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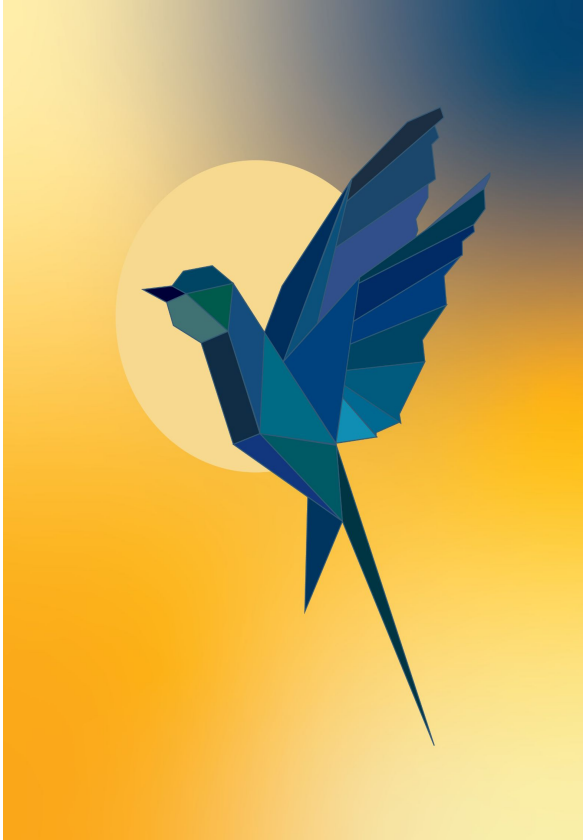
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**Silicon Valley
Sociological Review**
Volume 21
2023

Dr. Cara Chiaraluce
Editor

Department of Sociology
Santa Clara University



Silicon Valley Sociological Review

Volume 21 | 2023

“Letter from the Editor” Cara Chiaraluce	1
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EDUCATION & COLLEGE GREEK LIFE ORGANIZATIONS

“A Nexus of Supportive Infrastructure to Foster Student Learning, Engagement, & Flourishing During the COVID-19 Pandemic” Angel Lin, Maria Garcia, and Lucas Negritto	3
---	---

“Educational Outcomes of Multicultural Curriculum” Megan Imai	19
---	----

“The Social Politics of Contemporary Greek Life Organizations” Bryce Nishikawa, Kelly Lelapinyokul, and Alex Zabalza	47
--	----

HEALTH, VIOLENCE, & JUVENILE CRIME

“First Responders and Mental Health” Anthony Locatelli	60
--	----

“Social Implications of Violence in Sports” Teresa Hu	67
---	----

“On The Right Track: An Analysis of Efforts Aimed at Mitigating Juvenile Crime and Recidivism” Aimee Truscott	74
---	----

**Letter From the Editor of the
Silicon Valley Sociological Review, Volume 21**

Dr. Cara Chiaraluce, Editor
Jessie Hill & Kiki Valenzuela, Student Editorial Assistants

The Sociology Department at Santa Clara University is proud to present, in this volume of the *Silicon Valley Sociological Review*, six research papers written by students majoring in sociology. This 21st volume continues a tradition to provide students with a meaningful opportunity in professional socialization while honing their research and writing skills. As in past years, the substantive, theoretical, methodological, and applied content of the Sociology curriculum at SCU are reflected in these papers. The articles highlight students' ability to engage in meaningful professional work informing sociological understanding of important topics. The authors studied important social topics about individuals, interactions, organizations, and institutions. Furthermore, the authors incorporated their theoretical, substantive, and methodological training in their analyses of real-world social problems.

Angel Lin, Maria Garcia, and Lucas Negritto's "A Nexus of Supportive Infrastructure to Foster Student Learning, Engagement, & Flourishing During the COVID-19 Pandemic" examines the impact of virtual learning on middle school students' learning, engagement, and development during the COVID-19 pandemic. By interviewing middle school students, teachers, and parents of students who participated in remote learning, researchers identified the necessity of a nexus of interconnected support founded on the relationships between the students, parents, and teachers both inside and outside of educational contexts to foster student engagement. These findings suggest a reimagination of the educational landscape, which includes: (1) the prioritization of a dynamic, personalized, and evolving curriculum, (2) community-focused, inquiry-based pedagogy, and (3) an audit system that ensures students are consistently supported in all three conditions of the support nexus.

Megan Imai's "Educational Outcomes of Multicultural Curriculum" aims to answer the question: "Does the level of exposure to multiculturally representative curriculum in high school U.S. history courses correlate with educational engagement, especially for students of color?" Quantitative data from the National Assessment for Educational Progress 2010 12th grade U.S. history assessment and questionnaires was used to assess the correlation between the level of emphasis on people from various cultures in course curriculum and three measures of student engagement: NAEP test score, interest in course material, and their educational goals. Findings suggest that inclusion of different cultures in curriculum alone may not be enough to make a difference in achievement gaps along race and class lines. This study provides motivation for further research on the topic of diversity studies and multicultural curriculum in high schools, and discussion of the limitations of the study gives insight into how this might be done.

Bryce Nishikawa, Kelly Lelapinyokul, and Alex Zabalza's "The Social Politics of Contemporary Greek Life Organizations" asks: How does race impact college students' experiences in Greek Life? This study utilizes six interviews conducted with white and non-white racially identifying members of Santa Clara University GLOs and six hours' worth of digital observations on media affiliated with or in relation to Greek Life. The authors found that an inductee's racial identity was most significant during the rushing process. If and when an

inductee was accepted into a GLO, race was no longer critical to the nature of their experiences. However, the data also indicated the significance of numerous non-identity measures to one's experience which were: the importance of self-presentation, rationalization of the individual benefits, and idealized reforms to be made within the GLO. These findings suggest that one's experience in GLOs is dictated by more than their racial identity. More importantly, in cultivating a harmonious environment within this prevalent social culture in many higher education institutions, GLOs need to do more than diversify their membership and reconcile with their racialized past.

Anthony Locatelli's "First Responders and Mental Health" focuses on mental health issues facing first responders due to their line of work. A proposed study seeks to gain more information from first responders to create support resources and programs to ensure that first responders are getting the best quality care for their work-related stressors and issues. The goal of this paper is not just to increase access to support resources to help first responders, but also to inform the public of the seriousness of first responder mental health, since they are the emergency personnel that care for the community.

Teresa Hu's "Social Implications of Violence in Sports" essay focuses on the relationship between competitive sports and violence both on and off the field. Major findings in the literature suggest that competitive sports such as boxing, hockey, MMA, and American football, stimulate violence mainly among white male athletes and spectators and discriminate against minority groups. She demonstrates how sports can serve to reinforce gender stereotypes, racial hierarchy when black athletes receive relatively less or negative media coverage, widen social class divisions, and promote ableism.

Aimee Truscott's "On The Right Track: An Analysis of Efforts Aimed at Mitigating Juvenile Crime and Recidivism" investigates the current options, as well as potential avenues, for mitigating juvenile crime and recidivism. Focusing primarily on the efforts within Santa Clara County, she examines the implementation of alternative services for youth in at-risk communities. By emphasizing the importance of alleviating youth crime and recidivism, both in the immediate community and beyond, this article works to identify the steps necessary for change.

As a collection, the student research presented in this volume exemplifies the evidence-based social science curriculum offered by the Department of Sociology at Santa Clara University. The collection also reveals sociology students' deep care for social equity and justice. The social issues explored have important policy and programmatic implications. These applications resonate with the University's mission to prepare students of competence, conscience, and compassion, who will help fashion a more just, humane, and sustainable world.

The cover art for this volume was created by talented SCU sociology major **Cathy Moya**, class of 2023. This piece is titled "Sunrise Flight." Bringing this issue to life would not be possible without the support and input from all members in the Department of Sociology at Santa Clara University. We are grateful to all of the editorial reviews and assistance especially provided by Kiki Valenzuela and Jessie Hill, both 2023 sociology graduates.

A Nexus of Supportive Infrastructure to Foster Student Learning, Engagement, & Flourishing During the COVID-19 Pandemic

By

Angel Lin, Maria Garcia, and Lucas Negritto

ABSTRACT.

In 2020, educators and students were faced with a global pandemic that created unprecedented challenges to classrooms across the nation. For many students, the shift to online learning in a necessary effort to maintain educational continuity lasted for an entire academic year. Students attended online synchronous and asynchronous class sessions, interacted with their peers in exclusively online settings, and were isolated to the social and economic constraints of their own households. This study examines the dramatic impact that these virtual learning experiences had on middle school students' learning, engagement, and development during the COVID-19 pandemic. By interviewing middle school students, teachers, and parents of students who participated in remote learning, researchers identified the necessity of a nexus of interconnected support founded on the relationships between the students, parents, and teachers both inside and outside of educational contexts to foster student engagement. This nexus of support was even more imperative for the success of low-income students and students who were children from immigrant families. Even when all conditions of this nexus were met, however, it was still necessary for students to display a remarkable level of intrinsic motivation and self-help behavior in order to maintain consistent engagement. These findings suggest the a radical reimagination of the educational landscape for students and educators' return to the physical classroom: (1) the prioritization of a dynamic, personalized, and evolving curriculum, (2) community-focused, inquiry-based pedagogy, and (3) an audit system that ensures students are consistently supported in all three conditions of the support nexus.

INTRODUCTION

Individuals, families, communities, institutions, and nations all experienced the massive upheaval of the COVID-19 pandemic, fundamentally challenging the operation of every aspect of our social order. In less than one week, businesses across the globe shut down, governments entered states of emergencies, workplaces went remote, classes were moved online, and people were socially isolated. The world of normalcy we once knew was no longer relevant as leaders struggled to meet the urgent needs of the moment. Schools underwent an extreme overhaul in structure. As sites of childhood development and a significant predictor of societal well being, educational institutions in the U.S. carried the burden of dictating the course of our nation's well-being and recovery from these unprecedented times.

This realization led to the following question: "How has student engagement been impacted by the shifts to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?" Our research finds that optimal learning and engagement for students participating in online learning during the COVID-19

pandemic is contingent on a nexus of supportive conditions: from teachers, from parents, and from the student. Each of these variables are accompanied by a very specific set of criteria that facilitate student success. Teachers and educational professionals must be willing and able to adapt their curriculums, communicate directly with individual students, and receive financial and technological support from their administrators. Parents must be able to provide an at-home environment conducive to learning without distractions, have a certain threshold of digital literacy, and have the time to be able to meaningfully play a role in their child's learning. Even with these conditions in place, however, students, themselves, must exhibit some degree of intrinsic motivation and deliberate self-help behavior in order to experience meaningful participation and engagement in their classes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on education, resulting in a sudden shift to online learning. Many ed-tech companies have rushed to provide their services and solutions, often for free. However, there is a risk that these commercial solutions are not always designed with best pedagogical practices in mind, but rather with a focus on making profit from user data. Moreover, there has been increasing critique of how ed-tech is redefining and reducing concepts of teaching and learning. This paper challenges the narrative that claims education can be 'fixed' with technology. Instead, it urges educational leaders to carefully consider the decisions they are making about online learning, and whether they are paving the way to a desirable future of education.

Access to technology and digital literacy, however, is not by any means the cure all to accessibility and the democratization of education. Bach et al. (2013) describes the ways in which the digital exclusion of low income communities in the informational age directly leads to negative economic impacts in the development of social capital. Existing structures undermine full participation of low-income households with less overall digital literacy in community affairs, cultural life, and official institutions—including education. Research also demonstrates that the relational differences in home environments shape youth's engagement with digital content and network creation (Darvin 2018). Even before the shift to virtual learning that forced students to expose the intimacies of their at-home environments to all their classrooms in an online Zoom call, it was clear how class differences in contrasting social positions were exacerbated by the unequal digital accumulation of social capital. Even when technology is made widely accessible in a classroom context, studies have found the ways in which educator bias affects the encouragement students of color receive to expand their technological engagement. Rafalow (2020) observes particular "digital divisions" based on race: white students bringing disruptive or preexisting skills are labeled "innovative;" Asian students who do the same are named as "hackers;" and Latinx students are ignored or considered "troublemakers." Without a deliberate and meaningful inclusion of students of color from various socioeconomic statuses in the technological integration with education, existing paradigms of inequality and domination will continue to persist.

The available literature for educational learning and development is extensive and offers insights into how children and adolescents fare given different learning environments. Prior to the pandemic it was well established that in order for children to survive and thrive developmentally they need: "Good Health, Adequate Nutrition, Responsive Caregiving, Security and Safety and opportunities for Early Learning" (Rao et al. 2021: e741). The environment parents and

caregivers provide children, through emotionally supportive and responsive interactions, ensures good health, nutrition, protection from harm, and opportunities for early learning. Having policies and services is essential in creating these environments for children. The school closures caused by the COVID-19 pandemic impacted such policies and services and may have had an adverse effect in many areas of child development including education (Rao et al. 2021: e741). Since our research focuses on education, technology and the COVID-19 pandemic, this research is important in establishing what things need to be in place in order for children and adolescents to thrive in their development. These disruptions of the pandemic to everyday life, caused disruptions to children's developmental and educational growth. Due to the extended time that children were out of the classroom environment and in remote learning modalities (if applicable), there may have been significant learning loss for not just young children but for adolescents as well (McCoy et al. 2021: e892).

Although research is limited, pandemic related interruptions to Early Care Childhood Education services are likely to have especially strong and lasting impacts on children's long-term wellbeing. McCoy (2018) and other contributors go on to assert that "whereas losses associated with secondary and to some extent also primary school closures can potentially be offset by online or remote learning, the scope and feasibility of such services are currently limited for younger children." In addition to learning loss, COVID-19 has also exacerbated other disparities that can directly impact a child's education. In addition to these environments, policies and services, technology and technology literacy were also impactful in childhood education even prior to the pandemic. In *Social Class and The Unequal Digital Literacies of Youth* publication Darvin (2018: 29) describes how the "dynamic interplay of class-inscribed factors shape the out-of-school literacies of these adolescents." He delves into how physical space, digital and non-digital resources, and modes of parental engagement constructed home environments that socialize adolescents into specific digital dispositions and practices. In terms of digital resources, the findings highlighted how access to software is just about as critical as hardware and connectivity. When speaking of digital literacy he is "Challenging the notion of the "digital native" (Prensky 2001) that ascribes digital fluency to a generation of users born into technology, it illustrates how young people of different backgrounds can develop diverse sets of digital literacies" (Darvin 2018: 27). He also uses social class to examine the differences of these backgrounds and attempts to dissect how learners who have different levels of economic, cultural, and social capital can be socialized into different digital practices. These different digital practices based on social class greatly impact how students approach the technology which they were expected to have mastered during the shift to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

METHODOLOGY

Interviews & Observations:

The participant pool was selected using convenience sampling and purposeful sampling. We conducted eight virtual interviews via the digital platform Zoom with durations varying from 0.5 - 1.25 hours. Three distinct groups of research subjects were interviewed: students, parents and teachers. The three student participants that were interviewed were enrolled in both private and public middle schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. The two parent participants were parents of middle school-aged children who attended school during the COVID-19 pandemic. The three teacher participants were teachers from both public and private schools who teach in the subject areas of humanities, STEM, and foreign language. All three subject pools were selected from

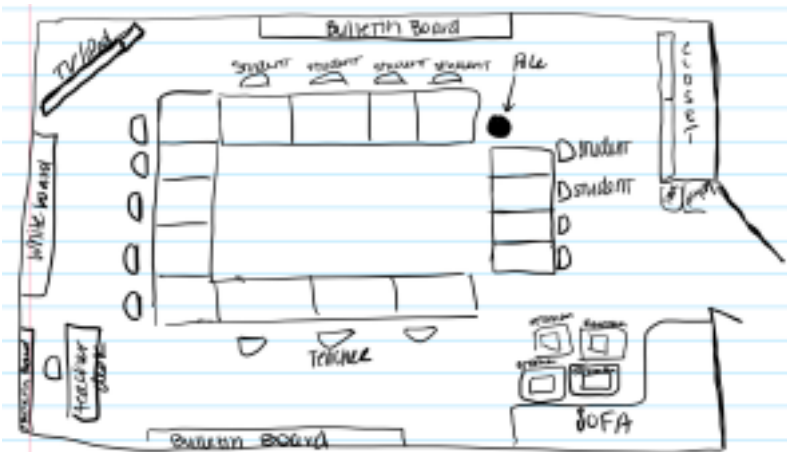
various social, economic, geographic, and cultural contexts. Three separate interview protocols were developed, one for each group, which asked questions about conditions prior to and after the pandemic.

We were able to interview 3 adult females, 2 adult males, 2 juvenile females and 1 juvenile male. Gwen is a white woman in her early thirties. She teaches humanities at a single-sex independent middle school located in the Bay Area. She is also a mother of a three-year-old son and was pregnant with her second child at the time of the interview. Maria is a Hispanic/Latinx woman in her early fifties. She teaches Spanish for Fluent Speakers at the same single-sex independent middle school where Gwen teaches. In addition to being a teacher, Maria is also the Director of a first-generation scholarship program at the school. Melissa is a Hispanic/Latinx woman in her late thirties. She works in education as an aid to a special education program in the Bay Area, located not too far from the middle school her daughter attends. She is a single mother who lives in an apartment with her daughter and a roommate. Mike is a white male who is married and is in his early fifties. His daughter attends an independent middle school in the Bay Area. He is a data administrator for a law firm and has recently bought a home. Dave is a white male in his thirties. He is a STEM teacher in Connecticut at a public high school. Dave is also in charge of technology at his school and gives instruction to teachers on how to use technology. Dave has two daughters, both in high school now. Giselle is a thirteen-year-old female student. She lives with her mother in an apartment close to where she goes to school. She is hispanic/latinx and is part of her school's first-generation scholarship program. This program awards full scholarships to high-achieving girls from under-resourced areas. Samantha is a fourteen-year-old student from a public high school located in the Bay Area. Johnathan is a thirteen-year-old, first-generation Japanese-American student from a public school in the Bay Area.

In-person observations were conducted at a single-sex independent middle school in the Bay Area. This school is small with an average of 67 students per grade and an enrollment of about 201 students total. This school is located in an affluent neighborhood but the student population is drawn from about forty different schools from around the Bay Area. The building is unassuming. It is not a traditional school building - it is a converted office building that has been modified to accommodate the school. There are brightly decorated wood cutouts of people covering the exterior. There is a singular drive way that leads to the back of the building with more parking. The back entryway of the building is flanked by turf areas. On the turf there are 4 large white event tents that serve as outdoor classrooms due to the pandemic. There are hand washing stations right before the double door entryway to the building. The inside of the building has been remade to fit the needs of the school so there are twelve classrooms, some of which are shared and some of which are not. There are lockers for each student along the walls. In addition to these classrooms, there is a library that is filled with curated books for the students. There also is a woodshop/ceramics studio, a traditional art room and a gym/multi-purpose room. Almost all administrative offices are located in a hallway at the entrance at the front of the school, but teacher offices are located more centrally to the classrooms.

The classroom where we did our observations is a multi-discipline room. This room is shared by the 8th grade Humanities teacher and by the 8th grade Spanish for Fluent Speakers teacher. This room was remodeled and was a model classroom before the pandemic. The door into the classroom opens into the hallway instead of into the classroom. There are no windows in this classroom. The only source of daylight comes from a large skylight. As you walk into the

classroom there are two white glossy closets off to the corner on the right. There is a pole in the classroom that is a few feet in front of the closets and breaks up the student desks. The student desks are individual desks but they are set up as a rectangle in the middle of the classroom with all the chairs set up on the outside (see diagram below). Behind the desks on the right hand side there is a dark blue bulletin board with student work displayed on it. At the front right corner of the room there is a television/iPad/camera set up and pointing towards the rest of the class. At the front of the classroom there are two large white boards that are blank. To the left of the white board is a Bulletin board with the word “DREAM” and it has pictures of Civil Rights leaders and important Women laminated and neatly displayed. The teacher’s desk and chair is located in the left top corner of the room directly in front of the decorated Bulletin Board. There is another large bulletin board in the middle of the room on the left side that also displays student artwork. On the bottom left corner of the room there is a blue corner sofa that can easily fit many people. In front of the sofa are 4 ottoman style seats with black plastic tops that act as “tabletops.”



Gaining Access

Our interviews were conducted with participants that were selected through personal connections or through connections through our place of employment. Access was easier to obtain because we were, for the most part, known to the participants that we selected to interview. Our field site was an independent middle school which made it a quasi-private place where “access is associated with the possession of certain credentials or attributes, such as being an employee or a recognizable member” (Lofland et. al. 2006: 35). It is precisely because one of our researchers is an employee and a recognizable member of this community that we were able to gain access to the site for our observations. Since one of our researchers was already known to the community at the site we were observing, we did not have to conduct our research covertly. Our fellow researcher disclosed our status as student researchers to the teachers of the classrooms being observed. This allowed us to approach our research from an “insider” participant researcher role which has the advantage of already knowing the setting and the people being observed. Some barriers to access to this field site were primarily due to the COVID-19 pandemic and to health protocols at this research site. The student researchers that were not employed there were asked to arrive earlier than the scheduled observation time to allow enough time to test themselves and receive the results before entering the classroom with students. Another barrier to access was timing. Because of the truncated schedule of this project, timing was a bit harder to navigate. We were able to email the program director who replied promptly, for clearance to observe a classroom for forty-five minutes to an hour. We then had to coordinate all three researcher’s schedules so that they could observe a full class with the

rotating 6 day schedule that the school has for their students and faculty.

Observer Effects in the Data

As students prior to and during the pandemic, we were deliberate in not reading into the data our own experiences with online learning during the pandemic. When reviewing the data, we distinctly recognized that our positionalities—as students, first-generation students, and gendered/racialized beings—facilitated access to research subjects as well as played a role in the conduct of our interviews, the observation of data, and the creation of codes. Accounting for the subjective “I”s, we could “consciously attend to the orientations that will shape what they see and what they make of what they see. By this consciousness, they can possibly escape the thwarting biases that subjectivity engenders, while attaining the singular perspective its special persuasions promise” (Peshkin 1988: 21).

Ethics

Since we were conducting research that involved minors, an IRB review was requested. In order to be transparent in our research, we had all adults read and sign a consent form with an overview of our research and what it would be used for. There were no incentives given for participation in our research. We informed the parents of the minors who participated in our research and obtained ascent forms. Due to the nature of our observations in a “normal educational setting” (Lofland et al. 2006: 49) we did not have to obtain individual assent for each student in either of the classes we observed, although we did obtain assent from the administrators of the school prior to reaching out to individual teachers with requests for classroom observations.

Tools of Analysis

Our approach to this research was an inductive one. After seeing the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in our own lives as students, we developed broad questions about its impact on education and then further narrowed our scope. Through the inductive process and through our shared interests in technology and education we arrived at our research question.

Throughout the research we relied on social constructivist frameworks which allowed us to study what the effect of COVID-19 has had on education, and what part technology has played. Our constructivist worldview led us to conduct interviews with the affected populations and to tailor our questions to each distinct group. This methodology is reliant on “doing inquiry in more natural settings, collecting more situational information, and reintroducing discovery as an element in inquiry, and, in the social sciences particularly, soliciting emic viewpoints to assist in determining the meanings and purposes that people ascribe to their actions, as well as to contribute to “grounded theory” (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1990). All these aims are accomplished largely through the “increased utilization of qualitative techniques” (Denzin & Lincoln 1994: 110). Since this methodological approach is not theoretically neutral we have to be careful to not let that affect how we carry out, collect, code and interpret our data. Our observation data and interview transcripts were coded by researchers using open and focused coding, which we then double coded into pre and post COVID categories. Specific codes included pedagogy, physical space, community, and technology. Researchers were deliberate in utilizing reflexivity to ensure that their individual positionalities would not bias approaches to the data.

RESULTS

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were staggering at every level of student learning, engagement, and social-emotional development. Information gathered from interviews indicated that students experienced significant gaps in learning, struggled to stay engaged, and fell behind in their social development. Parents struggled to step into their new roles as supportive participants in their child's learning and had to negotiate a restructuring of their at-home dynamics. Teachers rapidly redefined their classroom for an online setting and quickly evaluated the urgent needs and experiences of isolation that now affected their students. Field observations revealed the implicit mechanisms by which the in-person classroom environment was able to facilitate optimal student engagement by fostered relationships and spontaneous interactions—conditions that the virtual classroom was simply unable to effectively emulate. Each of our research subject categories, however, demonstrated the comprehensive nexus of supportive infrastructure necessary to mitigate the harms and disruptions in student engagement brought about by the shift to online learning.

Parents

As the head of the household, parents became solely responsible for providing students with the physical space for their learning environment. At the start of lockdown conditions in March 2020, parents cited their children spending upwards 24 hours per day at their home. Parents who were offered the option to work-from-home were asked to completely restructure their at-home routines and the interactions they had with their children. Working from home, however, meant that they had to essentially compete with other household members for physical space and network connectivity to adequately perform their jobs. Melissa, a single mother, discusses having to share a physical space with her daughter Giselle and roommate who was conducting virtual therapy sessions with children as a speech therapist:

She had therapy going on with kids and then Giselle was there and so we'd just kind of get up and get ready and eat breakfast and then everybody kind of knew where to go. My roommate in her room, Giselle in her room, and I was in the living room. The house is kind of quiet and nobody's really making noise because, you know, you're going to interrupt you know my roommate.

Melissa cites the creation of improvised workplaces for all members of the household. For many families, it was difficult to provide the physical chair, desk, and private space for students to adequately participate and engage with video calls. At the independent school that Giselle attended, the school was able to provide students with a desk, chair, and noise canceling headphones to block out any disruptions associated with a shared space. The integration of technology into their schoolwork, however, meant that students were experiencing drastic increases in their screen time. All parent participants cited this as a major concern of theirs: Mike, a father of a middle school daughter at the time, expressed disdain that his daughter could not be “outside with friends and stuff or meeting up with school friends to, you know, to go to the park and stuff. That was not happening at all. So basically their only means to communicate with each other was screen time.” Parents watched with anxiousness as their children's screen time went from 0-3 hours per day to, at times, tripling or even quadrupling, to 3-12 hours per day.

Parents who worked outside of the home as essential workers, however, faced their own set of

problematic circumstances. Oftentimes, leaving for work meant that they were leaving their child at home alone and socially isolated for the entire day. The lack of supervision became a slippery slope to a lack of routine or accountability for the student. Johnathan, whose parents both worked at a restaurant, was left home alone for most of the day during the pandemic. When asked what he would do on a typical weekday, he responded: “Go to school, stay in bed—which was bad. And I never turned my camera on either.” Johnathan experienced severe disengagement during the pandemic, admitting to neglecting his assignments and ignoring his teacher’s messages. Without his parents at home to keep him accountable, he spent his entire day Face Timing his one friend from bed or scrolling through his phone. Even after his parents came home from work, they often did not have the capacity to help him with any schoolwork:

Um, my mom tried and...sometimes it helped. But, she doesn't really know English, so it's really hard for her to explain stuff. And it made both of us stressed. I think she's the one who encouraged me to search up the answers and she searched up most answers.

Johnathan’s mother did not have the educational background, time, or language skills necessary to play the additional role of his tutor. Prioritizing the completion of assignments over genuine comprehension, the two resorted to simply looking up the answers to homework assignments online. Later in the year, when it came time to be evaluated on the content covered in his online classes, Johnathan immensely struggled. He nearly failed two of his classes and had exhibited severe gaps in learned content. From Johnathan’s experience, it became clear that if parents did not have the means or capacity to keep their children accountable and help set up engagement-focused routines, student’s were discouraged from doing so themselves.

Issues with technology and communication similarly fell along socioeconomic lines. Parents became the students’ most immediately accessible resource when it came to technological issues; for some pairings, however, this often became a problematic and frustrating experience. Parents from families at lower socioeconomic statuses typically exhibited lower levels of digital literacy and less confidence navigating online programs such as Zoom, Google Suite, or email.

Researcher: Before the pandemic had you ever used platforms like zoom Google meet or any other conferencing? And if so, did you ever have to use a computer for work?

Melissa: yeah but, just like usual emails and stuff like that, but not like video conferencing.

These findings corroborate existing research observing how digital inequality and access to technology fall along disparities in race, income, immigration status, and language barriers (Bach 2013; Darvin 2018; Rafalow 2020; Torralba 2015). Across the board, parents cited their children being more technologically “savvy” than them; it was parents in lower socioeconomic households, however, who hesitated to initiate any direct outreach to teachers if they noticed that their children were struggling. Parents who never used a computer for work or education assumed that their children would be able to either resolve their issues on their own or reach out to their teacher for help. This finding supports the existing literature of the “digital native” mentality which constructs the notion that young users are naturally more knowledgeable and skilled in operating digital tools than their older counterparts (Darvin 2018: 27).

Teachers

Teachers were tasked with the most significant burden at the start of the pandemic: to radically redesign their classrooms and curriculums for online learning—all within a matter of weeks. Many cited frustrations with the uncertainty of the pandemic: without a clear timeline, planning out their curriculum became extremely difficult. What became paramount, then, was clear communication from administrators about the resources and technological training made available to educators. Teachers from independent or private schools cited experiencing significantly more support than their counterparts at public schools. At the independent school Maria worked at, teachers worked with the technology team to install additional monitors in their homes and were provided standing desks to work on.

Recognizing and anticipating these areas of need relating to technology and individualized attention were profoundly important to promoting student success, particularly students at lower socioeconomic statuses. Teachers had to be deliberate in ensuring that their students had the technological means to engage in the online classroom. Beyond the one-to-one personal laptop programs that many schools already had prior to the pandemic, teachers recognized the need to support students at lower socioeconomic statuses who were at higher risk for disengagement. Gwen, the humanities teacher from the independent school, described how teachers came together to unofficially identify these students at higher risk:

It was harder to get in touch with kids who are lower SES, to be honest. It was harder, like, there was a direct correlation. So we kind of had to know who could get who. Two of them I could get from that class because one of them was my advisee. Well, I had very complicated advisees at that time who were in seventh grade. Three of them were on everyone's, like, 'Can't-Get-This-Kid' list.

In addition to providing tangible means to support these students—internet connection, technology, a desk and chair, gift cards for groceries, etc.—teachers found that it was necessary to establish consistent, reliable, and direct lines of communication. Reinforcing this connection with students on the improvised collective ‘Can’t-Get-This-Kid’ list and ensuring that students had the opportunity to reach out for help allowed them the opportunity to establish agency over their own education and avoid losing touch. Maria, the director of the first-generation program at the independent school also described being deliberate about establishing lines of communication with parents. To the Spanish-speaking parents who expressed hesitation using email and other forms of technology to ask questions, she joked, “If you can use WhatsApp, you can send me an email.”

Across the board, the most significant contributor to student success was the personal relationship that teachers had with their students. Without the external accountability measures and direct pressure that came with in-person learning, student motivation and accountability largely relied on respect for their teacher. This respect, however, had to be mutual. Middle school STEM teacher David describes:

It's about the relationship you have with the kid and the relationship that the student has with the work, more than anything else. It can't be about grades, it can't be about needing to get into college or whatever it may end up being that way.

Teachers had to be accommodating and understanding of the at-home conditions that students were learning under. Mutual respect fostered the most effective pedagogy, allowing for teachers to shift away from strict evaluation methods and punitive curriculums. A more expansive explanation of the shifts in curriculums that took place during the pandemic follows.

Students

The social isolation and loss of community suffered by these students at this formative time period in their social and emotional development took a tremendous toll on their well-being. While it is not within our scope as sociologists to evaluate the psychological impact that online learning had on these students, the interviews with students consistently demonstrated a weak or complete lack of social network. Students who enrolled in new schools in mid-pandemic recalled not having any friends at all and others described only consistently keeping in touch with one or two friends. The only mechanism to maintain communication at this time, of course, was virtually. Giselle, a student who began the sixth grade in 2020, described her struggle to make friends at her new school: "Um well...I didn't..so my school has these little cohort groups. So like those were like my friends but I wouldn't talk to them. We would just text, "Hey are you in class already?" Like, that's all." Even after the return to online learning, Giselle described awkward lunch breaks where students unaccustomed to in-person socialization would sit in silence. This lack of a social network significantly contributed to academic disengagement. Without peers to motivate their learning or engage within the classroom, online learning was a draining and tiresome burden. Students fell into a state of learned helplessness and suffered exacerbated mental health states. These findings underscored the necessity in developing a sense of community and human connection within the classroom.

Many students exhibited extreme wariness and hesitation when reaching out for help. For many students who were in virtual classrooms with teachers who they had just met for the first time, they expressed anxiety about speaking up in class. Giselle, who prided herself on being a "teacher's pet" prior to the pandemic, expressed her stress and intimidation about not being able to make connections with her new teachers from a distinctly racialized perspective: "Um, like I was like I was a bit scared at that. Like, it was hard because of our, like, our races. Like the skin color. Like, all my teachers are like white, mostly white and I thought they weren't gonna like me, so yeah. I'd be in my own little bubble." Whether or not these fears were founded is less relevant than the fact that the student perceived her teachers' help as inaccessible due to her inability to develop personal relationships with them. Logistical constraints also hindered students' willingness to engage with their teacher. Samantha, who at the point of the study had moved onto high school, explains that the online learning medium required that students learned the material on their own. Shortened class times and the switch to asynchronous learning contributed to the inaccessibility of teachers:

You kind of had to learn a lot of it on your own, you know? They'd be like, oh, like, look at these pages in the workbook, you know? And, like, do that. And you'd be like, I have no clue how to do this, you know? And it's not like, you can go to, like, office hours or, like, go into your teachers class after school and be like, hey, like, you know I had a question about the summer homework. And it was very—like, there wasn't any time in class to ask questions about the homework, really, because they were so busy, like, giving you everything you need for the next assignment.

Additionally, many students had resigned to the notion that their parents were unable to provide them with direct support at this time. Recognizing that parents were balancing their own concerns with finances, work, caring for family members, and the well being of the family, many students simply did not ask their parents for help.

Ultimately, the most important element in the nexus of supportive infrastructure for student learning was the student's own capacity for intrinsic motivation. If students were not willing or able to establish agency and ownership over their own learning during the COVID-19 pandemic, they fell behind. Across the board, students experienced a lack of focus and lower academic performance. For some, however, there was a moment in which they decided to take hold of their learning and truly commit to academic success. Giselle's mother, Melissa, describes a moment where her daughter just decided that she needed to "get it:"

I think, after failing so much, she kind of was like, I need to get it. Okay, I agreed with her. She just went, I need to get this together—because you know some weeks, she wouldn't submit her assignments right or they would go somewhere else—and it was just, like, she likes to be on it.

It was after this moment of realization and self-awareness that Giselle began to excel in school once again. She began reaching out to her teachers, working until she could understand how to technically work her computer, and being deliberate about the routine she made to complete her assignments. Giselle was able to demonstrate an outstanding display of intrinsic motivation. With all of the existing factors from before her switch in mindset remained the same, this moment of realization was triggered only by her sense of self. For other students, this intrinsic motivation and desire to learn did not come as naturally. Johnathan, who was already experiencing at-home conditions not conducive to learning, did not fare as well. Even though he was experiencing direct outreach from teachers, Johnathan could not become motivated to improve his own academic performance. The lack of accountability measures and the experience of social isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic intensely challenged students who benefitted from these normative structures. When asked about the supportive structures he had available to him at this point in his learning, Johnathan admitted dejectedly: "Actually, um, people did try to help me but I didn't really know how to help myself." Even if parents and teachers were able to create the most ideal conditions for online learning (physical space, community ties, direct communication, financial support, perceived availability of help, mental health and well-being) for their students—an admittedly unrealistic scenario—, their engagement and learning experience was still fundamentally dependent upon their intrinsic motivation and self-help behavior.

Shifts in Curriculum

Shifting to an online format caused major discrepancies in the curriculum for teachers during the pandemic. Some materials and learning experiences that were offered before the pandemic—guest visitors, field trips, site excursions, observation—were simply inaccessible in a virtual format. Teachers were agile in modifying their course content to fit the new modality. Specifically, Gwen discussed the issues that arose with the shortening of her classes: having less time in class meant that material took twice as long to cover over the school year, or certain concepts simply had to be covered in less depth. She also describes how a significant portion of the learning took place in the form of asynchronous assignments, putting students in a position where much of the material they were engaging with was being self-taught. It was not until the

school began reinstating live classes that teachers felt a sense of normalcy and routine that provided more opportunities for consistent engagement with students.

Understanding the ways in which online learning was significantly difficult for most students, many teachers decided to change their course load. Maria took the most radical approach to redesigning her curriculum:

So we had a class and then I just said we're going to read three novels and we're going to discuss. It's not going to be writing assignments and it's not going to be grammar exercises. We're just going to talk in Spanish, and we will open it up one day in each week, when you can, we can just gossip about whatever you want to do, *chisme*, you know, but as long as in Spanish.

She allowed her students to bring in their own content to discuss in Spanish—current events, funny videos, personal matters, and more. Maria reimaged her classroom as a space for community and bonding, rather than focusing on strict evaluation and assessment methods. By eliminating the rigid structure for her classes, she took on a holistic and interactive approach to learning that met the needs of students who were undergoing social isolation and online fatigue. This demonstrated a deliberate attempt to adapt the curriculum to meet the emotional and social needs of students.

Interestingly, however, traces of this more lenient and holistic approach to organizing the classroom curriculum remained *after* the return to in-person learning. From her eighth grade humanities students, Gwen observes,

There's a lot more pushback on homework than before because they're like, 'I've been to school, I should be done,' and we're like, 'No, like you have to do homework, too.' And we don't give that much homework to be perfectly honest, compared to a lot of schools, but I think kids are really, really stressed and they didn't have the ramp up that, like the gentle ramp up, that happens, normally from five, six, to seven.

The need for a gradual acclimation to the regular standards of in-person learning indicate a significant difference in curriculum expectations for both students and teachers. Students who have not had to differentiate between classroom assignments and homework assignments for the past two years are being challenged with coursework that, in most cases, are two grade levels above what they remember from the last time they were in in-person instruction. Many students—including Johnathan who nearly failed two class subjects during 7th grade but was able to pass by completing some makeup assignments at the end of the online school year—are struggling to keep up with the pace of in-person instruction and are still making up for an entire school year of lost knowledge. In order to account for these disparities, educators must be creative in reimagining their curriculum in the return to the classroom.

Interactive Community Learning

Field observations of the in-person classroom emphasized the ways in which community is central to the optimal learning environment. In each of the classes we observed, it was clear that the girls were all extremely close with one another. While they were aided by teachers who valued their empowerment and affirmed their achievements, some of the most affirming and

validating moments were prompted by students actively and vocally supporting their peers.

Within Maria's Spanish class, these patterns were especially relevant: the class starts with three of the students standing up, walking to the front of the classroom, and reciting a poem. After each student recites the poem, they receive applause from the rest of the class and each respond with a gleeful smile. The teacher continues to affirm the class and leads the class from the desk with conversational directives. One of the girls who gets up to speak struggles for a moment. She pauses and the teacher interjects to remind her of what to say. At one point, the teacher corrects her pronunciation of a word. Maria looks at us and explains in English that the girl is Brazilian and Portuguese, making her pronunciation especially difficult as she occasionally slips into a Portuguese accent. As the individual presentations go on, other students who struggle look to their peers for help. The students support their classmate by reminding them of the word that they have forgotten or a pronunciation they have mixed up. The contributions are spontaneous and they do not wait on their teacher to call on them to help out. While a majority of the classroom discussion is fluidly conversation based, there are times when the teacher directly poses a question to the class. When students do not immediately know the answer, there is a pause in the conversation. After having an 'aha!' epiphany, one of the students raises her hand and pridefully answers the question.

When contrasting this with the restrictive format of online learning, it becomes clear that the online classroom does not leave the same room for spontaneous empowerment and peer support. In an online classroom where students have to unmute to speak in class, students were much more hesitant to speak aloud. Online classrooms leave little room for cheering, side comments, jokes, or affirming nods. It is difficult to even know with certainty if students are fully engaged in one another's words when their peers are speaking due to the ability to multitask on a computer.

Another extremely valuable experience of community learning presented by the physical classroom, it became apparent, was the opportunity for students to assist one another in their learning. Students learned with one another and, when one of them began to struggle with a topic, others jumped in to help before even being prompted to do so by the teacher. At one point in the Spanish classroom when a student had a question about one of the grammatical concepts in the book they were reading, another student talked her through the concept in English. The teacher did not say anything, even letting the girls continue their conversation in English despite her Spanish-only policy for the sake of allowing the student to communicate the learning process to the other student.

DISCUSSION

Conclusions

We began our research by asking ourselves, "How has student engagement been impacted by the shifts to online learning during the COVID-19 pandemic?" In conclusion, we have identified not only how engagement has been impacted, but why it is important to understand a holistic view of education to solve engagement issues. Student engagement is a measure of how dedicated, curious, interested, and enthusiastic students are when they are learning. Educators are coming to understand how students' learning and retention are optimized when the students are excited about what they are studying; students are far less likely to retain information and engage with

material if they are uninterested. Contrary to what one may intuitively assume, however, the factors that contribute to engagement are not all based directly on learning or student motivation. Multi-disciplinary support must exist inside *and* outside of the classroom. These support structures are embedded in the relationship between teacher, parent, and student. Educational professionals must be willing and able to adapt their curriculums, communicate directly with individual students, and receive financial and technological support from their administrators. Parents must be able to provide an at-home environment conducive to learning without distractions, have a certain threshold of digital literacy, and have the time to be able to meaningfully play a role in their child's learning. Even with these conditions in place, however, students, themselves, must exhibit some degree of intrinsic motivation and deliberately self-help behavior in order to experience meaningful participation and engagement in their classes.

Implications

Our research offers three proposals for a radical reimagination of the educational landscape in the return to the physical classroom: (1) the prioritization of a dynamic, personalized, and evolving curriculum, (2) community-focused, inquiry-based pedagogy which considers the strengths and weaknesses of asynchronous and synchronous classrooms, and (3) an audit system that ensures students are consistently supported in all three conditions of the previously identified nexus.

Strict constraints on curriculum content prevent teachers from ensuring that students are adequately engaged in their classroom. This is not to say that teachers would not benefit from subject standards and supporting material for curriculum content. Rather, teachers significantly benefit from meaningful mechanisms of feedback from their students. This feedback is usually understood as levels of engagement through direct modes of communication. At this moment in time, it is impossible to completely personalize learning for each student; it is simply not scalable for the teacher to design an individual curriculum for every student. However, in allowing teachers to creatively increase student engagement on a personal level, the unique needs and conditions experienced by students—in their at-home environment, in their emotional and social development, in their willingness to engage in self-helping behavior—are addressed to optimize engagement. This dynamic curriculum is directly connected to student centered pedagogy. In our interviews and observations, we saw that teachers valued the freedom of choosing curriculum and ability to evolve the content for their individual classes, which teachers also believe that students feel a stronger sense of ownership and excitement about course content when they can discuss and interact with personalized curriculum that contain direct application to their lives. Without a direct line of communication from teacher to student, a teacher cannot efficiently evolve their curriculum.

The pandemic highlighted the school's critical role as a space of community for students. Beyond explicit roles in learning and education, schools play a role in the de facto emotional and social development of students. This underscores the necessity of community care in supporting students' overall success, happiness, and well-being. This community care extends beyond the classroom because the "hybrid classroom" model is not going anywhere. We've concluded that hybrid model classrooms can be functionally convenient and effective in designing course curriculum, but most importantly have identified that community care must exist in and outside the classroom. The asynchronous/synchronous nature of a classroom opens a new personal window into the lives of students not previously seen by teachers and peer students. An audit

system can create a systematic process that digests a picture of students' experiences and understands their unique challenges, while respecting their privacy. If a student is lacking a key support mechanism outlined in our research, teachers can shift curriculum, institutions can deploy resources to assist students in those areas and evolve campus resources to generalize this support to groups. There ought to be less focus on auditing an institution's student academic performance or the size of their classes. Rather, the COVID-19 pandemic highlights the ways in which evaluation must prioritize student engagement, which contains the emotional and experiential components that derive from community health. We have identified inquiry-based learning as the most effective description of the pedagogy that students need for success. With inquiry based learning, students play a more active role in the learning process. This approach encourages students to explore the material, ask questions, and share ideas, rather than simply receiving information from the teacher. In turn, teachers can evolve their curriculum, but they must be able to communicate and have no restraints on doing so. Further, the class must feel like a community to facilitate this environment. Finally, we can abstract the conditions of this environment with an audit system so institutions can numerically represent the health of the nexus of conditions.

Future research

As schools return to in-person learning, more research must be done to evaluate exactly where students have fallen behind. Researchers will be asked the following questions: How can educators address and rectify children's gaps in social, academic, and emotional development? What permanent shifts in classroom curriculums will we see after the return to in-person learning? Can we close the digital divide for more equitable education? Perhaps, most importantly, how can educators reimagine the classroom to model community care and cultivate the thriving of their students? Further, we have suggested an audit system to measure student engagement, but more research is needed to design and test whether the idealized system functions correctly.

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Educational Outcomes of Multicultural Curriculum

By

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ABSTRACT.

Under the context of political tension over restrictions on diversity curriculum in K-12 schools, this paper aims to answer the question: “Does the level of exposure to multiculturally representative curriculum in high school U.S. history courses correlate with educational engagement, especially for students of color?” Quantitative data from the National Assessment for Educational Progress 2010 12th grade U.S. history assessment and questionnaires is used to assess the correlation between the level of emphasis on people from various cultures in course curriculum and three measures of student engagement: NAEP test score, interest in course material, and their educational goals. While the literature suggests a more culturally competent and diverse curriculum would provide benefits for students, especially those from minority backgrounds, I could not conclude that there is a correlation between the level of exposure to many cultures in curriculum and any of these learning outcomes based on my data and analysis. Findings suggest that inclusion of different cultures in curriculum alone may not be enough to make a difference in achievement gaps along race and class lines. This study provides motivation for further research on the topic of diversity studies and multicultural curriculum in high schools, and discussion of the limitations of the study give insight into how this might be done.

INTRODUCTION

In the last few years, issues surrounding diversity and social justice in the U.S. have come to the forefront of the national conversation, capturing the attention of people and news media across the country. The prominence of the Black Lives Matter movement, voting rights campaigns, and the increase of Diversity Equity and Inclusion initiatives across many industries demonstrate how many people have been alerted to the problems of structural racism and homophobia in our society and want to do something about it. However, there has also been huge backlash against these social movements, evidence of and fuel for the severe political polarization we are experiencing.

One battleground where the backlash against diversity initiatives is particularly prominent is in K-12 education. Fears about what will happen if we give kids knowledge about race, gender, and sexual orientation have resulted in bathroom bills, “Don’t Say Gay” laws, and the uproar and legislative action against Critical Race Theory. While it has been highly publicized recently, resistance to curriculum that represents ethnic minority groups in the U.S. is not new. Though it

was repealed in 2017 after a federal district court found it unconstitutional, Arizona passed a law banning Mexican American studies in K-12 schools in 2010, even though such programs in Tucson showed signs of increasing test scores and engagement and decreasing dropout rates (Stephenson 2021). On the other hand, California became the first state to require ethnic studies to graduate high school starting in 2030 (Hong 2021). This year, the College Board is piloting an A.P. African American studies course in sixty high schools, another promising recognition of the legitimacy and importance of Ethnic Studies (Hartocollis 2022). Ethnic studies courses becoming more widely offered would make these fields of study available to students without needing to go to college to even be exposed to them. However, the A.P. course has met criticism and resistance from some conservatives including Governor DeSantis of Florida, who argues that it is a form of “woke indoctrination” (Hartocollis and Fawcett 2023). There have been back and forth discussions and decisions about what theories and topics should and should not be included, including intersectionality, Black queer theories, and the Black Lives Matter movement (Hartocollis, Goldstein, and Saul 2023). I have been alarmed by the strong and politicized reactions to efforts to create more opportunities for students to learn about the histories of minority groups and systemic inequities in our society. This drove my interest in researching this topic.

In addition to increasing access to Ethnic Studies for high schoolers, many scholars have investigated ways for schools to create a more holistic education system that enforces learning about and supporting people from many different backgrounds, cultures, and identities. One such approach is multicultural education. The National Association for Multicultural Education (n.d.) defines multicultural education as follows:

Multicultural education is a process that permeates all aspects of school practices, policies and organization as a means to ensure the highest levels of academic achievement for all students. It helps students develop a positive self-concept by providing knowledge about the histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse groups. It prepares all students to work actively toward structural equality in organizations and institutions by providing the knowledge, dispositions, and skills for the redistribution of power and income among diverse groups. Thus, school curriculum must directly address issues of racism, sexism, classism, linguicism, ableism, ageism, heterosexism, religious intolerance, and xenophobia.

Multicultural education advocates the belief that students and their life histories and experiences should be placed at the center of the teaching and learning process and that pedagogy should occur in a context that is familiar to students and that addresses multiple ways of thinking. In addition, teachers and students must critically analyze oppression and power relations in their communities, society and the world.

Multicultural education is a holistic and comprehensive effort to teach students about diversity issues that face our society and to improve their sense of self and academic achievement through this. This approach and its impacts on students have not been ignored by scholars, but it is not widely realized in the education of our young citizens. Political messaging and mainstream media has also obscured the nuances of it to the public.

While there is much debate over what is appropriate and valuable to teach children in our society, the arguments about introducing diversity studies courses that are publicized in the

media are largely based on conjecture and political buzzwords. We need to take a step back from culture wars to revisit the purposes and goals of education and how to center these in the discussion and decision making process. There needs to be more clarity on the outcomes of adding to or restricting curriculum that teaches students about diversity and inequality for K-12 students.

In higher education, affirmative action policies, while also facing controversy, work to improve representation of marginalized groups in higher education institutions. Ethnic Studies departments are now widespread. Universities have student groups and resources for students from different racial and cultural backgrounds. For example, Santa Clara University has a core requirement that students take a class that teaches them about diversity issues, and the Multicultural Center and Office of Multicultural Learning provide spaces where students of color and LGBTQ+ students can foster community and advocate for themselves and others. While even this is limited, public K-12 schools suffer from a larger lack of formal resources like these to ensure their students feel supported with respect to their racial or ethnic backgrounds or sexual orientation. K-12 schools touch the lives of all kids, whereas the college enrollment rate (18-24 year olds in undergraduate or graduate programs at 2 or 4 year institutions) in 2020 was only 40 percent (National Center for Educational Statistics 2022). People who don't go to college should still have an opportunity to understand systems of inequality and learn about people and issues that resonate with them. I think if we were to improve the ability of students to see themselves and their families reflected in what they learn in school, they would feel more connected to their studies, more supported by their schools, and more likely to want to pursue their education further. Combating racial and socioeconomic inequality is linked to this idea since higher education is considered an important (though imperfect) avenue for upward socioeconomic mobility (Torche 2011; Kelly 2014).

I believe a positive outcome of introducing multicultural education and specific topics such as Ethnic Studies, intersectional feminism, LGBTQ+ studies, etc., especially in high schools, is providing a way for students to connect to their curriculum, coursework, and education. In turn, this could lead to higher achievement rates and college attendance for traditionally underrepresented students. In this research project, I aim to empirically investigate whether these assumptions are supported by trends in students' learning outcomes. To limit the scope of my research and because it is less common to find a lot of data about LGBTQ identifying students, my research questions will focus on race and culture of students and in curriculum. I chose to study high schoolers because I think this is when students are old enough to really grasp some of the more theoretical ideas and connections between history and the present. This study aims to answer the question: Does the level of exposure to multiculturally representative curriculum in high school U.S. history courses correlate with educational engagement, especially for students of color? It is important to assess this in order to find out whether to pursue multicultural curricula as a strategy to improve educational achievement especially for students of color. This research can provide insight for policymakers, educators, and the general public and could inform policy reform for high school curriculum development that would benefit students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an achievement gap in education along race and class lines (Potter and Morris 2017; Noguera 2012). At a time when college degrees are a main avenue for upward socioeconomic mobility, it is important to understand how students, especially lower class students of color, can

be motivated to continue their education. One of the criticisms of the K-12 education system in the U.S. is that it lacks sensitivity to the diverse cultures that make up its student body and its country. While the idea of multicultural education is not new, a lot of research on it has been done especially in the last few years in light of scholars', students', and the public's heightened attention to social justice issues, especially with regards to race. Some areas of research include effects of a lack of culturally responsive support in schools, strategies to improve this support, specific pedagogical strategies for multicultural education, and outcomes of these. This literature review aims to summarize key questions and findings in these areas to better understand the landscape of multicultural education research, especially regarding curriculum in high schools.

First, the literature points to inadequate support of diverse social groups in K-12 education and curriculum, including racial groups (Brown 2011) and LGBTQ communities (Beck 2020). Brown (2011) argues that the existing K-12 curriculum develops a very narrow understanding of race and racism. Beck (2020) looks at LGBTQ college students' perceptions of their K-12 teachers to investigate teacher behaviors that support or fail to support students and their identities. To correct these shortcomings, multicultural education is an approach that has been suggested, implemented, and studied as a way to improve schools' support of minority students. Based on their own observations, urban teachers have expressed great satisfaction, support, and optimism surrounding their own use of culturally responsive teaching methods. They believe that when culturally diverse needs are met in their classrooms, this would result in higher educational achievement, greater acceptance, tolerance, and respect, increased self-confidence and self-esteem, higher motivation, better futures for students, as well as societal benefits (Bonner, Warren, and Jiang 2018). This study helps considerably in understanding the perceived benefits of multicultural education, but a more concrete analysis to test these outcomes for students would be useful.

While its potential for students is promising, multicultural education is not widely established. Many scholars have suggested ways to improve cultural literacy and multicultural education strategies in K-12 schools. One of these recommendations is through changes in the education of teachers who will then apply what they learn in their K-12 classrooms (Brown 2011; Gorski and Parekh 2020; Sanders, Haselden, and Moss 2014; Beck 2020). As a solution to the plentiful and persistent shortcomings of lessons on race and racism in K-12 classrooms, Brown (2011) advocates for increasing and improving teaching about cultural diversity, race, and racism in universities, particularly in teacher training programs. Teacher education is an important area because in studies that have examined the lived experiences of high school students in minority groups, relationships with adults on campus seemed to have significant impact on them. African American male high school students relied on the support of teachers and especially counselors while they worked to complete a college preparatory program on an urban campus (Huff 2016). LGBTQ students felt less safe at school when their teachers were unsupportive of them and their sexual orientation, but more self-secure when they did receive support (Beck 2020). Improvement in the higher education of teachers is clearly still needed to support multicultural education; teacher educators who teach more liberal and critical approaches to multicultural pedagogy feel less supported by their institutions than those who take a more conservative approach (Gorski and Parekh 2020). While teacher education is imperative to the development of more nurturing classroom environments for K-12 students, it does not fully address changes that should occur in K-12 schools themselves.

A more direct way K-12 schools can improve support for students from minority groups is by including role models from and topics pertaining to these groups in the curriculum. The lack of a critical multicultural curriculum is actively detrimental to minority students. In South Africa, Teeger (2015) found that curriculum that play downplayed structural racism limited the scope of students' learning: "By decoupling the racialized coding of victims and perpetrators, and sidelining discussions of beneficiaries, teachers hindered students' abilities to make connections to the present" (1175). This demonstrates the need for more comprehensive teaching about the history of race if we want students to understand how race plays a role in their communities today. In the U.S., a lack of holistic multicultural representation in advanced courses creates barriers to students' feelings of belonging and engagement in the course. A.P. U.S. History students of color in a qualitative study:

felt little connection to the curriculum and noted feelings of disengagement with the course despite initial interest in the subject matter. Their discussions revealed the following commonalities: curriculum bias towards a White, Eurocentric idealism; the singular and negative narrative surrounding people of color; and marginalization and otherness in the presentation of racially/culturally diverse subject matter. (Campbell-Cunefare 2020: 79-80)

This study on advanced courses is important because students of color should be encouraged to participate in these courses as much as anyone, and it suggests improvements to encourage this. However, students outside of A.P. courses (in regular placement courses and/or special education) and their relationships to their courses' curriculum should also be studied.

So what are the effects when a multicultural curriculum is implemented? Many scholars are working to find the benefits of developing curriculum and pedagogical exercises that are inclusive of minority groups in the U.S. and of students in the classroom. White elementary school students who were exposed to information about racism against African Americans in their history lesson expressed more positive attitudes and less negative attitudes toward African Americans than those who did not receive this part of the lesson (Hughes, Bigler, and Levy 2007). There is a correlation between race-related curriculum and high school students' increased intervention behaviors in anti-LGBTQ harassment incidents (Wernick et al. 2021). Having a multicultural curriculum "helps students develop 'self-knowledge,' meaning a personal awareness of their race and identity. Participants describe how self-knowledge provides corrective history, a response to negative media portrayals of minorities, and helps students understand current events" (Wiggin and Watson-Vandiver 2019). Students' understanding of themselves, their experiences, and larger patterns in the world around them improved with antiracist curriculum in this qualitative study. Positive effects of multicultural curricula in general are demonstrated in these studies.

The successes of specific pedagogical strategies that support multicultural learning have also been analyzed. Ethnic studies courses were praised for helping students engage with history and current events and navigate their own identity within them (Langdon 2020; de los Ríos 2020). Specifically, reflective writing and creative arts have fostered empowerment for Native American and Mexican-American students (Cisneros 2019; de los Ríos 2020; Langdon 2020). Cisneros found that in an indigenous college preparatory program in California, writing workshops helped students "in cultivating their college readiness, in bolstering their educational

aspirations, and, most saliently, in affirming their intersectional identities as Indigenous students” (2019:120). A photovoice project in a Latinx ethnic studies class helped link social justice to education and students’ own experiences (de los Ríos 2020). Langdon similarly investigated a play written and performed by Latinx students, which allowed students to connect their experiences, challenges, culture, and political context. Interestingly, this project featured a partnership between a university ethnic studies department and a high school arts program, providing a practical idea for how to bring ethnic studies to high schools (2020). Similarly to Wiggan and Watson-Vandiver (2019), these studies demonstrate that a multicultural curriculum helps students to develop an ability to place themselves in their academic and larger environment, which may have implications for keeping kids in school and their overall confidence and wellbeing. In addition to understanding their own identity and the histories of their cultures, students involved in multicultural educational exercises were able to connect across cultures. For example, in de los Ríos, Seltzer, and Molina (2021), a “critical translingual” assignment was used:

where students—both Latinx and African American—collaborated through the cowriting of corridos (Mexican ballads) about their lived experiences with in/justice. The findings demonstrate the ways that this unit invited students to write across racial, ethnic, and linguistic borders and fostered language and cultural sharing, political consciousness, and solidarity. (1070)

These studies show various ways educators have implemented multicultural learning in their classrooms and how students have responded and benefitted from them. These projects are amazing examples but have been explored on a small scale, largely addressing groups of students from one (or two) ethnic group(s). It would be wonderful to be able to apply the knowledge gained from these studies to develop a standardized curriculum that could be tailored to every classroom. Studying a larger sample has not been done in this area, and could be beneficial as well.

Most of these studies on multicultural learning strategies emphasized social-psychological impacts for students, though Cisneros also looked at college readiness (2019). Others have touched on impacts on students’ learning and educational achievement. For example, in the study on student and teacher perceptions of the school and curriculum at a “high-performing urban school that utilizes critical antiracism education”, the high achieving status of the school suggests academic benefits of multicultural education (Wiggan and Watson-Vandiver 2019). In many cases, these claims have been more exploratory and correlation seems not to have been studied directly. In one exception, cohorts of students in San Francisco Unified School District with low 8th grade GPAs were found to have increased rates of high school graduation, probability of graduating college, and other measures of engagement after completing an ethnic studies course in 9th grade (Bonilla, Dee, and Penner 2021). While this study’s sample overrepresented Asian Americans and underrepresented African Americans, its findings provide strong support for ethnic studies curriculum as a tool to improve students’ achievement, especially those who had less educational engagement before. In my own study, I aim to similarly explicitly investigate a correlation between multiculturally representative curriculum and student educational outcomes.

To summarize the review of relevant literature, educational strategies and curriculum that represent and engage the multitude of cultures and identities that make up our student body in the U.S. are not widely adopted, and this can be detrimental for minority students. Reforms,

including teacher training and K-12 curriculum (re)development have been explored, providing us with ideas for how and why to support the learning and wellbeing of minority students. While there is an increasingly robust body of knowledge on the importance of multicultural education and strategies teachers can use in classrooms, quantitative data on educational outcomes for high school students who receive a multicultural education has not been analyzed enough. This study will use quantitative methods and a large, nationally representative sample to help build research in this area, which may also help provide convincing evidence for policy reform in high school curriculum development.

METHODS

Design and data source

In order to address my research question, I did a quantitative analysis of secondary source data. Quantitative data analysis is a strong approach in this scenario for a number of reasons. First, there are far fewer quantitative studies in the literature on this topic than qualitative ones. It also provides a broad understanding of trends because samples are representative of the population, and results are consequently generalizable (Mahoney and Goertz 2006; Queirós, Faria, and Almeida 2017). This is useful in looking at the educational outcomes I am curious about as it pertains to multicultural curricula. Quantitative data can illustrate inter-group comparisons well, allowing me to evaluate whether the trends differ between racial groups. To influence curriculum reform on a large scale, statistics and a large representative sample can provide more persuasive evidence to policymakers, helping maximize the impact of my study.

The secondary data source I used is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), also known as the Nation's Report Card. According to their website, "NAEP is a congressionally mandated program that is overseen and administered by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), within the U.S. Department of Education and the Institute of Education Sciences" (n.d.a). It carries out surveys to "provide a common measure of student achievement across the country" and "informs education policy and practice"(n.d.b). I chose to analyze data from NAEP because it has a large body of nationally representative data available for public use, making it accessible to me as a student researcher. It is a reputable and important source because it is already involved in influencing educational policy and is linked to our federal government.

Sample

NAEP administers tests and surveys every few years in various K-12 subjects, surveying students in grades 4, 8, and 12. Students take the standardized test in a given subject, and also fill out a background questionnaire that asks about students' demographic information, homes, and education in that subject. The selected schools (administrators) and sometimes teachers also fill out questionnaires about their schools and classes. In my data analysis, I used the most recent survey data they have available for 12th grade U.S. history, which is from 2010. I used the student background questionnaires, assessment scores, and school background questionnaires. Ideally I would have used a more recent survey, but they have only surveyed 8th graders since 2010, and the question that I used to approximate a measure for multicultural curriculum is not included in the school survey in these. I chose U.S. history as a subject because it is easier (and therefore more common) to implement and recognize multiculturally representative curriculum

in social studies courses since they focus on people. U.S. history discusses how the country was shaped, and it is important for kids to know about the contributions of people they can relate to. Systemic racism is also rooted in the past, so history is a course where teaching about this can be included.

NAEP (2016) describes their sampling method as a:

three stage sample design: selection of primary sampling units (PSUs); selection of schools within strata; and selection of students within schools. The samples of schools were selected with probability proportional to a measure of size based on the estimated fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade enrollment in the schools.

For 2010 U.S. history, NAEP (2016) targeted a sample of 9,000 12th graders from public schools and 1,000 from private schools. I was unable to find the precise number of responses they received that year, but their typical response rate estimate for 12th graders is 85 percent (NAEP n.d.c). Fifty percent of students surveyed were male and fifty percent were female. When asked to check all races that applied to them, 69 percent of students selected white and 31 percent did not. Table 1 shows the mutually exclusive racial/ethnic breakdown of participants. The percentage of white students is lower than the 69 percent of “white” responses because some white students are represented in the Hispanic category here instead.

Table 1: Sample race/ethnicity demographics.

Race	White (non-Hispanic)	Black (non-Hispanic)	Hispanic	Asian/Pacific Islander	American Indian/Alaska Native	More than one
Percent	58	12	20	6	1	3

Data: NAEP 2010, grade 12.

Variables

Once I chose a data set, I had to identify survey questions that measured and operationalized multicultural curriculum and educational outcomes. For multicultural curriculum, one question in the school (administration) survey asked: “To what extent have you emphasized [Gatherings and interactions of people from various cultures] in your twelfth-grade U.S. history curriculum?” Respondents were instructed to choose one of the following: “Not at all”, “Small extent”, “Moderate extent”, “Large extent”, and “This topic is not offered in my school” (NAEP 2010a:15)¹. Table 2 shows the distribution of answers to this question.

¹ To view the full survey and question format, see https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/bgq/sch-sdlep/BQ10_School_Grade12.pdf.

Table 2: Response distribution (school administrators) for extent of emphasis on people from various cultures in grade 12 history curriculum.

Emphasis on people from various cultures	Not offered	Not at all	Small extent	Moderate extent	Large extent
Percent	11	7	16	40	25

Data: NAEP 2010, grade 12.

This is the closest thing to multicultural education that is assessed in these surveys, but it is not an ideal measure by any means because it relies on school reporting and represents a narrow view of what a multicultural curriculum can and should be. “Gatherings and interactions” does not necessarily include discussion of power, privilege, and oppression, which is crucial to the definition of multicultural education (National Association for Multicultural Education n.d.). I will examine this limitation further later on. I deliberated on whether to combine the categories of not offered and not at all, but ended up keeping them separate because while “Not at all” may be interpreted to mean that the gatherings and interactions of people from various cultures is included in the curriculum but not emphasized, “Not offered” implies the topic is not covered at all. There is room for some interpretation of the response options by the survey participant, but I believe this choice represents the most consistent distinction between the categories.

I ended up analyzing three different measures for students’ educational outcomes: scores on the NAEP U.S. history assessment, interest in their history class, and their expectations for their educational achievement. Test score is a measure of educational achievement that is tested by NAEP, so I included it. Scores were out of 300. I chose to use interest and educational achievement goals as well because they were asked about in the background questionnaire. Interest in course material is informative of student engagement and enjoyment and how much they get out of their courses, and educational attainment levels are important because of the literature on getting students of color into higher education. To gauge student interest, the questionnaire asked: “When you study social studies or history, how often do you agree with the following statement(s): The social studies or history work is interesting”. Respondents chose one answer on the scale “Never or hardly ever”, “Sometimes”, “Often”, or “Always or almost always” (NAEP 2010b: Section 4, page 4)². I combined the categories of “always or almost always” and “often” into one, and “sometimes” and “never or hardly ever” into another to make the data visualizations and pattern recognition easier to digest.

To find out students’ educational goals, the survey asked:

² To view the full survey and question format, see https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/pdf/bgq/student/BQ10_Student_USHist_Grade12.pdf.

QK070697

12. How much education do you think you will complete?

- Ⓐ I will not finish high school.
- Ⓑ I will graduate from high school.
- Ⓒ I will have some education after high school.
- Ⓓ I will graduate from college.
- Ⓔ I will go to graduate school.
- Ⓕ I don't know.

(NAEP 2010b: Section 4, page 5)

The categories “I will not finish high school” and “I don't know” made up less than three percent of responses. When evaluating the statistical significance, I combined the variable categories into two groups: those who said they would graduate college or go to graduate school, and those who said they would get less than a college degree. I chose this split because for people with low income backgrounds, graduating with a bachelor's degree is the education level that is significant for climbing the socioeconomic ladder (Torche 2011; Kelly 2014).

The other criteria I used in my analysis was student race. I compared white students to non-white students by selecting the variable “Student is White (choose one or more)” in the NAEP data tool. Students were put in the “White” or “No response” category based on whether they filled in bubble A in the following question:

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2. Which of the following best describes you? Fill in **one or more ovals**.

- Ⓐ White
- Ⓑ Black or African American
- Ⓒ Asian
- Ⓓ American Indian or Alaska Native
- Ⓔ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander

(NAEP 2010b: Section 1, page 1).

In my data I describe “No response” as “Non-white”. This does mean that the white category includes students who are mixed race, including white, who may have similar experiences as students solely belonging to a single racial/ethnic minority group. However, only three percent of students chose more than one race, so this should not interfere with the results. One hundred percent of respondents answered this question, so there are no white students who accidentally

got grouped into non-white by default. One potential criticism of the way I grouped racial groups is that I chose to include Asian Americans in the non-white category even though they have the highest college enrollment rates of any racial group (National Center for Educational Statistics 2022). However, since the aspect of curriculum I am assessing is about diverse minority cultural representation, I thought it would be more appropriate to group them with other non-white minorities. Educational engagement can still improve within a racial group even if it is good to begin with.

Research questions

I ended up with six research questions to test whether the level of exposure to multicultural topics in history curriculum correlated with the different measures of student learning outcomes and whether there was a difference between racial groups:

1. a) Does the level of exposure to various cultures in U.S. history class correlate with students' achievement on NAEP's standardized U.S. history test? b) Does this correlation differ between white and non-white students?
2. a) Does the level of exposure to various cultures in U.S. history class correlate with students' interest in the course material? b) Does this correlation differ between white and non-white students?
3. a) Does the level of exposure to various cultures in U.S. history class correlate with students' educational attainment goals? b) Does this correlation differ between white and non-white students?

To analyze the data, I used the Data Explorer tool on the NAEP website that allows you to select variables to create "reports". I exported the data charts from the website to Microsoft Excel and used pivot tables to reorganize and visualize the data. The NAEP website also allows you to generate significance tests (dependent t-test) for the difference between the scores and percentages of data that fall into the different categories. They calculate p-values and evaluate the statistical significance of the differences between values in the comparison. In these tests, the NAEP data tool adjusts for multiple comparisons, and it indicates whether the results of each individual t-test are significant based on the color of the box in the comparison chart they provide. For all three educational outcomes, I looked at statistical significance between adjacent³ categories of emphasis on people from various cultures for all students and within each racial group. I also looked at whether the difference was significant between white and non-white students within each category of emphasis. I was limited in my ability to conduct more traditional statistical tests because I did not have access to the raw data, but I was still able to use quantitative methods to look for patterns in the data.

³ e.g. between "Not offered" and "Not at all" emphasized, between "Not at all" and "Small extent", etc. I did not look across non-adjacent emphasis categories because unless there was a visible pattern (which there was not), this would not help to answer my research question.

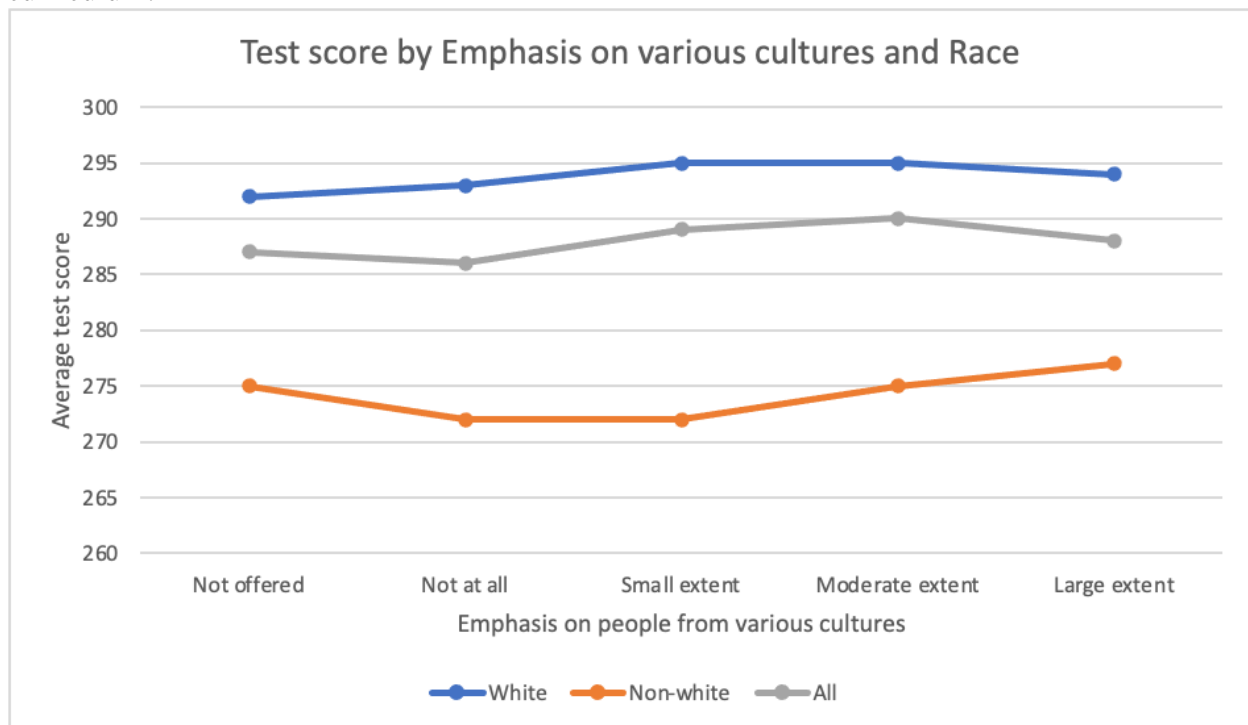
Results

In this section, I will walk through the results answering each of my research sub-questions. The overall results of my data analysis are that I cannot conclude that there is a correlation between exposure to many cultures in the classroom and NAEP test score, interest in course material, or educational goals.

Test Score

The first set of questions I tested was: Does the level of exposure to various cultures in U.S. history class correlate with students' achievement on NAEP's standardized U.S. history test? Does this correlation differ between white and non-white students? Table 3 shows the average test score on NAEP's U.S. History assessment for all students and broken down into white and non-white student groups. Scores are reported on a scale of 0-300.

Table 3: Average NAEP U.S. History test scores by emphasis on various cultures in history class curriculum.



Data: NAEP 2010, grade 12.

There is no statistically significant difference in average test scores between any levels of emphasis on people from various cultures for students in general or within either racial group. However, there is a statistically significant difference in average score between white and non-white students within each category of emphasis. Because the gap between white and non-white student achievement on the assessment is significant for all exposure levels, the gap is not closing as exposure to various cultures in the classroom increases.

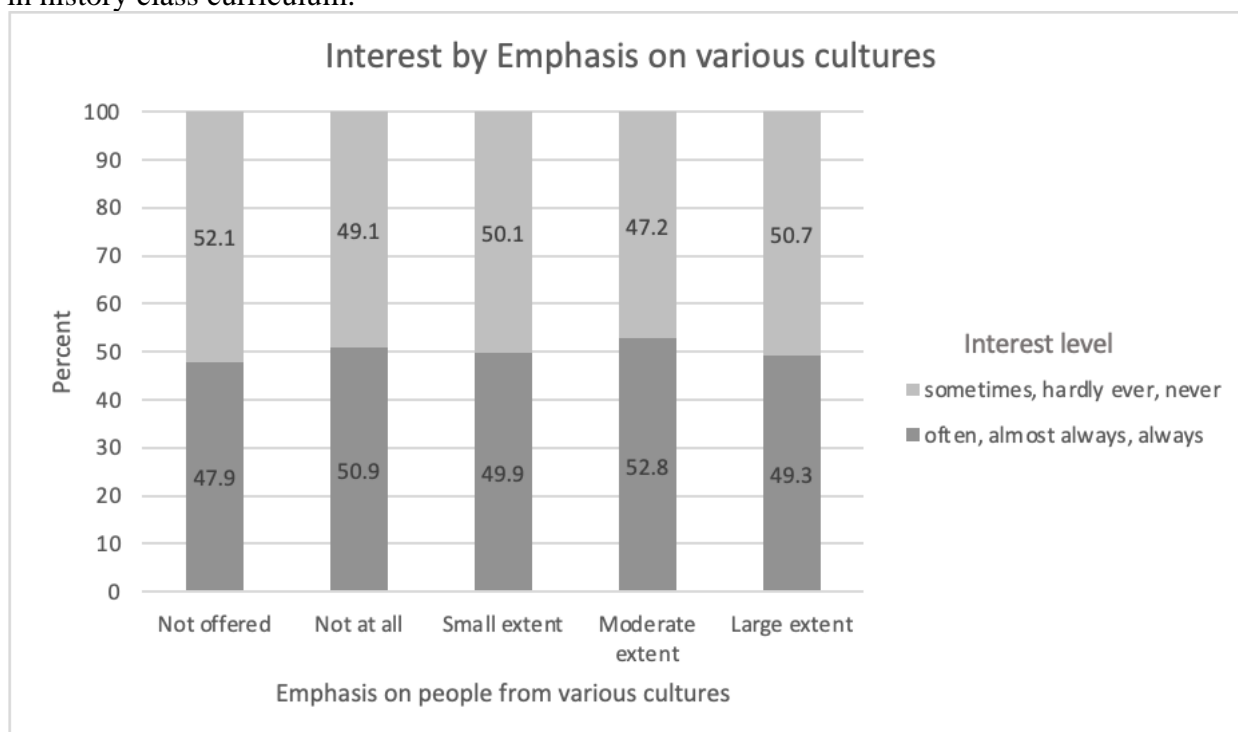
Hence, I cannot conclude that students' level of exposure to various cultures correlates with their achievement on NAEP's assessment. I also cannot conclude that there is any difference in

correlation between levels of exposure to various cultures for non-white versus white students. However, there is a statistically significant difference in average test score between white and non-white students.

Interest

For my second measure of achievement, I asked whether students' level of exposure to various cultures in U.S. history class correlates with their level of interest in the course material, and whether this correlation differs between white and non-white students. Table 4 illustrates the degree of interest in history courses reported by students overall, grouped by level of exposure to various cultures in the classroom.

Table 4: Interest in history/social science courses for all students by emphasis on various cultures in history class curriculum.



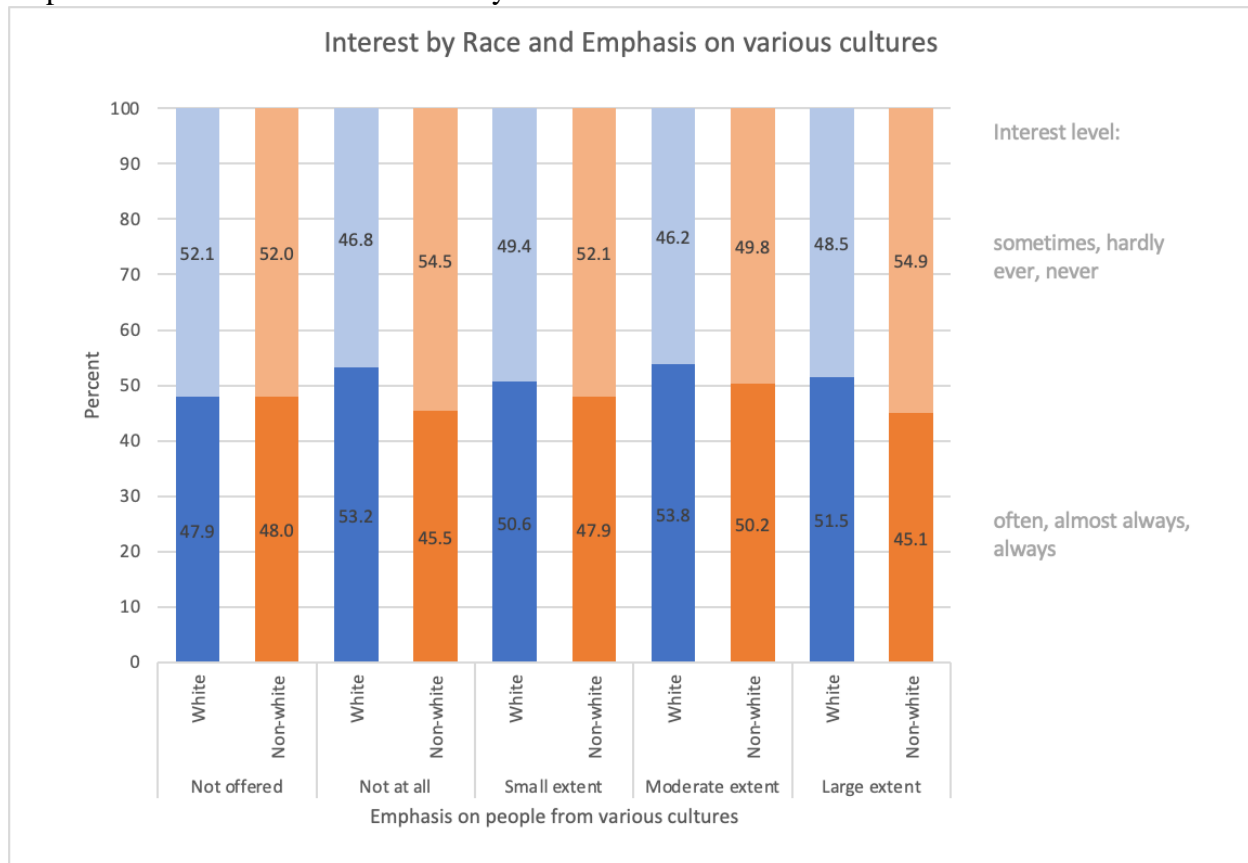
Data: NAEP 2010, grade 12.

Just by looking at this chart, we can see that the amount of interest stays relatively consistent throughout the level of exposure to various cultures in the classroom. In other words, students who had more emphasis on people from various cultures in their U.S. history courses did not report statistically significantly higher interest in the course material than those who had less exposure. In this data, the only statistically significant difference between two groups⁴ is between interest levels within the category of moderate extent of emphasis on various cultures. There are no other significant differences between degrees of interest within multicultural emphasis levels. There are no significant differences between levels of emphasis. Students who

⁴ To be in the same group in this case, I mean students who were in the same category for both multicultural emphasis and interest level.

had a moderate extent of emphasis on various cultures in their U.S. history class were more likely to report they were often, almost always, or always interested. Since this significant difference did not continue between interest levels for a large extent of emphasis, I cannot identify a relationship between the variables.

Table 5: Interest in history/social science courses between white and non-white students by emphasis on various cultures in history class curriculum



Data: NAEP 2010, grade 12.

When separated into white and non-white students, there is similarly a lack of correlation between interest and multicultural emphasis (Table 5). Across all exposure groups (except “Not offered”), slightly more white students reported being often, almost always, or always interested in their course material. However, for all categories of emphasis, there was no statistically significant difference between racial groups for the percentage of students who were more versus less often interested. Within each racial category, there was also no significant interest between any adjacent levels of emphasis on people from various cultures.

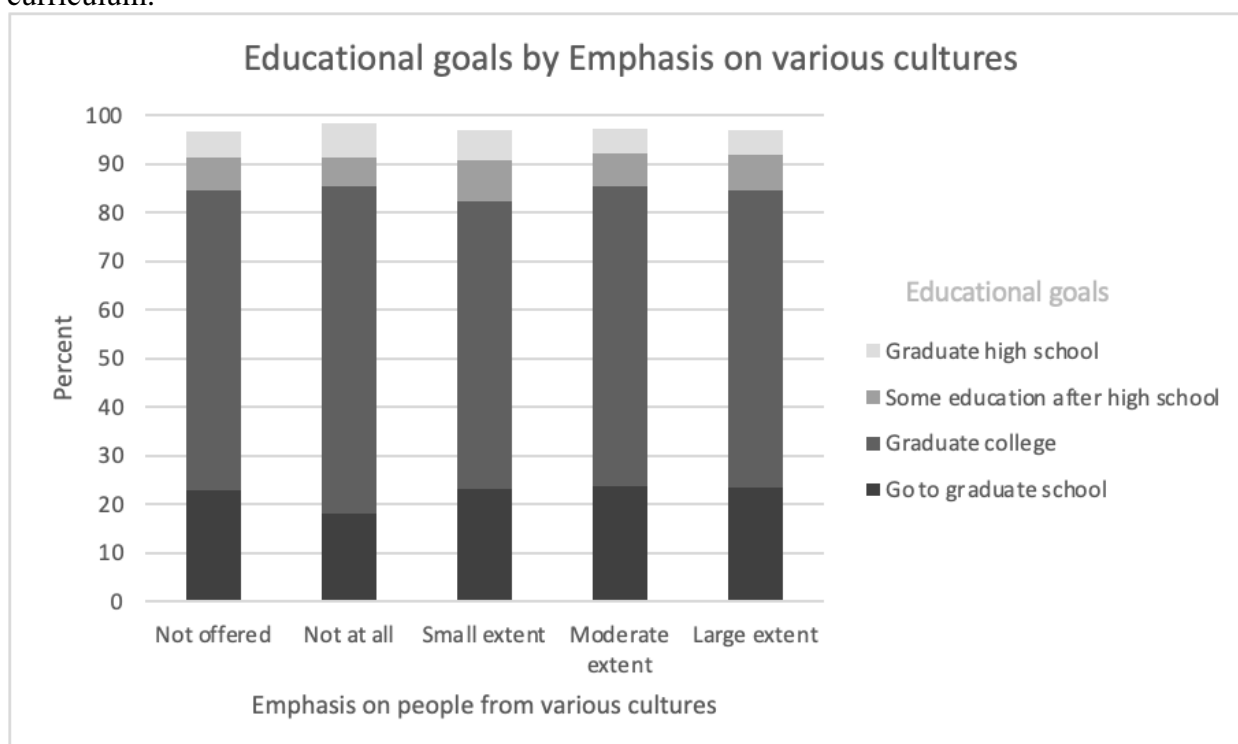
I cannot conclude that there is a correlation between the level of emphasis on people from different cultures in the curriculum and how interested students are in the class. There is no correlation for either white or non-white students. There is also no statistically significant difference between the proportion of white versus non-white students who reported being interested in their history coursework.

Educational attainment goals

Lastly, I investigated whether the level of exposure to various cultures in U.S. history class correlates with students' educational attainment goals, and whether this correlation differs between white and non-white students.

The proportion of students who thought they would at least graduate college remained comparable across the level of exposure they had to various cultures in their curriculum, as can be seen in Table 6 below. There was no significant difference in the percentage of students who said they would at least graduate college between adjacent levels of emphasis on people from various cultures.

Table 6: Educational goals for all students by emphasis on various cultures in history class curriculum.⁵



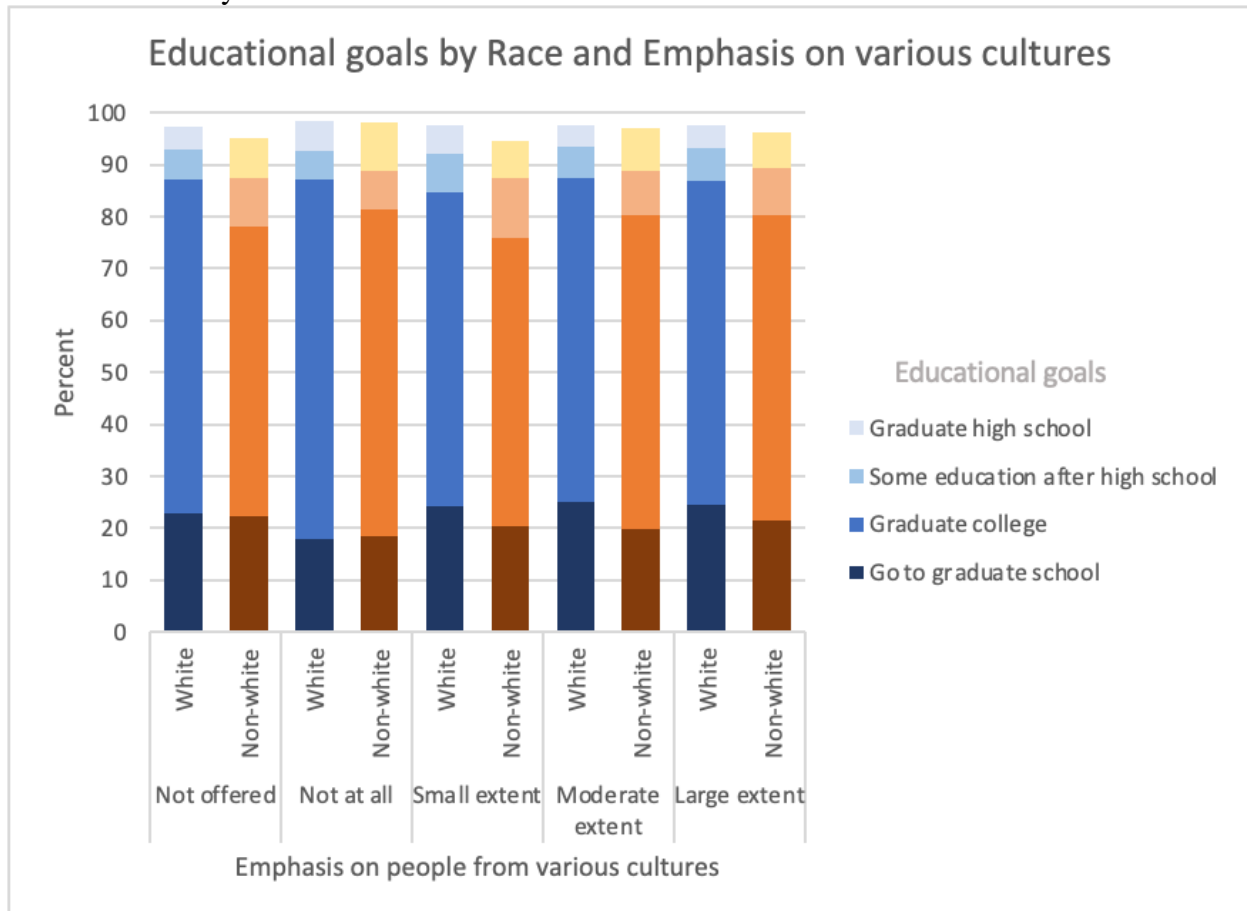
Data: NAEP 2010, grade 12.

The comparison of educational goals between racial groups is represented in Table 7. More white than non-white students reported that they thought they would at least graduate college in all emphasis categories, but the difference was only statistically significant for the categories of moderate and large extent of emphasis on people from various cultures. This is actually the opposite of what I would expect, because I would have thought if anything that the gap would be less significant as emphasis on people from various cultures in the classroom increased. Between adjacent categories of level of emphasis on people from various cultures, there were no

⁵ The remaining area to add to 100% is from responses of “I will not finish high school” and “I don’t know”.

statistically significant differences in educational aspirations for either white or non-white students.

Table 7: Educational goals between white and non-white students by emphasis on various cultures in history class curriculum.⁶



Data: NAEP 2010, grade 12.

I cannot conclude whether there is a correlation between multicultural exposure in curriculum and students' expectations or goals for their educational achievement. I did not find a correlation for either white or non-white students.

In summary, I cannot conclude whether the level of emphasis on various cultures in U.S. history course curriculum has any correlation with the learning outcomes of test score, interest, and educational attainment goals for students overall or students of color.

DISCUSSION

While null results are disappointing, they can still provide important insight on the topic of study. They are also important to science because the file drawer problem causes bias against the

⁶ The remaining area to add to 100% is from responses of "I will not finish high school" and "I don't know".

publication of negative results. Including them in the literature gives a more complete representation of results people have found, and it helps people design better studies and avoid replicating studies that have produced negative results (Weintraub 2016). While the lack of a significant finding in this study is not a limitation itself, the problem with this study is that it is uncertain why there is a null result. It could be that this reflects the real truth about my research question — that there is no correlation between cultural diversity in curriculum and student outcomes — or that there were problems in my study that prevented these particular data from showing outcomes that do exist in the real world. While I cannot conclude there is a positive correlation, which is what I hypothesized, I also cannot conclude there is not one or that there is a negative one. One implication of the lack of correlation between the extent of emphasis on people from various cultures and both white and non-white students is that white students are not adversely affected by the increased representation of minority cultures in the classroom, as some conservatives concerned about race-related curriculum believe. The results of my analysis depart from the literature, which suggests that improving curriculum to represent diverse student backgrounds does have positive social, psychological, and educational impacts, especially for minority students. Ultimately, more research needs to be done on multicultural education and learning outcomes on a systemic level to better understand how and why it should be implemented in more schools. Despite its negative findings and consequent inability to make a case for concrete widespread educational policy reform, this study has implications for the further study of the benefits of multicultural education and could help inform the NAEP of ways it can improve its questionnaires. This discussion will begin by addressing the limitations of this study, and explaining what this suggests about the relevance of my results. I will then explore what the implementation of multicultural education can and should look like based on an existing model and suggest ideas for future research.

Limitations

There are several limitations to my study. Since I am dealing with secondary quantitative data, I get the benefits of having access to large volumes of data that I would not be able to collect on my own. However, I had to settle for what is there and make it fit my research question. The consequences are that the operationalization of the factors I wanted to look at is not perfect. Also, the data is from 2010 and thus a bit outdated. In terms of analyzing the data, I did not have access to the raw data set, which prevented me from being able to conduct a more rigorous and traditional statistical test (such as an ANOVA test). Comparing t-test p-values between each difference is not a very precise tool for analysis. If I had more time and a better statistical tool, I also should have done a comparison between different non-white racial/ethnic groups. There may be differences in the various outcomes for students based on their specific racial/ethnic background, not just on their minority status. Different racial groups might have different responses to curriculum because of how or to what extent people from their racial/ethnic background were included in curriculum. While we do not know what groups were included in “various cultures”, sources of discrepancies between ethnic groups is an area for further research. My study was not comprehensive in terms of the nuances between different racial and ethnic groups, which is ironic given its topic and critique. As can often be the case for quantitative work, the data is not robust enough to show the complexity of the issue at hand (Better Thesis n.d.). Nevertheless, it can be brought into conversation with the literature on multicultural curricula and education and produce fruitful recommendations for further research.

Another limitation of my study that needs to be analyzed is the variable operationalization of the three measures of educational outcomes. First, NAEP's achievement test as a measure for academic achievement is not a great measure of how engaged students are in their learning. Increased emphasis on multiple cultures in course curriculum appears not to have an effect on how students digest the material they are learning that is represented on the NAEP assessment. However, the test may not ask many questions that pertain to knowledge about diverse cultures in our society, in which case the increased focus on this in the classroom would not directly influence test scores. Even if diverse cultures were well represented in the test, higher scores could be more about general exposure to the content than the overall engagement of students., so a different measure would need to be used to avoid this confound. Additionally, standardized tests (including the SAT) have been found to be biased against students of color because they more accurately correlate with students' wealth, ethnicity, and their parents' education level (Stewart and Haynes 2016). This could contribute to the difference in scores between white and non-white students here. In true multicultural education, "pedagogy should occur in a context that is familiar to students and that addresses multiple ways of thinking" (National Association for Multicultural Education n.d.). This should apply to all aspects of the learning process, including assessment of it. If the Department of Education decides to place value on multicultural education or ethnic studies, it would need to adjust what kind of knowledge is reflected in its assessments.

For interest in course material, the measure itself is fine because the survey questions directly ask about what I wanted to know — whether students are interested in their class. For educational goals, the survey asked what educational level students *think* they will complete. The wording of this survey question asks students to be practical rather than aspirational, and since I did not control for economic status or parental educational achievement, students who may want to graduate college or go to graduate school but believe it is not realistic for them and their families may answer according to what is realistic for them, not what they would want in a perfect world. Their uninhibited desires for their educational attainment would give better insight into how engaged they are in their learning, but the measure as it is gives a better understanding of their expectations, which may be closer to the actual achievement rates. Still, student-reported expectations for their educational achievement are usually overestimates, so a longitudinal measure would be more ideal (Castleman and Page 2014). In future research it will be important to take the nuances of factors that drive student college attendance into account so that it is clearer whether multicultural education can improve these rates and what programs or requirements it should use to do so. This is not a huge limitation in my study — it still tells me whether the two factors are correlated — but it is good to be mindful of.

Across my study, the measure I used for culturally diverse curricula poses a limitation. This survey question was part of a questionnaire that was given to school administrators. The first issue is that the reporting may be biased or inaccurate if administrators want to present their school in a positive light or simply do not regularly conduct thorough observation and assessment of class curriculum on the topics surveyed by the NAEP survey. The closed question survey style does not give us any insight to the pedagogical strategies used, what cultures are included in the curriculum, or how they are represented. Even if this measure were more reliable (i.e. completed by teachers and accompanied by a list of units or lesson plans that emphasized a minority culture), it still would not necessarily represent a holistic approach to a multicultural curriculum. Just because diverse cultures are included in the curriculum does not guarantee that

the teaching surrounding these topics meets the standards of multicultural education or is culturally sensitive and empowering for students of color and other minority groups. In addition to helping “students develop a positive self-concept by providing knowledge about the histories, cultures, and contributions of diverse groups... teachers and students must critically analyze oppression and power relations in their communities, society, and the world” in multicultural curricula (National Association for Multicultural Education n.d.). Societal critique and social justice are central concepts for students to learn in multicultural curricula that were not measured in my study. Inclusion itself is not enough. One change NAEP could make is to have a question specifically about multicultural education, such as “Does your school practice critical multicultural education?” Because true multicultural education includes multicultural curricula across all subjects including math and science, this question would need to be included across all subjects, not just U.S. history and other social studies. While reporting bias may still occur, it would more accurately screen for an active multicultural approach.

At a broader level, there is much more to multicultural education than curriculum. In order to understand more fully the potential impact of multicultural education, it is important to ensure we have a more holistic understanding of what it encompasses. According to The National Association for Multicultural Education (NAME) (n.d.), “Multicultural education is a process that permeates all aspects of school practices, policies and organization as a means to ensure the highest levels of academic achievement for all students... It prepares all students to work actively toward structural equality in organizations and institutions by providing the knowledge, dispositions, and skills for the redistribution of power and income among diverse groups”.

The results of my study support the importance of all parts of multicultural education reinforcing one another to be effective. The lack of correlation between exposure to knowledge about various cultures in the classroom and student outcomes suggests that cultural inclusion in curriculum itself is not sufficient to enact systemic change in the support of all students and close gaps for minority groups. In future research, a measure that takes the full scope of multicultural education into account would be more informative for policy decisions and educators seeking strategies to support diverse student bodies.

Best Practice - Existing models for multicultural education

It is helpful here to highlight an example of a program that does exemplify multicultural education in order to understand what it is and more carefully consider what would need to be assessed in a future study. June Jordan School for Equity (JJSE) is a public high school in San Francisco whose entire mission and pedagogy is rooted in promoting social justice and equity:

As a school for social justice serving a largely working-class, Latino and African-American student population, the mission of June Jordan School for Equity is not just to prepare students for college, but also to prepare our graduates to be agents of positive change in the world.

Consequently, our pedagogy is expressly designed to help our students understand the forces of marginalization they have experienced growing up, and thus to begin the process of freeing themselves from oppression, including especially the internalized oppression (or self-imposed limits) which we see preventing so many students from meeting their potential.

We are in the process of clearly defining the JJSE pedagogy, in order to support JJSE teachers on their path to becoming masters at the art of teaching for social justice, which in turn will provide all JJSE students the opportunity to develop the self-confidence and self-discipline they need to become not just authentic intellectuals, but also leaders who will work on behalf of their communities and create a more just and humane world.

They reject “test-based accountability” and list the following guidelines for their pedagogical practice: warm demeanor, safe classroom community, knowledge of students, students as intellectuals, students as intellectuals, teacher as coach, and social justice curriculum (JJSE n.d.). More detailed description of what these entail can be found on their website.⁷

The language on its mission and values webpage (excerpt above) echoes the description for multicultural education that NAME (n.d.) provides because it aims to promote student achievement, especially for students from marginalized backgrounds, develop a “positive self-concept” for students by teaching knowledge about oppression and social justice in its curriculum, and foster leadership skills that will help students help themselves and their communities. June Jordan School for Equity is an excellent example of multicultural education for many reasons. It both enacts and teaches about social justice by promoting the success of its students, who are largely from traditionally underserved backgrounds, and by actively teaching them about systemic oppression so they can understand how to resist it. It takes the interpersonal dynamics between teacher and student and between peers into account by encouraging teachers and students to recognize the contributions of students’ own knowledge, meet them where they are, and do a variety of activities including teamwork. Activities include those that allow student’s voices and interests to come through. In terms of its curriculum, JJSE says it is “relevant”, “helps explain the real world & oppression” across subjects and “is grounded in justice, fairness, dignity, & cultural strengths”. Outside of the classroom, the school has a wellness center that has culturally competent services and resources, advisories that group students and teachers together for academic and other support, and some extracurricular activities and electives despite being a small institution.

Although I have not done extensive research on what this program looks like in practice or evaluated its effectiveness, the goals and approach of JJSE are very strong. According to the U.S. News and World Report, it is a small school serving under 250 students (97% minority and 64% economically disadvantaged, 55% Hispanic and 24% Black). They have an 81% graduation rate and their test scores for both math and reading are well below average. The low test scores do demonstrate a weakness in the traditional sense used to evaluate students and a potential barrier for its students to move on to higher education. Again, however, standardized tests exhibit racial bias and other metrics are needed to evaluate student well-being as a whole. It would be important to study the school in more detail to evaluate its curriculum, structure, and the educational outcomes of its students to see whether its mission is doing what it purports to.

This program represents a multilayered example of applied sociology. It uses the body of research including studies similar to my own and especially the theory of multicultural education to develop and implement a school structure and culture that aims to make a difference in the lives of its students and community. It also exemplifies the sociological imagination because it

⁷ <https://www.jjse.org/our-mission-and-values>

treats individual students and their needs with consideration of historically developed systemic barriers. Multicultural education encourages educators to remember every student is different in terms of their learning style, while also emphasizing that this is in part due to all aspects of their background, including their race, ethnicity, culture, language, gender, family, etc. Additionally, students are seen as a source of legitimate knowledge in their classrooms, and collaboration between students of varying backgrounds is valued as a source of learning. Valuing student experiences as a learning tool is significant because it encourages them to develop a sociological imagination of their own.

The above analysis illuminates some of the strengths of a multicultural education approach. While there is no one-size fits all curriculum or policy that would fit the needs of schools in every community, multicultural education provides a framework each school can tweak to make it fit their needs. Particularly, the emphasis on centering students' knowledge and backgrounds in learning and structural resources to prioritize are designed to be adaptable based on school demographics. These are aspects that were reflected in the literature on experimental multicultural programs (Cisneros 2019; de los Ríos 2020; Langdon 2020; de los Ríos, Seltzer, and Molina 2021). As a "process that permeates all aspects of school practices, policies and organization as a means to ensure the highest levels of academic achievement for all students" (NAME n.d.), multicultural education argues that the best way to ensure success in schools is to cover all the bases.

Multicultural education seems best suited to be applied at the school or district level. Individual schools can play an active role in social mobility and inequality, argue Muller et al. (2010), who found that in racially diverse schools, minority (African American and Latinx) underrepresentation in sophomore advanced math courses predicted senior year grades and college enrollment, and schools differed in how much this underrepresentation occurred. This highlights the need for schools to recognize where inequality occurs in their own schools and tailor specific approaches to combat them. Curriculum reform may be one way, and more structural approaches such as ensuring representation of students in advanced courses may be another. While multicultural education in theory encompasses all of this, it is much easier said than done. One caveat to multicultural education is that because it is wide reaching in its aspirations and flexible to accommodate particular needs and ideas, implementing it requires a deep comprehension of its ideals, motivation on the level of individual schools and teachers, and creativity to find effective solutions. It would need to be broken down into smaller components to be implemented through state or federal legislation.

Directions for future research

There are endless areas under multicultural education that should be studied in order to better understand its potential to improve the school experience and education outcomes for students. I will list a few here that came to my mind and go into more depth about how I would design a better study to answer my original research inquiry.

First, my research was focused on one aspect of multicultural education: curriculum. The lack of correlation I found between a more culturally diverse curriculum and student outcomes may indicate that on its own, reform within curriculum may not close student achievement gaps. This does contrast with the results of the study on implementing ninth grade ethnic studies to improve

outcomes for low achieving students, which suggests that perhaps ethnic studies is a more effective way to include learning about minority history rather than trying to incorporate it into U.S. history courses (Bonilla, Dee, and Penner 2021). One direction to take research from here to clarify the interaction of curriculum and structural reform would be to look at whether specific structural changes such as more consistent and attentive academic advising or diversifying staff effectively close gaps in achievement for low income students of color. The impacts of curriculum and structure on their own should also be compared with holistic multicultural education, which encompasses both, in order to understand whether combining the two makes them stronger. One specific way I imagine this could be tested is by comparing student outcomes for students who took an ethnic studies class specifically to those who went to a school that fits the description of multicultural education but did not specifically take an ethnic studies class. A comparison of their impacts would be useful to inform relevant policy decisions especially because of the relative difficulty implementing multicultural education compared with adding an ethnic studies requirement to state policy as California has just done.

Because of the difficulty in imagining how it would be implemented, clear guidelines on how to apply multicultural education are necessary. One area of study which would be helpful here is the strategic evaluation of different multicultural programs, resources, or specific activities that have been tried. While some examples of these are present in the literature, there are undoubtedly many more ideas that have been tested by schools and educators that could be shared to other educators looking at ways to improve their support of minority students.

In the interest of supporting as many students as possible and educating citizens to be respectful of all people, it would be fruitful to study the outcomes of a multicultural education for not only students of color, but also based on sexual orientation, gender, class, ability, etc. This is also an area that would be important in a comparison between the effectiveness of ethnic studies and multicultural education. A more general diversity studies course that covered forms of oppression across many identities could also be included as a comparison.

Because true multicultural education must encompass all aspects of a school, studying outcomes of multicultural education on a large scale is difficult because it is so hard to find schools that live up to the ideal standards. This suggests that a study with a smaller scale is a better way to assess true multicultural education. If I were to do a similar study again, perhaps a better study design to answer this question would compare similar measures of educational outcomes (standardized test scores, interest in their classes, and educational goals) between students at high schools that intentionally follow a model for multicultural education and those that do not develop their school culture and pedagogy around this issue specifically. This would have two test groups, a control group and one with the multicultural education in place, which would be a more definitive comparison than the more vague scalar measure of emphasis used in my study. This would also more accurately measure multicultural education. Quantitative or mixed methods would still be ideal to analyze outcomes correlationally, although the dataset would need to be accessible for a more traditional statistical analysis. While some form of standardized test would be important to evaluate students' learning, the test used would need to be evaluated for biases. I also would not use a test in social studies because scores on that would vary depending on the priorities in the curriculum I would be treating as the independent variable. Instead, I would evaluate skills in reading and math because that would measure whether students are more engaged overall in their education, not just in their social studies course. I

would rely on the interest measure for their engagement within the target curriculum of social studies, although I could also extend this to other subjects since a multicultural curriculum makes adjustments to those as well. In addition to achievement, interest, and goals, I would include a measure about sense of self, because multicultural education highlights a positive self-concept as one of its main goals. A longitudinal design would be stronger to look at students' actual educational outcomes, though of course they would need to control for economic status. Measures of interest and self-concept could be evaluated over time as well (at the beginning and end of high school and at age 25). I would also measure across all major racial/ethnic groups instead of just white and non-white students to acknowledge the diverse experiences of people from different backgrounds. Ideally I would also extend the study to other minority students based on gender and sexual orientation.

Teaching about systemic oppression and people with diverse identities and backgrounds in K-12 schools is a very timely topic based on social justice issues and political debates in the U.S. right now. Further study in this area that focuses on concrete student outcomes is crucial to understand how student wellbeing is related to curriculum content and structure at their schools and to make sure policy reform is in the best interest of our nation in terms of tolerance, respect, and socioeconomic opportunities for the next generation. There are many directions to take this research, and I hope the above suggestions and the limitations of my own study provide guidance for the growth of this body of knowledge.

CONCLUSION

This paper aimed to investigate the connections between multicultural representation in social studies curriculum and high school students' educational engagement, with the hopes of supporting policies that protect and improve access to knowledge about diversity and inequality in the society we live in. The literature points to the need for concrete change in not only cultural competence in schools, but the value they place on the diverse cultural knowledge its students possess. While my study was unable to provide convincing evidence to this point, it does help expose limitations in the national tracking of multicultural education, which I believe is problematic now that there is so much publicity around education of diversity and equity issues. The flaws of this study also help generate ideas for improvement in future studies with similar research questions.

I would like to conclude with a connection to theory. In *Orientalism*, Edward Said identifies the connection between knowledge, politics, and power:

What I am interested in doing now is suggesting how the general liberal consensus that "true" knowledge is fundamentally non-political (and conversely, that overtly political knowledge is not "true" knowledge) obscures the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced. No one is helped in understanding this today when the adjective "political" is used as a label to discredit any work for daring to violate the protocol of pretended suprapolitical objectivity. We may say, first, that civil society recognizes a gradation of political importance in the various fields of knowledge. To some extent the political importance given a field comes from the possibility of its direct translation into economic terms; but to a greater extent political importance comes

from the closeness of a field to ascertain-able sources of power in political society. (Said 1978:10).

In this project, I have produced knowledge about the dissemination of knowledge that is deeply relevant to the American political landscape. I like this excerpt as a way to tie together my paper because it pulls these ideas together and prompts us to critically reflect on the relationship between knowledge and power and what this means for education. Multicultural education makes knowledge across all subjects political by connecting even math to social justice and students' own lives. Critics of Critical Race Theory are not wrong to recognize that theories of structural inequality stem from and impact politics and the organization of our society. Indeed, the knowledge produced in this paper comes from the perspective of a young, liberal, mixed race, feminist Californian who set out to write this paper with an idea of how the results might impact public policy in the area of education. However, the accusation that diversity studies curriculum is indoctrination and untrue is wildly dramatic and obscures the reality that all information that has been present in curriculum for years is political in some way based on how and by whom it was produced, who is interpreting it, and how students engage with it. In a democratic society, the diversity of the origins of the knowledge we consume and engagement with ideas from many perspectives is critical. We should be teaching our students to recognize that knowledge is not apolitical, and to develop the critical thinking skills necessary to evaluate it based on this fact.

What Said observed 45 years ago remains true today: labeling knowledge as “political” has a discrediting effect. People on both sides of the education culture wars know this and use it to delegitimize the other. Said reminds us that this is not the important part of the debate. What is important is to develop empirically sound, if still political, research that emphasizes why curriculum is important and how it can be developed in a way that fosters educational success among all students. This leads to Said's connection of the politicization of knowledge to power. This is of course why education is a site for such vitriolic debate. Political parties fear what is taught or not taught in schools will impact their party's membership and therefore political power. People also fear that empowering people from certain identity groups will threaten the power of others. Education's relationship to economic power and emotional empowerment is also why it is so important to continue to study ways to engage students from traditionally marginalized backgrounds. One way to challenge systemic inequality is to teach people about it and encourage those it disadvantages to continue their education so they can leverage the power that comes with it.

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The Social Politics of Contemporary Greek Life Organizations

By

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ABSTRACT.

Existing literature has examined the manifestation of race-based treatment in non-Jesuit higher education Greek Life Organizations (GLOs). These studies found that the history of white male-only spaces such as GLOs made for an exclusive campus environment even after minority groups gained access to higher education. This paper seeks to understand whether these same exclusive tendencies manifest in Jesuit institutions that cherish inclusivity such as Santa Clara University. Thus, it asks: How does race impact college students' experiences in Greek Life? This study utilizes 6 interviews conducted with white and non-white racially identifying members of Santa Clara University GLOs. Additionally, it analyzes 6 hours' worth of digital observations on media affiliated with or in relation to Greek Life. The data found that an inductee's racial identity was most significant during the rushing process. If and when an inductee was accepted into a GLO, race was no longer critical to the nature of their experiences. However, the data also indicated the significance of numerous non-identity measures to one's experience which were: the importance of self-presentation, rationalization of the individual benefits, and idealized reforms to be made within the GLO. These findings suggest that one's experience in GLOs is dictated by more than their racial identity. More importantly, in cultivating a harmonious environment within this prevalent social culture in many higher education institutions, GLOs need to do more than diversify their membership and reconcile with their racialized past.

INTRODUCTION

One of the major modern controversies surrounding Greek Life is its legacy of excluding racially minoritized populations. The scale and history of exclusionary practices in Greek Life can be traced back to their creation in a racially charged and discriminatory era of U.S. social politics. Existing studies found that the history of white, male-only spaces such as Greek Life/Letter Organizations (GLOs) made for an exclusive campus environment even after minority groups gained access to higher education. Since the attendees of the first higher education establishments were reserved for white Christian males, this became the status quo for most of US history. Many Greek Life chapters consequently normalized exclusionary Constitutions, which made it difficult for women and non-white students to join the same Greek Life organizations (Hughey 2007). The deeply embedded racial heterogeneity of Greek Life became a hidden but overarching factor that reproduced the anti-inclusionary sentiment of nationwide social norms.

Greek Life and Whiteness

The development of whiteness can be drawn back to the history of Greek Life and its pattern of exclusion and racism towards minority students. Institutional racism played a large role in the

founding of Greek organizations before students of color and women were allowed to attend college. When societal norms shifted and they were allowed to as minorities, they were still excluded from these historically white male groups (Gillon, Beatty, and Salinas 2019). An article reporting on recent racial makeup in GLOs found that the ratio of people of color to white is still often in favor of white members, who make up about 70% of their organizations (Gamar 2020). Only by accepting and acknowledging organizations' exclusionary acts, racial reconciliation from GLOs can be considered (Hogg 2020). However, social media has worked to bring to light still prevalent and recent exclusionary events against individuals within GLOs, showcasing the need and demand for these issues to be investigated. The question that remains is how deeply embedded whiteness is in GLOs and if any progress has been made toward moving away from its normalization.

The existence of whiteness in Greek Life in more recent decades can be directly reflected in statistical data, such as a report that among eight GLOs that participants associated with, there was an average of 3.8% non-white members per organization (Hughey 2010). Hughey (2010) further looks at how already participating "non-white" members employ strategies and behaviors to obtain the perception that they belong with their white counterparts despite being in predominantly white GLOs. What was found within this study is that the process of framing themselves as belonging within these GLOs involves a strong pattern and tie between their awareness of their racial identities being "different or inferior" (Hughey 2010:1). A different study conducted in the University of Michigan measured and found high in-group racial preferences among black and white students (Combs, Stewart, and Sonnett 2017). The prevalence of same-race preferences was significantly higher among those in GLOs, indicating that membership is also a considerable factor in an individual's same-race biases (Combs et. al 2017). Through these findings, the concept of homogeneity was emphasized by the participants themselves, as they both acknowledged this racially enclosed group of people as well as their perceived reasons why this homogeneity exists (Joyce 2018). Both these studies identify further unaddressed barriers to making Greek Life a more racially-harmonic setting on campus, but GLO members have tried to downplay the severity of these issues.

Joyce (2018) contributed to this racial dialogue within Greek Life by exploring how men in a white fraternity perceive the concept of "fit" within their organization. Members of the GLOs minimized race by claiming that it never played a significant role in their organization. They also compared themselves to larger demographics and other Greek organizations to claim their organizations were quite diverse (Joyce 2018). They additionally promoted the normalization of whiteness, which was explained through the fact that membership is earned through first impressions and that this quality will trump other factors including race. Additionally, members further discussed the origins of Greek life have simply carried over through time which is why whiteness is prevalent in Greek life culture. The importance of this concept is that it provides a baseline to which we can further examine Greek life. With the understanding that this culture is predominantly white, it provides all the more reason to which we can further our understanding of it.

Jesuit Values and the Debate Over GLO's

Jesuit universities are built on similar values such as care for others, service to one's community, and empathy for all. Thus, when the controversies of GLOs and racial exclusivity are brought up, these universities have had to make compromises to allow GLOs to satisfy

student demands but also bar any formal association with the university itself (Prout 2014). Georgetown University, a Jesuit campus in Washington D.C., was faced with an intense decision as many students rallied to establish Chapters with infamous practices that came into conflict with Jesuit ideals (Prout 2014). The article, which was published by Georgetown University's publication *The Hoya*, gave a close look into its Greek Life and how the university compromised its Jesuit values to allow students to establish unofficial Chapters. It was argued by principal opponents to Greek Life at Georgetown that practices such as deciding which students are admitted can easily become based on the characteristics of the student themselves, which fosters a community founded on exclusion (Prout 2014). Because the premise of "rushing" a Greek Life fraternity or sorority is based on whether one gets chosen by that organization, Jesuit institutions like Georgetown have struggled to incorporate those organizations into their campus climate in a satisfactory manner for the students. Students at Georgetown have expressed their frustrations with universities using conflicts with Jesuit values as an excuse not to allow GLOs.

Students who are members of GLOs see their organizations as bringing diverse opportunities to members and being capable of handling conflicts based on race (Prout 2014). Their claims are also supported by a quantitative study conducted by Severtis and Christie-Mizell (2007), which uses data from more than 3,000 respondents to show how being a member of a Greek organization provides opportunities after graduation for African American college students more than their European counterparts. The findings looked at different variables in terms of what contributes to the college retention of different races, such as sociodemographic variables, human capital, financial capital, social capital, and the overlap between race, education, and social capital. The study concluded that "membership in a Greek-letter organization increases the odds of college graduation by a little over 370%, compared to non-members" (Severtis and Christie-Mizell 2007:107). This is crucial in understanding the perspectives of people of color within GLOs who not only gain social relationships but support systems and resources to feel comfortable at college and pursue their studies with more confidence in their outcomes.

Georgetown's resolution has allowed Chapters of GLOs under the condition that they are not considered a part of the university. This seemingly temporary solution opens up more discussions on how other Jesuit institutions address the issue. Our study seeks to understand whether these same exclusive tendencies manifest in Jesuit institutions such as Santa Clara University. Jesuit institutions are notably founded on the principles of inclusion and care for the whole person.

Thus, we ask the question: How does race impact college students' experiences in Greek Life? Our study found that while racial identity was present throughout the data collection process, its role was largely confined to the initiation process. We determined that factors defining one's experience beyond recruitment were the importance of adhering to the norms of the organization regarding one's presentation, the conceptualization of the individual benefits all members reaped, and what each member saw as ideal changes to be made within their organizations.

METHODOLOGY

Our research group decided to use the Greek Life community at Santa Clara University as our

research population and decided upon a sample of 6 interview respondents, with three being white and three identifying as students of color to gain a holistic collection of data on experiences of the racial spectrum. Our respondents were members of different non-professional fraternities and sororities and were reached through convenience sampling. We decided to interview solely from nonprofessional GLOs because the motivations for membership and experience would presumably vary greatly.

Data Gathering and Methods

Utilizing convenience and snowball sampling methods, we had the organization's gatekeepers reach out to their connections within these organizations to gain access to other potential respondents. In terms of our interview protocol, it was organized into the following sections: asking respondents for personal definitions, experiences with GLOs, racial identity, and its presence in GLOs, and concluded with desires for organizational changes.

When creating the interview questions and format, we tried to make these questions as open as possible to account for the many experiences with race our participants were likely to have. We thought this would be necessary for establishing a good interviewer-respondent relationship (Weiss 1994:65). By showing that we are open to all perspectives, especially when dealing with a sensitive topic like race, we hoped to build rapport with our respondents. Additionally, during our interviews, we ensured that we participated in casual conversation and small talk upon arrival to the interview as well as before departing to build a better relationship between us and our respondents in hopes of making them feel both welcomed and comfortable.

We also chose to focus on the topics of racial identity, Greek life experience, interracial interactions within the Greek Organization, and feelings of inclusion/lack thereof. We conducted and recorded our interviews during weeks 5-7 in both virtual and in-person settings. Within these interviews, we worked to maintain the complete confidentiality of our respondents as well as the GLO with which they were associated. This was an important ethical agreement because we had to ensure that we kept consistent upon respondents' comfortability with talking about sensitive topics or experiences as well as their openness in telling truthful anecdotes.

We also conducted our observations virtually during weeks 8-9 due to non-existent access to in-person observations because of gatekeepers and weather conditions that canceled the events we sought to attend. These virtual observation sites included different media sites tied to GLOs, such as their official organizational Instagram, the Panhellenic Organization Instagram, their official organizational websites, a website that allows individuals to rate specific GLOs, and the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics. A mix of descriptive and reflective field notes was taken as the observations were conducted on social media sites and more traditional websites providing the information in a more structured manner. Additionally, it's important to take into consideration the possible ethical consideration that a few of these virtual sites that we observed were connected to individual GLOs, to which we did not get verbal permission to use them within this study. However, because these platforms are open to public access we did not reach out to ask for consent and thus we do not believe any ethical boundaries were crossed.

Coding

As for the coding, according to Lofland et al. (2006), some of the units which we should pick out from our data and group together included certain practices, roles/social types, relationships, groups, subcultures, and lifestyles. For example, regarding relationships, we coded intraracial interactions, for specific roles and social types, our group coded different organizational hierarchies that emerged, and so forth. Additionally, according to Emerson et al. (2011), when doing line-by-line coding, researchers should be entertaining all analytic possibilities. They should not be coding with the intention that we will be using all these categories but with whether these categories are emerging and what is in front of us. Prominent codes that emerged included: rushing and recruitment, meeting people, supportive sisterhood/brotherhood, type of social event, ideal organizational changes, and identity. These helped identify examples and experiences going through recruitment of their respective organizations, the people and relationships they have created within them, their commitments to their organizations through social events, and how they perceived themselves and their identities. After sharing and discussing codes that appeared throughout our interviews, we worked on reforming some codes to best capture ideas we felt brought insights for our research. We thus created “focus codes” which “makes comparisons between incidents, identifying examples that are comparable on one dimension or that differ on some dimension and, hence, constitute contrasting cases or variations” (Emerson et al. 2011). The focused codes that emerged consisted of individual benefits, care for one another, presentation of self, barriers, diversity, feelings of mutual support, and shifts in perception. These allowed us to create connections between the experiences described in our interviews and insight when coding our observations by identifying different types of support and benefits as well as the challenges within GLOs. When coding our observations, we used existing codes from our interviews as well as added to them with new findings and patterns. From our codes, we created memos to help foster the ideas and patterns that emerged throughout our data collection. These memos often highlighted a “wide range of new ideas, linkages, and connections” (Emerson et al. 2011) that helped us develop our main findings.

Subjectivity and Reflexivity

Subjectivity is centered around the culmination of the researcher’s values and characteristics that may overlap with the research being conducted. As Peshkin states, “It is an amalgam of the persuasions that stem from the circumstances of one’s class, statuses, and values interacting with the particulars of one’s object of investigation” (1988:1). Reflexivity is closely related to subjectivity as one might say reflexivity is the researcher’s ability to recognize their subjectivity and how it might affect their results and analyses. Positionality includes the contexts of your identity and life position such as social class, the environments in which you grew up, and one’s racial identity. Within our study, our positionality in terms of having existing relationships with individuals in these social groups and organizations helped to open up the potential for our respondents to be comfortable with us and we did not need to spend as much time establishing trust and rapport. Additionally, being immersed in the same age group as our respondents as well as being a part of the same university community allowed us to form a more equal dynamic when interacting. In terms of our reflexivity, we acknowledge that there is the confounding factor of us holding preconceived notions of Greek Life largely drawn from stereotypes and historically constructed assumptions. These preconceived notions influence how we interpret our data, especially regarding our observations where our notes and data are based on our understandings of the virtual platforms and perceptions of the presentation of these

organizations. Additionally, our own identities as people of color looking into the case of race brings into a certain bias in representing minority groups. Hence being conscious and aware of these perspectives will mitigate any risks or issues that may come up.

RESULTS

We initially thought we could measure one's experience in Greek Life based on single identifying factors such as racial identity. However, our data has shown us that this is not possible as identity characteristics are often interwoven with others and participant subjectivity also distinguishes how one measures their experience. Thus, while we collected data on the manifestation of racial identity in some aspects of Greek Life, we also needed to include the three major non-identity measures that were used to define the overall experience: The importance of self-presentation, the individual benefits one has, and how they see reform within the organizations they are a part of.

Race as a Constant Factor in Rushing

Discussing race was a central but complicated section of our interviews because of how personal some of the answers to our questions were. We started our open coding by looking at instances of our interviewees/observation participants "identifying their racial identity" or that of other members and citing places where "racial identity was not a contributory factor" to one's experience. We noticed these codes tended to be grouped in places where the respondents also mentioned "rushing or recruitment", another one of our most significant open codes. From this first round, we then generated focused codes around "diversity" (or lack thereof), "barriers" to inclusion or being accepted into a GLO, and "instances of interracial interactions" with other members of similar racial identity.

When reflecting on the importance of racial identity in Greek Life experiences, our interviewees reported its power in the rushing process and gaining entry to the organization. Our interviewees expressed feelings of discomfort around the knowledge their racial identity was a factor in their admission to certain GLOs. Marie, who is a self-identifying Asian American woman, claimed "I didn't think it [race] was going to completely diminish any chance of getting it anywhere, but based on reputations I knew there were certain sororities that I had a better chance of getting into than others just strictly off of my race." Marie, however, is not alone in being concerned about the weight her racial identity has on her Greek Life experience.

Kristine, who is of white racial identity, stated that "I was just very fortunate to basically have a higher chance of getting in because...I had basically a larger chance of getting into certain sororities because of my race". Kristine recognized her privilege as a white-identifying inductee and believed it applied to her during the rushing/recruitment process. She also shared that she heard most non-white inductees "...felt that they were the token diversity factor", which is why they got into X sorority/fraternity. She concludes "If I was not white, I may have dropped the recruitment process". Kristine making the statement that she would have otherwise dropped recruitment had she not been white due to fear of being a diversity requirement indicates the impact of one's racial identity regardless of whether they are white or non-white.

Sam, who identifies as a biracial individual with a mixed white and black identity, provides a different perspective as she was on the recruiting side of rush. She stated that while going

through the recruitment process for her sorority, they enrolled everyone in bias training, which she felt was unnecessary until she realized, “actually going through the process of like recruiting people like when you only talk to someone for 10 minutes, as half of what you like to think about them is like their initial appearance. Oh, that's what it's for”. She emphasized that despite having a conscious awareness of bias, she ultimately found herself unconsciously making judgments about appearances due to the constraints of time within their rush.

Through field observations of the Santa Clara Panhellenic Instagram account, 5 pictures were included in a post with the caption, “Missing bid day ... #gogreek” highlighting and reminiscing on the bid day for each of the affiliated sororities during that year's rushing and recruitment week. These 5 pictures consisted of small and large group pictures with only 2 of the 5 pictures including women of color, and one of them was by default since it was a large group picture of a sorority. The predominance of whiteness and lack of diversity within these organizations, especially during recruitment, was showcased in the pictures. The 5 pictures consisted of: 1) 3 girls in matching shirts in a pastel ball pit 2) a group of 6 girls wearing matching shirts in the theme of Lucky Charms- the cereal 3) A sorority outside of a house all wearing matching lavender shirts and showing new members with some diversity but majority white. 4) 2 girls matching in yellow on the porch of a sorority house 5) 3 girls amongst others in a blue theme holding bids. While the Instagram account posted these pictures where everyone is coordinated, wearing matching outfits, and overall predominantly white, there is a portrayal that the image of a recruited member looks like everyone else racially and aesthetically.

Importance of Self-Presentation

Coding our second major finding started with instances where the organization was “transparent” about its expectations for the appearance of its members. This was commonly associated with instances where we coded the “beliefs/values” of the organization and consequently its members being featured. These open codes led us to create focused codes looking explicitly at instances where the “presentation of oneself” was emphasized and whether that contributed to a “comfortable atmosphere” within the organization.

Our interview respondents and online observation of the GreekRank website and GLO's social media revealed the essentiality of presenting oneself as compatible with the values and norms of a respective GLO. When talking about the rushing process, Kristine, a member of her sororities leadership team, mentioned how she “very much spent time...finding the dresses that [she] needed to wear, and [she] was going to present [her]self...[she] lost some of who [she] was so that [she] would be like almost like an ideal candidate for recruitment”. The taxing cost of rushing was the loss of one's autonomy over how one presents themselves. This staple of Greek Life was also reported by George, a member of an SCU fraternity, who said “...The rush process was pretty straightforward. You attend events. You meet the brothers and kind of like just gain interactions. You try to present yourself in the best way possible, so you can get that like recognition, or get that bid, as they say”. Both George and Kristine note the importance of reforming their physical appearance and social behaviors to align with that of the GLO during the rushing process. These expectations are not formally communicated and are often based on one's observations of current members.

Furthermore, in terms of appearance within these GLOs, many pictures from the sorority Instagrams would often present different groups wearing dresses, and being done up and it would often seem as though there was a specific dress code that all of the girls fell in line with in

terms of appearance for specific events. Although it's unclear from the outside perspective, whether or not these GLOs explicitly create such codes or requirements for the presentation of their members, it's clear that there is at least coherence in their looks and style. This is additionally supported by the common appearance shared by sorority members in the Santa Clara Panhellenic Instagram, showcasing original and tagged photos from the five sororities in the Santa Clara community. When spotlighting each affiliated sorority through original posts, alongside general information, 3 group pictures were shown, of which the majority of the women seen were white and seen wearing similar colors, or within a certain causal aesthetic.

In addition, many of the reviews/discussions on GreekRank indicated the values of the person posting/the GLO being reviewed. In one such discussion, a user stated “[In a review of a fraternity] The guys are actually pretty chill and have a good brotherhood as well. They’re still a smaller frat, however, and need more houses and parties before they can truly rise in the rankings.” This user demonstrated the importance of having strong inter-group relations and a supportive community, something valued by both of my interviewees. However, this user also commented on the importance of having houses/properties and extravagant parties, something the fraternity they were discussing was still lacking in. This review indicates the essentiality of balancing strong communal relations with notable social events to be considered a good GLO.

Individual Benefits from Membership

In the process of coding our data, we found various cases of “social aspects” that many of our respondents claimed to be one of the most prominent reaped rewards from joining a GLO. Further, there were many layers to these social aspects such as expanding one’s social circle, the ability to meet new people, and making new close friends. Hence we were able to condense this finding into a focused code encapsulating individual benefits. Through this focused code as well as the care for one another and the open code of a supportive sisterhood and brotherhood, it was determined that besides the drawback of having to conform to organization norms, respondents also measured their experience based on the different ways in which individuals found themselves benefitting from joining a sorority or fraternity.

One prominent example was the social aspects of these Greek Life Organizations (GLOs) and the expansion of social circles for these individuals. One of our respondents, George, shared his feelings about his organization after just becoming an active member of his fraternity recently and claimed:

I got to get to know people at a really deep and personal level. Which I enjoyed during the process, so now when I get phone calls nightly and text nightly about people wanting to either A) study or just talk to me, it makes my day that I was able to impact these guys in that way.

This sentiment is further expanded upon by a respondent from a sorority, in which Marie shared that she felt one of her main motivations for joining her specific GLO can be explained by her feeling like she “had like a solid set of like group of friends”, however, she “wanted to like, broaden that, and have more connections to like more people like with the alums and stuff”. Marie explained to us that networking plays a large role in GLOs and hence she wanted to explore that opportunity.

Furthermore, a second individual benefit that many individuals found especially important was the culture of care that emerged creating an enhanced sisterhood or brotherhood for them and their peers. For example, George explained that there was a strong sense of “camaraderie” among him and his peers both from going through the rush and pledging process but also when becoming an active member as well, “it was a process through not finding your friends, but building something deeper than friendship, which is just like kind of brotherhood, in a sense”. In a different interview with our respondent within a sorority, Cathy stated that her perception of her sorority's main goal was promoting a feeling of community and mental health,

But I think a main goal is...mental health. And then I would also say, like community, and I think having a good, solid community, can definitely help with people's mental health because it gives you like good friends and resources to go to.

Cathy provides insight as to the support that she feels her GLO provides her in terms of having solid friends to turn to or even free therapy services provided to her and her sisters to ensure the wellness of their members.

The social media observations of these GLOs further supported these findings from our interviews. One example of a fraternity's Instagram is in which their posts predominantly portray and highlight the social ties and friend groups that form within the organization. Oftentimes many of these pictures and posts included large groups of people socializing, smiling, and generally having a good time together. They also included reels of their brother's activities over school holidays and breaks, promoting the notion that regardless of if they're in their social settings or outside of it, they keep up and check in with one another. A second example of the emergence of a culture of care can be found in an observation of a sorority's official chapter website, under the “about us” section they write about the main values of their sorority claiming that their “keystone is friendship- warm, simple, and sincere. In [X sorority] there is encouragement, understanding, and opportunities to grow”. This observation was consistent with findings amongst the sorority Instagrams as well in which they would post habitual “member Mondays” or “senior appreciation posts”, consistently showing their active support for one another and their constant recognition for all of their peers or sisters.

Ideal Changes Within Organizations

A fourth finding brought up in the research was the potential for reform within GLOs, which was recurring in our open code “ideal organizational changes” suggested throughout our interviews and observations. These suggestions overlapped and provided solutions to challenges in the experiences of joining or being members of a GLO, these recurring challenges became our focused code “barriers” which provides an experience as a reason for making organizational change. Our open code “rushing/recruitment” was also used in collaboration with our organizational change code, due to the limitations of recruitment which respondents highlighted as needing reform due to its dependence on first impressions. Also noted by our white-identifying respondents was the privilege of seeing themselves represented in the racial demographic of sororities which could have led them to feel less comfortable or welcome if they were of another race. One respondent, Sam, a mixed black and white sorority member, when asked about potential changes she would make, brought up, “if we like, took the girls that were women of color like, and have a separate meeting of them, and they saw themselves represented in the actual, initiated members, that might be good, and that might make them feel

more comfortable.” This idea would aim to provide a more comfortable atmosphere where minority potential new members could identify with current members within the organizations. Sam also discussed the process of voting to allow potential new members to join their organizations and the subjectivity of it because “there's no reason why, like if someone like really likes a girl that they like get booted because like no understands like how to rate someone well and how to rate someone”. Since decisions in letting people into sororities are made through impressions, in meeting someone of a minority, potential new members could feel more comfortable and willing to present themselves more naturally helping foster a space for more diverse students to join GLOs, allowing the active members of the GLO to get a better sense of their personality and let them in.

Another area for reform brought up in our interviews was the limitations of the organizations in reaching people through not being affiliated with the university and therefore not being able to recruit or advertise to the larger school community publicly. Our respondent, George, a white fraternity member discussed the potential of reforming outreach stating:

Yeah, the only thing I would change is probably you have a better advertising program, and just kinda reaching out to more students and kind of saying “hey it's not just like a simple fraternity you see on TV or in the movies”. It's more than that. It's a social club of people that care about your...success in the future, but also want you to enjoy your college experience aside from school and kind of school clubs.

Through reforming their ability to publicize, a potential for increased diversity becomes possible in recruiting people without as much knowledge of Greek life.

Room for reform in Greek life was also informally expressed through the observation of the Markkula Center for Applied Ethics, where multiple student authors published short scenarios about common experiences in Greek Life and encouraged readers to reflect on the ethics of the situation. In one example, the subject of the scenario was faced with a decision on whether to engage in hazing activities which can be dangerous and oppositional to the person's morals, or abstain from joining Greek Life and risking potential social connections. In this example, the role of personal values is crucial in shaping one's experience with Greek Life.

DISCUSSION

Our research has found that at Santa Clara University, race plays a minimal but still existent role in one's entry and experience in Greek Life. Our interviewees and observations have revealed that the racial makeup of some SCU GLOs is still predicated on racial identity. Marie's feelings of inclusion being heavily shaped by her racial identity corroborate the existing literature that identifies racial identity as a continually significant part of Greek Life recruitment. However, many of our interviewees, especially non-white inductees, have reported low levels of racial animosity which indicates the reduced power of race compared to other studies analyzed in our literature review. Unfortunately, we cannot attribute this finding solely to the Jesuit values of SCU because we have also learned about various criteria inductees use to portray their experiences in Greek Life. Whether it is norms about physical appearance, the goals, and values of a GLO, or the desire to make change within the organization and the broader community, our

findings have revealed the limitless interconnected ways in which one's experience is illustrated.

The social expectations for those rushing to conform to strict standards paint Greek Life as artificial and disrespectful of diversity in each of their members. While this expected conformity to become "one of them" is not predicated on racial identity, physical appearance is nonetheless taxing on inductees. Yet, the individual benefits one receives when joining, whether it is new friends, finding supportive communities, networking opportunities, or a place to find common interests, seem to outweigh the costs of compromising one's standards of appearance. Thus, it is understandable why interviewees like Kristine and George would modify their appearance or behaviors when they were rushing. To them, sacrificing a little bit of their identity to achieve the social capital mentioned earlier is a worthwhile tradeoff, even if it brings stress or the need to change oneself. The slight compromising of one's identity is also a testament to the impact of group social norms and expectations within social settings. If entry/acceptance into a social setting is desired, it is not unreasonable to assume their weighing of the trade-offs may be different than if they did not desire the group's acceptance.

What was further found amongst our findings was that the women within sororities emphasized the issue of race and the disadvantages that came with being an individual or color more often than our interviewees who were men and members of fraternities. Santi, who identifies as an Asian American male as well as George who identifies as a white male, both made strong opinions that race did not play any role during the rushing process to become inducted members of their organizations. This opinion and belief carried on throughout both of their interviews when prompted about the role of race, if any, in their experiences with their GLO. What this pattern amongst our respondents is suggesting is that there may be evidence of intersectionality between not only race but possibly gender, especially for women within this study. This may provide a line of inquiry for future studies to investigate if individual experiences within sororities and fraternities differ and to what extent both gender and race factor into those differences.

From both our interviews and observations, we were able to identify the power of participants' subjectivity. During our interview reflections, we were sure to note the way our subjectivity as researchers on interviewees and the coding process. But, we also noted how the participants in our observations had their own more pronounced subjective thoughts that affected what we learned about Greek Life. A good example of this from the GreekRank observation was the ranking of each sorority/fraternity in a pseudo-scientific manner. Each GLO was assigned a percentile ranking based on the number of reviews it received. What was unclear was how these rankings are calculated from each review and why the criteria listed (housing, involvement, social scene, and looks) are what determine a GLO's rank. Each individual that ranks a GLO will have their subjective thoughts at the forefront, especially in an anonymized environment where the reviews cannot be linked back to the original poster. The anonymized environment also masks the lived experiences of each user and we could not ask for further details on the observation participant's thoughts due to the constraints of the online environment. Regardless, the increased presence of participant subjectivity in anonymized online observations yielded interestingly specific and dramatic experiences about Greek Life that we did not have in our in-person or virtual interviews.

Limitations and Conclusions

This study wanted to see if coming from a Jesuit school that emphasizes diversity and inclusion could be a confounding factor of our study's findings on Greek Life members' experiences. It is unclear to us the extent to which these values have also been instituted amongst our participants as well as the broader sector of Greek Life here at Santa Clara. We have also found that GLO members utilize their subjectivity to define their experiences using more than one measure such as racial identity. As members of the SCU community alongside our interview and observation participants, we know the institution's core curriculum requires all students to partake in courses celebrating and studying Jesuit values of ethics, diversity, social justice, and civic engagement. However, the small scope of our study was confined solely to the population of Santa Clara University as well as the ten-week time constraints became considerable limitations. Our data collection process was rushed and we felt unable to explore the deep connections our positionality as student researchers afforded us. Despite these limitations, our study adds to the existing knowledge of Greek Life experiences by analyzing the role of multiple varying influences in a specifically Jesuit setting. To build on our work, future research should attempt to quantify how noteworthy Jesuit values are in the decisions of its followers. Expanding the research to other Jesuit institutions, or even non-Jesuit institutions, and how they address the ethical implications of GLOs would allow us to have a more robust picture of Greek Life experiences. For now, we understand that creating a harmonious setting open to all requires more than just diversifying the racialized settings in which they were constructed.

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First Responders and Mental Health

By

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ABSTRACT.

This research proposal focuses on mental health issues facing first responders due to their line of work. Topics that are addressed in this paper include the awareness of mental health and different programs that have been created to help first responders deal with work-related stressors and problems. A proposed study seeks to gain more information from first responders to create support resources and programs to ensure that first responders are getting the best quality care for their situations. The goal of this paper is not just to increase access to support resources to help first responders, but also to inform the public of the seriousness of first responder mental health, since they are the emergency personnel that care for all us in the community.

INTRODUCTION

When the people we care most for are injured or having some kind of medical emergency, the first thing we do is call 911 to get help from the right people for the job. These people are known as first responders and these responders can be Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), Paramedics, Firefighters, and in some cases Police Officers. First responders have one of the most stressful and physically demanding jobs in the world with trying to handle multi casualty incidents where the scene involves multiple patients and other types of incidents with hazardous materials that cause harm to people's immune systems. The physically demanding aspect of their job is to make sure they are physically fit to lift all types of patients and with firefighters being able to carry all their gear and get the job done. With these stressful environments and having to exercise enough to make sure they can still do their job correctly can create an issue for first responders' mental and physical ability to maintain life and work balance. There has been many instances where first responders have either quit their jobs or have even gone as far as responders committing suicide. The problems that first responders are facing can cause problems in our society. Trying to figure out why and how to help out these first responders who are having a hard time with their mental state or are just physically drained to the point of not being able to work, puts society at risk of not getting that necessary first emergency service right away.

This proposal will research the issues that first responders are facing in regard to their mental health and what kinds of programs exist or need to be created to help first responders. People see first responders and do know that they deal with all types of situations that involve the public. However, not too many people understand the type of job that first responders really do, they just see them as people who are experts and can take care of any situation. In reality they are capable, but they are humans, meaning that they have feelings and emotions that can run high in very stressful situations, which can then lead to not being able to mentally cope with their thoughts about that certain call. For this proposal, the research questions that will be the aim of this paper

are: How does the structure of the United States healthcare system affect first responders' mental health? Does the stress of being a first responder correlate with mental health problems? Accordingly, this research investigates the issues of first responders' mental health and burnout due to their everyday stressful environments that they deal with and the types of programs or interventions that are being used or created to help out these responders who are in need of such actions. This research proposal will analyze the relationship between the stressful work environment of first responders and how their line of work has impacted their well-being. It will also explore the idea of having more programs that are supposed to help first responders with any kinds of issues they are facing, either mental or physical health. This study is relevant mostly to people who work as first responders or are thinking of becoming one to show that this is a real problem for this line of work, but with the right help it can be changed and can make this work system better for them and for the patients. This research is worth doing because if our frontline care workers are not mentally and physically capable of doing their job, the public will not be able to take care of emergency situations on their own when they need that specific type of help. It can be detrimental to the society with no first responders who are able to help and deal with all the different situations they get into because people who are not in that field are not trained to try and figure out what to do that can cause someone to potentially die.

LITERATURE REVIEW

When people call for help in an emergency, they are happy for the people that show up to help take care of whatever is needed. First responders are the frontline of medical, fire, or any weather emergency for the public. These people are trained and continue training to be able to handle all types of emergencies so that the people who live in that community know that there are professionals that will come and take care of what is needed. First responders have one of the most mentally exhausting and physically demanding jobs that requires only the best people to work these jobs because they are handling life or death situations. First responders are seen as the heroes of emergency services and there are a lot of mental and physical effects that come with the job. Dealing with stressful and critical situations takes a toll on people and when this occurs frequently, it can drain someone's well-being. This literature review focuses on the topic of first responders and the ways their mental health has been affected by their line of work with developing higher levels of stress, anxiety, depression, etc. from dealing with all types of emergency situations. The main focus is to understand the problems that first responders experience and to try to find ways to migrate or help them. For this literature review, I will talk about the themes of studies showing the awareness of mental health of first responders and programs made to help first responders deal with their state of mind.

Awareness of Mental Health

Many studies have shown that first responders have symptoms of an emotional imbalance in their life and that their work is affecting them negatively. Being a first responder and dealing with stressful emergency situations go hand in hand due to their line of work and it can have a negative impact on someone's well-being. Analysis by Davies, and Cheung (2022) aims to provide information for social workers to protect their own mental health while caring for their clients and raise awareness about social workers' needs in frontline duties. They concluded five

challenges for first responder social workers: (1) COVID-19 impacts on resource constraints, (2) employment insecurity, (3) disenfranchised guilt, (4) physical distancing and caution fatigue, and (5) managing self-care. Even though this study found some evidence on the mental state of first responders and the challenges they face, we cannot strongly yet say that these challenges are the main problems for every first responder out there and that many responders have been working before COVID-19 and have had mental health problems before that started. Others like Nemecek (2018) highlight the importance of first responders who are at high risk of behavioral health issues as they frequently face violence, death, trauma, and societal struggles through studies being shown.

Many studies have focused on measuring empathy, traumatic stress, mental distress, aggression, world assumptions, and personality (Wagner, Pasca, & Regehr, 2019) and examining the four post-traumatic stress disorder PTSD symptom clusters: re-experiencing, avoidance, dysphoria, and hyperarousal, included in the Dysphoria factor model to depression, substance abuse, and general stress among firefighters in a large metropolitan city in the United States (Arbona & Schwartz, 2016.) For example, a qualitative study done by Stout and Kostamo (2021) with in depth interviews with firefighters on how they experience burnout or traumatic fatigue found two different themes. The first theme was contributors to stress and the two sub themes were traumatic incidents and a lack of sleep and fatigue from shift work and the second theme was stress mitigation, which consisted of three sub themes: giving and receiving mentoring; the healing benefits of dogs; and exercise, adrenaline, and work/life balance. Through these studies, there is supportive evidence that there are mental health problems related to first responders in their line of work and the burnout they feel from stressful emergency situations. Of course, this is only a couple smaller studies done and not representing the entire United States' first responders, but with each study the same theme of their work having an effect on their well-being is a huge problem because if they cannot perform properly, our emergency system will be destroyed. Further, paper will analyze the programs being created to help with the awareness of mental health problems for first responders.

Programs

With many studies looking at how mental health problems have been affecting first responders with their critical jobs, this paper will also show the programs that have been created that are supposed to help first responders with any kinds of issues they are facing either mental or physical. Addressing the problems first responders are facing in regard to mental health and feeling fatigued from their job has created a stressful life for them so having some programs set in place is what will help them. For example, Hillman (2022) illustrates how adding many programs and interventions for first responders will create a trauma informed environment for these responders to reduce their stress levels. The types of programs and interventions that have been implemented for first responders are growing rapidly, but not having the correct programs for responders with certain problems in their areas will not help them out and is just a waste of time. It is hard to have strong enough data to show that some programs work for responders, but there is enough evidence to say that many responders have depression (Harris, Baloglu, & Stacks (2002). In light of this, many places around the U.S. have devoted countless hours in finding the best type of programs that suit all the needs of dealing with significant stress factors,

mental health issues, depression, and many other related topics. Many studies have looked at exercises that will help first responders be able to handle long term exposure to critical incidents that they see on a regular basis (Chopko, Papazoglou, & Schwartz, 2018) and interventions have been identified in the general population to effectively reduce stigma that may be applicable to firefighters, such as psychoeducation, mental health literacy, and personal contact with consumers of mental health treatment revealed how digital storytelling is a resource to help with psychiatric symptom recognition and facilitate treatment (Johnson, Vega, Kohalmi, Roth, Howell, and Van Hasselt, 2020.) Also, others demonstrate how the government needs to take on more responsibility for better and more effective programs that help out first responders mental well-being (Hernandez, Arrell-Rosenquist, and Lewis, 2021.) Across these studies that talk about programs and interventions that have been created for the betterment of first responders, have helped think more about the issue of their line of work and how it affects their mental health and ability to do their job well.

With all the studies and sources that relate to my topic of first responders and how their jobs affect their mental health as well as their physical ability with the emergency situations they get put into every day, the key findings that are meant to be taken into consideration. This paper shows the awareness of these problems first responders are facing with different kinds of programs out there to give them the best help they need to stay mentally and physically healthy to continue working in this field. Most of the studies that are mentioned here are mostly recent so there is action going on, but future research could entail are these programs actually getting the results they want and if there are any areas for improvement. Having first responders being mentally stable and physically fit is very important for our society because if they are not present in our lives, it would create more difficulties that our world would not want to face.

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS

Research Design

The research study would be a mixture of original data collection and secondary source analysis. Having secondary sources will help this study make my analysis stronger because it will support my data and research questions. My research questions are: How does the structure of the United States healthcare system affect first responders' mental health? Does the stress of being a first responder correlate with mental health problems? The two main objectives that will be the focus of this study are: 1) Analyzing the relationship between the stressful work environment of first responders and how their line of work has impacted their well-being, and 2) To explore the idea of having more programs that are supposed to help first responders with any kinds of issues they are facing either mental or physical health. In order to address the research question stated above, a qualitative research design is used because doing in depth interviews and surveys that relate to the questions will help get the best data out of this topic and will give me clear examples from people who are actually in the emergency service field. Getting solid data from this type of research study is the best way to make out some conclusions about the research questions.

Methods

The sources of the data will be scholar journal articles that relate to this research study and the first responders that volunteer to be a part of this study. The participants are first responders, which can be firefighters, EMTs, or paramedics, in the bay area ranging from Santa Clara all the way up to San Francisco. The sample for this study will require 1,000 first responders from the bay area that have had some kind of struggle with either their physical and mental well-being as it relates to their line of work. For my data collection process, it will consist of interviews with first responders with multiple one on ones and group interviews to get more people involved to find stronger data. The questions being asked during the interview will be related to the first responders' experiences in the field, how they have been able to try and deal with stressful situations, how they are feeling about their job now, and many others that consist of questions relating to their well-being in their line of work. The study will also consist of a qualitative survey that other first responders can fill out instead of doing the interview if they wish not too. The qualitative survey will be based on open and descriptive questions to obtain in-depth answers. The thematic analysis for the qualitative data that I have found will consist of transcribing the interviews and creating open codes from the answers that I have gotten from the first responders using ATLAS.ti. Once I have finished writing all of my open codes I will look through all of them and see if there are any patterns that I noticed with the open codes and try to create focused codes so that I can have a better and more detailed understanding of the data that I have just collected from the interviews and how it is related to the research questions I am trying to figure out. With the focused codes, they will be the direct data I need to write down my findings and see if I have found out the answers to my questions and will have created a hypothesis on this topic. As for the survey, I will do a similar analysis as the interviews with finding codes within all the answers and seeing if there are any patterns that relate to my research questions.

Practical Considerations

With any study, there are always potential obstacles that could get in the way of getting all the data that one wants. With this study, an obstacle could be not getting permission from some of the districts and departments that deal with the organization of first responders so not having enough participants is always an issue. An ethical issue that could be a problem is this topic is very personal and the participants may not be comfortable with me asking questions relating to their personal life and answering them to me causing for not strong enough data to make a conclusion. These are serious problems, but there are ways to deal with them. With some departments not wanting to have their workers be interviewed, I will always tell them about the survey option, but with the entire whole bay area and just looking for 1,000 participants, I believe that there will be enough first responders that are eligible and are wanting to do the interviews. As for the ethical issue of the participants not feeling comfortable, I will do my very best to establish rapport and tell them they do not have to answer a question if they do not want to so that they know they are the ones in control of the interview, which will make them more comfortable with me and will usually correlate to having in depth conversations and solid data to come out of the interviews.

IMPLICATIONS & CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

Practical Implications

This research proposal has a lot of importance for not just the first responder community, but the public as well. As stated earlier, first responders help out the people in need, but if they are not adequately able to do their job because their minds are not in the right space, this creates a problem for the people who need their help in very urgent situations. For the data that will have been collected the findings should show that there needs to be an improvement of programs or interventions that truly help first responders get the correct care that they need. There are programs that have been helping out many responders to cope with stressful emergencies that they have dealt with, such as “First Responders Health & Wellness” and “Peer Support Group” funded by the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, but there also needs to be more emphasis on the long term damage that these responders are dealing with and that is where there needs to be improvement in the first responder programs and interventions.

Theoretical Implications

As stated in my literature review, the awareness of the mental health problems related to first responders is the theme that this proposal has been looking at. Programs are being created to help these first responders who are dealing with hardships in their life that affect their ability to function properly. My work that I have shown for this proposal will help challenge current assumptions about first responders and how people do not see the whole side of their work so they take advantage of their job for their own benefit, when people should be really thanking them more and having more people in power help start up more programs for first responders all across the United States. The status of first responders as shown before is that they are prepared for all types of emergency situations and they should be, but they are also human as well meaning they have emotions and sometimes those emotions can take over and destroy someone, so without the right guidance for them, their job or more importantly, their lives could be over. The work that I have done here is for everyone to understand the stressful environment first responders work in and to have the public be more aware about how their jobs have affected their ability to do the job properly and if it is not done properly, the possibility of people not getting the emergency service help they need will decline.

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Social Implications of Violence in Sports

By

Teresa Hu

ABSTRACT.

This essay focuses on the relationship between competitive sports and violence both in and out of the sports fields. Major literature findings suggest that competitive sports such as boxing, hockey, MMA, and American Football, stimulate violence mainly among white male athletes and spectators and discriminate against minority groups (females, black athletes) in the sports fields. Such violence is not limited to aggression among athletes, fans, and spectators in the fields and courts but also exercises penetrating and far-reaching influence through televised sports events and pop culture and media representation on individuals' (especially males') construction of self-image and social interaction modes. In particular, violence serves as a catalyst that encourages male aggression, such as male athletes' high crime rates in domestic abuse. Besides, sports reflect power oppression of the dominating white male group on different gender, racial and social class groups. Sports serve as a filter that consolidates narrow and stereotyped social norms on gender roles of males being physically and thus socially superior to females. Sports also enhance racial hierarchy when black athletes receive relatively less or negative media coverage. Televised sports also widen social class division by promoting ableism and thus the admiration of powerful and successful athletes lead the public to tolerate violence in athletes and discriminate against the socially disadvantaged and the disabled.

The goal of sociology in analyzing any popular cultural trend is to investigate the underlying social norms and implications and demonstrate how the world and all the individuals' values and interaction modes are shaped and constructed through exposure to the social event. One such example that poses penetrating and long-lasting social influence across all societies worldwide is televised sports. This essay aims to center on the popular and universal social norms behind competitive sports and associate them with various forms of violence. The essay synthesizes three sociology papers and four sports videos in Module 1 to demonstrate how various sports are associated with the common theme of violence and how violence penetrates different societies in the formation of ideologies regarding gender, race, and social class. As the sociologist Jay Coakley (2003) proposed, the current sociological studies on sports aim to understand "the meaning of "ideology" and how ideologies related to gender, race, social class, and ability are connected with sports" (2). My thesis is to display how violence in sports has become culturally, socially, and even legally accepted. Such widely accepted violence not only stimulates aggression among athletes, fans, and spectators in the fields and courts but also exercises penetrating and far-reaching influence through televised sports events and pop culture and media representation on individuals' (especially males') construction of self-image and social interaction modes. In particular, violence serves as a catalyst that encourages male aggression, but also a social filter that excludes specific social groups, consolidates narrow and stereotyped social norms on gender roles and racial hierarchy, and widens social class divisions.

Sports Definition

First, why do sociologists investigate the social implications of sports? All authors from the three assigned papers decode the violence embodied in competitive sports to analyze influence on culture and society from the view of social constructions. Some may argue that there is no need to study and evaluate sports for the purpose of transforming or making them better, because they are already what they should be (Coakley, 2003:11). However, sociology has always attempted to “defatalize and denaturalize the present, demonstrating that the world could be otherwise” (*Global Dialogue*, 2011). Sociologists study sports because “they are socially significant activities..., they reinforce important ideas and beliefs in many societies, and they’ve been integrated into major spheres of social life such as the family, religion, education, the economy, politics, and the media” (Coakley, 2003:13). To this end, this essay highlights three concepts of understanding ideologies associated with sports: culture, social interaction, and social structure: “These three aspects...represent the central interconnected aspects of all social worlds” (Coakley, 2003:3). To explain, a sports team and the athletes and coaches on it form a small society, which over time develops a specific culture composed of a set of beliefs, values, and social routines that every member of the team adopts in their social interaction. Next, such social interaction form ideologies that originate from the sports team itself, and then penetrate throughout the sports field and industry, and have “potential implications for their prestige in the community, self-images and self-esteem, future relationships, opportunities in education and the job market, and their overall enjoyment of life (Coakley, 2003:2). Eventually, such social implications within a special group spread to other social groups (spectators, views of televised sports events) through media demonstration and form ideologies in a broader context of society.

Sports as Catalyst for Violence

The first aspect of analyzing competitive sports and their association with violence from the social construction perspective is by investigating how authorized sports leagues define an official competitive sport. Starting with the loose definition of sports, which were defined as “physical activities that involve challenges or competitive contests”(Coakley, 2003:7). This widely accepted definition implies that “organized sports” are composed of a group of participants who are organized and disciplined to achieve better performance so that the team can compete against opponents for victory, and sociological research focuses on the “physical culture, which includes all forms of movement and physical activities that people in particular social worlds create, sustain, and regularly include in their collective lives” (Coakley, 2003:7) and how violence in various sports have become legally and culturally accepted through the formation of rules to play the sports and compete in the courts and fields.

Another aspect regarding defining sports is to trace how mankind’s inherited violent nature, usually suppressed in civilized societies, turns out to be socially and legally approved as sports leagues and authorities formulate rules regarding what kinds of physical contact is deemed acceptable violence in sports (Delaney & Madigan, 2021:215). For example, official sports associations such as the NCAA define and legalize specific physical aggression and violent physical contact among athletes, so some forms of violent moves in play and in training, such as aggression and risky provocative behaviors have been unaddressed or even acceptable: “Mills (1859) argued that individuals should have the right to engage in risky behaviors (without

interference)” (Delaney & Madigan, 2021:215). As demonstrated in the video titled “Times When NBA Players’ Bodies Were Weaponized,” the notorious NBA player Vernon Maxwell “was always prone to getting physical and fighting with other players” (NBA Central). Thus, punishments elude athletes who violate rules of fair play and sportsmanship, or punishments were not severe enough to deter violence from recurring, so eventually repeated provocative and aggressive behaviors become a common scene (Delaney & Madigan, 2021:213-216). Furthermore, sports terminology and broadcast terms often involve military or war expressions, such as “sports is war” (Messner, Dunbar, & Hunt, 2000:388), or “sports is war minus the shooting” (Delaney & Madigan, 2021:203). This rhetoric implies the violent nature in sports competition.

What’s more, not just athletes in play, but also fans or spectators of these competitive sports, such as boxing, hockey, MMA, and American Football, see violence as a necessary part of sports: “Fans still like to see fights. Athletes that play violent sports view such risks as “part of the game” (Delaney & Madigan, 2021:215). George Orwell proclaimed, “Serious sport has nothing to do with fair play. It is bound up with hatred, jealousy, boastfulness, disregard for all rules, and sadistic pleasure in witnessing violence. In other words, it is war minus the shooting” (Delaney & Madigan, 2021:203). Numerous fights among NBA players on rival teams were recorded in videos to prove this point, as one video shows three different fistfights in the 1990s, 2000s, and 2010s respectively (Adi 2022), it indicates that players would ignore referees’ warnings and would try to provoke opponents at the expense of fouls and suspensions. As a result, violence has gradually gained not just official recognition as the authorities and media promote sensational representation of violence in sports, but violence also gains unofficial approval among coaches, athletes, and spectators, to all viewers of televised competitive sports.

Violence is involved and even encouraged throughout the process of organizing a team, training athletes to achieve better performance, and competing and defeating opponents for advantages and victory. Therefore, violence is usually exercised when athletes try to defeat their opponents with physical aggression rather than fair play. Eventually, the concepts that violence is approved and celebrated in male athletes are carried through media and pop culture representation to construct biased gender stereotypes.

Sports as Catalyst for Violence: Violence spreads outside the sports fields

The sociologists in all three papers all infer that through the formation of official rules and social norms formulated in the sports fields, violence in particular forms have become identified, legalized, approved by the authorities, and finally accepted and even encouraged inside and outside the sports fields. Once athletes are accustomed to provocative behaviors in sports, as Delaney and Madigan argue, the sports players tend to transfer such learned aggressive behaviors in sport fields to domestic abuse, and thus studies have shown that male athletes tend to exert violence in the domestic domain of homes. The authors find that some athletes “may find themselves in off-the-field forms of violence, specifically domestic violence (Delaney & Madigan, 2021: 217). In their paper, Delaney and Madigan (2021) quote Pappas et al.’s (2011) research on male athletes in major U.S. universities, in which the researchers find “a correlation between athletes who participate in violent sports with sexual aggression” (218). The authors

also quote Grange and Kerr's (2011) study that presents four kinds of motivation for aggression: play, power, anger, and thrill (Delaney & Madigan, 2021:218). Athletes with past domestic violent behaviors may have trouble controlling the final three types of motivation. Delaney and Madigan further assert that violence is not only demonstrated in athletes of rival teams, but also in spectators, "There are a number of occasions when violence occurs in the stands between rival fans. Among the variations of spectator violence are verbal assaults, disrupting play, throwing objects, physical assaults, and vandalism" (Delaney & Madigan, 2021:220). All the assigned video clips provide evidence that shows spectators engaging in aggressive behaviors with athletes on opposing teams. The video titled "Twenty Disrespectful Moments in Sport History 18 minutes" captured the highlights of the most moments disgraceful moments in all of the sports, especially the most notorious NBA brawl: Malice at the Palace, which occurred in 2014, when Indiana Pacers and the Detroit Pistons fight began on the court, and "quickly took to the stands after a spectator threw a drink at the man... pro b-ballers and fans began throwing punches and drinks at each other... led to multiple player suspensions and criminal charges for several fans" (WatchMojo). In other videos, spectators' violence is demonstrated when some NBA fans crossed the line and tossed a water bottle that nearly hit the player or called rival players names in the stands (Golden Hoops; NBA Central). Delaney and Madigan (2021) further listed more severe spectator violence incidents in the U.S. and other continents, particularly the spontaneous and deliberate soccer hooligans, who behave similarly to street gangs by looting, rioting, burning cars, and shops, and causing chaos.

Ironically, even though sports leagues have tried to curb violence and aggression by identifying unacceptable violent behaviors in sports to reduce confrontations among opposing teams and reduce injuries, such as concussions and Alzheimer's, Delaney and Madigan (2021) argue that "such efforts are often inconsistent" because charges of violent athletes are often dropped (213-218) and thus proven ineffective of combating violent behaviors. As a result, violence becomes unstoppable and is contagious like virus that quickly spread outside the courts and fields.

Violence in Sports as Social Filter: Ideologies in gender, race, ableism, and social class

As mentioned above, competitive sports and violence are indicated both inside and outside the sports fields and courts, and thus with televised sports broadcast and pop cultural representation, violence has become imprinted, widely accepted, or even celebrated in societies, and thus form ideologies such as stereotyped gender roles, racial discrimination, ableism, and widened division of social classes.

As proposed by Coakley (2003) in his reflection on sports titled "Who Plays and Who Doesn't: Contesting Place in Sports," the author points out that one detrimental effect of defining sports and formulating rules for competition is that sports become a social filter that "exclude" specific social groups, "Being in a category of people that is wholly excluded from all or some sports ... is unfair and occasionally illegal. Most cases of categorical exclusion are related to gender and sexuality, skin color and ethnicity, ability and disability, age and weight, nationality and citizenship, and other "eligibility" criteria" (10). Hence, sports widen the division among social groups and construct a hierarchy in gender, races, ableism, and social classes.

Gender Ideology

Based on all three papers, the most apparent excluding the influence of violence in competitive sports is to form a binary of gender images: “Gender ideology ... are widely used to define masculinity and femininity, identify people as male or female, evaluate forms of sexual expression, and determine the appropriate roles of men and women in society” (Coakley, 2003:14.). In competitive sports, the male-dominated authorities define who gets to play in sports and who doesn’t, thereby marginalizing and excluding specific groups, especially women (Coakley, 2003:4). Section with questions such as these: Physical violence prevails in male athletes and is officially recognized and promoted in pop culture, and thus aggression is accepted and hailed as a significant trait tied to manhood and masculinity. In contrast, female athletes are marginalized, invisible, and ignored in the official sports arena, and thus women's rights are repressed as femininity is often associated with the voiceless, frail, weak and vulnerable and subject to male aggression in domestic and social domains.

Such opposite binary views of aggressive and oppressive masculinity versus passive and oppressed femininity consolidate and fossilize rigid, narrow, and biased gender stereotypes that boys must become violent to be a man and that females are physically less inferior to men so women are projected as minor roles, ignorable, unimportant, and thus voiceless and passive in broader social contexts. For example, Coakley (2003) argues that through hailing male physical strength in sports, it is easy to draw biased gender assumptions such as “Men are physically stronger and more rational than women; therefore, they are more naturally suited to possess power and assume leadership positions in the public spheres of society” (15). It implies men’s dominance over women.

Delaney and Madigan (2021) further echo Coakley’s gender ideology and present facts to support the male-have-power ideology to explain why male athletes often exert violence on women in domestic abuse: Men demonstrate power through sexual aggression on females. That’s why male athletes are more likely to exercise aggression on women and that violence is found to be highly associated with violence in boys and male adult spectators and viewers. As shown in all assigned videos, the aggressors in the sports arena are mainly male athletes and spectators (NBA Central; WatchMojo; Adi; Golden Hoops).

In contrast, women are excluded and marginalized in sports and in other social domains. To start with, female athletes are limited in sports competitions: “Research shows that women, ...have lower rates of sport participation than do other categories of people” (Donnelly & Harvey, 2007; Eilling & Jassens, 2009; Tomlinson, 2007; Van Tuyckom et al., 2010, quoted by Coakley, 2003:10). These reasons all contribute to the fact that “many women worldwide don't see sports as appropriate activities for them to take seriously” (Coakley, 2003:10). It indicates women’s minor and vulnerable roles in sports and other social contexts.

In Messner, Dunbar & Hunt’s (2000) study on how boys learn to gain manhood through violence by watching televised sports events, the findings also support Coakley’s and Delaney and Madigan’s observations in the masculine aggression and dominance over frail and vulnerable femininity stereotypes. The authors present the “Televised Sports Manhood Formula,” which is a gender ideological narrative that is well suited to “discipline boys' bodies, minds, and

consumption choices in ways that construct a masculinity that is consistent with the entrenched interests of the sports/media/commercial complex” (Messner et al. 2000:380). Main findings are as follows: white men are the voices of authority; sports are a man’s world; Men are foregrounded in commercials; aggressive players get the prize, while nice guys finish last; get some balls and guts to win; boys will be violent boys. On the other hand, women are sexy props or prizes for men’s successful sport performances or consumption choices (Messner et al. 2000:382-392). All these findings suggest that media representation of violence in sports will lead to hierarchy and oppression of men over women.

Racial Ideology

Another violence in sports is the dominance of white male athletes over other ethnic groups. In Coakley’s reflection on how definitions and rules of sports exclude certain kinds of people, the author suggests one form of “categorical exclusion ... related to skin color and ethnicity” (Coakley, 2003:10). He also infers that black and Asian athletes face obstacles in entering certain sports fields (Coakley, 2003:12). Similarly, Messner, Dunbar, & Hunt (2000) point out that “whites are foregrounded in commercials” (385) and that “Asian American people almost never appear in commercials unless the commercial also has White people in it” (386). These phenomena are systematic patterns of white men’s dominance in all aspects of social realms.

Social Class Ideology

Social class ideologies are interrelated beliefs that explain economic success, failure, and inequalities. Coakley (2003) suggests that “The United States is a meritocracy, where deserving people become successful and where failure is the result of inability, poor choices, and a lack of motivation” (14). This ideology leads to the conclusion that power and success are earned through hard work, and thus success in sports is seen as result of smart decision making and diligence, which shape successful sports stars into idols for the public, and thus violence in sports are often dismissed due to admiration of the athletes and violence as a means of competition to achieve success. Hence, violence in sports can be tolerated, or even modeled in other social practices and social interactions.

Ableism Ideology

According to Coakley, ableist ideology is composed of interrelated ideas and beliefs to justify treating the disabled as inferior, and thus to organize social worlds and physical spaces without considering the needs of the disabled. The idea of seeing disabled people as inferior to normal people is the general perspective of ableism, that is, “attitudes, actions, and policies based on the belief that people perceived as lacking certain abilities are inferior and, therefore, incapable of full participation in mainstream activities” (Coakley, 2003:21). Therefore, when people use ableist perspectives, they unconsciously exclude and marginalize the disabled group in daily social interactions. Violence in sports, for the disabled, is shown when the physically challenged athletes cannot compete in an arena where able athletes receive most of the public attention.

In conclusion, all the sources in Module 1 suggest that violence is highly associated with sports events both in the arena and in other social fields. Playing in sports and watching sports events

as well both help shape our experience and understanding of social norms and our individual roles in society. As all the papers and videos reveal, violence is often associated with and in favor of male able athletes. Such notions are consolidated not just within the sports team, but also projected in media representation, all of which combined to shape ideologies of race, gender, and social classes. Consequently, violence is constructed through the projection of these ideologies that determine the power relations among participants in social contexts.

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On The Right Track: An Analysis of Efforts Aimed at Mitigating Juvenile Crime and Recidivism

By

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ABSTRACT.

This article investigates the current options, as well as potential avenues, for mitigating both juvenile crime and recidivism. Focusing primarily on the efforts within Santa Clara County, I examine the implementation of alternative services for youth in at-risk communities. By emphasizing the importance of alleviating youth crime and recidivism, both in the immediate community and beyond, this article works to identify the steps necessary for change.

INTRODUCTION

A common behavioral trait among many throughout society, delinquency can occur during every phase of one's life. Especially within youth and adolescents, this reality is driven largely by a habitual sense of defiance and self-righteousness. Delinquency, although a seemingly innate and ordinary trait of our individuality, has long been frowned upon by the public and strictly monitored by enforcement. In its many forms, delinquency often yields different outcomes depending on the situation and individual responsible for such behavior. Proving unjust in deciding *who* or *what* is seen as delinquent, this reality has grown to target and inflict harm on specific groups of people. A population we often tend to disregard, youth involved with the juvenile justice system have long faced inadequate care and treatment—especially in the handling of mental health related matters.

Despite having declined over the last decade, juvenile delinquency and recidivism rates continue to inflict harm within certain communities. Racial minorities, predominantly African American and Latinos, as well as youth with mental health problems, are especially likely to face complications with the juvenile justice system. Faced with a variety of societal obstacles, these specific groups of individuals have been found 'at-risk' for negative interactions with law enforcement—and consequently, exposure to the inadequate systematic handlings of delinquent youth. Recidivism, referring to the tendency of a convicted criminal to reoffend (Oxford Dictionary), proves highly dependent on the resources provided to this population, both while incarcerated and after their release.

Though understanding that one should be held responsible for their crimes, many scholars highlight the long struggle faced by the juvenile justice system in their handling of delinquent youth. Among many things, the mere lack of resources to appropriately address this population results in higher conviction and recidivism rates. A reality more commonly experienced by certain groups of youth, specifically amongst racial minorities and individuals with mental health concerns, this increased exposure to the highly flawed juvenile justice system places such

youth at an extremely disadvantaged position. The absence of necessary resources and connections within these communities, ones that work to deter and refocus potential temptations leading to delinquent behavior, forces these vulnerable individuals to navigate life's difficult moments on their own. By not addressing the discrepancies and core needs of at-risk populations, their chances of committing and being convicted for a crime significantly increase. The same has unfortunately been found true for youth already involved in the juvenile justice system, as both insufficient treatment during one's punishment period and a meager provision of continued services post-release provide virtually no support. Just one of its many consequences, such reality acts as a revolving door which continues the facilitation of convicted youth in and out of prison. Having recognized the immense defects within their system, the Santa Clara County juvenile department pioneered a shift to a more rehabilitative approach. Much discussion has applauded Santa Clara County for their efforts, delivering at-risk youth with a second chance at life. Nonetheless, with a lack of current research—both on juvenile delinquency and the efficacy of such alternative programs—minimal information and overall awareness towards this problem only contribute to their presence.

In totality, this project aims to decipher the most appropriate and beneficial measures juvenile justice systems can take to help at-risk youth—both from an initial engagement into criminal behavior, as well as from reoffending. Through my research, involving lengthy content analysis and personal interviews, I plan on identifying the specific measures and forms of support that have been proved to mitigate this problem. With a heightened sense of clarity into how juvenile justice systems can best handle and assist those in at-risk communities, my work is intended to help guide future change within these structures.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Detailing the prominence of juvenile crime and recidivism rates, particularly among individuals with mental health concerns, sufficient background information on this issue allowed for a deeper recognition of the problem. Within the examined research, common themes describing current efforts made to address youth offending and recidivism, in addition to an overview of the prominence in mental health courts, highlights the admirable curiosity and dedication of these scholars.

Existing research on recent efforts to combat both juvenile incarceration and recidivism rates focuses on alternative measures and interventions that focus on punishment through a self-growth mindset. Through an examination of recent efforts to combat both juvenile incarceration and recidivism rates, much of the discussion shared information on alternative measures that harbor more rehabilitative features. Though noted by many a lack of research on this change within the handling of delinquent youth (Correia, 2019; Heretick & Russell, 2013; Matsuda, 2019), that which has been uncovered shows an overwhelming preference towards this rehabilitative approach--opposed to that of more traditional punitive measures. Emphasizing the importance of identifying one's needs and providing assistance, especially towards that of younger offenders, many of the highlighted options incorporated a restorative and 'second chance' mindset (Correia, 2014; Edelman, 2009). Aimed towards both at-risk youth, as well as those who have already been incarcerated, these efforts work to supply such communities with the necessary resources for achieving and maintaining their well-being. Much attention and

praise have been awarded to Santa Clara County in specifics, highlighting its role in initiating change within their juvenile justice system. Implementing the country's first juvenile court solely for assisting delinquent youth with mental health problems, Santa Clara County is considered the catalyst for shifting the ideas of how to address troubled youth and/or juvenile offenders. Referred to as the Court for the Individualized Treatment of Adolescents, or CITA, its introduction embraced and focused on implementing a more rehabilitative model. A recurring topic of discussion in the limited literature provided, the recognized benefits of CITA have proved key in mitigating youth offending and recidivism rates (Behken, 2008; Heretick & Russell, 2013;) Having expanded to include a variety of opportunities, such as Victim Awareness Classes and probation programs (Do, 2006; Edelman, 2009), Santa Clara County's Juvenile Court system models a reality in which we should strive for.

Several studies prove the benefits of increasing access to mental health services in disadvantaged communities, as well as providing awareness through classes and other programs, in reducing the likelihood of committing criminal behavior. (Behken, 2008; Correia, 2014; Do, 2006; Rankin, 2019). These methods work to deter such individuals from the initial engagement into criminal behavior by supplying at-risk youth with new opportunities and an outlook on their future. Supplying at-risk youth with new opportunities and an outlook on their future, these methods work to deter such individuals from the initial engagement into criminal behavior (Behken, 2008; Rankin, 2019). A similar approach is utilized for youth already involved in the criminal justice system, focused on providing continued guidance and connections once released. While unfortunately it is common for families of delinquent youth to face difficulties finding and securing these needed services, many of these programs work specifically to link these individuals with such crucial resources. Ultimately addressing the core of potential issues, these methods have led to overall decline in juvenile delinquency (Behken, 2008; Correia, 2014; Do, 2006; Edelman, 2009). Looking to work *with* these individuals instead of *against* them, much of the recent work done to assist youth offenders strives to meet the specific needs of each juvenile. At different levels, the goals of alternative measures, like that in Santa Clara County, strive to address juvenile delinquency and/or criminal behavior in a new light. Across much of the presented research, findings indicate the benefits of restorative justice models—in that youth offenders were less likely to engage in initial criminal behavior, as well as leading to a reduction in recidivism rates (Behken, 2008; Correia, 2014; Do, 2006; Edelman, 2009; Rankin, 2019). Other, less discussed options for decreasing juvenile offense rates have also proved a new option. More specifically, organized sport and increased physical activity have shown promising results in decreasing recidivism rates (Poole, 2010). Though having seen admirable progress, there is no question that additional change is needed. When considering youth with mental health issues, the juvenile justice system simply does not have the means to adequately serve these individuals. With this commonly perceived inattention and ability to meet one's needs, "each stage in the juvenile justice process presents a decision point and an opportunity to evaluate a youth's mental health and rehabilitative potential. Although some jurisdictions have incorporated resources to assess and address the mental health of youth within the system, more must be done"(McGarvey, 2012).

Stressing the extremity of this issue, much of the literature provided ample background information on juvenile delinquency and incarceration as a whole—predominantly centered around offenders with mental health concerns. Within this discussion, the effects of

incarceration on youth highlight the flaws within traditional preventative measures. Though findings indicate a decline in youth delinquency over the years (Edelman, 2009; Rankin, 2019;) the realities of juvenile incarceration continue to disproportionately affect certain, and especially vulnerable, groups of individuals. Specifically, as racial minorities and youth with underlying mental health issues have been found more likely to engage in and commit criminal behavior, (Heretick & Russell, 2013; Rankin, 2019; Woojae, 2020;), they consequently have a higher rate of exposure to the flawed juvenile justice system. Historical attempts to deal with and mitigate youth offenders often consisted of harsh prison sentences and little-to-no guidance after their stay. A reality leading to a plethora of related problems—including increased offending and recidivism rates, as well as a higher likelihood of drug abuse—incentive to utilize more humane services began to rise (Edelman, 2009 ;Rankin, 2019). For at-risk communities, referring to both racial minorities and those with mental health issues, this reality posed more of a harm and threat to their future success. Recognizing again that those with mental illness residing in disadvantaged neighborhoods are more likely to commit crimes than their affluent peers (Behken, 2008; Woojae, 2020) these initiatives were designed to provide such youth with the opportunity for guidance and self-improvement. For juveniles who have previously been incarcerated, the toll of such punishment—and necessity for a change in the system—proves extreme. Many scholars on this topic, “identify incarceration as the sanction that may have the greatest impact on young offenders' ability to achieve psychosocial maturity”(Chung, Little, & Steinberg, 2005). They suggest the withdrawal from family, school, friends, and community life in addition to added responsibilities of learning how to navigate this new environment can lead to adjustment problems” (Matsuda, 2009 pg 19; McGarvey, 2012).

Due to the proven severity of youth offenders with mental health diagnoses, as well as the higher risk these individuals have in offending at all, lengthy analysis on mental health courts and their role in assisting this vulnerable population grew evident. Found to be a more appropriate solution, mental health courts are utilized as an alternative to incarceration for individuals with mental health issues (Behken, 2008; Heretick & Russel, 2013; Woojae, 2020). In general, “the court seeks to hold offenders accountable for bad behavior while providing them with the necessary diagnostic, therapeutic, and aftercare interventions to reduce the likelihood of recidivism” (Behnken, 2008 pg. 28). While still ensuring juveniles are held accountable for their actions, mental health courts prove to approach this ‘punishment’ in a very different manner. Among many things, they have been credited with their ability to offer a viable alternative with access to community resources, adapting to meet the specific treatment needs of each juvenile, as well as fostering new relationships between at-risk youth and larger societal agencies. (Behnken, 2008; Heretick & Russell, 2013). Though generally reserved for youth already engaged in criminal behavior, mental health courts, in conjunction with other restorative justice approaches, have shown to reduce both recidivism rates and initial offenses from occurring (Correia, 2014; Edelman, 2009; Heretick & Russell, 2013; Woojae, 2020) Dependent on cooperation from a variety of parties, including the juvenile, their family, and a team of qualified professionals, the success of mental health courts is not always guaranteed. (Heretick & Russel, 2013; Woojae, 2020). Nonetheless, recognizing the presented changes within the juvenile justice system, as well as the rise in mental health courts, more appropriate steps are being utilized to handle youth crime and recidivism rates.

I did notice what seemed to be a lack of current research on mitigating youth crime and

recidivism rates, finding it difficult to secure up-to-date information. As all but two of my sources were published over a decade ago, I question the decline in examination of this topic.

RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS

As has been made clear, juvenile offending and recidivism rates disproportionately harm certain at-risk communities, specifically racial minorities and those with mental health problems. Aiming to identify the alternative measure(s) that most efficiently work to reduce youth criminal behavior and recidivism rates, I plan on utilizing my gained knowledge to better suggest changes to other juvenile justice systems.

Utilizing a qualitative study design, I will acquire various forms of data to help deepen my understanding of this problem. A large part of my information, roughly half that I acquire, will come from secondary sources. As I work to analyze the already discussed literature of my topic, I hope to gain ample insight into the explored avenues and findings made by previous scholars. Concerned with the efforts made in Santa Clara County in specifics, an area considered to have pioneered a change within their juvenile justice system, a core theme presented within the texts indicates their use of rehabilitative measures. Through this examination of lengthy dissertations and other credible literature on juvenile delinquency and recidivism, I plan to include ample discussion on the perceived benefits of these techniques—especially when targeted towards at-risk communities. These means of content analysis will allow for a translation of my findings into descriptive statistics. By examining patterns and themes found within these secondary sources, many of my published statistics will aim to describe common themes throughout the provided discussion—such as how many times the word ‘delinquent’ was mentioned, or the rates of youth involved in rehabilitative programs. From my extensive reading and subsequent inquiry into these pieces, the highlighted importance of such rehabilitative alternatives, and overall lack of investigation into this topic, indicate the need for further research. Providing me with the means to discern the most beneficially effective means of mitigating youth delinquency and recidivism rates, analysis of this literature and the additional work done in Santa Clara County grows to be an essential component of my project.

Another part of my research, relating to the qualitative aspects of my project, will be composed and examined through primary sources. More specifically, through the engagement of face-to-face interviews, I plan to develop a better understanding of the personal experiences and thoughts of those who have been affected by the juvenile justice system. Though a quite broad term, ‘affected’, for the purposes of my study, will be used to refer to having either been personally involved, or had a direct family member who was involved, with law enforcement at its various levels. With my focus aimed at better understanding the experiences of Black youth and those with underlying mental health concerns—those of which are deemed as ‘high-risk’—the parameters of my interviews will ensure Participants of my study, limited to residents of Santa Clara County, will be selected through snowball sampling. This method, allowing me to select members of the community who I feel will provide the best information for my project (Dawson, 2023), will help to ensure we reach participants who fit our scope of interest. With my proposal focused on those under 18 years of age, select individuals and their families will be chosen based on their fitting of certain criteria, including the listed age guidelines and association with the juvenile justice system. I will reach out to local organizations with the same

focus population, in hopes of deriving my interviewees through these connections and referrals to similar groups. Through a well thought out and written letter, a brief overview of my study and its perceived benefits will hopefully secure access to the desired populations.

Interviews will be conducted in person, each expected to take around two hours to complete, and will occur in the safety of the individual's own home. Through a total of 50 interviews, each recorded and later transcribed, various open-ended questions will aim to engage participants on their perceptions of Santa Clara's juvenile justice system. This attempt at a more participant-driven interview will hopefully convey a heightened sense of security and trust among my interviewees. Allowing for what I expect to uncover a more personal perspective on this topic, the findings of my interviews will help add depth to those of our content analysis. clarity into both individualized, and larger social, patterns, findings from these interviews will uncover a more intimate perspective on this topic. Roughly 80% of the referred literature dates back nearly two decades ago, engaging in these interviews will provide for a more current insight into the influence more rehabilitative interventions have on mitigating this problem.

I am aware of my place as an outsider; therefore, I expect to encounter a variety of complications throughout the interview process. Finding subjects who are willing to talk about their personal circumstances is already difficult, and my being from outside their community only amplifies that. I hope that referrals from organizations with a similar topic can help set me in the right direction, but there is no guarantee the subjects will be open to conversation. Considering the personal nature of this topic, especially in relation to oneself or family members, difficulties engaging in these conversations is to be expected.

IMPLICATIONS & CONTRIBUTIONS TO KNOWLEDGE

As mentioned throughout this paper, much of the literature surrounding efforts to mitigate youth offending and recidivism comes from dated research. Potentially unrepresentative of current realities, my investigation plans to uncover a more up-to-date insight into juvenile delinquency, and the alternative efforts taken to reduce its presence. Furthermore, I strongly believe that my provided proposal will help spread awareness and knowledge on this topic, as well as work to improve the current measures working to mitigate juvenile delinquency and recidivism rates. Sparking what I hope to be an initiative for change within the countless juvenile's justice systems across our country, the findings of my research will highlight alternative means which prove most effective in preventing criminal behavior among predominantly African American and mentally ill youth. My results will emphasize the benefits these rehabilitation-forward methods and services have provided in combating this problem. Additionally, this proposal will help shift the general narratives and discussion surrounding youth crime and recidivism. Challenging current perceptions on how delinquent youth should be handled, I hope for my work to reframe the societal image of these individuals into a more positive light.

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