

Title

Using Multiple Critical Methodologies to Center the Experiences of Marginalized Community College Students and Faculty

Abstract

We gather four papers employing critical quantitative and qualitative methodologies to advance knowledge about understudied and marginalized community college students and faculty/staff. The studies counter dominant narratives of success in higher education while simultaneously offering counterstories which expose hegemonic systems that contribute to ongoing (in)equities within community colleges.

Proposal Text**Purposes**

Community colleges enroll 41% of undergraduate students and disproportionately serve students from low-income facilities and racially minoritized students (CCRC, n.d.). While policies have generally aimed at building capacity within community colleges for historically minoritized and under-served students, these policies have also been less explicit in naming the specific challenges and inequities many groups face – which could stall equity efforts (Ching et al., 2020). To address this tension, this session synthesizes four new community college papers that advance knowledge on specific marginalized groups: women and racially minoritized students in computing fields, Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander students, and racially minoritized administrators, faculty, and staff in community colleges. Importantly, each paper uses critical perspectives and approaches to 1) provide counterstories of distinct and understudied groups in community college research and 2) counter dominant structures, ideologies, and practices that shape and affect these groups' experiences in the community college setting.

Theoretical Argument

Scholarly discourse has illuminated how hegemonic and oppressive structures operate in education and work to ignore students' (and faculty/staff) cultural assets and strengths (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Yosso, 2005). This reality calls for the use of research methodologies that center marginalized communities. Accordingly, this session demonstrates how more recently developed critical frameworks and methodologies – including QuantCrit (Garcia et al., 2018; Gilborn et al., 2018), AsianCrit (Iftikar & Museus, 2018), and the theory of racialized organizations (Ray, 2019) – offer new opportunities and important guidance to expand and humanize research inquiry in the community college setting.

The session also intentionally integrates quantitative and qualitative methodologies, showcasing how critical frameworks in both quantitative and qualitative inquiry enhance research in the community college setting. Two papers focus on computer science/computing in the community college, one using feminist phenomenology and

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one using QuantCrit, to identify counternarratives of success in computer science, along with inequities in access to computing fields. Another paper also uses QuantCrit and AsianCrit to disaggregate data on the enrollment decisions of Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander students – groups who are often subsumed by monolithic AAPI narratives. Finally, the fourth paper draws upon Ray’s (2019) racialized organizations to explore how racially minoritized faculty and staff perceive the campus racial climate, while also providing recommendations for how community colleges as an organization can improve campus racial climate for marginalized staff.

Relevant Literature

Given their status as open-access and affordable institutions and serving a large proportion of students of color attending college, community colleges must pay attention to inequitable experiences and outcomes of marginalized students. Critical approaches in community college research have therefore been used to examine the tensions that exist for marginalized students and how postsecondary systems tend to overlook and undermine students’ diverse cultural assets that bolster their college experiences and successes (Yosso, 2005). Community college scholars have provided empirical evidence and future directions for advancing equity by using critical research designs to tend to intersecting marginalized identities, assets born from family and cultural capital, and investigating racial diversity at the organization level (Ching et al., 2020; Jabbar et al., 2019; Leal-Carillo et al., 2023; Ngo & Sundell, 2023). Additionally, critical scholarship on community college students has illuminated the distinct challenges and stressors (e.g., transportation issues, housing insecurities) (e.g., Ojeda et al., 2012; Xiong, 2021) of students of color that current postsecondary organizational structures are ill-prepared to address. By generating empirical evidence that both highlights the specific counterstory of distinct groups and calls out the institutionalized racism that minimizes these stories, research is better able to leverage practices that not only improves the experiences and outcomes of marginalized groups, but also inform policy change that may dismantle oppressive practices and structures in community college systems.

Emergent Conclusions/Implications

Emerging evidence across all four papers suggests an urgent need to expand discourse on understudied community college groups by using critical research designs to provide empowering counterstories of success. Paper 1 and 2 suggests that fostering diverse student trajectories in community colleges that are not often recognized by traditional notions of success contribute to equitable access and outcomes for women and underrepresented minoritized students in computing. Paper 3 illuminates that Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander students vary significantly in their goals and intents to enroll at community colleges when compared to their other AANHPI peers adding to the growing evidence for disaggregating ethnic groups in research, practice, and policy. Finally, the findings from paper 4 point to the urgent

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need for organizational diversity to counter the skewed perceptions of racial campus climate that may drive policy decisions. While each paper offers specific insights on the groups that they examine and the counterstories that emerge from the findings, the critical perspectives employed by each study also ties each paper back to countering dominant narratives that are pervasive within higher education systems. By dually giving power to the stories of marginalized groups and deconstructing systems of oppression that are embedded in postsecondary organizational structures, research offers tailored recommendations for practice and adds to the growing literature that may guide policy reform toward equitable outcomes.

Significance of the Session

The session responds to the growing interest in using critical methodologies and frameworks such as QuantCrit and racialized organizations to inform research in higher education. Importantly, the session also focuses on community college students, faculty, and staff, and offers a space for scholars and practitioners to engage in conversations about how multiple critical methodologies can enhance research with a focus on community colleges.

Building Community in this Session

The authors and discussant of the session comprise faculty, an associate research director, doctoral students, and a postdoctoral fellow from five public universities in the U.S. Each author has developed expertise in community college research, with collective interdisciplinary training, teaching, and scholarship that span higher education, policy analysis, sociology, and student affairs. Taken together, this session offers not only an opportunity for the session contributors to build an intellectual community, but also for a broad audience to engage with scholars from diverse backgrounds and experiences specifically on research, policy, and practice in community colleges.

A Feminist Phenomenological Study of Upward Transfer Women's Computer Science Identity

Title (*Panel Paper*)

A Feminist Phenomenological Study of Upward Transfer Women's Computer Science Identity

Abstract

Due to persistent gender inequities in computer science (CS), women's participation in CS degree programs has received significant research attention, with studies documenting the importance of fostering undergraduate women's sense of belonging and CS identity. Unfortunately, women who begin their degrees at community colleges are often excluded from this research, despite the important role community college transfer plays in facilitating access to higher education (Bahr et al., 2017; LaSota & Zumeta, 2016). Guided by theories of CS identity (Carlone &

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Johnson, 2007; Taheri et al., 2019) and STEM upward transfer (Wang, 2020), this feminist phenomenological study centers upward transfer women to address the following: 1) How do upward transfer women in CS describe and make meaning of their identity as a computer scientist? 2) How does their CS identity inform the decisions upward transfer women make about their CS degree trajectories?

Methods: I interviewed twelve upward transfer women (see Table 1) to learn about how they identify with CS and make decisions about their degree trajectories. Interviews were transcribed and analyzed in stages, beginning with an inductive phase, in which I reviewed transcripts to construct themes that center participants' lived experiences, in keeping with my feminist approach.

Findings: While there was variation in how participants identified with CS (or not), many participants described an altruistic CS identity (see Carlone & Johnson, 2007), in which they identified as a computer scientist and were motivated to "break stereotypes" and be a role model for women in CS. Other findings draw connections between students' CS identity and how they made decisions about their degree trajectories. For example, those who described a strong, altruistic CS identity often explained how they adapted their degree trajectory to "prioritize [their] education" and development, even if that required "extending [their] graduation date." Others described "pressure to catch up" by graduating as quickly as possible, which limited their ability to engage on campus and develop their CS identity. By centering upward transfer women's meaning making, findings complicate traditional notions of student success (e.g., four-year graduation rates), providing insight into how to best support women navigating upward transfer pathways.

Individual Presentation

Panel Paper

Research Methodology

Qualitative

Qualitative Methodology

Phenomenology

Inclusive Pathways into Technology Fields: An Intersectional Analysis of Florida's Community College Students

Title (Panel Paper)

Inclusive Pathways into Technology Fields: An Intersectional Analysis of Florida's Community College Students

Abstract

While we understand that gender and racial stratification in technology fields continues to exist, we too often approach this workforce problem from a deficit perspective and look to typical sites (where status quo norms are reproduced) to investigate potential solutions. Women currently comprise only 25% of all current tech occupations being held by women with women of color experiencing even lower representation (Ashcraft et al., 2016). This underrepresentation translates into a lack

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of diversity in technological innovations, which poses a problem given the ubiquitousness of technology (Shapiro & Sax, 2011). Guided by QuantCrit (Garcia et al., 2018), we center the specific academic journeys of Asian, Black, Indigenous, Latina/o/x, and Multiracial and how community colleges may operate as salient computing pathways for women and racially minoritized students within these fields.

This study investigates the relationship between high school computer science course sequencing and community college computer science course enrollment and completion. We use a sample of 267,294 students enrolled in Florida community colleges between 2013-2016 from the Florida Department of Education Data Warehouse. Descriptive and inferential tables included in the submission demonstrate the limited opportunity racially minoritized students have in high school to engage in CS coursework, and the gender disparities that exist among race identity groups – with the widest disparity among white students and the smallest among Black and Indigenous students.

Preliminary models show that race and gender indeed intersect in their effect on Florida community college students' completion of degrees generally and computing degrees specifically. Given the relative rarity of high school computing course taking for Florida students, we use a quasi-experimental design in the final paper. We leverage propensity score matched samples of community college students and subsequent logistic regression models to investigate the relationship between high school CS course sequencing and total units attempted and completed in community college CS courses.

Given dominant postsecondary structures have perpetually affected women and URM students in computing, this study's quantitative research design centers and critically examines the intersecting relationships among gender, race, and students' opportunity structures to interrogate the perpetuation of (in)equities in computing pathways.

Individual Presentation

Panel Paper

Research Methodology

Quantitative

Quantitative Methodology

Correlation/Regression/ANOVA

Using QuantCrit to Understand the Academic Momentum of Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander Community College Students

Title (*Panel Paper*)

Using QuantCrit to Understand the Academic Momentum of Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander Community College Students

Abstract

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Community colleges continue to serve as critical entry points into postsecondary education for the 40% of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) students who attend them, particularly Southeast Asian and Pacific Islander (SEA&PI) students who are more likely to enroll in two- vs. four-year colleges (CCO, 2015; CARE, 2011). However, the few quantitative studies that have been able to disaggregate data for SEA&PI students reveals they continue to earn lower proportions of associate and bachelor degrees when compared to their AAPI peers (CCO, 2015; CARE, 2011) and face a unique set of challenges in their community college experiences (Ngo & Sablan, 2019). Therefore, additional research is needed to understand enrollment and outcomes specifically for SEA&PI students, who enter community colleges to pursue their educational goals but whose experiences and outcomes are overlooked and engulfed by a monolithic AAPI identity and the Model Minority Myth.

This study conceptualizes a framework that synthesizes AsianCrit (Iftikar & Museus, 2018) and academic momentum (Attewell et al., 2012) to center SEA&PI students and discuss how systemic racism within systems of higher education affect these students. Guided by QuantCrit (Garcia et al., 2018), a disaggregated transcript research design examines how early college experiences (e.g., developmental education; enrollment decisions) are associated with momentum towards degree completion for SEA&PI students, and how these experiences vary within the AAPI population.

We draw upon a dataset of over one million students who enrolled in a large California community college district (LCCCD) between 2009-2022. Just under 5 percent of all students identified as SEA (1.25%), Filipino (3%), or NHPI (0.5%). Table 1 and 2 shows a demographic portrait of these students, along with substantial variation in momentum-related outcomes. We will generate additional momentum indicators and use regression analyses to identify the relationship between early academic momentum and subsequent success, examining how these vary by racial/ethnic background. The study will offer insight into how SEA&PI students are using the community college, along with what academic barriers and successes they face in the first year of community college enrollment.

Individual Presentation

Panel Paper

Research Methodology

Quantitative

Quantitative Methodology

Correlation/Regression/ANOVA

Contradictory Climates: Nuancing our Understanding of Community College Employees' Perceptions of Campus Racial Climate

Title (*Panel Paper*)

Contradictory Climates: Nuancing our Understanding of Community College Employees' Perceptions of Campus Racial Climate

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Abstract

For decades, scholars have highlighted the role of campus racial climate in the student experience (Hurtado, 1992; Hakuta et al., 2003). Yet less is known about how college employees experience campus racial climate, especially at community colleges where both staff and students tend to be more racially and ethnically diverse than at four-year institutions. Given that college employees are in the unique position of experiencing the campus racial climate and shaping the climate for students, understanding employee perspectives may inform college leaders working to address their campus environments and student outcomes.

Informed by the campus racial climate literature and Ray's theory of racialized organizations (2021), this study explored differences in perceptions of campus racial climate using data from 8,050 community college employees nationwide who took the PACE Climate Survey in 2021-2022. Respondents were aggregated into groups (White faculty, Faculty of Color, White staff, Staff of Color, White Administrators, Administrators of color) and we analyzed differences in perceptions of overall campus climate (18 items), and of specific climate contexts including the institutional climate (9 items), team dynamics (4 items), and supervisory relationships (5 items).

Preliminary findings suggest perceptions of racial climate are impacted both by employees' race/ethnicity and by their role in the institution. For example, White administrators and White faculty generally had the highest mean scores across different campus climate contexts (See Tables 1-4). Conversely, Administrators of Color had statistically significantly worse perceptions of overall climate and institutional aspects of climate than all other employees regardless of race/ethnicity or role (Tables 1 and 2), though they did not differ from other employees on their assessments of team dynamics or supervisory relationships. Faculty of Color indicated the lowest mean scores on supervisory items; their mean of 4.1150 was significantly lower than all White employees regardless of classification (Table 4). Additional descriptive and inferential findings further elucidate the interplay between racial minoritization and status within the institution in shaping perceptions of climate. Findings suggest that improving campus racial climate may require bespoke approaches that account for a variety of social identities and power structures.

Individual Presentation

Panel Paper

Research Methodology

Quantitative

Quantitative Methodology

Correlation/Regression/ANOVA

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