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Abstract: Civic engagement was compared between private for-profit (PFPU) and public universities in Chile using Spiral Dynamic Theory. Engagement was lower at the PFPUs.
Keywords: *adult cognitive development, civic engagement, international higher education, memetics, Spiral Dynamic Theory*

Introduction

During the first decade of the new millennium, the United States experienced a severe economic downturn that resulted in an increase of laid-off workers and "downsized" professionals. This phenomenon contributed to an increase in the number of adults seeking advanced employment skills through the pursuit of higher education (Autor, 2010; Clark, 2010). The view of higher education as a viable means for Americans to access better socioeconomic (SES) and career opportunities helped to create a surge in academic capitalism themes (Ortmann, 2006; Slaughter, & Rhoades, 2009) leading to an emphasis on workforce readiness, which became a key marketing point of many emerging private for-profit universities. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2012), over a 10-year period for-profit schools' enrollments within the United States (US) increased exponentially, and the number of graduate degrees conferred among its students seeking masters and doctoral degrees within that decade rose even more significantly.

Demands from the adult learner population for more access and opportunities to obtain a university degree introduces a unique set of challenges for higher education (Cooley, 2012; Gumport, 2000; Simmons, 2013). For example, in addition to the administrative need to manage rising costs, universities must also negotiate their roles as both businesses and academic agents for the public good. Public institutions of higher education that provide academic instruction for purposes of civic learning, democratic engagement, and student development (Saltmarsh & Hartley, 2011) must do so as they negotiate the expectation that state funding and appropriations be tied to performance metrics based upon their production of degree holders who are workforce ready. It was within this complex environment of redefining the purposes of a college education/degree that the private for-profit universities experienced their ascendency of mission to provide increased access to adults seeking degree credentialing (Cooley, & Cooley, 2008).).

Background of the Problem

Metrics that require the rapid production of graduates with masters and doctoral degrees—educated under a paradigm shift of *workforce readiness*—contributed to the reshaping of the higher education landscape such that the fostering of, for example, civic virtues became subordinated to obtaining a degree credential (Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich, & Corngold, 2007; Ehrlich, 1997). Instrumentalist forms of higher education, which hold that education's primary purposes are for participation in career and professional pursuit(s), have been criticized as restrictive with regard to the student development goals of civic awareness (Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1996; Jez, 2011; Sullivan, 2000), community engagement, and social consciousness. American for-profit higher education—focused on providing structured

and expedited pathways toward obtaining a degree credential or job skill—has grown in popularity (Jez, 2011). Yet, very little is known about the long-term outcomes of a higher education paradigm shift that marginalizes civic development goals (Colby et al., 2007) for adult students.

Generally, the study of civic engagement (CE) as a phenomenon of higher education is a challenge. This is due to the fact that there is no universally accepted definition or model of civic engagement, particularly within the field of adult education. Nevertheless, this research defined CE through adopting some of the conceptualizations offered by the Association of American Colleges and Universities (2012), The National Task Force on Civic Learning and Democratic Engagement [NTFCLDE] (2012), and the Franke, Ruiz, Sharkness, DeAngelo, & Pryor (2010) report. Therefore, in this study CE was defined as *maintaining interest and action in one's world as evidenced by active participation in both civic and political matters within one's community, ranging from the local to international domains*.

The Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement (CIRCLE) showed that baccalaureate college graduates, as a consequence of achieving advanced educational attainment post-high school, tended to be more civically engaged (Lopez & Elrod, 2006). The literature also indicated that student CE is enhanced if the activities are a part of in-school learning requirements or are built into out-of-school adult learning and literacy programs (Daniels & Gillespie, 2005; González, 2008; Hartman, 2008; Huerta & Jozwiak, 2008). Persell and Wenglinsky (2004) found that students enrolled at a two-year for-profit proprietary school exhibited lower levels of CE compared to their counterparts who had attended a two-year public community college. However, no such comparative studies exist that have examined CE among graduate and post-graduate level adult learners within the context of a private for-profit higher education environment.

The Privatization of Higher Education in Chile

Chile was a prototype case of a county negotiating the challenges of market-based for-profit higher education, civic engagement, and social justice activism. University students led protests that have demanded from the government educational reforms, a retrenchment of privatized education, and a return to the country's former free-public education (Simbuerger & Neary, 2015; Villalobos-Ruminott, 2012) for all Chileans. The trend toward market-based higher education, especially notable in Chile during the 1980s, mirrored a similar period in the United States—around the time of the Reagan Administration —when calls for the privatization of public sector services increased and in which university academic capitalism ideologies (Slaughter, & Rhoades, 2009) facilitated the rise of the private for-profit higher education sector (Breneman, Pusser, & Turner, 2006; United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), 2014). Growth of the private sector's role in Chilean society was advanced under Dictator Pinochet, who introduced the Constitutional Organic Law on Education (LOCE) that allowed for a shift in the government funding policy in higher education until its revoke 2007. Nevertheless, most Chilean education is currently privatized and operates under laws that have been favorable to the presence of entrepreneurial universities (UNESCO, 2014).

Memetics and Adult Education

What is a meme, and what is its application in the creation of pedagogy, adult learning, and practices (Yoon, 2008) that lead to culturally transferred conceptions within higher education such as CE learning? The term meme has been applied to a broad variety of dissimilar ideas and concepts (Bennet, 2007; Knobel, 2006; Williams, 2002). However, Gatherer (1998)

challenged the more abstract conception of memes, arguing that Dawkins' (1989) reformulation of the meme concept—first introduced via his 1976 book *The Selfish Gene*—had contributed to the misdirected abstraction of the meme definition. Gatherer's conception of meme was used in this study, and defined as an observable cultural phenomenon, such as a behavior, artifact or an objective piece of information, which is copied, imitated, or learned, and thus may replicate within cultural system. Objective information includes instructions, norms, rules, institutions and social practices provided they are observable. (Section 9)

The imitator conception (Blackmore, 1996, 1999; Gatherer, 1998) that memes are transferred through non-genetic mechanisms of repetition was advanced as a construct in this study.

Theoretical Framework

Empirical discoveries relative to the effects of for-profit education on the CE outcomes of graduate-level adults were obtained using an integral and multidimensional theoretical framework (see Figure 1). Grave's (2009) emergent cyclical levels of existence theory (ECLET) was adapted for use in this study and is referred to as Spiral Dynamic Theory (SDT). The framework of SDT provided a model from which to attribute the civic engagement phenomenon and ontological worldviews of participants that were hierarchical in nature. The constructs of the framework are termed ^{V}MEMEs (the superscript "v" represents the word value), and progression (or in some instances regression) occurred as oscillations through various change states that moved from lower-order to more complex higher-order thinking.

Spiral Dynamic Theory

A biopsychosocial system of SDT is one in which the interaction of human biology, psychology, and sociology converge neurologically in order to facilitate thinking and problem solving abilities. These elements combine within the SDT framework in connection to a complex network of social structures or ontological memetic units (i.e., ^{V}MEMEs). SDT applies the biological model of the human gene from the natural sciences to the social science fields in the form of *memes*—behavioral units of culture that are imitated and transferred in an evolutionary Darwinian like fashion between people (Beck & Cowan, 2006; Blackmore, 1996, 1998; Dawkins, 1976, 1989).

Spiral Dynamics is based on Graves's (1970, 1974, 2005, 2009) original research. In the book, spiraling models are presented as diverse and emergent worldviews, providing a type of memetic taxonomy of adult thinking. SDT holds that it is the formulation of a variety of smaller memes into particular larger Meta-meme "onion-like profiles" (see figure 1), which Blackmore (1999) describes as a *memeplex*, that combine in specific ways to produce particular worldviews (Beck & Cowan, 2006, p.63).

In *Spiral Dynamics*, a lettered and color-coded mnemonic device exists that guided this research—through discourse analysis—in the interpretive distinguishing of each hierarchical level. The ten organizing principles on the SDT open-ended framework are subsuming systems, which means that lower level thinking is absorbed and retained, and may be drawn upon when necessary as a means to problem solve. The color-coded ^{V}MEMEs oscillate between two grouped themes (i.e., themata). The first is more individualistic, expressing the self, represented by the five "me" organizing principles located on the right side of the framework. The other themata is more collectivist in its orientation. It is presented by the five more self-sacrificial constructs where subjugating of the self to the group—or the "we" organizing principle located on the left side of the framework—is expected (Graves, 2005; Cowan & Todorovic, 2000, p. 6).

Methodology

This mixed methods research investigated post-graduate level CE activities and outcomes in Chilean private for-profit and public universities, interpreting that engagement through a Spiral Dynamic Theory framework. Descriptive data was collected from qualitative methods and statistical data was obtained from an online self-administered survey adapted from two pre-existing instruments (Franke et al., 2010; Lee, 1983). Discourse analysis (Wodak & Meyer, 2008; Ziegler, Paulus, & Woodside, 2014) of transcripts alongside use of the SDT framework served to guide the interpretation phase of the sample data. The SPSS statistical software program allowed for ANOVA and multiple regression testing of the quantitative survey data.

Research Design and Data Collection

Table 1 displays the research questions that guided the study using the substantive theory (i.e., SDT) paradigmatic stance per Greene's (2007, 2008) mixed methods research typologies. The quasi-experimental sequential research design was carried out in two parts. The concurrent qualitative data-gathering portion of the study (Part I) was completed first. Part II of the study followed qualitative methods, with the administration of the researcher-developed (Brown, 2013) online survey instrument. The survey was sent to over 3, 236 potential subjects located at 21 different private for-profit universities, one mixed private not for-profit university, and 13 traditional not for-profit public universities (TPU) located throughout Chile's 15 metropolitan regions and 202 completed surveys were obtained. The Table 2 correlation matrix is attached.

Participant demographic information for the Part I graduate student focus group discussions and the high-level university administrator(s) in-depth interviews included: 2 females ages 28 and 65, and 6 males between ages 35-44 in the mini-focus groups. The university administrators were not asked their ages, but both were males and hold PhD degrees. Four of the focus group participants had already obtained their master's degrees and two—one at the TPU the other at the PFPU—were in the first year of their master's degree programs. The TPU and PFPU mini-focus groups were held at separate sites.

Table 1

Mixed Method Research Methodology Process using a SDT Substantive Theory Framework

Research Questions	Data Collected	Methods
In what ways are Chilean public and private for-profit institutions committed to doing civic engagement education and practices?	QUAL	• Focus Group • In-depth Interviews
What are the prevailing ^{v}MEMEs of Chilean graduate students in public and private for-profit higher educational institutions?	QUAL + quan	• Focus Group • Online Survey
To what extent is there a relationship between graduate students' personal characteristics and civic engagement outcomes?	qual + QUAN	• Focus Group • Online Survey
Is there a relationship between institutional type and graduate students' civic engagement outcomes?	qual + QUAN	• Focus group • Online Survey

Data Analysis

Participant responses to the qualitative CE protocols were magnitude coded using a Likert like-scale ranging from 0-5, and were also assigned a mnemonically colored SDT attribution code (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014). Below are some excerpts from the interviews and mini-focus group discussion that shows how participant data was schematically organized:

ADMINISTRATOR Interviews:

2: Could you please identify perhaps three key priorities referenced in your institution's mission statement that you believe relate to civic engagement? Why do you think they are important?

Chalmers (For-profit University):

"Yes, yes, well, ... our mission is to prepare good professional people that can help not only to make money, but to help people and – let me – I don't know how to write, to say to you [in English]" (SDT code: ORANGE/Green)

Skinner (Public University):

"Universities were created for training the elite at the beginning. In some ways, they still do, but afterwards, with the inclusion of research as a basic university function, in a modern concept of the university, the university becomes a really, really relevant actor in country development." (SDT code: Blue/ORANGE)

GRAUATE STUDENT Focus Groups:

#1. Could each of you share your own definition or give examples of what you consider to be civic engagement?

Marge (Public University):

"It's commitment to the country and all the elements and surrounding country. Your nationality, your identity, and also the way that you involve within the society, as part of the society…" (SDT Code: BLUE/ orange; CE code: = 4)

Table 3 below represents the results of a multiple regression analysis where civic engagement served as the dependent variable and the SDT constructs, university type, and socioeconomic factors served as the independent variables in the statistical analysis. The result below is an example displaying how voting in a student election was most influenced by one's attendance at traditional Chilean not for-profit universities as compared to private for-profit universities.

Table 3
Multiple Regression Analysis of CE_13 Voting in Student Election Frequency

Variable	Model 1 B unstandardized	$SE\ B$	Model 1 B standardized	95% CI
Constant	2.102**	0.07		[1.96,2.25]
Public	-0.237**	0.10	-.163**	[-0.44, 0.043]
R^2	.03			
F	5.48**			

*p <.05. **p < .01.

Table 4 shows descriptive statistics obtained from the quantitative data analysis of the survey. The civic engagement items were coded on a continuous frequency scale ranging from 1 to 3 (1= frequently, 2 = occasionally, 3 = never). The CE variables are identified in the first column and the second column identifies the specific university type associated with the data.

Table 4
Descriptive Statistics of Key Study Variables

		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	95% Confidence Interval for Mean	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Voting in	Public	104	1.87	0.70	1.73	2.00
Student	Mixed	38	1.95	0.73	1.71	2.19
Elections	For-Profit	60	2.20	0.73	2.01	2.39
CE_13	Total	202	1.98	0.73	1.88	2.08
Community	Public	104	1.17	1.15	0.95	1.40
Volunteer	Mixed	38	1.87	1.85	1.26	2.48
Hours	For-Profit	60	1.23	1.28	0.90	1.56
CE_17	Total	202	1.32	1.36	1.13	1.51
Protests &	Public	104	2.08	0.73	1.93	2.22
Demonstration	Mixed	38	1.87	0.58	1.68	2.06
Activities	For-Profit	60	2.27	0.61	2.11	2.42
CE_33	Total	202	2.09	0.68	2.00	2.19
Discussing	Public	104	1.46	0.57	1.35	1.57
Politics with	Mixed	38	1.84	0.59	1.65	2.04
Family	For-Profit	60	1.55	0.67	1.38	1.72
CE_83	Total	202	1.56	0.62	1.47	1.65

Findings and Discussions

This study made four important findings based upon the research questions and two general conclusion: 1) Civic Engagement, broadly conceptualized, is not well integrated into Chilean higher education through its institutional missions or academic pedagogy and 2) Individualism, as defined by the SDT themata, served to affect CE outcomes and was environmentally connected to the specific university culture of the private for-profit universities.

Implications

This research offers the field of adult education greater insights into adult developmental cognition and how it contributes to problem solving capacities (Erickson, 2007; Merriam & Bierema; 2014; Taylor, 2006) in association to emergent worldviews. Recommendations are that civic engagement learning be integrated into the teaching and research mission of universities in order to enhance community engaged scholarship and student leadership development (Barker, 2004; Hudson, 2013; Lott II, 2013; Whitley & Yoder, 2015). There is much knowledge to be gained via repeating the study in a more individualistic cultural, such as for-profit universities in the US, in order to better establish adult learning benchmarks and models relative to entrepreneurial higher education.

Reference Listing is Available upon Request