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Letter From the Editors

Dear AGEF Science Today Bulletin Readers,

Welcome to the third edition of the Michigan State University Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate “Science Today” Bulletin! The purpose of this peer-reviewed scholarly publication is to highlight rigorous, innovative scholarly research conducted by members of the Michigan State University AGEF community. We are proud to present this diverse combination of interdisciplinary scholarship by graduate students, from Education to Anthropology. The scholars included within this publication conduct research that contributes to the betterment of our society. We would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to the Michigan State University Graduate School, the MSU AGEF community, and in particular, the graduate students who chose to share their research with us. This project could not have happened without the support that we received from each of you.

Sincerely,

Leigh-Anne K. Goins
Editor

S. Mo
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Ruby Carrillo
Christopher Seals



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Special Feature: Identity Construction and Gender in Western Honduras

As an Editorial Board we strive to provide the Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate community with innovative research projects and interesting analysis. This year we added a new feature to The Bulletin, a featured brief, which provides additional detail surrounding a new and innovative research project.

This year's brief by Fredy Rodriguez-Mejia, a Ph.D. Candidate in the Department of Anthropology focuses on Indigenous gender identity in Honduras. Through his work, he situates local practices surround land, identity, and gender within the context of farming rituals. Fredy conducted his research in Honduras with the Ch'orti' Mayan farmers between June 2012 and August 2013. Supported by two grants –the Gender Justice and Environmental Change Dissertation Research Fellowship by the Center for Gender in Global Context here at MSU, and the Bidirectional Knowledge Exchange Program Grant sponsored by the Indigenous Heritage Foundation at the University of North Carolina (Chapel Hill) with Kristin Laudau (Northwestern University)– his research engages the voices of indigenous populations, often marginalized and silenced, and centers his work through their voices which provides new insight into our understandings of land, identity and farming.

Through Fredy's strong and engaging scholarship, he challenges the reader to rethink their understandings of land, gender, and identity in indigenous populations and by extension, our own interconnections with land, identity, and rituals. As a testament to this, Fredy's co-authored a piece with Kristin Laudau won the best paper award from the Society for Applied Anthropology's Tourism and Heritage Student Paper Competition in March 2014. In the following pages, you will read about Fredy's innovative research and see him in the field with farmers in Honduras.

Constructions of Indigeneity and Gender among the Ch'orti' Maya of Western Honduras

Fredy Rodriguez-Mejia
Department of Anthropology

Key Words: Indigenous Identity, Gender, Political Activism, Ch'orti' Maya, Honduras

Introduction

Local and transnational activism has helped communities in Western Honduras mobilize as indigenous and obtain land from the Honduran government since the 1990s. Before this, for most of the 20th Century, the government, non-indigenous society, and anthropologists referred to these communities as either *Indio* (Indian), a derogatory racial classification, or *campesino* (peasant), a class-based identification that has been generally accepted by indigenous communities in the past.

Indigenous communities were successful in obtaining land largely because they mobilized as "Ch'orti' Maya," a subgroup of Mayan ethnic groups. This ethnic classification also helped them receive support from international donor agencies concerned with indigenous human rights issues. Subsequently, the classification Ch'orti' Maya has been adopted by the state, social scientists, workers of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and tourists to refer to indigenous people in this region of Honduras. Although this focus on ethnic identity and the use of indigenous rights discourse helped indigenous communities secure land and receive support from the state and international agencies, it has also subjected indigenous people to new expectations of performing indigeneity and gender. For example, although indigenous communities no longer speak the Ch'orti' Maya language or wear traditional clothing, non-indigenous society, expects them (especially women) to adopt and fully embrace these cultural elements instantly. Moreover, indigenous activists are expected to promote Western ideas of gender equality that sometimes conflicts with the norms and dynamics of their own communities.

Previous studies have shown the history of political activism among the Ch'orti' Maya and critically examined identity claims using Western standards of indigeneity (Metz 2010, Chernier et al. 1999). However, there is a notable gap in our knowledge of how indigenous people actually perceive and practice these new identities across multiple social terrains (e.g. activism and villages). In this study, I investigate the strategies that indigenous communities employ to increase their ethnic visibility, promote identity formation (e.g. encourage people to practice new traditions labeled Ch'orti' Maya), and comply with outsider expectations of indigeneity and gender.

Methods

I conducted 12 months of ethnographic research (2012-2013) in the municipal region of Copán Ruinas, Western Honduras. My research focused on indigenous activists, indigenous villagers, state officials, transnational activists, and NGO workers. I carried out individual interviews, focus groups, and participant observation in order to understand the role of identity in indigenous people's everyday lives, both in their communities as well as in their encounters with tourists and state officials.

Findings

I found that multiple actors and institutions set different expectations on indigenous people. For instance, state officials expect indigenous communities to become more visible by increasing the use of traditional attire and creating new rituals and traditions to set themselves apart from mainstream society. In the same vein, some development NGOs expect indigenous communities to increase the role of women in both development initiatives and community rituals. As a result, indigenous people have created gendered farming rituals which they have labeled as Ch'orti' Maya. In this sense they construct an image of indigenous communities that responds to the expectations of outsiders. On the other hand, non-indigenous entrepreneurs have taken advantage of the demand for indigenous visibility in the tourism industry and have created theatre performances that promote their own image of indigeneity. While the role of women is central to the community rituals created by indigenous activists, those performances developed by entrepreneurs portray the Maya as a male-dominated, violent society, which produce contrasting notions of indigenous societies in the region.

Broader Implications

Land acquisition has allowed indigenous communities to construct and introduce farming rituals that simultaneously help them create ethnic boundaries and comply to expectations of state officials and foreign donors for ethnic legitimacy. Through the display of cultural elements, indigenous people are able to promote themselves as traditional Ch'orti' Maya communities. Transnational activists and NGO workers have assisted in promoting these cultural elements through the production of not only farming rituals but also other environmental practices such as conservation and the production and marketing of local medicinal plants. In this sense, the quest for ethnic visibility comes in a package that includes new gender norms and also portrays indigenous communities as being naturally close to the environment. Meanwhile, in theater productions created by non-indigenous entrepreneurs, members of Ch'orti' Maya communities are hired to perform scenes depicting the ancient Maya in sacrificial rituals where male rulers and warriors are the protagonists. Thus, different ideas of Ch'orti' Maya identity are produced and reproduced in multiple sites—the community, agricultural fields, and theater performances—as indigenous activists respond to the expectations of multiple audiences.

Previous discussions on indigenous identity formation in Latin America, including Maya identity, have either theorized about the birth of indigenous identity through social movements (Jackson & Warren 2005) or its construction as a livelihood strategy in places such as the tourism industry and the market place (Little 2004a, 2004b). This paper brings these discussions together by examining not only how identity is constructed and negotiated through the interplay of political activism, the state, the tourism industry, and foreign NGOs, but also how outsiders' expectations sometimes influence how and why identities are performed. I contend that while the expectations of activists, NGO workers, state officials, and foreign donors circumscribe the identities of indigenous people, they also afford indigenous communities new opportunities to articulate their own vision of indigenous society which enables them to compete with notions of indigeneity constructed outside of their communities by non-indigenous entrepreneurs.

Future Directions

Thus far, my research has examined the different ways in which people have constructed an ethnic identity through multiple channels and the role that outsiders' expectations plays in this construction. Over the last 10 years people have gradually transitioned from embracing a peasant identity to self-identifying as Ch'orti' Maya. Future research will focus on understanding how their children make sense of these new identities. A new generation of Ch'orti' Maya children have not had to experience any form of transitional identity and hence it is imperative to examine if and how their ideas of identity differ from those of previous generations.





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Notes:

A Qualitative Study of International Graduate Students' Perceptions on Academic and Social Life at Michigan State University

Shikha Bista
Department of Sociology

Key Words: International students, adjustment, academic and social experience

Introduction

Strongly cognizant of the economic as well as cultural benefits that international students bring, colleges and universities in the US are increasing their efforts to attract international diversity (Liu: 2001). Yet successful international student recruitment does not entirely ensure positive educational experiences and smooth integration into their new academic and social environments. International students, according to Misra et al. (2003), go through the process of adjusting to a new social and educational environment. There is considerable literature that has examined factors associated with the level of socio-cultural adjustment experienced by international students. These factors include but are not limited to length of time spent in the United States, English proficiency, level of interaction they may have with students from the United States, their academic status or background, their ability to extend social networks and obtain social support from the host nation, and one's country of origin (Xiao-liang 2007). Compared to their domestic counterparts, international students are said to experience greater adjustment difficulties and more distress during their initial transition into the university and report greater academic and career needs (Poyrazli Grahame & 2007).

The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptins of international students concerning their academic and social experience at Michigan State University and have a better understanding of the factors that play a role in international student' adjustment, goals, and expectations. Being an international student myself, the prospect of carrying out an exploratory research on the socio cultural context of this adjustment process intrigued me. I am not only eager to compare my personal experiences with other international students, but also to gain an understanding of the mechanisms that help explicate the nature of the international student experience in US higher education.

Method

This study uses a qualitative methodology approach to understand the human social and adaptive behavior from the respondents' perspective. Qualitative data provided me with the opportunity to explore and explain how the select group of international students understood their lived experiences and the meaning they make of that experience. The study drew on data from in-depth interviews of 10 international graduate students at Michigan State University, specifically their perspectives and beliefs related to their cross- cultural adjustment and learning. The students represent a number of different countries: Taiwan, India, Pakistan, Turkey, China, Mexico, Japan and Serbia. Students reported studying in the following majors: statistics, psychology, sociology, economics, Environmental Engineering and education. All the international students identified for the

interview were unmarried and their age ranged between 25-35. Most of them had completed a masters' degree prior to their enrollment in MSU and have been living in the US between 1-4 years. No selection criteria were established for English language proficiency, country of origin, race, gender or other factors that have been previously identified as significant in determining their social and academic experiences.

Findings

Through in-depth interviews the study examined how international students conceptualize the accommodating and challenging experiences they may have encountered in their social and academic life. More importantly, the study demonstrated how international students actively negotiate US practices as they deal with cultural differences to become quickly adapted to their new surroundings, by learning its customs and values, as well as by becoming proficient in English. However, this study revealed that integrating and adjusting to life in the US is more than just learning and adopting the dominant values and cultures but also creating friendship networks with their o-nationals as well people who are culturally similar to them. In this study members of the host society, therefore, were not understood to be primary source of social support in resolving problems related to adjustment process. However, this was not viewed as a source of concern or isolation, and instead these students found their own way to cope with the strain that comes from not feeling completely integrated due to limited interaction with Americans. These students avoided feeling social isolated by developing positive social and peer relationships with those who they felt shared common cultural characteristics, beliefs and values.

Broader Implications

In light of the significant number of international students, and the potential benefits that might be derived from the presence of international students on American college campuses, it is crucial to identify and understand the quality of their experience in the US. Increased attention, therefore, needs to be paid to the situation of international students upon their arrival into their new environment. This is especially pertinent because many young people as they join the growing numbers of international students in US today may face not only the demanding transition from school to higher education common to all students, but the stress of adjusting to a new country, culture and often language. With this, the experience of international students' adjustment to academic and sociocultural life in the US is an area of research that demands attention, as international students are more likely to have a positive experience if there is better understanding of the unique needs and issues they face as a result of the cultural discord they may experience. By coming to understand their needs in all their complexity, institutions can play a key role in facilitating integration by promoting an environment that is hospitable towards international students.

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Notes:

On Modern World-Systems and Migration in 16th Century Zacatecas, Mexico

Christian V. Ramirez
Chicano/Latino Studies & Department of Sociology

Key Words: Colonial Mexico, Migration, Modern World-Systems Analysis

Introduction

This paper is the second exploration in a larger project intended to produce an analytical report on the origins and continuation of internal and external migration patterns to Texas by Mexican nationals. I argue that migratory routes between Mexico and the southern most regions of Texas have been in existence before Spanish contact and throughout the centuries. The purpose of this paper and overall project is to expand the limited theoretical writing *of* and *about* processes of cultural exchange and the social actions and meanings produced by colonized groups. The long-term migration patterns demonstrate that Mexicans are active participants in the western hemispheres' modernity project as exemplified by the Mexican colonial reality.

The second phase of the project focuses on the geographic area of Zacatecas, Mexico. Zacatecas is located in north central Mexico and is important because it was the site of imbalanced power relationships between Amerindians, enslaved and free Africans, and Europeans. Silver mining in colonial Zacatecas was a lucrative industry for the Spanish crown and conquistadores. As early as 1521 silver mining laborers were coerced, unpaid, and predominantly of indigenous and African descent (Chapa, 1979, pg. 99). Silver mining initiated a forced migration of Amerindians from central Mexico to its northern provinces. It was a phenomenon that would later establish wage labor networks. These colonial relationships have carried over to contemporary labor divisions in Mexico and Texas.

To give evidence of these relationships I ground my work in modern world-systems as exemplified by sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein. World-Systems analysis has its origins in sixteenth century Europe and the Americas, eventually expanding to cover the world (Wallerstein, 2004, pg. 2). This approach allows sociologist to analyze the cyclical features of social change and the long-term patterns of development in historical and comparative perspective (Chase-Dunn, 2007).

Questions important to this paper are: What are the Mexican ethnicities represented in the migration patterns? What are the geographic, gender, age distribution of the migrants? Differentiating demographics is necessary for the colonial period and will become the statistical foundation for my future descriptive and comparative exploration of the contemporary period.

Methods

This paper takes upon historical archival research and documentary review of secondary sources to investigate 'historical systems' as the unit of analysis (Wallerstein, 2004, pg. 4). This approach to sociological inquiry is understood as a stratification system composed of economically, culturally, and militarily dominant core societies with their dependent peripheral and semi-peripheral geographic regions (Chase-Dunn, 2007).

The methods of data collection and investigation in historical research involve the empirical examination of traces the past has left behind in the present, including material artifacts, written and/or otherwise recorded primary and secondary sources (Deflem & Dove, 2013, pg. 561). I began with documentary review of materials including population maps that located Mexican migration patterns in the 1500 colonial environment. The maps and subsequent literature provided a qualitative outline of Amerindian groups, their cultural distinctions, economic interactions with one another, and migratory destinations predating Spanish arrival in 1519. Only historical research can unravel such sociological questions that ponder on the conditions of society as emanating from a historical process of change and continuity (Deflem & Dove, 2013, pg. 562).

Findings

Anthropologist and archeologist on Mesoamerican society provide empirical evidence to the argument that indigenous migratory and trade routes were the antecedents to the Spanish colonial roads. Preliminary findings in this paper suggest that Amerindian groups in Zacatecas were active participants in the modernization of Mexico, particularly in establishing urban silver mining towns. The routes from central Mexico to the Zacatecas transformed the indigenous production of silver from a religious/political item to a world-wide commodity for Spain's economy in the global market.

Broader Implications

Regrettably, few if any American sociologists have considered many of the new social relationships of early colonial Mexico and their relationship to contemporary migration despite the abundance of recent historical literature that reveals additional insights about the populations. Sociology stands to benefit from the new knowledge, languages, cultural expressions, and understandings about human relations that have been constructed in Mexico. These realities shape the experiences, identities, and migratory patterns of the contemporary Mexican and Chicana/o population in the U.S.

Further analysis is needed to fully contextualize the social relationships between and among the various cultural groups of the geographic region in question. This includes disaggregating the multiethnic Spanish population and the distinctive African cultural communities of early colonial Mexico. Moreover, this project opens up a historical narrative of the fastest growing ethnic group within the United States and how their integration into a world-system has developed over the centuries.

Future Directions

Broadly, the overall project provides sociology and other disciplines with a theoretical understanding of how social relations are formed, reproduced, maintained or change over time. It also engages scholars to contend with. The origins of Mexican migration to Zacatecas give insight to the long-lasting consequences of colonialism and the social order in which multiple cultural groups are arranged today.

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Increasing Latino Educational Attainment in the U.S.

Elizabeth Gil

K-12 Educational Administration

Key Words: Latino educational attainment, Latino education, culturally responsive practices, Latino immigrants and education, Latino student success

Introduction

The U.S. should be greatly concerned that Latinos continue to have the lowest educational attainment of any ethnic/racial group in the United States, as they represent almost one-fourth (over 12 million) of school-aged (K-12) children in the public school system (Swanson, 2010; Hernandez, Murakami, Cerna, Medina, & Martinez, 2013). Although research often focuses primarily on academic achievement, there are holes that fail to address situational and systemic factors that impact educational attainment. This review attempts to bridge the gaps by exploring factors that may inhibit Latino educational attainment in the U.S., including school culture and response to student and family needs, lack of information, and higher education policies, and considers what steps can help increase Latino educational attainment rates. Guiding questions for this review are: what factors influence Latinos' educational attainment rate? What can be done to improve educational attainment rates among Latinos?

Method

Brought together, the data employed in this review tell a story that serves as a basis for looking critically at deficit discourses regarding Latino students and families, and points toward effective ways to engage Latino students and their families, fostering higher educational attainment. Among the search terms used to locate appropriate sources were *Latino educational attainment*, *Latino achievement gap*, *Latino crisis*, *Latino dropouts*. I also conducted searches using "Hispanic" as a search term instead of "Latino." Works related to this section of the study served to establish the problem and various factors that inhibit Latino student success and that result in lower student education attainment.

U.S. Census Bureau statistics, regarding characteristics of Latino groups in the U.S., and relevant literature drawn from Census Bureau data and the Bureau of Labor Statistics, provide context regarding the needs of Latino groups in the U.S., and address the costs and benefits of educational attainment, both individually and as a society (e.g. Levin, 2009).

In analyzing works focused on culturally responsive practices, I identified approaches that effectively responded to students' and families' needs. Initiatives were sorted into relational and informational types of approaches, and categorized into school-level and wider policy-oriented efforts initiated at the state level.

Findings

Educational environments that lack understanding of Latino students and families and their needs negatively affect students' abilities to succeed. Some Latino families, especially those with immigrant parents and children, face various obstacles, including language barriers, and school

cultures with expectations aligned to White, middle-class norms. When teachers, administrators, and school staff recognize students' and families' contexts, and develop respectful relationships with families, however, opportunities for student success increase. Among steps that school officials may take are including students' cultures within the school's academic program, reaching out to families rather than simply expecting them to come into the school, and making efforts to analyze school structures that might impede engagement and achievement.

Among Latinos/as themselves, while both native-born and foreign-born Latinos/as have a desire to pursue college education, there are differences in actual plans to pursue further education, with foreign-born Latinos/as being less likely to do so. Often, these students and their immigrant families have limited access to meaningful information to impact students' educational aspirations and choices, so families remain an untapped resource. When parents do receive basic information in addition to resources specific to their needs, they utilize information and share it with other parents.

Immigrant status can also be a major issue to college attendance. Among the obstacles facing this subpopulation is the ineligibility for federal financial aid and residential tuition rates. Studies such as influential works by Stella Flores (2010) have found that legal policies, such as those that allow students with undocumented status to pay in-state tuition rates increase the likeliness that this subgroup will attend college.

The current state of Latino educational attainment in the United States is not inevitable. Latinos as a whole have a positive attitude about education, educational attainment, and its importance for a successful life. As scholars, if we deconstruct and understand the factors that lead to students dropping out, having low achievement rates, or their abstaining from higher education, we can help to develop interventions and work with city, state, and school leaders to reduce obstacles to educational attainment.

Future Work

Future work will examine effective efforts to empower Latino parents, especially low-income and immigrant parents, who have traditionally experienced lower engagement with U.S. schools, to advocate for their children in pursuit of academic reforms and conditions that provide equitable learning conditions for their children and for all children.

Broader Implications

The effects of policies are not only experienced on an individual level, but send messages about how and whether society values all of its members. This review illustrates that policies and behaviors enacted by school officials, and policies authorized by policymakers, can positively or negatively impact the educational experiences of Latino students and their families, in turn impacting the likeliness of their educational attainment and lives beyond school in terms of labor opportunities, lifetime earnings, and quality of life in general.

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Social Identities and Social Attitudes in the Classroom

S. Mo

Department of Sociology

Keywords: Social Inequality, Social Attitude, Social Identity, Pedagogy

Introduction

Research studies have shown that students enrolled in social inequality/diversity courses (e.g. Psychology of Race and Gender, Introduction to Women's Studies) have a change in their social identities (e.g. sex, gender) and social attitudes (prejudice, sexism). Case (2007) found that students in Psychology of Race and Gender had more identity awareness and increased support of affirmative action by the end of the course. Additionally, Case found that students in Introduction to Women's Studies had greater self-identification and lower discriminative attitudes towards women by the end of the course (2007). Malkin and Stake (2004) found that students in Women's and Gender Studies courses had an increase in egalitarian gender attitudes and a reduction in prejudice against women. Both studies looked at the effectiveness of taking a social inequality/diversity course and the change in social identities and social attitudes, but Case also emphasized the impact of anti-oppressive pedagogy (e.g. feminist teaching methodology, course content).

However, the majority of research has focused on sex and gender. There are few, if any, studies conducted on the social identities of race and sexuality in conjunction with racism and homophobia. In addition, the social inequality/diversity courses were either studied in isolation or in comparison to other social inequality/diversity courses. It is not apparent whether social identity and social attitudes changes takes place in courses that are non-social inequality/diversity courses.

Building on previous scholarship, this study aims to address these issues first by incorporating multiple social identities (race, sex, gender, sexuality) and corresponding social attitudes (e.g. racism, sexism, homophobia), then by including both social inequality/diversity courses and non-social inequality/diversity courses. Finally by investigating anti-oppressive pedagogy and its impact on the classroom.

Research Questions:

1. Does enrolling in/taking a social inequality/diversity course impact students' social identities and social attitudes?
2. Does anti-oppressive pedagogy impact students' social identities and social attitudes?

Methods and Expected Results

An experimental pre- and post-test design will be used to study students' social identities (race, sex, gender, sexuality) in relationship to corresponding social attitudes (racism, sexism, homophobia, etc.) both in social inequality/diversity and non-social inequality/diversity courses. Social identities and social attitudes will be compared in the following three courses - Race and Ethnicity (social inequality/diversity course), Sex and Gender (social inequality/diversity course), and Family (non-social inequality/diversity course). Online surveys (social identities, social attitudes, demographic background) will be administered at the beginning and end of the semester. Multivariate ordinary least squares regressions will be conducted to predict the score difference

between courses while controlling for student demographic background and instructor demographic background. Additionally, a content analysis of the professor's teaching philosophy and syllabi as well as interviews will be conducted to examine whether anti-oppressive pedagogy is utilized and if it impacts students' social identities and social attitudes.

Projected results expect to be consistent with past research, where applicable, in that students enrolled in Sex and Gender will have the most significant change in social identities and social attitudes (reduction in prejudice, sexism, etc.). It is estimated that students enrolled in Race and Ethnicity will have a greater change in social identities and social attitudes compared to those enrolled in Family.

Future Work and Broader Implications

The aim of this study is to explore the impact of social inequality/diversity courses and anti-oppressive pedagogy on students' social identities and social attitudes. This study will also be conducted within Social, Behavioral, and Economic (SBE) science courses. Future research should replicate this study both within SBE courses and beyond to the Sciences, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics courses; as well as analyze anti-oppressive pedagogy. However, there are a number of other factors that may influence a student's identities and attitudes besides curricula (e.g. diversity-related events, awareness of social inequalities) that should be included in addition to anti-oppressive pedagogy in future studies.

Social inequalities exist and have negative impact not only within academia, but also within greater society. Students operate both in the college/university community as well as the community connected and outside of academia. As students transition from one community to the next, anti-oppressive pedagogy may be one way to impact social identities and social attitudes.

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Notes:

Social Psychological Interventions: Listening to Student Voices

Christopher Seals
Department of Education

Keywords: Social Psychological Interventions, Educational Psychology, Higher Education, Self-Affirmation

Introduction

National data shows that white students are consistently more successful than students from underrepresented backgrounds in educational achievement (Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009). While various strategies have been used to address this achievement gap, social psychological interventions have been introduced and have shown to be effective in closing the achievement gap for college students, by influencing students feelings and beliefs (Yeager & Walton, 2011). These interventions are proving to close the achievement gap and reduce stress and depressive symptoms (Yeager & Dweck, 2012). Based on value affirmation, social psychological interventions protect students from the stress and impact of stereotype threat (Steele, 1997) in academic settings, proving to be impactful for underrepresented students. The purpose of this study is to examine student responses in a social psychological intervention to see whether students' expressed beliefs reflect the belief message intended by the intervention. Many social psychological interventions are using open response questions and written components in order to make the intended message stick (Yeager & Walton, 2011, Stephen et al. 2014). However, there is not much research on what the students are writing and these open response answers could shed more light on how students are receiving these messages and approaching college. Further, the written responses could shed light on future academic performance, with written responses acting as a predictor of grade point average.

Methods

The intervention was distributed to over 500 incoming freshman students at a large Midwest public university. The students completed the intervention online, prior to or during orientation. The intervention is presented to the students as an exercise that prepares students for college. At the beginning of the exercise, students are randomly assigned to one of the two treatment groups (mindset or belonging) or the control group. The larger study is analyzing students' credit accrual, and use of resources on campus as outcomes that may be affected by the intervention. This particular study is examining the written open responses, of the students, using word count analysis software. The count of common used words is later compared with grade point average to find a relationship. The research questions are:

- ◆ What words, from the interventions, do the students express in their written open responses?
- ◆ Are the words expressed in written responses related to end-of-semester grade-point average?

Findings

Grade point averages are increasing for students from underrepresented backgrounds, after completing the interventions. I, however, argue that a qualitative analysis of the students' written responses can be a predictor of future academic achievement. By analyzing the types of messages that are shared in the written open responses we can find commonly used words that are associated with participants who expressed an understanding of the intervention. Stephens et al. (2014) reported themes that emerged from open responses, but this is a rare case. Additionally, Stephens et al. (2014) offered little analysis or discussion. My work will add to Stephens' and emphasize words that are used by the students. An in depth analysis of these words and themes could be beneficial to future use of social psychological interventions. A limitation is that students, who understand and fully conceived the intended message from the interventions, may have written very short or shallow answers out of a lack of interest. This means that some of the responses may not be fully representative of students understanding the intervention message and therefore could offset our analysis based on word use.

Future Work

I anticipate that the count of related words within the open responses will be strong predictors of student beliefs. Future researchers will be able to use student responses as a predictor of student grade point averages in the future, particularly over the course of their four plus year college experience. The next step in research may require doing a more in depth analysis of the students' responses that focuses on the variation in word use between students who may have been in different treatment groups of the intervention study.

Broader Implications

Currently we use written open-ended responses to understand students' beliefs concerning belongingness and their perceptions of personal ability. If we take this formula and apply it to all college students from underrepresented backgrounds, it is likely that student responses will inform researchers on their values, mindset, and self-image. This new line of research will bring awareness to researchers and educators, in crease understanding of factors concerning incoming freshmen, and will provide universities with knowledge to help their students be more successful academically.

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Notes:

Recidivism and Criminogenic Needs of Juvenile Sex Offenders

Ashlee R. Barnes & William Davidson, II

Department of Psychology, Michigan State University

Keywords: YLS/CMI, risk assessment, juvenile justice

Introduction

Risk assessments are comprised of criminal risk factors that courts use to measure the likelihood of an offender committing a new offense (Andrews, Bonta, & Wormith, 2006). Most juvenile risk assessments are designed to predict general re-offending, however there is variation in the types of offenses (e.g., violent, non-violent, sexual) youth commit, therefore it is important that juvenile courts are careful to choose the assessment that will best predicts reoffending for the correct subpopulation. For instance, a recent study demonstrated that a popular risk assessment, the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI), did not predict re-offending for a subpopulation of young offenders who were also involved with the child welfare system (Onifade et al., 2014). Juvenile sex offenders represent another important subpopulation of juvenile offenders. Juvenile sex offenders are considered a vulnerable population because while they are perpetrators they are likely to be victims of sexual abuse (Burton, 2000). If courts employ general risk assessment instruments to determine level of risk to re-offend, it is important that these assessments have the ability to identify the unique risks and needs of all offender populations (e.g., sex offenders, dual status).

This research study had two primary aims; first, to investigate how well a popular risk assessment predicts general delinquency and sexual misconduct for a sample of juvenile sex offenders. Second, to investigate whether a risk assessment instrument specifically designed to predict sexual re-offending was a better predictor of sexual and non-sexual re-offending than the general risk assessment. My research question is as follows: What is the comparative predictive validity of the Youth Level of Service/Case Management Inventory (YLS/CMI) and the Juvenile Sex Offender Assessment Protocol (JSOAP-II)? To address this question, we analyzed archival data from a local juvenile court. The desire to examine this research question was motivated by findings from a previous study (Onifade et al., 2014) that identified risk assessments do not consistently predict future offenses for unique juvenile populations. We chose to address these research questions because juveniles who sexually re-offend could pose a threat to the community if their unique needs are not properly assessed and treated.

Methods

The current study was conducted within a larger research collaborative between Michigan State University and a Midwestern juvenile court. Every juvenile offender on probation is required to participate in a risk assessment interview. The Michigan State University research team trained (32 total hours) juvenile probation officers on how to administer the risk assessment tools. After the data was collected, the research team obtained secondary, de-identified risk assessment data from the court in question to run analyses.

Based on previous research (Onifade et al., 2008; Prentky & Righthand, 2001), the research team chose the most validated general risk assessment, YLS/CMI and the most promising assessment designed for predicting sexual re-offending, JSOAP-II. The YLS/CMI is a 42-item instrument that examines eight criminal risk domains that predict juvenile re-offending. Domains include: Prior Offenses, Education, Peers, Attitudes, Behavior, Substance Abuse, Leisure Activity and Family. Each item is scored dichotomously (yes or no) indicating whether or not risk is present. The items are totaled and the composite score is translated into a level of risk; low, moderate, high, and very high (Onifade et al., 2014). The JSOAP-II is comprised of 28 items that are distributed across four domains (Sexual Drive/Sexual Preoccupation, Impulsive/Antisocial Behavior, Clinical/Treatment, and Community Adjustment) (Prentky & Righthand, 2001). The concept of risk assessment is that theoretically, those youth scoring high risk to re-offend are more likely to commit future crimes. Alternatively, those youth that are assessed as low risk are expected not to engage in future crimes.

Recidivism, or re-offending was defined as making official contact with the court up to one year subsequent to risk assessment administration. Previous literature has confirmed that a follow-up period of at least one year is sufficient to track new offenses (Onifade et al., 2008). The current sample ($N = 97$, 3% female, 35% non-White) was comprised of all juvenile sex offenders that made contact with the court between 2004-2012.

Findings

To investigate the comparative predictive validity of the YLS/CMI and JSOAP-II, we conducted a receiver operating characteristic/area under the curve analysis (AUC). The AUC statistic tests the probability that a randomly selected re-offender will have a higher risk score than a randomly selected youth that did not re-offend. This statistic is ideal because it accounts for the base rate of the predictor variable (i.e., re-offending). AUCs ranging from 0.0 to .50 indicate a risk assessment is not a reliable predictor of future crimes. AUCs ranging from .60 to 1.0 are most ideal and indicate a risk assessment with acceptable predictive validity. Both the YLS/CMI and JSOAP-II demonstrated strong predictive validity at predicting any re-offense with AUCs of .82 and .74, respectively ($p < .05$). When examining sexual re-offenses, the JSOAP-II significantly predicted the outcome with an AUC of .94 ($p < .05$), however the YLS/CMI did not reach significance (AUC = .56, $p > .05$).

Put simply, the JSOAP-II predicted the likelihood that a juvenile sex offender will commit a new sexual offense. The JSOAP-II also did an adequate job at predicting whether a juvenile sex offender would commit a non-sexual offense. Although the YLS/CMI performed well at predicting the likelihood that a young sex offender would commit a non-sexual offense, it poorly predicted the probability of sexual re-offenses. Based upon the aforementioned results, it would be imprudent of juvenile courts to employ general risk assessments to predict future sexual delinquency.

Future Work

The findings from this study increases our understanding of risk assessment, however more work is to be done. To our knowledge, there is no published study that has examined the comparative predictive validity of the YLS/CMI and JSOAP-II. Given the results of this study, general risk assessment may not capture the unique risk factors that contribute to sexual re-offending, or provide

information on the distinct needs of young sex offenders. It is important to note that sexual offenses are rarely reported, making it more difficult to access youth that engage in this specific behavior. Next steps include working closely with court administration to develop collaborations with other Midwestern courts with the goal of increasing the sample of juvenile sex offenders in this study. Replicating this study with a larger sample size could reduce the amount of error in the prediction and offer a more accurate picture of the relationship between risk assessment and re-offending.

Broader Implications

This study highlights the importance of employing empirically driven assessments in juvenile justice. Before the creation of risk assessment, the justice system relied on the experiential judgements and “hunches” of court administrators and judges. Experiential judgment, while valuable, is susceptible to bias, making predictions about who is more likely to commit crimes unreliable. The findings from this study contribute to the larger notion that using science to help make important decisions about the world is crucial. Failing to address the unique needs of young sex offenders while under the supervision of the court runs the risk of putting siblings, neighbors, and peers in danger once youth return to the community.

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Notes:

"I am black and I am gay": A Brief Activist Biography of Simon Nkoli, 1974 -1994

David M. Walton

Department: History/African American and African Studies

Keywords: South Africa, Apartheid, Black Consciousness, Gay Rights, Simon Nkoli

Introduction

This study is primarily concerned with two fundamental questions, and one sub-question. Specifically, the questions are: 1) Did Simon Nkoli face racism within the general South African gay rights movement and face homophobia within the anti-apartheid movement? If so, how did he address those challenges? 2) What was Simon Nkoli's philosophy concerning the connection between anti-apartheid activism and gay rights activism? I selected this topic because Simon Nkoli, a principle co-founder of the first national black lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intergender (LGBTQI) organization in South Africa; the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of Witwatersrand (GLOW), has been marginalized in the broader black South African anti-apartheid historiography. Thus, this study is, in part, a search for the 'real' Simon Nkoli, as well as an assessment of Nkoli's role in the democratization of South Africa. Furthermore, an examination of the history and trajectory of South Africa's black gay rights movement, from the 1970s to the 1990s help explicate Nkoli's contributions to the movement and impact on post-apartheid society.

Methods

It is important to note that this study is not a full length biography, nor a life biography; but a narrow activist biography of Simon Nkoli. I have approached this study from a Black Studies framework used to inform a historical method. In the tradition of Black Studies, I employ an African Centered Methodology that requires pluralism (or multi-centers), emphasizing the voice and agency of the subject, and an interdisciplinary understanding. The African-centered paradigm as an analytical lens places Africans' voice and agency at the center of the discussion. Important to my approach is the giving of agency and voice to my subjects (Keto, 2001). Through the use of primary sources, I highlight the agency and voice of Nkoli by reproducing his words and constructs. I use primary sources such as films with Nkoli interviews, Nkoli's prison letters, recorded interviews with Nkoli's lovers, friends and comrades; GLOW posters, African National Congress (ANC) letters, Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action (GALA) materials and documentation, recollections from the 1990 Gay Pride March, black South African gay youth memoirs, writings by South African gay men, and periodical entries. The 'African Voice' presents an important counter narrative that more comprehensively reveals the true qualities of Nkoli and the black South African LGBTQI movement. I also utilize analytical induction to interrogate secondary sources. Exploiting both primary and secondary sources, I privilege the actual accounts and words of Nkoli and his comrades.

Critical Race Theory (CRT) also proved to be a valuable paradigm and facilitated a more accurate and comprehensive interrogation of the global and South African political economies. According to Delgado and Stefancic (2001) CRT is a "perspective that includes economics, history, context, group - and self-interest, and even feelings and the unconscious" (p. 3). Further, the revisionist quality of this study's approach to historical narrative is also a result of the utilization of CRT (Delgado and Stefancic, 2001). Examination of the global and South African political economies, through the lens

of CRT, best reveals Nkoli's and the black South African LGBTQI movement's unique histories of winning inclusion in a broader racialized struggle as compared to the U.S. and Europe. Further, it also elucidates how Nkoli's and the black South African LGBTQI movement's motivations, aims and mentalities were constructed in ways that led to their militancy. Another characteristic of CRT that is valuable to my analysis of the general South African LGBTQI movement, more specifically the South African political economy, in this study is its notion of "interest convergence," sometimes called "material determinism" as stated by Delgado and Stefancic (2001, p. 7). Interest convergence, as constructed by Derrick Bell (1976), asserts that measurable improvements in the "status of some blacks... and predictions of further progress have not substantially altered the maxim: white self-interest will prevail over black rights." Even further, interest convergence also states that whites will unite and establish solidarity when it is also in their best interest, despite any pre-existing divisions. Simply, CRT too informs a historical method. The use of a case-study based qualitative research approach founded on an African-centered paradigm and CRT broaden the types of data collected, enhanced the analysis of that data, and provided for nuanced and comprehensive conclusions.

Findings

This study's thesis is that Nkoli did face, and identified, considerable racism against black South Africans in the general South African LGBTQI rights movement. Nkoli would confront this racism in the same fashion as he did apartheid, by creating parallel institutions, agitating, raising awareness, and organizing. Nkoli did face, and identified, considerable homophobia within the anti-apartheid movement. Nkoli would also confront this homophobia in the same fashion as he did apartheid and racism in the LGBTQI movement, while also engaging in strategic coalition building. Nkoli crafted and articulated a philosophy that positioned LGBTQI rights as another pillar of the anti-apartheid struggle. Simply, for Nkoli the denial of LGBTQI rights was consistent with the apartheid regime's oppression of black South Africans. To completely dismantle apartheid and create an inclusive post-apartheid democracy, LGBTQI rights must also be recognized along side multi-racialism.

Future Work

However, more work needs to be done about the impact of Nkoli, particularly concerning AIDS/HIV awareness. Further work on Nkoli should also explore his interactions with black lesbians in the South African LGBTQI movement as well as the implications of his having a white lover. Nonetheless, the present study complicates notions of masculinity and theology as the foci of Black Consciousness studies.

Broader Implications

Simon Nkoli's statement, "I am black and I am gay. I cannot separate the two into secondary or primary struggles" (as cited in Ditsie, 2007), from the rally before the first South African Gay Pride March in 1991, reveals his approach to LGBTQI rights and anti-apartheid activism in South Africa. As the 'father' of the black South African LGBTQI movement in South Africa, his views created and shaped that movement. His activism contributed to the inclusion of the sexual orientation equality clause in the South African Constitution. Thus, Nkoli's activist biography helps to better understand the South African anti-apartheid movement, the Black Consciousness Movement, and the post-apartheid political realities in South Africa.

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Notes:

Black Women and *Scandal*: Representation, Recognition and the Creation of Black Women Centered Narratives

Leigh-Anne K. Goins
Department of Sociology

Keywords: Olivia Pope, Post-Racial, Post-Feminist, Media, New Media

Introduction

In 2012, a new series starring a Black woman provided a possible disruption to the lack of Black women's positive media representations. Under the helm of Shonda Rhimes and her ShondaLand team *Scandal* presented Olivia Pope (played by Kerry Washington) a political relations crisis manager for the Washington, DC elite. Based on public relations crisis manager Judy Smith (former press aide to President George H. W. Bush), Pope "handles" situations with her team of loyal "gladiators in suits." Internet conversations surrounding the prominence of *Scandal* pointed to Pope's commanding presence, her beauty, and the dramatic and well-written script. Through this research, I examine Black women's intentional and active reading of Rhimes' personal narratives into *Scandal* as a mechanism to locate readable and relatable representations of Black femininity and focus on their perceptions of representations of Black women in media. Specifically, I outline the work Black women perform in response to the discursive a/effects of structural and social exclusion—crooked spaces—through active and intentional readings that provide momentary release or escape from fatigue. To achieve this and describe Black women's complex interactions with readings a post-race(ial) show, character and the series writer I ask: (1) do intentional readings complicate our understanding of Black women's interactions with post-racial characters and texts on Black women's social experiences, and (2) what benefits do Black women receive from their intentional and active readings of Rhimes' series, Pope's character, and engagement with the series' post-racial fantasy?

Methods

Through a Black feminist institutional ethnography, which examines the affects of structural exclusion, failed recognition, and (un)belonging through a discursive analysis of digitally mediate d (online) comments and focus groups and interviews. I use the term *crooked spaces*, an extension of Harris-Perry's (2011) crooked room, to outline the relative social a/effects of the aforementioned constraints on Black women's lives. Grounded within participant narratives and supported by theory, I examined comments and narratives line by line for manifest and latent themes as they relate to the social, psychological, and physical a/effects of exclusion and oppression. I then identify the ways Black women deploy a Black women centric post-racial reading to address the racial and gender fatigue they experience in their daily lives.

Findings

To negotiate this space and attempt to find balance in their lives, Black women blur the lines in reading representations through actively centering and intentionally reading Black women, or Black women centric post-racial readings. Their intentional reading of Rhimes' narratives about the intersection of race and gender and her social experiences onto the show and Pope's body reframed

the rhetorical function of race, gender, and class producing a recognizable Black femininity. Their intentionality in reading Rhimes blurs the lines between producer/writer and audience, which challenges scholars to rethink the ways Black women (re)read and (re)frame texts.

The work Black women perform (within focus groups and 'online') challenges the fatigue inducing affects of crooked spaces. Further, their intentional engagement with Black women centric readings and reframing of representation create safe spaces for interaction with post-racial fantasies. Their critical readings of Rhimes grounds their engagement with a post-racial fantasy and challenges scholars to rethink audience engagement with and negotiation of post-racialisms. The push moves beyond denials of race and associated effects (e.g. differential sentencing, increased deaths at the hands of police, and unequal access to economic advancement) to understanding that post-race(ial) readings can exist as a response to the structural effects of racism.

Future Directions

The term, *Black women centric* delimits the intentionality in reading Black femininity and associated experiences into shows and onto bodies. Similar to Holland's (2012) work on erotic revolutionaries and Cartier's (2014) extension of future texts, Black women centric readings challenge bracketed constructions of Black women's bodies in media, that open possibilities to renegotiate interpretations and interactions with media. Black women centric fantasies interrupt the fatigue produced by crooked spaces. Black women within this study actively create safe spaces through intentional reading and fantasizing, through a specific subjective gaze that accounts for the unique positionalities of Black women.

Broader Implications

The safety created within Black women centric post-racial fantasies are momentary and typically alone or with safe others. For this reason, I conclude that their re-readings of *Scandal* and Olivia Pope through Rhimes' writings and narratives, while important, are distinct from future text readings and colloquial and scholarly understandings of post-racialism. The evidence of active readings of and interactions with Rhimes counter assertions that Pope misrepresents Black women and Black femininities. Through a consistent Black women centric lens, participants complicate our understandings of Black women and their engagement with post-race(ial) representations and post-racial fantasies.

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