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Career Aspirations and Migration Intentions of Youth Living in a Tourism Destination

Introduction

Youth aspirations and out-migration have been and continue to be important areas of research in the field of community and economic development. The out-migration of youth can be detrimental for many communities as it results in a loss of human and social capital, which can affect a community's ability to develop and pursue economic opportunities (Johnson & Rathge, 2006; Stockdale, 2004). Much of the current literature has focused on identifying factors that influence the aspirations and migration intentions of youth. Researchers have recognized that the context (e.g., community, economic) in which youth grow up influences their aspirations (Cox, Tucker, Sharp, Van Gundy, & Rebellon, 2014; Crockett, Shanahan, & Jackson-Newsom, 2000); however, little is known about the formation of aspirations and migration intentions of youth who live in a tourism destination. Recreation and amenity-rich communities have been showing the greatest population growth in rural America (Johnson, 2006). For tourism destinations that offer recreation opportunities and amenities, it is important to understand youth's aspirations and migration intentions within this tourism context.

Literature Review

Guiding the development of this research study is Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological theory of human development. According to Bronfenbrenner, there are five nested subsystems that influence an individual's development. These systems, beginning with the innermost system to the most external, include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, macrosystem, and chronosystem. Settings within these systems include family, peers, school, mass media, socio-economic climate, government policies, culture, and events and experiences throughout one's lifetime (Bronfenbrenner, 1994; Hickey, Harrison, & Sumsion, 2012). As evident in the literature discussed below, many of these systems have been found to influence youth's career aspirations and migration intentions.

The economic context and employment opportunities available in a community influence youth's migration intentions and residential preferences (Bjarnason & Thorlindsson, 2006; Demi, McLaughlin, & Snyder, 2009; Johnson, Edler, & Stern, 2005). Youth are more likely to report wanting to leave their home community if they perceive the community offers limited or undesirable employment opportunities. Because the tourism industry is a source of employment and provides economic benefits to many communities in the United States, understanding the role tourism may have in the development of youth's career aspirations and migration intentions is important. In 2013, the tourism industry directly and indirectly supported 14.9 million jobs in the United States (U.S. Travel Association, 2014). According to the U.S. Travel Association (2014), tourism is the nation's number one service export and "travel is among the top 10 industries in 49 states and D.C. in terms of employment" (p. 1). Tourism has also been touted as an economic driver for the United States and, during the economic recession, provided employment to a large number of younger adults and individuals who did not have a college degree (U.S. Travel Association, 2012).

Despite the positive economic benefits tourism provides to communities, employment in the hospitality and tourism industry is sometimes perceived negatively and as undesirable (Getz, 1994; Kuslivan & Kuslivan, 2000; Richardson, 2010). For example, the Hawaii Tourism Authority (HTA) has noticed that many youth in Hawaii are not interested in pursuing a career in

the tourism industry (Schaefer, 2012). This is a concern because, as David Uchiyama, HTA's Vice President of Brand Management explained, "We have an aging workforce. If we can't get the kids who have been raised here and understand the cultural values into the management of our industry, then we're going to lose what differentiates Hawaii from other destinations around the world" (as quoted in Silverstein, 2012, para. 3).

Related to the economic context and employment opportunities available in a community, researchers have found that attachment to one's community and family can be a source of conflict for youth if they perceive they are unable to pursue their career aspirations in their home community (Cox et al., 2014; Elder, King, & Conger, 1996; Hektner, 1995). Some youth may respond to the conflict by leaving their home in order to pursue their career aspirations. Others may choose to modify their career aspirations so they can continue to live in their community and/or near family.

Researchers have also explored the influence parents, educators, and community members have in the formation of youth's career aspirations and migration intentions (Griffin, Hutchins, & Meece, 2011; Jodl, Michael, Malanchuk, Eccles, & Sameroff, 2001; Petrin, Schafft, & Meece, 2014). Studying out-migration in a rural town in Iowa, Carr and Kefalas (2009) found that community members and teachers played a role in the out-migration of youth: teachers and adults in the community focused more on the high achieving youth (i.e., those more likely to leave the community) rather than the youth who will likely remain in their community.

The formation of youth's career aspirations and migration intentions is clearly a complex process impacted by many different factors. Understanding how tourism influences the career aspirations and migration intentions of youth living in tourism destinations is important for communities that are dependent on tourism or are developing tourism. For communities that are dependent on tourism, a lack of interest in a career in the tourism industry could lead to out-migration. On the other hand, the destination's amenities and recreational opportunities may be attractive to youth and could be a factor that influences them to remain in their home community.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this proposed study is to identify the career aspirations and migration intentions of youth living in a tourism destination and to investigate the factors influencing their aspirations and intentions. The researchers are especially interested in understanding the influence, if any, the tourism industry and factors related to it (e.g., perceptions of employment in tourism) have in the formation of youth's career aspirations and migration intentions.

Proposed Methods

A mixed methods approach (i.e., surveys, interviews) guided by Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological theory of human development is currently being developed for this proposed study. It is expected that this study will be conducted with youth between the ages of 15-18 residing on the island of Kauai, Hawaii. These youth are generally in high school (10th – 12th grade) and it is expected that they will be forming their career aspirations and migration intentions. The island of Kauai provides a unique study setting as it is a popular tourism destination and is dependent on tourism. In 2010, 26% of Kauai's workforce was employed in leisure and hospitality. By 2020 the leisure and hospitality workforce is forecasted to grow by 17.2% (Hawaii DLIR, 2013). Utilizing Bronfenbrenner's (1994) ecological theory of human development and a mixed methods design will allow the researchers to identify and gain an in-depth understanding of the

various factors and contexts influencing the formation of career aspirations and migration intentions of youth living in a tourism destination.

Expected Outcome

Based on the concern expressed by HTA regarding the lack of interest amongst youth in Hawaii in pursuing a career in tourism (Schaefer, 2012), it is expected that many youth will not report having career aspirations in the tourism industry; however, tourism is still expected to play a role in how their career aspirations and migration intentions have been formed. If youth are not interested in pursuing a career in the tourism industry, they may still find the amenities and recreational opportunities available in the destination to be attractive, which may influence their migration intentions.

Understanding the factors influencing youth's career aspirations and migration intentions is critical to ensuring a community's future sustainability. As more communities pursue tourism as a form of economic development, it is necessary that we evaluate the role tourism has in the formation of youth's career aspirations and migration intentions. The results of this proposed study are expected to provide insight into the challenges and opportunities the tourism industry and communities may face in the near future in terms of workforce development and youth out-migration. This insight can lead toward the development of strategies to address these challenges and opportunities.

Results of this study also will make important contributions to the tourism literature. This study will further enhance our understanding of the impacts of tourism on communities, particularly their youth population. Furthermore, investigating the career aspirations and migration intentions of youth living in a tourism destination will provide valuable insight into the role of tourism in the economic and workforce development of communities.

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