"African American Patriotism: A Qualitative Study of African Americans in Texas"

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1.   Aim

This paper examines how social factors affect the patriotism of African Americans.   This research addresses five research questions: (1) How do African Americans perceive American society?, (2) How do being victims of discrimination affect their patriotism?, (3) How do their Christian faith and church socialization affect their patriotism?, (4) How did national crises such as the 9.11 terrorist attacks affect their patriotism, and (5) How did the Obama presidency affect their patriotism?

2.   Data & Methods

For this purpose, I conducted qualitative interviews in Texas from November 2014 to July 2015.   Research participants are African American Christians who are at least 30 years old.   Because I wanted to focus on middle-class African Americans, participants' qualifications also included having at least a four-year university degree.   I completed interviews with 52 participants (23 men and 29 women).

3.   Results

I found that a majority of research participants had strong patriotism, but a significant minority had weak patriotism.   When I asked those with weak patriotism about the reason for their answers, most of them pointed to racial discrimination that existed in the U.S.   Interestingly, those with strong patriotism had also experienced racial discrimination in the U.S.   When I asked them why they had strong patriotism, the most common response was that they were born in the U.S.   The second most common response was that they enjoyed freedom in the U.S.   The third most common reason was that the U.S. was better than other countries.   I also made two relevant observations.   One is that many participants perceived that only a small proportion of Americans had racist attitudes toward African Americans.   Another is that many participants had hope for positive changes in the U.S. because of the ideals that the United States claims to uphold.   I also found that most participants prayed for the U.S. as a country.   Their prayers appear to result from the internalization of patriotism and from their desire that the U.S. live up to its ideals.   The 9.11 terrorist attacks made many participants feel that they were united with other Americans.   The Obama presidency appears to have boosted participants' patriotism.

4.   Conclusion

From these findings, I conclude that, although a minority of African American participants have weak patriotism because racial discrimination has negatively affected them, a majority of participants have strong patriotism because they perceive the U.S. as their country of their birth, a country of freedom, and a country better than others.   Also, because many participants perceive that only a small proportion of Americans are racists and that the U.S. has great ideals, they still have hope for more positive changes in the U.S.   The Obama presidency appears to have strengthened their patriotism because it was a clear example of what African Americans could accomplish in the U.S.

References

Ishio, Yoshito. 2010. "Social Bases of American Patriotism: Examining Effects of Dominant Social Statuses and Socialization." *Current Sociology* 58(1): 67-93.