HIGHER EDUCATION THROUGH STUDENT EYES

A COLLECTION OF STUDENT ESSAYS

With contributions by

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About the Authors

Nicholas Brennan

Physics, '23
Winthrop House

Nick Brennan is a sophomore in Winthrop House from Saratoga Springs, NY. Nick concentrates in physics and is planning on a secondary in computer science. In GenEd 1039, Nick enjoyed exploring the student debt crisis through the lens of federal student loan policy, admissions testing policies on student enrollment diversity, and the role of institutions of higher education in creating and verifying knowledge. On campus, he spends much of his time working as a representative on the UC, and is also involved with the admin team working to organize the HNMUN 2021 conference. When he's not p-setting or in a UC meeting, Nick enjoys cooking, playing board games (Monopoly and Rummikub especially), and going on long walks by the Charles River.

Chukwudi Ilozue

Chemical and Physical Biology, '24

I'm a Freshman from Buffalo, New York intending to study Chemical and Physical Biology with a minor in Global Health and Health Policy with an eye on a career in medicine. I'm a student in Crimson Yard's Greenough Hall but will be studying remotely from home. I'm a member of WHRB News and ICMUN here at Harvard and am looking forward to learning and sharing more about higher education both here and abroad, especially as a Nigerian-American born in the US.

Atuganile Jimmy

Economics, '22
Currier House

Hello, My name is Atu and I am a junior from Tanzania studying Economics. I am currently living on campus in the best house ever, Currier House! On campus, I am involved with HASA, HSA, and Kendo. I enjoy reading, cooking and dancing.

Jenny Le

Undecided, '24
Canaday House

Jenny Le is a first-year student who spent her Fall semester at Harvard in the Canaday building. Although she is unsure - possibly entirely unsure - of her future career path, she is exploring her interests in the humanities field, or more specifically, her love of history and government. Before her first semester at Zoom Harvard, she engaged with the PBHA Spark Program and created an Environmental Conservation Awareness effort and plastic-waste charm bracelet market. Raising hundreds of funds for COVID-19 relief over the summer by turning plastic bags into charm bracelets, she hopes to continue public service and advocacy in her future career. During 2020, she picked up new hobbies such as baking, cooking, and crocheting, and although initially involuntary, she had a ton of fun and now bakes bread between zooms.

Hannah Liu

Economics, '23
Leverett House

Hannah Liu is a Sophomore from Shenzhen, China in Leverett House studying Economics with a secondary in Psychology. On campus (or Zoom), she spends time planning conferences for Harvard College China Forum, singing as a mezzo-soprano for Harvard College Opera Society, working with Harvard Undergraduate Capital Partners, and participating in Harvard Undergraduate Women in Business. Outside of academic work, Hannah enjoys learning languages, reading, watching k-dramas and documentaries on financial crises, avoiding exercising, sipping on bubble tea, attempting to cook, and talking endlessly about anything and everything with anyone who is willing to sit through.

Lex Michael

Economics, '22
Kirkland House

Junior in Kirkland. I'm a music producer, and tennis player from Arizona (currently living in Arkansas). Despite studying economics my long term goals are more personal projects, such as starting a record label, playing professional tennis and building a real-estate firm. Went to 10 schools and was homeless for most of my sophomore year, but I guess I got the last laugh as far as education goes. During the class, I gained an insight in the internal functions of higher education as well as an insight on the scope of external impacts. Through this new lens I can better understand my own experiences as a student as well as empathize with and understand the experiences of others within higher ed.

Christine Mui

Economics, '23
Eliot House

Hello, my name is Christine Mui, and I am a sophomore from Chicago, Illinois residing in Eliot House. I study Economics with a citation in Mandarin Chinese and would like to pursue a career in journalism. On campus, I'm involved with the Harvard Political Review, Harvard Crimson, and Flyby Blog. Within higher education, I'm interested in what parts of pandemic learning will stay when schools begin to reopen again, whether that's more digital components, a push towards student loan forgiveness, or greater student crisis support. In my free time, I love cooking and eating what I make even more.

Rukaiya Sharmi

Economics and Education Secondary, '23
Kirkland House

Rukaiya is a sophomore in Kirkland House and she is from NYC. She is currently studying economics and education. She founded a non-profit that works with homeless students to help them continue their education and eventually attend four year colleges. She hopes to learn more about higher education through this class. Rukaiya is a part of running the two Model UN conferences on campus and loves to volunteer through PBHA. She mentors 5th grade girls in Boston in Strong Woman Strong Girls. In her free time, she likes writing and cooking. She is a huge fan of anime and Blackpink so hit her up if you are interested in them too!

Ann Yang

Molecular and Cellular Biology, '22
Pforzheimer House

Hi, my name is Ann. I am a junior in Pforzheimer House studying Molecular and Cellular Biology. I am originally from Spartanburg, SC and am now living in New Jersey. My academic course load has mostly been in biology and chemistry. On-campus, I am involved with research. Prior to the transition to remote learning, I was working on a yeast genetics project in a research lab at HMS. While this project has been halted due to the ongoing pandemic, I am continuing to pursue research this semester through a computational project on the pufferfish genome. For this class, I am interested in the connection between secondary education and higher education and how the COVID-19 pandemic has shaped and continues to shape the accessibility to higher education, particularly elite higher education. I am also interested in learning about the perception of the purpose(s) of higher education from student, institutional, societal, and economic perspectives.
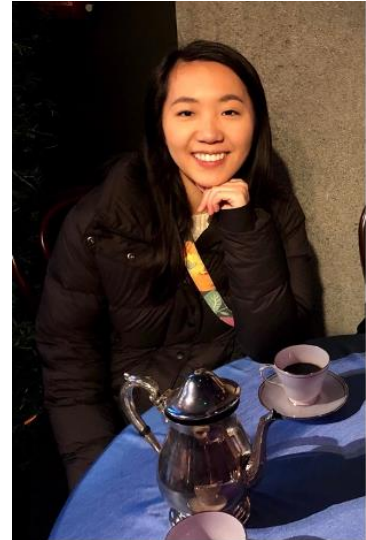
Jonathan Zhang

Social Studies, '23
Lowell House

Jonathan Zhang is a sophomore in Lowell House studying Social Studies. Born and raised in West Bloomfield, MI, he has spent a year abroad in both China and Argentina at the ages of 12 and 16, respectively, hoping to learn the top 5 most widely spoken languages in the world before the age of 25. Before coming to Harvard, he studied as a Davis Scholar at UWC-USA in Montezuma, NM for two years. On campus, he is involved in the International Relations Council and Model United Nations club, as well as the PBHA and IOP CIVICS program. When not thinking of new recipes to cook and monitoring flight prices to plan his next trip, Jonathan can be found in his room watching The Good Place and having an existential crisis. In Gened 1039, Jonathan focused on the debate surrounding universal higher education and looked to Denmark as a case study.

Nicole Zhang

Economics, '22
Pforzheimer House

Hi everyone! My name is Nicole, and I am a junior studying economics. I am from the Bay Area, CA and am currently living in Allston, MA. Entrepreneurship is my passion! I am the founder of Sylphi, a healthtech startup incubated at the Harvard Innovation Lab. On campus, I am co-captain of the Harvard Women's Club Soccer team and love staying active! As part of GENED 1039, I enjoyed exploring the representation of women in the faculties of elite higher education institutions.

Dr. Manja Klemenčič

GENED1039 Course Instructor

Manja is Lecturer on Sociology (of Higher Education), Department of Sociology and Lecturer in General Education, Program in General Education, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University. She has been teaching GENED1039 *Higher Education: Students, Institutions and Controversies* since Fall 2019. Her three staple courses offered at Harvard have repeatedly won Harvard's awards for teaching excellence. Thrice, she was voted by the Harvard Yearbook Publications one of the favorite professors by the graduating class ('19, '20 and '21). In 2020, she won John R. Marquand Award for Excellence in Advising and Support to Undergraduate Students at Harvard, and in 2021, she was a recipient of Phi Beta Kappa Alpha-Iota Prize for Excellence in Teaching at Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University. Manja's main research contribution is on students' impact on higher education through representation, service roles, campus employment, consumerism, and activism. She also researches student agency in student-centered learning and teaching, and a broad range of other higher education topics. She is Editor-in-Chief of *European Journal of Higher Education* and Co-Editor of the book series *Understanding Student Experiences of Higher Education*. She regularly acts as a consultant for international organizations and governments on higher education policies and programs.

Alen Agaronov

GENED1039 Head Teaching Fellow

Alen is a doctoral candidate in Social & Behavioral Sciences at the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, with a secondary field in Critical Media Practice through The Film Study Center. He is also a New Civics Scholar and Rose-Service Learning Fellow. Alen has been a Teaching Fellow at Harvard College since 2017 and designed and taught courses in aesthetics, anthropology, engineering, public health (and now higher education) together with the Active Learning Labs, The Institute of Politics, The Global Health Education and Learning Incubator, and Harvard Medical School. He borrows from science and technology studies, performance studies, public science, public health, program evaluation and the arts to study the performativities of public health initiatives (e.g., surveys as props, staging board meetings, acting serious). He also uses lecture-performance, video, sculpture, and other media to deconstruct the performativities of scientific expertise (e.g., webinars, science posters, science journals). Prior to Harvard, he trained in program evaluation and public science during his BS-MS studies at the CUNY School of Public Health *at* Hunter College ('12).

Foreword

Though we may think of universities and colleges as centers of learning and research, they too are the subject of teaching and burgeoning research. The course *GENED1039 Higher Education: Students, Institution, and Controversies* is offered by the Program on General Education at Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University. The course explores contemporary higher education institutions, higher education systems and markets, higher education students and student experiences, and major issues and controversies in contemporary higher education. This course is a primer into the study of higher education in the United States and internationally. It gives students an opportunity to look beyond the experiences of being a student in higher education and explore the magnitude of higher education as a social institution and as an industry, its complexities, and controversies. Students develop thinking tools to analyze higher education and its many facets, and analytical and research skills to generate new knowledge.

In Spring 2021, we have addressed five thematic areas: (1) the effects of COVID-19 pandemic on higher education, (2) students in higher education, (3) higher education institutions, higher education systems and markets, (4) academics and academic profession, and concluded with (5) the case for or against higher education. Within these thematic areas, we have covered the following modules:

1) Higher education in and after the pandemic.
2) Rising cost of higher education and student debt.
3) Elite higher education.
4) Higher education as industry, university as corporation.
5) Alternative higher education and alternatives to higher education.
6) Scandals and scoundrels in the academy.
7) Woke academy.
8) The case for/against higher education.

Each of these themes enabled students' exploration of different disciplinary perspectives, their foundational concepts, and approaches to study higher education. Each of these themes also prompted students to explore the opposing perspectives, evaluate their arguments and seek common ground. Students complemented in-class readings with independent research and with case study visits (online) to a chosen higher education institution or an industry actor.

The capstone assignment in this course has been either a set of three essays or a research project. Through the essays and research projects students generated new knowledge and offered original insights into the different aspects of higher education. In developing their essays and research projects, students have benefited from case visits to different higher education institution and higher education industry actors and informal mentorship from several individuals at Harvard and beyond.

I am immensely grateful to the following guest speakers for enhancing student learning in this course (in order of appearance):

Rakesh Khurana, Danoff Dean of Harvard College

Liviu Matei, Provost, Central European University

Andrew Perez '20, FYRE Co-Founder, Harvard Alumnus

Thomas Hollister, Vice-President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer, Harvard University

Chip Green, Partner and Co-head, Oliver Wyman's Global Education Practice

Nina Zipser, Dean for Faculty Affairs and Planning, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University

Martina Darmanin, President and **Jakub Grodecki**, Vice President, European Students' Union (ESU)

Larry Bacow, President, Harvard University

Students also benefited from two events featuring:

Kimiko Matsuda-Lawrence, playwright, interviewer, and creative director of the I, Too, Am Harvard production and **Tsega Tamene**, producer of the I, Too, Am Harvard production (joint event with *SOCIOL1130 Student Leadership and Service in Higher Education*)

Pedro Nuno Teixteira, Director of CIPES - the Center for Research in Higher Education Policies and Professor, Faculty of Economics, University of Porto; **Jung Cheol Shin**, Professor, Seoul National University; **Elizabeth Balbachevsky**, Associate Professor, Department of Political Science, University of São Paulo (USP) and Director of the Research Center on Public Policy at the University's Institute for Advanced Studies; **Goolam Mohamedbhai**, independent consultant and former Secretary-General of the Association of African Universities and former President of the International Association of Universities (joint event with the Mahindra Seminar on Universities: Past Present and Future).

I would also like to acknowledge support to GENED1039 by **Karen Galvez, Laura Hess, Kat Veach** of the Program in General Education and **David Cutler, Kim Jinah, Venkatesh Murthy, Rebeca N**e**sson** and other members of the Standing Committee on General Education; **Marlon Kuzmick, Jordan Koffman, Katie Gilligan and the team** of the Bok Center Learning Lab, and **Adam Beaver, Eleanor Finnegan and Tamara Brenner** of the Derek Bok Center for Teaching and Learning, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Harvard University, and **Alen Agaronov**, Head Teaching Fellow in the course.

The present collection of research papers reflects students' perspectives on today's changing higher education landscape and the challenges or controversies they observe in contemporary higher education. Student research papers featured in this collection are a testimony of students' genuine interest in studying and contributing to the established and emerging areas of higher education studies, and their commitment to achieving equity and excellence in higher education.

Manja Klemenčič
Cambridge, MA
10 June 2021

STUDENT ESSAYS

All or Nothing: Testing Policies and its Effects on Enrollment Diversity amid the Pandemic

Nicholas Brennan

The College Board's SAT and other college admissions examinations have long been a hallmark of the college admissions process in the United States. In the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic however, many universities have made the once unthinkable decision to roll back testing requirements for the 2021 application cycle in order to better accommodate students as they navigate the uncertainties posed by the evolving health crisis. While the SAT certainly poses barriers to students of underprivileged and underrepresented backgrounds, I argue that the institution of test-optional policies for the 2021 admissions cycle continues to disadvantage students from already underrepresented communities, albeit in a manner distinct from that of SAT-mandatory policies. We begin by examining the response of university admissions programs to the COVID-19 pandemic and the motivation for such shifts. Then, highlighting the work of Paul Sackett et al. in "The Role of Socioeconomic Status in SAT-Grade Relationships and in College Admissions Decisions", along with the reflections of Li Cai, we consider the usual function of the SAT under test-mandatory policies, and it's role in influencing enrollment diversity as a pre-application limiting factor. Finally, we consider research by Andrew Belasco etal. in "The Test-Optional Movement at America's Selective Liberal Arts Colleges: A Boon for Equity or Something Else?" to analyze the ways in which test-optional programs inhibit enrollment diversity while simultaneously bolstering application numbers, ultimately demonstrating the viability of test-blind programs as the most effective interim solution to supporting enrollment diversity.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, a multitude of universities instituted test-optional policies for the 2021 application cycle. According to U.S. News, the number of test optional schools rose from 1,070 to 1,686 in fall 2021 (Moody, 2020). Some, such as testing companies themselves, see this shift as providing increased flexibility for students (Moody, 2020), allowing prospective applicants to make the decision for themselves on whether or not to submit test scores to schools. However, given the optionality of test reporting as opposed to outright test-blind systems, others point out how test-optional practices implicate additional complexity in the admissions process. While colleges may have to focus more on other factors for students not submitting test scores, those who do choose to submit their scores may have an advantage in the application process. As Jed Applerouth, the president of Applerouth Tutoring Services notes, "'Students who do have strong scores are probably going to stand out a little more in this year'" (Moody, 2020). Thus, we find that the choice of whether or not to submit scores has the potential to be an application factor in and of itself, regardless of the reason a student may have for choosing not to provide scores. What

then, does this choice mean for students of underrepresented backgrounds? To answer this question, we will first consider how test-mandatory policies influence admission of underrepresented students.

The SAT has long been used by colleges for the purpose of gauging a student's academicpreparedness as a factor in admissions decisions. According to Sackett et al., the SAT holds significant predictive power in first-year grades that goes "beyond the predictive validity contributed by high school grades"(Sackett, 2012, p. 1006). Thus, it is no surprise that colleges have developed such a reliance on standardized examinations like the SAT in their admissions processes, making the test-optional policy shifts in response to the pandemic all the more shocking. When we examine the pre-pandemic role of the SAT under test-required policies, we find the screening-out of students already within the applicant pool on the basis of socioeconomic status to be remarkably low, thereby suggesting obstacles in the form of pre-application factors. According to Sackett et al., for a given school in a sample of 110 colleges of varying selectivity in 2006, the standard deviation in SAT scores was 18% less on average among enrolled students than among applicants (Sackett, 2012, pp. 1001, 1003) while "SES [socioeconomic status] variability was only 3% smaller among enrolled students than inthe applicant pool" (Sackett, 2012, p. 1006). While the study does not explicitly control for test-mandatory policies, the fact that the study considers SAT scores from a diverse array of colleges in 2006 makes it a good proxy for studying the implications of test requirements (especially considering that the surge in test-optional schools has been a relatively recent trend).Sackett et al. further points out that while greater emphasis on the SAT would certainly result inmore underprivileged applicants being denied admission, the data suggests that schools are not actively selecting against underprivileged students in their admissions programs and that most ofthe selection against students of lower socioeconomic status may manifest as a prefactor to the application process (Sacket, 2012, p. 1006). One explanation for this phenomenon is that the financial barrier posed by the SAT and other examinations in the form of testing fees discourage students of lower income from applying. Thus, it would appear that SAT-mandatory polities limitenrollment diversity not by selection within the admissions process, but by discouraging potential applicants altogether.

In some cases however, the SAT and standardized testing may play a role in furthering the inclusion of students of underprivileged backgrounds. In her analysis of college admissions testing amid the pandemic, Li Cai, former member of the University of California's Standardized Testing Task Force, notes that the Task Force discovered that "approximately 25% of low-income, first-generation and underrepresented minority students earned their guaranteed admission into UC because of test scores"(Cai, 2020), supporting the argument that the SAT andother examinations have the ability to bolster enrollment diversity. By whatever influence, however, when we consider test-mandatory policies, we see that the effect of the SAT on underprivileged students becomes primarily an issue of pre-application limiting or encouraging factors as opposed to admissions decisions and selection. This has major implications for the function of the SAT in admissions outcomes

and challenges the perceived agency we may ascribe to admissions officers in influencing enrollment diversity. As we will see in the case of test-optional policies, admissions officers are given greater ability to create more diverse classes,yet this opportunity falls short of its potential in practice.

Despite providing increased flexibility to students during the pandemic, test-optional policies may actually serve as a barrier to students of disadvantaged backgrounds. According toBelasco et al., test-optional programs "enrolled a lower proportion of Pell recipients and underrepresented minorities, on average, than test-requiring institutions–during all years of the panel" based on a sample of "180 selective liberal arts colleges" between 1992 and 2010 (Belasco, 2015, pp. 210, 214). At a minimum, one would expect that policies lauded for being flexible in times of crisis would be at least marginally accommodating for the most vulnerable students applying for admission. Yet, based on the impact of test-optionality prior to the pandemic, it appears unlikely that this flexibility will be of any tangible help to applicants of underrepresented communities. One potential mechanism for this trend is that test-optional policies offer privileged applicants, who can afford the tutors and preparatory courses to do well on the SAT in the first place, a way to highlight their strengths by submitting competitive scores.Meanwhile students without such opportunities, or perhaps even the necessary funds to take the SAT, are left without the possibility of having a similar competitive edge. In this way, test optionality would appear to support a system that encourages applicants with good scores to flaunt them, and those without any scores at all to remain in an amalgam of students with unfavorable scores. This mixed bag paradigm may very well discourage colleges from selecting students that don't provide scores on account of the possibility that they may be withholding them, even if they may actually have no scores to submit at all. While U.S. News points out that colleges inquiring on the reasoning for students not submitting scores are not truly test-optional and that over 500 schools have signed onto an NACAC statement committing to fair test-optional policies (Moody, 2020) that "do not penalize students for the absence of a standardized test score"("Test-optional", 2020), one cannot overlook that the advantage other students secure in submitting good test scores necessarily disadvantages students without the means to submit any scores at all in the admissions process. In support of this point, a court ruling in California stuck down test-optional policies in the UC system on account of test inaccessibility, effectively imposing a test-blind policy for all University of California schools(Moody, 2020).

What is particularly interesting to note is that institutions enforcing test-optional policies actually benefit from an increased number of applicants, thereby apparently reducing the influence of the limiting pre-factors associated with test-mandated policies. In 1992, test-optionalschools received about 150 more applications on average than their test-mandatory counterparts and in 2010, the number was roughly 550 more on average (Belasco, 2015, pp. 215). Although these findings may potentially be the result of the specific data set used (Belasco, 2015, p. 218), this trend would suggest that some limiting pre-factors to college admissions are curbed by not mandating score reports, thereby encouraging more

prospective students to submit applications. By expanding application pools, test-optional policies serve to increase the control admissions offices have in determining class composition. This places the responsibility of incoming class diversity more firmly in the hands of university admissions offices, who are equipped with greater agency by way of larger cohorts of applicants to curate qualified and diverse classes of students. To better accommodate students of underrepresented communities during the pandemic and after, colleges will require policies which both mitigate discouragement from applying and further embrace equitable consideration for the development of diverse enrollments.

Test-blind admissions policies may serve as one useful methodology to cultivate diverse enrollments. Like test-optional policies, test-blind systems may serve as a way to encourage more prospective students to apply by reducing the financial burden of preparing an application. Unlike test-optional systems, however, test-blind admissions would compare applicants on equitable criteria, as opposed to weighing the scores of some but not all applicants. While a test-blind system would involve losing the effect of guaranteed admissions outcomes described by Cai, the overall equality of consideration combined with increased applicants has the potential to foster increased enrollment diversity during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond until new testing methods are developed. As Cai states, "universities needed reliable and valid information about applicants before the pandemic and will still need it when it's over" (Cai, 2020). Indeed, the predictive power of admissions examinations may not easily be overlooked, emphasizing test-blind systems as an interim solution at best until more accessible examinations may be developed. Cai further notes that future innovations in college admissions examinations will be partially driven by the ability to reduce costs (perhaps via automation) (Cai, 2020), thereby making testing more accessible to students of underprivileged backgrounds.

The COVID-19 pandemic has led colleges and universities across the United States to a great reckoning with standardized testing, one that has highlighted the need for both equitable and inclusive policies. COVID-19, and the wave of reconsideration surrounding admissions testing that follows in its wake, has taught us that it may be the testing policies as opposed to the test itself which holds the greatest immediate implications for college diversity. Test-optional models, while flexible and providing a convenient alternative to the more rigid test-mandatory policies rendered ineffective by the pandemic, have the additional effect of comparing applicants on differing criteria, ultimately resulting in less diverse enrollments. Considering the pitfalls of test-optionality, we find that test-blind policies may serve to unify the benefits of equitable consideration offered by test-mandatory programs with the increased applicant pools fostered by test-optional policies. While the predictive power of admissions testing proves too useful to be done away with in perpetuity, test blindness may be the best interim hope that colleges have to cultivate diverse and inclusive enrollments and ensure that higher education is accessible to underrepresented communities amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

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Medical Pathways: Clearing the Way for Those Who Most Need It

Chudy Michael Ilozue

The basic fact is unassailable: the number of minority medical school matriculants does not match the minority share of the United States population. 12.3 percent of the United States is African American, 7.3 percent of medical school enrollees are. 12.5 percent of the United States is Hispanic, only 6.5 percent of medical school enrollees are (IHS Markit Ltd., 2020).

Some might call this an untapped resources medical schools are failing to recruit into medicine as much as they should. Others may argue that, while they are potential resources to the medical field, medical schools can't easily tap this resource because these students often aren'tprepared for the medical field thanks to problems beyond recruitment that are out of the reachof medical schools and the medical establishment as a whole.

And, while often criticized, those who make this point don't do so in a vacuum; there is some credibility to their statements. One former Stanford student, now a medical doctor, evenwrote an article titled "Many Black and Minority Students Aren't Properly Prepared for MedicalSchool. I Was One of Them" (Fenton, 2021). In a small 2008 study done at Stanford, underrepresented minority students showed a larger decline in medical school interest than non-minority students and that women showed a larger decline than men, independent of minority status (Barr, et al., 2008). There was no link between decline and ability entering college, at least as measured through SAT.

In a larger, College Board-sponsored, review of data at far more schools and which included the achievement of four milestones throughout college, it becomes abundantly clear that this is not a problem that starts at admissions and isn't about any one milestone in particular (Zhang, et al., 2020). The rates of fulfilling all perquisites was 23% for Asians, 16% forwhites, 13% for Hispanics and 9% for African Americans. They also found that SAT scores, with an emphasis on math, socioeconomic status and AP grades in the AP's headline science coursesall had impacts on the completion of pre-requisites. These are things that happen certainly before the medical school and sometimes even before the collegiate level.

Since the factors that affect the completion of pre-requisite courses, and thus medical school readiness, can happen long before medical schools are involved they are, arguably, not responsible for the disparity. But, assigning the blame to K-12 institutions instead of medical schools or colleges does not actually bring a solution to the problem. However, the aforementioned article by a minority physician who graduated from Stanford details where shebelieves one possible solution lies: university-run educational experiences for high-achieving students who would otherwise be disadvantaged (Fenton, 2021). One major sign of the value ofthese experiences is the investment parents with means make in them, such as through programs like John Hopkins University's Center for Talented Youth[1] which allow

talented students and difficult material from across the country to interact with each other throughout K-12 in ways their home communities may not allow. Unfortunately, even when programs like this are financially made open and accessible to students with few means, it often is not truly accessible for students culturally as students may lac a sense of belonging and feel distant from their often wealthier and whiter classmates, something which shorter programs can rarely overcome and can reduce repeat enrollment and program efficacy, obviously not something ideal for students who actually rely on this program to be able to enter these careers and not other factors like parental connections, wealth, tutoring and private education, among others.

The patchwork solutions currently used don't truly work. While expanding them more as Dr. Fenton suggested would help many students, most of these highly selective solutions can't truly scale to a national level: there's only so many summer camps Stanford and Harvard can run for low-income youth and, as they're privately funded, most of their resources will always be directed at the children of those who fund them. More publicly influenced solutions may be needed but there's little focus on high-achieving students in districts with many students failing to graduate. Especially not as much as in suburban districts or private schools with >90% graduation rates: a lack of focus which can disadvantage these high-achieving students more than they already are, even when the resources are available within their districts. While suburban districts are often able to maintain a dual-focus on standard students and high- achieving ones backed by greater parental involvement and financial resources, impoverished ones are already dual-focused on standard and under-achieving students, often constrained by resources from triple-targeting high-achieving ones.

Summer-long experiences, while influential, are not as impactful as the K-12 education itself. Novel solutions are needed to make sure high-performing and high-ability low-income students have access to the same resources as their similarly-qualified high-income peers. One idea taken up by many districts is selective public schools. However, these schools often fall short in service provision compared to their non-selective suburban peers and almost always fall short of their selective private peers. This often happens because the schools, while selective, are still in resource stressed districts. Novel ideas are needed to circumvent this, more than just allocating money to districts that will get redirected (often rightly so) to serve underachieving students. One that might work may be public-private partnerships: one in which private schools make a partial charter to take high-performing public-school students and give them the resources and connections they would miss in their public schools.

Alternatively, high-performing public schools could accept paid private students from suburban areas, allowing them to provide specialized resources for high-achieving students that even suburban districts may not be able to provide. Public and private universities could also lend their prestige, expertise and even faculty to these projects to increase their probability of success and their ability to attract private dollars. But, as long as high-

performing high-income students and high-performing low-income students are separated, schools will not be able to receive the resources, often parentally funded, that they need to serve low-income populationsand prepare them for professional careers. K-12, specifically secondary schools, undergraduate education and post-graduate education including medical school are deeply and irrevocably intertwined. There's no way to truly change one without changing the other. To prepare minority K-12 students to go into andcomplete college in a way that can result in medical school admission and graduation may require lengthening the pathway from the undergraduate level through potentially even the middle school level[2] as the data suggests collegiate intervention strategies may often have minimal impact.

A lot of the advocacy against these kinds of programs comes from a genuine place of high- and middle-income parents wanting to protect their children from competition and ensure their future. But, there's a shortage of physicians (IHS Markit Ltd., 2020). Of nurses (American Association of College's of Nursing, 2020). And globally, of healthcare workers in general (Grady, 2021). There's a shortage in many other professional fields as well, including law. There shouldn't be competition when there are more spots in the field than able players. But, as many spots as there are in the field, universities haven't done a good job of making that reality in their institutions. Every rejection letter speaks of the limited spots in their classes compared to the number of well qualified applicants. Not often do schools speak of how they plan to expand their classes (if they do at all). So, at the end of the day, as much as advocates which it wasn't, it is a zero-sum game. For every qualified low-income student that gets a spot, a qualified high-income student doesn't. And high-income parents know this and protect these pathways at all costs, even if it results in them coming across as racist in a school board meetingor in charges of NIMBYism.

So, while universities may *nominally* not be part of the problem, they're the root cause of it. By making medical, law and other professional school spots artificially scarce instead of expanding class sizes to meet the need for professionals in the future and in the present, they force more competition than needed in an already competitive field. And, whenever competition comes, those with the most resources tend to win. And thus, logically, parents don't advocate for resource allocation or sharing through public-private or suburban-urban partnerships as it, objectively, harms their own children.

And while there's been fewer available reporting on promotion in the US of minority medical professionals in what might also be seen as a zero-sum game, UK studies have found time and time again it lags (Oliver, 2020) (Iacobucci, 2020). But that doesn't matter if minority physicians can't get in the game. And that starts with medical schools committing to making sure the game isn't a zero-sum one and that there's room for everyone to share, privileged andunderprivileged.

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Endnotes

[1] Disclosure: this is a program I qualified for and took part in during elementary school.

[2] There is little data actually properly correlated for this. Some potential data collection may be asking for middle-school state standardized scores in future studies of collegiate students with interest in medicine. However, few people actually remember their middle school standardized testing scores so this may present a serious difficult in collecting such data.

Medicine ≠ Doctor: Going Beyond the 'Highest' Ed

Chudy Michael Ilozue

Medicine needs more doctors, but higher education also needs to focus on fields 'below' physicians in the medical-academic hierarchy and know when it needs to get out of the way.

MDs (Medical Doctors) are well known the flagship degrees of healthcare along with DOs (Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine), PharmDs (Doctor of Pharmacy) and DNP (Doctor of Nursing Practice). They also hold a place in academia with many serving in teaching and researching, an opportunity made easier by the low academic barrier to entry with many often not needing a PhDs or other difficult-to-obtain degrees for roles that would otherwise need one, especially if they have experience (many, however, do have such a degree through MD- PhD programs). Many also hold roles in government, on various committees and panels, in healthcare management and in corporations. With a shortage of physicians and many in non- practice careers, it becomes clear that if you get your idea of medical practice from *House* or *Grey's Anatomy* you may be a bit better served by watching *The Resident*. A lot of care is provided by non-doctors in 21st century medicine as these secondary professionals become far more capable and better trained as medicine advances.

But, while there remains a shortage of physicians, there also are not enough RNs (Registered Nurses), NPs (Nurse Practitioners), HHAs (Home Health Aides), along with other fields. And, while these fields all require education, none receive the focus that doctors get. And the shortages are not being helped at present. But these failures have different origins. And, while higher education needs to get more involved and be more accepting of some professions in academia, for some professions academia is not the correct option for solving issues.

Registered nursing schools turned away eighty thousand *qualified* applicants due to a lack of resources, most crucially faculty, especially those needing a doctoral degree (American Association of Colleges of Nursing, 2020). With the average age of faculty climbing, an impending wave of retirements will make this issue worse while programs producing doctoral and masters holding nurses are also affected by this faculty crunch, creating a death spiral. Essentially, not enough younger nurses are going into academia and preparing to be able to teach the next generation of nurses.

Nurse practitioners, on the other hand, are filling the role of doctors in many basic cases, especially as primary care becomes less lucrative to physicians (Lupkin, 2019). Even the article suggesting solutions to this dearth of physicians entering primary care quotes Elsa Pearson of Boston University as saying "one way to keep and attract primary care doctors might be to shift some tasks to health care providers who aren't doctors, such as nurse practitioners or physician assistants" (Lupkin, 2019). With most primary care doctors saying

they would not re-enter the field if they had a choice, it is unlikely their mentees will do so, especially considering the high debt load and lucrative alternative specialties. And this problem is further exacerbated by the fact 2 in 5 are near retirement (Regis College, 2017). So, while nurse practitioner levels are currently adequate, there are two critical problems: most nurse practitioners are nurses getting a master's degree. With an increasing shortage of nurses, nursepractitioner conversions may become the medical equivalent of "robbing Peter to pay Paul." And, with the aging out of both primary care physicians and nurses, the need for both nurse practitioners and nurses will increase. This means that a greater focus on getting more people to enter nursing in general and this field in particular is crucial to it becoming a viable solution to impending healthcare staffing issues.

For home health aides, it is an entirely different problem. CNBC found that the average hourly earning of a home health aide is $11.17 (Woods, 2019). But they also found that the average retail salesperson made $11.29 and restaurant cook made $12.06. It is not surprising why people are taking arguably easier jobs for less money. And, with the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services refusing to raise the amount it pays the relevant companies for a significant period of time, it is not surprising in the least that wages in this field are not rising along with wages overall. And with immigration cooling after the Trump era, the issues in this field will continue to worsen as long-time Americans often will take the opportunity to performeasier jobs.

Academia has far too often focused on increasing the number of people rising to the top of its internal ladder: regardless of whether the academic focus is on education, healthcare or any other field. But this has often come to the detriment of healthcare as a whole. For instance, at the top of the academic ladder, all Ivy League universities but Princeton offer a medical degree. Only two seem to offer a nursing bachelor's degree. While this is not a practical issue, given the small percentage of universities that are that is the Ivy League, it does speak to a larger problem: academia is often competitive, attracting people who want to play the game until they "win" with tenure. Top schools effectively declaring that nursing degrees are not worth their academic name is a symptom of the larger problem: nursing as a field does not getthe respect or academic talent it deserves in higher education. As long as that continues, therewill continue to be a shortage of academic talent in nursing faculty and thus qualified potentialnurses will be unable to start their careers.

Nurses also note that they do not have an equal path to leadership in the same way physicians do at hospitals. But one nurse notes that "nurses are still voicing the same complaints they did thirty years ago about 'not having a voice, not playing a key role in decision-making'" (Satterly, 2004, p. 130). However, he notes that it is not all about the non-nurse administrators as when nurses get into administration themselves they may repeat the same mistakes by not involving their other nurses in leadership.

One review of the literature suggests problems with nursing attrition (CHAN, et al., 2012). They found a paper out of Lebanon which said university educated nurses (as opposed tothose holding technical degrees) were more likely to leave nursing (El-Jardali, et al., 2009).

Although, the relevant paper seems to have been less confident about its findings and their generalizability than the literature review was. If the findings do, in fact, generalize, that nurseswho do not get educated at higher levels are more willing to practice nursing, that is not a gooddevelopment. If higher levels of education are pushing nurses out of practice, that says that it ispossible that the "nursing isn't good enough" for the best educated mentality may extend beyond the top schools and become something that graduates internalize. The rest of the literature review suggests non-university related factors, but it is possible higher education could work towards helping reduce graduate attrition due to these factors as these are some ofthe same factors that make up STEM and medical school attrition, albeit in this case the genderattrition is reversed.

However, it is clear that just increasing the number of students entering nurse training isnot enough. Most programs focused on this narrow goal failed for reasons such as a lack of clinical education infrastructure, not enough jobs and weak standards regulation (Bvumbwe & Mtshali, 2018). While the jobs and regulation issues have been solved in the US, theeducational infrastructure still needs to be expanded.

And, while expanding the pipeline is not the entire battle, it is a part of it. Promoting it as a career for all, male or female, support for existing auxiliaries to become nurses, elevating nurses to use their full training, better benefits, not relying on international recruitment and supporting workforce entry for nurses who leave (Drennan & Rossv, 2019). Workforce re-entryis especially crucial considering nursing is currently a disproportionately female field (about 9- to-1) and women have, in other fields, been especially vulnerable to temporary career interruptions (Pew Research Center: Social & Demographic Trends, 2013).

Another issue with retention may be in the way nurses treat each other (Satterly, 2004,pp. 129-130). Some survey respondents said, "Nurses are their own worst enemies" and "Nurses eat their young." This is not an effective way for a profession to operate and is not likely to make it an attractive profession for people looking to start in a profession.

At the end of the day, it is not about the case for or against higher education: it is about higher education knowing where to step in and where to step aside. Higher education has to intervene in nursing education and training to make sure there is a stronger supply of nurses. But it is healthcare's responsibility to retain them. And when it comes to professionals like HHAs and other "paraprofessionals" in healthcare, it is not higher education's business at all. Itis the responsibility of government and industry to pay more throughout the system for these chronically undervalued services.

Higher education cannot solve every problem, but it can solve many. And, most crucially, when nurses and other healthcare workers are accepted into academia as experts intheir own right, it becomes easier for them to affect change in their own fields through research and academic discourse: tools which many other fields have access to and have used to the tremendous benefit and improvement of their fields.

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Mental Health Challenges among International Students in Higher Education Institutions

Atuganile Jimmy

Universities and other higher education providers globally, attract a significant number of international students each year. According to the 2019 Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange, the total number of international students, 1,095,299, is a 0.05 percent increase over last year. The number of international students in the United States set an all-time high in the 2018/2019 academic year, the fourth consecutive year with more than a million international students in the country. International students provide multiple benefits to the financial and cultural health of the host institution and the country at large. According to the data from the U.S. Department of Commerce, international students contributed about $44.7 billion to the U.S. economy in 2018, which is an increase of 5.5 percent from the previous year. The economic benefit for the host country is always the primary consideration. A potential challenge for the host institution/country is the failure to acknowledge the differences between the needs of international students and domestic students. For most of international students, the adjustment to studying offshore and experiencing different culture, academic systems, people, and country rules in general can be overwhelming and contribute to unfortunate consequences for their mental health. This essay describes the mental health status of international students in institutions of higher education, unique challenges these students face and their impact on mental health, and suggestions for ways to effectively address these challenges. Given the increasing numbers of students choosing to study abroad, it is important to understand their psychological well-being while at university and find ways to better support them.

Mental health problems among international students are caused by many factors that are unique to international students. Many studies suggest that adaptation to the host culture is very stressful and difficult (Yang & Clum, 1994). Stress caused by this adaptive process is known as acculturative stress. Studying in a foreign country, international students are forced to adapt to the new culture, new people as well as a new educational and social environment. Based on the literature on mental health challenges among international students, the frequent sources/causes of mental health issues are as follows. Church (1982) reported that international students are faced with problems such as language difficulties, homesickness, adjusting to a new educational system, financial problems, adjusting to social norms and customs of the new environment, and for some students, racial discrimination (Church, 1982). Likewise, other studies indicated the following problems: academic difficulties due to the English language and the different educational system, psychological stressors due to unfamiliarity with the new rules and social norms, changes or lack of social

support system, and intrapersonal and interpersonal problems caused by the process of adjustment and acculturation (Mori 2000, Lin & Yi 1977).

In sum, the unique sources of mental health challenges encountered by international students are language barriers to academic performance and daily living, social relationships dueto different social norms, difficulties with the American educational system, loss of sense of identity, financial concerns, issues of belonging, lack of family support since they are far from home, cultural shock, no existing peer network from high school since most of them come from their home countries alone, and not being able to go home during short breaks. Financial challenges are faced by indigenous students too, but it can be greater for international students because they are not allowed to work outside the university (since they hold student visa and not a work visa). Therefore, most of them depend on campus jobs which are typically short in supplyand consequently most of them don't build relevant skills. For example, in my freshman year, I really needed to make money because I didn't come to Harvard (from Tanzania) with enough money, and I used the start-up fund that Harvard provides to buy a laptop since I didn't have oneand I needed it to study. The only job I was able to get was cleaning other students' bathrooms. Iwas able to earn some money cleaning bathrooms, but the job didn't really help me in my professional career development. If I was allowed to work off-campus, I would have found a better job to build skills relevant for my professional career. Overall, international students have to overcome their unique problems as well as those faced by domestic students.

Studies have indicated that entering into an unfamiliar environment and adjusting to the new environment requires changes, which can lead to anxiety, confusion, and depression, all symptoms of mental health problems (Lin &Yi, 1997). Moreover, international students have difficulty adjusting to the new culture, "culture shock". Furnham (1997, p. 16) describes culture shock as "individuals lacking points of reference, social norms and rules to guide their actions and understand others' behaviors" (Furnham 1997). International students then feel alienated andisolated from everyone else. I remember in my first year at Harvard, I couldn't use the subways at all. We don't have subways back home. Everything was so confusing and overwhelming. I needed to go shopping Downtown Boston, but I just couldn't do it by myself. Also, the dining food tasted so bad. It still does. I had to learn and find ways to cook familiar food, Tanzanian food. Additionally, understanding other people's accents and people understanding my accent was a problem. This problem gave me depression in my first year. I was scared to voice my thoughts in class, scared to ask questions, and to just socialize in general. I was by myself mostof the times. It really affected my mental health. Now I am more comfortable, and I can talk topeople with different accents and communicate nicely.

Given these challenges, what can higher institutions do to support international students' mental health? Higher Education institutions need to acknowledge the differences between international students' need and domestic students' need and be willing to fund resources that specifically target international students in the institution. The most common

approach that most universities follow is to provide mental health services, counselling and wellbeing services to students with mental health issues. However, researchers have found that international students underutilize mental health services (Mesidor & Sly, 2014). That is, many international students who might benefit from mental health services do not use them. This underutilization can be explained by the stigma, cultural mistrust and negative attitudes that international students have towards mental health services. One study conducted an interview with mental health services staff that reflect on how they had responded to students with mental health difficulty, one staff reflects, "The students were extremely reluctant to use the University Counselling Services—sawit as having a stigma attached as well as the very public entrance to the office" (Greta Bradley, 2000). Bradley (2000) finds that students from Europe used the services the most; students from Africa and the Caribbean Islands the least; students from Asia and Middle East fell in the middle category of international students. Most international students are more likely to rely on religion to deal with mental health issues than seek mental health services (Mesidor & Sly, 2014). This is mainly due to the perceived stigma associated with mental health treatment and negative attitudes towards counseling and seeking mental health services. Universities can focus on creative ways to eliminate this stigma among international students. By organizing discussion panels where some international students that got help from mental health services encourage other international students to fight the stigma and utilize the services when needed. More students will have the courage and confidence to actually seek the services. Seeing a fellow student from almost similar background seek mental health services pave a way for others to also seek mental health services whenever they are struggling.

In her study, Bradley (2000) asked students to consider what would assist staff to provide more effective support to students with mental health needs and the key response was that funding needed to be released by the institution to train academic staff appropriately in order to know how best to approach students with mental health needs. International students suggested that staff needed some form of cultural awareness training because they were likely to misread the signs and get things wrong and also thought that supervisors should spend more time with them and get to know them better. These trainings will create a deeper understanding of cultural differences between staff and international students which may provide insights into communication styles, preferred styles of teaching and learning and counselling (Bradley, 2000).

Higher Education Institutions can also encourage creation and funding of student organizations. Positive and timely social support that student organizations provide helps students to adapt more effectively and provides a powerful coping resource for people experiencing stressful life changes, including stress of adjusting to an unfamiliar culture and environment. Student organizations enable international students to find friends that form long- life bonds, mingle with students from similar cultural backgrounds (example both Kenyans and Tanzanians speak Swahili), and talk about school life in general which can be a

good way to reduce stress and have good mental health. Most of my current close friends are from the student organizations mixers. Additionally, higher education institutions can support international students' mental health by providing support groups, international students office that can handle all the legal and travelling challenges, financial support, and equal opportunities for internships on campus and off-campus. Higher ed institutions can assist low-income international students from poor countries by informing them of all available resources and help from financial aid office. This awareness will encourage low-income international students to seek financial help when needed and consequently decrease stress and worries caused by financial problems.

In conclusion, all students, irrespective of their background, require advise, support and guidance. However, due to unique challenges that international students experience, challenges of acculturation and adjustment to new academic study and everyday life in another country, there is an urgent need to ensure that adequate resources are provided for the support of all international students' mental health in higher education institutions.

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First-Generation Low-Income Students, Not So Similar Afterall

Jenny Le

Growing up in a household with two Vietnam War refugee parents, neither of which obtained higher than a high school degree, I found myself looking up to my oldest brother for guidance in dealing with domestic hardships and prioritizing my ability to pursue a public education. I modeled my behavior after my brother who is 9 years older than me, James, in helping my parents with their medical bills, living expenses, and employment paperwork, but most consistently in my schoolwork because our living conditions pushed us to work for a better life for our family. I now wonder why I am so proud of my James's accomplishments and aspire to be like him but hesitated to pursue community college as he had. I realized that other avenues — such as public and private 4-year institutions — were not as feasible for him as they were for me when he was my age; although my brother and I are both first-generation low-income students, I had my degree-holding brother to shape my academic future, while he had no one to guide himself. How does one's position in their family prepare them for college, if at all? I arguethat F.G.L.I. students like James — who have no older siblings to model after — pursue community college because of cost barriers, necessitated proximity to home and family care, andthe vision that community college can achieve dreams, while F.G.L.I. students who have more social capital and college resources (such as their older siblings) have accessibility to more college paths.

To consider what makes community college the right option for F.G.L.I. students, it is crucial to consider the vast differences in college information accessibility across different F.G.L.I. students; I noticed these disparities within my own family. While I was able to attain college application fee waivers, leave my home, and pursue a degree at any type of college immediately after graduating high school, my brother endured different limitations, despite both being F.G.L.I. students. While speaking with James about his experiences applying to college, herecalled his family being a key proponent in his locality. "I had three younger siblings I had to pick up from the bus stop every day and parents who could not speak English or file taxes on their own," remarked James, sharing why he "just could not leave." James noted that his dreams of working in anesthesiology were not destroyed, merely redirected due to his lack of college familiarity. James noted that he considered community college to be the only available option forhim because his "family needed him," he could not afford to pay for any college applications andhad no one in the family to provide him with the information he needed to possibly attend elsewhere. "I had to figure it all out on my own. I knew I had to go into medicine, and I made a plan for myself by myself. I went to community college for two years and cared for you all [my family], transferred to SUNY Stony Brook School of Nursing and lived at home and cared for you all during that, and then worked as a

registered nurse for four years and still lived at home totake care of you all. You're [Jenny] in college now, and I can go." With this, my brother left to attend CRNA (Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetics) School at UAlabama to pursue his delayed dream of working in anesthesiology.

In a 2006 qualitative study on the role of peer groups in applying and paying for college,William G. Tierney found that peers can replace parents in helping students develop college paths and financial aid resources in "Fictive Kin and Social Capital." Citing a 1961 national survey of more than 569,000 students called the Coleman Report, Tierney noted "the determining factors that led to academic success and college opportunity were access to adequateinformation, access to adequate preparation, mentoring, and good counseling," (Tierney, pg. 1688), all of which are characteristics of social capital — or human resources that provide us with social networks, and consequently, cultural and economic capital as well. Since F.G.L.I. students often cannot use their parents as social capital due to their unfamiliarity with higher education, Tierney identifies that peers, similar to older siblings, can serve as fictive kin to cultivate "a culture of success" (Tierney, pg. 1688). Tierney developed his observations from a 3-year study of financial aid and access in nine low-income high schools in Los Angeles, California, focusing on the relationships between peer counselors and their students. He noted that peer counselors are "by no means all the best students," (Tierney, pg. 1694) but merely college-bound students with information to share based on their own experiences. After his observations, he concluded what makes for effective peer counselors as social capital is the ability to provide students a place for formal and informal guidance, such as suggesting financial aid resources via scholarship books, websites, and existing files, every day. The consistency of support provided by peers is what makes for fictive kin in times when real kin are unable to provide effective information. James operated similar to a peer counselor: he was not the best student, but he applied to CRNA school while I applied to undergraduate school and offered me advice on how to access large scholarships and fill out financial aid correctly, activities which henavigated by himself at my age.

A qualitative research study on twenty low-income Chicana Public School Seniors by Miguel Ceja identified a range in college application information across F.G.L.I. students. Although all participants felt that their parents' unfamiliarity with the college application process implicated a lack of familiarity for themselves, students with older siblings who attended collegefound that their older siblings served as social capital in their college decisions. While older children like James faced the college application process having no guidance from familiar sources, he acted as a protective agent in my college decision process because he had "the capacity and commitment to transmit directly international resources and opportunities" (Stanton-Salazar, p. 6) such as travel plans to study away and available local scholarship. This dynamic was captivated by the qualitative interviews of the Chicana students, where some notedfeeling that "their older siblings, who had already experienced the college choices process, had accomplished the task of exposing their parents to the

process of making decisions about college." (96) Similar to James, Chicana students who did not have protective agent siblings to guide them had to address the issues of educating themselves on the college admissions process while educating their parents, often through a language barrier. Consequently, Ceja gathered that "being the first to go to college...made the college choice process a much greater feat" (101) thanfor those with college-going siblings. College-bound older siblings served to "envision college opportunities as an attainable reality" (97), "establish college-going expectation" (97), and "act as role models." (98) While Chicana students expressed solidarity with James in navigating college alone, many characterized similar experiences to mine as a student whose path to collegewas paved by my brother, demonstrating that two F.G.L.I. students may be from the same family,but have entirely different college decision experiences.

When addressing the question of college locality in the college decision process, Holly Henderson found the decision toward college mobility is directly related to the collective narratives and spatial relationships associated with students' homes in her book "Non University Higher Education" (2020). One's decision to move away to college, as she notes, corresponds to one's sense of belonging to their home and the communities attached to that home, creating unequal opportunities amongst F.G.L.I. students who inherently come from different communities in different homes with different living situations. Henderson cites Massey (2005), who argues that "one person's mobility...depends on the immobility of others." For example, James and I have different senses of belongings to our communities despite growing up in the same home; while applying to college in 2011, James's sense of belonging was tied to being hisparents' tax filer, health care proxy, and Vietnamese translator, and to being a babysitter for his little siblings while I do not inherit the same responsibilities and was able to study away.

According to a 2018 study by the Public Policy Institute of California, an associates degree tendsto quadruple the average salary of the average American with a high school degree, and because F.G.L.I. families tend not to have parents who pursue college, first-generation students encounterthe college decision process with likely immobile household members (PPIC, 2018). Thus, Henderson's argument that "privilege and mobility become synonymous" (42) in the context of college locality further perpetuates the disparity in responsibilities and hardships across F.G.L.I. students. Finally, college locality, cited by Henderson, is tied into the 'neighborhood effect' (Bedasso, 2019) which describes how college decision making corresponds to peer role modeling, and the access to peer role models across F.G.L.I. students are inconsistent as well, as seen by the absence of a role model for James and James's position as a role model to me.

In a qualitative interview study of F.G.L.I. students at UMass Boston and Massachusetts Community College, findings by John A. Drew indicated that the access to career planning and college mapping greatly contrasted across the students, regardless of all being first-generation and low-income. Drew found that three out of the four community college students interviewed described inconsistent guidance counselor meetings with

minimal encouragement in "superficial and vague terms" (83). One community college attendee responded "Nah, we didn't go too deep into it" when asked about non-transactional services offered by their guidance counselor and another community college attendee noted that she applied to a program for financial assistance without knowing it was a six-week program (83). This pattern of inconsistent engagement and miscommunication between guidance counselors and F.G.L.I. students that choose to go to community college mirrors James's statement of "feeling lost and alone in the process without any support." In contrast, F.G.L.I. students involved in college access programs "more frequentlycited meetings with guidance counselors...and provided rich descriptions of these interactions" (86), ultimately choosing to attend UMass Boston. Although I did not utilize college preparatory programs, James acted as my social capital in ensuring that I pursued the most economically feasible route to higher education, and although it was Harvard for me, for him it was a community college, given his conditions of locality and unequal college preparation. Thus, F.G.L.I. visions are often shaped by those who mentor them, dividing college paths based on mentorship access. Since James did not have frequent mentorship, he similarly enrolled in community college, envisioning a future in medicine and a present at home with his family.

Based on my observations thus far as a Harvard first-year student, universities tend to group all first-generation, low-income students under a singular umbrella term: F.G.L.I. But, despite falling under a specific income threshold or having parents without degrees, we find thatour experiences do not necessarily align: some have parents who speak English while some do not. Some had access to college preparation programs while some did not. Some are only-children while some have siblings. No two F.G.L.I. students have the same opportunities toward higher education, even if those two students are brother and sister. When considering theissues of cost-barriers, college locality, and future visions of oneself, approaches to these questions and what social capital aids these approaches determine whether or not community college is the right path to take. Although James served a role model to me, my choice not to attend community college resulted in our different positions as F.G.L.I. students. Thus, F.G.L.I.students are not so similar after all.

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Crescendo to Success: An Op-Ed on the Music Student Crisis

Hannah Liu

Imagine Pierre Cox, a Senior in high school on the cusp of graduation preparing to enter a university that will, hopefully, deliver him a fruitful career to follow. Unlike his peers who are still exploring their interests and potential future career paths, Pierre has it figured out. As a passionate opera singer devoted to advancing his craft and carrying on the traditions of the classical performing arts, Pierre is determined to enter the field of classical music and become a professional opera singer after college. With his passionate commitment in mind, Pierre faces two distinct paths in higher education that may lead him to starkly different professional landscapes post-college: a music conservatory or a liberal arts university with a strong music department.

Seemingly a trivial matter of campus environment, sense of community, and general preference – factors for choosing a university that Pierre's peers may contemplate – the decision for Pierre, as a music student, weighs far heavier. A long-established trend that has only been exacerbated by the explosion of the Coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19) in late 2019, the classical music industry's gradual decline and loss of competition against popular music and entertainment are evident. As with any student regardless of academic focus, Pierre should desire a future that yields returns that, at the very least, equate his costs; but this basic demand in the field of classical music is becoming a challenge. In the 2019 to 2020 academic year alone, tuition costs for a music degree – including fees, supplies, room, board, and other expenses – averaged at $53,722[1]. Given that Pierre should want to be a successful opera singer, costs such as booking recital venues, hiring accompanists, studying under the tutelage of established artists, and long- term expenditure related to constant practicing are all added to the already-hefty price tag of a basic music education. However, the returns of an opera career do not seem to offset the tremendous costs. First, the occupational availability for opera singers is low and consistently declining, especially with the added pressure from the pandemic. In fact, unemployment for performing artists grew from 1.7% in January 2020 to 27.4% in May 2020[2]. Even for the lucky few who have found employment, income remains an unstable paid-per-performance rate of anywhere from $400 to $1,000[3], unless they are skilled enough to have signed with a renowned and well-endowed opera house, such as the Metropolitan Opera in New York City. In general, salaries remain low unless one rises to be a well-known opera star, for which spots are especially limited due to both the level of expertise required and the decline in popularity of opera as a genre.

Assuming that Pierre is fully and wholeheartedly committed to opera with an all-in-or- nothing attitude, he may choose to attend a music conservatory, where he would see greater chances of success on the stage but confront the risks of tying his entire career to the

volatile stability of the classical performing arts industry. Compared to typical higher education institutions, conservatories are rigorously focused on skill, technique, and performance. For instance, at the New England Conservatory of Music (NEC), students take 70% to 80% of courses in music and a few general education requirements to fulfill their Bachelor of Music degree[4]. While having more opportunities to sharpen their performance and technical skills play a definite role in landing conservatory musicians jobs post-graduation, another undoubted factor is the professional network that is readily available in the immersive environment. For musicians, feeling a sense of belonging to a particular community of practice, finding moral support, and building professional relationships are crucial pieces in the search for a place in a seemingly dwindling and competitive industry[5]. At conservatories, large-scale alumni programs seek to leverage its vast pool of post-graduates already in the industry to help bring in current students. For instance, the NEC Mentor Program and Entrepreneurial Musicianship Program pairstudents and alumni for intimate one-on-one mentorship. Its Regional Club Leaders program asks alumni to facilitate student professional networking. Additionally, the NEC Student Intern Program provides students a number of opportunities to intern with alumni and gain professionalexperience before they officially step foot into the industry[6].

However, excellent professional and technical preparation from conservatories still do not combat the challenges of low occupational availability. Having graduated from conservatory and completed a few years of apprenticeship to bolster his professional experience, suppose that Pierre has now successfully begun his professional career as a well-paid chorus member at the Metropolitan Opera House. Normally, Pierre would be paid a base salary of $62,000 – with additional compensation if he has a costume change or works overtime, among other nuanced situations – for working twelve hours a day and six days a week during a busy season[7]. That would last until the COVID-19 pandemic, when the Metropolitan Opera House would announce a 16% pay cut, fourfold increase in healthcare deductibles, and reduced pension contributions forits 80 chorus members[8]. Being tied to an opera house, Pierre's re-employment would depend on the revival of the house while struggling in the meantime to pay his bills in a year-long financial drought.

Alternatively, Pierre could pursue a solo career post-graduation; evidently, opera stars like French tenor Roberto Alagna and American soprano Renée Fleming – who attract huge audiences for the opera house – naturally garner greater attention, protection, and pay from the house, earning $15,000 to $20,000 for a single performance[9]. However, such fame in the opera world is extremely rare. In reality, as of 2008 – prior to the stock market crash and the pandemic – less than 2% of conservatory graduates with masters degrees make a sustainable living solely on performance income. Additionally, an average salary of $32,500 usually only holds for a five-year career[10]. Ultimately, a conservatory education would leave Pierre largely dependent on the survival of the industry with no alternative route. Additionally, not everyone can be Pavarotti.

Daunted by the prospects of a fully immersive career path from going to conservatory, Pierre may choose to enter a liberal arts institution instead, such as Harvard or Yale University, with a prominent music department. While liberal arts institutions will undoubtedly offer Pierre alternative paths and back-up plans to pursue music, its ability to bring Pierre to the top of the classical music industry diminishes drastically compared to a conservatory. For instance, Harvard's undergraduate music program is academic rather than pre-professional. In fact, the department has limited performance faculty and does not offer regular instrumental or vocal lessons, factors that are crucial for prospective professional musicians[11]. In this sense, Pierre's liberal arts degree and academic training would better set him up as an executive or critic in the classical music industry rather than a performer. However, assuming that Pierre is still committed to singing opera on stage, his education may bring additional burdens. First, missing out on extensive networks of established alumni in the performing field and his own performance experience, Pierre would see his chances of employment with a major opera house fall significantly as compared to his conservatory peers[12]. To remedy his lack of performance training, Pierre must then seek external support from out-of-school lessons, which quickly becomes financial burdens in addition to the expensive and ever-rising four-year tuition. That said, Pierre's liberal arts degree offers him paths on which he may bring his passion for music into fields that have more stable and traditional market environments. For instance, Pierre could choose to study music congruently with a subject in the medical field in order to prepare for entry into musical therapy. While still an emerging field that requires further scientific research, support, and development, music therapy services larger populations of consumers than performance; namely, the work can be applied to neurorehabilitation, early childhood, drug and alcohol rehabilitation, juvenile detention, general wellness, pregnancy and childbirth, as well as autism[13]. Additionally, unlike a solo career with a low pay-per-performance rate, music therapists can collect income in more expansive ways, especially those who choose to engage in private practice. The primary way by which therapists charge is typically through direct service time. That said, to supplement income, therapists in private practice are able to charge additional fees for medical assessments, consultations, or offer treatment programs, such as group sessions and music lessons[14]. Ultimately, while music therapy remains a niche field in medicine, Pierre may find in it more stability and predictability – both in consumer landscape and financial prospects – than pure performance.

In reality, the reasoning behind the need for such a discussion on the music student crisis falls back on the current extreme difficulty in employment and financial security when pursuing classical music as a career. This extreme difficulty then draws from the fact that current societal expectations are undoubtedly placing greater attention, care, and support on STEM fields rather than the arts and humanities. This ultimately means that students like Pierre must feel extreme dependence and passion for music, or a committed will to carry on the age-old traditions of the classical performing arts, in order to brave the obstacles and pursue an education that leads them onto the path for pure music and performance.

Alternatively, if Pierre is wary of the prospects of pure performance, his best interest might be to devise a backup plan through a liberal arts environment. In recent years, more well-endowed and resourceful institutions have also recognized the difficulty in music students' decisions and have sought to create accommodating solutions. In 2005, Harvard University announced its dual-degree program with the NEC, and in 2016, its program with the Berklee College of Music. These options that fall between the strictly-musical conservatory and the strictly-academic liberal arts institution offer music students an even wider range of possibilities in choosing their future career. Ultimately, in current societal climates that, unfortunately, do not favor a career in classical music, students in higher educationpursuing such a path must carefully assess their commitment and choose a path that both parallels their passion and offers a fitting number of alternative options.

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Ensuring an Encore: Where Does Higher Music Learning Go from Here?

Hannah Liu

Unlike in previous centuries when the world's shiniest celebrities were Paganini and Liszt, today's world presents the classical music industry with shifted prospects; namely, pivoted demands, shrinking positions, and other aspects including a pandemic make the industry increasingly vulnerable. With drastically different social expectations, many classical musicians—both professional and prospective—must look for alternative paths or side-careers apart from pure performance to sustain a living. In this new and changing environment, challenging questions arise of how education institutions could and should adapt to better support its students and future leaders in the field.

It is clearer than ever that classical music education—contributing to the supply side of the industry—must evolve and modernize in a modernized world. To do so, institutions must realize that the traditional formula of lessons and practice equating success no longer proves to be always true. More knowledge—sometimes that outside of music—is needed to augment a balanced educational and professional career in music. Additionally, while shifted demands towards popular music presents a threat to the classical field, it also demonstrates that the selling point of interest remains with innovation, something that the classical industry comparatively lacks.

Classical music comes from a long history of traditions spanning multiple centuries. This means that the field has also preserved a traditional method and standard for educating future musicians. As the initiator of classical music in the western canon, Europe's music education system continues to demonstrate highly conservative attitudes[1]. In Italy, for instance, classical music is generally solely taught in conservatories, where its students aim for a career in music and rarely access traditional college education. Outside of a conservatory, opportunities to professionally learn music are rare. Traditionally, like its name, seeking to conserve and protect traditions, Italian conservatories tended to draw a dichotomy between the craft and scholarly aspects of classical music. This means that before the late 20th century—when conservatories started to gradually grow the emphasis on history, philosophy, and other humanistic scholarly subjects related to music—music students focused almost solely on practice and technical skills that would make them well-seasoned performers. In practice, this focus is also pursued in a routine manner, one that may overly respect tradition but lack innovation. For over a hundred years, the method has always largely been pushing students through the same technical training—a certain number of years of harmony writing, orchestration, and counterpoint—and few electives. Additionally, as Italian conservatories rely on state endorsements and rest on a controlled

system of standardized hiring and curriculum design nationwide, Italian conservatories lack the autonomy and flexibility to alter or modernize methodology as they— professional musicians in the field—see fit.

While the preservation of history and tradition is undoubtedly crucial and positive, the issue occurs when the traditional methodology outputs musicians who no longer entirely fit the demands of the modern market. Today, music heavily bends towards contemporary styles— primarily, popular music—for the majority of young consumers. While classical music seeks to preserve, performing renditions of pieces that have been created by past musicians, contemporary music is comparatively built more so upon the model of creation and innovation. The business model of the contemporary music industry inherently relies on artists writing or producing their own work and sound; for instance, it is rarely the case that an established pop musician holds an entire concert to perform the songs of other artists. Alongside the rapid pace atwhich new pop music is being written and released, today's pop music industry is also open to leveraging technology in transforming older concepts and producing new sounds. Evidently, thistransformation, creation, and innovation is what a vast majority of young music consumers, who make up a large portion of the market, are attracted to. On the other side, the consumer space for classical music—or, fanbase, in the contemporary context—shrinks; naturally, it would take an audience with high levels of music understanding and knowledge to differentiate musicians' renditions of the same work, making it hard for individual classical musicians to emerge as top artists. Thus, when higher classical music learning drives its students through years of technical practice to replicate and reproduce, it is simultaneously driving them away from modern demands and consumer groups, which adds greater pressure to their already prominent employment struggles.

That said, classical music's apparent lack of innovation stems not from an inability to create, but more so from an obscure identity in the modern context that deters innovation. Since classical music seeks to preserve, it tends to shine a brighter spotlight on its existing and somewhat capped reservoir of music from Beethoven, Mozart, and other artists that are commonly and broadly defined as "classical musicians". This definition of classical music fosters a hard-to-challenge standard of good classical music and musicians, where good classicalcomposers are commonly considered those who have written and passed, and good classical musicians today are those who have the best technique and produce the best sound when recreating these existing pieces. Given this, while contemporary music seems to be infinitely outputting brand-new melodies, one could ask where classical music seems to be going. The answer lies in whether, in the modern context, classical music identifies by its structure and orchestration styles or by its existing pieces and composers. By the latter, classical music is and will continue to plateau, as it will rarely accept new additions to its built reservoir. However, by the former, today's musicians working with the classical style are able to transform, create, and innovate, thereby modernizing and extending the classical music field. Perhaps then, education institutions should take on this identity, focusing more

on innovative composing and an educational environment that invites creation than replication, so as to ensure both the longevity of the field as well as the maximization of students' potential.

Compared to Europe and its century-old history with music, the United States and its implementation of music higher education in the liberal arts creates new prospects with new challenges. According to musicologist Manfred Bukofzer, "The recognition of music as an academic subject in the undergraduate college is a rather recent and, we should add, specifically American achievement...Only in this country has the idea of a general music education been combined with the comprehensive school system of an industrial and democratic society[2]." That said, the fact that most music programs in liberal arts curricula are by nature more academic thanperformance-focused demonstrates the struggles of the other extreme, which lacks industry practicality. Inherently, a more academic music education prepares students for careers as music critics, journalists, and other non-performance careers. However, at its core, the industry needs people to provide the music. Therefore, at this opposite extreme, the industry is equally incomplete, imbalanced, and vulnerable. A solution, which is gradually being implemented, is dual-degree programs, which allow students to spend almost equal parts of effort and focus on both the academic and technical sides. However, while these programs can facilitate a more balanced educational career and industry, because of the heavy logistics, only resourceful andwell-reputed institutions can afford the time, effort, and funds for these programs.

In addition to altering curricula and programs to educate music students that match new industry environments, institutions have the ability to improve the industry itself by ensuring thequality of its agents. One consistently present issue in the industry is that far too many musicians are reaching for a limited number of available positions. While falling demand causing availablepositions to shrink is one root cause of the phenomenon, another lies in institutions without proper resources and support outputting unprepared music students, resulting in excess supply. Similar to the building of extravagant infrastructure— for instance, lazy rivers and climbing walls—to attract applicants, many institutions build music and art programs to emphasize a well-rounded curriculum, plentiful opportunities, and overall prestige. However, without high-level faculty and alumni networks as support, these institutions often fail to graduate skilled and well- prepared musicians into the industry. The result is excess supply, increased competition, and a heightened unemployment issue. Evidently, the problem is not that too many institutions are interested in music education. Instead, it is the lack of proper preparation and quality insurance atevery university that wants to build a program catering to music. The solution for this issue varies. If the institution is located where art is seen as important—for instance, Europe—there should be government support and funding, ensuring proper staffing and resources; regarding this, we return back to the fact that European, and especially Italian, conservatories are state endorsed and controlled, allowing them standardized financial and administrative aid. In the United States, however, large funding cuts during the COVID-19

pandemic to provide space for STEM fields demonstrates a lack of attention towards the arts. In this case, it might instead be more practical to simply set a standard and system for determining programs that truly add value to the industry and society.

At the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the classical music community's struggles were evident. However, even more evident is the fact that the trend of classical music's increasing vulnerability did not begin with the pandemic, but rather much earlier and as a result from numerous different factors, only augmented and exacerbated by the pandemic's limitations. With increased competition from contemporary music, more challenges lay ahead in terms of bringing attention back to the field, at the same time ensuring that students attain both sufficient practical skills and academic knowledge for a successful career. Ultimately, it will be the way that higher music learning transforms, innovates, and modernizes that will revitalize the industry and its participants.

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Mobility or Suppression - Higher Education's Role in Lower Income Communities

Lex Michael

Introduction

Higher education's role in American culture and economy has been long debated and controversial because it's difficult to pinpoint and define its function. The reason is that higher education doesn't just serve one function, it serves a spectrum of functions. The way these functions interact with society is what makes arguing a case for or against it so difficult; becauseit's not a matter of higher education exclusively being beneficial or detrimental to society, but whether the pros outweigh the cons and for which portions of society they do so. The way that higher education functions in society as a whole is different from how it interacts with specific demographics. For this reason, this essay will argue that while higher education is a critical aspect of our society in America, it should be reformed to be more accessible to specifically those in lower income communities. That is, it will argue for that higher education should exist, but that many improvements need to be made both within higher education and throughout society in order for it to be a truly equitable or beneficial practice.

Framework of Thinking

It's impossible to talk about the merits of higher education in America without first taking into account primary education. It is common knowledge that schools in inner city and urban environments have long suffered from under-funding and low resources, and that environmental challenges affect students' performance in school. Ward (2006) speaks to these issues articulating how lacking school systems in urban environments are also paired with impoverished home environments which directly affect the psyche and long-term academic performance of students in these conditions and that, for many students in these environments, their parents lack college experience or education, further disadvantaging them in the market forhigher education. Thus, social stratification continues to be an issue when it comes to admittanceand preparedness of students for college. Higher-education, then, can be considered a reflection of the inequalities that exist outside of its sphere. Over time, through programs such as Title 1[1], some improvements have been made to educational systems, but they do not nearly make up forthe starkly contrasted preparedness of students. Bastedo and Jaquette (2011) point out that whilelow-SES (socioeconomic status) students have made gains over time in overall levels of academic performance, test scores, and preparedness, non low-SES students and high-SES students have made even more gains in

the same time period, causing low-SES students' goal ofgetting into highly selective schools just as , if not more, difficult to accomplish.

Of course, the case for higher education extends past primary education and into the college playing field itself. First generation low income (FGLI) students face many discouraging odds even after being accepted into college. In a report by the Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, Engle and Tito (2008) found that "Across all institution types,low-income, first-generation students were nearly four times more likely – 26 to 7 percent – to leave higher education after the first year than students who had neither of these risk factors". These references show that, when considering the role of higher education, one must acknowledge that there are a scope of influences on performance that go beyond test scores and GPAs. There are distinct cultural and socioeconomic factors that affect the function of higher edin many communities.

An Analysis on Higher Ed's Functions

Having acknowledged the difficulties facing particular students when engaging with higher education, we can now analyze whether the positives and negatives of the many functions that higher education serve. The first we will examine is the transmission of knowledge. Education and the pursuit of knowledge, driven by passion, is a worthy cause for the continuation of higher education. It is in human nature to find, research, and discover new information and pass it alongfor posterity and development. To discontinue this would be incredibly detrimental to America (or any society). However, this is only one of the functions of higher education. Another functionis the far more economic process through which higher education 'filters' students into the workforce. Naturally, due to the nature of education discussed in the framework, this presents a lopsided economy of opportunities in the workforce and labor market. Education is a double edged sword, and a platform for both attaining greater social mobility and preventing it. But within the framework detailed, we find that, logically, it's impossible for an admission process tobe completely equitable if the student pool itself is created inequitably. Thus, even if a college admission board had a completely balanced and fair way of measuring the aptitude of students, the gap in aptitude caused by the imbalance of primary schooling levels would distort the results.

The final function is the aspect of social development that occurs within higher education. In college, students learn to socialize, network, and interact with various situations, beliefs and life events. This 'experience' aspect, as we'll call it, is very different for low income students than other students. The unfortunate reality is that, for many FGLI students, socializing cannot be a priority. FGLI students are not only attending college for personal educational pursuits but to escape the funnel of low-achievement perpetuated by a resulting low income. Notice that national economy and socioeconomic status is segmented[2], almost rigidly, by level of education.These connects evidence that higher education is a piece of a large systemic issue, and therefore not experienced the same by all of its participants.

Conversations within the class have pointed out that the external pressures placed on low- income students often interfere with their ability to engage with the full extent of the college environment and limit the scope of their experience to strictly professional goals rather than personal. In addition, financial aspects put an incredible pressure on low-income students to perform or can affect their ability to focus on classes *because* they know they have to do well tojustify the cost they are incurring on themselves or their parents/families.

What My Experience Tells Me

At the risk of being too subjective, I will momentarily speak to my own experiences as a black first-generation low income student attending Harvard. As a high school student, college (let alone Harvard), seemed like a distant goal, and rarified amongst my people. Even before being accepted into college, the need, and struggles to qualify for, higher education were playinga crucial role in my life and decision making. Because of this, my high school life was directly affected by the way higher education interacts with my socioeconomic placement. I *had* to be focused on school in a way many others were not, and I *had* to prioritize things differently than the white contingent of my school district(s) and most likely the average non low-SES student. This was exacerbated by my goals to enter the Ivy League. Therefore, I have a very jumbled view of higher education - it simultaneously provided me with an opportunity to escape the circumstances I grew up in and do better for future generations while also helping hold the bar over which many of my people could never make it over. Therefore, I strongly believe in the value of higher education while also being acutely aware of its many shortcomings as a national,and global, function.

Conclusion

Currently, higher education is a resource needed by many but available to few - stratified in purpose by many socioeconomic factors. From what I've gathered within this class, the role of education is such a mixed bag of factors that it's almost impossible to label it either good or evil,but it has proven to have a large potential for good. Many factors, both internal and external, have profound effects on the equity of education; thus the goal of future research or actions should likely be less on whether education should or shouldn't exist and more so on how to makeit as ideal as possible for all parties, in particular the students and educators. When I was youngerand considering my options for higher education, I had a lot of influences and factors that were directly attached to my socioeconomic status, so I can personally attest to many of the issues andideas written about in this paper. However, I believe that education is a way of empowering and constructing a more ideal society. Thus, my argument is in support of higher education in the hopes that it will grow in its equitability and accessibility and eventually be an asset to all and not a few.

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Endnotes

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What Role Do Campus Communications Play in Enforcing Social Stigma Around COVID-19?

Christine Mui

From losing their job to experiencing ridicule from peers, individuals who have tested positive for COVID-19 may encounter yet another side-effect of the virus long after recovery: social stigma. Some people may assume that individuals who contracted the virus were being irresponsible and not following public health guidelines. This stereotype is more commonly directed towards young adults and college students, characterized as largely responsible for the second wave of COVID-19. Indeed, stories about outbreaks following students taking spring break trips and attending parties amidst the pandemic have been featured prominently in the news. In reaction, public officials and university administrators alike have been quick to condemn the behavior of students involved in such incidents, blaming them for attempting to ruin the semester for everybody and selfishly spreading COVID-19 to older, more vulnerable populations. Using language that reflects the poor choices of some upon the entire student body, the channels of campus communication promote these negative stereotypes with a shame-driven and shared punishment approach, which can fuel further non-transparency and mental health challenges.

Colleges began laying the groundwork to redirect the sole blame of future campus COVID-19 outbreaks onto students during their preparations for the 2020 fall semester. In their communications to students returning to campus during this time period, administrators firmly emphasized collective adherence to new behavioral guidelines, using terminology that implied students who flouted rules were betraying the campus community. Harvard University named its agreement the "residential community compact" and imparted responsibility on all students to uphold its outlined public health directives and maintain the university's status as a safe haven during the global health emergency. As reported by Cobb (2020), the compact also reiterated the importance of cultivating "strong communication skills and empathy for others" while on campus (p. 3). Other colleges across the nation, like Northwestern University, followed suit by reminding students of their personal responsibility for actions that may impact the health of the greater campus community ("Prepare to Return," 2020). These social contracts require students to sign and promise not to party, have overnight guests, and gather in large groups, often attaching strict penalties for those who violate the rules. While these agreements were and still are undoubtedly a necessary precautionary measure, they helped create the notion that it is students' responsibility as much as it is administrators' to monitor and "police" the behavior of others on campus.

Despite being actively encouraged by the leadership of several universities, the new model of student-on-student policing of peers for COVID-19 violations has been rightfully

critcriticized for building an environment of coercion and shame. Rice University has students serveas judges on its COVID Community Court, investigating low-level COVID-19-related violationsand determining punishments (Anderson, 2020). Other universities took a less extreme but still pressuring approach, with New York University telling its students to report non-compliant students to higher-ups (Closson, 2020). At Santa Clara University, a student took the matter into their own hands, creating an Instagram account to expose student parties publicly (De La Fuente,2021). The expectation for students to surveil one another carries real risks to the interpersonal dynamics of student life. Students are forced to contemplate choices of "snitching" on their friends, and at its worst, the system allows students to misuse it by reporting others based on non-COVID-related personal reasons. Cornell professor Karen Levy and doctoral student LaurenKilgour recently wrote in a New York Times op-ed that competition, broken hearts, roommate disagreements, revenge, and other daily aggravations are all possible misuses of a student-led policing system (Levy & Kilgour, 2020). Beyond the room it allows for abuses, the peer-policingsystem transforms campuses into a place of paranoia and mistrust, a sharp contrast from the pre-pandemic portrayal of the college campus as a social place for questioning, experimentation,and risk-taking.

Communications from administrators in response to students who do violate COVID-19 restrictions also promote mistrust on campus with language that shames students for a lack of personal responsibility in front of the community. Following a large student gathering at Syracuse University, J. Michael Haynie, the college's vice chancellor for strategic initiatives andinnovation, wrote in a statement, "Last night, a large group of first-year students selfishly jeopardized the very thing that so many of you claim to want from Syracuse University—that is, a chance at a residential college experience," (Haynie, 2020, p. 1). The statement was titled "LastNight's Selfish and Reckless Behavior" and concludes by telling students that the world is watching and expects them to fail. The statement displaces the blame onto students without acknowledging any fault on the university's part for possibly not providing adequate public-health messaging to divert students from risk-taking behavior. In fact, the statement entirely assumes that the university has done a sufficient job in communicating the risks to students: "Make no mistake, there was not a single student who gathered on the Quad last night who did not know and understand that it was wrong to do so," Haynie, 2020, p. 1). The statementleaves no room to consider if the official guidelines lacked clarity or where there might still be confusion and uncertainty around what is or isn't acceptable. On the flip side, universities have not taken much initiative to reward students for good behavior and rule compliance. Instead, when an overwhelming majority of students were following proper COVID-19 protocol at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, associate vice chancellor for student affairs Jonathan Sauls said, "Overwhelmingly, we've seen people doing what they're supposed to do.

Unfortunately, 90% compliance is not good enough," (Hudson, 2020, p. 3). However, a study published in Nature modeling the control of the COVID-19 pandemic implied that a

90% compliance rate is effective at controlling the virus within 13 to 14 weeks (Chang et al., 2002, p.2). Discrepancies aside, university communications seem to be setting a knowingly unrealistic standard for students to meet, while alleviating leadership from their role in ensuring compliance to said standards. Although there is not much scientific literature specifically on the effectiveness of a punishment and shame-based approach to controlling COVID-19 on college campuses, studies show that shame has been counterproductive to past public health efforts. A study published by the National Center for Biotechnology Information explores how shame negatively impacts attempts to combat and treat HIV (Hutchinson & Rageshri, 2017). It outlines five distinctive effects of the stigma from HIV-related shame: preventing complete disclosure of all relevant facts to a clinician, disincentivizing individuals from seeking care, averting regular testing at clinics, warding off people from disclosing their health status to partners, and psychologically "imprisoning" those with the condition by making their experience more negative (Hutchinson &Rageshri, 2017, p. 1). Although COVID-19 is a drastically different public health problem, manyof these effects are applicable to the current pandemic, specifically the use of shame to fuel a pattern of dishonesty or omission of information out of fear of criticism. In the event of a campus outbreak in particular, contact tracers rely on students to truthfully disclose all relevant information, even if it is potentially stigmatizing — and the threat of facing punishment or peer backlash hinders that. The research article "Contact Tracing: A Memory Task With Consequences for Public Health" affirms that fear of punitive consequences and shame over one's rule-breaking are reasons why contact-tracing witnesses may be reluctant to report the fullpicture behind a positive case (Garry et al., 2020). The authors also emphasize that it is crucial for contact tracers to "reassure the witness that any information provided will not be used to penalize, embarrass, or otherwise implicate anyone" (Garry et al., 2020, p. 6). Their argument provides support for the implementation of an alternative empathy-based approach instead.

However, that alternative would require universities to admit that students are not solely responsible for keeping campuses virus-free and recognize that administrators have failed to create a campus environment that values transparency during the pandemic. Few colleges, if any, have taken steps to provide impunity for students who are honest in disclosing information in these contact-tracing interviews. Leadership at universities, like Harvard, cannot simply tell students that "every one of us in the residential community enters into a shared obligation and commitment" and then later remove themselves from the equation when the campus situation goes south.

Without shifting their blame-heavy approach to a more empathetic one, colleges exacerbate the mental health challenges students already face from COVID-19's social stigma. Before accounting for the added blame imparted on college students by the media, those experiencing the social stigma of testing positive have reported severe mental health consequences. A study explored the social stigma health care workers experienced from their own colleagues after testing positive through a series of case studies (Grover et al.,

2020). One case study was of a health care worker who her boss blamed for putting her peers at work and experienced avoidance from others after completing her quarantine, leading to further worseningof her mental health and contemplation of self-harm (Grover et al., 2020, p. 2). The case blatantly shows that not only do mental health impacts of social stigma persist long after recovery, but also that the stigma is exacerbated in environments where authority figures use shame as a "punishment" of sorts. On campus, the emphasis on shared responsibility from early-on communications compounds the possible mental health effects of stigma with community rejection. Students need to be set up to succeed at keeping their campus safe, not toldthat the world expects them to fail, as Syracuse University did, or threatened by losing their home on campus. Youth cannot be held to high expectations without being provided the adequate support to meet those expectations and the ability to communicate honestly with their peers and administrators if they feel themselves falling short. Using a shame-driven response goes against the premise of what a college environment is supposed to be: a place to learn.

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How Can Elite College Admissions Account for Social Mobility?

Christine Mui

Following a college application season like no other, the impacts of the pandemic are clearly reflected in this year's acceptance rates for the Ivy League and elite universities, which plummeted to record lows. Columbia College only accepted 3.7 percent of applicants (Sentner,2021), a sharp drop from 6.1 percent the previous year, while Harvard College's rate went from 4.9 to 3.4 percent (Anderson, 2021). These numbers make sense in a context where the pandemicpushed schools to adopt test-optional policies, increasing the number of applicants. The change comes as no surprise since prior research on the policies also indicated application increases afterimplementation (Syverson et al., 2018). In alignment with such research, that upward trend was especially true for private, large, and more selective universities, which saw the largest rise, 20.2 percent, in Common App applications (Erde, 2021). The increasing selectiveness of elite universities faced backlash from many who view it as going against social mobility and diversity.Those themes are shared among the mission statements of elite universities, with Harvard's statement emphasizing how the diversity of ideas in the classroom and experiences in the campus living environment combine to create "conditions for social transformation" (Mission, Vision, & History). Using CollegeNET's social mobility index, CUNY Baruch College tops the list for "how effectively four-year colleges and universities enroll students from low-income backgrounds and graduate them into good-paying jobs" (CollegeNET, 2020). Harvard, on the other hand, ranks 1264th in the nation, joining the rest of the Ivy League colleges in placing below the 1,000th place. However, Baruch College still possesses a moderately competitive acceptance rate of 39.3 percent and required standardized tests prior to the pandemic (PrepScholar). The next few schools that ranked extremely high on the social mobility index generally also met both of those criteria. It raises the question: what changes would promote social mobility in the admissions process for elite universities, if not test-optional policies?

For the few income students offered the opportunity, elite university education has distinct benefits. These colleges have generous aid packages that fully cover each family's demonstrated financial need. Additionally, attending an elite college is generally a trusted and reliable pathway for social mobility. A report from the National Bureau of Economic Researchfound that "rates of bottom-to-top quintile mobility are highest at certain mid-tier public universities" (Chetty et al., 2017, p. 2). The colleges that possessed the highest social mobility index, City University of New York and California State colleges, were also cited as examples ofhaving the highest bottom-to-top quintile mobility in the report (Chetty et al., 2017, p. 26). For elite universities, however, there exists a disparity with the incredibly low percentage of low-income students despite the education itself proving an effective

mechanism for social mobility. Isaac Lozano, a newly admitted Stanford student, called his acceptance a reminder of the "exponentially wider inequality ingrained in the college admissions process" in an op-ed published in The San Diego Union-Tribune (Lozano, 2021). He considered himself "one of the lucky few," as part of the 3 percent of the elite university students from working-class backgrounds. Although Ivy League universities were found to have the highest rates of mobility from the bottom quintile to the top one percent (Chetty et al., 2017), the barrier lies within admission to these colleges, not when students are already attending. Children with parents in the top 1 percent of the income distribution were 77 times more likely to attend an Ivy League college compared to those with parents in the bottom income quintile (2017), according to the report. By anonymously linking the tax returns with attendance records of approximately 30 million students, the researchers indicate that low and high-income students who attend the "Ivy plus" universities – including Duke, M.I.T., Stanford, and the University and Chicago with the Ivy League – have similar income distributions post-college: 75th percentile and 80th percentile respectively (2017). It seems then that the key to real social mobility within elite higher education is easing entry. In fact, the researchers write that those mid-tier public universities, which have exhibited high levels of social mobility, "combine moderate success rates with high levels of access."

The admission rate statistics released by elite universities this year have sparked a national conversation on admitting more students as one way of expanding access. David L. Kirp, a professor of the graduate school at the University of California, Berkeley, raised the argument in a New York Times op-ed that Stanford and other top-ranked colleges should open new campuses within the U.S. (Kirp, 2021). Citing the statistics from the National Bureau of Economic Research report, Kirp outlines the idea of a "Harvard-San Diego" as not only a "simple solution" to ensuring diversity of class and race but also a win-win for all parties involved. "Professors with glittering resumes would jump at the opportunity to teach there," he argues, adding that "cities would perform handstands to land such a school" (2021). Kirp also addresses a common counterargument to accepting more students, explaining that admissions standards would not have to be lowered since "the best and brightest would queue for admission"(2021). He points out that an international precedent for these schools already exists in the form of Yale's Singapore campus. For students at Yale-NUS, though, diversity of socioeconomic background has been a concern as well. The school only decided this cycle to make the shift to being need-aware for international students, which make up one-quarter of the students (Xie, 2020). A student's story for the campus newspaper explains how the "meritocracy trap" outlined by Yale Law Professor Daniel Markovitz is at play even in Singapore (Linder, 2020). Like their New Haven counterparts, Yale-NUS students benefit from the same system where the wealthy provide their children with the same education and thus lifestyle they received. The student, Harrison Linder, observed that his peers "nearly invariably come from the upper echelons of our countries, affording us far superior education to the average student in any country in the world" (Linder, 2020). It raises the question of if adding domestic campuses, as Kirp proposed,

would simply allow for more high-income students to be admitted. After all, there is no shortage of applicants, so these campuses would likely still be highly selective. The acceptance rate for the Yale-NUS Class of 2024 was 6 percent (Xie, 2020), compared to Yale's 6.54 percent (Wei, 2020), and past years of data show the two rates consistently paralleled one another.

Albeit on a smaller scale than described by Kirp, some of the Ivy League colleges have already ventured into efforts to extend their admissions. From 2017 to 2020, Yale University has gradually expanded its class size, resulting in a cumulative 15 percent increase in its undergraduate enrollment (Peart, 2020). Although Yale does not specify the income demographics of students admitted, in the four years since 2017, the university has increased the number accepted through the Questbridge National College Match program and qualifying for $0 parent contribution from 52 (842 Early, 2017) to 72 students (Davidson, 2021). It is unclear whether the increased partnership would have happened anyway without the expansion of the class size. After a small expansion of 28 additional students in 2005, Princeton has announced its "plans to welcome a larger first-year class in fall of 2022" (Aronson, 2019). The university did not specify how big of an expansion it is anticipating, but the first expansion, which was recommended in 2000, intended to increase the size of its student body over time by about 11 percent, from 4,700 to 5,200 (Quinones, 2005). As of this year, Princeton has exceeded that goal, with an undergraduate enrollment of 5,267 students (Facts & Figures). It is important to note that over the course of that expansion, the number of applications has more than doubled, from 16,516 in 2005 (Quinones, 2005) to 37,601 in 2021 (Office, 2021), so the 11 percent class size increase may very well not make a dent in the 228 percent applicant increase.

In both Princeton and Yale's cases, it seems as though beyond accepting more students, there were no additional considerations made specifically through expanding the class size to increase socioeconomic diversity. Instead, the universities focused on promoting social mobility through outside partnerships. All the Ivy League universities, with the exception of Harvard and Cornell, are college partners with Questbridge, a nonprofit program aimed at helping students from low-income backgrounds learn about and apply to top colleges. The Ivy League is also members of The American Talent Initiative, an alliance of colleges and universities dedicated to expanding opportunity and access for low- and moderate-income students. Still, these partnerships rely on students to be made aware of their existence. Approximately one in four high-achieving, low-income students applied to college without any outside advising from parents, teachers, or other mentors (Glynn, 2017), according to a report from the Jack Kent Cooke Foundation. These colleges could draw inspiration from Amherst College, which has "matched low-income prospective applicants with current students from similar backgrounds" since 2006 (Glynn, 2017, p. 21). The students act as mentors to help applicants identify and apply to selective universities. Whatever individualized approach they take, elite universities have an obligation to take

initiative within the admissions process and ensure low-income students are not lost as applications inevitably continue to surge in the coming years.

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Classism Behind the Undermatching Theory

Rukaiya Sharmi

As a student who attended a selective high school in NYC, which consisted of incredibly smart, minority, low-income students but also incredibly smart, wealthy, and white students, there is quite a clear difference between the colleges both groups of students attend. On average, the white students at my school attended selective private schools, while minority and low- income students attended nearby schools in the city. Additionally, there is quite a difference between the way the admissions counselors at the school treated minority students from the white students. For example, I was dissuaded from applying to the Ivy Leagues because my counselor told me that there was "no chance" for me considering my credentials, whereas my white peers didn't experience the same sort of counseling. I still applied just in case there may be a small chance and was subsequently accepted early to Harvard. This brings up the concern of the number of students that were actually dissuaded by their teachers, counselors, and advisors when they might have been accepted to a selective school. How many students had misconceptions about applying to selective schools, thinking it's not for them, and subsequently never applied? The theory of undermatching is exactly this— highly qualified, minority, low- income students end up attending schools they are overqualified for, and thus, not reaching their full potential. However, this theory is based on the assumption that these students would be better off attending highly selective, elite schools rather than state schools or other schools. This theory, which seems like a theory advocating for low-income students on the surface, actually reinforces the classism present in higher education in general. It is also "pernicious in its not-so- subtle disparagement of the non-elite institutions that serve significant numbers of low-income African-American and Latino students," and not to mention, women's colleges (McGuire, 2018).Attending a highly selective school may not be the best choice for all low-income or minoritystudents and attending a less selective school should not be considered a blockage for studentsreaching their full potential. There are multiple flaws with the theory, as it fails to consider thestudents' current situations that lead them to go to a less selective school, it helps perpetuate racist stereotypes, and lastly, it further enforces the idea that name-brand universities are betterthan other schools. As a student attending an "elite" institution myself, I believe that transforming the classist theories based around prestigious schools is long overdue.

Most supporters of the undermatching theory claim that elite schools tend to have more funding, are better able to support low-income students and can help them climb the social mobility ladder. There is data to show that attending a more selective college leads to more financial security in the future, as Michael Tiboris explains in his paper *What's Wrong With Undermatching?*: "At the level of personal welfare, graduation from a more selective

institution is correlated with higher pay, lower unemployment rates, and greater access to insurance and pensions upon graduation" (Tiboris, 2014). For those who attend colleges they are overqualified for, they have "less favorable post-college outcomes, as compared with outcomes for comparablestudents attending a match college, including lower earnings and lower likelihood of employment" (Ovink et al., 2016). However, while both of these trends may be true, they fail to take into account the current financial, social, and academic decisions students have to make when deciding on a college and instead focus on their future success. For many students, it is notpossible for them to think that far into the future because they have problems that need to be addressed in the current. The theory assumes that, regardless of what the student is facing, the best choice for them is a highly prestigious, name-brand university.

Speaking as a low-income, minority student, the culture shock of attending an elite university like Harvard is huge. For the first time, I was able to see how much difference wealth can make in one's life: people would buy Canada Goose just to fit in or some students would be able to afford laundry service. In fact, people could tell there was a difference in wealth betweenmy freshman year roommate and me, simply due to the number of things we had. Her side of theroom was packed and decorated to the nines while my side was bare. Sometimes, it was the first thing people commented on when they walked into the room. Academically, I have been struggling to catch up as well. My writing is considered sub-par compared to many other students, which is especially evident as a history concentrator, and I constantly have a hard time in my classes while my peers think the content is not difficult. My imposter syndrome, therefore,is intense and I constantly feel like I don't belong. Lastly, my family's problems keep following me around, even on campus, and interfere with my ability to focus purely on academics. I don't have the luxury to live in my own bubble on campus, since my parents are immigrants and have only some understanding of English— I need to help them deal with their problems over Facetime in the privacy of my dorm room regardless of whether or not I have a paper due that evening. While coming to Harvard certainly has opened so many doors for me, I am currently facing a very difficult time helping my family, keeping up academically, and fitting into social norms. I genuinely think I wouldn't have the same struggles if I attended a less selective school and was able to achieve a better school-life balance. This is only my personal experience, but it goes to show that every student is different and to assume that a student would succeed only because they attend an elite university regardless of their other life circumstances, is ignorant of the whole picture.

But even when considering students' current situations, there is still a belief that studentsundermatch. For example, Tiboris brings up in his paper an interesting ethical perspective that undermatching is not a bad thing for the student if it's done autonomously. Meaning, if the student chooses to go to a less selective college even after they can financially afford to go to a more selective school through scholarships and financial aid, undermatching should not be considered negatively. However, he also suggests that the choice to go to a less selective schoolis not autonomous if the student decides that they can't attend due to

financial reasons— in this case, they are forced into that choice (Tiboris, 2014). While an interesting perspective, it pushes the narrative that the student is settling for "less" by attending a less prestigious school. Both of these takes on the issue (the regular undermatching theory and the autonomous undermatching theory) ignore the actual problem here: the fact that certain schools are supposedly much better than others.

Why is it that the more selective schools often consist of largely wealthy, white students? Why is it that they are considered prestigious because they churn out elite students, most of who are already wealthy and "elite" to begin with? Why is it that the graduates from these institutions are considered to be the students who reached their full potential and are put on a pedestal while graduates from other schools are considered sub-par? These biases of the type of people that attend elite schools are what's inherently wrong with the undermatching theory. It keeps perpetuating the myth that Ivy Leagues and other elite universities somehow produce a different type of people than other schools do, regardless of actual wealth increases, job success, and social mobility movements. Additionally, it subtly perpetuates racism by disparaging state schools and community colleges as lesser schools, which are historically attended by low- income, minority individuals; it further highlights that students from these schools are not "elite."

Another interesting insight that attempts to shed light on the reality of undermatching is in the paper *Running in Place: Low-Income Students and the Dynamics of Higher Education Stratification*. It describes that wealthier students have remained on top in college admissions to this day even when low-income families have been making strides because they too are making strides in higher education and also have wealth to back them up "Although, low-income students have shown strong gains in the indicators that lead to admission to highly selective schools and therefore might be seen as undermatching higher-income students have simultaneously made even stronger gains on these same indicators. Thus, enrollment in selective colleges has become a horse race in which wealthier students always remain at the head of the pack" (Bastedo and Jaquette, 2011). However, once again I disagree with this framework because once again it pushes the narrative that these schools are not going to churn out elite students the same way the prestigious universities will.

Overall, there is a long way to go before the actual problems behind the undermatching theory are addressed. The theory is a surface-level look that subtly shows the cracks in our current higher education system— it deflects blame to the students for not reaching their full potential by attending a less selective university but fails to address the problem that there is such huge discrimination regarding name-brand universities and other unis. It's not simply "a recruitment issue" that schools have to address but a bias issue our society needs to address (Jump, 2019). As Patricia McGuire, the President of Trinity Washington University says, we should focus on making universities and the higher education landscape more equal for students rather than changing students' behaviors: "The mainstream focus of higher education must remain on enlarging the total pipeline of learning opportunities across all institutions to meet the increasingly sophisticated intellectual

demands of the future national and global society. We need all institutions, not just a privileged few, to be doing even more to reach this goal" (McGuire, 2018).

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The Case for Higher Education: Societal, Economic, and Individual Benefits

Ann Yang

One of the most common markers of the progress of a society is its educational attainment. Education occupies a unique position in society, with varying purposes and levels of accessibility across the world. Globally, education has been on the rise over the past two centuries. In addition to gains in primary and secondary education, the rate of higher education enrollment has also seen an overall increase over the past century. In the US, higher education occupies a unique position that is central to society, economy, and individuals. Many people do not pursue higher education, although trends toward an increasingly knowledge-based society have made higher education a popular expectation, particularly for the middle and upper classes. Given that higher education is not mandatory which many do not pursue, the value and purpose of higher education comes into question. Critics oppose the concept of "college for all" as doubts over the benefits of a college education come to light and the cost of college increases. In fact, some argue that the current model of higher education is in a state of decline and should be eliminated. However, given its central role in society, higher education is in a highly visible position which places it under close scrutiny and sensationalizes its imperfections. Thus, advocates for higher education argue that the perceived decline of higher education is exaggerated and ill-founded. Overall, in their current state, colleges, universities, and other higher education institutions still remain dominant social institutions which societies, economies, and individuals largely benefit from.

Critics of higher education argue that higher education is glorified and overrated. Many education scholars claim that colleges are not fulfilling their intended purposes and thus brand themselves as providing more benefits than they actually are. These claims often have an underlying assumption that education is primarily academic and centered around the transfer of knowledge and skills. For example, studies find that students make minimal gains in critical thinking skills after entering college and call for reform of the current higher education system based on this finding (Roksa & Arum, 2011). In fact, some critics claim higher education functions primarily as a signaling mechanism of students' employability rather than their actual skill level, thus acting as a selection filter (Caplan, 2019). This problem is exacerbated at elite universities, where the institutions themselves funnel students into high-paying careers they are not passionate about. Thus, elite institutions fail to educate students and provide them with the skills and knowledge to seek out their true passions (Deresiewicz, 2014).

Higher education has multiple, competing purposes. Arguments that make the case against higher education engage in an overly-simplified analysis of higher education. They

inaccurately assume that higher education has only a handful of purposes such as knowledge transmission, improving critical thinking skills, and finding one's passions. Furthermore, these arguments generalize these purposes to all colleges, which in reality serve distinct purposes, or to all students who may attend college for different reasons. Furthermore, they imply that the signaling function of higher education, while significant, is not the "true" purpose of college. Thus, colleges are failing to fulfill their "true" purposes and in need of reform. However, such implications trivialize the economic benefits of higher education. Given how tangible economic status is in our daily lives, the economic benefits of higher education are significant. Thus, it is not accurate to claim that higher education is overrated for fulfilling or even prioritizing this function when a large portion of our lives are dependent on our economic well-being.

Higher education confers benefits at multiple levels, the broadest being the societal level. Traditionally, scholars, institutions, and students have acknowledged the role of higher education in contributing to society through sustaining the democratic process. In this view, higher education is a public good that enhances society: "through increased knowledge, innovation, and economic development, universities act as catalysts to promote a healthier, civically minded, law-abiding populace that sustains stable democratic systems both locally and abroad" (Benson & Boyd, 2018, p. 2). Colleges themselves actively promote this function: "The mission of Harvard College is to educate the citizens and citizen-leaders for our society." When surveyed or interviewed, students also frequently responded that they believed one purpose of college is to broaden one's perspectives (Trinidad et al., 2021). Thus, the mechanism higher education institutions employ to sustain democratic systems is creating an educated population. In contrast to the primarily academic definition that critics of higher education assign to education, the definition of education in this view encompasses communication, tolerance, and conflict- resolution. Furthermore, many higher education institutions are centers of knowledge production and research. The case against higher education often overlooks this function, focusing instead of the role of knowledge transmission and teaching in higher education. Research is not a primary function at all higher education institutions, but knowledge and research produced by colleges and universities benefits society as a whole, not just those in the institution (Brint, 2018). For example, researchers developed the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine using work done by academic scientists at the University of Texas at Austin (Kramer, 2020).

The economy benefits from higher education and thus indirectly benefits society as well. The global rise of trends such as scientization, democratization, expansion of human rights, and rise of development planning have produced increasingly knowledge-based economies. In these societies, higher education is an investment in human capital that produces graduates who can fill a variety of positions in contrast with education for specific occupations, which was more popular in previous decades (Schofer & Meyer, 2005). On a societal level, this allows for unlimited progress as there is an unlimited supply of human capital. Additionally, higher education institutions themselves are active participants and

stakeholders in the economy. As societies and economies become increasingly knowledge-based, the entrepreneurial university is increasingly involved in technological innovation and encouraged and regulated by governments (Etzkowitz, 2003; Etzkowitz et al., 2000).

Most directly, higher education benefits individuals. College graduates have significant economic, social, and personal benefits from their college education. College graduates have higher earnings compared to those with only a high school degree (Caplan, 2019). In addition to being an investment in human capital for society, higher education is also an investment in human capital for the individual. Higher education provides graduates with more opportunities, flexibility, and security with their career choices, as they are not limited by their education to specific occupations. Critics of higher education may argue that the increasing cost of higher education leaves students in debt and prevents them from participating in the economy after graduating, thus offsetting the monetary gains of a college degree. While rising costs of college are exacerbating the student debt crisis, this does not mean higher education itself is not beneficial for the economy on an individual or societal level. Rather, increasing prices are reflective of how higher education is primarily viewed as a private benefit rather than public good, thus displacing more of the costs on students rather than taxpayers or the government (Armstrong & Hamilton, 2013).

Higher education confers social and personal benefits on graduates. Networking in college has economic benefits when searching for career opportunities but can also elevate graduates' social status and expand their social influence and power. Marriage and relationships are also correlated with educational level, thus benefiting the individual (Martin, 2006; Raley & Bumpass, 2003). Children of college graduates also benefit from their parents' education. Children of college graduates are likely to acquire an early form of human capital. Thus, these children are likely to reproduce their parents' success and in turn go to college themselves (McMahon, 2009). While such generational effects maintain socioeconomic inequalities and reinforce family-related social advantages, they highlight the existing defects in access to higher education (Brint, 2018). Inequalities in education mirror broader socioeconomic inequalities and underscore the need for reform of the current system. While the benefits of higher education are not uniformly distributed, there are more likely issues with the distribution rather than existence of such benefits.

Institutions of higher education are important and beneficial for societies, economies, and individuals. At the societal level, higher education ensures the democratic process through education of a civically engaged population. Higher education additionally benefits society through the economy by increasing the supply of available human capital for a wide range of occupations. These economic benefits apply to the individual as well, increasing salaries, number of career opportunities, and economic security for college graduates. Individuals also gain personal benefits from higher education such as increased social influence and generational propagation of success through their children. Furthermore, arguments against higher education often take a reductionist approach that does not account for its multiple purposes. The near future of higher education is not obsolete. Higher

education's unique position in relation to society, economy, and individuals ensures its success despite its rising costs and maintenance of socioeconomic inequalities. While the current system of higher education will require reform to remedy the uneven distribution of its benefits and growing costs, higher education overall confers more benefits than disadvantages, thus making reformation rather than elimination of higher education appropriate for the future.

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The Tale of Two Pandemics: Student Experiences

Jonathan Zhang

To what extent did the pandemic exacerbate the gap between FGLI students and more privileged,wealthier students?

COVID-19 has undoubtedly uprooted the lives of students all over the world. From having to attend college remotely in their childhood bedroom to balancing the myriad of new issues that have arisen from this pandemic, the college experience has drastically changed. Yet, there are those who clearly fared better and those who had their one and only safe haven taken away from them. On one side, a student is living abroad in their own apartment with friends and gaining new life experience despite the adverse circumstances, on the other, a student is struggling to juggle a part-time job to support their family and living in cramped living spaces, if they even have the luxury of one at all. The typical residential college experience, known to be the great equalizer for students, has disappeared and showed the massive chasms that divide first-generation, low-income students (FGLI) and those who come from privileged upper-middle class backgrounds which can be showcased by first examining student anecdotes and experiencesfrom two interviews as well as synthesizing it with data from four journal articles looking at social mobility and mental health.

As an international student from Canada, "Australia" faced a great deal of stress in regards to her financial security as well as the future of her studies (A. Siebold, personal communication,February 17, 2021). As the oldest child of five other children who were raised by a single mother, she had no choice but to return home to Alberta and pick up two part-time jobs to help support the family as her mother received a pay cut. In the wake of such dire circumstances, she noted that,"[she] was just grateful that [her] mom didn't get laid off. I wouldn't know what to doif that happened." Still, while supporting her family, she did not actually have physical space in the house to accommodate another person and Australia made the decision to live with her grandparents, who lived 30 minutes away. She would often work 40+ hour weeks at a gas stationas well as picking up additional shifts in a restaurant kitchen in the summer to receive overtime pay to help support herself and her family. Throughout the months following the removal from campus, Australia dealt with severe bouts of anxiety and depression, yet was unable to seek outadequate professional therapeutic help as her insurance did not cover it and many provinces andstates have laws regulating cross-border telehealth (which has since been changed due to the unique circumstances caused by the pandemic). As a first-generation college student who receives full financial support from Harvard, she felt safe and secure on campus and having the ability to live independently and not have to act as a second mother to her younger siblings.

Another international student, "Cincinnati" faced a very different situation. Born and raised in Spain, but coming to the United States for university, her biggest dilemma was whether or not to continue to enroll at Georgetown University for the fall semester despite the cost of tuition having raised by 3%, debating on if the experience was worth that price tag especially since much of the intangible benefits of university were unavailable to her (C. Desmet, personal communication, February 17, 2021). Having a United States Permanent Resident Card, she was confident that if she left the country, she would be able to be let back in. With her two parents working remotely and still working a nine to five job, she decided to take a semester off and live in Belgium in student housing in Brussels with her Spanish friend. While Cincinnati did note that there were feelings of anxiety and uncertainty, she overall had a very memorable experience and did not regret the decision that she made. During the summer, she was able to network with a newfound sense of ease and secured herself three different unpaid internships at a start-up in Spain, at a legal firm in Texas (where her family is based in currently), and at a beauty company in a remote internship as a social media marketing intern. Cincinnati never sought out mental health care in the past, but felt a great deal of anxiety and depression when her aunt contracted COVID-19 in Italy and passed away over the summer.

The main contrasts to highlight between the two students interviewed were firstly, the difference in the severity of their mental health during the pandemic, and secondly, the ability to gain social capital and to have upwards mobility in life. As one can see, the answer is never clear-cut and there are nuances in every person's experience. The two people interviewed were both white, international, sophomore females who identify as queer, with the only major differentiating factor between the two of them being their socioeconomic status and previous history with mental health. Both of them attend highly competitive universities, Australia at Harvard and Cincinnati at Georgetown University. Yet even then, despite the wealth and mobility that Cincinnati has, she still suffered from anxiety and depression throughout the pandemic especially when a close loved one passed away from the virus, which is something that Australia luckily did not experience. This being said, from other larger studies one can see that mental health issues were more severe among students of color, queer students, and students who are low-income and/or first-generation.

Using logarithmic regression models to analyze the association between COVID-19 and depression and anxiety symptoms, one study found that students with household savings of less than $5,000 had an increased risk of 47% for severe anxiety and depression symptoms (Rudenstine et al. 2020). These students were interviewed from New York public universities when the state was the epicenter of the outbreak and it paints a clear and devastating picture of the psychological distress among students who identified as FGLI. This is due to a myriad of factors including but not limited to students with lower socioeconomic status having less access to stable housing, livable wages, and both mental and physical health resources compared to those from wealthier backgrounds, making them even more prone to traumatic experiences. The Rudenstine study further points out that students

pursuing higher education face extra barriers in regard to their academic success on top of the ones that already exist due to remote learning due to financial concerns requiring part-time and even full-time employment and the limited ability to acquire and purchase technology necessary for digital learning (2020). Other studies echo a similar problem as fatigue and frustration are commonplace problems for students without good access to the internet, further fueling the sentiment that they are falling behind and increasing the stressors in their life (Irawan et al. 2020). Due to the economic recession and stay at home orders, the economic stressors for FGLI students are further exacerbated as 40% of students lost a job, internship, or offer (Aucejo et al. 2020). While all 40% of these students were not necessarily FGLI students and many of these internships and offers were unpaid to begin with, by looking into Australia and Cincinnati's experience, one can gain some further insight into thisissue and see that low-income students were disproportionately affected by this and let to greatereconomic stress as well as mental health stressors.

Both of them lost a job or an internship due to the pandemic but the aftermath of this result was a lot different. Australia had an on-campus job working in the student alumni outreachoffice working part-time to fulfill her work-study requirement as well as have some disposable income for miscellaneous expenses not covered by her financial aid package. When she went back home to Canada, she was unable to continue working in a remote environment and had her linguistic fellowship cancelled due to the pandemic. With no other alternative and most businesses closed except for essential services, she got a job at a gas station and at a restaurant asa line cook. Australia noted that she did not have any extra time to take on work that was unpaid and decided not to pursue any sort of internship or fellowship that summer. Cincinnati on the other hand had her internship in Spain become remote which prevented her from traveling and living abroad. Despite this, it turned out to be a "blessing in disguise" (C. Desmet, personal communication, February 17, 2021) as she was able to find two more unpaid internships and advance her own professional skill set due to the newfound flexibility of not having to be in person.

This also brings up the second important issue to address: the increasing gap between the development of social capital and the lack of upward mobility for FGLI students. While Australia did not take time off and Cincinnati did, the Aucejo noted that lower-income students are 55% more likely to have delayed graduation due and taken a leave of absence (2020). In the study, 13% of students delayed their graduation and 29% of participants expect to earn less at 35 (Aucejo et al. 2020). Even though Cincinnati took a semester off, she was able to find opportunities to bolster her resume, expand her professional network, and gain more applicable work experience in her field while living abroad in Belgium. Because of the financial aid package that Harvard provided, Australia's most economical choice was to go back to school and return to campus but did note that she felt lost and behind professionally because of her inability to have an internship and develop professional work skills compared to her peers (A. Siebold, personal communication, February 17, 2021). A 2015 study by Falcon noted that many FGLI students work full time while going to school

due family dependence on their income, which may interfere with time dedicated to schoolwork and networking that are critical to success. Thisfalls neatly into involvement theory which postulates that the rewards and return of investments on one's college experience is proportional to how much each student invests into the college experience. Because many FGLI students have many other considerations that come before their academic and social life, oftentimes college is less prioritized especially in the wake of unforeseen disasters. College was noted to be the biggest determining factor for accruing social capital and for students at the lowest quartile of the income bracket to graduate and situate themselves firmly in the first quartile of the income bracket (Falcon 2015). With the pandemic, these traditional methods to network, be it informal social environments like extracurricular activities or formal social environments like campus recruiting events, have been completely altered in a way that individuals without a previous network available to them are unable to access. Because of the positional centrality of universities and its potential as an incubator forstudents to build wealth and capital, this shift away from the traditional model has greatly disadvantaged FGLI students.

  By looking at the ways in which the pandemic has heterogeneously impacted students in terms of mental health and social capital, and framing it with two different student experiences, one can see that universities must place a greater emphasis to support FGLI students, especially international students, for the future of higher education as a social institution and as an industry.The biggest policy recommendations would be to increase both informal and formal social environments specifically catered towards diverse student populations with an emphasis for FGLI students in order to develop professional networks as well as provide different summer opportunities like fellowships and internships that include a monetary stipend to help alleviate the economic stress students face as well as develop their professional career skills. While not anall-encompassing solution to the issue of social mobility and the accumulation of social capital, itis a start to regain the status of universities having positional centrality in society. In addition, universities should offer more resources for mental health support services, especially students who are not physically on campus and divert more resources into alleviating economic barriers to education. This can either mean providing technology to students or by allowing students to haveremote campus jobs to increase disposable income. Universities are in a unique space in society as a great equalizer for students of all backgrounds and when this balance is disrupted, these institutions have a moral obligation to help level out the playing field so that students like Australia are not disadvantaged compared to students like Cincinnati for circumstances outside of their control.

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Denmark: A Case Study on the Impacts of Universal Education

Jonathan Zhang

The topic of universal education has been at the forefront of many political debates around the world, especially in the United States. To better understand the ramifications of such a policy, it is necessary to look towards countries that have implemented similar systems effectively. As one of the few countries in the world that offers free education on all levels, Denmark is known for its high level of literacy and human development. By first delving into Denmark's education system to better understand how it functions and interviewing a current gap year student in Denmark to understand student perceptions before looking at socioeconomicmetrics of the general population in Denmark, one can see that there is a myriad of positive impacts with the implementation of free universal education. This being said, the benefits can only be fully actualized if the necessary preconditions are met, like a homogenous population and cultural perceptions regarding education, something that is not the case for the vast majorityof the world.

Denmark, similar to many other Scandinavian countries, has compulsory education untilthe age of 16, though interestingly, does not mandate education until the age of seven (Sutcliffe, 2002). Even then, all but a few Danish youths do not attend state-funded, preschools or similar childcare services as there is universal access to these public services. Parents are able to send children to nursery school from as young as six-months-old until the age of three and then to *børnehave,* or kindergarten, from the age of three until six ("Resources and Infrastructure: Education", 2005). From the age of seven, the vast majority of students go to a public school, known as *folkeskoler*, which is usually dictated by geographic location while an eighth of the students go to publicly funded private schools, known as *friskoler* (literally meaning "free school"). In an interview with "Jakarta", a 21-year-old Danish student who is working part-time and living with his parents for a year before enrolling in a university the coming fall, he said thatclassroom sizes are kept small with an average of 18 students per class (J. Ravnemose, personal communication, March 12, 2021) where there can be a lot more individualized attention placed on students as compared to the United States and China where general class sizes can be as large as 35 students and 45 students, respectively. Over 90% of students stay in school after the age of 16, with 60% of them taking vocational courses and apprenticeships in technical colleges, a thirdof them going to rigorous upper secondary schools known as gymnasiums for another three years (UIS Statistics, 2020). According to Sutcliffe, after graduation, approximately 70% of students continue to pursue post-secondary education.

The barriers to entry for university are quite low as all public higher education institutions (HEI) are free in Denmark. This not only applies to native Danish citizens (which

includes those from the Faroe Islands and Greenland) but also those with a humanitarian visa, permanent resident visa, or are from a country in the European Economic Area or European Union (Uddannelses-og Forskningsministeriet, 2021). In fact, Danish citizens and other criteria- meeting students are also offered *Statens Uddannelsesstøtte* (SU), which is a monthly financial aid ranging anywhere from 950 Danish Kroner (DKK), roughly equivalent to $152 USD, to 6321 DKK, around $1013 USD, depending on the parents' income and whether or not the student lives with or away from their parents household (Uddannelses-og Forskningsministeriet, 2021). For Jakarta, he would be eligible for an SU of around 3000 DKK, around $500 USD, as he would be living away from his family in Copenhagen but would not receive the full amount ofaid due to both of his parents working and having relatively higher incomes.

When asked in a series of conversations how much his viewpoints align with his Danish peers, Jakarta said that it is quite commonplace for students to take a gap year between the end ofprimary school, which marks the end of compulsory school, and the beginning of a branching pathway of pursuing a degree from a technical college or enrolling in a gymnasium (J. Ravnemose, personal communication, March 12, 2021). In this time period, students have the ability to participate in an *efter skole,* literally meaning "after school", which is a semester-long boarding school for students to experience living away from home and to decide what the steps are in their educational pathway. While exact figures were not provided, Jakarta indicated that his younger sister would have gone to one had it not been for COVID-19 and that generally 10% of students aged 16 take this route. In Jakarta's case, he spent a year abroad in Argentina studying Spanish before he entered a gymnasium. It was not against the norm to graduate secondary school at the age of 20, which is much later than most other countries in the world. In addition, it is quite common for students to take another year or two off after graduation from thegymnasium to gain work or life experience. When asked about it, Jakarta mentioned that "there'sa lot less stress to do things all at once. I know I won't be negatively judged for taking time off and I know that I will have an education to come back to and a relatively secure job waiting for me when I'm done" (J. Ravnemose, personal communication, March 12, 2021). Withing the pressures of having to pay for his own education, as well as additional aid through the SU, Jakarta views his late teens and early twenties as a time for him to enjoy being youthful. The SU all the other educational services starting from pre-K are publicly funded by taxpayer money and are due to the reality that Denmark invests more public funds in education than any other country in the world. While the "international average for developed countries is 5 percent...the Comparative figures (OECD, 1998) show that [Denmark] spent 6.8 per cent of its gross domesticproduct on education" (Sutcliffe, 2002). In this framework, those who shoulder the cost of education are not the individuals themselves, but by the rest of the community through taxpayer money. Contrasted to the United States, Denmark assumes then that education is more so a public good than that of a private good.

By looking at a few metrics, one can easily see the positive effects that universal education has on the country. As an average of the last 5 years, the GDP of Denmark has risen 2.5% each year compared to the GDP growth of the US. However, this metric alone is not sufficient to indicate advancement and development as "empirical studies have by now shown that political liberty, health, and education are all poorly correlated with growth" (Nussbaum, 2016). To dive a little deeper, one can see that Denmark's poverty rate, which is defined by the UN as living under $3.20 USD per day after adjusting for PPP, is only at 0.3% compared to the 1.2% of Americans who are under the poverty line (UIS Statistics, 2020). In addition, accordingto the World Bank (2019), the Gini coefficient, which measures wealth inequality in a given population, of Denmark is only 28.3, ranked 144/159. For reference, the US has a Gini coefficient of 40.1, ranked 40/159 (World Bank, 2019). With all these benefits, one must remember that there are a few limitations to this framework. Danish students on average take longer to finish their education and attain their degrees, which can be showcased by Jakarta's two gap years and general lack of stress due to security surrounding employment and education.This can pose a disadvantage from a policy point of view as it not only requires longer for students to start contributing back into the workforce and for the investment into human capital to be actualized, but also it shaves off a few years of a population's prime working age.

In addition, there exist many preconditions that have been met beforehand for Denmark to achieve such high levels of success with its education system and to have it run in such a format. First and foremost, 90% of Denmark's population of 6 million people are ethnically Danish and a further 7% are ethnically European or originating from Western Countries (Statistics Denmark, 2020). With such a homogenous population, there are a set of cultural values and ideologies that can be agreed upon and certain tensions between races are less prevalent than in the United States. The Danish Government sees education as an investment of human capital and its future, which has changed cultural perceptions as time goes on. Using a method of critical discourse analysis (CDA), which can underpin the ways that one thinks, shapes, and forms different ideas in relation to the language used, a study found that by looking at official higher education policy texts from the 1970s, the policy platforms set forward in Denmark's system of education is based upon egalitarian values promoting enlightened citizenship and equal opportunity (Vingaard et. al, 2017). These official policies ended up influencing cultural perceptions in the Danish citizenry causing them to view the topic of education as an inalienable right, even in tertiary education, which is far from the viewpoint thatmany Americans hold.

Denmark is an amazing case study to see how higher education functions in a universal context and to see the support networks for students that allow them flexibility in a geographicaland socioeconomic manner. With a strong set of cultural identities and values, as well as having the government emphasize education in its spending and official policy reports, Denmark has been able to set up a structure of education that lends way to massive achievements on the levelsof human development and on standards of living. While not

impossible for other countries to adopt the same system, policymakers should be cautious when setting forward universal education standards as they may not be able to see salient benefits to the degree that Denmark isable to enjoy. It is recommended that the government starts by changing cultural perceptions about education and have people view it as something that is a universal and public good. The first and foremost way to signal this is to increase spending on education and provide more support structures for students to have autonomy with their own educational careers. Only by changing the collectives' cognition regarding education can a country truly start to reap the benefits of free and accessible higher education.

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The Case of Universal Education

Jonathan Zhang

While the right to free and accessible public education from primary to secondary school is guaranteed to children in all nations, with all but a few countries deeming it compulsory, the topic of universal post-secondary education has recently been at the forefront of many political debates around the world. Many nations and advocates are beginning to now see tertiary education as necessary for human self-actualization. Education has been seen to be the cornerstone of a person's developmental process and is seen to be a way to instill ethical, social, and political values in citizens of a nation with even non-citizen immigrants in some countries having access to free public education. In order to understand the development of education as a right, it is important first and foremost to see how education became guaranteed for children before seeing how it pertains to adults. By understanding how the expansion of education to the underprivileged through religious groups came around, one can understand how throughout time, the conception of education became seen from a human rights perspective. Looking at international covenants and declarations like those of UNESCO, the WUS, and OIDEL gives rise to the notion of education being a lifelong endeavor and provides the rhetoric for justifying universal education.

The debate surrounding education as a right began around the 17th century with egalitarian rhetoric based on religious values, this then expanded throughout the Age of Enlightenment to encompass natural rights. While this was only inclusive of children, the same rhetoric is used to expand upon universal adult education as international organizations begin to codify this right after World War II. It was around the second half of the 20th century in the post-war era when the first international attempt to address the needs of adult learners occurred. At the World Conference on Adult Education held by UNESCO in 1960, member nations and their respective delegates drew upon several individual countries which set earlier precedents in adult education. Of these examples, Denmark proved to be a potential model for further education with their inclusion of folk high schools, which has continued to grow in popularity since its introduction in the 1830s (UNESCO 1960). What made this model so interesting is that the majority of the students attending these folk high schools are over the age of 60, emphasizing that education should be a lifelong process and freely accessible to all (Folk High School, 2021). It emphasized that adult education could not be viewed in a vacuum but should be viewed as an "integral part of a global scheme for lifelong education and learning" (Tarrow, 2014, p. 139). In addition, 16 years later, the UNESCO General Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya in 1976 drafted up a document that makes it a responsibility for each of its member states to "ensure that financial assistance for study purposes is available for those who need it to undertake adult education...as a general rule, be free of charge" (UNESCO 1976). The conversations

surroundingthis statement are based on the idea that the individual should not have a lack of funds to be an obstacle to participating in adult education programs. The debate of adult education emphasized the changing economic conditions in the wake of World War II which forced many people to update their skills in order to adapt to the myriad of technological advancements. Many member states, like Denmark and the United States, in efforts to coincide combatting employment discrimination on the basis of race and gender, advocated for new avenues for economic mobilityand formal training at institutions to better prepare people for the labor market (Tarrow, 2014, p. 149). Education seems to be a vital part of human development and growth and was a necessity for all in order to live a life that guaranteed all other rights. Amongst UNESCO's recommendations, the right to lifelong adult education can only be realized by "strong national and state commitments" and a "clear vision of ...greater learning opportunities for all citizens now and in the future" (UNESCO 1976). This sparked the debate for other countries and NGOsto discuss the issue of further education and accessibility to it.

A few decades later, the World University Service (WUS) in their 68th General Assembly published The Lima Declaration on Academic Freedom and Autonomy of Institutions of Higher Education in 1988, on the year of the 40th anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The WUS is an international organization founded in 1920 to meet the needs of students and academics after World War I. It merged with the European Student Relief after World War II and became the WUS in the late 1950s, campaigning for educational rights for all (Fernandez, 1995). The Lima Declaration advocated for the expansion of the right to education to include post-secondary education and access to higher education institutions. In its preamble, the declaration emphasizes that "universities and academic communities have an obligation to purpose the fulfillment of economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights of the people'' and that the right to education is paramount for the realization of all other human rights and the development of people (Fernandez, 1995). The language used here is in stark contrast to previouscovenants and declarations which emphasized the role of education in the development of a child's psyche and critical development. Instead, the declaration viewed education as a continuous process that does not end after adolescence and secondary education. The Lima Declaration expands upon the previous rhetoric of child rights advocates which stated that children should be guaranteed access to fair and equitable education, stating that "Every human being has the right to education" as a categorical imperative. It is also important to note that the declaration also mentions that every state should guarantee this right without discrimination and not limited to one's economic condition and national or social origin, highlighting the duty of thestate to "take all appropriate measures to plan, organize and implement a higher education system without fees for all secondary education graduates and other people who might prove their ability to study effectively at that level" (Fernandez, 1995). This continues to build upon previous activists' work on the right for education for all regardless of age. This culminates

with the right to education being seen as a prerequisite for other social and political rights in the end of the 20th century.

Near the new millennium, the International Organization for the Development of Freedom of Education (OIDEL) advocated for universal education and gained international acclaim. OIDEL is an NGO specialized in the right to education and freedom of education, with Consultative Status with ECOSOC, UNESCO, and the Council of Europe located in Geneva. In one of their groundbreaking reports, they included a proposal for the renovation of education in Europe in 1994 which included criticisms pertaining to many European countries. This emphasized that currently, "education is not considered as the first priority in political programmes...it seems a matter of priority to restore to it its human and personal dimension in content and method" (Fernandez, 1995). The declaration further emphasizes that the right to education and freedom in education is just as much a right as "freedom in religion, science, art, and the press" (Fernandez, 1995). Education lays the groundwork for the ability to develop a critical sense and an autonomous personality in a free and open society, something that is more than "the right to anonymous and technocratic instruction" (Fernandez, 1995). Education is nowseen to be not just a means to and end, but an end in it by itself.

It was only after World War II that international organizations started to apply pressure tocountries that have failed to codify a right to education and who still continued to gate off education to the masses. The future of accessible universal education seems to be a real possibility, to see universal education as a prerequisite for a fulfilled human life. In this, nation- states must be in line with international organizations and see education as a prerequisite for other human rights. The international covenants and declarations provide a roadmap and the justifications for policymakers around the world to adopt a universal model of education. In order to do this, states must look past their own economic interests and see education as an obligation and a duty that they must perform for members of their community. Instead of seeing education as a transitory phase of one's life in preparation for the future, one has to see educationand the process of learning as life itself.

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From Gender Disparity to Gender Parity: The Representation of Women in the Faculty of Elite Institutions

Nicole Zhang

Although women have matched or surpassed men in many educational outcomes such as college access, they are still not perceived in the same way as their male counterparts. In the context of academia, women are particularly underrepresented in the faculties of elite colleges like Harvard, and previous studies have examined the additional burdens and biases that female professors bear. In contrast, the ratio of male to female students at elite higher education institutions is typically one-to-one. This creates an environment where women are more equally represented in the student body than in the faculty. One logical question that follows is how students perceive their female professors differently from their male professors. As a female student at an elite college, I recognize that my own experiences may bias my perspective on the issue of female underrepresentation in the faculty. Excluding this semester, I have had only two female instructors over the course of my studies at Harvard, and neither of them were professors. Both were preceptors, which the Harvard Office of Faculty Affairs defines as "teachers who provide language, skill-oriented, or other special instruction." As an economics concentrator, I have taken ten economics courses, and all but one of them were taught by male professors. I personally believe that students may be biased against female professors because they assume that the gender imbalance in the faculty suggests that men are more deserving of professorships. However, I will attempt to be objective as I explore student perceptions of male and female professors in this essay.

Many bodies of work have studied the differences in how students perceive their female versus male professors and find that female professors are subject to different student expectations and treatment. In a survey of professors across the United States, a study found that female (versus male) professors reported getting more requests for standard work demands, special favors, and friendship behaviors (El-Alayli et al., 2018). There are many potential explanations for why this may be the case, and I will highlight a few hypotheses that are rooted in my own personal observations. One explanation for why female professors may get more requests from students is that students may find their female professors to be more approachable. Another way of looking at it is that students may want to make these same requests to their male professors but find themselves too intimidated to ask. Additionally, if students have more respect for their male professors, they may not feel that it is appropriate to ask for special favors. When it comes to requests for friendship behavior, I think the driving forces are more complicated.

Female professors may get more requests for friendship behaviors because they may behave in ways that lead students to believe that they are interested in friendship. For example, if female professors generally smile more than male professors or exhibit more compassionate and caringbehaviors, then students may interpret that as a green light for building a friendship. In another study where more than 1,000 male and female college students evaluated their instructors in terms of teaching effectiveness and sex-typed characteristics, male students gave female professors significantly poorer ratings on six teaching evaluation measures (Basow & Silberg, 1987). Male students' ratings of female professors were poorer than those of female students on four of the six measures, and female students also evaluated female professors less favorably than male professors on three measures (Basow & Silberg, 1987). It is possible that social identity theory may explain some of their findings. On one hand, people tend to evaluate adisreputable or disliked person more negatively when that person is a member of one's own group rather than of some other group. This is known as the black sheep effect and may be the driving force behind why female students evaluated female professors less favorably on half of the teaching measures; they may have high expectations for female professors and respond negatively if female professors act in ways that threaten their group's identity. On the other hand,ingroup bias tells us a different story. Perhaps the female students rated female professors more highly than male students because people tend to give preferential treatment to others who belong to the same group that they do.

Whatever the driving forces may be, Basow and Silberg's findings align with the mainstream literature on women in male-dominated professions, which suggests that clients resent their authority, deny their competence, and accord them less prestige than men (Mackie,1976). It appears reasonable to assume that perceptions of women so commonly held in the workplace would also hold in academia where faculties are male-dominated. The denial of competence aligns with students' lower evaluation ratings for female professors in Basow & Silberg's paper. The accordance of less prestige may explain why female professors get more requests from students in the paper by El-Alayli et al.; students may place a "prestigious" maleprofessor on a pedestal and seek a mentor-mentee relationship instead of a friendship. These relationships differ in the power dynamics involved, with a clear hierarchy in the former and asense of equality in the latter.

In the popular media, articles in Forbes and The New York Times claim that women are finally being seen as equally competent as men (Nietzel, 2019; Salam, 2019). Rigorous studies on the differences in how students perceive competence have found mixed results. A study examining the perceptions of female and male sociology professors and graduate instructors at a large public research university finds that students misattribute in an upwards direction the level of educational attainment of their male professors and misattribute in a downwards direction the level of educational attainment of their female professors (Miller & Chamberlin, 2000). In other words, students tend to overestimate their male professor's qualifications and underestimate theirfemale professor's qualifications. It

is difficult to untangle the mechanisms that may be driving these perceptions without conducting further qualitative research; however, it is possible that students may be using an availability heuristic when guessing the educational attainment of their professors. They may know more men in their lives than women who have Master's or Doctoral degrees, and these immediate examples that come to their minds may be shaping their perceptions.

Some researchers have conducted studies with the same research question (i.e., differences in student perceptions of female vs. male professors' competence) and arrived at completely different conclusions. One study found that female professors were perceived by students as more competent than male instructors in both task and socio-emotional competence (Mackie, 1976). Women are often seen as more nurturing than men, so students may find their female professors to be more socio-emotionally competent because they find them to be more approachable and more empathetic. Competence can be defined in many ways, so it is unsurprising that there is no single conclusive answer to this area of research. Nevertheless, it is clear from the review of literature that students have distinct perceptions of female and male professors, and some of the forces driving biases against female professors may be addressed by changes in policy at the institutional level.

One initiative that elite higher education institutions should consider pursuing is according more prestige to female professors in their faculties. For example, universities should look to identify barriers that make it difficult for female professors to win awards like the Nobel Prize. Institutions should actively seek to remove these impedances and develop programs targeted at supporting women who are conducting award-worthy work. If an academic prize has an open application process that involves review by a committee, then the university should pay special attention to the composition and demographic diversity of the committee. If an award has a nomination process, then the university should investigate the pipeline and ensure that female faculty members are not disadvantaged by simply not having the same connections and mentors as their male counterparts. Any nomination process where nominators are predominantly men gives male candidates a leg up on female candidates because of in-group bias. One caveat to consider is that certain policies that try to even the playing field may undermine a female faculty member's perceived competence. There is a fine line to walk because at the same time that according more prestige to female professors is important, it must be done in a way that is perceived as fair so that people do not write off the award as a token.

At the end of the day, the most impactful action that a university can take is to tackle gender disparity head-on by hiring more female professors. Until students see a faculty that is balanced in gender, there will always be reason for even well-intentioned individuals to think that female professors are in the minority because men are more competent professors. Universities will need to decide whether waiting for tenured professors to retire so that the next generation of professors can be more diverse is a process that would stand in the way of much-needed change. I will conclude by sharing a riddle. A father and son were in a car accident where the father was killed. The ambulance brought the son to the hospital. He

needed immediate surgery. In the operating room, adoctor came in and looked at the little boy and said, "I can't operate on him. He is my son." Who is the doctor?"

The doctor is the little boy's mother. Many individuals are stumped by this riddle because theiravailability heuristic leads them to assume that the surgeon must be a man when it is actually awoman. In the same way that people will continue to struggle with this riddle until we live in a world where there are just as many female surgeons as male surgeons, students will continue tohave biased perceptions of female professors until we live in a world where there are just as many female professors as male professors.

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