Chapter 1

Why Financial Aid Matters (or Does Not) for College Success: Toward a New Interdisciplinary Perspective

Sara Goldrick-Rab, Douglas N. Harris, and Philip A. Trostel

Abstract

The failure to account for group differences in responsiveness to financial aid is a primary shortcoming of existing higher education research, and compromises the explanatory power of theories and models. Even more importantly, it limits the ability of policymakers and practitioners to achieve the important goals of increased college success and reduced achievement gaps. In this chapter, we identify and explore concepts from social sciences disciplines which hold promise in terms of informing future theoretical developments in the field. Drawing primarily on the work of behavioral economists, and economic sociologists, we discuss concepts such as aversion to risk, work centrality, ambiguity aversion, and consistency theory which may serve to illuminate several unexplained anomalies in prior empirical research. We also describe the methodological problems plaguing the study of financial aid and argue that tests of existing theories, as well as those we propose here, require research that addresses selection bias in who receives aid. We then describe other aspects of future research critical to the testing of these concepts.

Chapter 2

The Use of Matching Methods in Higher Education Research: Answering Whether Attendance at a 2-Year Institution Results in Differences in Educational Attainment

C. Lockwood Reynolds and Stephen L. DesJardins

Abstract

This chapter provides readers with the conceptual and statistical underpinnings of matching methods. These methods have gained in popularity in recent years given the push to make stronger inferential statements about the impact of educational interventions and policies. Given the likelihood of nonrandom assignment into "treatments" in higher education, matching methods seem particularly well suited to apply in many educational research contexts. We demonstrate the use of these methods by examining whether there are differences in educational outcomes depending on whether students begin their postsecondary careers in a 2- or 4-year institution. Our results indicate that estimates of the educational outcomes examined are sensitive to the choice of analytic methods employed. These results provide evidence that remedying nonrandom assignment problems that are often encountered in higher education research is important if we hope to provide accurate information to our colleagues and educational policymakers.

Chapter 3

Othering Research, Researching the Other: De/Colonizing Approaches to Qualitative Inquiry

Kakali Bhattacharya

Abstract

De/colonizing epistemologies challenge the imperialistic understanding and practice of research. In this chapter, the author demonstrates the influence of de/colonizing epistemologies on qualitative inquiry grounded in transnational feminism. The author focuses on the approaches taken in designing, implementing, and analyzing an ethnographic case study which explores the experiences of two female Indian graduate students in higher education within their first years of migration to the United States.

The author argues that there can never be a utopian space where qualitative inquiry can be free of imperialistic ways of knowing and documenting people's lived experiences. Therefore, a call for reflexive autoethnographic gaze along with re-presentation of messy methodological spaces, tensions, and contradictions needs to be at the forefront of de/colonizing qualitative inquiry. It is within such messiness that the author frames de/colonizing approaches with the acknowledgement of being framed herself in the process.

Chapter 4

The Cultural Capital of Cultural and Social Capital: An Economy of Translations

Glenda Musoba and Benjamin Baez

Abstract

Scholars of higher education in the United States have embraced the theories of cultural and social capital. Bourdieu's writing illuminates our understanding of social structures that limit opportunity for oppressed groups but is sometimes mistranslated as a theory of social mobility. We argue that the translation of his theory of classes into one of individuals obscures the ways class structures get formed and re-formed in the United States, and how individuals, while not determined by such structures, are constrained by them. We summarize James Coleman's articulation of social capital, and speculate whether Coleman's theory grounds the uses of the theory of cultural and social capital in the United States as a theory of individual mobility. Coleman's theory errs in emphasizing individual agency while ignoring the covert and "natural" functioning of oppressive structures. We critique Bourdieu's theory as being too deterministic; a good misappropriation of Bourdieu makes room for some form of agency.

Chapter 5

The Rise and Fall of Need-Based Grants: A Critical Review of Presidential Discourses on Higher Education, 1964–1984

Julie Renee Posselt

Abstract

Recent economic histories by Benjamin Friedman and Robert Fogel argue that America's economic future depends on a return to policy of the 1970s, including a major reinvestment in Pell Grants, which have steadily declined as a proportion of total financial aid spending since 1978. To evaluate the adequacy of purely economic rationales for reinvesting in grants today, this review uses historiography and discourse analysis of US presidential speeches to critically review rationales for student aid policy between 1964 and 1984. Along with economic arguments based on human capital theory, presidents' rationales for aid spending were grounded in leaders' political ideologies and views of equity and excellence as desired sociopolitical ends of education. Economic arguments themselves varied to alternately emphasize individual and national returns on investment. More importantly for con-temporary debates about a renewed federal role in supporting college opportunities, these rationales were combined in various ways throughout the period, suggesting the need today for multidimensional and balanced arguments that are relevant to the present social, economic, and political contexts.

Chapter 6

A Review of Attributional Retraining Treatments: Fostering Engagement and Persistence in Vulnerable College Students

Tara L. Haynes, Raymond P. Perry, Robert H. Stupnisky, and Lia M. Daniels

Abstract

Pursuing a university degree intermixes intellectual ability, content knowledge, emotional stamina, unflagging motivation, and goal striving with diverse learning environments. The academic aspirations of students, however, often belie the realities of unanticipated obstacles along the way that thwart eventual success. Motivation and performance can be undermined through unfamiliar and unpredictable learning experiences involving heightened competition, increased pressure to excel, more frequent failure, novel assignments, ineffective instruction, stringent grading practices, critical career choices, and new social networks. These situations can lead to a paradox of failure in which bright, enthusiastic, and capable students underperform in university, or quit outright. In response, various educational interventions have been developed by postsecondary institutions to rectify escalating attrition rates. Attributional retraining (AR) is a motivation-enhancing treatment designed to offset the dysfunctional explanatory thinking that can arise from unsatisfactory learning experiences. This chapter describes the theoretical framework and empirical evidence underpinning AR as an effective motivation treatment for assisting failure-prone students in higher education settings.

Chapter 7

Globalization, Social Movements, and the American University: Implications for Research and Practice

Robert A. Rhoads and Amy Liu

Abstract

This chapter examines the influence of globalization on the American university and the increasing importance of social movements and the engagement of universities and the role their social actors play in advancing social change. The authors contend that traditional organizations increasingly are limited in their ability to advance social change by the growing power of global structures and networks. Of particular note is the power of neoliberal economic ideology and its dominance in framing global processes and the role of universities in a growing knowledge-based economy. As a consequence, the authors point out that universities increasingly become targets of social reform to be brought into greater alignment with the interests of global capital. Alternatively, social movements and the engagement of universities offer opportunities for oppositional action aimed at serving diverse public spheres and constituencies. The authors conclude by identifying several implications for research and practice.

Chapter 8

Hispanics and Higher Education: An Overview of Research, Theory, and Practice

Amaury Nora and Gloria Crisp

Abstract

Substantial gaps exist in our knowledge base relative to understanding and serving the unique needs of Latina/Latino students in all areas of postsecondary education. More specifically, a deeper understanding of the issues surrounding both access and persistence of Hispanic students is needed. As such, the present article reviews and synthesizes the literature relative to the barriers and limitations impacting college access and choice. Next, the article reviews existing literature and theory specific to the impact of academic, social, noncognitive, perceptual, and behavior factors impacting Hispanic students' persistence decisions. An overview of state and federal policy impacting Hispanic college students is then provided in preface to best practices and policy recommendations for serving Hispanic students throughout the educational pipeline.

Chapter 9

Turning from Time to Space: Conceptualizing Faculty Work

Aaron M. Kuntz

Abstract

This chapter traces the overreliance on temporal frames in the scholarship on faculty work and offers a theory of space as an alternative frame. In order to counter temporal determinisms, Kuntz points to the unacknowledged spatial metaphors that abound in research on faculty and the new meanings that such spatializations make possible. He proposes a shift from time to space for research in higher education, involving first a critical awareness of our metaphors and, second, an inquiry into the social spaces and material places from which these metaphors emerge. In order to link social conceptualizations with embodied experience, Kuntz calls upon embodied metaphor as a theoretical heuristic and suggests possible avenues for understanding faculty work at the level of patterned daily practices within institutional spaces that produce professional identities. Finally, he ends the chapter with a series of methodological considerations for the practical application of the theoretical concepts that currently dominate research on space and place.

Chapter 10

Student Aid and Its Role in Encouraging Persistence

Don Hossler, Mary Ziskin, Jacob P.K. Gross, Sooyeon Kim, and Osman Cekic

Abstract

For more than 3 decades, scholars and practitioners have speculated on the extent to which financial aid increases the odds of students completing their degrees. While the impact of financial aid on persistence has been studied a great deal, we know relatively little about the impact of aid on graduation. This chapter provides a comprehensive review of the extant research on how student financial aid affects undergraduate student persistence and graduation. In this pursuit, 74 articles, chapters, and monographs published after 1990 were reviewed to shed light on (a) how the studies define student persistence and student financial aid, (b) the summative knowledge of the relative effects of grants and loans on within-year persistence, continuous enrollment, and graduation, (c) how the existing studies were able to untangle the effects of merit- and need-based aid, and (d) the effect of debt on student persistence.

Chapter 11

Enter the Dragon? China's Higher Education Returns to the World Community: The Case of the Peking University Personnel Reforms

Rui Yang

Abstract

Peking University has been urged to achieve world-class level in the coming decade. The university issued a plan to reform its faculty appointment and promotion systems in 2004. The plan received strong responses and was hotly debated. The debate touched on the fundamental issue: successful adaptation of the European–American education system to China has not been matched with continuity with the traditional Chinese spirit of higher learning. After reviewing the historical achievements of Peking University, using the event as an indicative case, and locating Peking University's contemporary reforms in historical and international contexts with due regard for cultural and social issues, the chapter captures China's experience as its higher education institutions reenter the world community.