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Comorbid Complications and Risk Factors with Bipolar Disorder

Mikaela G. Neubauer, Department of Public Health, Sam Houston State University

Bipolar disorder (BD) is the sixth leading cause of disability among adults globally. An estimated two-thirds of individuals with BD also experience other psychiatric conditions, including ADHD, anxiety, and substance use disorders. This study aimed to identify prevalent comorbid mental illnesses among those with BD and explore the risk factors. Deidentified survey data came from a convenience sample of 6,740 responses collected between 2020 and 2021 from TeleSage's SAGE-SR assessment. SPSS Statistics was used to perform descriptive analyses and logistic regressions between the independent variable, combined bipolar disorders (cBD), and dependent variables ADHD, Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD), Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), Opioid Use Disorder (OUD), and Combined Stimulant Use Disorders (CSUD). Results from the independent samples test suggested strong associations between cBD and ADHD, CUD, AUD, and OUD. Subsequent multinominal logistic regressions confirmed an increased risk of comorbid BD among individuals with ADHD, AUD, and CUD. Individuals with AUD were 1.38 times more likely, those with CUD over two times more likely, and those with ADHD were over five times more likely to have comorbid BD. Further research investigating risk factors and impacts of co-occurring BD, ADHD, and substance use is necessary to inform clinicians in tailoring diagnostic approaches and developing targeted treatment plans.

Keywords: Bipolar disorder (BD), psychiatric comorbidity, substance use disorders (SUD), ADHD

Introduction

Bipolar disorder (BD), also known as Bipolar Affective Disorder (BPAD), is a mood disorder characterized by marked, cyclical periods of mania or hypomania and depression (Dattani et al., 2021). These episodes are defined by significant and specific changes in mood, energy, and activity levels (Chen et al., 2022). Some individuals experience mixed states, or mixed episodes, fluctuating between high and low symptoms (Cleveland Clinic, 2022). Bipolar episodes can cause mild to severe disruptions in daily functioning and cognitive impairment, and difficulty in maintaining employment, social and familial relationships, stable living arrangements, and physical and emotional health (Grande et al., 2015). The main three subtypes are type 1 (BD-I), type 2 (BD-II), and cyclothymia (Grande et al., 2015). BD-I includes manic, hypomanic, and depressive episodes, although many primarily experience manic episodes (Chen et al., 2022).

BD-II includes hypomanic and depressive episodes, with many primarily experiencing depressive episodes (Chen et al., 2022). Cyclothymia consists of shorter cycles of depressive and hypomanic symptoms (Chen et al., 2022). Other types include Other Specific Bipolar and Related Disorders, Unspecified Bipolar and Related Disorders, and those induced by substance use or medical conditions (Grande et al., 2015).

Comorbid Conditions

Bipolar Disorder (BD) is associated with a high prevalence of comorbid psychiatric and medical illnesses (Grande et al., 2016; Miller, 2016). It is estimated that up to two-thirds of individuals with bipolar disorder experience other psychiatric conditions, such as anxiety, substance use, or impulse control disorders (Miller, 2016). Other common psychiatric comorbidities include ADHD and OCD (Miller, 2016). OCD is one of the most chronic and difficult-to-manage comorbidities, often changing in tone with bipolar episodes (Amerio et al., 2016). A study conducted on the Danish population found that comorbid ADHD and anxiety increased the risk of bipolar disorder onset by 30 times compared to individuals with no prior ADHD or anxiety disorder diagnoses (Meier et al., 2018). Shared genetic influences are strongly implicated in ADHD and hypomania among adolescents, with a negligible effect of environmental influences (Moran et al., 2019). Even when controlling for overlapping symptoms of ADHD and hypomania, children diagnosed with ADHD have ten times the incidence of adolescent and adult-onset bipolar disorder (Moran et al., 2019). Childhood-onset anxiety disorders are also associated with a family history of bipolar disorder and prediction of bipolar disorder in familial studies (Meier et al., 2018).

Individuals with BD have 1.5 to three times the risk of developing comorbid medical illnesses (Chen et al., 2022). They are three times more likely to die prematurely, and three-fourths of this is due to a comorbid chronic medical illness (Levin et al., 2015). Other common underlying causes among individuals with BD include those related to cardiovascular disease

(Watts, 2016; McIntyre et al., 2020), diabetes, and obesity (Grande et al., 2015). Comorbid BD and medical illnesses increase rates of attempted suicide, episode relapses, rehospitalizations, mood symptom severity, and number of lost life years (Chen et al., 2022). The risk of suicide attempts is much higher in individuals with comorbid ADHD and Bipolar Disorder (Moran et al., 2019). The mortality rate for adults in the U.S. with BD by suicide is up to an estimated 20 times higher than the general population, especially when left untreated (Grande et al., 2015).

Prevalence

Since 2010, bipolar disorder (BD) has been reported to affect between 1% and 3% of the population globally and is one of the leading causes of disability among young adults (Grande et al., 2015). In 2017, there were an estimated 46 million individuals with bipolar disorder across the world (IHME, 2021). However, research on the disorder is surprisingly limited, and prevalence and incidence rates are often inconsistent across sources. The Cleveland Clinic reports that an estimated 5.7 million adults in the U.S. are affected by BD, about 2.6% of the population (Cleveland Clinic, 2022). The National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) reports that 2.8% of the U.S. population is affected by BD (NAMI, 2017). The Recovery Village reflects the prevalence rate reported by NAMI, referencing the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance (DBSA) (2022). The DBSA webpage does not reflect this, reporting an estimated 5.7 million U.S. adults, or 2.6% of the U.S. population, and cites the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) (DBSA, 2019). However, the NIMH website reports a prevalence rate of 2.8% of the U.S. adult population, including tables and graphics from 2001 to 2003, citations and references from 2001 to 2007, and a last review in August 2017 (NIMH, 2017).

Risk Factors and Health Outcomes

Bipolar Disorder (BD) is one of the most heritable psychiatric disorders and is understood to be caused by a combination of genetics and environmental influence (Grande et al., 2015). Studies conducted on twins have shown that 80% of children with an affected parent had an

increased risk of bipolar symptoms and neurobiological abnormalities (Haggarty et al., 2021). Bipolar-related genes have been found to have incomplete overlaps with schizophrenia and other major psychiatric neurological disorders (Haggarty et al., 2021). Individuals with BD experience lifelong adverse health outcomes, including increased rates of relapse, initial and repeat hospitalizations, and attempted and completed suicide (Grande et al., 2015). Mortality rates from the CDC's Vital Statistics System were unreliable due to the small sample size (CDC WONDER, 2021). However, expanding parameters for the underlying cause of death to manic and depressive episodes yielded a rate of 0.2% in the U.S. from 2016 to 2020 (CDC WONDER, 2021).

Misdiagnoses among individuals with bipolar disorder are extremely common for several reasons, including incomplete psychiatric care history, limited patient insight, and comorbid health conditions (Perlis, 2005). One in five individuals receiving treatment in primary care settings for significant depressive symptoms or Major Depressive Disorder (MDD) likely has undiagnosed BD-I or BD-II, as do 20-30% of patients being treated for depressive and anxiety symptoms (Miller, 2016). This is partially because individuals usually seek care during depressive episodes and not during manic or hypomanic episodes (Kamat et al., 2008; Grande et al., 2016.) Misdiagnoses often worsen health outcomes, with ineffective treatments causing manic, mixed, or rapid-cycling episodes (Perlis, 2005).

Treatment

Due to the cyclical nature of bipolar disorder (BD), treatment is critical to manage and prevent episodes (Grande et al., 2015). Periods of remission and euthymia are possible with lifestyle changes and medication adherence, but recurring episodes remain highly likely (Grande et al., 2015). Pharmacological treatments include antipsychotics and mood stabilizers, often with concurrent anti-depressant use, although this is approached with caution as they can induce hypomanic or manic states (Grande et al., 2015). Nonadherence to medication affects 20% to

80% of those receiving psychiatric care for BD, contributing to increased hospitalizations, relapse rates, violent or suicidal behavior, and increased healthcare costs (Levin et al., 2015). While few other standardized treatments are available, some research has investigated alternative approaches. Recent research on circadian rhythm has explored potential therapies for improving sleep quality, a common feature and symptom in BD. A small study targeting melatonin receptors found it beneficial for over 80% of participants, with few hypomanic and manic episodes (Haggarty et al., 2021). Another study found that blue-light-reflecting glasses provided rapid anti-manic effects on participants with bipolar disorder within three days of continuous use in the evenings (Haggarty et al., 2021).

Hypothesis

Based on the reviewed literature, the null hypothesis stated: a) individuals with Bipolar Disorder (BD) are equally likely to have comorbid ADHD, Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD), Opioid Use Disorder (OUD), or Combined-Stimulant Use Disorder (CSUD) compared to those without BD, and b) those with BD are equally likely to have ADHD, AUD, CUD, OUD, or CSUD as comorbidity.

Methods

Sample Information

This study retrieved sample data from the 2020-2021 SAGE–SR mental health assessment responses with permission from TeleSage. TeleSage is a behavioral health research and tech company that develops diagnostic assessments and tools to track patient-reported outcomes, evaluate treatments, and report to regulatory agencies (Brodey et al., 2018)—funded by the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) and National Institute of Drug Abuse (NIDA), TeleSage partners with top research universities and health organizations, including Stanford

University, Yale University School of Medicine, National Institutes of Health, Healthscope, and St.

Jude Children's Research Hospital (TeleSage, 2021). The SAGE–SR screens for diagnostic symptoms of the 31 most common behavioral health diagnoses and episodes using a comprehensive, online self-report assessment based on the DSM-V and SCID-5-Clinician Version (Brodey et al., 2018). The initial 65 questions cover symptoms from 13 diagnostic categories, including mood disorders, anxiety disorders, obsessive-compulsive and related disorders, trauma- and stressor-related disorders, neurodevelopmental disorders, psychotic disorders, and substance-related and addictive disorders (Brodey et al., 2018). Appropriate follow-up questions are selected based on answers to the initial 65 (Brodey et al., 2018). The SAGE-SR provides an intuitive report identifying the severity and degree to which ICD-10 diagnoses should be considered for further evaluation (TeleSage, 2021). The report is also compatible with the DSM-5. Clinicians can view their patients' reports and assessment item responses for subsequent evaluations of relevant symptoms and conclusions (TeleSage, 2021).

Sample Procedures

The initial data set included 6,801 responses, which were exported to a spreadsheet, and any identifying information was removed. Incomplete, incorrect, or missing data for birth year and gender were also removed from the dataset, along with the 65 initial questions and subsequent responses. The only remaining data on the Excel sheet were those reporting a diagnosis. Bipolar type 1 (BP1), Bipolar type 2 (BP2), and Other Specified Bipolar Disorder (OSBPD) were combined into one independent variable, Combined Bipolar Disorders (cBD), referred to as cBD in subsequent analyses and results. Stimulant Use Disorder-Amphetamine and Stimulant Use Disorder-Cocaine were combined into one dependent variable, Combined Stimulant Use Disorders (CSUD). Dependent variables included gender, Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder

(ADHD), Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD), Opioid Use Disorder (OUD), and CSUD. After identifying the relevant variables, all other diagnoses were removed from the dataset. The remaining responses were then coded as 0 to indicate no presence or 1 to indicate the positive presence of a diagnosis. These revisions and removals reduced the sample size to 6,740 responses.

Data Analysis Techniques

Fundamental descriptive analyses were conducted in SPSS Statistics v25, beginning with cross-tabulations between the independent and dependent variables. This was followed by an independent samples test with all dependent variables to assess each variable's confidence intervals and p-values. Results were considered statistically significant if the p-value was below 0.05 and the CI did not cross 1.0. Strong associations from the independent samples test developed the new hypothesis that those with cBD are more likely than those without cBD to have comorbid ADHD, AUD, CUD, or OUD. Individual logistic regressions were conducted between cBD and each dependent variable, using the 95% Confidence Intervals (CI) to identify statistically significant associations. A multinomial logistic regression was conducted between the statistically significant dependent variables ADHD, CUD, AUD, OUD, and gender. Results were considered statistically significant if the p-value was below 0.05 and the CI did not cross 1.0. Variables with p-values below 0.05 were analyzed in another logistic regression with and without gender, examining gender as a potential confounder.

Results

Sample Characteristics and Crosstabulations

Almost 39% of the total sample (N=6739) were males (n=2,622) and 61.1% were female (n=4,117). Those with Bipolar Disorder (BD) made up 11.86% of the sample, of which 34.3% were male and 65.8% were female, as shown in Table 1A. About 27.1% of the sample had ADHD,

26.7% of which also had BD. Conversely, 61% of those with BD also had ADHD. Results regarding ADHD are indicated in Table 1B. About 15% of the sample had CUD. Of those, 21.6% had comorbid BD. Conversely, around 27.3% of those with BD had a comorbid CUD. Results regarding CUD are indicated in Table 1C. About 12.6% of the sample had AUD. Of those, 16.2% had comorbid BD. Around 17.3% of those with BD also had an AUD. Results regarding AUD are indicated in Table 1D. About 2.2% of the sample had OUD. Of those, 20% had comorbid BD. Around 3.6% of those with BD had a comorbid OUD, as indicated by the results for CUD in Table 1E.

Independent Samples Test Results

The Independent Samples Test showed statistically significant associations between the independent variable, combined bipolar disorders (cBD), and the dependent variables ADHD, Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD), Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), and Opioid Use Disorder (OUD) based on p-values <0.05. Levene's Test assesses if variances are equal between groups, testing the null hypothesis. The results of Levene's Test show that the variances are not equal, as indicated in the Equal Variance column of Table 1F, rejecting the null hypothesis. The independent samples test identifies the statistical significance of associations by p-values <0.05, as indicated in the Sig (2-tailed) column of Table 1F. Results from the t-test show significant associations between cBD and ADHD, AUD, and CUD. Results for the combined stimulant use disorders (CSUD) were insignificant. The p-values from the two-tailed test for OUD were <0.05 but varied between equal variances assumed to equal variances not assumed, potentially indicating statistical invalidity.

Logistic Regression Results

Initial logistic regressions showed statistically significant associations between the independent variable, cBD, and the dependent variables AUD, OUD, ADHD, and CUD. This is

based on the p-values <0.05 shown in Table 2A. A multinomial logistic regression, which included gender, showed statistically significant associations between cBD and AUD, ADHD, and CUD, as indicated by the p-values in Table 2B. A separate logistic regression was conducted without gender to test for potential confounding effects on OUD, but none were found. The multinomial logistic regression without OUD presented results consistent with the previous logistic regression, indicating statistically significant associations between cBD and AUD, ADHD, and CUD, as indicated in Table 2C. However, a slight overlap of CIs between AUD and CUD may suggest weak statistical associations.

Results can be interpreted as such: Males were almost 29% more likely to have a co-occurring bipolar disorder (BD). Those with an AUD were 1.38 times more likely to have a co-occurring BD. Those with a CUD were over two times as likely to have a co-occurring BD. Those with ADHD were over five times more likely to have a co-occurring BD. The results of the logistic regressions partially supported the new hypothesis. Individuals with alcohol use disorder (AUD), cannabis use disorder (CUD), and ADHD were more likely to have a comorbid bipolar disorder, especially those with ADHD.

Discussion

Despite increased awareness of common comorbidities in bipolar disorder (BD), few studies aim to gather updated data and prevalence estimates on conditions comorbid with bipolar. Even fewer studies focus on improving the efficacy of diagnostic, treatment, and intervention plans targeting psychiatric comorbidities. The current study analyzed associations between BD and common comorbid conditions, including ADHD, Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD), Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), Stimulant Use Disorders (CSUD), and Opioid Use Disorder (OUD), hypothesizing an increased likelihood of individuals with BD having one of the disorders as a comorbidity. The hypothesis was confirmed; individuals with AUD and CUD were more likely to

have comorbid BD, and individuals with ADHD were five times more likely to have comorbid BD. This study

contributes to the growing literature by clearly outlining the vulnerability of individuals with BD and ADHD in suffering from psychiatric comorbidities. Challenges in receiving dual diagnoses can be confusing and harmful, particularly for patients receiving inappropriate pharmacological treatment. Available treatments are often low quality and ineffective because of patient reluctance to share the full extent of symptoms and a general misunderstanding of multi-morbidities (Dattani et al., 2021). For example, similarities between unipolar and bipolar depression commonly lead to misdiagnosis (Perlis, 2005). This often results in patients entering manic or hypomanic episodes from the use of anti-depressants without additional stabilizing medications (Grande et al., 2016). Similarly, individuals receiving stimulant treatment for ADHD without concurrent treatment for BD can experience manic episodes.

Comorbid conditions often antagonize and exacerbate each other, which is especially dangerous in the case of bipolar disorder. Individuals with BD require acute care and treatment to maintain stability in social, personal, and career-related spheres. Routine and consistency, which are critical in preventing and managing bipolar episodes, play an equally crucial role in treatment adherence (Levin et al., 2015). Individuals with comorbid ADHD face additional challenges, as hyperactivity can disrupt sleep patterns and inhibit treatment adherence. Additionally, those with ADHD often experience symptoms similar in appearance to depression and hypomania, such as executive dysfunction and dopamine-seeking behaviors, which impact long-term employment and planning capabilities. Substance use also increases the risk for manic episodes and psychosis, especially with psychedelics and stimulants. Clinicians should consider the use of substances, mainly cannabis use, as a coping mechanism or self-medication for underlying or untreated BD and comorbid psychiatric conditions. Identifying and treating BD

should be the primary concern before beginning treatment through recovery or rehabilitation programs.

There is a clear need for comprehensive psychiatric care and assessments from multi-morbidity perspectives instead of dual or single approaches (Bhalla & Rosenheck, 2017). Without proper diagnosis and treatment, individuals with chronic psychiatric comorbidities will continue to suffer relapses, severe episodes, early deaths, and increased disability-affected life years (DALYs). Clinicians can improve diagnostic accuracy by incorporating longitudinal assessments in differential evaluations, addressing patient physical health, and evaluating treatment adherence for mental and physical medical conditions (Grande et al., 2016; Watts, 2016). Future research should examine the relevant risks and relationships between BD and other comorbid conditions. These risks should be considered when developing tailored treatment plans through a multi- morbidity approach. Studies should also explore potential non-pharmacological treatment options to address additional issues, such as sleep disturbance and interference in treatment adherence.

There are some limitations to this paper, primarily related to the sample. First, the SAGE-SR does not provide official diagnoses; symptoms are self-reported and endorse potential disorders of low, medium, and high concern. For the 2020-2021 data set, the presence of a disorder is only counted when the symptoms endorsed by possible differential diagnosis are present and meet the DSM-5 criteria. Some individual reports may have presented diagnoses of medium concern that would not have met the threshold to be reported present on the analyzed dataset. Secondly, the SAGE-SR dataset was limited to 31 disorders and episodes, not including personality disorders, physical medical comorbidities, or any initial intake. The SAGE-SR has since been updated and includes a separate general intake and additional assessment for personality disorders. Thirdly, this study focused on ADHD and substance use disorders but did not explore other potential comorbidities that could have altered the odds ratios. As noted in the

literature, anxiety disorders, and obsessive-compulsive-related disorders are prevalent diagnoses within BD. Future analyses should include these common comorbidities, as well as genetically similar conditions such as schizophrenia (Amerio et al., 2016; Miller, 2016). (TeleSage, 2023)

Conclusion

Bipolar disorder (BD) is a severe and disabling mental illness that impairs cognitive functioning and quality of life for millions of people. Despite this, few studies have examined preventative efforts or comprehensive interventions designed to support individuals with BD in managing complex differential diagnoses. This study aimed to identify common comorbid mental illnesses and respective risk factors among individuals living with BD. Findings were congruent with existing literature, identifying an increased likelihood of comorbid ADHD, Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD), and Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD) among individuals with BD. Further research investigating the risks and relationship between comorbid ADHD and BD is critical to developing effective treatments tailored to their unique health challenges and outcomes. Moreover, comorbid conditions can exacerbate morbidity, worsening already adverse health outcomes for the BD population. An advanced understanding will improve clinical diagnostic assessments and support the development of targeted clinical interventions. AI-informed self-report assessments are relatively new and may prompt some validity-based concerns. As a known entity and tunable diagnostic, the SAGE-SR presents promising improvements in diagnostic accuracy through its multi-comorbidity approach to symptom severity and profile presentations. BD is highly sensitive to disruptions and changes, so standardized interventions and assessments are needed to mitigate health risks and prevent further adverse outcomes. By informing clinicians and developing tailored diagnostic approaches and treatment plans, individuals with BD can be effectively treated earlier, morbidity and mortality can be reduced, and their overall quality of life can be improved.

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Tables

Table 1A

Crosstabulation of BD & Gender

Gender		Bipolar Disorder		Total
		No	Yes	
Male	n			2622
	% within males	89.6%	10.4%	100.0%
	% within BD	--	34.28%	38.9%
Female	n			4117
	% within females	87.2%	12.8%	100%
	% within BD	--	65.72%	61.1%
Total	n	5940	799	6739
	% within males and females	88.14%	11.86%	100.0%

Table 1B

Crosstabulation of BD & ADHD

Bipolar Disorder		ADHD		Total
		No	Yes	
No	n	4603	1337	5940
	% within BD	77.5%	22.5%	100.0%
	% within ADHD	93.7%	73.3%	88.1%
Yes	n	312	487	799
	% within BD	39.0%	61.0%	100.0%
	% within ADHD	6.3%	26.7%	11.9%
Total	n	4915	1824	6739
	% within BD	72.9%	27.1%	100.0%

Table 1C

Crosstabulations BD & Cannabis Use Disorder (CUD)

Bipolar Disorder		Cannabis Use	Disorder	Total
		No	Yes	
No	n	5149	791	5940
	% within BD	86.7%	13.3%	100.0%

	% within CUD	89.9%	78.4%	88.1%
Yes	n	581	218	799
	% within BD	72.7%	27.3%	100.0%
	% within CUD	10.1%	21.6%	11.9%
Total	n	5730	1009	6739
	% within BD	85.0%	15.0%	100.0%

Table 1D

Crosstabulations BD & Alcohol Use Disorder (AUD)

Bipolar Disorder		Alcohol Use Disorder		Total
		No	Yes	
No	n	5228	712	5940
	% within BD	88.0%	12.0%	100.0%
	% within AUD	88.8%	83.8%	88.1%
Yes	n	661	138	799
	% within BD	82.7%	17.3%	100.0%
	% within AUD	11.2%	16.2%	11.9%
Total	n	5889	850	6739
	% within BD	87.4%	12.6%	100.0%

Table 1E

Crosstabulations BD & Opioid Use Disorder (OUD)

Bipolar Disorder		Opioid Use Disorder		Total
		No	Yes	
No	n	5824	116	5940
	% within BD	98.0%	2.0%	100.0%
	% within OUD	88.3%	80%	88.1%
Yes	n	770	29	799
	% within BD	96.4%	3.6%	100.0%
	% within OUD	11.7%	20.0%	11.9%
Total	n	6594	145	6739
	% within BD	87.4%	12.6%	100.0%

Table 1F

Independent Samples Test

Variable	Equal Variance	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		95% Confidence Interval	
		F	P-value (Sig.)	t	(Sig., 2-tailed)	Lower	Upper

Gender	Assumed	47.35	<.001	-2.929	0.003	-0.090	-0.018
	Not assumed			-2.996	0.003*	-0.089	-0.019
ADHD	Assumed	238.1	<.001	-23.913	<.001	-0.416	-0.353
	Not assumed			-21.239	<.001*	-0.420	-0.349
AUD	Assumed	64.53	<.001	-4.230	<.001	-0.077	-0.028
	Not assumed			-3.767	<.001*	-0.080	-0.025
CUD	Assumed	325.1	<.001	-10.471	<.001	-0.166	-0.114
	Not assumed			-8.531	<.001*	-0.172	-0.108
OUD	Assumed	36.85	<.001	-3.068	0.002	-0.027	-0.006
	Not assumed			-2.444	0.015*	-0.030	-0.003
CSUD	Assumed	17.59	<.001	-2.088	0.037	-0.041	-0.001
	Not assumed	47.35	<.001	-1.758	0.079	-0.045	0.002

*Variables found statistically significant

Table 2A

Logistic Regressions of Significant Dependent Variables and Bipolar Disorder (BD)

Variables	P-Value (Sig.) *	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval (CI)	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
AUD	<.001	1.533	1.256	1.871
OUD	0.003	1.891	1.25	2.86
ADHD	<.001	5.374	4.604	6.272
CUD	<.001	2.442	2.055	2.903

*Variables found statistically significant

Table 2B

Multinomial Logistic Regression with Bipolar Disorder (BD) and AUD, OUD, ADHD, and CUD

Variables	P-Value (Sig.) *	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval (CI)	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
AUD	.004*	1.370	1.103	1.701
ADHD	<.001*	5.054	4.322	5.909
Gender [c]	.002*	1.292	1.096	1.522
CUD	<.001*	1.993	1.652	2.406
OUD	.109	1.445	.921	2.268

[c] Referencing male participants

*Variables found statistically significant

Table 2C

Multinomial Logistic Regression with Bipolar Disorder (BD) and AUD, ADHD, and CUD

Variables	P-Value (Sig.) *	Odds Ratio	95% Confidence Interval (CI)	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
AUD	.004	1.375*	1.108	1.707
ADHD	<.001	5.065*	4.332	5.922
Gender [c]	.003	1.287	1.092	1.517
CUD	<.001	2.022*	1.677	2.438

[c] Referencing male participants

*Variables found statistically significant

The Impending Principal Shortage

by

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In December 2021, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) released a survey indicating that approximately 40% of secondary school principals intended to leave their positions within three years. This study examines the potential negative impact of high principal turnover, emphasizing that effective principals are crucial to student performance and overall school effectiveness. A 2020 meta-analysis found that a 1 standard deviation increase in principal effectiveness improves student achievement by 0.13 standard deviations in math and 0.09 in reading. Principals' roles in fostering instructional quality, school climate, professional collaboration, and strategic resource management are vital. Principal turnover can disrupt these areas, negatively affecting school stability and teacher retention. For instance, a 2022 Texas study found that principal retention correlates with teacher retention rates, particularly in schools with initial instability.

To understand the implications of this issue in New Mexico, the authors conducted a study surveying 137 K-12 public school administrators. The survey aimed to compare New Mexico's principal attrition rates to the national average, explore factors influencing job satisfaction, and assess the impact of mentoring on retention.

Key findings include: (1) 50.37% of New Mexico principals plan to leave within three years, and 70.08% within five years, exceeding the national average; (2) Factors such as work-life balance and salary were top priorities for principals, aligning with national trends; (3) While mentoring programs exist, two-thirds of mentored principals still plan to leave, suggesting other factors also play significant roles in their decisions.

The study highlights urgent issues for policymakers, school leaders, and stakeholders to address to support school principals and enhance educational stability and effectiveness in New Mexico and beyond.

Key Words: Principal Attrition, Job Satisfaction, Mentoring, School Leadership, Educational Stability

In December 2021, the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP) released data from a national survey they conducted with 502 secondary school administrators. The results indicated that approximately 40% of those surveyed intended to leave their jobs within the next three years (NASSP, 2021). The potential negative impact of such a high principal turnover percentage on schools cannot be underestimated. "Simply put, effective principals

matter to student performance. One meta-analysis stated, 'Across six studies of data from more than 22,000 principals in four states and two urban school districts, principals matter substantially. We find that a 1 standard deviation increase in principal effectiveness increases the typical student's achievement by 0.13 standard deviations in math and 0.09 standard deviations in reading'" (Kraft, 2020, p. 247).

The loss of effective school principals also affects other areas of the school organization, as principals are responsible for:

- Engaging in instructionally focused interactions with teachers. This includes teacher evaluation, instructional coaching, and establishing a data-driven, school-wide instructional program to facilitate such interactions.
- Building a productive school climate. This involves fostering an environment marked by trust, efficacy, teamwork, engagement with data, organizational learning, and continuous improvement.
- Facilitating productive collaboration and professional learning communities. This means promoting teachers working together authentically with systems of support to improve their practice and enhance student learning.
- Managing personnel and resources strategically. This encompasses processes around strategic staffing and allocation of other resources (Grissom, Egalite, & Lindsay, 2021).

Guthery and Bailes (2022) found that there were direct correlations between principal retention and teacher retention rates. "Principals hire significantly more teachers who persist after they have led their first school for five or more years; however, the average principal in Texas leaves a school after four years, thus never realizing those gains. The authors' second main finding indicates that principals who enter an unstable school (less than 69% retention in the two years

prior to the principal's arrival) and stay at least five consecutive years can counteract prior instability" (p. 450).

Given the results of the NASSP national survey and the potential negative impacts on students and schools of losing over 40% of school principals within the next three years, the authors decided to initiate a study in their home state of New Mexico. The purpose of the study was to survey New Mexico school administrators to see if there were correlations between the state and national survey results. Additionally, the researchers sought to gain insight about the perceived value of school mentorship and preparation.

The research questions that the authors aimed to answer were the following:

1. How does the attrition rate of principals in New Mexico compare to the national average of 40%, as reported by the NASSP study?
2. To what extent do New Mexico principals prioritize factors such as work-life balance, salary, societal respect, and autonomy in their job satisfaction, and how does this compare to national studies?
3. What is the level of job satisfaction among principals in New Mexico?
4. Is there a correlation between mentoring programs and principal retention in New Mexico?

Utilizing a confidential online Qualtrics 26-question Likert survey instrument, the authors gathered data from 137 New Mexico K-12 public school administrators. The data collected was then quantitatively analyzed, with the following summarization of the analysis:

- Factors Ranking: The groups were separated by when they indicated they were leaving the principalship. An average ranking score for each of the factors was calculated, with averages arranged from smallest (most important) to largest (least important). This

provided an indication of which factors were considered most important by the respondents.

- Demographic Information: The groups were separated by when they indicated they were leaving the principalship. An item analysis was conducted to count how many respondents fit into each of the demographic factors listed in the survey.
- Correlation: The groups were separated by when they indicated they were leaving the principalship. A correlation coefficient was calculated to assess the degree of association between job satisfaction and each of the factors related to the job. This provided an indication of which job factors had a strong association with job satisfaction (i.e., which factors might cause principals to leave).

Selected Findings

Demographically, the study's participants ranged from school districts in large cities to small rural towns. Approximately 48% of principals came from suburban to large city districts, and 52% came from small town to rural districts (see Table 1).

Table 1: Location of School Principals' Districts

Location	N	%
Medium to Large City	49	35.77%
Small City	5	3.65%
Suburban	11	8.03%
Small Town	31	22.63%
Large Town	22	16.06%
Rural Town	19	13.87%

The survey participants' schools had predominantly Hispanic/Latino student populations (67.15%) (see Table 2).

Table 2: Ethnic Demographics of Schools

These demographic findings are significant as prior research has found that certain demographic characteristics of school populations impact principal retention. Levin and Bradley (2019) found, "Overall, the relationships between school and student characteristics and a principal's likelihood of leaving are much stronger than relationships between principals' personal characteristics and principal turnover. The most robust evidence from the studies reviewed indicate that schools with higher percentages of students from low-income families, students of color, and low-performing students are more likely to experience principal turnover" (p. 10).

Attrition Rate Comparison

One of the main questions the researchers wanted to answer was how the attrition rate of principals in New Mexico compares to the national average of 40%, as reported by the NASSP study. The findings showed that in New Mexico, 50.37% of the respondents stated they were leaving within the next three years, and 70.08% stated they intended to leave within five years (see Table 4).

Table 4: Respondents Intending to Leave Their Position Within the Next Ten Years

These New Mexico results led the researchers to examine the second research question regarding the prioritization of factors such as work-life balance, salary, societal respect, and autonomy in job satisfaction, and how this compares to national studies. The respondents were asked to rank what would most likely keep them from leaving their current position (see Table 5).

Table 5: Factors Ranked by Importance

Factor	Rank
Life/Work Balance	2.79
Salary (increase)	3.26
School Staffing	4.40
School Funding	4.73
Mentoring	4.96
Support	5.06
Respect	5.25
Authority	5.55

The most important factor for all respondents was life/work balance, followed by salary. These results were unsurprising to the researchers, who noted that the number of hours a principal must work per week is significant compared to other school district positions. A 2016 study by the United States Department of Education National Center for Education Statistics showed that most principals work a minimum of 58-60 hours per week.

The researchers then looked at what specifically was causing dissatisfaction with current positions. The findings showed that job stress, pressures from dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, and the current political climate related to education were the top three causes for job dissatisfaction (see Table 6). These findings correlate with the national survey (NASSP, 2021).

Factor	Dissatisfaction Score
Resources	0.194
Support	0.198
Autonomy	0.311
Factor	Dissatisfaction Score

Mentoring	0.065
Stress	-0.444
COVID-19	-0.410
Politics	-0.391
Shortages	-0.370

Table 6: Major Causes of Job Dissatisfaction

The researchers wanted to determine if those stating they were leaving their positions were moving to district-level positions (higher salaries, fewer hours) or leaving the profession entirely. Of 137 principals surveyed, 78 stated they were leaving their positions entirely, while 59 stated they were taking district-level positions (see Table 7).

Leaving to a District Position?	N	%
No	78	56.93%
Yes	59	43.06%

Table 7: Leaving to a District Position?

The final question addressed was the correlation between mentoring programs and principal retention in New Mexico. The researchers discovered that of the 137 principals surveyed, 103 received direct mentoring or coaching, while 34 did not (see Table 8). Projecting those intending to leave within one year, 32.14% did not receive mentoring or coaching, those leaving within 2-3 years, 24.39% did not receive mentoring or coaching, and those leaving within the next 4-5 years, 29.63% did not receive mentoring or coaching. While not receiving mentoring may have influenced approximately up to one-third of those leaving within the next five years,

Mentoring	N	%
No	34	24.81%
Yes	103	75.18%

the fact remains that two-thirds of principals did receive mentoring and are still planning to leave the profession, raising further questions.

Table 8: Mentoring Received

Conclusions

The study's results provide insights into the current state of school principalship in New Mexico. The findings indicate that the attrition rate of principals in New Mexico is higher than the national average, a cause for concern given the critical role that effective principals play in student achievement and the daily operation of schools. The study also sheds light on the factors important to school principals in New Mexico, with work-life balance being the most significant, followed by salary and job autonomy. Addressing these factors could be vital to retaining effective principals and reducing turnover rates.

The study highlights the need for mentoring programs to support and prepare aspiring school leaders. By providing effective mentoring and preparation opportunities, schools and districts can help ensure a pipeline of school leaders, essential for maintaining the quality of education and improving student outcomes.

Overall, the study's findings have important implications for policymakers, school leaders, and other stakeholders concerned with improving the quality of education in New Mexico and beyond. It is essential to address the challenges identified by the study to ensure that school principals have the support and resources they need to succeed in their roles and positively impact student outcomes.

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Near-Peer Mentoring: Empowering Underrepresented Students for Graduate Education

by

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This program evaluation examined a near-peer mentoring experience designed to increase diversity in graduate education, specifically exploring the types of support provided to underrepresented undergraduate students receiving mentorship from graduate students. First-generation, low-income (FGLI) college students and underrepresented minority (URM) students participated in near-peer mentoring and submitted reflections following mentoring meetings. Mentoring reflections were analyzed, and five types of mentoring support were identified: social-emotional support, technical coaching support, cultural sensitivity support, exposure to ideas and experiences support, and promoting self-reflection support. The relationship between enrollment in graduate school and the number of different types of mentoring support ($p<.05$) was statistically significant, as was the presence of social-emotional support ($p<.05$). Recommendations are provided on best practices to support peer mentoring.

Key Words: mentoring; underrepresented students; graduate school enrollment

Introduction

Diversity gaps persist in graduate education. The lack of diversity can affect the quality, breadth, and depth of intellectual contributions in a field and create a social injustice when barriers are present that prevent access to study a field of interest at advanced levels (Shultz & Stansbury,

2022). A ten-year effort to increase diversity in graduate education produced small gains (Okahana et al.; J., 2020). Enrollment of underrepresented minorities remains a small percentage of the graduate school population in all fields, with slight to negative change in first-time enrollment for Black/African Americans (0.3%), American Indian/Alaska Natives (-3.1%), and Native Hawaiians/Other Pacific Islanders (-2.2%) (Okahana et al., 2020). Additionally, first-generation college students enrolled in graduate education at a significantly lower percentage

(38%) compared to their peers whose parents attained a 4-year degree (51%) (NCES, 2021) and are far less likely than their peers to earn a graduate degree, and even far less likely to earn a doctoral degree (The Pell Institute for the Study of Opportunity in Higher Education, 2021). Additional support is needed to ensure this population's pursuit and successful completion of graduate degrees.

Underrepresented students were more likely to face obstacles to successful matriculation due to lacking a sense of belonging (Cahalan et al., 2021). According to Benisek (2022), those most different from their peers, such as first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented minority students, are more likely to experience impostor syndrome, which is perpetuated when underrepresented students are unable to see their identities reflected in the academic community. The data shows that most professors are from privileged backgrounds and are more likely to have highly educated parents (Schultz & Stansbury, 2022). Among full-time professors, 51% were White males; 28% were White females; 2% were Black males; 2% were Black females; 2% were Hispanic males; 2% were Hispanic females; 8% were Asian/Pacific Islander males; 4% were Asian/Pacific Islander females; and <1% were American Indian/Alaska Native (National Center for Education Statistics, 2022). Lack of representation in academia can create feelings of being less capable than others, fearing overestimation of their ability, and then being exposed as a fraud. This may prevent one from taking on new challenges or engaging fully in learning environments.

Underrepresented students often lack access to informal networks and information needed to be successful in their academic and professional lives, in which they are underrepresented (Thomas et al., 2007). A study by Thomas et al. (2007) reported that underrepresented graduate students had to go through their studies without a mentor to serve as an advocate or support system. Compounding the issue, most minority students are likely to be mentored by someone who is racially and/or culturally different from them, and this poses an issue in

academia where there may be pressures for faculty to reproduce themselves. Mentors who lack cross-cultural competence and awareness of differences across race and socioeconomic status or who are culturally insecure may create dysfunctional mentor-mentee relationships. When there were more similarities in cultural, ethnic, and socio-economic experiences and values between mentors and mentees, the mentoring relationship was more productive (Haeger & Fresquez, 2016). Furthermore, holistic mentoring that provides social-emotional support, culturally relevant mentoring, and skills-based training can assist marginalized populations in overcoming barriers that historically prevented underrepresented students from enrolling and persisting in graduate school (Edgcomb et al., 2010).

According to Haeger & Fresquez (2016), when graduate students worked with peer mentors, they discussed issues they faced while embarking on their graduate educational experience beyond the technical components of graduate study, such as navigating academia with unwritten rules and politics. Zaniewski and Reinholz (2016) concluded that students increased their sense of belonging when underrepresented students engaged in mentoring relationships addressing common challenges alongside a positive role model.

However, Gershenfeld's (2014) review of undergraduate mentoring programs revealed that while the research literature reports on the different mentoring programs that lead to positive results, descriptions of the primary mentoring program components were absent in 75% of studies, making replication difficult. Additionally, Zaniewski and Reinholz (2016) concluded that what is even less well-known is the nature of the mentoring relationships, with consideration of both mentor and mentee characteristics.

In this article, we evaluate a near-peer mentoring experience where underrepresented undergraduate students (referred to as "scholars" going forward) were matched with graduate students from the same demographic background to support enrollment and completion in graduate studies.

Research Questions

1) What types of mentoring support exist, if any, in near-peer mentoring between underrepresented undergraduate scholars and graduate student mentors?

2) What is the relationship, if any, between the types of support received in near-peer mentoring and graduate school enrollment?

Description of the Near-Peer Mentoring Experience

The near-peer mentoring experience described in this paper was executed in the context of a host educational opportunity program. The host opportunity program requires supervised faculty mentoring for all participants, largely focused on a mentored research project. However, a scholar's Faculty Research Advisor may or may not provide mentoring beyond the research project itself and, in addition, may or may not have the experience of being an underrepresented student / or have an understanding of the unique challenges that underrepresented students must navigate in higher education. Therefore, a near-peer mentoring experience was added and evaluated as an additional layer of support. The graduate student mentors were charged with supporting undergraduate scholars in meeting the four educational opportunity program goals: (1) participation in research or scholarly activity, (2) enrollment in graduate programs, (3) continued enrollment in graduate study, and (4) doctoral degree attainment.

The design of the near-peer mentoring experience includes several elements of engagement: recruitment, selection, compatibility evaluation, matching, training, and support and ongoing engagement. (See Figure 1).

RECRUITMENT**.** Interested graduate students were invited to apply to become near-peer mentors. Invitations to apply were distributed through the campus's graduate student

organizations (especially those with a mentoring component), professional development programs (e.g., graduate teacher training), and graduate academic advisors. In addition to biographical data, applicants were asked the following questions: (1) “Have you participated in an educational opportunity program in the past? If yes, in what capacity?” (2) “Why are you interested in serving as a mentor for underrepresented students?” and (3) “What experiences will you draw on in your mentoring to support underrepresented undergraduate students?”

SELECTION**.** Criteria for selecting applicants for the role of graduate mentor included undergraduate major, field of graduate study, and research area to ensure that mentors represented fields of study related to the current cohort of scholars. Applicants were also selected based on their perceived ability to relate to and support underrepresented students. Alumni of educational opportunity programs and applicants who identified as first-generation/low-income or underrepresented in higher education were prioritized. Also readily accepted were applicants who communicated an understanding that the pathway to graduate school is not always straightforward and especially difficult to navigate for students whose family/social network is not highly integrated into the higher education system. Other evaluation criteria included the applicant’s perceived ability to provide well-reasoned and accurate instruction in key areas and the applicant’s description of their past (positive) mentoring relationships.

COMPATIBILITY EVALUATION. All graduate student applicants who met the selection criteria were invited to participate in a mentor/mentee “meet and greet” event. Generally, the number of graduate student mentors at the event outnumbered the number of scholars. Prior to the event, mentors submitted their bios, which were distributed to scholars. Upon reviewing bios, scholars selected three mentors they wished to meet at the event. Mentors were assigned to tables (or breakout rooms for virtual events) while scholars rotated between tables during the event. The 1-hour event consisted of three sessions, allowing scholars to meet their selected mentors.

Since multiple scholars and multiple mentors were seated together during each session, mentors had an opportunity to meet each other and interact with mentors whom they may not have selected initially.

MATCHING. Following the “meet and greet” event, scholars were invited to provide their preferences (first, second, and third choices) regarding mentors to be matched with. Matches were created based primarily on scholar preference; however, in cases where multiple scholars preferred the same mentor, matching was based on staff perception of the match between a scholar’s needs and the mentor’s strengths. Mentors and scholars were notified of their match by email and invited to begin the meeting.

TRAINING. All mentors matched with a scholar were required to attend a 2-hour training session before meeting with their assigned scholar for the first time. Mentor training provided an overview of the educational opportunity program’s goals to ensure that mentoring aligned with the goals set for scholars. Mentors who were alumni of an educational opportunity program were invited to share their experience as scholars so that the entire cohort of mentors could better understand both the need and impact of these programs. All mentors were invited to introduce themselves and share about the nature and impact of their past mentoring experiences, specifically focusing on the elements of their past mentoring experience that significantly impacted their academic/career development. Mentors were then given mentoring scenarios to discuss in small groups before a large-group discussion of potential approaches to each scenario. Finally, mentors were instructed in promising mentoring practices.

SUPPORT AND ONGOING ENGAGEMENT. To support the quality of the mentoring experience, both mentors and scholars were supported by staff throughout the mentoring relationship. The cohort of mentors was connected via a Slack channel to discuss topics/scenarios that arose for them. In addition, both mentors and scholars completed summaries/reflections after each meeting. Scholars were also asked to provide topics they

wanted to discuss in their next meeting with their mentor. Beyond meeting with their mentees, mentors were included in other program events throughout the academic year. For example, mentors were invited speakers and/or panelists during monthly program meetings, mentors hosted drop-in help sessions where they provided feedback on graduate program application materials, conference presentations, and CVs, and mentors participated in weekly drop-in sessions designed for connection among scholars, mentors, and staff.

Methods

A mixed-methods program evaluation was conducted to determine the types of mentoring support that existed in near-peer mentoring between undergraduate scholars and graduate student mentors. The population consisted of 39 undergraduate scholars who submitted written reflections regarding each of their near-peer mentoring meetings as part of a non-credit course during the academic years of 2018 through 2022. The reflections prompted scholars to describe (1) their mentoring meeting with a focus on something new learned about graduate school not known prior to meeting with the graduate student mentor; (2) how the meeting positively or negatively influenced their outlook on enrolling in graduate school; and (3) discussion points in preparation for their next mentoring meeting. The study protocol was granted an exemption from formal review and identified as a program evaluation.

Using qualitative content analysis of these reflections, the authors identified the types of support provided through the mentoring experience. Scholar reflections were downloaded, uploaded to an Excel document, and de-identified. The authors segmented data from the student reflections using a priori and emergent codes around the types of mentoring support described. Discussion between the authors was used to reach a consensus on the types of mentoring support evidenced in the reflections. Five types of mentoring support were identified, and quotes were selected as documentation for each type.

Next, the authors independently reviewed each reflection and determined which types of mentoring were described within it. For the 5 types of support, reflections were scored at 0 for no evidence or 1 for evidence. The authors then compared ratings and discussed any difference until a complete consensus was reached. Using these ratings, the authors quantified how many types of mentoring support each scholar experienced. A score was computed for each scholar (Range 0-5), where a score of 5 indicates that that scholar experienced all 5 types of mentoring during their mentoring relationship.

Each scholar was also assigned a score based on graduate school enrollment: 1 for no graduate enrollment, 2 for a master's program, and 3 for a doctoral program. A Pearson Product Moment Correlation was conducted to examine the relationship between the types of mentoring support received and graduate school enrollment. Statistical analyses were performed using SPSS Version 28.

Findings

Population

Thirty-nine undergraduate scholars (female=23; male=16) participated in the near-peer mentoring between the academic years of 2018 and 2022. Of those, 82% (n=32) of the scholars identified as a first-generation college student and 18% (n=7) identified as a continuing-generation college student, 77% (n=30) met the U.S. Department of Education low-income threshold and 23% (n=9) did not meet the low-income threshold; 79% (n=31) identified as a member of an underrepresented minority group (Black or African American, Hispanic or Latino, Native American or Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander); and 72% (n=28) were both low-income and first-generation college students. Eighty-two percent (n=32) of the students were STEM majors; 18% (n=7) were Social Science majors. (See Table 1).

A total of 127 reflections were submitted and analyzed for scholars who graduated with a bachelor's degree between the academic years of 2018 and 2022. Both reviewers independently identified the types of mentoring support documented in each scholar's reflection. Inter-rater reliability was established by determining agreement regarding the type(s) of support evident in each reflection. Of the 127 reflections reviewed, an 89% inter-reliability was determined, indicating strong reliability. Ratings that differed were discussed until a 100% consensus was reached.

Findings related to RQ1

The qualitative study found five types of mentoring support evident in the scholar's reflections: social-emotional support, technical coaching, cultural sensitivity, exposure to ideas and resources, and facilitating self-reflection.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SUPPORT was defined as experiencing acceptance, reassurance, encouragement, and/or praise from their mentor. For example, this mentor took inventory and praised the scholar's past and present achievements. *"[My mentor] celebrated what had been accomplished in the last four years with me and reminded me to take some time to appreciate."* Scholars also frequently reported that discussions with their mentors helped them develop confidence that they would be successful in graduate school. *"[My Mentor] has made me feel more confident in my application decisions and my abilities to succeed in graduate school."*

Discussions of doubts and belonging were also identified as social-emotional support. Scholars reported being validated and encouraged following discussions with their mentors about their doubts that they would be successful in graduate school. "*This meeting has positively influenced my outlook on grad school by showing me that the difficulties I face now are real, and many people experience them. There are also practical ways to overcome these challenges.*" Their mentor reassured the scholar that they were not alone in experiencing

challenges. The mentor also shared examples of how others have addressed challenges and experienced subsequent success.

Another topic commonly addressed in mentoring meetings was the scholar's assumptions about the expectations that needed to be met in graduate school. Scholars often reported relief that the expectations they imagined they would need to meet were higher than the expectations their mentor reported experiencing. For example, some scholars imagined the need to develop a research project on their own. The mentor provided relief by explaining that graduate students work in partnership with their Research Advisor to develop a research project. *"I learned that it's okay to not fully understand the ins and outs of what your research project may look like going into your first year of grad school."* The scholar explained how this information eased doubts about "*having to come up with a whole project on my own."* Another scholar imagined that certain attributes characterized graduate students and faculty. The scholar apparently feared that if they did not "fit the (imagined) mold," then they would not belong in graduate school. Interaction with their mentor appeared to dispel this way of thinking. *"It was very relieving in my meeting to find out that [my mentor] likes to play video games just like me and that I was able just to have a comfortable conversation with somebody at that level of education."*

TECHNICAL COACHING SUPPORT was defined as receiving guidance from their mentor regarding how best to accomplish tasks and activities that scholars were actively engaged in as undergraduate students. Applying for undergraduate research opportunities, preparing CVs, designing presentations for research conferences, and selecting graduate programs were everyday activities involving technical coaching from mentors. Common statements included, "*[My mentor] gave me a lot of information on how to apply … and what the process looks like."* Additionally, mentors and scholars discussed how to improve personal statements, and most specifically, "*we discussed how to upset the expected format so that my statement would stand out from others."* Last, these examples demonstrate how the mentor advised talking to other

graduate students at potential graduate schools. One scholar stated, *"I learned that it's very important to talk to the graduate students before choosing a school because the school or advisor might have a big name but might not be as good at mentoring."* Another scholar stated, *"[My mentor] helped me figure out questions to ask other graduate students in the department of the school I'm interested in attending."*

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY SUPPORT was defined as discussions of unique perspectives and experiences related to being first-generation, low-income, and/or underrepresented students in higher education. Within this category of support, scholars reported discussions around their experience and their mentor's experience in higher education. For example: *"[My mentor] is a fellow person of color in a field not so different from my own, so it's always good to hear his own methods of navigating academia/college campuses."* This scholar's statement highlights the significance of connecting undergraduate scholars with graduate student mentors of similar backgrounds.

In the next example, the scholars benefited from learning about their mentor's experience of leaving home for the first time to pursue their graduate degree. The scholar reported being inspired and bolstered in pursuing this next stage of their education and life: *"I asked my mentor what it was like for her to leave her home behind to go off and study for a PhD in a totally new environment. This is something that has been on my mind for the longest time… never being more than an hour drive away from friends and family. She told me about her experience, and now I am even more excited to be able to start mine!"* This example also highlights the significance of connecting undergraduate scholars with graduate student mentors of similar background.

In the last example, the scholar experienced support and reassurance regarding the desire to balance educational decisions with the value for family. It appears that - prior to speaking with the mentor - the scholar believed that considering the family in the graduate program selection

was somewhat unique to them. *"It positively affected my outlook on graduate schools because [my mentor] told me it's okay to choose a graduate school that works best for my personal and family needs, which is important to me."* This example highlights the significance of connecting undergraduate scholars with graduate student mentors of similar backgrounds.

PROVIDING EXPOSURE TO IDEAS AND EXPERIENCES, SUPPORT was defined as providing exposure to new ideas and experiences related to what it may be like to be a graduate student. For example, one scholar stated, *"I didn't understand a lot of the true dynamics of being in a PhD program … [my mentor] has shared his experience"* and another scholar stated "[I learned] *more about what graduate school looks like on a day-to-day basis."*

Beyond descriptions of their experiences as graduate students, many mentors also provided opportunities for scholars to experience first-hand what it is like to be a graduate student. Scholars wrote about touring their mentor's research lab *"to show me what she does as a graduate student".* Another scholar shared how they "*learned [about] … the process of how graduate students go through publications for a conference. My mentor was able to let me shadow her meeting with her advisors and meet her fellow PhD students."* Other scholars shared how they observed milestone assessments related to completing a PhD: *"I learned … I would have to give a presentation to a board of faculty members in my graduate study to be able to advance to candidacy… I got a first-hand look at how I could organize my presentation to convey the results of my research as a graduate student for this panel of faculty members."*

Exposure to these ideas and experiences translated to the scholars seeing themselves as graduate students in the future. One scholar stated, *"Explaining what she did gave me a good outlook on the future of the things I could be doing."* Another scholar shared a similar sentiment in this statement: *"My mentor introduced me to… what she does on a daily basis and how she*

manages her research with her other schoolwork. This gave me a good picture of how things will be in the near future."

Even more striking was that scholars expressed confidence that their experience as a graduate student would be positive because their mentor's experience has been positive. *"My mentor seemed to be very happy with her research and was confident in what she is doing so it made me think that good times are ahead!"* One chief concern among scholars included whether graduate school would be enjoyable in addition to being rigorous. *"I've imagined that it would be difficult to find the time for fun, and so hearing [my mentor] talk about her experience gets rid of some of my worries."*

Other areas of great concern for scholars were whether graduate school allowed for healthy work-life balance and whether graduate students can find financial stability while pursuing their degree. One scholar stated, "*As an undergraduate, I've always worked during all 4 years, but I have learned that being a graduate student in of itself is a job, and the compensation typically allows for students not to need to find additional employment."* One scholar stated how mentoring has had a positive impact on the perspective on graduate school because "it *made me realize that I will be able to find ways to make sure that I will financially be okay during it."* Misconceptions in any of these areas could deter pursuing graduate studies; however, as evidenced by these quotes, scholars' concerns were reduced or alleviated by their mentors' descriptive and first-hand exposure.

FACILITATING SELF-REFLECTION SUPPORT was identified when students re-analyzed their priorities and goals after meeting with their mentor. Self-reflection was also identified when students changed their view of/outlook on their potential to be successful in graduate school after meeting with their mentor.

After speaking with the mentor, this scholar self-reflects regarding the priorities in selecting a graduate program, specifically that the priority on an institution's competitive ranking may not be the most critical selection criteria to rely on: *"[My mentor] definitely stressed the importance of making finding a good department and PI a priority. I think I've fallen into the trap of applying to certain programs because of prestige. It was good to have someone's personal input on this."*

Other areas of reflection included priorities in a future career, specifically noting that they have become confident that the work they will accomplish as graduate students and beyond will be fulfilling and impactful. One scholar stated, "*I genuinely love the idea of giving my entire life into research in engineering and science…the research process really satisfies my desire to do something that positively affects the world, since I can actively see my progress."*

Self-reflection regarding the potential for success in graduate school was also common as it related to positive mentor affirmation. The following statements suggest the recognition that scholars experienced increased self-confidence in their abilities to be successful in graduate school when they remember that others have confidence in their abilities. One scholar stated, *"The meeting with [my mentor] positively affirmed my outlook on grad school because it's good for me to see how much other people I've worked with believe in me. I forget sometimes."* Another reinforced this idea with this statement, *"Meeting with my mentor …helped me see just how much control I have over my situation and that I can do anything with the right drive and mindset. Can't wait to meet with him again!"*

This scholar self-reflects regarding the potential for success in graduate school, explicitly recognizing success because of the effort and the faculty support received when struggles arise. Example: *"I feel like I have had more than my share of failures, perhaps even too many, so I was wondering if someone like me would even be able to succeed in graduate school if admitted. She assured me that if I get admitted, if would be because they felt as if I could do it. She told me that they want you to succeed. So to me, this kind of just showed me that I*

shouldn't be as worried as I am about being a graduate student because even though graduate school is going to be tough, as long as I keep up that drive and motivation to want to succeed, I'll be able to find someone who can help me."

The self-reflection evident among scholars highlights the profound effect that our interactions with others can have on our decision-making and view of ourselves, both of which, in turn, shape our personal and professional trajectories.

Findings related to RQ2

Seventy-seven percent of scholars enrolled in graduate school. Table 2 provides disaggregated data regarding the demographics of scholars who enrolled in a doctoral program, a master's program, or did not enroll in a graduate program.

Table 3 provides quantitative data regarding how many types of mentoring support scholars experienced (min = 0; max = 5). Scholars who enrolled in doctoral programs reported the highest number of different types of mentoring support used (n=16, M=3.37, SD=1.02), followed by those who enrolled in master's programs (n=14, M=3.14, SD=.770). Scholars who did not enroll in a graduate program reported the fewest types of mentoring support (n=9, Mean Score (M)=2.33, SD=1.41). The overall mean for all scholars was 3.05 (n=39, SD=1.09).

Table 4 provides quantitative data regarding the percentage of scholars experiencing the five types of support. Forty-four percent of scholars reported evidence of social-emotional support. Fifty-six percent of students who enrolled in doctoral programs, 50% of students who enrolled in masters programs, and 11% of students who did not enroll in a graduate program reported support in this area.

Sixty-seven percent of scholars reported evidence of technical support. Support in this area was reported by 75% of students who enrolled in doctoral programs, 64% of students who enrolled in master's programs, and 56% of students who did not enroll in a graduate program.

Three percent of scholars reported evidence of cultural support. Support in this area was reported by 6% of students who enrolled in doctoral programs and 0% of students who enrolled in master's programs or did not enroll in a graduate program.

Forty-nine percent of scholars reported evidence of exposure/experience support. Support in this area was reported by 50% of students who enrolled in doctoral programs, 64% of students who enrolled in master's programs, and 22% of students who did not enroll in a graduate program.

Thirteen percent of scholars reported evidence of support for self-reflection. Support in this area was reported by 6% of students who enrolled in doctoral programs, 14% of students who enrolled in master's programs, and 22% of students who did not enroll in a graduate program.

Correlation coefficients presented in Table 5 indicated a significant relationship between the number of different types of support and graduate enrollment with an *r* value of .353 (p=.02). Additionally, a significant relationship existed between social-emotional support and graduate enrollment with an *r* value of .328 (p=.04). No statistically significant relationships were found to exist between graduate enrollment and the following types of support: technical coaching had a *r* value of .163 (p=.32); cultural sensitivity had a *r* value of .171(p=.29); exposure to ideas and experiences had a *r* value of .170 (p=.30); and promoting self-reflection had a *r* value of -.187(p=.25).

Discussion

According to this program evaluation, graduate student near-peer mentors provided five types of support for scholars: social-emotional, technical coaching, cultural sensitivity, exposure to ideas and resources, and facilitating self-reflection. Scholars consistently reported the positive impact of mentoring support on their perspectives on graduate school enrollment.

Recommendations based on the literature review and the findings of this evaluation suggest the following best practices for facilitating an impactful near-peer mentoring program. (See Table 6). First, recruit mentors based on mentees' similarities in background (ethnicity, race, culture, identities, experience of being an educational opportunity program participant) and field of study. Thomas et al. (2007) believed the benefit of pairing mentors from similar backgrounds was that underrepresented students could benefit from increased informal networks to enhance success in their academic and professional lives. When training graduate student mentors, ensure their understanding of program goals and welcome them as partners in meeting those goals. Edgcomb et al. (2010) found that near-peer mentors provided a larger network of collaborators when needing feedback and may be more accessible and approachable than faculty.

Continue to support mentors by providing examples of the different types of support mentors can offer, with a focus on asset-based mentoring where strengths are identified, understood, and nurtured to strengthen self-efficacy, resilience, and belonging. According to Benisek (2002), those most different from their peers, such as first-generation, low-income, and underrepresented minority students, are more likely to experience impostor syndrome, often preventing a sense of belonging. Feelings of not being as capable as others, fear of others overestimating their ability, and exposure as an impostor may prevent one from taking on new challenges or engaging fully in learning environments. Another recommendation is to encourage graduate student mentors to share their stories as a model of their value in a diversity-valued environment. Edgcomb et al. (2010) discussed the importance of holistic mentoring, including social-emotional, cultural relevancy, and skills-based training, to support students in overcoming barriers to matriculation. Last, use reflections as a key assessment in progress monitoring the value of the mentoring relationship.

Limitations of this evaluation include the use of self-reported data. Participants may respond in a way that they believe is desired or expected. Findings are limited to the specific population of this evaluation and are non-generalizable. Because this study intended to evaluate student perceptions of support provided in near-peer mentoring and how those supports influenced scholars' outlook on graduate school enrollment, changes in student perceptions could not be determined. Additional mentoring meetings may have occurred without a reflection submitted to document the meeting. Finally, other factors influenced participant enrollment in graduate school, including faculty mentoring, other scholars in the program, program services, conference attendance, graduate school visits, and other activities beyond the program's scope.

Future studies should investigate the value of near-peer mentoring in other educational opportunity programs from other universities to compare findings with this evaluation. Future studies could also investigate the influence of near-peer mentoring with scholars pursuing graduate studies to provide insight into the long-term outcomes of the mentoring and include survey data from both the graduate student mentors and scholar mentees to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the influence of the near-peer mentoring on both the mentor and mentee. Finally, the impact of near-peer mentoring on professional identity could be examined to identify best practices in designing near-peer mentoring training to improve intentionality in developing a positive professional identity as a scholar.

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Figure 1

Design of the Near-Peer Mentoring Experience

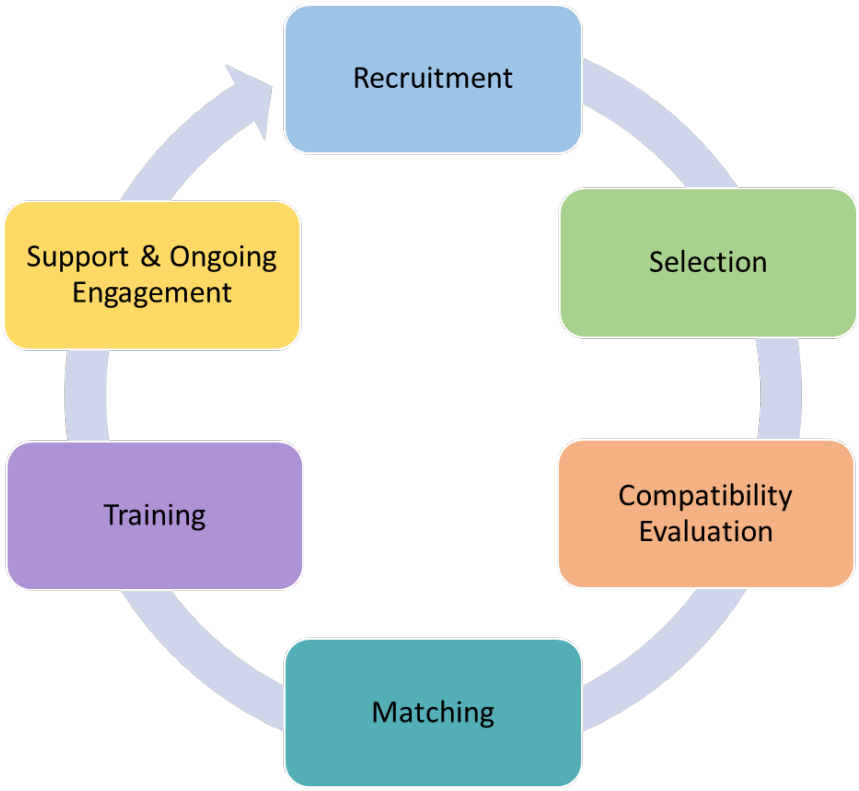

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Scholar - Data, 2018 - 2022 (n=39)

	Percentage	n
Gender		

Female	59%	23
Male	41%	16
Program Eligibility		
Continuing-Generation	12%	7
* First-Generation	82%	32
Does not meet Low-Income Threshold	23%	9
Meets Low-Income Threshold	77%	30
Does not identify as an Underrepresented Minority	21%	8
Underrepresented Minority	79%	31
Asian	5%	2
Black/African American	10%	4
Hispanic or Latino	64%	25
Native American or Alaska Native	3%	1
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	0%	0
White	18%	7
Major Field of Study		
Social Science	18%	7
STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering & Math)	82%	32

*Notes. *First-Generation Classification defined as neither parent earned a bachelor's degree, and Continuing Education Classification defined as either parent earned a 4-year bachelor's degree.*

***Low-Income Threshold defined as family taxable income did not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level amount. The family poverty levels are established by the Census Bureau for determining poverty status and are published annually by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services in the Federal Register (https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/trio/incomelevels.html).*

Table 2

Percentage of Scholars' Graduate Enrollment Based on Demographics

Demographic	No Enrollment	Masters	Doctoral	Total
Overall	23%	36%	41%	100%
Gender				
Female	13%	25%	21%	59%
Male	10%	10%	21%	41%
Program Eligibility				
Continuing-Generation	2%	8%	8%	18%
*First-Generation	21%	28%	33%	82%
Not Low-Income	8%	5%	10%	23%
* Low-Income	15%	31%	31%	77%
Not Underrepresented Minority	8%	8%	6%	21%
*Underrepresented Minority	15%	28%	36%	79%
Major Field of Study				
Social Science	5%	13%	0%	18%
STEM	18%	23%	41%	82%

n=39

Table 3

Mean Scores of Types of Mentoring Supports Based on Graduate Enrollment

Enrollment	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Number of Different Types of Support			
Did not enroll	9	2.33	1.41
Enrolled in Master's Program	14	3.14	.770
Enrolled in Doctoral Program	16	3.37	1.02
Overall	39	3.05	1.09

Number of Different Types of Support Range (0-5).

Table 4

Percentage of Students Reporting Each Type of Mentoring Support Based on Graduate Enrollment

Enrollment	*n*	*%*
Social-Emotional Support		
Did not enroll	9	11%
Enrolled in Master's Program	14	50%

Enrolled in Doctoral Program	16	56%
Overall	39	44%

Technical Support

Did not enroll	9	56%
Enrolled in Master's Program	14	64%
Enrolled in Doctoral Program	16	75%
Overall	39	67%

Cultural Support

Did not enroll	9	0%
Enrolled in Master's Program	14	0%
Enrolled in Doctoral Program	16	6%
Overall	39	3%

Exposure/Experiences Support

Did not enroll	9	22%
Enrolled in Master's Program	14	64%
Enrolled in Doctoral Program	16	50%
Overall	39	49%

Self Reflection Support

Did not enroll	9	22%
Enrolled in Master's Program	14	14%
Enrolled in Doctoral Program	16	6%
Overall	39	13%

.

N=39

Table 5

Relationship Between Types of Mentoring Support Provided and Graduate Enrollment

Scale	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Number of Types of Support	–						
2. Graduate Enrollment	.353*	–					
3. Social Emotional Support	.435**	.328*	–				
4. Technical Support	.033	.163	-.146	–			
5. Cultural Support	.291	.171	.185	.115	–		
6. Exposure/Experiences Support	.238	.170	-.029	-.181	.336	–	
7. Self-Reflection Support	-.089	-.187	-.182	-.108	.062	-.220	–

*p<.05. **p<.01.

Table 6

Recommendations on Best Practices to Support Near-Peer Mentoring

Near-Peer Mentoring Elements	Recommendation
Recruitment	● Self-selected mentor-mentee matches based on similarities: background (ethnicity, race, culture, identities), experiences (educational opportunity program participant), field of study ● It is important to screen mentors and understand their motivation for wanting to mentor

Training	● Encourage the use of the different types of support and the importance of including multiple types of support in mentoring ● Move away from deficit thinking where excuses are tolerated; instead, focus on asset-based mentoring where strengths are identified, understood, and nurtured to strengthen self-efficacy, resilience, and belonging + cultural capital is highlighted (example: I can do hard things and I can do this based on being able to do hard things in the past) ● Transparent discussions about impostor syndrome to normalize the feeling that one does not belong and to share different strategies that work to overcome this in difficult moments
Mentoring	● Provide opportunities for mentor-mentee meetings, but also provide additional opportunities for mentoring to occur in different environments (panel discussions, working meetings, informal group conversations, etc.). ● Encourage all to share their story toward appreciating the uniqueness and value one can bring to an environment and understand one's ability to make contributions in the way only you can make.
Evaluation	● Progress monitoring to ensure mentors are reporting positive effects of mentoring

	● Reflections to support mentees in pursuing their needs and continually analyzing their goals and experiences ● Check-ins by program staff to keep mentors/mentees accountable for meeting and reflecting.

The Efficacy of Early Assessment Grades: Impact on Retention

by

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Final grades are the primary assessment tool used to measure students' acquired knowledge in higher education. However, some colleges and universities employ midterm grades as an early feedback tool for students and their advisors. In the economically fragile climate many institutions of higher learning face, an important question is whether early assessments can serve as a student retention tool. Our university's faculty post midterm grades and early assessment grades (pre-midterm). This study aimed to examine students' semester-long progress in Spanish classes by looking at the relationship between early assessment, midterm, and final grades. We found that early assessment and midterm grades strongly predict final grades, suggesting that early assessments may be an essential tool for colleges and universities to intervene with struggling students.

Key Words: early assessment, grades, retention, higher education

Introduction

Some higher education institutions have implemented midterm grades as a progress report for college students. Receiving a provisional grade midway through a semester can alter a student's trajectory—either positively or negatively, depending on the student's perception. Grades are generally conceptualized as an outcome of the educational process; however, they may alternately be considered an input, particularly in the case of pre-final grades. Receiving a low grade in the middle of a semester may affect a student's subsequent effort and learning throughout the remainder of the term (Gray & Bunte, 2022). Over the years, studies have shown that midterm grades are a good indicator of students' overall performance in a class over a semester. For example, Jensen and Barron (2014) found that midterm and first-exam grades were strongly correlated to overall final grades.

In more recent years, many colleges and universities have begun to implement early assessment grades—in addition to midterm grades—as an early alert tool for advisors to support students who may need additional academic assistance or may be experiencing financial, familial, or emotional hardships. Early assessment grades can be considered an early intervention tool designed to help identify struggling students before it is too late to correct the course. Through these early alerts, students who are struggling academically can get the appropriate assistance needed. Students feel less embarrassed being offered help early when they only miss a few assignments or have received a bad grade on a test rather than failing a course. By intervening early, students have a better opportunity to improve their overall grades and achieve academic success.

The importance of early assessment grades is potentially far reaching for both the student and the institution. Others, including Nowakowski (2006) have pointed to the positive impact of early assessment on students' resilience, in addition to overall retention. It is essential that this type of feedback is provided to students early on in a semester to get students the necessary support to improve their grades.

After early assessment grades are posted, many advisors reach out to their advisees to set up a face-to-face meeting and develop a personalized academic plan for the student. Advisors can help the advisee realize whether they need a professional or peer tutor, academic coaching to help the student get organized with time management and study skills, or counseling if they are struggling with the emotional aspect of college.

According to Main and Ost (2014) and Oettinger (2002), students who are on grade boundaries before the final exam—and who are aware of their grade going into the final exam—score higher on the final exam, on average, compared to other students. These results suggest that the pre-final assessment motivates students as they enter the final stretch of the course.

In this study, we compared early assessment grades, midterm grades, and final grades of students taking undergraduate Spanish courses to assess whether the provisional grades were predictive of final grades. We performed some additional post-hoc analysis on demographic measures of interest known to contribute to grades.

Method

Participants

We collected assessment data on 278 students enrolled in undergraduate Spanish courses from Spring 2022 through Fall 2023, following the height of the COVID-19 pandemic (106 Males and 172 Females). The Male/Female proportion is equivalent to our overall undergraduate student body. Students were distributed across class levels as follows: 57 students in Sp101, 211 students in Sp102, 7 students in Sp201, and 3 students in Sp202. The data represent 90 students from Spring 2022, 69 from Fall 2022, 60 from Spring 2023, and 59 from Fall 2023. Among the 278 students, 154 took their class in-person, compared to 124 online.

Procedure

In each class, students were evaluated for Early Assessment Grades (EAG) based on attendance, one chapter of homework, one quiz, and one exam. For Midterm Grades (MG), students were evaluated based on their attendance, two chapters of homework, two quizzes, and two exams. For Final Grades (FG), students were evaluated based on their attendance, five chapters of homework, five quizzes, five exams, one oral exam, one writing assessment, and one cumulative final exam.

Predictions

We made 5 predictions:

1. Early Assessment and Midterm Grades will correlate with Final Grades.

2. Females will score higher than males across all three assessment instruments, consistent with the breadth of research on gender and academic performance.

3. Assessment scores in online courses will be higher than scores in face-to-face courses, consistent with some of the literature on grade inflation online.

4. As students advance through the four class levels, their assessment scores will increase progressively as they become more familiar with the language.

5. Grades will vary by semester as school returns to in-person classes following COVID-19.

Results

Prediction 1: Correlations between Assessments

We computed a correlation matrix using the aggregated EAG, MG, and FG grades across all 278 students in the sample. All three assessment measures were highly correlated with one another: EAG and MG (r=.783, p<.001), EAG and FG (r=.627, p<.001), MG and FG (r=.700, p<.001). See Table 1.

Table 1

Correlations between the Three Assessment Measures

	Early Assessment	Midterm	Final
Early Assessment	r=1.0	r=.783, p<.001	r=.627, p<.001

Midterm	r=1.0	r=.700, p<.001
Final		r=1.0

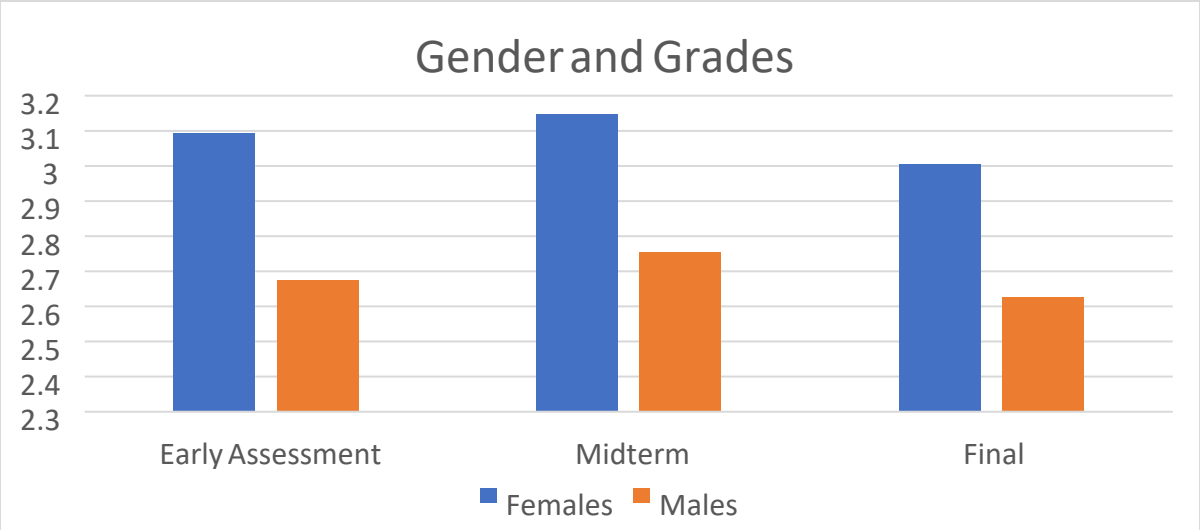
Prediction 2: Impact of Gender on Assessment

We performed a series of One-way ANOVAs to investigate the role of gender on assessment. In each of the analyses, the Independent Variable (IV) was Gender (Male or Female), and the Dependent Variable (DV) was the Assessment grade (EAG, MG, or FG), converted from a letter grade into a GPA score (0-4). All the analyses were statistically significant. See Table 2. On all three analyses, females performed significantly higher than males:

- EAG: $F(1,276)=7.257$, $p=.007$, Mean EAGs: Female 3.095, Male 2.676.
- MG: $F(1,276)=8.578$, $p=.004$, Mean EAGs: Female 3.148, Male 2.755.
- FG: $F(1,276)=8.937$, $p=.003$, Mean EAGs: Female 3.004, Male 2.626.

Table 2

Gender and Grades



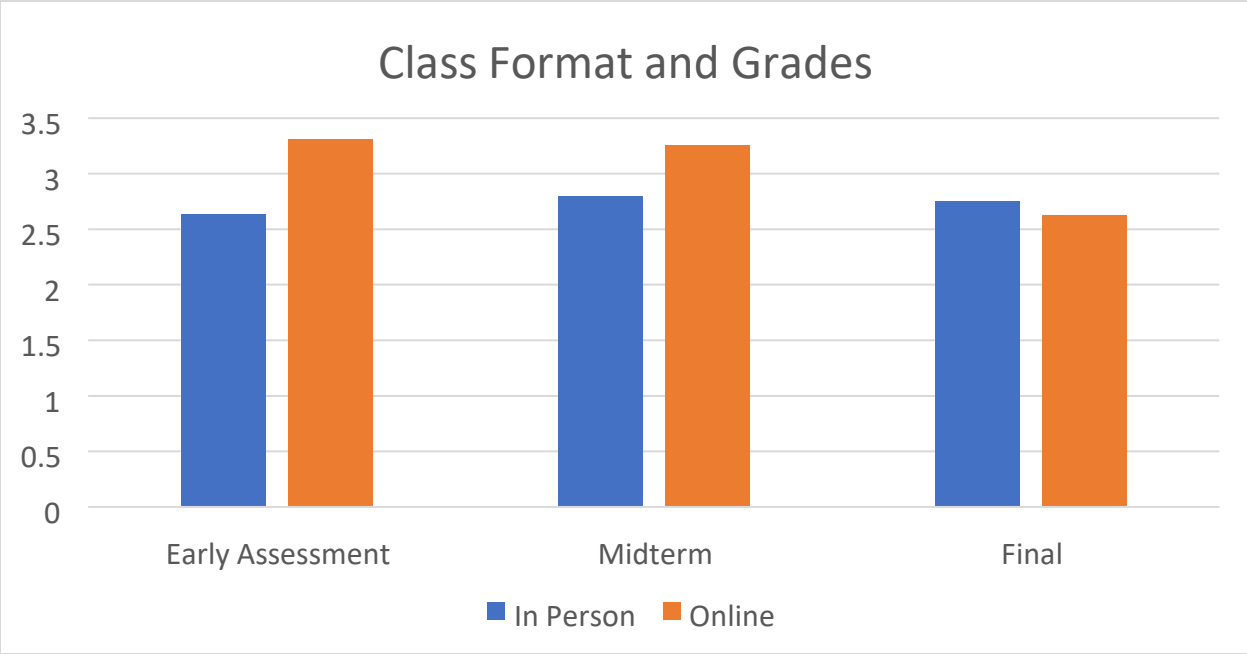
Prediction 3: Impact of Class Format on Assessment

We performed a series of One-way ANOVAs to investigate the role of class format on assessment. In each of the analyses, the IV was Class Format (in person or online), and the DV was the Assessment grade (EAG, MG, or FG), converted from a letter grade into a GPA score (0-4). While students performed significantly better online at both early assessment and midterm, the effect washed away by the final assessment (See Table 3):

- EAG: Overall, online students performed significantly better at Early Assessment. ($F(1,276)=20.981$, $p<.001$, Mean EAGs: In person 2.632, Online 3.311).
- MG: Overall, online students performed significantly better at Midterm. ($F(1,276)=12.209$, $p<.001$, Mean MGs: In person 2.795, Online 3.250).
- FG: There was no difference in final grades when comparing online to in person. ($F(1,276)=3.833$, $p<.051$, Mean FGs: In person 2.751, Online 2.995).

Table 3

Class Format and Grades



Prediction 4. What is the impact of Class level on Assessment?

To examine the impact of class level on grades, a One-way ANOVA with Post-hoc Linear Trend Analysis was completed using class level (101, 102, 201, and 202) as the IV and assessment grade as the DV (EAG, MG, or FG). None of the analyses reached or neared statistical significance. This analysis is likely compromised by low power, as the number of students taking Sp201 and Sp202 was very low compared to the other class levels.

Prediction 5: What is the impact of the semester?

We were interested in whether COVID-19 may have impacted grading overall. Spring 2022 was the last semester at our university when classes were fully online and synchronous. Starting in Fall 2022, all classes were back in person. We predicted that grades would be impacted by the change back to pre-pandemic learning.

We performed a series of one-way ANOVAs to investigate the role of semesters in assessment.

In each of the analyses, the IV was the semester (Spring 2022, Fall 2022, Spring 2023, or Fall 2023), and the DV was the Assessment grade (EAG, MG, or FG), converted from a letter grade into a GPA score (0-4).

For EAG, the overall One-way ANOVA was significant ($F(3,274)=7.474$, $p<.001$). Post hoc Tukey tests revealed the effect was driven by a significant decline in grades in Fall 2022; all pairwise comparisons with Fall 2022 were significant at the $p<.01$ level.

For MG, the overall One-way ANOVA was also significant ($F(3,274)=4.909$, $p=.002$). Post hoc Tukey tests revealed the effect was also driven by Fall 2022. Fall 2022 grades were significantly lower than Spring 2022 and Spring 2023 grades.

For FG, the overall One-way ANOVA was significant ($F(3,274)=2.637$, $p=.05$). Post hoc Tukey tests revealed that Fall 2022 grades were significantly lower than Spring 2022 grades.

Discussion

Four of our five predictions were at least partially supported. We predicted that Early Assessment and Midterm Grades would correlate with Final Grades. This prediction was fully supported. The results suggest that both early assessment and midterm grades are predictive of final grades. This information can help to identify students early in the semester who are struggling, with the hope that they can course correct with enough early warning. These findings have implications for retention, especially in today's climate when colleges struggle with declining enrollment.

We predicted that females would score higher than males across all three assessment instruments, consistent with the breadth of research on gender and academic performance. This prediction was fully supported. At every assessment level and across formats (online and in- person combined), females outperformed males at significance levels of $p<.01$. This and similar research raise serious questions about the appropriateness of timed exams for male

students. Colleges may want to consider whether there are other methods to assess comprehension among male students.

We predicted that scores on assessments in online courses would be higher than assessments in person, consistent with much of the literature showing grade inflation online. This prediction was partially supported. Assessments in online courses were significantly higher at both early assessment and midterm; however, the effect washed away by the final assessment. These results suggest that, at least in a course in which grades are based on a combination of assignments (including ones in which cheating is difficult), the concern about online grade inflation may not be fully warranted. More research is clearly needed to understand the impact of online learning on grades fully.

We predicted that as students progressed through the four class levels, assessments would get progressively higher as students became more familiar with the language and chose to continue taking Spanish-language courses. This was our only prediction that failed to attain any statistical support. We believe that our results may be partly attributable to low power, as most of our sample (96.4%) were in Spanish 101 and 102, making trend analysis difficult.

Finally, we predicted that grades would vary by semester. We made this prediction because our data spanned the period during which our university was fully closed due to COVID-19, through our soft reopening when many classes remained online, and to our return to regular learning. This prediction was supported. Fall 2022 was the first semester when the university returned to fully regular, in-person classes, and during this semester, scores dipped for all three assessment grades.

In combination, our results reveal important nuances about assessment in higher education and speak to the need for more research.

Conclusion

In recent years, higher education has been struggling to retain students. For this reason, higher education needs to have serious conversations about retention. Early Assessment Grades may be one effective strategy to intervene early with struggling students with the overall goal of retention. By having both instructors and advisors reach out early to struggling students to set up an effective academic plan for success, students can ultimately reach academic achievement by the end of a semester and remain enrolled in an institution of higher education.

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Writing for Peace in a Prison Classroom

By Wes Atkinson

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Education in prison classrooms faces unique challenges but also opens unique potential. Post-secondary Prison Education Programs (PEPs) have emerged nationwide since the restoration of Pell funding to incarcerated people. Peace Studies approaches to nonviolence, and trauma-informed teaching can be incorporated into many prison college classrooms. College composition and rhetoric courses are uniquely situated to be transformative for students in the carceral classroom. Experience from and anecdotal evidence of teaching "inside" support a new practice of teaching writing in the prison classroom: "Writing for Peace." Writing for Peace is loosely defined as nonargumentative, compassionate writing that examines the root causes of violence, transforms conflict, and builds community. Joe Baker's podcast, "Doin' Time with Joe," is examined as an example of inside student Writing for Peace.

Key Words: composition, prison education, peace studies

Introduction

There may be no classroom better suited for teaching than a classroom in a prison. The prison is a site of maximum and constant state control of human bodies. Just as a prison is a space set aside for deprivation of liberty in an otherwise liberal society, within the prison, the classroom is a special space with the potential for liberation of thought, ideological exploration, and academic freedom. Malcolm X put it best:

In the world's hectic pace today, there is no time for meditation or deep thought. A prisoner has time that he can put to good use. I'd put prison second to college as the best place for a man to go if he needs to do some thinking. If he's motivated, in prison he can change his life. – Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* p428

There may be no better prepared student to approach Peace Studies than the incarcerated student. Peace Studies here examine the root causes of violence to discover methods to transform violent conflict through nonviolent means. Students who are incarcerated are often

first victims of violence in its physical, structural, cultural, and environmental forms before they become perpetrators of physical violence. Students “inside” who seek peaceful futures must overcome the violence of their past and present conditions. Nelson Mandela writes, “As I walked out the door toward the gate that would lead to my freedom, I knew if I didn’t leave my bitterness and hatred behind, I’d still be in prison.” (p. 559)

There may be no sentence better composed to develop writing skills than a prison sentence. The student inside has access to little more than food, shelter, conversation, and time to read and write, often for years at a stretch. Many students use this time writing autobiographies, novels, essays, and poems as a creative outlet. Communication with the outside world is largely through letters that are read and reread. On the smaller scale of daily routine, the writing process is not regularly interrupted by the increasingly invasive media penetrations into sustained thinking faced by those outside the walls.

There may be no moment better seized to build new educational programs in prisons than the present. In 2023, after a thirty-year hiatus, Pell Grants once again became available to students who are incarcerated. Prison Education Programs (PEPs) are emerging nationwide as public and private colleges and universities partner with correctional facilities to provide technical, liberal arts, and other post-secondary certificates and degrees.

This essay is a reflection on teaching writing for peace in a prison class. Having taught and co-taught several courses with a range of humanities topics over several years in a correctional facility in Tennessee, I have found writing for peace to be exceptionally well-suited for students in prison. I will share my experiences with course design, lesson planning, and assignment writing. In place of a conclusion, I will turn to the voice of Joe Baker, an exceptional student and mentor who produces a podcast, *Doin’ Time with Joe*. Baker’s February 28, 2023 episode, “How to identify your trauma!” is a vivid example of how examining the root causes of violence in one’s own life can restore peace and transform a life into a commitment to nonviolence.

I write this essay as a suggestion for writing for peace in prison education programs. Composition and rhetoric courses are the foundation for liberal arts education and argumentation is fundamental to composition and rhetoric, along with description, narration, and exposition. Writing for peace is an alternative to argumentation with the goal not of persuasion or domination, but rather compromise and reconciliation. Writing for peace is a practice situated for a prison environment and thrives in a context of trauma-informed teaching. The goal of writing for peace is community.

History, setting, and students

I taught and co-taught credit and non-credit-bearing courses at a correctional facility in the Tennessee Department of Corrections from 2018-2022. Since that time, I've been building a Prison Education Program partnership between Austin Peay State University and the Tennessee Department of Corrections. I have co-taught with Dr. Audrey Anton and Dr. Steve Kershner, who initiated me into the facility and continue to teach "Inside-Out" courses through Western Kentucky University, and Dr. Dwonna Goldstone. Subjects include philosophy, ethics, classics, African-American studies, humanities, literature, peace studies, and writing.

The location is DeBerry Special Needs Facility, a men's prison that serves as a center for health care for people who are incarcerated and require medical treatment for conditions ranging from mental health to diabetes. It also has a hospice ward – people at the end of their lives may not be at the end of their life sentence. It is located on the outskirts of Nashville and is adjacent to Riverbend Maximum Security Prison, which houses Tennessee's death row. There are about 700 people serving time at DeBerry, most of whom are not patients, but who do work in the facility in one of many roles: cook, groundskeeper, barber, and some who farm vegetables.

The incarcerated students apply to the program and are eager to learn but arrive with a variety of experiences in education. Very few earned high school diplomas prior to incarceration, but many

have earned a GED or HISET (high school equivalency tests) while incarcerated. Many are serving long sentences, but many are also near the end of their sentence. It is a *big deal* for the students to participate in these classes. Most students never thought they would have an opportunity to participate in a college-level course and almost as many are proud to learn they are capable of working through the reading, writing, and discussions.

Trauma-informed teaching

While the subject matter varied from class to class, I (we) increasingly incorporated trauma-informed teaching practices into lesson plans. Brian Cavanaugh (2016) describes how trauma-sensitive practices from health services, specifically the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Center for Trauma-Informed Care, can be applied to educational settings in "Trauma-Informed Classrooms and Schools." Trauma-informed teaching recognizes that students who have faced a traumatic event face unique barriers to learning and seeks to provide a safe and consistent learning environment to avoid re-traumatization. Minimizing power dynamics, frequent positive reinforcement of successes and failures, and validating students' life experiences are components of trauma-informed teaching. Students in a prison classroom are likely to have faced trauma prior to incarceration and are likely to face trauma while incarcerated.

There are simple ways to create a trauma-sensitive classroom. For example, in carceral classes where I teach or co-teach, we follow the tradition established in The Inside-Out Prison Exchange Program of "checking in" and "checking out" (Davis & Roswell, 2013). At the beginning of each class, students and teachers "check in" by describing what has happened in their lives since the previous week. At the end of each class, each student and teacher "checks out" by sharing their state of mind in one word. This establishes consistency, promotes a sense of belonging and equality, validates students' lives outside of the classroom, and ensures each

student contributes to every class discussion, all of which are practices of trauma-informed teaching and are fundamental components of Inside-Out. Inside-Out programs have been thoroughly explored in academic literature; anyone teaching in a prison classroom should become familiar with its methods (Allred 2009; Davis & Roswell 2013; Wyan & Lockwood 2018; Yeo 2019; Cates, et al 2020; Perez & Leon 2020; Dewey, et al 2020; Allred, Boyd, & Perry 2023).

Peace Studies – a correspondence course

During the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, DeBerry Special Needs Facility restricted all visitation and volunteers. The prison was closed to volunteers the day before the final class meeting of a Herman Melville seminar I was teaching. Because the isolation of students inside the prison was intensified by social distancing and, quite frankly, because I missed interacting with students inside, I developed a correspondence course, “Introduction to Peace Studies.” My goal for the course was to alleviate tensions and mitigate potential conflicts within the prison by providing an intellectual outlet focused on conflict transformation, nonviolence, and healing.

The course consisted of mailed workbooks that, when completed, could be returned in the included stamped envelope. Upon receipt of a completed lesson, the next lesson would be mailed to the student, along with feedback on their writing and a personal letter. Most students submitted about ten to fifteen pages of handwritten responses to guided, open-ended prompts. The students appreciated and enjoyed the correspondence course; for some students, it was their only communication beyond the prison. These years later, I still occasionally receive letters from one of the students.

The first episode defined the key aspects of Peace Studies and asked students to read passages from essays on the intersection of peace studies, education, and prison writing, including Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.’s famous “Letter from a Birmingham Jail” and Malcolm

X's "Learning to Read," and respond in about a paragraph. The lesson also included passages from Johan Galtung on structural violence, or social injustice, and how elementary schools can be sites and perpetrators of such structural violence. (Galtung, 1969, p.171, and Galtung & Uduyakumar 2013). Schools can omit historical truths like racial injustice, but schools can also establish harmful power relationships.

Students in my prison classroom were not surprised by this claim. Nearly half came from the same handful of the poorest school districts in the state. People from low-income communities are indeed incarcerated at a higher rate than wealthier communities, but it is also true that poorer school districts have higher suspension rates and higher police presence (Garbee, 2021). Students in the prison classroom have traveled through the school-to-prison pipeline, and students in this correspondence course had insight into Galtung's writing through their experiences of structural violence.

One student who permitted me to quote his writing but wished to remain anonymous wrote the following passage. (I quote at length to demonstrate the intellectual sophistication of a "typical student" inside to those who might not know):

I strongly agree with Galtung after reading this. In my school experience, I feel as tho I would have been labeled the 'schooling' type of individual. I also feel like this was a label that was forced upon myself because in the system I was in the teachers just wanted you to do enough to get by and get out of their way for the next group. I'm not pointing the finger at every teacher I had, but for the most part that was the way it was. I do think the school system treated me as a flawed and unfit human being because of certain labels that society seem to give certain people or groups. After you're treated in a certain type of way for a while, whether you fall under that label or not, a person tends to exhibit actions of the label given. (fig. 1)

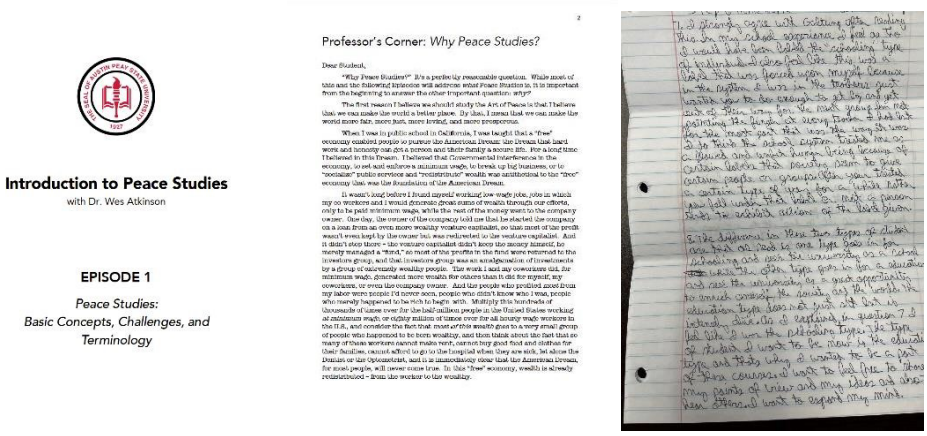

Figure 1: workbook cover for Episode 1, letter to students, and student written response.

For a few months during the COVID lockdown, the correspondence course was, I think, a partially successful model of trauma-informed teaching in the following ways:

1. *Flat hierarchy*. The teacher-student relationship took the form of a pen-pal relationship. Despite the duration and delays of using "snail mail," the intimacy of handwritten words built rapport and compelled me to engage in one-on-one interactions with each student.

2. *Validate student experiences and prior knowledge.* Response questions and other writing assignments sometimes made room for student experiences alongside and equal to the expert voices in the readings. The student writing cited above responded to the basic prompt: "What was your experience of school?"

3. *Individualized, student-directed feedback.* Students received personal letters with each successive episode that responded to their writing and segued into the next lesson. The students directed the flow of conversation.

4. *Strengths-based positive reinforcement.* Having no tests or quizzes precludes shame and allows students to put their best foot forward. Positive reinforcement did not take the form of constant praise but rather honest engagement as equals.

Writing for Peace – an experiment in composition

The students in the correspondence course demonstrated deep interest in Peace Studies, particularly lessons on nonviolence and conflict transformation. I had intended to teach a composition and rhetoric course when the prison reopened to volunteers in the summer of 2022. I modified the reading and writing assignments to move away from argumentative persuasion and incorporate the tenets of Peace Studies.

Anti-argumentation in writing has a long history in Western academia. Feminist composition pedagogy has been working toward this goal for a generation. Catherine E. Lamb (Lamb,1991) offered a mode of Feminist composition in College Composition and Communication that has since become a reference point for composition pedagogy. Lamb seeks writing that has an:

understanding the range of power relationships available to a writer and her readers … with the emphasis on cooperation, collaboration, shared leadership ... to the study of negotiation and mediation, and how these well-established forms of oral discourse can be adapted for a feminist composition class … The end—a resolution of conflict that is fair to both sides—is possible even in the apparent one-sidedness of written communication. (11)

This course also drew from lessons I learned as a graduate student of Barry Kroll, which he later shared in his essay, “Arguing with Adversaries: Aikido, Rhetoric, and the Art of Peace” (Kroll, 2008). Kroll writes, “When I teach composition, one of my goals is to show students that there are multiple options for arguing with adversaries, depending on the rhetorical situation. When a topic is controversial and polarized, I foreground the advantages of conciliatory, mediation-based, and cooperative approaches.” (465-466). Specifically, Kroll refers to maneuvers of aikido to demonstrate how working with the energy and force of an adversary can achieve maximum effect with minimal effort as a metaphor for rhetorical strategies that do not attempt to dominate, but rather to guide adversaries to shared outcomes. One is *tenkan*, or “turning”:

"a circular movement in which the defender turns outside the attack to a position alongside the aggressor, shoulder-to-shoulder and looking in the same direction, so that from a position where they initially confronted one another as adversaries, they have moved so that they share a point of view." (456)

Kroll's essay was the first shared reading for the class. While the students were challenged by encountering the writing style of an academic journal in an entry-level course, they appreciated Kroll's suggestions for modes of peaceful argumentation and readily drew out personal experiences of arguing in this way. To be incarcerated is to be continually subaltern – finding ways to achieve goals regularly involves situating their argument in terms of the goals of the facility or the Department of Corrections or finding ways to "share a point of view."

"Writing for Peace" drew deeply from these threads of Feminist composition theory and Kroll's "Art of Peace." The class focused on four goals for composition: "writing to de-escalate," "writing to examine the root causes of conflict," "writing with compassion," and "writing to build community." Writing for Peace can thus be loosely defined as nonargumentative, compassionate writing that examines the root causes of violence, transforms conflict, and builds community. While each writing assignment was engaging, students were captivated by "writing to examine the root causes of conflict."

I chose the textbook, *Invitation to Peace Studies* by Houston Wood. The chapters on sociological and psychological approaches to peace introduced common situations or states of mind that can lead to physical violence. To a student, they could each relate to one or more of the sociological or psychological root causes of violence, universally as victims of physical violence and a significant minority as perpetrators of physical violence. For example, more than one student recalled being cheered on to violence by bystanders and feeling a need to validate those harmful jeers and encouragement, just as described in a section on sociological approaches to peace.

For many students, this was the first time they could reflect on their experiences, environments, and actions from a social science perspective. It also helped many students situate their past actions as possible outcomes given their social conditions at the time. Many students understood their actions and themselves in a new light without displacing blame or denying responsibility. This new understanding also provided a pathway for nonviolence, as students could better avoid situations that could lead to violence.

The academic and scientific framework of these ideas allowed for some critical distance for the students, while the trauma-informed teaching practices invited students to bring their own experiences and emotions to class conversation. In a way, this class reversed the contemplative isolation that prisons inherited from their historical predecessor and ideological foundation: the monastery. A person who is incarcerated is removed from society to ponder their personal crimes sufficiently to "contribute to society." In this class, sociological and psychological root causes of violence were explored as contributing factors to their personal pasts. One of the basic principles of volunteering in a prison is to "never ask a person about their crime or conviction." That question reduces a person to the equivalent of the worst moment of their life. The job of an educator in a prison classroom, like anywhere else, is not to judge but to help students build better potential futures. In this classroom, some people volunteered their past crimes because they could bring them up as specific, personal examples of widespread social or psychological patterns.

Case study: "Doin' Time with Joe"

As an example of student writing and also as a conclusion to this brief essay, I would like to leave you with the words of Joe Baker, a student of the Peace Studies correspondence course and Writing for Peace. Baker produces a podcast from inside, "Doin' Time with Joe." Baker's podcast often tells stories of life inside the walls, including personal testimonies from many

others serving time. Through the many (in the hundreds) of episodes he has produced, Baker has examined the nature of prisons from many angles, including their role in communities and society more broadly. Baker thus participates in a long tradition of critics of mass incarceration and the prison more generally, including Michel Foucault and Angela Davis. I mention the French philosopher Foucault and the American social activist Angela Davis because I feel that Joe Baker, in many ways, can be intellectually situated between Foucault, who examines the role prison serves in a surveillance state (1977), and Angela Davis, who examines how prisons can harm people and communities (2003, 2005, 2020, 2023).

In the February 28, 2023 episode, about six months after the conclusion of the Writing for Peace class, Joe reflects on his own childhood trauma and how it affected his relationships throughout life. He also invites his listeners to examine their own trauma and prescribes writing as a path to peace and understanding. I have Joe's permission to transcribe his words here, but I have chosen to omit some details of the tragic nature of his specific trauma to avoid voyeurism.

Check this out y'all. Like I said, the question that I was asked is how to, how did I identify the trauma that I believe caused the foundation of the way I responded to different situations and how I conducted myself in my relationships when I was younger and older and all of the decisions that I made?

[…] But those things that I was experiencing growing up without knowing what my mother had endured and died from, the things that I was curious about. That was all of the things that, if I would have had information about what happened to my mother, I would have known early on what was going on with me.

Because if I would have been able to receive some type of counseling, early on, I may have been able to process and re-narrate things that happened to me growing up in a positive way, in a way that wouldn't have made me feel rejected.

But that wasn't the case. And because of that, there's not blaming anybody. I just think therapy would've helped me. But because of that, I made a lot of decisions in my life that were rooted and grounded in fear and rejection, because that's how I felt about the death of my mother without knowing what I felt about the death of my mother. If that makes any sense.

[…] When you have those moments that you make a decision. You know, something happens to you and it makes you super angry or your heartbeat just increases and your palms start to sweat, you're having a reaction. You're being triggered by something. Be curious about it, be curious about that and start to wonder to yourself, "What was that?"

[…] The next time it happens, write it down and be focused on that and start to try to go back in your memory and remember other times that you felt this way. And the more you dig, the more you dig, you're going to learn that there's something, there's something that happened to you that shaped the way you, the way your brain interprets these things.

Baker's narrative reflects on his past trauma to understand the root causes of violence in his own life. He self-consciously moves away from reacting to the outside world as a threat, to imagining ways he might have been able, through therapy, to "re-narrate" his life "in a positive way." He then connects the ability to process trauma through writing as a part of the healing process – in pursuit of reducing conflict and promoting peace. This is a poignant example of what Writing for Peace can be and what Writing for Peace can do.

While Joe Baker's podcast is an accessible, public expression of Writing for Peace that stands out because of its emotional depth and intellectual power, every student in the class

wrote essays of personal discovery and expressed varying degrees of confidence for a peaceful future. The lessons learned from my experience could be applied to any carceral writing class.

Conclusion: An Outline of Writing for Peace

What sets Writing for Peace apart from an ordinary composition classroom? A provisionary outline of what makes Writing for Peace unique could be that it is a writing course that:

1. Practices trauma-informed teaching;
2. Avoids argumentative writing;
3. Examines the root causes of violence;
4. Explores pathways to peace; and
5. Builds community.

Writing for Peace is a practice that needs further practice and development, but I hope that I have shared enough of my positive experiences with this methodology to provide context for others who may wish to pursue incorporating Peace Studies and trauma-informed teaching into their composition classrooms, particularly in prison classrooms. This essay is an invitation to pursue Writing for Peace in your nearby prison.

Italian political philosopher – and political prisoner – Antonio Negri, reflects on his time in prison and its relationship to the capacity for building community in terms of a desire "to live the positive passions" (Negri, 1998):

The problem, then, is not that one must go through prison and the problem is not to make a philosophy out of this. There is no need to go through any deprivation. This is not a condition of philosophy. The fact that one must make live the positive passions. The positive passions are the ones that construct, whether one is in prison or outside. And positive passions are the ones

that construct community, that liberate relationships, that create joy. And this is completely determined by the capacity to grasp the movement of time and translate it into an ethical process, in other words, a process of the construction of personal joy, community, and the free enjoyment of divine love. (para. 2)

Students who are incarcerated have an all-too-highly developed capacity to "grasp the movement of time" and, in my experience, have a strong desire "to translate that movement of time into an ethical process of the construction of personal joy, community, and the free enjoyment of divine love." Students who are incarcerated are already constructing community. Writing for Peace, in the context of a Prison Education Program, can be the open door for inside students to step through to build community.

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Habits and Social Norms Leading to Childhood Caries and Identification of Preventive Measures

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The purpose of this review is to investigate the dental caries disease process and its impact on the oral cavity among children with deciduous (primary) teeth. Primarily, this paper aims to provide an overview of dental caries prevalence among children worldwide and inform the public of the significance of primary teeth in the development of permanent teeth. Dental caries, commonly called dental cavities or tooth decay, are the result of bacteria metabolizing dietary sugars or fermentable carbohydrates in the mouth. Research has shown that untreated cavities in the deciduous dentition can eventually affect the growth and development of the permanent dentition. Although the bacteria are transferable, dental caries are preventable. Most of the global population currently has or will have a cavity in their lifetime. This is indicative of the severity and global prevalence of tooth decay in children. Identification of common habits and practices that lead to disease progression can inform targeted interventions educating the public on the significance of maintaining healthy primary teeth for proper development of permanent teeth and provide insight on reduction or prevention of childhood caries.

Keywords: Cavities, early childhood caries, dentition, cariogenic,

Introduction

The universal prevalence of dental caries is staggering. Almost 100% of adults globally have been afflicted with dental caries in their lifetime (Rathee & Sapra, 2023). The Global Oral Health Status Report of 2022 approximated 2 billion people worldwide suffer with cavities in their permanent teeth and 514 million children exhibit cavities in their primary teeth (WHO, 2023). In the United States, statistics indicate that 90% of adults aged 20 and older have encountered at least one cavity in their lifetime (CDC, 2021a). Moreover, 1 out of 4 adults aged 20-64 currently has at least one untreated cavity (CDC, 2021a). Similarly, the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry (AAPD) indicated that tooth decay is the primary chronic, infectious disease among children in the U.S. This statistic corroborates an analysis of data from the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey of 1999-2004 and 2011-2016 which revealed that 27.8% of children aged 6-8 had untreated carious lesions, a percentage that decreased to 16.4% in the 2011-2016 survey (NIDCR, 2022). This was a noteworthy 11.4% reduction in decay in primary teeth over the years (CDC, 2021b). A comparable trend is evident in adolescents with a

reduction of 2.6% and adults with a reduction of 1.8%, indicating a steady decline in the prevalence of cavities across different age groups (CDC, 2021b). Unfortunately, cavities exhibit a disproportionate prevalence among low-income families and children, with around 57% of adolescents aged 12-19 having experienced a cavity in a permanent tooth (CDC, 2021b).

Dental caries, commonly referred to as cavities or tooth decay, are caused by millions of bacteria that inhabit a sticky film in the mouth, called plaque or dental biofilm. Some of these bacteria are classified as cariogenic, which means they cause tooth decay. Cariogenic bacteria such as Streptococcus Mutans play a pivotal role in metabolizing any leftover dietary sugars in the mouth (Rathee & Sapra, 2023). When cariogenic bacteria encounter and metabolize dietary sugars, the byproduct is acid (FDI, 2016). The consequences of this metabolic activity can be damaging, as the acid alters the pH of the mouth, creating an acidic environment (ADAa, 2023). The outermost layer of the tooth, the enamel, is demineralized by this acid once the oral pH reaches 5.5 or lower (ADAb, 2023). Frequent and extended consumption of sugary beverages and foods exacerbates the process due to a consistent, acidic environment. In other words, consistent exposure of acid will remove essential minerals from the enamel layer of the tooth, resulting in tooth decay (Colak et al., 2013). If left untreated, cariogenic bacteria will proliferate and destroy more of the tooth structure and may even spread to adjacent teeth (NIDCR, 2023).

Development of dental caries is a multifactorial process that requires specific conditions within a susceptible host. For a cavity to exist, there must be a vulnerable tooth surface, the presence of dental plaque, exposure to dietary sugars, and time for disease progression (FDI, 2016). Untreated cavities can escalate into painful infections which can inhibit everyday activities such as eating and talking. Common symptoms of dental caries may include toothache, sensitivity to temperature and pressure, fever, and facial swelling (NIDCR, 2023). Prolonged neglect may lead to the formation of a dental abscess, which is a severe infection typically located beneath the gums or at the root of the tooth. Although very rare, the infection from a dental abscess can

potentially spread to other parts of the body, resulting in serious, sometimes deadly, consequences (CDC, 2021a).

Levels of Prevention

All disease processes can be described using the epidemiological triangle. Each vertex represents a component required for disease development: the host, agent, and environment. In the case of cavities, the host is the susceptible tooth, the agent causing the disease is bacterial plaque, and the environment is one with frequent and extended exposure to fermentable carbohydrates. Halting this disease process from an epidemiologic standpoint involves the removal of one of the apices from the triangle. For this purpose, the paper will investigate best practice methods for primary, secondary, and tertiary levels of prevention of tooth decay.

Primary prevention of dental caries are measures undertaken to halt or lower the risk of cavities before they happen. For example, limiting the consumption of added sugars in the diet, or proper, personal oral hygiene care in the form of regular brushing and flossing. This disrupts the plaque biofilm, removing the cariogenic bacteria and sugars that may result in a cavity on a susceptible tooth. Flossing is just as crucial as brushing because it removes bacteria and sugars from between the teeth, where the toothbrush cannot reach. Although the body cannot regenerate enamel, it can be re-mineralized or strengthened by adding the same type of minerals that were lost during periods of high acidic, oral environment (ADAa, 2023). This can be accomplished with the application of topical fluoride since it assists in replenishing those lost minerals (NIDCR, 2023). Another primary preventative measure is the application of sealants. Dental sealants are a thin plastic coating painted into the pits and fissures of the teeth that normally harbor food. It is difficult to remove food debris from these areas with a toothbrush and is, therefore, a great area for food retention. Additionally, pits and fissures are nidus for bacteria

to proliferate and metabolize sugars (ADAa, 2023). Maintaining regular dental appointments is a critical primary preventative measure wherein steps are made by the dental professional to give patients individualized oral health education, assess current risk, evaluate for incipient (early) cavities, and good oral hygiene (NIDCR, 2023; FDI, 2016).

Secondary preventative measures are taken when there are early signs of tooth decay. In these instances, the goal is to limit the severity of the impact the disease has on the host. Secondary prevention encompasses some of the same measures as primary, such as regular dental visits, proper home care, patient education, and fluoride application (FDI, 2016). When fluoride is used for secondary prevention, it is because the dental professional may have noticed an incipient carious lesion. Application of fluoride, at this stage, can halt and reverse the caries process as it re-mineralizes the enamel (FDI, 2016). Other forms of secondary prevention include extractions of broken or impacted teeth, dental fillings or restorations, root canal therapy, placement of crowns and caps, and non-surgical periodontal therapy, commonly referred to as a “deep cleaning” (Mbawala et al, 2015).

Tertiary preventive care is administered to patients with active carious lesions, or those who need continued treatment of prior tooth decay (FDI, 2016). The goal of tertiary prevention is to help patients attain or maintain basic function and eliminate pain in order to sustain quality of life. Examples of tertiary preventative care include root canal therapy, dentures, bridges, implants, oro-maxillofacial surgery, periodontal surgery, fixed prosthodontics, and space maintainers (Mbawala et al, 2015).

Caries in Children

Dental caries are transmissible and can be passed between persons both horizontally and vertically (Damle et al, 2016). Horizontal transmission refers to the passage of a disease from proximity, whereas vertical transmission is the passing of a disease or infection from parent to

child (Chen, 2006). Dental caries among infants and children are commonly transmitted both horizontally and vertically. Previous studies demonstrated that cariogenic bacteria only affected children after the eruption of their first tooth. However, streptococcus mutans can inhabit the mouths of infants prior to the eruption of their first tooth (Damle et al., 2016). In other words, children's teeth are susceptible to tooth decay when tooth eruption begins (ADAa, 2023). Furthermore, the number of bacteria in the mouth increases as the child ages. Damle et al. (2016) revealed that the method of bacterial transmission and frequency of maternal kissing was not significant in bacterial colonization in the children. However, nutrition, infant oral care, the number of the child's erupted teeth, and the sharing of eating utensils with the mother and other family members significantly impacted bacterial oral count (Damle et al., 2016; Colak et al., 2013). This is further evidence that cavities are transmissible and multifactorial.

Additionally, it was discovered that early exposure and colonization of streptococcus mutans in children often resulted in the manifestation of rampant tooth decay. This rampant decay is formally known as Early Childhood Caries (ECC) but commonly referred to as "baby bottle decay" (Damle et al, 2016; ADAa, 2023). ECC primary lesion tends to manifest as faint, white demineralized enamel that rapidly deteriorates to noticeable decay near the gum line (Colak et al., 2013). The American Dental Association defines ECC as the existence of one or more decayed, noncavitated or cavitated lesions, missing (due to cavities), or filled tooth surfaces in any primary tooth in children 6 and under. Children ages 3-5 years with one or more primary, upper, front teeth that are cavitated, missing, or filled, are diagnosed with Serious Early Childhood Caries (S-ECC). Furthermore, any evidence of smooth-surface caries in children younger than three is also classified as S-ECC (ADAa, 2023; Colak et al., 2013).

Potential Barriers to Care

As previously stated, dental visits are vital for oral health education, oral disease risk assessment, evaluation of cavities, and evaluation of good oral hygiene (NIDCR, 2023; FDI, 2016). Although keeping regular dental visits are essential to optimal oral health, some parents may elect to postpone visits until the child has most of their teeth, which is roughly age three (Colak et al., 2013). In these instances, a lack of knowledge is the barrier to dental care since parents do not see the significance of the dental visits prior to this age.

Other reasons for not making and maintaining dental visits include inadequate funds, inadequate insurance coverage, lack of access, and conflicts in schedule (Colak et al., 2013; WHO, 2023). Due to unequal distribution of oral health professionals, access to oral preventive care services is often low. Individuals from lower socioeconomic classes who do not have adequate insurance coverage may be required to pay out of pocket, which poses a financial strain and a barrier to care (WHO, 2023). According to the CDC (2021a), socioeconomic status is a huge indicator of dental health in children. Studies have shown that children aged 5-19 from low-income families are twice as likely to have dental caries when compared to children of higher income families (CDC, 2021b). Factors such as poverty, poor economic conditions, ethnic or racial minority status, and low parental education levels contribute to the likelihood of children from low socioeconomic status experiencing ECC (Colak et al., 2013).

Parents' fear or anxiety about dental visits is another barrier to dental care for children. Dental anxiety can be exhibited as delayed or missed appointments, challenges in administering treatment, elevated stress during dental visits, and poorer oral health outcomes (Šimunović et al., 2022). Parents who exhibit dental anxiety tend to inadvertently transmit it to their children, which results in avoidance of dental care and infrequent visits to the dentist for the child. Therefore, negative attitudes towards dental care can significantly impact both parent and child, underscoring the importance of addressing dental anxiety for the whole family's oral health (Šimunović et al., 2022).

Common Practices and Misconceptions

Given the prevalence of cavities and ECCs, this review will discuss the common practices and attitudes related to infant and child oral care that contribute to the formation and progression of caries. Notable mentions include poor nutrition and bottle-feeding habits, lack of awareness and education, and failure to schedule and maintain regular dental visits. During the first year of life, dietary and feeding habits are established that can potentially influence food choices and habits later in life. During this period, feeding patterns can be complex and include breastfeeding, bottle feeding, and the introduction to solid foods and other drinks (Fildens et al, 2018). Frequent breastfeeding and prolonged use of bottles containing milk or sugary liquids, throughout the day or night, leads to extended exposure of the tooth surface to an acidic environment (AAPD, 2023; Colak et al., 2013). Nocturnal feedings with milk or sugary drinks to facilitate sleeping are quite common and have been associated with caries development and progression in children (AAPD, 2023). High frequency, daily consumption of breastfeeding, bottle feeding, or a combination of both within this first year of life, was linked to greater prevalence of ECC and S-ECC two years later (Fildens et al, 2018).

Nevertheless, breastfeeding does present healthy benefits for both mother and child, and dental professionals should recommend breastfeeding as the primary form of nutrition for the first few months of life (Fildens et al, 2018). Research has indicated that a child's risk of cavities does not increase with exclusive breastfeeding within this period (Fildens et al, 2018). Liquids such as sugar water, juice, or soft drinks should be avoided for infants (CDC, 2022). It is also recommended that infants finish their bedtime and nap time bottles before sleeping, and a pacifier should never be dipped in sugar or honey to encourage suckling (Johns Hopkins, 2019; CDC, 2022). Eventually, less frequent breastfeeding and bottle-feeding sessions are encouraged as new foods are introduced to prevent cavities. Incorporating solid food in

conjunction with breastfeeding should be nutritionally complementary. As more solid food is introduced, it is recommended that foods are nutritious and low in sugar (Fildens et al, 2018).

Reducing the frequency of snacks and sweet drinks are additional preventative measures (ADAa, 2023).

In addition to lack of awareness about proper feeding habits, some parents are not well informed on the importance of deciduous teeth, which can be a contributing factor to the development of early ECC. Primary teeth play a critical role, and their neglect due to insufficient awareness or education can result in subpar oral hygiene habits. Cavities, due to poor oral hygiene habits, can cause dental and facial pain (Colak et al., 2013). This may impact eating habits, potentially leading to malnutrition and a decreased quality of life. Dental pain may also lead to a child's decreased academic performance and engagement (Aguilar, 2022). For example, within the U.S., approximately 50 million academic hours are lost annually due to caries-related dental pain in children (Mbawala et al., 2015). Dental pain is also considered the second most common medical emergency, further highlighting its relevance in public health (Mbawala et al., 2015).

Unfortunately, there is a misconception that cavities in primary teeth, even when not painful, are inconsequential because these teeth are temporary and will naturally fall out. However, these primary teeth are as important as permanent teeth. By learning to care for primary teeth, children develop oral hygiene habits that are transferrable to caring for permanent teeth. Furthermore, neglecting the primary dentition can negatively affect the developing permanent dentition. Cognizance that primary teeth serve as placeholders for permanent teeth is crucial. The premature loss of a primary tooth from severe decay can affect the development of the succeedaneous tooth (Colak et al., 2013). Remaining primary teeth may drift, causing the erupting permanent tooth to emerge in an abnormal position or orientation, potentially leading to misaligned teeth and the need for orthodontic intervention. Additionally, in

instances where a primary tooth with severe decay is close to being replaced by its permanent successor, cariogenic bacteria may be transferred to the developing permanent tooth, impairing its development (Colak et al., 2023).

Building a strong foundation for oral health from an early age is critical in avoiding dental complications. Recommendations for oral hygiene care for infants include gently wiping the gums and tongue with a clean, damp, soft, cloth twice daily (Aguilar, 2022). This will remove any sugars or microbes that cause cavities (CDC, 2022). As soon as teeth start to erupt, parents should brush twice daily with plain water and a small, soft bristle toothbrush (Aguilar, 2022;
CDC, 2022). Flossing should be introduced to the child's oral care regimen as soon as parents notice two or more teeth touching (AAPD, 2023). This allows the child to get accustomed to the feeling and habit of flossing. Proper nutrition and feeding practices should also be taken into consideration to eliminate other risks of caries development. Furthermore, children who want to exhibit independence by brushing their own teeth should still have parental guidance until age seven or eight (AAPD, 2023).

Regular dental appointments help children become acclimated to dental care, diminishing their fears and anxieties (AAPD, 2023). Children should have their first dental visit by their first birthday or the eruption of the first tooth; whichever comes first (AAPD, 2023). These visits are essential for early diagnosis and prevention of cavities and other dental diseases, and for receiving anticipatory guidance in child dental development (AAPD, 2023). A pediatric dentist may be the best option for young children seeing as some dentists prefer not to see children under a certain age. Regular application of fluoride can be administered as a preventative measure against caries lesions (Aguilar, 2022; FDI, 2016). Toothpaste containing fluoride is a good example of daily fluoride usage. It is strongly advised that parents consult their dentist for

recommendations on the appropriate dosage of fluoride to administer based on the child's age (CDC, 2022).

Conclusion

In conclusion, the evidence presented underscores the multifactorial nature of early childhood caries (ECC) and the imperative need for comprehensive preventive strategies. ECC is a prevalent, preventable condition with a complex etiology involving diet, oral hygiene, and caregiver knowledge and practices. The literature reveals the devastating impact of ECC on children's oral health, well-being, and academic performance. Despite this, several barriers to effective ECC prevention persist, including financial constraints, unawareness, parental misconceptions, and dental anxiety. These barriers contribute to delayed dental visits and inadequate oral care, exacerbating ECC risk. Moreover, the disproportionate prevalence of ECC among low-income families and racial and ethnic minorities underscores systemic health disparities and calls for more targeted interventions.

The recommendations for ECC prevention and management are multifaceted and necessitate a collaborative effort between caregivers, oral health professionals, and public health entities. Key strategies include breastfeeding promotion, early dental visits, fluoride application, dietary education, and targeted community programs to address systemic barriers. Nevertheless, the gaps in evidence-based practices and the persistence of misconceptions indicate a need for enhanced caregiver education and culturally sensitive oral health messaging.

ECC remains a significant public health challenge that requires a diversified, evidence-based approach. Efforts should continue to prioritize reducing systemic barriers, enhancing caregiver education, and fostering partnerships between public health entities and dental professionals. By doing so, meaningful strides can be made in preventing and managing ECC and promoting optimal oral health for all children.

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African American Students' Perceptions of Their Teachers: Implications on Policy, Teaching Practices, and Teacher Preparation Programs

by

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The premise of this research study is to emphasize the importance of why teachers should consider the perceptions, voices, and lived experiences of African American students, who are key stakeholders that historically underperform in the classroom. The relevance of this research is based on the number of educational reforms in the U.S. and the continual underperformance of marginalized students for many decades. The implications of this research show that creating effective policies would improve educational indicators and equity in education and enhance teacher preparation programs. Additionally, policymakers should consider marginalized students' perceptions when creating effective policies for equity in education and determine where disparities in educational indicators are no longer an issue.

Key Words: students' perceptions, students' voices, African American students' learning experience

Introduction

The historical disparities prevalent in educational outcomes continue to be at the core focus of educational reforms (Benoliel & Berkovich, 2017). The overarching theme of this research study was to examine the impact of African American students' perceptions of their teachers regarding educational indicators related to academic achievement and disciplinary referrals. Current literature is inundated with research that explores teachers' perceptions of African American students' ability to achieve (St. Mary et al., 2018), while limited research exists that examines

African American students' perceptions of their teachers (Howard, 2009). According to Howard (2013), abundant research exists on teachers' beliefs regarding the academic and discipline gaps. Furthermore, Byrd and Chavous (2011) examined specific indicators that promoted or hindered African American students' academic achievement and concluded that "…current literature has paid little attention to the role of youths' contexts" (p. 849). Thus, the current study suggested considering African American students' perceptions of their classroom experiences

in crafting effective policies and teaching practices that would create greater equity in education (Howard, 2009).

Statement of the Problem

Academic achievement is a strong indicator for predicting educational attainment (Rabiner et al., 2016), economic attainment, and overall quality of life (Edgerton et al., 2012). For many decades, African American students continued to lag behind their peers in academic achievement (Howard, 2013; St. Mary et al., 2018), access to advanced courses, and gifted and talented programs (Howard, 2013), while leading in negative outcomes, such as exclusionary school discipline (Fisher et al., 2020) and school dropout (Howard, 2013). Research has demonstrated a high correlation between African American students who drop out and the probability of incarceration (Choudhry, 2018). This research study addressed underlying factors perpetuating African American students' negative educational outcomes and experiences.

Purpose of the Study

This study aimed to determine whether African American students' beliefs about their teachers in a rural school district located in a southeastern state affected their academic outcomes and the number of discipline referrals they received. It proposed specific strategies to help teachers better understand how to interact with and teach African American students. As a result, this research study centered primarily on African American students' perceptions of their classroom experiences.

Indirectly, this research study addressed intermediate- and long-term negative social factors, such as African Americans' rates of high school dropout and incarceration, which tend to have a negative impact and consequences on society.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

(1) How do African American fifth-grade students' beliefs about their teachers affect their composite report card grades?

(2) How do African American fifth-grade students' beliefs about their teachers affect the number of discipline referrals they receive?

Theoretical Framework

The researcher examined relevant theories that undergird this research study, such as physiological needs and cultural-ecological and cultural contexts.

Physiological Needs

When teachers communicate adverse messages to students regarding their academic performance or classroom behavior, it can result in students becoming emotionally withdrawn from school. Students' basic needs must be met to create the most conducive learning environment. Based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, a person's motivation and drive in life are determined by whether their basic physiological needs are satisfied (Arkes & Garske, 1977; Cofer & Appley, 1964). This theory applies to the classroom because teachers are charged with ensuring the safety of all students while maintaining an inviting learning environment where all students can thrive and maximize their learning opportunities. When students' most basic needs are unmet, it leads to dysfunction and disturbances in the classroom (Arkes & Garske, 1977). Students should experience a sense of belonging and feeling nurtured before being expected to acquire learning concepts.

Cultural-Ecological Context

Despite teachers creating a conducive learning environment and meeting students' most basic needs, some students continue to experience barriers that hinder their academic success.

African American students' low academic achievement is often attributed to cultural differences between these students and mainstream public schools (Gibson & Collett, 2014). Within a theoretical context regarding cultural differences and academic achievement, Ogbu and Simons (1998) postulated that the cultural-ecological theory of school performance framework comprises two factors that impact marginalized students. The first factor is how marginalized students are being treated or mistreated based on systemic barriers, such as rigid discipline policies or failure to reach students through a non-culturally relevant pedagogy (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). The second factor examines marginalized students' perceptions and responses to the systemic barriers based on their treatment or the lack thereof (Ogbu & Simons, 1998). Cooper (2003) suggested that teachers should be required to learn about the sociopolitical issues that directly impact their students' communities.

Cultural Context

The cultural context theoretical framework is grounded in Ware's (2006) assertion that students who share the same values and culture with their teachers are more likely to excel academically. It should be noted that approximately 7% of U.S. teachers are African American compared to 79% White (National Center for Education Statistics, 2021). Many African American students have a cultural perspective contrary to mainstream public schools, which can harm their academic success and social adjustment (Howard, 2013). Based on their behavior and conduct, African American students are often misunderstood and mislabeled. Ford (1996) claimed, "bodily-kinesthetic students are likely to be (mis)labeled as 'hyperactive'… Black students are overrepresented among those identified as hyperactive" (p. 19). As a result, many African American students receive an unjust number of disciplinary expulsions and are

often referred to special education services (Ford, 1996; Howard, 2013). Cultural differences often result in teachers failing to equip students with the necessary academic and social skills to bring them to a cultural level deemed appropriate for mainstream society. To meet students' learning needs, teachers should incorporate culturally relevant pedagogy that would address multiple learning styles of diverse learners' needs (Gibson & Collett, 2014).

Review of the Literature

An African American man who has not obtained a high school diploma has a 70% chance of being incarcerated by his thirty-fifth birthday (Choudhry, 2018). While African Americans make up nearly 13% of the entire United States population compared to Whites at 64% (United States Census Bureau, 2020), a stark contrast exists in the incarceration rate. While African Americans contribute to nearly 39% of the total inmate population, Whites contribute to 40% (Prison Policy, 2024). Gramlich (2020) stated that African Americans are five times more likely to be incarcerated than Whites. In 2018, out of 100,000 incarcerated men, 2,272 were African Americans, compared to only 392 Whites (Gramlich, 2020).

Many incarcerated African American men have not completed high school. According to research, African American males are more likely to drop out of school because they perceive it as an unwelcoming environment (Fisher et al., 2020), and they are "…viewed as a problem" (Howard, 2013, p. 59). Thus, critically analyzing this issue should be a precursor to improving educational outcomes. Conducting research in this area can prepare African American students for greater social outcomes as adults in terms of quality of life, economic factors, and employability. The key findings can benefit teaching practices and teaching preparation

African American Students' Perceptions of Their Teachers

The body of research is inundated with countless studies exploring teachers' perceptions of students and the qualities of good teachers. "However, students' perceptions are rarely

considered in both educational research and practice, although relationships with teachers dominate their daily school life" (Raufelder et al., 2016, p. 31). Brittian and Gray's (2014) study explored eighth-grade African American students' perceptions of differential treatment or how their teachers treated them. Students' perceptions regarding their academic abilities were evaluated based on their responses to the following question: "At school, how often do you feel that teachers think you are less smart than you really are because of your race?" (Brittian & Gray, 2014, p. 4). In addition, students' perceptions regarding receiving disciplinary actions were evaluated based on their responses to the following question: "At school, how often do you feel that you get disciplined more harshly by teachers than other kids do because of your race?" The researchers found a correlation between African American students who indicated experiencing higher degrees of differential treatment and "lower academic self-concept" (Brittian & Gray, 2014, p. 6). The bivariate correlations at the eighth-grade level were highly predictive of African American students experiencing similar academic self-concept to eleventh graders (Brittian & Gray, 2014). As a result of the study, Brittian and Gray (2014) concluded that "differential treatment as a form of perceived discrimination represents a notable risk factor for African American students' education outcomes" (p. 6).

Rowley et al.'s (2007) longitudinal, qualitative study interviewed 385 African American students in the eighth grade and again three years later in the eleventh grade. The study examined African American students' perceptions of differential treatment on educational outcomes (Rowley et al., 2007). The researchers explored factors, such as students' strong affinity for their cultural heritage or community, that hindered effective relationships between African American students and their teachers (Rowley et al., 2007). For instance, they reported that "girls viewed girls as superior in reading and writing at all grades" (Rowley et al., 2007, p. 164) and were perceived as more favorable in the sixth and eighth grades as opposed to the fourth or lower grades. Since older students tend to be more mature, intelligence and being

smart are prioritized as students advance to upper grades. Rowley et al. (2007) reported that African American female students believed that school was very important compared to the beliefs of male students. On the other hand, African American male students tend to have a stronger affinity for their ethnic heritage and tradition (Rowley et al., 2007). Rowley et al. (2007) identified a negative relationship between students' perception of differential treatment in the eighth grade and whether school was important in the eleventh grade. An interesting variable that allowed students to overcome this barrier was maintaining strong peer support (Rowley et al., 2007).

Another factor that helps African American students excel in the classroom is the influence of a quality teacher. Savage's (2020) study explored students' mathematical motivation beliefs from a predominantly Black and a predominantly White high school located in rural East Mississippi. The participants included 47 students (42 Blacks, 3 Whites, and 2 Others) randomly selected from a predominantly Black high school and classified as low-income, underprivileged, and receiving free and reduced lunch. The predominantly White high school participants included 55 students (46 Whites, 4 Blacks, 1 Hispanic, 2 Asians, and 2 Others) who were randomly selected. There were only 41% of students who had free and reduced lunch from the predominantly White high school compared to 100% who had free and reduced lunch from the predominantly Black high school (Savage, 2020). Savage (2020) concluded that the influence of teachers was the highest predictor of students' mathematical performance. In both school settings, teachers influence had a higher predictability among Black students than White students (Savage, 2020).

Methodology

Instrumentation

This research study utilized a student questionnaire comprised of 52 questions regarding African American students' beliefs about their classroom experience and discipline behavior. All the questions had a readability index at the fifth-grade level and were in a five-point Likert-scale rating format with the following choice selections: 1. Strongly Disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Neutral,

4. Agree, and 5. Strongly Agree. The researcher assembled a four-member expert panel to analyze and critique each item on the questionnaire for comprehension and clarity. After receiving approval, the researcher conducted a pilot study with ten participants to ascertain psychometric properties regarding the instrument's validity and reliability. The sub-scales established reliability at the 0.75 level or above, which confirmed that the instrument had a reasonable level of reliability. Cronbach's alphas and scale reliability measures resulted in two sub-scales: students' positive beliefs toward teachers (Cronbach's alpha = .77) and students' negative beliefs toward teachers (Cronbach's alpha = .83).

Data Collection Procedures

The data collection process is comprised of archival data (annual report card grades and disciplinary records) and students' responses to questionnaires. A designated school district office official distributed handouts of the research study synopsis and parent/guardian permission forms to guidance departments at seven elementary schools. Student participants were required to return signed parent/guardian permission forms to their school. Upon receiving the completed parent/guardian permission forms, the designated school district office official provided each student participant with a unique identifier code placed in the upper right corner of each 52-item survey to maintain students' anonymity. The school district office official

contacted the guidance department at each of the seven elementary schools to arrange a convenient date and time to administer the questionnaire. Seven research assistants were assigned to one of the seven participating elementary schools.

Throughout the one-week period of distributing and collecting student questionnaires, the research assistants were instructed to report to their designated schools, and only students with signed, active parent/guardian permission forms were able to complete the questionnaire. The research assistants briefed the student participants on the student participant's form and required their signatures before completing the questionnaire. After ensuring students completed the assent form, the research assistant provided each student participant with a 9″ x 12″ envelope containing the questionnaire. The research assistants advised students to read and answer each question, and they were not obligated to answer any questions that made them uncomfortable. Afterward, the research assistants instructed students to return the questionnaires to the enclosed envelopes and to seal them. After this data collection phase, the district official collected all the signed participants' assent forms and surveys from each research assistant.

The next phase included collecting archival data: gender, ethnicity, attendance, disciplinary, and annual report card grades. The district office official transferred the archival data from the school district's database into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Students' unique identifier codes were located within the first column of the spreadsheet, which linked the archival data with questionnaire responses. Upon completion, the district office official emailed the researcher a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet containing the archival data and students' responses from the questionnaires. The researcher immediately arranged the unique identifier code in ascending order and converted the Microsoft Excel spreadsheet into an SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) data file. Once the SPSS data file was created, the researcher entered each questionnaire response into SPSS based on each student's unique identifier code.

Key Findings

This study used a quantitative research design to analyze the relationships among the variables and the experiment's outcome (Heddle, 2002). There were two dependent variables (DV): (1) students' academic attainment or their earned grades, and (2) students' discipline records or office referrals. The current study collected data from a subset of fifth graders from a rural school district located in a southern state. In the seven participating elementary schools from a single school district, there were a total of 34 African American student participants (18 males, 16 females). A descriptive analysis was applied to African American students' attendance records (see Table 1) to demonstrate the range, mean, and SD of absenteeism and tardiness.

Table 1.

Descriptive Statistics of African American Students' Frequency of Absenteeism and Tardiness

	Range	Mean	SD
Absenteeism	0-24	2.62	5.03
Tardiness	0-18	2.85	4.49

The next descriptive analysis demonstrates African American students' end-of-year cumulative report card grades in the four core subjects: language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies. Out of the 34 African American student participants, 17 earned a letter grade of a "B" (numeric grade of 85-92) or higher in the four core subjects. Table 2 displays the range, mean, and SD for each core subject. Only one African American student who was required to attend

summer school for earning a failing grade in one or more of the four core subjects. There was not an African American student who was retained or was required to repeat a grade level.

Table 2.

African American Students' End-of-Year Cumulative Report Card Grades

Subject Area	N	Range	Mean	SD
Language Arts	34	61-99	86.97	7.20
Mathematics	34	68-100	85.06	8.05
Science	34	73-99	85.97	7.39
Social Studies	34	68-99	85.44	7.99
Average	34	69.25-99.25	85.86	7.00

Subscales

Two subscales, positive beliefs toward teachers and negative beliefs toward teachers, emerged from the 52-item questionnaire. Students' responses to nine questions on a five-point Likert scale (options from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree) produced positive beliefs toward the teacher subscale. The researcher applied a reliability analysis to these questions, which generated a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .74 (N = 96) (see Table 3).

Table 3.

African American Students' Positive Beliefs Toward Teachers Subscale

#	Item	N	Means	(SD)
2	Get along with all my teachers	33	4.36	(.74)
4	Am comfortable asking my teachers for help with my homework	33	4.03	(.85)
5	Like all my teachers and feel as if I can talk to them about anything	33	4.00	(1.06)
25	Respect and care about me as an individual	33	4.27	(.76)
26	Take time to get to know their students	33	4.33	(.54)
28	Make me feel like I belong there	33	4.42	(.66)
37	Set high expectations and want me to do well in class	32	4.50	(.62)
38	Believe that I am smart and can learn	32	4.44	(.76)
48	Feel that my teachers treat all students fairly when it comes to discipline	32	3.78	(1.24)
	Overall Subscale Means	33	4.24	(.45)

In students' positive beliefs toward teachers' subscale, the researcher compared the means between students who earned a letter grade of "B" or higher (N = 17) and those who earned a letter grade of "C" or lower (N = 16). African American students who earned a "B" or higher had a mean of 4.28 (SD =.45), while their counterparts had a mean of 4.20 (SD = .45) on the positive beliefs toward teachers' subscale.

The results of students' responses to thirteen (13) questions on a five-point Likert scale (options from 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = strongly agree) produced negative beliefs toward the teacher subscale. The researcher applied a reliability analysis on these questions, which generated a Cronbach alpha coefficient of .84 (N = 92) (see Table 4). In students' negative beliefs toward teachers' subscale, African American students (N = 33) mean was 4.35 (SD = .47). The researcher compared the means between students who earned a letter grade of "B" or higher (N = 17) to those who earned a letter grade of "C" and lower (N = 16). African American students who earned a "B" or higher (N = 17) had a mean of 4.48 (SD =.33), while their counterparts (N = 16) had a mean of 4.21 (SD = .55) on the negative beliefs toward teachers' subscale. A stronger negative belief toward their teachers indicates African American students had a higher level of negative beliefs or attitudes toward their teachers. The African American students who earned a "C" or lower demonstrated a lower level of negative beliefs or attitudes toward their teachers compared to the African American students who earned a "B" or higher.

Table 4.

African American Students' Negative Beliefs Toward Teachers Subscale

#	Item	N	Means	(SD)
3	Do not understand my teachers and they do not understand me	32	4.03	(1.23)
11	Do not learn anything in class	33	4.75	(.50)
31	Do not teach me anything	33	4.67	(.54)
35	Just give me a grade to pass me to the next grade	32	4.28	(.99)
39	Talk down to me as if I am not smart	33	4.58	(.56)
40	Embarrass me in front of other students	32	4.13	(.91)
41	Think I am not smart enough to be in school	33	4.82	(.39)
45	Feel my teachers unfairly give me discipline referrals for no reason	33	4.18	(1.01)
47	Feel my teachers are always calling on me or accusing me for something that I did not do	33	4.06	(1.06)
49	Feel that teachers are too hard when it comes to discipline	32	3.53	(1.14)

50	Feel that teachers give more disciplinary actions to African American students	32	4.56	(.62)
51	Feel that teachers are giving me a lot of disciplinary actions because they do not like me	33	4.49	(.80)
52	Believe that teachers would rather write up a student so he or she can be expelled	33	4.46	(1.03)
	Overall Subscale Means	33	4.35	(.47)

Eighteen items on the survey instrument did not correlate highly with the two subscales. Due to their low reliability, these questions were not used in the two subscales (see Table 5).

Table 5.

Items Not Included in Subscales Due to Low Reliability

#	Item
	Feel that students pick at other students for making good grades
	Allow my friends to tell me what to do
	Really care about what my friends think of me
	Experience a lot of peer pressure from my friends

16 Want to go into easier classes because the work is too difficult

17 Am not being challenged to learn

18 Am in a class with other students who are not smart

21 Like when my teachers give me group work

22 Do not like to participate in class assignments

27 Always correct me when I speak incorrectly

29 Treat all students fairly

30 Encourage African American students to learn

32 Give me a lot of homework

33 Encourage African American students to be in gifted and talented classes

34 Are willing to help me learn by coming early to school or staying after school

36 Challenge me to do well in school

43 Am always getting into trouble at school

46 Feel I do not deserve to receive disciplinary action(s)

Analyses of Research Questions

The researcher used the two subscales of students' beliefs toward teachers to examine whether any correlations existed between African American students' beliefs toward teachers and their cumulative report grades earned in the four core subjects (language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies). No significant correlations existed between the two subscales of students' beliefs toward teachers and students' cumulative report card grades (see Table 6).

Table 6.

Correlations of African American Students' Beliefs Toward Their Teachers and Report Card Grades

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Language Arts	1					
Mathematics	.826*	1				
Science	.670*	.866*	1			
Social Studies	.680*	.789*	.833*	1		
Positive Beliefs	.012	.060	-.083	-.238	1	
Negative Beliefs	.143	.211	.125	.052	.538*	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

African American Students and Discipline Referrals

Most of the African American students in this research study, 25 of 34 (73%), did not receive any discipline sanctions for the entire academic year. Five (5) African American students (15%) received one discipline referral, and four (4) African American students (12%) received at least two or more discipline referrals (see Table 7).

Table 7.

African American Students' Discipline Referrals

Number of Discipline Referrals	N	Percent (%)
	25	73.5
5	2	14.7
2	10	5.9
3	1	2.9
4	5	10
5	2	2.9

The researcher analyzed several key questions regarding African American students' beliefs about receiving discipline referrals from their teachers. In question #45: "Feel my teachers unfairly give me discipline referrals for no reason," three (9%) (N = 33) of African American students believed their teachers administered discipline referrals for no reason. Twenty-five (76%) African American students either disagreed or strongly disagreed with teachers unfairly giving them discipline referrals for no reason. Five (15%) African American students indicated a "neutral" response.

In question #46: "Feel I do not deserve to receive disciplinary action(s)," five (15%) African American students perceived that the disciplinary actions they received were undeserved.

Sixteen (49%) African American students believed they deserved the administered disciplinary actions. On the other hand, 12 (36%) African American students indicated a “neutral” response.

In question #48, “Feel that my teachers treat all students fairly when it comes to discipline,” 20 (63%) African American students believed teachers treated all students fairly. Five (16%) African American students believed that teachers did not treat all students fairly. On the other hand, seven (21%) African American students indicated a “neutral” response.

In question #50: “Feel that teachers give more disciplinary actions to African American students,” 30 (94%) African American students did not believe that their teachers administered more disciplinary actions to African American students. No African American students believed that their teachers administered more disciplinary actions to African American students. On the other hand, two (6%) African American students indicated a “neutral” response.

The researcher used Spearman’s correlations to determine whether relationships exist between African American students’ beliefs about their teachers and the number of discipline referrals administered in an academic year. A negative relationship existed between African American students’ positive beliefs toward their teachers and discipline referrals received in an academic year (see Table 8).

Table 8.

Correlations of African American Students' Beliefs Toward Their Teachers and Discipline Referrals Received

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Discipline Referrals Received	1		
Positive Beliefs	-.394*	1	
Negative Beliefs	-.312	.510*	1

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Conclusions/Implications for Teaching and Teacher Education

This research study explored relationships between students' beliefs and academic outcomes, which affect teaching practices and policies. The researcher found African American students who earned a 'B' average or better had stronger negative beliefs toward their teachers compared to African American students who earned a 'C' average or lower. To combat students' negative feelings, teachers should make a concerted effort to learn more about each student at the beginning of the academic year to help develop positive relationships. For instance, teachers could contact parents by developing effective communication channels via a hand-written memo, telephone, and/or e-mail. Teachers could contact parents within the first several weeks of a new academic year to establish a friendly rapport. Relationship building

could help students develop more positive beliefs about their teachers and lessen their negative beliefs of their school experience.

In their classes with African American students, teachers should emphasize the importance of performing well in their classes. Based on this research study, African American students tend to lag behind other sub-groups. Teachers are responsible for creating a haven and a culture that promotes equitable learning opportunities among all students. This could help students develop a stronger level of self-belief regarding their potential to excel academically. This change in approach may require some teachers to attend professional development opportunities, specifically designed to discuss effective strategies and best practices working with marginalized students.

Based on the participants in the current study, the researcher assumes active parental involvement because students were required to have signed parent consent forms. On the other hand, due to the small sample size, the researcher also assumes low parental involvement school-wide. Although research has demonstrated that teacher influence predicts students' academic performance, parental influence is also important (Savage, 2020). Therefore, an implication of this study is for schools to develop and maintain effective school-parent relationships. Schools must make intentional efforts to reach out to parents who are not actively involved in their children's education.

Regarding student discipline, the process of administering disciplinary referrals and sanctions to students should be objective in nature. The researcher suggests that administrators and teachers analyze the disaggregated data based on students' race to look for disparities. Teachers may gain insight into the genuine rationale for administering disciplinary referrals to students. Furthermore, teachers may want to ensure that students understand their infractions and why they are disciplined. If possible, administrators and teachers may want to avoid disciplining students in such a way that will inhibit students from receiving invaluable classroom

instruction (Black, 2004). Students withheld from being in a classroom due to their wrongdoings may begin to believe that education is not important and lose interest. According to Cooper (2003), “Teacher education programs should integrate activities and courses that promote teachers becoming more culturally sensitive and self-aware” (p. 114).

For policy implications, the researcher suggests policymakers at each level, i.e., district, state, and federal, should intentionally include African American students' perceptions in developing effective policies that directly impact improving educational outcomes. African American students are important key stakeholders in schools. Therefore, these stakeholders' lived experiences can improve teacher preparation programs and ensure that future teachers have the skills to effectively teach and interact with marginalized students. Effective policies that include African American students' perspectives can be beneficial in eradicating the historical disparities in educational outcomes and dismantling the systemic barriers and stereotypes that hinder these students from maximizing their full potential.

Limitations and Considerations for Future Research

The current study contributes to the literature on African American students’ perceptions of their teachers regarding academics and discipline relying only on a quantitative method. The researcher has identified the study's limitations. Due to the sample size, it would be difficult to generalize this study to other rural education settings. Therefore, the researcher encourages further research in this area by incorporating a larger sample size (Raufelder et al., 2016) and examining students’ perceptions from higher grade levels, such as middle and high schools (Brittian & Gray, 2014; Rowley et al., 2007). Another limitation of the study is the number of students selecting “neutral” as an answer choice. To address this concern, the researcher believes expanding the research design to include a qualitative component, such as focus

group discussion or interviews, would help to better understand students' perceptions of their teachers.

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Appendix A

Student Survey

The following survey asks you to report your beliefs or feelings about your school, classroom, and behavior. Please read each question carefully and fill in the circle that best describes your answer. No one will see your responses. This is not a test; there is no right or wrong answers, only your opinion, which is important.

MARKING INSTRUCTIONS

- Use a No. 2 pencil only.
- Do not use ink, ballpoint, or felt tip pens.
- Make solid marks that fill the response completely.
- Erase cleanly any marks you wish to change.
- Make no stray marks on this form.

SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT

ID NUMBER

9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0
O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O
O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O	O

As a student, I…

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Enjoy going to school and learning new things.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Get along with all my teachers.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do not understand my teachers and they do not understand me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Am comfortable asking my teachers for help with my homework.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Like all my teachers and feel as if I can talk to them about anything.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feel that students pick at other students for making good grades.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Really care about what my friends think of me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Allow my friends to tell me what to do.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Experience a lot of peer pressure from my friends.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Study and earn good grades because it is important to me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do not learn anything in class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Am in the right classes that challenge me to learn.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
As a student, I…	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Am in classes with other students that have the same ability level.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Am in the “smart” class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Should be in gifted and talented classes so I can learn more.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Want to go into easier classes because the work is too difficult.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Am not being challenged to learn.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Am in a class with other students who are not smart.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Belong in a higher class because I am smart.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Like doing work with other students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Like when my teachers give me group	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

work.

Do not like to participate in class assignments.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Raise my hand in class and ask my teachers questions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Sit at the back of the class.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT

The following questions are about your feelings towards your teachers. Please respond with your honest opinion by placing a check in the appropriate box.

My teachers…..	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Respect and care about me as an individual.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Take the time to get to know their students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Always correcting me when I speak incorrectly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Makes me feel like I belong there.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Treat all students fair.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Encourage African American students to learn.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do not teach me anything.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Give me a lot of homework.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Encourage African American students to be in gifted and talented classes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Are willing to help me learn by coming early to school or staying after school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Just give me a grade to pass me to the next grade.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Challenge me to do well in school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Set high expectations and want me to do well in their classes.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Believe that I smart and can learn.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Talk down to me as if I am not smart.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Embarrass me in front of other students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Think I am not smart enough to be in school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

DISCIPLINE **BEHAVIOR**

As a student, I…	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
Am always getting into trouble at school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Do not get into any trouble at school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feel bad when I do get into trouble at school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feel my teachers unfairly gave me discipline referral(s) for no good reason.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feel I do not deserve to receive the disciplinary action(s).	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feel my teachers are always calling on me or accusing me for something that I did not do.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feel that me teachers treat all students fairly when it comes to disciplinary actions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feel that my teachers are too hard on me when it comes to receiving a disciplinary action.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Feel my teachers give more disciplinary actions to African American students.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Feel that my teachers are giving me a lot of disciplinary actions because they do not like me.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Believe that some teachers would rather 'write a student up' so that student can be expelled from school.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Using The Civil Rights Era as A Baseline to Teach About the Social Movements of Today

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Over the past several years, numerous sources in the popular press have noted that the Civil Rights Movement has been undertaught in K-12 school districts across the United States. This review attempts to further illuminate this problem and offer a few ways to negate it by way of individual assignments created by the author. It also attempts to offer a way to remedy this problem through a teaching rubric created by the Southern Poverty Law Center. The Southern Poverty Law Center's rubric can also serve as a guide when teaching students about contemporary social movements.

Keywords: Civil Rights Movement, rubric, undertaught, Southern Poverty Law Center

Introduction

It is well documented in the fields of K-12 education, higher education, American history, and sociology that the Civil Rights Movement is undertaught in most school systems around the United States (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2011; Schulten, 2012; Frost, 2012; Alhumam, 2015; Russell, et al., 1998; Gersten, et al., 2006). This has been a social problem for many reasons. First, it brings numerous consequences to students trying to understand how and why social movements occur. Second, it is an important era of U.S. history for young people to understand how African Americans have struggled to acquire their Civil Rights in society. Third, students have no frame of reference because many American history, including the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, is not being taught in classrooms across the country. This is impacting students negatively because when they are studying the social movements of today, they have no "rubric," no "model," and no "example" to teach them about how and why social movements work. Numerous articles in the popular press explain this fact (Dunn, 2005; Dallmer, 2007; Southern Poverty Law Center 2011, 2014; Frost, 2012; Schulten, 2012; Brown, 2015).

Problem

The problem is the Civil Rights Movement is not being adequately taught in elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, and at colleges and universities (Buchanan, 2015;

Anderson, 2018; Combs &Skipper, 2014; Dillon, 2011; Hale, 2018; Pass &Campbell, 2006). This relevant educational topic has been examined numerous times. There are countless studies reviewing this topic. A majority of the articles were written between 1998 and 2015. As a result of the Civil Rights Movement not being taught, students have no frame of reference for understanding how today's social movements operate, their purpose, and their strategies.

Strategy

The purpose of this paper is threefold. First, it is necessary to frame the problem of the Civil Rights Movement being undertaught. This will be achieved by discussing some of the content from articles in the popular press and summarizing the various reasons why this era in American history seems to be forgotten. Second, it is necessary to present the only instrument in the literature that attempts to resolve this gap in history. The instrument comes from the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama.

When examining the literature for this paper, there were few solutions and no assessment instruments offered to solve the problem of the lack of teaching the Civil Rights Movement in schools across the country. This paper outlines the content of this six-part instrument to help resolve the issue. Each of the six sections will be discussed and reviewed in detail. Thirdly, the author of this paper would like to offer a couple of solutions (assignments) that have been created for classrooms to teach the Civil Rights Movement more appropriately. The assignments are based on the six criteria set forth by The Southern Poverty Law Center's rubric (2011). This gets to the crux of the paper, which is using the time era of the Civil Rights Movement to teach our students about the mistreatment of African Americans and to teach about how social movements work in our society.

Review of Literature

As stated previously, most of the literature found for this research was written between 1998 and 2015. Scholars in numerous fields, including higher education, history education, sociology, and law have carefully studied the problem of the Civil Rights Movement not being taught in U.S.

classrooms (Cook, 2005; Schulten, 2012; Hamlin, 2016; Dunn, 2005; Stewart et al., 2015). The following section explains a brief overview of the top four reasons why this time era is so neglected. A review of the literature follows.

States are not Making it Mandatory in the Curriculum

Simply stated, teaching the Civil Rights Movement has not been mandated in any of the 50 states (Dunn, 2005; Dillon, 2011; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2011, pp. 9-10; Frost, 2012; Schulten, 2012).

Teachers are not Qualified

It was stated in the literature that many teachers who were not qualified to teach history in K-12 were forced to teach it because of teachers quitting, the teaching shortage, budget cuts, and other circumstantial reasons. Numerous teachers who do not even have a minor or major in history have been tasked with teaching history in their schools. Many of them felt unqualified to do so and believed they did not know enough to adequately cover the Civil Rights Movement (Dillon, 2011; Russell et al., 2011; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2011, pp. 9-10; Hamlin, 2016).

No Child Left Behind=Not enough instructional time

This paper does not examine the pros and cons of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. However, it is safe to say that some scholars studying the Civil Rights Movement and teachers in grades K-12 believe its focus on standardized testing and teaching basic skill sets certainly does not encourage teaching about the events of this time era. Further, many academic disciplines have been reduced since the No Child Left Behind law was implemented, especially social studies and history (Dillon, 2011; Southern Poverty Law Center, 2011; and Anderson, 2018).

No Agreed Upon Curriculum

Presently, no official national standard exists that makes it mandatory to teach the Civil Rights Movement, its purpose, or possible instructional strategies in schools across the country. The only

instrument remotely close to achieving these things is the Southern Poverty Law Center's six-category rubric (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2011; Anderson, 2018; Pass & Campbell,

2006; Foster et al., 2015). An explanation of the rubric follows.

Southern Poverty Law Center Rubric

Both in 2011 and 2014, the Southern Poverty Law Center developed a rubric, the only rubric discovered in the literature offering guidance on how to teach the Civil Rights Movement adequately. This section focuses on the most recent rubric devised in 2014 and its six categories. Each category explains the minimal expectations for teaching the Civil Rights Movement for that section. The Southern Poverty Law Center reminds readers that these six categories and the suggested teaching content within them, is merely a reasonable starting point. A review of the six categories follows.

Events

The Southern Poverty Law Center criteria states that students should be able to identify key events in the civil rights movement and place them in correct chronology. These events include *Brown v. Board of Education*; Little Rock 9; Freedom Rides; Montgomery Bus Boycott; 24th Amendment; Birmingham bombings and protest; March on Washington; 1964 Civil Rights Act; Freedom Summer; Selma-to Montgomery-March; 1965 Voting Rights Act; uprisings such as Watts, Cicero, IL and riots in Detroit, MI; 1968 Civil Rights Act; and the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. Students should also be able to identify the causes and consequences of these events, linking key figures and organizations to each event (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2014).

Leaders

The Southern Poverty Law Center criteria states that the civil rights movement was composed of many individuals and was not the initiative of any single person or small group. All students learn about Martin Luther King Jr. and Rosa Parks, but students should learn about at least six additional people from the civil rights movement (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2014).

Groups

The Southern Poverty Law Center criteria state that students should be able to identify major groups, including CORE, SCLC, and SNCC. Students should also be able to explain the mission and accomplishments of each group and trace the relationships among groups (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2014).

Causes of the movement

The Southern Poverty Law Center criteria states that students should be able to trace the roots of the civil rights movement to slavery and disenfranchisement through the Civil War and Reconstruction. They should learn about Jim Crow laws, poll taxes, and literacy tests. They should understand the complex causes of President Harry S. Truman's decision to desegregate the U.S. military, including A. Philip Randolph's role (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2014)

Opposition to its successes

Students should identify opposition to the civil rights movement's success. They should learn the difference between *de jure* and *de facto* segregation and examine the extra-judicial enforcement of segregation through diverse tactics such as the formation of White Citizens' Councils and the Ku Klux Klan. Students should be able to identify key figures and groups opposing the extension of civil rights, including Bull Connor and the significant opposing Southern governors: Orval Faubus, George Wallace, J. Lindsay Almond, and Ross Barnett (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2014).

Tactics

Students should be able to explain the advantages and disadvantages of nonviolent resistance, discuss the role of civil disobedience in a democratic society, and identify and compare tactics and ideas such as boycotts, sit-ins, marches, voter registration, and Black Power that were used at different times during the struggle for civil rights (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2014).

Discussion of SPLC Rubric

As mentioned previously, a plethora of academic research has discussed the Civil Rights Movement time era in terms of covering topics such as racism, abuse by law enforcement officers on Black Americans, teaching leadership, teaching young children, and teaching high school children. The approach in this research is different.

The primary aim of the literature search in this study is to locate a model or rubric that could improve the teaching of the Civil Rights Movement to students and help them retain a better understanding of that era. The only model or rubric discovered came from the Southern Poverty Law Center. A rubric was introduced in 2011 and later upgraded. The second, more comprehensive rubric was unveiled in 2014. This paper focuses on the contents of the 2014 rubric.

The rubric addresses six key categories to understand better a social movement, specifically the civil rights movement. The categories in the 2014 rubric include leaders, groups, key events, causes of social movements, opposition to the movement's successes, and tactics employed. In fact, this rubric is an instrument that can be used to teach about social movements for virtually any group.

Attached at the end of this paper are a couple of sample assignments crafted by the author. The assignments are from the original *Eyes on the Prize* series, which was a 14-part series created by PBS between 1979 and 1985 (Hampton, 2006). Each of the 14 films covers specific events caught by news media between 1954 and 1968 related to the Civil Rights Movement. These assignments can be found in Appendix A.

The Southern Poverty Law Center recommends a six-category rubric for teaching the Civil Rights Movement. The six recommended categories can also be applied to teaching about the social movements of other marginalized groups in American society, including: Hispanic Americans, Native Americans, Asian Americans, and the LGBTQIA+ community.

Conclusion

This paper aims to examine numerous journal articles on the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s, and how to better teach about this era in our classrooms. Another objective was to find a “model” or “rubric” that could improve teaching key content from the Civil Rights Movement to our students meaningfully. The rubric from the Southern Poverty Law Center in Montgomery, Alabama, offers a solid way to not only teach our students about the Civil Rights Movement in a sincere manner but can also be used as a way to approach teaching other social movements.

When the Southern Poverty Law Center conducted its last study in 2014, it ranked states on an A-F scale based on the criteria outlined in the 2014 rubric. The Southern Poverty Law Center has not conducted a similar study since 2014. In the last study, the following results were determined. Only three states earned a grade of “A” in teaching the Civil Rights Movement; eight states earned a grade of “B”; five states, including the District of Columbia, earned a grade of “C”; fourteen states earned a grade of “D”; and twenty states earned a grade of “F” (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2014). More detail on which states scored at a grade of “A”, “B”, or “C” can be viewed below.

The three states earning an “A” grade included: South Carolina, Louisiana, and Georgia. The eight states receiving a grade of “B” included: Maryland, North Carolina, Alabama, Virginia, Oklahoma, California, New York, and Florida. The five states earning a grade of “C” included: Tennessee, Kansas, Mississippi, Arkansas, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2014). To put this into perspective, only 16 states out of 50 scored an “A,” “B,” or “C” according to the standards set forth by The Southern Poverty Law Center (Southern Poverty Law Center, 2014). To summarize, this means precisely 32 percent of states in the country were teaching the civil rights movement at a sufficient level.

The standards set forth in the Southern Poverty Law Center’s rubric are lofty but attainable. Perhaps what makes the six categories of learning from the Southern Poverty Law Center’s rubric

so special is that they are so well-constructed that they can be applied to teaching any social movement. Following this rubric could enhance student retention in learning about the Civil Rights Movement or any social movement for that matter.

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Appendix: A

A. The two assignments in this paper are related to film

*Before viewing specific segments of each "Eyes on the Prize" video, I provide my students with 5 to 8 discussion points, i.e., (leaders, events, groups, tactics, and maybe things students have never heard about before, such as "White Citizen's Councils"). I have created the discussion point assignments independently, following the Southern Poverty Law Center's 2014 rubric and all 14 videos of the "Eyes on the Prize" series.

**After discussing what to look for with the 5 to 8 discussion points prior to viewing video segments, I hand out a fill-in-the-blank assignment (of my own creation) for the students to complete for credit. I have created all of the "Eyes on the Prize" assignments based on the suggested criteria from the Southern Poverty Law Center's 2014 rubric.

We then go over the fill-in-the-blank assignment and have a dialogue on the 5 to 8 discussion points for each

Discussion Points for: "Eyes on The Prize: Awakenings 1954-1956"

1. Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas, 1954
2. Emmett Till
3. Rosa Parks
4. Dr. and Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.
5. How did White leaders retaliate against Black leaders who said it was unconstitutional to have bus segregation?
6. What role did White women in Montgomery, AL, play during the bus boycott?

Eyes On the Prize

Awakenings

1954-1956

Directions: This is an assignment you are to complete independently during the documentary. You should fill in the answers to the best of your ability. Most of the answers are only one to four

words. Each question is worth .5 (or ½) of a point. ***For example***, 16 questions would equal 8 points.

1. What was the "prize" that Blacks were fighting for? _____**freedom**

_____ 2. **Segregation** was the context for blacks' lives throughout the country, but especially in the South.

3. **World War II** _____ brought great hope for social change in the United States. They fought and died in a segregated military.

4. On May 17th, 1954, the Supreme Court ruled in what court case that segregated schools were unconstitutional? **_Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, KS**

_____

5. **Emmett** _____ **Till** came down to Mississippi from Chicago to visit relatives and was murdered because he talked "fresh" to a white woman in a store. He said "Bye Baby" to the white woman. (It was later discovered that Emmett Till did not say this).

6. What was the name of the Black Congressman who came to Sumner, Mississippi to trial of the men who killed the young black child? **_Charles Diggs**

_____

7. Over the years there have been over **_500_**documented lynchings in Mississippi alone.

8. **Montgomery** _____, Alabama prides itself on being called "The Cradle of the Confederacy."

9. In December of 1955, **___Rosa Parks__**refused to give her seat to a white man while riding on a bus in Montgomery, Alabama.

10. Which Black leader from Atlanta, Georgia did black leaders from Montgomery, Alabama want to continue the leadership of the bus boycott in Montgomery? **_____Dr. and Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr**._____

11. Martin Luther King, Jr. said the best thing to do with your enemy is to make them your **___friend**

_____

12. How did white leaders retaliate against Black leaders who said it was unconstitutional to have bus segregation? **_By indicting almost 90 Black leaders under an old anti-boycott law._____**

13. Which group of people would pick up black people and give them rides to work or to their homes because blacks were boycotting the busing system in Montgomery, Alabama? **_____white women_____**

14. On November 13th, **_1956_**, the U.S. Supreme Court broke the deadlock ruling unanimously that Montgomery's bus segregation was unconstitutional.

15. How many months did the Montgomery bus boycott last? **_____11**
_____

16. After the boycott ended, where did Blacks want to sit on the bus? **_____in the front**
___

*****Upon completing the documentary and fill-in-the-blank assignment, we review the answers to this assignment and then have a robust discussion about the 5 to 8 discussion points I asked them to pay attention to before viewing the documentary.**

Discussion Points for: "Eyes on The Prize: Fighting Back 1957-1962"

1. Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, KS, 1954
2. 14th amendment
3. Governor Orval Faubus, Governor Lindsay Almond, and Governor Ross Barnett
4. Little Rock 9
5. James Meredith and Autherine Lucy
6. President John F. Kennedy's role in the Civil Rights Movement and getting James Meredith enrolled at Ole Miss.

Eyes On the Prize

Fighting Back

1957-1962

Directions: This is an assignment you are to complete independently during the documentary. You should fill in the answers to the best of your ability. Most of the answers are only one to four

words. Each question is worth .5 (or ½) of a point. ***For example***, 12 questions would equal 6 points.

1. Which Mississippi politician said: "All the people of the South are in favor of segregation and Supreme Court or no Supreme Court, we are going to maintain segregation."
   ____**James Eastland**_____

2. Under what Supreme Court ruling was it determined illegal to segregate students under the Constitution? _**Brown vs. Board of Education of Topeka, KS 1954**_. Which Amendment stated that segregated schools are unconstitutional? _____**14th**_.

3. Southerners felt integration attacked their _____**heritage/traditions** _____.

4. Which Governor of Arkansas deployed the National Guard to prevent the Black students from entering Central High School in Little Rock, Arkansas in 1957?
   ___**Orval Faubus**_____

5. What was the name given to the nine students from Little Rock, Arkansas who were trying to go to Central High School? ____**"Little Rock 9"** _____

6. How well were the military men who protected the nine Black students received by the black students? _____**well/good**_

7. What action did Lindsey Almond, Governor of Virginia, do to prevent both Black students going to public schools with Whites and to avoid having federal troops from coming into the state of Virginia to patrol the schools? _**He closed many of the schools**
   _____

8. What was the name of the black man who was initially denied admission to The University of Mississippi (Ole Miss)? _____**James Meredith**
   _____

9. What was the name of the obstinate Governor of Mississippi who claimed he was a proud Mississippi segregationist? He also vowed no public school in Mississippi would be
   integrated __**Ross Barnett**_____

10. **True** or False (**please circle one**). The governor of the state of Mississippi met the black student in person at Ole Miss when he tried to register for classes, but he was denied admission to Ole Miss.

11. What happened on Ole Miss's campus at 8 p.m. after they found out Meredith was on campus about the same time Kennedy was on television speaking to the United States about violating Civil Rights? **__rioting and violence broke out**

12. Which two people did the documentary state ultimately won the battle on the Ole Miss campus? **_JFK and Meredith__**

*****Upon completing the documentary and fill-in-the-blank assignment, we review the answers to this assignment and then have a robust discussion about the 5 to 8 discussion points I asked them to pay attention to before viewing the documentary.**

The Demise of Affirmative Action and the Rise of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

by

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This paper revisits the change in purpose and direction of affirmative action over the years in response to directives being issued by the courts. In particular, the impact of recent Supreme Court cases are examined as to the changes ushered in with these opinions. It is noted that the early defining cases did not anticipate Affirmative Action to be a permanent fixture but rather something that would be phased out within 25 years. That has not occurred, and the recent efforts to repurpose these initiatives in support of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) efforts have again drawn the courts back into the discussion. This article explores the history of Affirmative Action and presents recent efforts to repurpose and redirect focus with the emergence of DEI.

Keywords: Affirmative Action, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, discrimination, constitutionality

Introduction

Affirmative action is not going to be the long-term solution to the problems of race in America because, frankly, if you've got 50 percent of African American or Latino kids dropping out of high school, it doesn't really matter what you do in terms of affirmative action. Those kids aren't going to college. Senator Barack Obama (Obama, 2008). The way to stop discrimination based on race is to stop discriminating based on race. Chief Justice John Roberts (*Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District No. 1*, 2007).

The original purpose of affirmative action was to pressure institutions to comply with the nondiscrimination mandate of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. In *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003), the Supreme Court (Court) upheld the idea that an underlying goal of the Fourteenth Amendment – eliminating oppression – was a justification for affirmative action programs (*Grutter v. Bollinger,* 2003). Most Americans believe in the concept contained in the preamble to the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" (Declaration of Independence, 1776). People believe in

merit and equal opportunity. However, over time affirmative action began to be seen as a quota system, a timetable, and an example of reverse discrimination. Consequently, support for affirmative action began to lessen. Nine states abolished affirmative discrimination (Saul, 2022). This paper will explain the most recent cases of *Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College* and *Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina* and the possible ramifications of the decisions.

Strong opinions on affirmative action are common, especially for people in education who have worked with the ideals of merit, equity, color blindness, equality, diversity, and inclusion for so long (The Chronicle of Higher Education, 2023). The values go to the very core of educators and how they define themselves. Indulge this writer and simply look at the discussion of these cases. Professors may love or hate the cases, but the cases will affect everyone for years to come. The cases will affect college faculty immediately this fall when the selection process for admissions begins again for the 2024 school year. Those in education must know the most recent cases to join in the discussion.

Overview of Affirmative Action

Slavery is a systemic problem for humans. The practice has been around since at least the time of the Mesopotamian and Sumerian civilizations in 3500 BC (Restavek Freedom, 2023). The earliest human written records show established slave systems. The Code of Hammurabi is a Babylonian legal text created around 1755-1750 BC. It is one of the oldest comprehensive legal codes found to date. The ancient text shows King Hammurabi receiving the laws from the ancient Mesopotamian god Shamash. Ten laws in the code deal with slavery. Most of these laws concern the harboring and return of escaped slaves (King, 2008). The punishment for harboring escaped slaves is death. The code provides rewards for the return of escaped slaves. The earliest slaves were people captured in war, debtors, or as punishment for a crime. There is evidence that this type of slavery existed in most cultures, including slavery among indigenous peoples of the Americas (The History Press, 2023). In some cases, slavery was an inherited status with little chance of freedom, extending for generations. In other cases, slaves were too resource-consuming to continue forever. Slaves were freed after a certain number of years. Although they were then replenished in later wars (The History Press, 2023). While all countries have now legally abolished slavery through the adoption of a United Nations resolution 317(IV) of

December 2, 1949 (United Nations, 1949), there still is modern slavery in the shadows, in the form of sex slaves, forced marriages, forced labor, and other practices often affecting the most vulnerable groups in societies (International Labour Organization, 2022). This practice has plagued civilization in untold ways and resulted in people being treated as less than human. The practice continues to affect us today and tears at the very fabric of society.

At the time of the Philadelphia Convention during the summer of 1787, slavery was an established institution in the southern states and some northern states (Mintz, 2023). To keep the delegates together in changing the Articles of Confederation through the approval of the new Constitution of the United States, Congress was prohibited from outlawing the Atlantic slave trade for 25 years (United States Constitution, 1787). As of January 1, 1808, federal law made it illegal to import captive people into the United States, although the enslaved population grew through reproduction (Library of Congress, 1810). Slavery did not formally end until after the Civil War with the ratification of the 13th Amendment, which abolished slavery in the United States on December 6, 1865 (National Archives, 2022). There was still resistance to ending slavery. After the Civil War, some southern states adopted "Black Codes" (Stephens & Scheb, 1993). These codes denied basic economic rights to newly freed slaves. They also limited what jobs African Americans could hold and their abilities to leave a job once hired. Some states even passed laws that forbade newly freed slaves from buying land or voting (Stephens & Scheb, 1993). Congress tried to end these practices by passing the Civil Rights Act of 1866. However, Congress has limited law-making powers. Many questioned if Congress had the power to pass civil rights acts. Fearing the law could be unconstitutional, Congress adopted the 14th Amendment (Ducat, 2009). The amendment included the Equal Protection Clause. The amendment says, "No state shall deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws" (U.S. Const. amend. 14) In that amendment, Congress gave itself the ability to pass laws to carry out the amendment. It says, "The Congress shall have the power to enforce, by appropriate legislation, the provisions of this article" (Ducat, 2009). Congress then passed a series of Civil Rights Acts. Subsequently, Congress passed the Civil Rights Act of 1875. Unlike prior acts, this one focused on equal rights and privileges by places of public accommodation. This act tried to stop private discrimination rather than public discrimination (Ducat, 2009). This resulted in The Civil Rights Cases of 1883 (Justia, 1883). The Supreme Court concluded that the

14th Amendment limited congressional action to state-sponsored discrimination, not discrimination practiced by privately owned places of accommodation. The states did not own the railroads that moved people across the country or the restaurants that fed people and the hotels that supplied lodging to people who traveled (Stephens & Scheb, 1993). The Civil Rights Act of 1875 tried to regulate private discrimination, but it was an unconstitutional exercise of congressional power. The case signaled that the private practices of discrimination could continue and allowed for Jim Crow Laws (Ducat, 2009).

Several states used the tenth amendment's Police Power of the State in the U.S. Constitution (U.S. Const. amend. 10) to require separate facilities and legally enforce discrimination (Epstein, 1989). Racial discrimination laws required separate facilities in transportation, education, housing, bathrooms, drinking fountains, and numerous other activities. Jim Crow laws even extended to the courtroom and Bibles. The Raleigh Evening Times, March 29, 1906, described an incident where a trial judge in his courtroom stopped a witness from being sworn in to testify until the sheriff got the Bible black hands were supposed to use (Wilkerson, 2010). Jim Crow laws were challenged in 1896 in *Plessy v. Ferguson*. Louisiana passed a law that required railroads to provide separate but equal accommodations for white and black passengers. Public opinion during this time was firmly in favor of separate accommodations. The Court upheld the law. Justice Henty Billings Brown wrote for the majority that the 14th Amendment could not have been intended to abolish distinctions based on color, enforce social as distinguished from political equality, or the commingling of the two races upon terms unsatisfactory to either. Justice John Marshall Harlan dissented and wrote that the Constitution is color-blind (Justia 2, 2022).

Between 1938-1950, the Supreme Court began to chip away at the separate but equal doctrine in higher education. One example from 1950 was *McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education* (Justia 3, 2023). The Supreme Court prohibited racial segregation in state-supported graduate or professional education. The University of Oklahoma admitted George McLaurin, but to comply with separate but equal facilities, he was provided with a separate table in the cafeteria, assigned a separate desk in the library, given a desk outside of the classroom by the doorway, and given separate hours to meet with professors. The Court concluded that this was not an equal education. There are intangibles in education that are different or nonexistent

under the different treatment and facilities (Justia 3, 2023). An example of an intangible is the amount and quality of education that takes place from discussing the material with other students compared to solely hearing a lecture or reading a book. Here McLaurin was so separated from other students he lost the ability to communicate with fellow students. This made his education inferior because he lost the exchange of ideas that his fellow students experienced. If there are intangibles in higher education, they should also exist in elementary and high school education. Separate but equal in all public schools was overturned four years later in *Brown v. Board of Education* in 1954. Chief Justice Earl Warren wrote, "In the field of public education, the doctrine of separate but equal has no place. Separate facilities are inherently unequal" (Justia 4, 2023). This conclusion was, in part, reached by considering intangibles.

Different Philosophies

Affirmative action aims to improve educational and employment opportunities for underrepresented groups, including people of color and women. More recently, it has expanded to other historically disadvantaged groups based on religion, national origin, people with disabilities, and veterans. Affirmative action developed from executive orders during the Kennedy, Johnson, and Nixon Administrations. It is compensatory preferential treatment for members of traditionally disfavored minority groups. Affirmative action started in the areas of government employment, government contracts, and higher education (Ducat, 2009). The president oversees the executive branch of government, and federal agencies are under the president's control. When Congress decides to build a building or assist schools, Congress appropriates money to accomplish the task. The executive branch carries out the laws of Congress. In spending money to build a building, the president can require that, as a condition for getting a government contract, a builder must hire a certain number of minorities or subcontract to minority-owned businesses (Ducat, 2009). In the case of money to schools, the president can require that, as a condition to getting the money, the school must hire more faculty of color or admit more students of color.

The Supreme Court has struggled in at least three areas when trying to decide if affirmative action is constitutional. First, there are two competing models of affirmative action. The Court has struggled as to which approach should guide current court actions. The first is the group model (Stephens & Scheb, 1993). This theory looks at racial discrimination and remedies

for that discrimination in terms of groups. If one belongs to a group that was discriminated against in the past, then that person should get preferential treatment now. For example, if one's ancestors long ago were barred from buying a home and a business in the past from Black Codes, then that person's family suffered because they could not build up wealth like other families. Families that could own land and pass it on to future generations can slowly acquire more wealth with each generation. This allows future generations to own their own homes and businesses. It allows their future members to get increasing educational levels, which can result in better-paying jobs. The family that was held back from wealth accumulation will always be behind by the original effects of slavery and the Black Codes on the family.

The other model is the individual model. This model says affirmative action should only be available to those currently facing discrimination. Providing special treatment to someone whose family members were discriminated against in the past is reverse discrimination. Past discrimination in a family or ethnic group is not enough to justify claims of current discrimination. Justices on the Court have often split depending on which of these models they subscribe to (Stephens & Scheb, 1993).

A second concern for the Court is the fact that there are two different roots of discrimination. One type of discrimination is *de jure*. This is state-sponsored discrimination. An example would be if the state required blacks to live in one area (A) and whites to live in a different area (B). This would cause discrimination in education. The schools in Area A would all be black. In such cases, the government passed a law requiring discrimination, which caused all the following effects (Ducat, 2009). The other type of discrimination is *de facto*. Here, discrimination occurs because of many individual choices. A black person wants to live with other black people and chooses to live in Area A. A white person feels similarly and chooses to live in Area B. If enough people make the same decisions, Area A will be predominately black, and Area B will be predominately white. This has nothing to do with the government telling people where to live. The appearance of segregation is, in fact, voluntary separation. Remedies, like forced bussing, tend to stop when the vestiges of *de jure* segregation are over. The Court does not always continue to provide remedies to entire groups when *de facto* segregation is all that is left (Ducat, 2009). Individual remedies for anyone personally being discriminated against are usually considered more appropriate.

A third area that concerns the Court is the level of scrutiny to which affirmative action cases should be subjected. Affirmative action is to provide members of a group with special treatment. It is reverse discrimination. The Court uses strict scrutiny when a law causes a group to be denied fundamental rights based on race, national origin, religion, or alienage. The government might be able to discriminate, but the government would bear the burden of proof to convince the Court that there is a compelling need for this law. Compelling is the Court's highest level. The law must also be written in the narrowest fashion to achieve the government's objective (Ducat, 2009). Affirmative action measures subjected to strict scrutiny reviews have a higher chance of being found unconstitutional. First, when using strict scrutiny, the burden of proof is on the government to articulate a compelling need for its law. It is hard to find a compelling need for affirmative action if the Court concludes that prior discrimination should not justify current discrimination. Second, methods other than reverse discrimination may be possible to remedy current discrimination. Those who want affirmative action to have an easier chance of being upheld would want intermediate scrutiny or a rational basis to analyze the government's use of affirmative action.

The other way the Court could review cases where a group is denied fundamental rights is intermediate scrutiny. Traditionally, this is where the government discriminates on the basis of gender, sexual orientation, or illegitimacy. Here, the government has a better chance of upholding its law. The government still bears the burden of proof, but under intermediate scrutiny, the government only needs to show an important or substantial interest in making the law. This is understood to be less than compelling and more accessible for the government to establish. Also, the law would not have to be written in the least restrictive fashion to achieve the government's objective. The law could be broader in its reach (Ducat, 2009). If this approach were used for affirmative action cases, affirmative action would have a better chance of being found constitutional despite being found to be reverse discrimination.

Rational basis analysis is used to judge laws where the discrimination is not toward any of the above listed groups and involves a legitimate government interest (Ducat, 2009). An example here is wealth and economic regulation. Governments can discriminate based on wealth, such as making higher earners pay a higher percentage of their earnings in taxes. On a rational basis, the burden of proof is not on the government. The burden of proof is on the challenger to

show that the government's law is not rational. The government cannot impose restrictions on liberty that are irrational or arbitrary or draw distinctions between persons that serve no legitimate government purpose. Most laws are upheld with a rational basis.

Key Affirmative Action Cases

The first case challenging the constitutionality of racial preferences to reach the Court was *DeFunis v. Odegaard* in 1974 (Justia 5, 2023). Marco DeFunis, a white applicant, was not admitted to law school. He argued this was because of the school's affirmative action policy favoring the admission of minority applicants over better-qualified white candidates. The school's set-aside admission policy, which saved several seats solely for minorities, discriminated against him based on race. Despite not being accepted, DeFunis was allowed to attend the University of Washington Law School while he brought his discrimination case. He was just weeks from graduation by the time the Supreme Court would enter an opinion. Because of this, the Court called the case moot and dismissed it. In dissent, Justice William O. Douglas, a staunch advocate for racial equality during his time on the Court, indicated a need for racial neutrality (Justia 5, 2023). This left the country with the understanding that he would have considered the school's affirmative action plan to be unconstitutional.

The second case to reach the Court, *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* in 1978, was not dismissed (Justia 5, 2023). The University of California at Davis' medical school set aside 16% of its available seats for minorities. Only minorities could compete for these seats. Allan Bakke was rejected twice for a place in the medical school, while minorities with lower grades and test scores were admitted. The Court concluded that Bakke should be admitted, and the set-aside policy was invalid. The Court, however, did not conclude that race could not be used for admissions. Creating a racially diverse educational environment was found to be a compelling state interest. The Court concluded that race was only one factor among many factors that the school used for admissions (Justia 6, 2023). This case established the precedent that, for 45 years, has allowed schools to engage in race-based affirmative action. If other factors are similar, race could be one factor that breaks ties.

A year later, the Court, in *United Steelworkers v. Weber* in 1979 (Justia 7, 2023), considered affirmative action in a private employment case. In some industries, it was the practice to hire craftworkers and people with prior craft experience only. This made it impossible

for black applicants to get hired, as they were usually excluded from craft unions. The steelworkers' case grew out of an in-plant craft training program for blacks to compensate for this history of exclusion. The program reserved 50% of the seats for black workers. Brian Weber, a white worker, sued, claiming that, but for the set-aside policy, his seniority would have guaranteed him a slot in the training program. Justice William J. Brennan wrote for the majority that Title VI does not prohibit private, voluntary, race-conscious affirmative action programs to overcome past discrimination. In dissent, Chief Justice William Rehnquist wrote that the law should prohibit all racial discrimination, even discrimination directed at whites in favor of blacks (Justia 7, 2023). This argument was the same as was used by Justice Harlan in *Plessy v. Ferguson* to argue that the Constitution was colorblind. The argument continues to be used by many to oppose racial preferences in employment as well as education.

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor joined the Supreme Court in 1981. In another affirmative action case in employment, *City of Richmond v. J.A. Croson Company*, 1989, O'Connor wrote the majority opinion. She concluded:

> While there is no doubt that the sorry history of both private and public discrimination in this country has contributed to a lack of opportunities for black entrepreneurs, this observation, standing alone, cannot justify a rigid racial quota in the awarding of public contracts in Richmond, Virginia. Like the claim that discrimination in primary and secondary schooling justifies a rigid racial preference in medical school admissions, an amorphous claim that there has been past discrimination in a particular industry cannot justify the use of an unyielding racial quota (Justia 8, 2023).

Some scholars interpret this quote as O'Connor pushing the Court to adopt an individual model for affirmative action rather than the traditional group model (Stephens & Scheb, 1993). She basically said past discrimination is not enough of a compelling interest on the part of the state to justify current reverse discrimination. The state should be limited in its scope to ease current discrimination and apply remedies to individuals who are currently being harmed, rather than an entire group of people.

The Supreme Court decided two affirmative action cases in 2003: *Gratz v. Bollinger* and *Grutter v. Bollinger*. Rehnquist wrote the majority opinion in *Gratz v. Bollinger* (Justia 9, 2023).

Jennifer Gratz, a white applicant, was not accepted to the undergraduate program at the University of Michigan, while minorities with lower grade point averages and fewer extracurricular activities were accepted. In response to the lawsuit, the university eliminated its two-tiered admission policy that operated like a quota system. However, in its place, the university started a new policy that gave minority applicants 20 extra points. Rehnquist wrote that the extra point system was only based on race. The award of extra points was mechanical and ignored individual characteristics. The admissions system was struck down as it violated equal protection. Justice O'Connor was in the majority with Rehnquist in this case (Justia 9, 2023).

Justice O'Connor wrote the majority opinion in *Grutter v. Bollinger*, while Rehnquist dissented (Justia 10, 2023). This case challenged the University of Michigan Law School's admissions process. Barbara Grutter, the plaintiff, argued that the school's admission policies were race-conscious and granted minority applicants a much greater chance of admission. This time, the Court upheld the admission system. The law school's approach looked more holistically at competing applicants and was more *Bakke* compliant. The policy did not violate equal protection because it did not give points for minority status like *Gratz*. O'Connor authored the majority opinion and stated, "race-conscious admissions policies must be limited in time" to ensure "all citizens that the deviation from the norm of equal treatment of all racial and ethnic groups is a temporary measure" (Justia 10, 2023). She cautioned that colleges and universities should continually reassess their admissions policies to see whether changed circumstances allowed schools to maintain diversity without affirmative action. She expressed the expectation "that 25 years from now, the use of racial preferences will no longer be necessary" to achieve diversity (Justia 10, 2023). Rehnquist would have struck down the policy as unconstitutional racial balancing.

A final key case involved the University of Texas at Austin's race-neutral policy. In Texas, anyone who graduated in the top 10% of their high school class was automatically admitted. The school had a complicated policy to review applicants who did not make the automatic cut-off. In these cases, race was considered part of a holistic review of the applicants. A white applicant, Abigail Fisher, did not make the 10% cut-off. She argued that the school was not allowed to supplement its race-neutral policy with one that took race into account. The Fifth

Circuit held that the admissions policy was within what was allowed by *Grutter*. The Supreme Court, in *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin* in 2013 (Justia 11, 2023), held on review that the Fifth Circuit did not use strict scrutiny as required by *Bakke* and *Grutter*. A reviewing court must (1) place the burden of proof on the government, (2) show a compelling need for its law, and (3) require the law be written in the least restrictive fashion to achieve that compelling need. The Court could not conclude that the appellate court used strict scrutiny in its review. The Court expected the appellate court to conclude that no workable race-neutral alternatives would produce the educational benefits of diversity after reviewing possible alternatives. Without this type of review, too much deference could be given to the state. The appellate court's review appeared to be more like intermediate scrutiny. The Court returned the case for further review (Justia 11, 2023). In 2014, the Fifth Circuit again upheld the university's admission policy. The Supreme Court agreed to hear the case again in 2015. Much speculation was made about the Court striking down affirmative action this time. However, Justice Antonin Scalia died before the Court could decide the case. Justin Elena Kagan recused herself because she was involved with the case while serving in the Solicitor General's office during the Obama Administration. The Court, in 2016, decided 4-3 that the university met the burden of strict scrutiny (Justia 12, 2023).

These cases demonstrate how the court and country were divided over affirmative action. Many of these cases were decided by a single vote at the Supreme Court, and whether an admissions policy was constitutional was hard to predict. Sometimes, the outcome of cases seemed more dependent on the particular justices in the court at the time of a decision than constitutional principles. Out of the courtroom, citizens who favored affirmative action argued that the policy was necessary to provide opportunities to groups who may not otherwise have those opportunities. Citizens who oppose affirmative action argue that it does not work. Affirmative action is reverse discrimination, and policies should be colorblind. Preferential treatment breeds resentment; those who benefit under affirmative care are sometimes considered less qualified. Proponents believe admissions or employment should solely be based on merit. The states would sometimes become involved in admission policies. It was said that *Gratz* played a role in Michigan's (2006) passing of Proposal 2, which ended race-based preferences in admissions at their state's schools. Other states like Arizona (2010), California (1996), Florida (1999), Idaho (2020), Nebraska (2008), New Hampshire (2012), Oklahoma (2012), and

Washington (1998, rescinded 2022) have banned affirmative action (Saul, 2022). By 2023, most commentators predicted that the Court would overturn affirmative action (Lemann, 2022). Abigail Fisher remained at the forefront of the fight. She became one of the leaders of Students for Fair Admissions, the plaintiff in both most recent cases.

Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College and Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina (2023)

Both Harvard and the University of North Carolina have highly selective admissions policies. When accepting students, they consider grades, letters of recommendation, extracurricular activities, and race. Harvard is a private school, and the University of North Carolina is a public school. In both cases, the question facing the Supreme Court was whether the affirmative action admission policies violated the law. The Court decided both cases jointly. By a 6-3 vote, the Court concluded that both schools' policies could not use race-conscious admissions policies (*Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College and Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina*, 2023). The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment bars public colleges and universities' use of racial preferences. Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (Civil Rights Division, 2023) restricts race-conscious admissions at any school that receives federal funds. Harvard, while a private school, accepts federal funds.

Chief Justice Roberts wrote the majority opinion. He was joined by Justices Clarence Thomas, Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barret. Roberts reviewed the facts in the cases, established that the Court had jurisdiction, reviewed the Constitution and amendments, and the Court reviewed prior cases. The Court mentioned O'Connor's opinion in *Grutter, where* she anticipated that affirmative action would end in 25 years. The Court noted that twenty years have passed with no end in sight to the demise of affirmative action. He focused on the Equal Protection Clause and concluded that the clause's core purpose was to do away with all government discrimination based on racial, *de jure* discrimination.

The Court moved onto the merits of the cases with a consideration of strict scrutiny analysis. The Court reaffirmed that strict scrutiny must be used when people are treated

differently based on race. The school's interest in the need for race-based diversity must be measured for purposes of strict scrutiny review. In arguing a compelling need for racial diversity, the schools used arguments such as the need for different perspectives and robust discussions in class. Roberts questioned how the court knows selecting by race automatically provides different viewpoints and how the Court should measure the robustness of arguments. The compelling needs the schools identified were too vague for courts to measure. He questioned how a court could determine whether the universities had accomplished their goals and when racial preferences could end. The Court was not satisfied to simply "trust" that the compelling need for diversity that the schools identified was being achieved with the selected minority students (*Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College and Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina*, 2023).

The majority also concluded that college admissions programs can consider race on a case-by-case basis but only to allow applicants to explain how one's race influenced other admissions criteria, such as character. For example, a student could have faced discrimination. By facing discrimination, the student could have developed courage and determination. These character traits could have led the student to develop into leadership positions. The student could explain how their leadership positions could benefit the university. The student would be considered for admission based on their experiences and not race. How race forms different aspects of a person's behavior is fine, but the use of race without an explanation of how race forms the person's character would not be acceptable. Also, race can never be used negatively. The freshman class has a fixed number of students. Providing a benefit to some applicants but not others means the advantaged group gets a benefit at the expense of other groups. The admission programs also rely on prohibited racial stereotyping. Schools assume that minority students always have the same views or perspectives on issues. There are no guarantees that the schools will achieve diversity of ideas from focusing on race.

The Court's opinion effectively overturns a *Bakke* and *Grutter* review, although the Court did not directly say it overturned those cases. In those prior cases, race could have been a plus factor if other admissions criteria had been equal. Now, race alone cannot be used as a factor. It can only come into admission consideration if race is what developed some admission criteria,

such as personal characteristics (*Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College and Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina*).

The majority opinion did not review the use of race in admissions at the country's service academies. The Biden administration filed a friend of the court brief emphasizing that senior military leaders across the different military services believed having a diverse officer corps was essential. Consideration of race, it was argued, is necessary to achieve this racial diversity. As arguments and briefs in the cases in front of the Court did not consider the uniqueness of the service academies, the Court would not consider these schools.

Thomas filed a concurring opinion. He argued against the idea, raised by Sotomayor, that the 14th Amendment "does not impose a blanket ban of race-conscious policies" (*Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College and Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina*). He also made a personal and practical argument against race-conscious admissions. He was admitted to Yale Law School in the 1970s under a race-conscious admissions program. He wrote that he felt the "stigmatizing effects of racial preference" (*Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College and Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina*). He also took issue with the dissent's statement that race-conscious admissions programs have increased the overall numbers of blacks and Hispanics able to access a college education. His position is that the admission policies did not create more college-bound students. The admission policies simply redistribute minorities to selective schools when they would have fanned out and gone to many other universities and colleges.

Gorsuch wrote a concurring opinion that Thomas joined. He argued that affirmative action violated Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. The developed argument on Title VI supported Roberts' reliance on the Equal Protection Clause to move away from race-conscious admission policies. Both colleges received public funds and violated Title VI with their policies. He suggested the schools could achieve diversity by focusing on socioeconomically disadvantaged students instead of race (*Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College and Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina*).

Kavanaugh also filed a concurring opinion. He wanted to explain further why the Court's decision was consistent with the Court's precedents on affirmative action in higher education. He

wrote that "racial discrimination still occurs, and the effects of past racial discrimination still persist." However, other paths like federal and state civil rights laws can "deter and provide remedies for current acts of racial discrimination" (*Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College and Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina*). Universities can use race-neutral methods to remedy past discrimination. He seemed to be writing about *de facto* discrimination rather than *de jure* discrimination, and he may have been focusing on the individual rather than the group model to show how these changes would lead to the same conclusion the Court reached in abandoning the use of race as an admissions factor. This is a very strange opinion as the Court overturned past affirmative action analysis. How the case could have been resolved under older analysis is irrelevant. It could just confuse the casual reader. No one signed on to this opinion.

Justice Sonia Sotomayor wrote a dissenting opinion. Justice Elena Kagan joined her. Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson joined the dissent as it applied to the University of North Carolina. She was on Harvard's board of overseers before joining the Court and abstained in the decision of Harvard's case. Sotomayor noted that the majority opinion rolled back decades of precedent and progress in increasing school diversity. These justices did not agree with a colorblind constitutional rule and thought it would be superficial. They believe the limited use of race "has helped equalize the educational opportunities for all students of every race and background and has improved racial diversity on college campuses" (*Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College and Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina*).

Jackson also wrote a dissenting opinion in the University of North Carolina case. Sotomayor and Kagan joined her. She argued that America was never colorblind. Jackson wrote, "to say that anyone is now victimized if a college considered whether that legacy of discrimination has unequally advantaged its applicants fail to acknowledge the well documented 'intergenerational transmission of inequality' that still plagues our citizenry" (*Students for Fair Admissions v. President and Fellows of Harvard College and Students for Fair Admissions v. University of North Carolina*). Here, she seems to be calling for the use of the group model and the idea that prior discrimination justifies current discrimination with race-conscious admission standards. She may be arguing that there still is *de jure* discrimination or that the effects of state-

sponsored discrimination are still being felt. She does not believe that the majority's opinion will bring a quick end to racism.

Implications and Conclusions

On its face, the two most recent cases seem very narrow. However, their effects may be great. Justice Roberts is known for guiding the court toward making slow and incremental changes (Biskupic, 2016). These cases could have a significant impact not only in education but beyond. First, the cases will affect admissions in education. They will affect any selective schools, from elementary schools to universities. In time, the decision will also probably affect the military service academies. All schools will have to use race-neutral selection criteria. Criteria given greater emphasis will probably be things like a parents' education level, household status (one or two-parent homes), socioeconomic status of the family, socioeconomic status of the neighborhood, composition of neighborhood housing (single-family homes or multifamily units), and geography. Other factors might be discovered to identify the potential for diversity. The use of an essay for admissions will become more critical for a better understanding of the whole person. Applications should now remove a common checkoff that an applicant used to identify one's race. Special points and scholarships for legacy candidates may result in court cases, but a legacy candidate may be of any race and thus not of concern. Special scholarships for minorities may be more problematic. These scholarships are not colorblind. Schools' Special programs for students of one specific race may also be problematic. These may have to be changed to programs for all students with the same problem/concern that created the special program. For example, maybe special programs should be for all students with study problems such as time management, writing, math, etc., and not just those of one race. As then-Senator Obama indicated in the first quotation in this essay, if students cannot get help to learn high school material, they will not be competitive in college applications. Good high schools provide study aid. It should not just be available to those who have parents who learned in high school or those who have parents who can pay for tutoring. In fact, students who do not have help in high school and do not do well will feel so defeated that they will not even try to go! Colleges will probably have to do more in-person recruiting and go to predominantly minority schools to recruit. They will probably want to offer sessions in-person or online to help students fill out the school's application. Help does not stop with high schools.

Second, these cases could easily broaden in scope. Affirmative action started in the areas of government employment and government contracts, as well as education. The government—local, state, and federal—may not be able to continue using government funds to favor the hiring of minorities or force the hiring of minority-owned subcontractors on a government job. Employment, in general, may have to move to being more race-neutral in selection processes.

Schools are now focusing on diversity, equity, and inclusion. Could this case affect this focus? What is diversity? "The practice of including or involving people from a range of different social and ethnic backgrounds and different genders and sexual orientations" includes all ways people differ and can include age, mental and physical abilities, income, religion, political perspective, etc. (Oxford University Press, 2015). It can be argued that if there is no discrimination, a school should see this type of diversity in its application pool. However, if the school tries to increase its acceptance numbers of a few of these groups over applicants, the school can very well expect to be in the exact position the schools were in these cases when they tried to select of race. What is equality? This Court would consider equality as treating everyone equally, especially regarding status, rights, and all opportunities (Takeuchi et al., 2018). Contrast equality with equity, which means "providing the same to all" (Merriam-Webster, n.d., a). If equity in any way means equal outcome, this court will not adopt it. Merit is more likely to be the preferred focus of the Court. Merit implies worthiness or excellence (Merriam-Webster, n.d., b). Students are selected for admission based on tests all applicants take for admission or grades they earned in class while competing with others. There certainly can be other factors, such as exceptional art, music, or sports achievement. All prospective students have an equal opportunity to apply and be considered. However, selection by merit will not result in an automatic equal representation of all different groups under the diversity definition. Inclusion means the state of being included within the group. It is the idea that all students accepted to the school should be embraced. Excluding students from competitive sports teams or majors based on ability would be acceptable. There are only so many places available for students, for example, in a nursing program. Grades must be earned, and knowledge learned to graduate in nursing. However, the race or gender of a student should not matter.

How about legacy candidates? Some schools have plus factor policies for legacy candidates or even automatic admission for this group. Some commentators argue that these

schools are discriminating, and it may result in wealthier white applicants being admitted at the expense of other poorer groups. However, the policy may not be racial discrimination. As students from different races graduate, their children will be legacy candidates just as much as white students whose parents graduated from the school. Why do schools have legacy policies? Schools have these policies because these graduates can feel a family attachment to the school. They might donate to the school because of closer connections, but they may also feel part of the school's network and provide internships and jobs to graduates from the school. Could this be wealth discrimination? Wealth is not a protected class by the Court, nor is the amount or percentage one pays in taxes. Wealth is not included among race, national origin, religion, and alienage. But this seems to be discrimination based on wealth. This country does not have a flat tax rate that all pay regardless of income. The Court only gives challenges to tax codes rational basis scrutiny. The burden is on the challenger to prove the government's tax code is not rationally related to their legitimate interest in taxing. These cases could go nowhere. However, these cases may never come to the Court. Many schools are voluntarily removing preferences for legacy candidates.

Could a school use affirmative action to determine gender and sex preferences? These cases would not be given strict scrutiny but instead intermediate scrutiny. The school would have a better chance of this type of affirmative action being upheld because the test is easier. The school would only have to show an important or substantial need for its admission policy. However, Roberts criticized Harvard and the University of North Carolina for not clearly articulating a compelling need to discriminate to achieve their reason for the admission policy and showing in some measurable fashion that their policy would achieve that purpose. Discrimination based on sex and gender may result in the same types of problems that resulted in affirmative action based on race, even if slightly lower scrutiny is given.

What is the ultimate goal? If the Constitution is colorblind, how should things operate? Maybe the goal is to provide equality and select people based on merit. If all elementary and high schools offered the type of education where all students could compete on admittance tests for college, race would not be needed for the selection of students. This seems to be what Justice Thomas is saying in his concurring opinion. Why did the country have separate but equal facilities after the Civil War? Separate but equal rests on two foundations. First, the separate

facilities were, in fact, equal. And second, separating the races made no statement as to the worth of the people being separated. In *Brown v. Board of Education*, the Court struck down the concept of separate but equal. The railroad cars in *Plessy v. Ferguson* were not of equal quality. The separate schools, drinking fountains, and all other things were not equal in quality or function. Also, there are no reasons to separate people if all people are equal. The only reason to separate is if one group is considered of lesser value. All schools need to provide students with a good education. When students cannot compete equally for admission to elite schools, and admission is just handed to some, it breeds resentment in those who feel they lost out for no reason under their control. Those who get slots because of race forever feel like it was not earned. They feel inferior. This is what Justice Thomas was trying to say. There needs to be equality, and people need to be selected based on merit, but what is at the heart of Justice Jackson's argument is that things are not equal. This can only be cured by schools not just being equal but all being excellent.

Finally, all vestiges of *de jure* segregation need to be routed out. There has been significant progress over the years in ending *de jure* segregation, but *de facto* segregation is still a problem. Why do some people decide that other people are not the same or equal? It does not help that there is modern slavery. To finally root out *de facto* segregation, people need to believe they are all equal. It is not enough to be taught these truths. As long as examples of modern slavery exist, and as long as it appears to be tolerated, those truths will never be realized. Justice Roberts suggests in the second quotation in this article that the only way to stop discrimination is to end affirmative action because affirmative action is discrimination. Unsaid but implied is the idea that to end affirmation action, the problems that lead to its development must also be ended.

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Global Hegemony in the Horn of Africa: Exploring the Consequences for the States in the Region

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Abstract

Studies on the geopolitics of the Horn of Africa have focused essentially on the strategic importance of the region to world powers that supposedly safeguard the free movement of trade and commerce through the shipping waterways all-around the Red Sea. Two sets of countries--global and regional--- are the known forces at work in the region. To ensure their hegemonic presence in the Horn of Africa, various global and regional powers use trade, investment, military, intelligence, and diplomatic capacities, and, even in some cases, the instrument of development aid, to place undue pressure and influence on the regional states. This could occur while attempting to thwart each other's rival from gaining a competitive edge in the region and elsewhere, as well as pursuing their national interest and geopolitical supremacy. As such, existing studies about global hegemony in the Horn of Africa often seem to perpetuate analyses skewed towards the rivalry itself among the hegemonic powers while offering only scant attention to the consequences of the rivalry that directly affect the states within the region. Indifferent from these contorted scholarly practices. Therefore, this study attempts to foster a new perspective on the effects of hegemonic competition on the Horn of Africa states while aiming to fill the gap that exists in the scholarly literature surrounding the topic.

Keywords: Hegemony, Horn of Africa, Global Powers, Regional Powers, Effects of Hegemonic Rivalry on Horn of Africa States

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Introduction

Studies on the geopolitics of the Horn of Africa have focused essentially on the strategic importance of the region to world powers that supposedly safeguard the free movement of trade and commerce through the shipping waterways all-around the Red Sea. Two sets of countries--- global and regional--- are the known forces at work in the region. Global powers are those states that can exert power, pressure, influence, and use other instruments of force on countries and regions beyond their own region of the world, and

do so because of their inordinate economic, political, and military strengths. Such countries as the U.S., China, Russia, Great Britain, Germany, France, India, and Japan, and, to a lesser degree, Italy, Turkey, and Spain, may possibly fall into this category of states. On the other hand, because of their increasingly growing ranking in the current power hierarchy spectrum, states like Israel, Iran, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates may be regarded as regional powers. So, compared to a global power, a regional power is capable of wielding

> …influence in a specific region. If this power capability is unrivaled in its region, the state could rise to the level of a regional hegemon. The regional powers display comparatively high military, economic, political, and ideological capabilities enabling them to shape their regional security agenda. Overall, the terms 'middle powers' and 'regional powers' convey capacity, hierarchy, influence, and aspiration (Yilmaz, 2019, 1).

To ensure their hegemonic presence in the Horn of Africa, various global and regional powers use trade, investment, military, intelligence, and diplomatic capacities, and even, in some cases, the instrument of development aid, to place undue pressure and influence on the regional states. This could occur while attempting to thwart each other's rival from gaining a competitive edge in the region and elsewhere, as well as pursuing their national interest and geopolitical supremacy (Yachyshen, 2020, 1-2). As such, existing studies about global hegemony in the Horn of Africa often seem to perpetuate analyses skewed towards the rivalry itself among the hegemonic powers while offering only scant attention to the consequences of the rivalry that directly affect the states within the region. Indifferent from these contorted scholarly practices. Therefore, this study attempts to foster a new perspective on the effects of hegemonic competition on the Horn of Africa states while aiming to fill the gap that exists in the scholarly literature surrounding the topic.

Effects of the Hegemonic Rivalry on the Horn of Africa States

As we have seen so far, studies on the Horn of Africa have focused on the geopolitical significance of the region to both global and regional powers external to the Horn. As such, such studies often seem to perpetuate analyses skewed towards the rivalry itself among such powers while offering only scant attention to the consequences that directly affect the states and people in the region. Given this reality, therefore, the following

discussion is meant to fill the void left in the scholarly analyses devoted to this very subject. With that being the case, we now briefly examine some of the negative effects of the external pressure put to bear upon the Horn of Africa states.

Violence and Human Rights Violations

The conventional understanding of violence and human rights violations in the Horn of Africa may not convey sufficiently the depth and magnitude of the real consequences for human conditions facing the region. Those conditions seem to receive from external pundits only lukewarm empathy as though to validate them as the accepted norm of the Global South countries. The Global South, not to be equated with the geographical South, refers largely to the majority of the underdeveloped or poor countries th at happen to be located below the equator and are likely to display unstable democracy, or are in the process of industrializing, and may even have experienced colonization in their past by the Global North countries, especially West European ones. So, the economic understanding of the concept more than the geographic one provides a better context for the term. In this regard, for example, Australia and New Zeeland would be the exceptions to the Global South while the Horn of Africa countries would fit nicely to the South classification. Albeit the uncertainty about the conceptual understanding of the Global South, it is an undeniable fact that the group of countries located in the Global South is faced with a myriad of issues, including economic deprivations, political instability, social upheavals, and poverty, among others. In this connection, Bayeh best describes the conditions of the Horn of Africa countries in these words:

> The Horn of Africa is one of the most conflict ravaged regions in the continent. It has encountered, inter alia, political exclusion/power struggle, ethnic and religious-based discrimination, piracy, terrorism, violation of human rights, the proliferation of SALW {Small Arms and Light Weapons}, poverty/famine as a major threat to human security (Bayeh, 2014).

The question then is, to what extent do the external forces contribute to the host of problems confronting the Horn of Africa today? Any external meddling in the internal affairs of weaker or vulnerable states, such as those of the Horn, can be a recipe for disaster, as their pursuits of maintaining sovereignty, territorial integrity, social cohesiveness, and unimpeded development by such counties become entangled with

the machination of the powerful forces external to the region. Any internal conflict of a state in the Horn always has its external manifestations in the form of arms transfer, overbearing diplomatic interventions, direct or clandestine funding of armed groups, and, in some rare cases, sharing of intelligence information sought with those engaged in armed conflicts. Such were the cases in point in the internal conflict of Ethiopia during 2020-2022 between the Tigrayan People Liberation Front (TPLF) rebels in the north and the federal government in Addis Ababa. Taking the side of the TPLF were Egypt, Sudan, the U.S., and the EU, while Russia, China, Turkey, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) implicitly supported the federal government. The Addis Ababa regime received drone planes from Turkey, Iran, and the UAE, respectively. At the same time, the strong and consistent support received by the Ethiopian government from Russia and China came on the diplomatic front, especially at the United Nations, where Ethiopia's alleged human rights violations came up for discussion at the U.N. Security Council meetings more frequently than ever before during the two years of the civil war, which was a record for the world body. The U.S. was behind all these unprecedented U.N. Security Council moves, which were unmistakably intended for punitive actions against Ethiopia over the unprecedented humanitarian disaster the civil war caused; however, none of them was successful due to the combined vetoing power of Russia and China, whose stances favored Ethiopia, arguing that it would be undue interference in the internal affairs of that Horn of Africa country.

The violence, human rights abuses, and infrastructural destruction reported in Ethiopia, mostly perpetrated by the TPLF rebel forces against the people and properties of the Amhara and Afar regions adjacent to Tigre, were the most heart-wrenching aftereffects that the country has ever seen in recent memory. Equally, the people in Tigre were facing at the time shortages of food, medicine, electricity, fuel, and other basic services resulting from the destruction that the war brought to bear, particularly on the civilian population. Egypt's direct involvement in the training and supplying of arms to the rebels through Sudan, coupled with Sudan's training of the rebel recruits inside its own country, as well as the sharing of satellite images of Ethiopian troops and arms movements by the U.S. with the rebel forces all point to the extent to which the external powers were involved in the civil war there. This eventually led to thousands of civilian

deaths and the displacement of thousands throughout Tigre, Amhara, and Afar administrative regions. The extent of human rights violations that took place in the areas affected by the civil war in the north of Ethiopia is hard to describe, requiring a thorough investigation of the subject in depth in its entirety, and this is not of course the place to do it, as it would be beyond the scope of the current study

Intra- and Inter-state Conflicts to the Detriment of Development

External powers rivaling in the Horn of Africa have either military bases or in some cases a physical presence at seaports in any of the regional states , or even at times may use foreign aid as an enticement to secure asymmetrical bilateral relations with them; and the intention is always one of securing a competitive advantage against each other within the region. It behooves the latter then to ensure their own security by way of a military buildup due to the fear of the unknown, which could emanate from being surrounded by external forces that may be even hostile to each other. Indeed, any fallout that could ensue from any hostile activities among the rival powers would precipitate fear and threats within the regional states; hence, military expansion becoming their compelling need in the interest of national security. In the final analysis, as the national security of any of the states in the region could be at risk, with rival hegemonic powers vying for domination of the region, it is reasonable to expect that the regional states would probably place their security priorities ahead of economic development.

Indeed, economic well-being is what is rather needed throughout the region to address the issues of abject poverty, poor physical infrastructure networks, dependency on food aid, meagre healthcare, illiteracy, poor transportation systems, and endemic deficits in most other necessities of life. However, raising military capabilities by the Horn countries in the face of insecurity may not even be limited to the perceived security threat that global and regional powers pose in the Horn of Africa. The threat may also come from within the region among the neighboring states, which are rife with boarder disputes. It may even further emanate from interstate conflicts caused by armed groups waging wars from each other’s borders, often by receiving support from the state

hosting the armed group as part of a destabilization scheme against another neighboring state.

In fact, intra-state and inter-state conflicts in the Horn of Africa are not new. In the recent past, such conflicts as the second North-South civil war (1983-2005) in Sudan and the intra-state war in Darfur, and the inter-state Ethiopian-Eritrean war of 19982000 brought untold devastations to the region (Bereketeab, 2013). The current conflicts are thus a microcosm of the past and touch every country in the region. Still, the worst of the intrastate conflicts in the Horn of Africa may have occurred in Somalia. Since 1991, Somalia has been beset with so much civil strife and political disharmony that the country has been mocked by critics as a “failed state.” Following the 1991 toppling of the Said Barre regime, the country has been divided effectively into two new de facto states (Somaliland and Puntland) and a central government occupying only the capital city, Mogadishu, and the surrounding areas. This is in addition to the terrorist group Al-Shabaab, which controls the central and southern portions of the country. Each of these entities receives support, military, and the like, from supporters among global and regional powers. The central Somalia government is, for example, supported by the U.S. against Al-Shabab, which has been hit by American air-strikes occasionally to ensure that the terrorist group would not destabilize the Horn of Africa (Klobucista et al, 2022, 14). In the same vein, conflicts of the interstate kind have happened between Ethiopia and Eritrea; Eritrea and Djibouti; Ethiopia and Sudan; Kenya and Somalia; and Sudan and South Sudan, all involving boarder disputes. Intrastate conflicts have taken place within Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, and Somalia, as well.

Undeniably, the most extreme and tragic of the intrastate conflicts of late occurred in Ethiopia’s northern Tigre region, starting in November 2020 and lasting more than two years, destabilizing the most populous country in the Horn of Africa, while leaving thousands of people dead and displaced. As global and regional powers supported the TPLF rebels and placed pressure on the federal government in Addis Ababa, the immediate impact of the external meddling was the prolongation of the conflict itself while causing untold human costs and material devastation, as well as abruptly halting the strong pace of economic growth the country had earlier enjoyed.

Taking the side of the TPLF were Egypt, Sudan, the U.S., and the EU, while Russia, China, Turkey, and UAE implicitly supported the federal government. The Addis Ababa regime received drone planes from Turkey, Iran, and UAE, respectively. At the same time, the strong and consistent support received by the Ethiopian government from Russia and China came on the diplomatic front, especially at the United Nations, where Ethiopia's alleged human rights violations came up for discussion at the U.N. Security Council meetings more frequently than ever before during the two years of the civil war, which was a record for the world body. The U.S. was behind all these unprecedented U.N. Security Council moves, which were unmistakably intended for punitive actions against Ethiopia over the unprecedented humanitarian disaster the civil war caused; however, none of them was successful due to the combined vetoing power of Russia and China, whose stances favored Ethiopia, arguing that it would be undue interference in the internal affairs of that Horn of Africa country **(Ibid)**.

The violence, human rights abuses, and infrastructural destruction reported in Ethiopia, mostly perpetrated by the TPLF rebel forces against the people and properties of the Amhara and Afar regions adjacent to Tigre, were the most heart-wrenching aftereffects that the country has even seen in recent memory. Equally, the people in Tigre were facing at the time shortages of food, medicine, electricity, fuel, and other basic services resulting from the destruction that the war brought to bear, particularly on the civilian population. Egypt's direct involvement in the training and supplying of arms to the rebels through Sudan, coupled with Sudan's training of the rebel recruits inside its own country, as well as the sharing of satellite images of Ethiopian troops and arms movements by the U.S. with the rebel forces all point to the extent to which the external powers were involved in the civil war there. This eventually led to thousands of civilian deaths and the displacement of thousands throughout Tigre, Amhara, and Afar administrative regions. The extent of human right violations that took place in the areas affected by the civil war in the north of Ethiopia is hard to describe, requiring a thorough investigation of the subject in depth in its entirety.

The U.S. punitive action against Ethiopia over alleged human rights violations during the conflict included both economic and military sanctions, the most damaging of which was the barring of the Horn of country in January 2022 from participation in the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA). President Joe Biden declared that Ethiopia was noncompliant with the provisions of the Act, which allowed African countries for a preferential treatment in their export trade with the U.S. by fulfilling, among other things, the requirements necessary for democracy, transparency, and the rule of law. In a message to Congress in 2021, the President reported that Ethiopia failed to comply with AGOA due to the "…gross violations of internationally recognized human rights." (Hansler, 2021, 2). Consequently, this retributive action by the U.S. effectively cut off Ethiopia's promising export market to the U.S. even as leaving thousands of workers without jobs. While leveraging the benefits of AGOA prior to being expelled from it, Ethiopia's exports to the U.S. had risen by 62 percent in just one year (2019), which is clear evidence that the removal of Ethiopia from AGOA was a severe blow particularly to that country's bourgeoning manufacturing industry, and thereby making it adversative by all measures to its long-term, sustainable economic development strategies (*Embassy of Ethiopia in Brussels*, 2019). The Tigray conflict eventually came to an end in December 2022 after peace agreements between the federal government and the rebellious region were signed in Pretoria, South Africa and subsequently in Nairobi, Kenya, which was mediated under the auspices of the African Union and with the active sponsorship of the U.S.; Olusegun Obasanjo, former President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, appointed in August 2021 as High Representative for the Horn of Africa region by Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union, H.E. Moussa Faki Mahamat, brokered the agreements with the help of former President Uhuru Kenyatta of Kenya.

While the Tigray conflict in the north may have ended eventually, Ethiopia's eastern border by Djibouti has become a significant strategic hotspot, as landlocked Ethiopia looks to Somaliland for an outlet to the sea, where the port of Berbera is located. Ethiopia's fees for use of Djibouti as an export-import hub have become so exorbitant that the Horn of Africa powerhouse is seeking additional ports in Somaliland and Kenya

to reduce absolute reliance on the Djibouti's port. Consequently, the U.S. and China, both stationed in Djibouti, are in a fierce rivalry to influence regional interstate relations. China is deeply committed to Ethiopia's economic interest because of its huge investment capital there, such as in Ethiopia's mega dam project on the Blue Nile and oil and gas exploration prospects in the Ogden area of Ethiopia. The U.S. was interested in getting the oil and gas exploration prospects from Ethiopia in a bid to rival China. When that did not materialize, the U.S. was reportedly trying to use Ethiopia's expulsion from AGOA and the various sanctions it has imposed during the Tigray crisis in the north as the bargain chip to leverage Ethiopia's stance against China, which the U.S. sees as a threat to its strategic interest in the region, and so the Asian economic giant's robust economic relations with Ethiopia has fueled U.S. resentment such that the latter has been under constant economic and diplomatic pressure to change course. Thus, there have been clear instances when the U.S. has tried to force Ethiopia to ease off its ties with China by promising to lift the sanctions as well as allow it to rejoin AGOA, but all to no avail at the time of this writing.

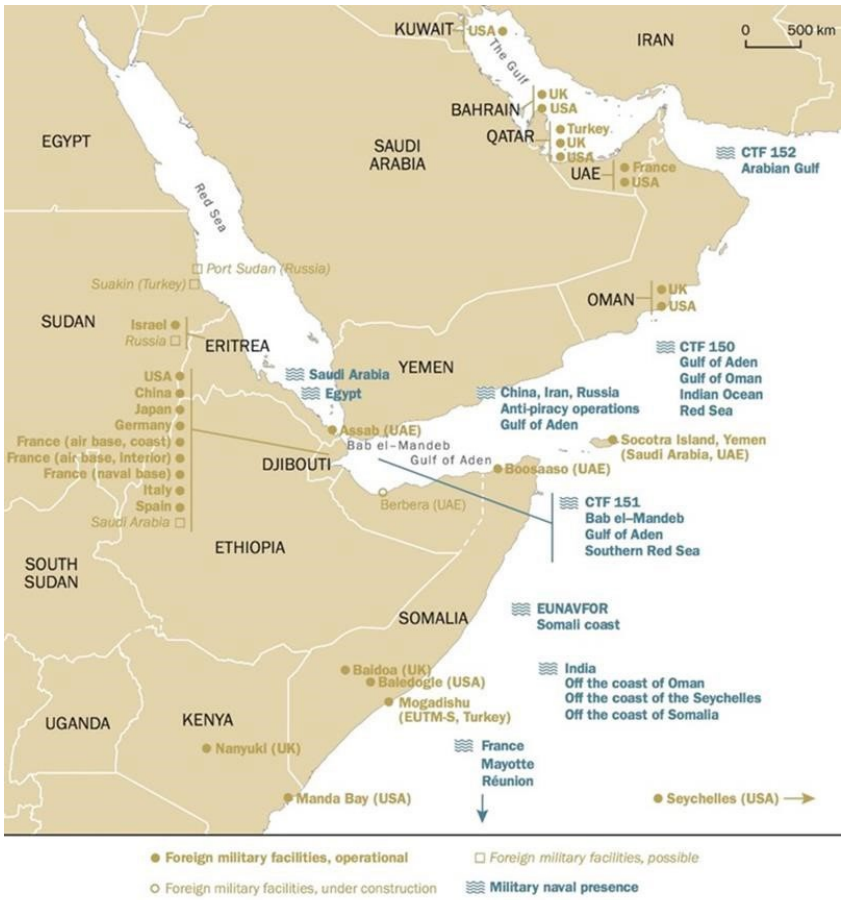
Furthermore, there were unconfirmed reports at the time of this writing that Ethiopia was alleged to have conspired with Mogadishu to divide up the *de facto* state of Somaliland, with the support of China, and take over the Berbera port in Somaliland by force, thereby making the semi-independent territory from becoming a separate state from Somalia altogether. On the contrary, the U.S. was reported as having an interest in facilitating Somaliland's recognition as an independent state, in variance with China, as the two great powers continue to vie for influence and control of the regional states' interstate and intrastate affairs. While this new development may have been a speculation of some pundits, however, no evidence has come out supporting this report in absolute terms; neither Ethiopia nor Somalia has confirmed it.

So, as the foregoing illustrates, the adverse effects of external interventions, coupled with the inter- and intra-state conflicts, on political stability and development activities in the Horn can be very costly, both in the short term and long term. There is no better description of such effects than provided by Aleksi Ylönen (2022), based on his research findings, as the following quotation so strikingly illustrates:

> Despite recent efforts to propel economic development, external players in the Horn of Africa have often engaged in rivalries that have had destabilizing consequences for the wider region. Their involvement in the Horn of Africa has mostly been adventurous and self-serving without much concern for the repercussions of their actions. Meanwhile, local state and non-state actors have taken advantage of foreign interests to strengthen their position. This analysis suggests that external actors should tone down their rivalries and engage more responsibly in the Horn of Africa to encourage local players to work for mutual benefit. (p. 1)

There is also no doubt that when poor states are faced with such vulnerability, as stated by Ylonen, and become politically unstable, their efforts at developing their economies or providing the essentials of life for ordinary citizens can be enormously hampered. This further creates the perpetuity of deficiency of basic needs for survival while raising the cycle of dependency on foreign aid. Political and social instability may also result in the diminishing of the potential for independent development. When this is added to the costs of military buildup some of the Horn of Africa countries are engaged in, any national projects aimed at sustainable development suffer the most and remain in shambles as a result. Although the exact figures are not known, well-armed militaries in Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Sudan take the greater share of the national budget expenditures, just to mention a few. This is a fact that is exceedingly prevalent in the many facets of existence in the Horn of Africa today and elsewhere in Africa.

Prospects of Conflict among the External Powers



As the above map illustrates, there are more than a dozen global and regional powers that are situated with military bases in the Horn of Africa. The possible outcome of the rivalry for strategic advantage in the region among these powers is difficult to predict. Yet, the issue may lead to a rhetorical debate over the balance of power versus a single dominant power typology in its geopolitical context. A traditionally vital concept in the studies of international relations, the balance of power theory refers to the state of dynamic equilibrium characterizing relations among sovereign states, especially the great powers. More realistically, it is a way of pairing some nations' powers against those of other nations so that there is no upheaval or anarchy in the international system; and the criteria for appraising national power are based, among other factors, on a country's demographic size, economic capacity, and military prowess. Given this perspective, one may then question whether the Horn of Africa is better off with several powers present in the region to deter anarchy or without them at all, or even with only a

single dominating power. While the question begs for a precise answer, however, this investigation does not necessarily purport to provide one. It is intended here to address the possible effects of the power rivalry itself on the countries of the region based on the existing geopolitical predictabilities.

While hosting military bases leased to the global and regional powers, a few of the Horn states are on the hot seat of impending risks that may result from the intense competition among the external forces in the region for the sphere of influence and control. The aggressive efforts of the external powers to position themselves in the region at a level equal to or more than that of their rivals pose risks not only for themselves but also for the hosting states, as the “scramble for the Horn of Africa” rages on in both scope and intensity.

Whereas leasing military or naval bases to global and regional powers can be a reliable source of revenue for the low-income Horn countries, coupled with a few of such powers even investing in the modernization of seaports and thereby creating rare job opportunities for the domestic workforce, the risk of conflicts nonetheless always remains in the reckoning for all. The threats may be even more aggravated by two ongoing crises near the Horn, namely, the Yemen civil war and the U.S.-Iran standoff over Tehran’s denuclearization accords. The nuclear deal was signed between several powers led by the U.S. and Iran in 2015, placing significant restrictions on the latter’s nuclear program while lifting gradually the economic sanctions imposed on it for decades prior. But regrettably, the agreement was written off by the Trump administration in 2018 claiming that Iran had received the better of the deal and thus the agreement failed to force Iran to halt the program completely as the U.S. had wished. So, the spillover effects from these two crises, coupled with the military bases now in place in some of the Horn states, would make the threats of conflict more ominous in the region than ever before (Robinson, 2022).

In this regard, three of the Horn of Africa states are the most vulnerable because they host two or more rival and/or competitive powers, thus increasing the prospects of their becoming the scene of military showdowns should those happen. Eritrea became in

2015 the seat of a UAE military base, but the latter dismantled the sophisticated military structure it had built in the port city of Assab in 2021. This came about after the UAE decided to pull from the Yemen civil war in which it was a member of the coalition supporting the Saudi-led campaign against the Iran-backed Houthi rebel forces. At the same time, Eritrea just recently agreed to allow Russia to build a military base there, and in exchange Moscow gave it eight Russian Zala KYB drones. "Russia gave the drones in the form a support to Eritrea which it considered its friend in need for Eritrea is a key for the region's peace and as an input for the military base which Russia is going to build in the future in Afabet, 40km away from Massawa," according to the *Eritrean Press Agency* (2022).

Somalia is also the host of two active external powers--Turkey and Qatar—whose military bases in the unstable Horn of Africa state are about to face off a rival, Egypt, although the latter has yet to build its base because at the time of this writing such was not the case. However, considering the current rancor between Egypt, on one hand, and Turkey and Qatar on the other, it would be a dangerous diplomatic maneuver for Somalia to take on, as hostile international actors are vying for expanding their military presence on its soil. Would the hostilities between the two rival groups escalate to the extent that Somalia may have to choose one over the other? That would be a precarious position for a weak and unstable country to be in.

While the *de facto* state of Somaliland is now hosting the UAE's naval base, it is Djibouti's external multi-power presence that has rivetted global attention of late. What makes Djibouti peculiar is not only the number of external powers that have military bases in the tiny state but also the size, power ranking, and level of antipathy found amongst them. Presently, Djibouti is home to six well-established external powers and four others being hosted by three of these powers, for a total of ten competitive and/or rival forces. The external forces at work at military bases in that tiny state currently---in locations not too far apart from each other--- include the U.S., China, Japan, France, Italy, and Saudi Arabia. The four others hosted are India by Japan; the United Kingdom by the U.S.; and Spain and Germany by France. In this regard, six of the ten topranking

military powers in the world, including U.S.(1st), China (3rd), India (4th), Japan (5th), France (7th), and United Kingdom (8th), have established military bases in Djibouti. The world's first and third military powers (U.S. and China) are hostile to each other and yet have military establishments on a foreign land near each other, which by itself is a danger waiting to happen as any uncalculated move by either power could trigger a military confrontation between them, with profound consequences not only for the host country but also for the entire region and the larger world. The hostilities between them have escalated even more in the wake of the Russia-Ukraine war in which the U.S. and its European allies have poured in billions of dollars in arms transfers to Ukraine against Russia. China has become a close ally of Russia and their relations have soared because both regard the U.S. and NATO as a threat to their national security. China's animosity toward the U.S. has been reinforced by the latter's action of supporting and arming Taiwan, over which China claims sovereignty. The expected military presence of Russia, the second ranking world power after the U.S., in Eritrea makes things even more unpredictable within the entire region.

Extraction of the Region's Resources

The Horn of Africa is endowed with raw materials, such as oil, gas, mineral deposits, among others, and thus the motivation by external powers for influence and control is not only because of the region's strategic location, but also of the desire to take advantage of the untapped natural resources that the region has to offer. Natural resource extraction, however, could come at the expense of minority and indigenous communities that often inhabit undeveloped areas with vital raw materials or climatic suitability for agricultural, industrial, and mineral development; profit making, and job creation are often used as an incentive to lure outside investors so that they may launch small- and large- scale industries in agriculture and mineral exploration, among others, critical for a sustainable development. In the process, Indigenous people or ethnic minorities could lose land to developers on which their livelihood depends. For instance, in its 2012 annual report on East Africa and the Horn, *Minority Rights Group International (MRG)* observed that "Cases showing the rush for the remaining resources in the region has thrown communities into conflict, leaving tens of thousands displaced through land grabs and livelihoods threatened," (*Minority Rights Group International*

(MRG), 2018, 1). To cite just one example, Ethiopia was reported to have relocated thousands of Indigenous people in the western region of Gambella in 2012 to create land space appropriate for mechanized farming aimed at exporting produce while increasing the country's exchange earnings and maintaining the double-digit economic growth it had been enjoying prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

At the same time, it should be noted that land grab in the Horn through long-term land leases mostly has come to date from Saudi Arabia, although the UAE and other Gulf states would do the same soon because of their limited agricultural resources and the need for long-term food security. Among global powers, India has had its share of land leases in the Horn, as well. It is also a fact that the Arab Axis, a reference mostly to Saudi Arabia and the UAE, is clearly motivated as much by political designs as by commercial pursuits in the Horn. Politically, the primary aim of the Arab Axis is to neutralize Iran, with which both Saudi Arabia and UAE have had an age-old quarrel over the Yemen conflict, which was further fueled by the Sunni-Shia divide. Both countries had also designs aimed at inhibiting the influence within the region of the Qatar-Turkey Axis, which they accuse of promoting Islamic radicalism.

In the commercial sector, though, the expansion to Sub-Saharan Africa is often conducted through commercial investments. For example, Gulf investment companies poured in more than $1.2 billion in sub-Sahara Africa between 2016 and 2021. While Saudi Arabia and the UAE had the largest share of those investments, 88% in total, Kuwait and Qatar shouldered the rest (Yousif, 2022). With a particular reference to the Horn, Saudi investors acquired land through leases running several years in Ethiopia, Sudan, and South Sudan. In Ethiopia, a company owned by Saudi- Ethiopian billionaire Mohammed Al-Amoudi acquired 10,000 hectares of land in the Gambella region, the consequences of which was the displacement of thousands of Indigenous people, who were told without any prior notice that "We have some projects to implement here. [Saudi investor name withheld] needs to use this area for a market so you must go." (Bahati, 2014, p. 2). The Saudi policy of land leasing outside of the Kingdom was directed by King Abdullah himself in 2008, urging Saudi investors to acquire land wherever they could get it. "Saudi investors – both state and private – have since gone

on a global shopping spree, spending billions of dollars buying up or leasing large tracts of land around the world," according to Bahati (p. 3**)**

Countries such as Ethiopia, however, quickly learned that land grabbing by Arab billionaires could spark resentment among its people, who were severely affected by the displacement that uncaring investors caused, culminating in riots and killings in the western part of that country. Therefore, "Critics accuse Saudi Arabia – and several other countries including fellow Gulf states - of participating in a global "land grab," using their financial power in a bid to impose industrial-scale farming practices on what are usually traditional, mixed crop, smallholder plots of land" (p.4)

For its part, India, by "…joining the neo-colonial bandwagon, Indian companies are acquiring land in Africa at throwaway prices, indulging in environmental damage and exporting food while locals continue to starve," states *GOI Monitor*, explaining the degree of Indian involvement in land garbing in Africa. (*Gio Monitor*, 2011). Indian venture in land acquisitions in Africa was motivated by many factors, including the stagnant growth of domestic food production; the temptation of acquiring massive tracts of land suitable for agriculture at colossally low-cost prices; and subsides offered by African governments to attract investors. Besides, the availability of cheap labor in the areas leased for commercial farming is another source of allure for Indian investors. Consequently, India was able to acquire thousands of acres of development land on both short- and long-term leases in the Oromia, Benishangul and Gambella regions of Ethiopia for agricultural projects aimed at producing commercial produce in palm, tea, spices, sugar, pulse, coffee, rice, maze, oilseeds, cereals, and edible oil crops. The dozens of highly mechanized agricultural projects launched on thousands of undeveloped acres of land in the three of the nine administrative regions of the country meant that the local populations faced both exploitation of their land passed to them through generations and in many instances even evictions without any just compensation. (**Ibid.)** The Indian experiment in land exploitation in Ethiopia has since waned as both security issues within the areas of the land possessions and the investors' failure to live up to the agreements forced lease terminations.

Burden of Foreign Debt

The external debt crisis in Africa has reached alarming proportions. Although borrowing money by many developing countries from rich, industrialized states is a widespread practice for accessing development funds, the countries that borrow money are saddled with so much debt and debt servicing costs that they could face at times bankruptcy and economic collapse. Stressing the enormity of the external debt burden that African countries are facing nowadays, Lynne Al-Nahhas stated that, “China and Russia are bolstering their presence in Africa to tap its rich natural resources… amid grave warnings from UN agencies {that} the world's poorest countries face accumulating crippling debts” (Al-Nahhas, 2023, 2). There is nothing more revealing about the debt crisis than the following statement by Paul Nantulya of the *Africa Center for Strategic Studies*: "One out of every three major infrastructure projects in Africa is built by Chinese state-owned enterprises, and one out of every five is financed by a Chinese policy bank” (NTV, 2023).

Data from the *World Bank’s International Debt Statistics* provide a bird’s-eye view of the debt crisis for African states. The report reveals that several African countries are either bankrupt or at elevated risk of debt insolvency. At the same time, the structure of the debt owed by African countries has changed over the years. Previously, industrialized, affluent countries, such as the U.S., Japan, and the high-income European countries, including the multilateral financial institutions they control---the IMF and World Bank--were the main creditors of African loans; however, China and private commercial interests have now become the main funding sources for African loans. Harcourt and Robertson, citing numbers from the *International Debt Statistics (IDS)* database, disclose that “More than 40% of African debt is owed to private creditors, 26.6% to bilateral creditors, and 32.5% to multilateral creditors,” adding that, “ China has become Africa’s biggest bilateral lender, holding over $73 billion of Africa’s debt in 2020 and almost $9 billion of private debt” (Harcourt and Robertson, 2023).

Without any doubt, the most revealing element of the IDS database that speaks to the massive African debt is this one:

> 21 countries in Africa are in, or at risk of, debt distress (58% of assessed countries); African countries owe US$644.9 billion to external creditors as of 2021; African countries will pay US$68.9 billion in debt service in 2023; Debt owed by African countries is equivalent to 24.0% of their combined GDP in 2021. **Ibid.**

The Horn of Africa states, like their counterparts elsewhere in Africa, are under so much debt that their hard currency reserves are depleting, thereby affecting their ability to import goods and services; limiting their power to compete on the global market; impeding their economic growth; and hindering their capacity to overcome poverty and improve the wellbeing of their citizens. According to the latest debt statistics, Ethiopia's external debt has reached $26.8 billion, compared to Djibouti's $2.68 billion; Kenya's $35.8 billion; Somalia's $5.2 billion; Sudan's $60 billion; and Uganda's $19 billion. South Sudan's and Eritrea's debt figures are not significant enough to be part of the comparison.

In sum, it is abundantly evident that hegemons in the Horn of Africa have lured the weak, economically vulnerable states by making loans available to them to gain access and influence to outdo rivals and adversaries alike, as they all strive to gain a strategic advantage in the region. The rivalry in the Horn of Africa among the global powers in particular has exacerbated the debt crisis so profoundly that in a country like Kenya, the Export Import Bank of China, and other lenders reportedly fined Kenya a colossal amount of Kenyan Shelling 1.312 billion for its loan default; Kenya has owed China $7.02 billion since 2020. The East African country in 2018 became the joke of critics following media reports that Kenya risked losing the Mombasa port if it failed to repay its loan to the Chinese creditors; the reports were subsequently proven false. Regardless, the Kenyan case unambiguously shows the extent of the debt burden that African countries are facing at this critical juncture when the global economy has not fully recovered from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, which caused a tremendous loss to economic activities worldwide. As hegemony intensifies and global actors vie to buy influence and control the political, economic, and geopolitical dynamics of various countries strategically located and/or endowed with rich natural resources as in Africa, so do the latter's financial, social, and security woes.

Conclusion

This paper examined the ever-increasing militarization of the Horn of Africa, a modernday hegemonic spectacle that has generated unprecedented interest, as it becomes a new nexus of geopolitical rivalry involving great powers across the world, among which are Russia, the United States, and China. At the same time, it has become clear that the competition for control and influence in the Horn among the regional powers is just as fierce as that of the global ones. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Turkey, Qatar, Iran, Israel, and Egypt, for example, are all pursuing their interests in and exporting their conflicts to the Horn of Africa. Other powers that also have impactful presence currently in the region are Japan, India, France, Great Britain, Italy, Spain, and Germany.

Some external states are regarded as allies and thus known to have similar strategic interests; however, they still may pursue their policies in divergence toward the Horn of Africa. A case in point is the contrast in their pursuits of foreign policy strategies that is apparent between Egypt and the UAE. The latter has been a staunch supporter of Ethiopia's overall military posture in the region; however, by contrast, the former's relentless undermining of Addis Ababa by supporting rebel forces in Ethiopia as well as attempting to hinder the construction of the Blue Nile mega dam is a clear testimony affirming the opposite paths that two regional allies could pursue to maximize their respective foreign policy interests. And while the global powers, namely, U.S., Russia, and China, remain in fierce competition--- Russia with its expected building of a military base in Eritrea, and the U.S. and China, with their respective current military base in Djibouti---when and where their rivalry will eventually spiral to a real confrontation still remains the unanswered question; it certainly does not seem to provide a sense of security for the region and even for the entire global community.

It has also become evident in this study that research on the external competition in the Horn of Africa has generated valuable data, as shown in much of the scholarly literature pertaining to the subject; however, the missing critical part---the lack of discussion about the potential ramifications of it in the region---has been the fundamental concern of this paper. Given this drawback, the study therefore has been a small but

wellmeaning attempt to uncover the critical missing parts by providing several consequential contexts that, in this regard, demand further scholarly investigation while filling the existing gap in the literature. Significant cases bearing the direct effects of the external influence and control on the Horn were brought to light in the study, thereby yielding these unpredictable, far-reaching consequences: violence and human rights violations; incidences of inter-state and intra-state conflicts, followed by a retreat from the democratization process; fears of armed confrontation among the external rival powers; exploitation of the region's resources at the expense of the powerless and the needy there; and finally the burgeoning debt crises and the burden under which the Horn of Africa states find themselves and to the extent to which loan defaults have increasingly become a recipe for economic disaster.

Finally, this author closes with an affirmation that the adverse consequences must be part of the scholarly discourse among scholars and regional experts, so that the variety of current analyses available on hegemonic rivalry in the Horn of Africa can have the full extent of its empirical significance as a subject of scholarly inquiry.

While this scholarly default is duly noted here, however, the recommended action would be the immediate alleviation of human rights violations In the Horn of Africa and the halting of the externally-instigated interstate and intrastate conflicts plaguing the region. This will, of course, depend on decreasing the potency of external influence in the region. The main way to do this is to strengthen the African governmental bodies that are already in existence. One of these external bodies is the African Union (AU), a continental union consisting of 55-member states located on the continent of Africa. A second is the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a body of eightmember states--Djibouti, Ethiopia, Kenya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Uganda, and
Eritrea. IGAD's mission is to assist and complement the efforts of its member states in areas such as peace, security, environment, economic cooperation, and social development. These continental and regional organizations in tandem should establish a blueprint for dealing with both intra- and inter-state conflicts throughout the region

and the continent, creating an effective mechanism to deter conflicts that have displaced millions of Africans from their local communities.

Ultimately, once strengthened, these institutions can provide the means to increase stability and decrease the ability of foreign powers to interfere in the region. The Horn of Africa has for decades been awash with political instability, ethnic tensions, and armed insurrections, often attracting external powers to take sides in the conflicts which further exacerbates the internal instability of the affected states within the region. Both the AU and IGAD can provide the forum for reconciling disputes and taking effective measures against those that spurn reconciliation as a way of conflict resolution. Over the years, however, these two organizations have been known to be either passive or ineffective in resolving conflicts, and it is therefore high time that African leaders and the organizations they lead became relevant and capable of achieving the missions for which they were originally founded.

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