Social and Historical Factors Affecting Biracial and Multiracial College Students

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EDLD 7130 – Educational Research – Fall 2014

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December 9, 2014
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Introduction

In this research review, the article entitled “An Introduction to Social and Historical Factors Affecting Multiracial College Students”, describes social and historical developments of increasing numbers of biracial and multiracial college students (Shang, 2008). Biracial and multiracial students are defined as students having parents who are more than one race (racial or ethnic category). Multiracial students are coming to campus in increasing numbers, Jaschik’s work as (cited in Shang, 2008). Some of the social and historical factors that affect the experiences of multiracial students will be examined. The social and political developments, that may have an impact on how colleges and universities serve the multiracial students, will also be examined.

Biracial and Multiracial students are an important group of students because we are beginning to have more and more multiracial college enrollments. Since I am striving to become an academic advisor, it is important to find out more about the multiracial students and their backgrounds in order to assist them with their concerns and questions. Each student who is biracial and multiracial will have new questions, that advising staff; will have to be prepared to answer.

A qualitative research method will be used for this article review. Some of the characteristics of qualitative research are the process orientation – which focuses on why and how behavior occurs, rich narrative description- which is a detailed narrative providing in-depth understanding of behavior. Another characteristic is natural settings – which is the study as it occurs or occurred naturally (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).
According to McMillan & Schumacher (2010), qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, the possible use of a theoretical lens, and the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. To study this problem, qualitative researchers use an emerging qualitative approach to inquiry, the collection of data in a nature setting sensitive to the people and places under study, and data analysis that is inductive and establishes patterns or themes. The final written report or presentation includes the voices of participants, the reflectivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem. (p. 320)

The ethnography was used in this study, in that a social group, multiracial and biracial students were studied. In this article review, a convenience sampling was used. According to McMillan & Schumacher (2010) “a sample is a group of individuals from who data are collected and convenience sampling (also called available sampling) is a group of subjects selected on the basis of being accessible or expedient (p. 129). An example of convenience sampling would be a group of lawyers in a graduate class. Another example would be people who decide to go to the grocery store on a Saturday. The following subjects were chosen in this article: traditional-age biracial and multiracial students are part of a cohort of students entering college, high school students before 1980s, millennials who are born between 1982 and 2002, and entering freshmen in 2006. In which the traditional-age biracial and multiracial students entered college at a time of great student diversity and yet are likely to have little precollege experience with such diversity. The high school students before the 1980s were less segregated back then than they are now. Millennials were home-schooled or attended independent schools. Only one-third of entering freshmen in 2006 which is (34.0 percent) rated the objective of helping to promote racial understanding as either ‘essential’ or ‘very important’; and now that number has declined since it
was goal since 1992 to 46.4 percent, Higher Education Research Institute (as cited in Shang, 2008). In 2005, 11.6 percent of more freshmen who completed their first year in college reported a personal goal of “helping to promote racial understanding” as being “very important” or “essential” (Shang, 2008). The growth in awareness could make a difference in students having a greater diversity when they first arrival at college and the opportunities to interact with and learn from diverse student populations (Shang, 2008). The researchers gathered information that was valid because of the reliable sources they obtained information from like The Higher Education Research Institute and other reputable work mentioned in the article.

**Literature Review**

Biracial and Multiracial Students in the United States are increasing day by day. Of the 6.8 million people who indicated more than one race on the 2000 U.S. Census, 40 percent were under 18, meaning we should expect an increase in the number of biracial and multiracial students in the coming years (Shang, 2008). The way biracial and multiracial students feel about themselves and how they interpret their treatment by others have been complicated for some time now. In 2008 mixed race public figures came about in large numbers for an example: Tiger Woods, Vin Diesel, Dwayne “The Rock” Johnson, Halle Berry, and Barack Obama just to name a few. In many parts of the United States, mixed race people were not welcome just a few generations ago. The last state law banning interracial marriage was in Alabama. Thirty-three years ago these laws were ruled by the Supreme Court unconstitutional. These type of decision sent mixed messages to biracial and multiracial people about the acceptability of their heritages. Sadly, recently in the past year or so, “Don Imus’s infamous reference to the Rutgers women’s basketball team as “nappy headed hos” on his nationally syndicated radio program Imus in the Morning is an example of the racial bigotry” according to Associate Press, 2007 (as cited in
Shang, 2008, p. 6). I personally feel that people still have hidden racism inside of them that they never express unless indirectly.

**Findings**

As United States colleges and universities ponder the changes that are occurring in the student body, they must get ready for all the biracial and multiracial students who will be enrolling by 2015. Of the 2.6 million students expected to enroll in college by 2015, 80 percent of them will be African American, Hispanic, and Asian Pacific Islander, in which minority students make up 37.2 percent of the undergraduate enrollment. As more diverse students come to college from segregated backgrounds, students are going to needs more social support and opportunities to explore personal backgrounds to relate to the other students (Shang, 2008).

**Conclusion**

Biracial and Multiracial students are going to need programs and services that can assist them when they first at college in order for them to adapt. Institutions of higher education are great places for mixed-raced students to grow personally and develop. Colleges and universities allow students of different races to ask each other without having family around. It also allows the students to relate to other students of different economic status, different races, different sexual orientations, and different cultures. Programs and services should be provided for biracial and multiracial students with an understanding of affirmative action and race equity, social, legal, and historical contexts related to mixed-race people.

Personally I feel that staff at colleges and universities has to become more educated about biracial and multiracial students in order to relate to them when they come in the office to receive help. The more educated we are, the more we can relate to them and make them feel like
we genuinely care about their situation related to being a well-rounded student. Some of the most popular words we need to learn are new words like “phenotype, biracial, monoracial, multiracial, multicultural, and AHANA (African, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American). This was a summary of the social and historical factors in this article review that affects the experiences of biracial and multiracial students.
References
