Social Justice and Positive Youth Development

A Conversation with Dr. Corliss Outley

Clemson University
Agenda

My Journey

From Hopelessness to Hope: A New Research Agenda with the Social Justice Youth Development Framework

Framing the Problem
The journey is never ending. There's always gonna be growth, improvement, adversity; you just gotta take it all in and do what's right, continue to grow, continue to live in the moment.

- Antonio Brown
My Journey

Childhood

Experiences

Education
B.S., Biology, 1992
M.S., Forestry, 1994
Ph.D., Recreational & Natural Resources Mgt., 2000

Career
Univ of Minnesota, 1999-2006
Texas A&M, 2006-2020
Clemson, 2020 & Beyond
Has led to a focus on...

- Social Justice
- Youth
- Empowerment
- Culture
Youth Development

A variety of models and frameworks have been developed:

- Problem/Prevention Model (PPM)
- Positive Youth Development (PYD)
- Community Youth Development (CYD)
- Social Justice Youth Development (SJYD)
Developing a Research Agenda with Purpose
• Frameworks are related in the following ways
  • Address importance of positive and supportive relationships with others (i.e. family, teachers, peers)
  • Emphasize importance of developmental outcomes
  • Focus on ecological contexts

• Limited literature on racial/ethnic background impact:
  • SJYD is unique in addressing youth of color living in impoverished areas and a focus on social change and internal empowerment.
From Hopelessness to Hope

A New Research Agenda with the Social Justice Youth Development Framework
A Contested History

• Historically, research has been conducted for or on racialized people rather than with them.

• Generally carried out by non-Indigenous academics, research has often been approached from an outsider’s perspective that has “othered” Indigenous peoples and subverted the knowledge stemming from within their communities (Smith, 1999; Teufel-Shone, Siyuja, Watahomigie, & Irwin, 2006).

• Through the predominant use of monocultural paradigms, often been underscored by a “one-size-fits-all” approach, where little (if any) consideration has been given to worldviews, values, and ways of knowing that diverge from mainstream research practices.
  • Affirmed the dominant culture’s view of itself as the center of legitimate knowledge, upholding “Whiteness” as a privileged and unchallenged norm against which “others” are marginalized (Butryn, 2002; Prior, 2007).
  • As a consequence, Indigenous voices and those from other marginalized communities have been largely silenced within academic domains (Smith, 1999), including recreation/leisure.
A Contested History

• Research on ‘race’ and ethnicity has always been a contested history (Bonnett, 1998).
  • Human Zoos, The Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment, Guatemala Syphilis Studies, San Antonio Birth Control study and other unethical studies have led to significant mistrust from marginalized populations

• Today, unethical practices have included “helicopter” or “drive-by” research where data has been taken and not returned to the community

• Predominance of white academics working in minority communities and accepted norm of research
  • Western approaches are universal
  • Knowledge is uni-linear

• Social labeling of communities
  • Reproduced inaccurate representations
  • Resistance to researchers & reporting is viewed as ignorance/lack of knowledge; white savior syndrome
The foundation of youth development field

• Oppression has been normalized by focusing on developmental approaches that emphasize individual differences as a result of ability, motivation, and ambition, while simultaneously deemphasizing the importance of historical colonialization and the historical development of structural inequalities within communities and society (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Adams-Wiggins & Taylor-García, 2020).

• Grounded within risk and prevention discourse (i.e., theories, frameworks, etc.) by politicizing from a position of power and privilege that certain youth are problematic without acknowledging that their status is being produced due to oppressive conditions.
  • ‘Risk’ discourse has permeated the policy and funding sector
  • Developmental approaches surrounding “resilience” and “grit” (Foster & Spencer, 2011; Gale & Bolzan, 2013; Unger, 2004)

• This racialized/ethnicitized discourse has led to the justification of increased surveillance of youth, implementation of policies, laws and practices that limit youth agency and voice, and increased regulation of youth behavior within society (Gabriel, et al, 2020).
Differential Treatment Continues Today: A Closer Look

Girls

- Compared to white girls of the same age, survey participants perceive that
  - Black girls need less nurturing
  - Black girls need less protection
  - Black girls need to be supported less
  - Black girls need to be comforted less
  - Black girls are more independent
  - Black girls know more about adult topics
  - Black girls know more about sex

Boys

- Compared to white boys participants perceive that
  - Black boys are viewed as guilty of suspected crimes
  - Black boys faced with increased police violence if accused of a crime
  - Black boys viewed as older than they are
    - In one study, people overestimated their ages by 4.5 years.
  - Black boys are a criminal threat

Epstein, Blake & Gonzalez, 2017

Goff et. al., 2014
The Consequences Are Found In Other Areas…

Education
Black students constitute 15.5% of public school students, but they accounted for 39% of students suspended from school.

Foster Care System
Black and Hispanic kids are more likely to be overly reported for abuse and/or neglect, less likely to be placed back in their homes and less likely to be adopted.

Juvenile Justice System
African-Americans & Hispanics are incarcerated at disproportionately higher rates than their white counterparts.

School-to-prison pipeline exists and prisons are built based on 4th grade reading levels of Black boys.

Economics
White boys who grow up rich are likely to remain that way. Black boys, however, are more likely to become poor than to stay wealthy in their own adult households.

Black man raised by two parents together making around $140,000 a year — earns about the same in adulthood as a white man raised by a single mother making $60,000 alone.
...And Especially During Play & Recreation; a vital context for development.

- Dajerria Becton, 15-year-old girl, McKinney, TX
- Tamir Rice playing in a park with a toy. Shot dead.
- The Creative Steps Summer Day Camp denied access to Private pool
  - “When the minority children got in the pool all of the Caucasian children immediately exited the pool”
- 5 Black boys walking from park police held at gunpoint in Grand Rapids, MI
- Jordan Davis sitting in a car listening to music loud. Shot dead
- John Crawford playing in Walmart with toy BB gun.
- Six black teens kicked out of a mall in Chicago.
  - A woman asked security guard, “What did the boys do wrong?” The guard said, “I don’t even know if they did anything wrong.” Management said they were “loitering.” and not “engaged in the shopping experience.”
A Contested History

• Only recently have scholars in the field begun to acknowledge the error in maintaining Eurocentric-dominated research approaches, and more specifically, the historical injustices associated with colonizing research in Indigenous communities (Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Unger 2004; Gale & Bolzan, 2013; Adams-Wiggins & Taylor-García, 2020).

• Research methodologies that centralize diverse, culturally situated perspectives are slowly being adopted through alternative inquiry paradigms that address many of the criticisms associated with mainstream academic approaches.
West (1993) in *Race Matters*,

“to engage in a serious discussion of race in America, we must not begin with the problems of black people but the flaws of American society—flaws rooted in historic inequalities and longstanding cultural stereotypes” (p. 3).
New Research Direction

Social Justice Youth Development

“An approach focused on the developing, actively reducing or eliminating disparities in equitable access to and opportunities for education, health, employment, justice, and any other systems that hinder the development of young people.”

To broaden the scope of youth development to include all sectors of a community in order to be inclusive of and responsive to the needs of all youth in a way that promotes social, economic and political change.

To reduce or eliminate societal systems and structures (e.g., in health and education programs and services) that perpetuate practices and policies that not only produce disparities, but also decrease quality of life.

To conduct research that results in equitable access and opportunity for all youth regardless of circumstances through the recognition of power imbalances in our communities.

To encourage youth development professionals to consider cultural relevancy in the design, implementation, and evaluation of programs and services for youth, their families, and communities.
Ontological, Epistemological, and Methodological Views

- The nature of reality is an important element in research
  - In research, what is true (ontology) and methods used to figure out those truths (epistemology) can be traced to “whiteness” and European ideas are automatically “better” than those associated with other racially defined groups.

- Ladson-Billings (2000,2003) argued that epistemologies encompass not only ways of knowing and perceiving the world but also systems of knowing the world.
  - The systems that guide inquiry are often portrayed as black/white binary paradigm with “whiteness as the norm”.
  - Power derived from the privileging of dominant scientific methods have served to legitimize the marginalization of non-White ways of knowing in the academy and beyond.

- The ontological assumptions posed by a transformative paradigm, implicitly or explicitly, ask the following questions:
  - How is reality defined? By whom? Whose reality is given privilege?
  - What are the social justice implications of accepting reality that has not been subjected to a critical analysis based on power differentials?
  - Given the reality-shaping power of racial categories, what variables and categories are meaningful and appropriate?
  - What methods and measures fairly capture and communicate the experiences of people of color?
  - Where do we as researchers look for guidance in matters of race and racism?
Framing the Problem

Race, Antiracism, and Youth Development: From Awareness to Sustained Action

Outley and Blyth (2020)
Call to Action: Research Arena

- Advance long-term, antiracist, equitable frameworks, models, and theories to dismantle persistent inequities.
- Expand research on race in youth development
- Build antiracist research environments
- Commit to better understanding & dismantling systemic racism.
- Reexamine past and current research narratives.
- Recognize and address the extra burdens of scholars of color.
- Include Black representation and voices to build a stronger and more representative field.
- Acknowledge our own biases.
- Seek out, promote and be accountable for training on antiracism
- Actively develop a pipeline of diverse scholars
- Strengthen our field’s journals’ & other publications’ understanding of racism and inclusion of antiracism efforts
Addressing accountability requires asking questions about the impact that the research can have on the lives of racial/ethnic groups at each of these decision moments?

- Onset of Scientific Process
- Research agenda & funding
- Utilization of particular methodology
- Collection & characterization of data
- Interpretation of data & drawing conclusions
- Dissemination & application of results

We, as researchers, have CHOICES!!!
Call to Action: Practice Arena

Provide antiracist training and educational resources

Encourage commitment to an antiracist agenda

Encourage policies to foster interactive learning communities that promote cultural humility

Provide opportunities to ensure the workforce is competent to deliver culturally appropriate and youth-centered programs and services

Advocate for development and use of diverse and antiracist curricula for and with youth

Ensure all youth in our programs & practices have meaningful opportunities to discuss & come to understand racism, White privilege, prejudice, discrimination & institutional racism

Acknowledge the antiracist agenda within our professional associations
Call to Action: Policy Arena

- Personally & professionally acknowledge that youth equity is unachievable unless racism is addressed through a systemic approach.

- Policies & resources that shape & inform youth development practices should explicitly acknowledge racism & convey their commitment to all youth/families.

- Public policy and funding, as well as private efforts, should work to create culturally safe youth organizations.

- Collaborate with diverse community-based organizations to eradicate policies and practices in youth development that are discriminatory and perpetuate racial injustice, inequity, and disparity.

- Convene leaders and collaborate with racially and ethnically diverse communities to develop a national standard and training in culturally competent care and programming.

- Advocate for antiracism accountability at the institutional, state, and national level within our field and its respective organizations.

- Encourage and advance community-level advocacy with members of those communities disproportionately affected by racism to develop policies that advance social justice.

- Advocate for policies and actions that eliminate racism within our youth development/out-of-school-time system.

- Work to grow and invest both public and private resources to ensure equitable access to non-formal and informal community learning opportunities for all youth regardless of means, race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or ability.

- Ensure antiracism funding.

- Advance policies and investments in research and practices that ensure evidence is generated, translated, and used to improve programs and practices that promote diversity, cultural respect, and antiracist practices.

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MISSION
To improve the lives of racialized and ethnitized youth populations through innovation community engagement and knowledge exchange.

OUR PRIORITIES

Advance Knowledge: Advance the theory and research methods used to conceptualize and assess the impact of race and/or ethnicity in youth development that contributes to a more just, resilient, and equitable society.

Share Progress: Serve as an Interdisciplinary Repository for scholars authoring cutting edge approaches to study social inequality and positive youth development.

Community Collaboration: Collaborate with communities to build capacity and understand, document, and respond to injustices.

Create Dialogue: Create an informed, sustained dialogue with a wider public audience, such as community members, scholars, policymakers, and the media about issues of race/ethnicity and social inequality as they pertain to youth development.

Facilitate Training & Learning: Expand the current knowledge base and build capacity among youth and adults to practice youth development and social equity at the individual, organizational and community levels.

Find out how to become a REYSE Scholar or REYSE Partner Organization by visiting: www.clemsom.edu/reysecollaboratory
HEAD
What Have I Learned?

HEART
How Do I Feel About this?

FEET
What Action Will I Take?

Questions?

CONTACT: Dr. Corliss Outley, Professor | Clemson University | coutley@clemson.edu