and traditionally aged counterparts. Find areas for partnership.

Credits

Leslie Laing
Monique Eguavoen
Judy Wills
Julie Fitzgerald
Dr. Ashley Adams

Participants

University of Maryland-Educational Opportunity
Center
Maryland Educational Opportunity Center

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Thanks!

Any questions?

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