California Sociology Forum

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Cover Image: Photograph by Victor Mojica. Cover design by Andrea Dominguez and Brittany Kalaj Margulieux. "Drowning in the American Dream" painting by Claudio Talavera-Ballón. This art mural captures the experiences of Latin American immigrants crossing the southern border of the United States. It depicts migrant families persisting through a river to greener pastures but encountering the obstacle of a border patrol on horseback using a whip. Monarch butterflies represent the right of living beings to move freely. The mural shows Dreamers in graduation attire, achieving the immigrant dream of upward mobility. In the center of the mural, a student depicted in graduation attire holds a sign that asks, "NOW WHAT?" Another student on the left holds a sign with the writing, "I AM A DREAMER. YOU CAN'T DEPORT IDEALS."

ABOUT THE CALIFORNIA SOCIOLOGY FORUM

THE HISTORY

CSF was initially published in 2007-2008 by Professor Hyojoung Kim. It was re-launched in 2022-2023 by a group of faculty members in the Department of Sociology. CSF expresses its immense appreciation to all editors—both faculty and student — who served as the re-launching editorial board.

THE MISSION

The California Sociology Forum (CSF) is a student-run online journal that publishes scholarly and creative works of students enrolled in the Sociology program or taking Sociology classes at Cal State LA at both the undergraduate and graduate level. It is committed to cultivating student research, supporting intellectual exchange, and featuring diverse perspectives on various issues of our society and world. Students are strongly encouraged to submit not only original research papers, but creative works such as poems, cartoons, music, pictorial essays, personal essays, and fieldwork notes that use the sociological imagination, as well as sociologically relevant book and film reviews. As we continue to grow, we welcome new additions to our editorial board. Please feel free to reach out to us!

CONTACT US

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CALIFORNIA SOCIOLOGY FORUM

Student Journal

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Letter from the Editors

Dear Reader,

With great pleasure, we share with you the 5th volume of the California Sociology Forum, a student-led journal showcasing the depth and breadth of the learning that is being undertaken by students in the Department of Sociology at Cal State L.A. This volume comes after a protracted hiatus since 2010. Bringing it into the world required a commitment to the process of learning and dedication to creating a final product that sets a precedent for future editorial boards.

Together we debated processes and points both big and small. We've agreed and disagreed. We reimagined accessibility to academic spaces by collaborating with CSU Open Journals and added a Creative Works section to recognize the many ways sociologists make society visible. We returned to one another every week: a neat assembly of tiny videos on digital screens; very real windows into our lives and homes.

When we finally met in person, we were already months into our endeavor. It was fitting that Dr. Hyojoung Kim, CSF's founding Faculty Editor and Director of the Center for Korean-American and Korean Studies, hosted our coming together around a traditional barbecue. He shared his culture—the traditional dress he wore for his wedding, how one must always pour a drink for their elders as a sign of respect, and the meaning of eating wraps (or "ssam") with one bite to enjoy all the flavor and take in the blessing all at once.

Dr. Hyojoung Kim introducing CSF to KBBQ

Dr. Kim illustrated the character language for family—eating together under one roof. He explained that in the process of sharing a meal we would forge a family. This felt symbolically parallel to our assembly of tiny videos. In a time of post-pandemic disconnectedness, we have found an academic home and forged an academic family through our CSF community.

Week after week our editorial team came together to participate in simultaneous action—moving toward a singular goal to uplift the scholarship and voices of Cal State LA students. Together, CSF helps create what Émile Durkheim called *collective effervescence*—a sense of harmony through shared purpose. This reflects Dr. Kim's explanation of imbibing in ancient Korean culture, allowing the gods to enter the body so people could access a higher plane.

We are proud of this volume and the future we envision for CSF. Within, you will find original and creative works by dedicated student sociologists of Cal State LA. This collection is a testament to the varied, complex lived experiences and deep curiosity of our campus community. We editors are thankful to all of the authors and feel privileged to have curated these works with the help of thoughtful and devoted faculty editors. We are eager to share it with you.

In Community,
The CSF Editorial Board

CSF Dining at KBBQ

About the Student Editors

Victor Amador (He/Him) is an undergraduate senior of Sociology at California State University, Los Angeles. He is graduating with his B.A. in May 2023. His main research focus is on deviant behavior. One thing that drew Victor to being on CSF is the enjoyment he receives out of reading the submissions of other sociology majors at Cal State LA.

Taryn Bates (She/Her) is a transfer student to Cal State LA in her junior year, currently pursuing her undergraduate B.A. in the Sociology Inequalities and Diversity track while also participating in the Honors College. For 2022-2023, she holds the positions of Sociology Club Treasurer & Social Media Manager, Student Homie Union (SHU) Treasurer, and the role of Managing Copy Editor for CSF. Taryn is honored to be a 2023 recipient of the campus-wide 21st Annual Distinguished Women Awards. She is passionate about the written word – specifically crafting or refining pieces for the best audience engagement – and is grateful to CSF for the opportunity to work alongside dedicated faculty and students.

Sarra BenGhorbal (She/Her) is a Cal State LA alumni and part-time lecturer in the Department of Sociology. She also teaches Ethnic and Gender Studies at Cerritos College and Pasadena City College. Sarra received her Master's in Sociology from Cal State LA in May 2022, a Bachelor's in Sociology in the Inequalities & Diversity option (Summa Cum a Laude; Honors' College), and a minor in Women Gender & Sexuality Studies. Sarra is one of the founding student editors in the CSF journal relaunch and an engaged member of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion at the College of Natural & Social Sciences.

Madeline "Maddie" Bourdeau (She/Her) is a second-year master's student with a special interest in labor and the political-economy. She completes her M.A. program at Cal State LA in May 2023. Maddie is passionate about the written word and its ability to communicate the unique perspectives of others. Maddie is glad to have served alongside such talented and dedicated peers and faculty members on the editorial board for the CSF journal's revival.

Darron Michael Cunanan (He/Him) is a Graduate Student at Cal State LA pursuing his M.A. in Sociology. His research interests include pop culture, Asian American studies, and political sociology. On campus, he is involved as a research assistant with LEEAF (Los Angeles Economic Equity Accelerator and Fellowship) and as a graduate assistant in the Sociology and Psychology departments. At CSF, Darron is the Book and Film Review Lead Editor and a member of the Public Relations Team. He truly believes in CSF's efforts in showcasing students' written work and appreciates the opportunity of working alongside the students and faculty of CSF who work hard to make it happen.

Andrea Dominguez (She/They) is currently a graduate student who is pursuing her M.A. in Sociology. Andrea is the Public Relations leader for CSF. Additionally, she works as an Assistant Student Engagement coordinator for the Center for Student Involvement at Cal State LA, along with serving as one of the Board of Directors for the University Student Union. Her interests in academia include studying phenomena occurring in the world of Urban Sociology and different sociological pedagogies. Andrea hopes that CSF will continue to encourage students to submit their works and show the academic world their creativity.

John M. Eleby (He/Him) is an M.A. student in Sociology at Cal State LA. His research highlights Black college students' experiences in post-secondary education. John is involved in Associated Student Incorporation (ASI) as the Vice President for Academic Governance. He developed a quantitative survey to measure how grad students are serviced by Cal State LA, which the Graduate Resource Center used to improve its visibility. He believes one benefit of joining CSF is working with other future sociologists to learn to analyze scholarship, which is a great skill to have for future employment.

Sammy Garcia III (He/Him) is an undergraduate senior at Cal State LA. He will be graduating in May 2023, receiving his B.A. in Sociology option Law and Society. He made the dean's list for Sociology twice (Fall 2021, Spring 2022) and received a Sociology award for being part of CSF Student Journal. His research interests are in music and film, and he is proud to have an op-ed on music published in this volume. He has enjoyed being part of the CSF editorial team and loved the process of editing and working with his fellow students and faculty.

Lami J. Glenn (He/Him) is a senior undergraduate student, majoring in Sociology, with a minor in Pan African Studies at California State University, Los Angeles, graduating Summa Cum Laude in May 2023. Glenn currently holds the position of President for both the Sociology Club and the Student Homie Union (SHU) and is also the senior Research Assistant for the Department of Sociology professor Dr. Robert D. Weide. Born and raised in south Los Angeles, with a fervor for social justice, his research seeks to examines people's sentiments and attitudes towards police brutality against unarmed Black Americans from the multifarious perspectives rooted in race, class, and gender.

Brittany Kalaj Margulieux (She/Her) is pursuing her B.A. in Sociology. Her interests lie at the nexus of sound sociological research and effective policymaking. Cal State LA has provided rich opportunities for growth - she serves as Dr. Dingeman's qualitative research coordinator, interns for Abundant Housing LA, and serves as outreach coordinator for the campus' LEEAF program. In her capacity as CSF Undergraduate Managing Student Editor, she has taken pleasure in witnessing the profound and diverse learning that is taking place within the department and is grateful for the opportunity to have worked with such a dedicated and accomplished editorial team.

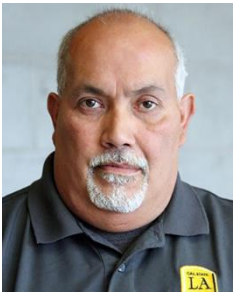
Jennifer C. Perez (She/Her/Ella) is a transfer student from Rio Hondo College. She's a first-generation college student and an AB540 student, DACA Recipient. She will be graduating with her B.A. in Sociology with an emphasis in Law and Society this Spring. She's Vice-President of SURGE which advocates for undocumented students on campus. She's also an intern with Project Rebound and enjoys working with the community. Joining CSF has been an honor for her, learning from faculty and members has only opened more opportunities for her in her college career. She's eager to expand her experience and continue to learn from faculty and members.

Marie Rivera (She/Her/Ella) is a graduate student currently pursuing her thesis in the Department of Sociology. She has research interests in intersectionality, race and ethnicity, gender, climate justice, and abolition. Marie loves working collaboratively with other students and faculty on research projects, theoretical literary works, and organizing with her Abolition Study Action People's (ASAP) Collective. She is honored to work alongside amazing faculty and students in CSF and is thankful for the opportunity to grow as a writer and student. Marie acted as Graduate Managing Editor for CSF in Spring 2023.

About the Faculty Editors

Luoman Bao is an Associate Professor in Sociology whose primary research interests include family dynamics, population aging and health, and quantitative methods. Her work has been published in various venues, including *Journal of Gerontology: Social Sciences*, *Journal of Health and Social Behavior*, and *Research on Aging*. Dr. Bao served as the Editor-in-Chief of CSF in Fall 2022. She loves working with students in classrooms and on projects. She is passionate about facilitating students to grow and achieve their full potential.

Katie Dingeman is an Associate Professor in Sociology with research interests around migrant rights, reproductive justice, social ecology, and qualitative methods. She has published in a variety of venues, including *Social Problems*, *Feminist Criminology*, and the *Journal on Migration and Human Security*. She loves facilitating student-led projects and enjoys growing as a teacher, scholar, and advocate alongside her students. Dr. Dingeman was Editor-in-Chief of CSF in Spring 2023.



Gilbert Garcia is a lecturer in Sociology at California State University, Los Angeles and Associate Faculty at Riverside City College in Riverside, California. He is also on the board of the Social Science Research Instructional Council for the California State University System. His research and teaching interests are in race and ethnic relations with an emphasis on exploring systemic racism in the U.S. He also explores the connection of Media and Technology as Socializing Forces in the development of individuals. He serves as the IT Liaison for CSF.

Roseann Giarrusso is Chair and Professor of Sociology with research interests in aging and the life-course, family and intergenerational relations, and quantitative research methods. She has over 50 publications including two co-authored books, many peer-reviewed journal articles (e.g., *Journal of Marriage and Family; Journals of Gerontology: Social Science; Journal of Family Issues; and Generations*), and numerous chapters in books. She enjoys helping students to realize their academic potential. Dr. Giarrusso wrote a grant to facilitate the relaunching of CSF and served as Faculty Editor-Advisor in Fall 2022 and Spring 2023.

Hyojoung Kim is a Professor of Sociology and Director of the Center for Korean American and Korean Studies in Cal State L.A. His main research and teaching areas include political sociology and race and ethnic studies with special emphasis in Korean and Korean American studies, Quantitative Research Methods and Statistics, Rational Choice, Social Network Analysis and Social Movements. His research has been published in various internationally acclaimed academic journals, including *American Sociological Review*, *American Journal of Sociology*, and *European Sociological Review*. Dr. Kim has edited a few books on Korean Americans and Korea. He founded *California Sociology Forum—Student Online Journal of Sociology* and served as Editor-in-Chief during 2007~2013.

Recognition of the 2023 Graduating Class at Cal State LA

To the Graduating Class of 2023:

We are so proud of your many achievements that each of you have accomplished at Cal State LA. Best wishes to you all as you move into the next chapter of your personal and professional lives. May you all continue to uplift sociologically informed scholarship and progress in activism for many years to come.
Class of '23 -- You did it!

The Past, Present and Future of Sociology is Now!

Congratulations to the Class of 2023!

First Generation Students in Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

The percentage of first-generation college students enrolling in universities has been increasing. However, the percentage of first-generation students who continue past the first year is significantly lower than their peers. Past research indicates that low bachelor's degree attainment rates among first-generation students include difficult transitions to college, financial barriers, and personal relationships. Recent literature confirms a change in educational pathways for many first-generation students. As the cost of education increases, the traditional route of four-year institutions has encountered a more cost-effective pathway offered by two-year community colleges. However, the challenges present in transferring from a two-year community college to a four-year university impact the bachelor's degree attainment rate for first-generation and transfer students. It is crucial to identify factors contributing to the gap to create policies and services that better support students from marginalized backgrounds.

This study employs logistic regression to compare the educational experiences of first-generation and transfer students at a large public Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) university. I examine the association between first-generation students or transfer students and academic challenges such as academic probation. Findings support most prior research surrounding the academic challenges pertaining to transfer students and their educational experiences in higher education institutions. However, contrary to recent research, this study did not find a significant relationship between first-generation students and likelihood of being on academic probation. Although no significant relationship was observed between first-generation students and having ever been on academic probation, educational policies that further support this student body remain essential.

INTRODUCTION

College students who are the first in their families to obtain a bachelor's degree face numerous academic and social challenges in their transition into college, impacting their access and retention in higher education (Redford and Hoyer 2017). Using the definition from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES 2018), students are considered first-generation if their parents completed some college credits but hold no degree or may have siblings who have completed bachelor's degrees. Throughout this thesis, I will use the definition from Cataldi, Bennett, and Chen (2018). As of 2015–2016, 56 percent of all undergraduates were first-generation, meaning neither parent held a bachelor's degree (RTI International 2019). First-generation students tend to be racial minorities and come from lower-earning households; Latinx students represented 27 percent of first-generation college students, compared to 9 percent of traditional students, and 77 percent of students come from households with income below $50,000, compared to 29 percent of traditional students (Redford and Hoyer 2017). Combined with the challenges of being a racial minority and coming from a low-income household, first-generation students tend to withdraw from college at higher rates than traditional students, especially before the second year (Cataldi et al. 2018). Although many bridge programs and resources aim to close equity gaps for first-generation students, there is still a need for support beyond the first year of enrollment.

Scholars have identified numerous contributing factors as to why first-generation college students struggle academically (Cataldi et al. 2018; Ives, Castillo, and Montoya 2022). However, a key barrier in college persistence among first-generation students is academic probation. Students earning low grades are placed on academic probation and may be suspended if grades do not improve. One of the key factors contributing to academic probationary experiences among first-generation students may be insufficient academic preparation prior to entering college (Grace-Odeleye 2019). Additionally, the challenges faced by transferring from two-year colleges into four-year universities may potentially exacerbate rates at which first-generation students are placed on academic probation compared to continuing first-generation

students. Because the enrollment of first-generation students is expected to increase in the next decade (Cataldi et al. 2018), it is important for researchers to understand the academic challenges faced by first-generation students.

This paper examines the relationship between generational status (first-generation or traditional) and the likelihood of academic probation as a key obstacle many first-generation students face navigating higher education. My thesis also considers the experiences of transferring from a two-year college to a public four-year university. It aims to contribute to prior research by highlighting students' experiences with academic probation and providing insight on how to target better students disproportionately impacted by obstacles commonly encountered on educational pathways.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Past research on first-generation students suggests that their educational experiences are negatively impacted by a wide range of factors such as financial constraints, sense of belonging, and family conflicts (Ives, Castillo, and Montoya 2020). Moreover, many first-generation students who start at two-year colleges encounter additional barriers when transferring to four-year universities, including adjusting to differences in class and campus size, academic rigor, and institutional culture (Wang, Lee and Wickersham 2019; Witteveen and Attewell 2020; Xu et al. 2018). While these factors are beyond the scope of this study, the literature review draws on prior research on academic probation, placement, and transferring experiences among first-generation students.

Academic Probation among First-Generation Students

Academic probation is a prevalent tool used by colleges and universities to warn students that their grade point average (GPA) is below a minimum threshold (typically 2.0 on a 4.0 scale) and are not in good academic standing (Bowman and Jang 2022). If students do not meet the minimum threshold within a specific timeline, students are usually subject to escalating penalties up to dismissal from the institution (Bowman et al., 2020). While national data on academic probation is scarce, research suggests

that academic probation is relatively common among undergraduates in general–one study observed that more than 94 percent of students at a large four-year university were placed on academic probation within the first three semesters (Leon et al. 2019). Moreover, nearly 25 percent of first-year students in a statewide community college sample had overall GPAs below 2.0 – the minimum threshold for most universities (Schudde and Scott-Clayton 2016). Despite the prevalence of academic probation among undergraduates generally, few studies have investigated whether first-generation students are more likely to be placed on academic probation and what role transferring from a two-year to a four-year university plays in mediating this relationship.

As reported by Eveland (2019:2) "although the growing attendance of first-generation college students attests to higher education's commitment to access and social mobility, by many measures students who are the first in their family to attend college are not as successful as their later-generation peers". Moreover, research has shown that first-generation college students have many responsibilities that compete with that of the university for time and attention (Eveland 2019). Thus, the obstacles first-generation students encounter in assimilating to university culture are exacerbated by the lack of preparation to navigate through these spaces successfully. Researchers have found that "negative signals" experienced in higher education contribute to the early withdrawal of first-generation students, such as placement in remedial coursework, lower GPA, repeating classes, and delay in major declaration - all of which results in a slower accumulation of credits towards the degree (Chen 2005). While there are a variety of resources to support students, first-generation students continually face significant challenges impeding their success in degree completion and beyond.

Although there is a broad range of scholarship that examines the various aspects of first-generation student profiles that contribute to their academic experiences, there is a lack of scholarship centered on the intersection of the personal and academic identities of this student population. Through a comparative analysis on first-generation and traditional students, lack of family support and understanding from family members

are other issues faced by many first-generation college students (House, Neal, and Kolb 2019: 4). Furthermore, Abraham Barouch-Gilbert's (2016) qualitative study of former probationary students draws on a self-efficacy theoretical framework to analyze the role that supports from family, friends, and the four-year university played in the academic attainment of participants. Barouch-Gilbert (2016:156) states,

> When sharing their experiences of academic probation, participants described how to support, encouragement (social persuasions), and guidance from others (vicarious experiences) emerged as primary sources of self-efficacy information. Further, participants' academic achievements (e.g., good grades on papers and/or assignments) and changes in their emotional states strengthened their beliefs in their academic capabilities.

The different components that impact the educational success of first-generation students are tied to the various facets of their intersecting identities. Further analysis of the effects of intersectional identities on the educational experiences of marginalized student bodies will provide a stronger understanding of the discrepancies in higher education institutions.

Navigational Pathways of First-Generation Students

Although not all transfer students are first-generation, the transfer identity forms a large part of the intersectional identities of first-generation students. Over one-third (37%) of first-generation students entered as transfers, versus 27% for others, nearly three-fifths (58%) of first-generation students identified as female, and three-fifths (60%) of first-generation students were reported as lower-income Pell Grant recipients, versus 16% for others (University of California Annual Accountability Report 2021). While there are various pathways among students who navigate multiple higher education institutions (e.g., lateral transfer, reverse transfer, dual credit), the most critically reviewed and prevalent transfer pathway is the vertical transfer- when a student transfers from a two-year to a four-year college with or without an associate degree (Taylor and Jain 2017; Townsend

2001). This study examines students who identified as having vertically transferred from a two-year college into a public four-year university.

Vertically transferring from community colleges to four-year institutions plays a critical role in upward mobility among first-generation, low-income, and racial/ethnic minority students – many of whom are overrepresented in community colleges but less represented at four-year universities (Jenkins and Fink 2015; Witteveen and Attewell 2020). Part of this can be attributed to vertical "transfer gaps" - the difference between the percentage of students who indicate they desire to transfer and the percentage that transfer (Taylor and Jain 2017). A racial transfer gap, coined by Crisp and Nunez (2014), identifies an inequity in vertical transfer rates based on race. Using this lens, white students from community colleges were 71% more likely to transfer than students of color (Wood et al. 2011). Thus, while racial and ethnic minority students are heavily represented at the community college level, this representation is not reflected in the transfer to four-year universities.

The underrepresentation of marginalized students in transfer rates can be attributed to the many challenges that students must navigate; many students who begin at community college must ascertain when to transfer, whether their credits transfer, how to afford increased tuition costs, or how to juggle career, education, and family (Jabbar, Epstein, Sanchez, and Hartman 2020). Many first-generation students who transfer struggle with securing financial resources to pay for increased tuition costs at a four-year university which can be a crucial factor when deciding to which institutions they apply and transfer (Xu et al. 2018). Low financial security can also negatively impact the academic and social lives of first-generation students; many first-generation students are employed while attending college, resulting in fewer opportunities for interactions between first-generation students and their peers as well as the level of involvement in campus culture (Gibbons and Woodside 2014).

Lack of adequate academic preparation has also been a significant aspect of transfer students' experiences. Community college students are less likely to transfer if they attended under-resourced high schools that did not adequately prepare them for

college if their parents did not attend or complete higher education if they are older, or if they did not come from wealthy families with stable incomes (Wood et al. 2011; Taylor and Jain 2017). Common struggles transfer students reported were social isolation, problems adapting to the change in academic systems and class sizes, as well as a lack of access to information, and difficulty maintaining a balanced student life (Solis and Duran 2020).

Overall, the different components that impact the successful transfer from two-year colleges to four-year universities are also related to the challenges faced by first-generation students. Thus, examining the experiences of both statuses with academic probation can provide further insight on the challenges faced by marginalized students.

The Current Study

In this study, I drew data from a web-based questionnaire that collected responses from undergraduate students currently enrolled at California State University, Los Angeles (Cal State LA). Using quantitative analysis, this study examines the experiences of first-generation and transfer students on academic probation. Thus, I ask: (1) What is the relationship between first-generation student status and academic probation? and (2) How does transferring into a four-year university mediate the relationship between first-generation student status and academic probation?

Hypotheses

For the first research question, I hypothesize that first-generation students will have higher odds of being on academic probation than their traditional student counterparts. Regarding the second question, I hypothesize that the relationship between first-generation status and academic probation is mediated by transfer status. That is, the experience of transferring from a two-year college will have an indirect association with academic probation through first-generation status.

The literature on the educational pathways and experiences of first-generation and transfer students describes similar challenges that characterize their educational outcomes.

Therefore, I examine the odds of these student identities ever having been on academic probation. As I will demonstrate, the relationship between academic challenges and student status will further support the literature and hypotheses outlined above.

METHODS

Data

I collected data using a web-based survey (i.e., Qualtrics) between September 9th, 2021 and February 17th, 2022, distributed among undergraduate students enrolled at California State University, Los Angeles (Cal State LA) during this window. The survey consisted of 37 questions and was estimated to take approximately 11 minutes. Eligibility to take the survey included having a current undergraduate enrollment status at Cal State LA. Access to the web-based questionnaire was provided in a variety of ways, including an anonymous URL link and QR code both available via flyer. The survey flyer was posted on the sociology department's bulletin board and distributed by several department faculty. The survey asked participants about their academic experiences in the 2020-2021 school year. Additionally, the survey includes closed- and open-ended questions about educational barriers, such as academic probation, and decisions to withdraw and re-enroll.

Measures

The key independent variables of this study include first-generation and transfer statuses. Students who identified as first-generation were coded as "1" and "0" for students who did not check this option. Students identifying as transfer were coded as "1" and "0" was coded for students who did not check this option. These categories are not mutually exclusive, as the original survey requested students to check all identities that applied to their experience. The main outcome variable in this study is academic probation. Academic probation is a dummy variable, with "0" coded for students who reported not having ever been on academic probation and "1" for students who identified as ever having been on academic probation.

Covariates in my models include student demographic characteristics, such as gender, race and ethnicity, year of

enrollment, and house size. Gender was recoded into a dummy variable, coded 0 for male and 1 for female. Racial-ethnic categories included Latinx, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian, Black/African American, Middle Eastern/North African, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander and White identities. Due to sample sizes comprising less than 10 participants (and to ensure confidentiality among participants), the racial-ethnic variable was collapsed into two categories: "Latinx" (coded as "1") and "non-Latinx" (coded as "0"). Year of enrollment is drawn from participants identifying what year they are enrolled at Cal State LA. Because of the relatively smaller sample of students enrolled in their fifth year and beyond, I pooled participants in their fifth year and beyond into a single category for year of enrollment. Household size is drawn from a question asking participants to identify the number of residents residing in their household, including the participant. Because not all students self-reported funding strategies in the survey, I use house size to approximate a measure for socio-economic status and include it as a control in my analytic models.

Sample

Data drawn from the CSULA Office of Institutional Effectiveness (2022) reports that in the 2021-2022 school year of 44,445 total enrolled undergraduate students, approximately 72 percent identified as Hispanic, and 79 percent had a parent that did not obtain their bachelor's degree. Furthermore, a majority of the students enrolled in the fall 2021 semester were female (59 percent), with 41 percent males, less than 1 percent identifying as non-binary. Moreover, of the total enrolled undergraduate students, 10 percent were new transfer students. Additionally, 81 percent of all students reported a full-time course load with 19 percent identifying as part-time students. Thus, the average student profile of those currently enrolled is Hispanic, full-time, and first-generation.

Table 1 summarizes the controls and the number of students that completed surveys for this study (n = 59). The initial sample included 98 participants with 87 completed survey responses, resulting in an analytic sample of 59 observations with non-missing values on key independent, dependent, and

demographic variables. The sample comprises more women (86 percent) than men (14 percent), which does not necessarily align with the undergraduate 2021-2022 average student profile of currently enrolled CSULA students of 59 percent female and 41 percent male. Moreover, the sample consisted of primarily Latinx students (85 percent), and 15 percent non-Latinx. Regarding academic characteristics, more than half of students were between their first and fourth year at Cal State LA (90 percent), while 10 percent were in their fifth year or beyond. For key independent variables, the study sample is primarily composed of first-generation students (83 percent), with more than half identifying as transfer students (54 percent). For academic outcomes, about 22 percent of students reported having ever been on academic probation.

Analytical Strategy

Given that the outcome variable is dichotomous, I use logistic regression for my analyses to estimate the odds of having ever been on academic probation among first-generation students. The first model is a bivariate analysis, predicting the odds of academic probation across first-generation and traditional students. Then, the second model includes transfer status as a control to investigate how transfer status mediates the relationship between first-generation status and academic probation. The third model includes demographic characteristics, such as Latinx, gender, year, and house size, to statistical control for extraneous variables and test the influence of these variables on the relationship between first-generation status, transfer status, and academic probation. For ease of interpretation, the coefficients from logistic regression analyses are exponentiated to the odds ratio.

FINDINGS

Table 2 reports the logistic regression results of first-generation and transfer students in odds ratio predicting having ever been on academic probation. I first report the odds ratio for first-generation status across all models. Model 1 reports the baseline model without controls for first-generation students ever on academic probation. While first-generation students have

higher odds of academic probation, the coefficient was not statistically significant (β = 2.92) My findings thus show that first-generation first status is not significantly associated with odds of academic probation. Likewise, in Model 2, although the odds of academic probation increase, the association for first-generation status remains statistically insignificant (β = 3.05). Model 3, which includes controls for Latinx, gender, year of enrollment, and house size, reports statistically insignificant odds among first-generation students in odds of academic probation (β = 2.16). Thus, I reject my first hypothesis that first-generation students will have higher odds of academic probation than traditional students. Instead, I find that first-generation status is not significantly associated with academic probation.

Next, I examine the odds of academic probation with the transfer status of the student. Because Model 1 does not include transfer status as a variable, I will present results from Models 2 and 3. Model 2 reports higher odds of academic probation that is statistically significant (β = 15.77). This suggests that students who transferred had 15 times the odds of those who did not to have ever been placed on academic probation, even after controlling for first-generation status. Transfer status appears to be a stronger predictor of academic probation than first-generation status alone.

Model 3 reports that, even after controlling for student-level covariates, the odds of academic probation increased (β = 24.93) among transfer students, and the statistical significance increased. Transfer students have nearly 25 times the odds of having ever been on academic probation compared to traditional students, even after accounting for first-generation status and other demographic characteristics. Across Models 2 and 3, because the odds ratio is greater than 1, transferring from a two-year college appears to be a risk factor of experiencing academic probation at any point in a student's academic career.

The high magnitude of the odds ratio (β = 15.77 in Model 2 and β = 24.93 in Model 3 also suggests a unique and strong association between transfer status and academic probation. Thus, I reject my second hypothesis that transferring from a two-year college to a four-year university mediated the relationship between first-generation status and academic probation. Instead, I find evidence of a direct relationship between transfer status and

academic probation. However, caution must be exercised in interpreting the odds ratio for first-generation status, in that while the coefficient remained statistically insignificant across all models (perhaps due to the small sample sizes of the comparison group), first-generation students had higher odds of academic probation compared to traditional students. Overall, my findings demonstrate evidence of the challenges transfer students endure in their navigational pathways in higher education.

DISCUSSION

This thesis examined the relationship between academic probation and student status (e.g., first-generation, transfer) to provide insight on their academic experiences. Contrary to prior research (Barouch-Gilbert 2016), my study shows that first-generation status is not statistically significantly associated with academic probation. However, consistent with prior research, transferring from a two-year college to a four-year university is significantly associated with having been on academic probation (Taylor and Jain 2017). My findings also show that, even after accounting for students who identified as first-generation, transfer students had significantly higher odds of academic probation compared to traditional students.

The findings from this study align closely with prior research on the educational experiences of transfer students. Moreover, this study builds on Barouch-Gilbert's (2016) analysis of the impact of academic challenges such as academic probation on transfer students. The significant relationship between transfer students and academic probation is further highlighted throughout this study. Thus, additional analysis of the role that supports from family, friends, and institutions play in the academic attainment of marginalized students is essential to develop stronger educational policies.

This thesis aims to contribute to literature regarding the factors contributing to the academic experiences of first-generation students while also attending to their navigational pathways. However, this study has important limitations. The first limitation is a limited sample size from survey collection efforts. Although the survey was distributed to on-campus and off-campus students, the variance in experiences may not be accounted for.

Many students were able to select various identities in multiple response formats; as noted in the sample description, the sample size was relatively small (89 responses) and reduced by 6 percent (59 observations) after eliminating responses that were missing on key variables. The second limitation is non-response bias, in that sampled students who did not respond (by choice or by mistake) may differ in characteristics from students who responded to the questions about academic probation, first-generation status, transfer status, or other demographic characteristics. The third limitation is that this study cannot account for potential differences in the unobserved characteristics of students who transferred or did not transfer, or who were ever placed on academic probation. Furthermore, sampling on-campus students provides an additional set of limitations. Given that the data cannot establish whether the experience of academic probation happened before or after transferring, my study cannot make causal inferences. Additionally, the sample does not account for students who have been on academic probation or are academically disqualified from enrolling at CSULA. As such, the results from this thesis should be viewed as a descriptive analysis. The fourth limitation is that the study sample comprises different demographic characteristics than the overall CSULA student population. Moreover, the study sample only collected survey responses from students at a public four-year university. Thus, these findings should be cautiously interpreted and cannot be considered a nationally representative student population.

Although my hypotheses were not supported by my findings, the results contribute to existing literature and potential directions for future research. Educators and policymakers should pay special attention to the intersecting identities of transfer students, who tend to be racial-ethnic minorities, come from low-income households, and identify as first-generation. Future research should consider expanding the focus of first-generation students to include the various challenges posed by transferring from two-year colleges into four-year universities. Future directions of this study include replicating the survey in different settings such as other CSU universities, the UC university system, and the community college network.

CONCLUSION

Despite the prevalence of academic probation among first-generation students, there are few studies that examine the additional academic challenges faced by first generation students who tend to transfer from two-year colleges into four-year universities. This thesis examines the relationship between first-generation students currently enrolled at CSULA and the odds of having ever been on academic probation, with transfer status as a mediating variable. Contrary to prior research, my thesis finds that first-generation status was not statistically significant with academic probation. However, I find that transfer students had significantly higher odds of having been placed on academic probation. My findings shed light on the transfer experiences of first-generation students and their relationship to the academic challenges faced by many first-generation students.

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APPENDIX

Tables

Table 1. Descriptive statistics of variables (n = 59 students)

	n	Percentage
Status		
First-generation student	49	83
Transfer student	32	54
Demographics		
Gender		
Female	51	86
Male	8	14
Race/Ethnicity		
Hispanic or Latinx	50	85
Non-Latinx	9	15
Year of enrollment		
1st year	7	12
2nd year	15	25
3rd year	13	22
4th year	18	31
5+ years	6	10
House size		
2 residents	11	19
3 residents	11	19
4 residents	18	31
5 residents	8	14
6 residents	5	9
7 residents	5	9
9 residents	1	2
Academic probation (ever)		
No	46	78
Yes	13	22
Total	59	100

Source: First-generation Students in Higher Education Survey.

Table 2. Logistic Regression – estimated odds ratios (OR) of ever being on academic probation

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
First Generation Status	2.92	3.05	2.16
	(1.11)	(1.16)	(1.26)
Transfer Status		15.77*	24.93**
		(1.09)	(1.18)
Demographics			
Latinx			1.68
			(1.34)
Gender			3.44
			(1.38)
Year			
1st Year			1.08
			(1.26)
2nd Year			1.46
			(1.40)
3rd Year			1.98
			(1.26)
4th Year			2.93
			(1.74)
Family Housing			
House Size			1.46
			(0.26)
Constant	0.11	0.01	0.00
	(1.05)	(1.48)	(2.81)
Pseudo R	0.03	0.29	0.37
N	59	59	59

Note. Standard errors underneath coefficients in parentheses. Controls are in reference to non-FG, native student, White, male, 5th year+ students. $^{+}p < 0.10$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$.

Source: First-generation Students in Higher Education Survey.

Elite Course-Taking and Racial Disparities in STEM

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ABSTRACT

African American and Latinx populations are still disproportionately underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) fields. To understand why racial disparities persist, this article investigates African American and Latinx students' high school careers. Specifically, it examines whether students take a course in trigonometry, pre-calculus, or calculus students' (elite math courses) in their senior year. Using the theoretical framework of *categorical inequality*, I examine whether racial disparities exist in elite math courses that often serve important gatekeeping functions for future STEM pathways.

Data are from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:02) public use data, focusing on data from the first follow-up (when the students are in their senior year of high school) and postsecondary education transcripts collected in 2012. I use logistic regression methods to examine the odds of taking an elite math course across racial and ethnic subgroups. Then I analyze the odds of high school graduation rates, postsecondary enrollment across different racial/ethnic subgroups, and whether students obtained a bachelor's degree in STEM, after accounting for elite math courses taken in high school. Surprisingly, my findings show that African American and Latinx students have similar odds as White students of taking an elite math course and have higher odds of enrolling in a postsecondary institution than their white counterparts.

INTRODUCTION

Careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) have become one of the fastest growing areas in the United States; however, racial and gender disparities continue to persist in the STEM workforce (Chen 2013). The representation of African American and Latinx populations in STEM fields is still considerably low; where only 9% of the STEM workforce is African Americans and 7% is Latinx (Pew

Research Center 2018). Moreover, only 7% of African Americans and 12% of Latinx students graduated with a degree in STEM, lower than the national average of 15% (Fry et al. 2021; Pew Research Center 2018).

Examining math course-taking in high school can help us understand the factors that contribute to students pursuing and persisting in STEM (Sanabria and Penner 2017). In doing so, my study highlights the disparate pathways of minority racial and ethnic groups in STEM. Prior research has established that the type of math courses taken in high school often serves a gatekeeping function into STEM in higher education. Students are differentially sorted into higher-level math courses offered in high schools and evidence shows that students from minority groups are less likely to enroll and take higher-tracked math courses, such as trigonometry, pre-calculus, or calculus, than White and Asian American students (U.S. Department of Education 2018). Advanced math course-taking in high school is a strong predictor for attending college (Long et al. 2010). Additionally, higher-level math courses operate as a "gatekeeper" in STEM, limiting the rate at which students can prepare for college coursework in STEM fields. Investigating the extent to which African American and Latinx students take these higher-tracked math courses in high school (which I will refer to simply as elite math courses in this thesis) and earn a bachelor's degree in STEM can better illuminate a key mechanism in racial stratification in STEM. Thus, this thesis examines the racial disparities in STEM elite math courses taken in high school, high school graduation, postsecondary attendance, and STEM degree attainment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis will be drawing from previous literature which utilized various theoretical frameworks to demonstrate why the categorical inequality framework can better explain racial disparities in STEM. This thesis will also examine previous literature which focus on math course taking at the high school level, their findings and how racial disparities in math course taking has contributed to STEM attrition among African American and Latinx students.

Racial Disparities in Higher-Level Math Courses

Previous researchers have focused on patterns relating to math course-taking and race. As previously stated, research on racial disparities in STEM has been an ongoing issue for decades with researchers focusing on several factors affecting math course taking. For example, Daempfle's (2004) study on STEM attrition at the undergraduate level found that there was a disconnect between high school and college teachings that impacts for students' opting out of STEM majors. While Daempfle's research focused on students at the undergraduate level, others researched students at the high school level. Some of the earlier studies conducted on math course taking at the high school level found that elite math courses can predict postsecondary attendance (Riegle-Crumb 2006; Tyson 2007; Riegle-Crumb and Grodsky 2010), math course taking across different racial/ethnic subgroups has increased (with some exceptions) across different cohorts (Dalton 2007), African American and Latinx students have lower odds of taking higher level courses (Archbald and Farley; Ripple 2012), and elite math and science courses in high school play a significant role in STEM persistence amongst students of color (Lichtenberger and George-Jackson 2013).

While these studies contributed greatly towards the understanding of STEM attrition and persistence among students of color, they are outdated. Some of the studies used data from the National Education Longitudinal study of 1988, Beginning Postsecondary Students Longitudinal Study (BPS:96/01), and Adolescent Health and Academic Achievement (AHAA) which was conducted in the 1990's. Although the data used in these studies were instrumental in research and policy, newer data would help researchers today in understanding why STEM attrition continues to persist.

Categorical Inequality Framework

Plenty of research on racial disparities in STEM discusses the relationship between elite math course taking and racial disparities at different intervals of students education (Riegle-Crumb 2006; Dalton et al. 2007; Kelly 2009; Kokkelenberg and Sinha 2010; Riegle-Crumb 2010; Archbald and Farley-Ripple 2012; Domina and Saldana 2012; Xie et al. 2015; Champion 2016;

Shi 2017; Fong 2020; Sanabria 2020; McEachin et al. 2020; Irizarry 2021). This thesis examines the impact of math course taking at the high school level and how this affects students' STEM pathways after they transition to a postsecondary institution. More recent studies (2016 onward) analyzed similar data to that of this article but used different theoretical frameworks to explain racial disparities. Much like this thesis, previous research focused on students starting from high school to understand how math courses might affect STEM persistence at the postsecondary level. For example, Fong and Kremer (2020) used the expectancy value theory to examine math underachievement at the high school level and found that 'math motivation' was a significant predictor in underachievement which played a role in the students' transition to college. Riegle-Crumb et al. (2019) used the opportunity hoarding framework in their study of underrepresentation of racial/ethnic groups in STEM and found STEM is a high value degree and due to opportunity hoarding, racial disparities continue to persist. The theoretical frameworks used in these studies were instrumental in providing relevant and significant findings, the categorical inequality framework will contribute to understanding why racial disparities continue to persist in STEM.

Previous researchers used a myriad of theoretical frameworks to investigate and further understand why racial disparities exist in STEM (Fong and Kremer 2020; Andersen and Ward 2013; Domina and Saldana 2012; Archibald Farley-Ripple 2012; Daempfle 2004; Crisp 2009; and Riegle-Crumb et al. 2019). However, this article uses the categorical inequality framework (Domina et al. 2018) to explore racial inequality in elite math courses in high school. In their review, Domina, Penner and Penner (2018) discuss and apply the theoretical framework of categorical inequality to education. Unfortunately, within the institution of education, schools have been sorting and categorizing students, placing them on track to higher education, technical schools, or elsewhere, leading them on a specific pathway. For working class students, female students and people of color, education is sometimes the only clear path towards a successful life.

> By creating categories and sorting youth among them, schools develop templates that influence the contours of inequality throughout contemporary societies…The categorical inequality perspective draws attention toward the organizational processes through which schools create categories and sort individuals into them, and how, in doing so, they generate and reinforce social inequalities. (Domina, Penner, and Penner 2018)

By sorting students, educational institutions are creating and perpetuating inequalities; students who are sorted into lower-level courses are at a disadvantage compared to students sorted into higher level courses. Applying the categorical inequality framework towards elite math course-taking and racial disparities in STEM gives insight as to the important role sorting students based on race and status has on the persistence of racial disparities.

The Current Study

This project examines the relationship between elite math courses and STEM pathways, as well as the role of sorting in math courses on racial disparities. In sum, the literature suggests that math course taking plays an important role in continuing on the STEM pathway. Thus, this thesis asks (1) What are the racial disparities in elite math course-taking in high school? After accounting for elite math courses taken, I ask the following questions: (2) What is the high school graduation rate across racial and ethnic groups? (3) What are the odds of ever attending a postsecondary institution across ethnic/racial subgroups? And after students have enrolled in a postsecondary institution, I ask (4) what are the odds of obtaining a degree in STEM across ethnic/racial subgroups, after accounting for elite math courses completed in high school?

I expect that my findings for research question 1 will support previous research on math course taking and racial disparities (Tyson et al. 2007; Kelly 2009; Riegle-Crumb 2010; Irizarry 2021). I hypothesize African American and Latinx students would have lower odds of taking elite math courses in high school compared to White students. I hypothesize that

African American and Latinx students would be less likely to complete high school compared to their White counterparts even after accounting for elite math courses taken in high school.

Previous research has demonstrated evidence of math course taking at the high school level playing a significant role in students' STEM pathways after high school (Lichtenberger and George-Jackson 2013; Shi 2017; Riegle-Crumb et al. 2019; Fong 2020; Sanabria 2020; Irizarry 2021). As previous studies suggest that taking elite math courses in high school affects students' decision in attending a postsecondary institution and obtaining a degree in STEM. Therefore, this project proposes two more research questions: For my third research question, I hypothesize African American and Latinx students are less likely to attend a postsecondary institution compared to their White counterparts.

Previous research has found that students sorted into different levels of math courses affect students' decisions in choosing a STEM major (Irizarry 2021). Therefore, for my final research question, I hypothesize that among those who attend a postsecondary institution, African American and Latinx students are less likely to obtain a bachelor's degree in STEM even after accounting for elite math courses taken in high school. As students enter postsecondary institutions, required courses for STEM majors affect African American and Latinx students persisting in STEM (Chen 2009).

METHODS

Data

Data is drawn from the Educational Longitudinal Study of 2002 (ELS:02) by the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) public-use data, specifically focusing on high school seniors graduating in spring 2004. The ELS (2002) is a longitudinal study that followed a baseline representative sample of approximately 17,500 tenth-grade students over ten years, beginning in 2002. The ELS data contains a nationally representative sample of high school seniors graduating in 2004 and follows students' trajectories into enrollment and degree completion at postsecondary institutions. As a longitudinal panel study, ELS experienced sample attrition and non-response bias. To adjust for the sampling frame, the ELS:02 replenished the sample

with additional respondents. I adjust for attrition by using a sampling weight and only including students who are non-missing on key outcome, predictor, and control variables in my analyses.

ELS (2002) collected a wide range of individual-level details from students, including race, gender, socioeconomic backgrounds, family housing composition, and family educational background. ELS surveyed students through four waves: base year (BY) during the students' tenth-grade year in 2002, first follow up (F1) during the student's senior year in 2004, second follow-up (F2) in 2006 two years after high school, and third follow up (F3) occurred in 2012 (eight years after high school). High school transcripts were collected in the first follow-up (F1) and postsecondary transcripts were collected in 2012 in the fourth follow-up (F4).

Measures

I examine whether racial disparities in elite math course-taking and persist across a range of academic outcomes: high school postsecondary attainment, and STEM degree completion. The key independent variable is race and ethnicity. The categories under race and ethnicity in the ELS (2002) data were American Indian/Alaska Native, non-Hispanic; Asian, Hawaii/Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic; Black or African American, non-Hispanic; Hispanic, no race specified; Hispanic, race specified; More than one race, non-Hispanic, and White, non-Hispanic. Due to the small sample of American Indian/Alaska Native and More than one race, these categories were combined into one category and categorized as "other." For this study, White, non-Hispanic, is the reference category due to their overrepresentation in the STEM fields and workforce (Pew Research Center 2021).

Given that this paper investigates the role of elite math course taking on future student outcomes, the four dependent variables used in this thesis are whether the student has taken and elite math course (pre-calculus or higher), high School diploma or GED equivalent, enrollment at a postsecondary institution, and a bachelor's degree in STEM.

Demographic variables will be student-level covariates, which include gender, socioeconomic status, family composition, math item response theory (IRT) scores in senior year, and parents'

highest level of education. For Research Questions 2, 3 and 4, elite math course is added to the complex models as a control. In addition, models for Research Questions 3 and 4 only include students who have obtained a high school diploma (or equivalent).

Sample

As shown in Table 1 (n = 17,500), the sample was fairly evenly split by gender consisting of 48.85% male and 50.15% female students, with male students being the reference category. The racial composition consisted of White (62.22%), Hispanic, race specified (8.46%), Hispanic, no race specified (6.6%), Black (13.34%), Asian (4.51%), and Other (4.86%) students. Socioeconomic status (SES) is measured in quartiles with students fairly evenly distributed across quartiles. Family composition was categorized as: 'mother and father' (60.08%), 'female guardian only' (1.22%), with 'mother only' (17.66%), and the following categories were combined: 'mother and male guardian', 'father and female guardian', 'two guardians', 'lives with student less than half time', and 'father only, male guardian only' (17.73%). Parent's highest level of education was divided into three categories: 'Did not finish high school' and 'graduated from high school or GED' (25.03%); 'Attended 2-year, no degree,' 'Graduated from 2-year school,' attended college no 4-year degree' (34.21%); 'graduated from college,' 'completed Master's degree or equivalent,' 'completed Ph.D., MD, other advanced degree' (34.78%). Students' math scores are on a continuous scale ranging from 13.74 to 83.03 (std=13.84). This variable measures the probability of students correctly answering, "each of the items in the pool" (NCES 2014).

The key dependent variables: elite math course, high school attainment, postsecondary enrollment, and bachelor's degree in STEM were collapsed into dichotomous variables. The categories for 'elite math course' were 'no math course or math course is other,' 'pre-algebra, general or consumer math,' 'Algebra I,' 'Geometry,' and 'Algebra II' which were combined (54.03%) and my reference category and trigonometry, pre-calculus, or calculus as the reference category (45.08%). High school attainment was categorized as: 'successful graduate (HS diploma

recipient),' 'marginal graduate (HS diploma recipient),' 'Completer (GED/equivalency/certificate of attendance),' and 'non-completer.' The categories were collapsed into 'completer' (90.24%) and 'non-completer' (2.6%) with non-completer as the reference category. The categories for postsecondary enrollment were already dichotomous 'has some postsecondary enrollment' (87.9%) and 'no postsecondary enrollment' (12.1%) which was the reference category. The final key dependent variable 'Bachelor's degree in STEM' was collapsed into 'STEM' (10.25%) and 'non-STEM' (31.99%) categories (57.76% were missing or NA); non-STEM was the reference category.

Analytical Strategy

Given that the key dependent variables are dichotomous (has taken an elite math course or not), I use logistic regression to examine (1) racial disparities in elite math course taking by senior year of high school; after accounting for elite math course taking: I examine the odds of (2) high school attainment (3) postsecondary enrollment and (4) STEM degree attainment. With each research question and corresponding key dependent variable I examine the students' transition into a postsecondary institution and whether students earned degrees in STEM. For ease of interpretation, logit coefficients from the analyses are exponentiated into odd ratios that are then interpreted as either an increase (>1) or decrease in odds (<1) of the outcome variable occurring. The analyses start with a baseline model to estimate the association between elite math course-taking and race:

$$logit(ELITE_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_2 Race + \chi_i + \varepsilon_i$$

$(ELITE)_i$ estimates the odds of taking an elite math course by senior year of high school for every student. I first examine the odds of taking an elite math course across racial and ethnic subgroups. In the second model, I include the following student-level covariates: gender, socio-economic status, family composition, parent's highest level of education, and prior math achievement, represented as X_i. The second model with added controls examines whether elite math courses have a distinct

relationship with racial disparities in STEM relative to other significant predictors.

$$logit(DIPLOMA_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_2 Race_i + \beta_3 Elite_i + \chi_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Equation 2 predicts the odds of high school attainment across racial/ethnic groups, controlling for whether the student had taken an elite math course by senior year. Then, the second model includes controls. Analyses for Research Questions 3 and 4 follow a similar equation as Equation 2 to predict the odds of attending postsecondary education and STEM degree attainment.

RESULTS

Table 2 reports the odds ratios for taking an elite math course by the students' senior year of high school. Model 1 (n = 13, 300) reports the baseline model without controls showing the odds of taking an elite math course across racial and ethnic categories. We can see that Asian, Hawaii/Pac. Islander students had twice the odds ($\beta = 2.0$; $p < 0.001$) of taking an elite math course compared to their white counterparts. Black, non-Hispanic ($\beta = 0.6$; $p < 0.001$), Hispanic, race specified ($\beta = 0.5$; $p < 0.001$), Hispanic, no race specified ($\beta = 0.4$; $p < 0.001$), and Other ($\beta = 0.7$; $p < 0.001$) students had significantly lower odds than White students of taking an elite math course by their senior year.

Model 2 in Table 2 (n = 13,000) shows the odds of taking an elite level math course by senior of high school with the following covariates: gender, SES, Family composition, prior math achievement, and parents' education. We see in Model 2 that Black, non-Hispanic ($\beta = 2.2$; $p < 0.001$) and Asian, Hawaii/Pac. Islander ($\beta = 2.4$; $p < 0.001$) students have twice the odds of taking an elite math course compared to White students. Hispanic, no race specified, was no longer statistically significant after introducing controls. However, Hispanic, race specified, and Other were only marginally significant ($\beta = 1.2$; $p < 0.10$; $\beta = 0.7$; $p < 0.10$ respectively).

Table 3 reports the odds ratio of completing high school by race/ethnicity after accounting for elite math course taking. Model 1 (n = 12,800) represents the baseline model without

controls, showing that the odds of completing High School were significantly lower for Black non-Hispanic ($\beta = 0.4$; $p < 0.001$), Hispanic no race specified ($\beta = 0.4$; $p < 0.001$), Hispanic race specified ($\beta = 0.3$; $p < 0.001$), and Other ($\beta = 0.3$; $p < 0.001$) race compared to White students; Asian, Hawaii/Pac. Island students were just as likely to complete High School as white students and was not statistically significant.

After accounting for control variables in Model 2 (n = 12,000), the odds of Asian students completing High school lowered slightly and were not significant ($\beta = 0.9$; $p > 0.10$). For Black ($\beta = 0.6$; $p < 0.001$), Hispanic, race specified ($\beta = 0.5$; $p < 0.001$), and Other ($\beta = 0.4$; $p < 0.001$) students, there wasn't much change from Model 1, the odds increased slightly and remained statistically significant. However, interestingly Hispanic, race specified, students were slightly more likely to complete High School than White students but lost significance in Model 2. The elite math course covariate was marginally significant ($\beta = 0.7$; $p < 0,10$).

Table 4 reports odds ratios predicting enrollment at a postsecondary institution. Model 1 (n=10,400) shows the baseline model without controls, showing the odds of students ever attending a postsecondary institution by race. Hispanic, no race specified ($\beta = 0.6$; $p < 0.001$) and Other students ($\beta = 0.6$; $p < 0.001$) had lower odds of ever attending a postsecondary institution; Black and Hispanic, race specified were not statistically significant. Asian students were more than twice as likely to attend a postsecondary institution than White students ($\beta = 2.3$; $p < 0.00$).

After accounting for controls in Model 2 (n = 10,000), the odds of ever attending a postsecondary institution increased significantly for each category of students with the exception of Other students who were just as likely as white students to attend a postsecondary institution although this was not significant ($\beta = 1.0$; $p > 0.10$). Model 2 shows Asian students have three times the odds ($\beta = 3.0$; $p < 0.00$) than White students to attend a postsecondary institution. Black ($\beta = 2.1$; $p < 0.001$), Hispanic, race specified ($\beta = 1.8$; $p < 0.001$), and Hispanic, no race specified ($\beta = 1.8$; $p < 0.001$), students were about twice as likely as White students to ever attend a postsecondary institution. The control,

family household composition was only marginally significant, and the parent's highest level of education was only statistically significant for the parents in the category High School/GED or less. Highest elite math course taken was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.4$; $p < 0.00$).

Table 5 reports the odds ratios of attaining a bachelor's degree in STEM. Model 1 ($n = 4,700$) shows the baselines without controls with White students as the reference category. Asian students had twice the odds of earning a STEM degree ($\beta = 1.7$; $p < 0.001$) compared to White students; all other categories were not statistically significant. After accounting for controls in Model 2 ($n = 4,500$), the odds for earning a STEM degree compared to White students lowered slightly for Asian students but remained statistically significant ($\beta = 1.5$; $p < 0.001$). However, even after accounting for controls, Black, Hispanic, race specified, Hispanic, no race specified, and Other students were still not significant. Students who did not take an elite math course were less likely than students who took pre-calculus, calculus, and/or trigonometry to earn a STEM degree ($\beta = 0.5$; $p < 0.00$).

When examining elite math course taking, I hypothesized that African American and Latinx students were less likely to take an elite math course in high school compared to their White counterparts, the results presented in table 2 shows that Model 2 does not support my hypothesis. As previously stated, African American and Latinx students were twice as likely or just as likely to take an elite math course by their senior year of high school. This finding shows that students of color are slowly narrowing the gap in elite math course taking. For the second hypothesis: African American and Latinx students are less likely to complete high school compared to their counterparts (after accounting for elite math), Table 3 supports my second hypothesis. Apart from Hispanic, no race specified, African American and Latinx (when race is specified) students are less likely to complete high school compared to White students.

Regarding postsecondary enrollment, I hypothesized that African American and Latinx students were less likely to ever attend a postsecondary institution compared to White students (after accounting for elite math course). Table 4 shows that the results do not support my hypothesis. Results show African

American and Latinx students are about twice as likely to ever attend a postsecondary institution compared to White students. Lastly, when looking at the first known bachelor's degree, I hypothesized that African American and Latinx students are less likely to obtain a bachelor's degree in STEM, after accounting for elite math course taking. Unfortunately, results were not statistically significant therefore I was not able to conclude if African American and Latinx students were more or less likely to obtain a bachelor's in STEM.

DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

This paper examined the effects of taking an elite math course in a nationally represented dataset and provided a better understanding of how elite course taking plays a role in persisting on the STEM pathway. This study shows that while students of color are enrolling in elite math courses in high school at similar or increased odds as White students, African American and Latinx students are shown to have lower odds of attaining a high school diploma. However, according to data, African American and Latinx students are more likely to attend a postsecondary institution but results on STEM degree attainment could not provide evidence of the odds of which students of color earned a bachelor's in STEM. Unsurprisingly and consistent with prior research, Asian students are more likely to earn a bachelor's degree in STEM compared to their White counterparts (Chen and Weko 2009; Kokkelenberg and Sinha 2010; Ma and Liu 2015).

This project contributes to literature on racial disparities in STEM education and persisting on the STEM pathway, despite some of the thesis' limitations. The first limitation was sample attrition; as with longitudinal designs, one of the issues is losing participants over time. Furthermore, another limitation was from analyzing data from ELS:02 public use data instead of their restricted data; unfortunately, some variables of interest were restricted. For example, students' first choice of major and institution type (two-year vs. four-year) was inaccessible. In addition, access to students' first choice of major would have provided important information on STEM attrition across racial/ethnic subgroups.

Previous research shows there is a relationship between math courses taken and STEM persistence (Chen 2013). While some of my findings aligned with prior research, others contradicted it. Findings suggest that African American and Latinx students were just as likely or more likely to take an elite math course by their senior year. This finding supports previous literature comparing students from different cohorts (1982, 1992, and 2004). Students in 2004 earned more math credits than the other two cohorts with the exception of Latinx students who did not show much difference from 1992 to 2004 (Dalton et al. 2007; Domina and Saldana 2012). This finding also supports Xie and co-authors (2015) study who found that the racial gap in elite course taking in high school has narrowed.

Future research should focus on why students of color are more likely to be sorted in lower-level math courses compared to White students (Xie et al. 2015). Furthermore, even though this thesis did not find any statistically significant results on African American and Latinx students' odds of obtaining a bachelor's in STEM, previous research found evidence of racial disparities in obtaining a degree in STEM (Chen and Weko 2009; Ma and Liu 2015). More research should be conducted to these seemingly contradictory results.

It is important for researchers and policymakers to understand why African American and Latinx students do not persist in STEM once they've enrolled in a postsecondary institution. Perhaps developing pre-college programs aimed at creating a smooth transition from high school to postsecondary institutions could lower attrition rates among these students. Sorting students also plays a significant role in STEM persistence as students of color, African American female students in particular were found to be less likely to have been recommended for elite math courses (Francis et al. 2019). Policies need to be developed to prevent bias against students of color who qualify for enrollment in elite math courses. On a structural level, perhaps school districts can consider making elite math courses mandatory. In most public schools in the United States math requirements usually go up to Algebra II or students need to fulfil only three years of math by making elite a requirement it might

work to motivate students or introduce them to math courses that are relevant and lay a foundation to a STEM education.

Although some of the hypotheses were not supported by the results, the findings from this thesis contributes to literature and future research. For example, students of color were found to have taken elite math courses at equal and or double the odds as White students. Future research should continue research on elite math course taking and its relationship with STEM persistence. As previously stated, African American and Latinx students have higher odds of enrolling in a postsecondary institution, future research should be conducted to determine whether postsecondary enrollment in two-year vs. four-year institutions would be significant in persisting in STEM across racial/ethnic subgroups.

The theoretical framework of categorical inequality helps explain students being sorted in elite level courses. Previous research utilized different theoretical frameworks when researching racial disparities in course taking and STEM. For example, Fong and Kremer (2020) used the expectancy value theory which focuses on the students, their perceptions of reality and how this affects their academic performance. Categorical inequality shifts the focus from the student to the educational institution by stating that schools create categories based on status and sort students accordingly. It focuses on sorting at the institutional and organizational levels and frames racial status as more salient in elite math courses.

When analyzing data from ELS:02 I found that students are taking elite math courses at similar rates. However, racial disparities continue to persist in STEM education and workforce. Future researchers should utilize this framework to understand how sorting students in elite math courses versus non elite math courses at the secondary level and its effects of STEM persistence.

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APPENDIX

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics for study sample (N=17,500)*

	Percentage
Race	
Other	4.86%
Asian, Hawaii/Pac Islander	4.51%
Black	13.34%
Hispanic, no race specified	6.6%
Hispanic, race specified	8.46%
White	62.22%
Sex	
Male	49.85%
Female	50.15%
Socioeconomic Status quartile	
Lowest quartile	22.24%
Second quartile	24.34%
Third quartile	26.02%
Highest quartile	27.4%
Family Household Composition	
Mother and Father	60.08%
Father or Male Guardian only	3.32%
Other	17.73%
Female guardian only	1.22%
Mother only	17.66%
Parent's highest level of education	
High school or GED or less	25.03%
Attended 2-year no 4-year degree	34.21%
At least a 4-year degree or higher	34.78%
Elite Math Course	
Trigonometry, pre-calculus, or calculus Pre-Calculus or higher	45.08%
Algebra II or lower	54.03%
High School completion	
Completer	90.24%
Non-completer	2.6%
Ever attended a postsecondary institution	
No postsecondary enrollment	87.9%
Attended a postsecondary institution	12.1%
First Known Bachelor's degree	
STEM	10.25%
Non-STEM	31.99%

*N is approximate
Source: NCES

Table 2: Logistic Regression – estimated odds ratios (OR) of taking an elite math course (pre-calculus or higher) by 12th grade

	Model 1 Elite math course	Model 2 Elite math course
Race		
Asian, Hawaii/Pac. Islander	**2.0*****	**2.4*****
	(6.4)	(7.1)
Black, non-Hispanic	**0.6*****	**2.2*****
	(-4.8)	(6.3)
Hispanic, no race specified	**0.4*****	1.2
	(-7.2)	(1.1)
Hispanic, race specified	**0.5*****	**1.2**$^{+}$
	(-6.0)	(1.5)
Other	**0.7*****	**1.2**$^{+}$
	(-2.9)	(1.7)
Gender		
Female		1.3***
		(5.1)
Socio-economic status		
Second quartile		1.1***
		(0.5)
Third quartile		1.1^{+}
		(1.2)
Highest quartile		1.5
		(2.8)
Family Household Composition		
Mother and Father		1.3***
		(2.9)
Father or Male guardian only		1.1
		(0.3)
Female guardian only		1.8***
		(2.2)
Other		0.9^{+}
		(-1.6)
F1 math IRT (BY scores)		1.1***
		(33.7)
Parent's highest level of education		
High School/GED or less		0.7***
		(-2.6)
Attended 2-year no 4-year degree		0.8***
		(-2.8)
Constant	1.0	**0.0*****
	(-0.7)	(-26.9)
Pseudo R^2	0.0	0.2
N	13,300	13,000

Note N is approximate. Standard errors underneath coefficients in parentheses. Controls are in reference to White, male, lowest quartile, mother only and parent's highest level of education as 4-year degree or higher. $^{+}p < 0.10$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$
Source: NCES

Table 3: Logistic Regression – estimated odds ratios (OR) of completing High School

	Model 1 H.S.	Model 2 H.S.
Race		
Asian, Hawaii/Pac. Islander	1.0	0.9
	(0.1)	(-0.5)
Black, non-Hispanic	**0.4*****	**0.6*****
	(-3.8)	(-4.8)
Hispanic, no race specified	**0.4*****	1.2
	(-2.9)	(0.4)
Hispanic, race specified	**0.3*****	**0.5*****
	(-4.8)	(-6.1)
Other	**0.3*****	**0.4*****
	(-3.5)	(-6.8)
Gender		
Female		1.9***
		(2.4)
Socio-economic status		
Second quartile		1.7***
		(3.0)
Third quartile		1.9***
		(2.1)
Highest quartile		2.4***
		(2.4)
Family Household Composition		
Mother and Father		1.3***
		(2.0)
Father or Male guardian only		0.7
		(-1.1)
Female guardian only		1.0
		(0.2)
Other		0.8***
		(-4.0)
F1 math IRT (BY scores)		1.1***
		(15.3)
Parent's highest level of education		
High School/GED or less		0.9
		(-0.3)
Attended 2-year no 4-year degree		1.0
		(-0.1)
Highest math course taken		
Algebra II or lower		0.7^{+}
		(-1.6)
Constant	**58.3*****	**3.6*****
	(22.8)	(16.7)
Pseudo R^2	0.0	0.2
N	12,800	12,000

Source: NCES *Note N is approximate.* Standard errors underneath coefficients in parentheses. Controls are in reference to White, male, lowest quartile, mother only, parent's highest level of education as 4-year degree or higher, and pre-calculus or higher. $^{+}p < 0.10$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$, $^{***}p < 0.001$

Table 4. Logistic Regression – Estimated odds ratios (OR) of ever attending a postsecondary institution compared to white students

	Model 1 Bachelor's	Model 2 Bachelor's
Race		
Asian, Hawaii/Pac. Islander	**2.3*****	**3.0*****
	(4.1)	(4.8)
Black, non-Hispanic	0.9	**2.1*****
	(-0.5)	(4.4)
Hispanic, no race specified	**0.6*****	**1.8*****
	(-2.6)	(2.6)
Hispanic, race specified	0.8	**1.8*****
	(-1.4)	(3.2)
Other	**0.6*****	1.0
	(-2.6)	(-0.1)
Gender		
Female		2.3***
		(7.8)
Socio-economic status		
Second quartile		1.4***
		(2.2)
Third quartile		2.2***
		(4.6)
Highest quartile		4.7***
		(5.8)
Family Household Composition		
Mother and Father		1.1
		(1.0)
Father or Male guardian only		0.7*
		(-1.6)
Female guardian only		0.6
		(-1.2)
Other		0.8^{+}
		(-1.5)
F1 math IRT (BY scores)		
		1.0***
Parent's highest level of education		(8.9)
High School/GED or less		0.7***
		(-2.1)
Attended 2-year no 4-year degree		0.8
		(-1.2)

Table 5: *Logistic Regression – estimated odds ratios (OR) of students who attended a postsecondary institution and graduated with a STEM degree*

	Model 1 Elite math course	Model 2 Elite math course
Race		
Asian, Hawaii/Pac. Islander	**1.7*****	**1.5*****
	(3.2)	(2.4)
Black, non-Hispanic	1.0	1.2
	(-0.2)	(1.0)
Hispanic, no race specified	1.0	1.1
	(-0.2)	(0.2)
Hispanic, race specified	1.0	1.2
	(-0.2)	(0.7)
Other	0.9	0.9
	(-0.2)	(-0.5)
Gender		
Female		0.7***
		(-4.0)
Socio-economic status		
Second quartile		1.1
		(0.6)
Third quartile		0.8
		(-0.7)
Highest quartile		0.7
		(-1.2)
Family Household Composition		
Mother and Father		1.2
		(1.3)
Father or Male guardian only		0.9
		(-0.2)
Other		1.0
		(0.2)
F1 math IRT (BY scores)		1.0***
		(3.4)
Parent's highest level of education		
High School/GED or less		1.0
		(-0.2)
Attended 2-year no 4-year degree		0.9
		(-1.0)
Highest math course taken		
Algebra II or lower		0.5***
		(-5.2)
Constant	**0.4*****	**0.2*****
	(-19.2)	(-3.8)
Pseudo R^2	0.0	0.0
*N**	4700	4500

Source: *Note* N is approximate. Standard errors underneath coefficients in parentheses. Controls are in reference to White, male, lowest quartile, mother only, parent's highest level of education as 4-year degree or higher and pre-calculus or higher. $^{*}p < 0.10$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{****}p < 0.001$

Introspection: An Expository Analysis of Police Brutality Against Unarmed Black Men

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INTRODUCTION

With this sociological analysis endeavor, I am fervently interested in the social phenomenon of police brutality against unarmed Black men and the role that *Critical Race Theory* (CRT) factors into this conundrum. CRT is defined by the NAACP Legal Defense Fund as an academic and legal framework that denotes that systemic racism is part of American society—from education and housing to employment and healthcare. CRT also recognizes that racism is more than the result of individual biases, and is also used in sociology to explain social, political, and legal structures and power distribution through a "lens" focusing on the concept of race, and experiences of racism (NAACP Legal Defense Fund 2023).

Recently, in light of the coronavirus pandemic that has taken a stronghold of the world and has claimed the lives of over 1,121,512 Americans to date according to official statistics by the *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention* (CDC), unarmed Black Americans continue to be beaten, shot, and/or killed by various law enforcement agencies across the country. In 2022, A total of 1,096 civilians had been fatally shot, 225 of whom were Black. Furthermore, the rate of fatal police shootings among Black Americans was significantly higher than that for any other ethnicity, standing at 37 fatal shootings per million of the population in 2022 (Statista Research Department 2023).

The videotaped events that evidenced the murder of *George Floyd* led to nationwide riots, protests, and civil unrest that would become a central focus of media attention across the world. *The Black Lives Matter Movement* emerged as a vocal and demonstrative part of the movement against police brutality in the U.S. by organizing many of these marches, protests, and rallies in response to the killings of Black men and women by police. While *Black Lives Matter* has become a polarizing mantra and subsequent movement within the U.S., often being politicized

inappropriately, it has brought considerable attention to the number and frequency of police shootings of Black civilians. Indeed, a CBS news publication identified that police have killed at least one Black man or woman every week in 2020, as of August 31, 2020.

Many prominent Black athletes, including the likes of LA Lakers star *LeBron James* and NBA legend and recent philanthropist *Michael Jordan*, have grown committed to bringing awareness to this social injustice and have been advocating for systematic changes that would save Black lives. This stance for change was on display through basketball players' camaraderie when the NBA season came to an immediate halt in 2020. Many NBA players willing to forfeit their salaries in the name of social justice in the wake of the shooting of Jacob Blake, an unarmed Black man who was shot (in front of his three children) and paralyzed on August 23, 2020, by law enforcement officers in Kenosha, Wisconsin.

CRT seeks to address the general and systemic features of the legal system that serves to perpetuate race-based oppression. This system that CRT challenges permits law enforcement to continue to brutalize and kill Black Americans with no recourse and with longstanding impunity. In this way, we see the significance of sociology in contextualizing societal issues and the undue impact of CRT, to the extent that it transcends itself in the domains of community, politics, and sports. This is the eminence of sociology, in that it provides a systematic approach to thinking about, examining, and comprehending society and its social problems, human social comportment, and social groups which athletes, politicians, and other societal leaders make up.

Being a Black man who has experienced police brutality growing up in South Los Angeles, I have pondered some important questions relative to this experience and seemingly nationwide phenomenon: *How do people feel about the particular issue of race and police brutality*? I've also been intimately curious as to why Black men specifically are targeted at such high rates for police-enacted violence. *Do people of different races, other than African Americans, view police brutality differently? Are non-Black people more accepting of police brutality knowing that it is directed at African Americans as*

opposed to their own people? Do people, in all actuality, believe that Black men deserve to be brutalized, even killed, if they resist arrest or refuse to comply with police directives in any encounters? These are some of the questions essential to this disquisition. Prior research on this topic has contextualized the social construct of race and race relations here in the United States, examined marginalized communities and their lack of trust and collaboration with law enforcement (Braga, Brunson, and Drakulich 2019), the history of this nation and subsequent colonization & enslavement of Black people, cultural and familial influences including racism and anti-Blackness and the effects of such (Alexander 2010), as well as the ways in which popular media, including music, television, radio, or social media depictions and stereotypes have attributed to the negative portrayals of African American men in ways that impact people's views on police brutality against unarmed Black men (Jeffries and Jeffries 2017).

This literature does not necessarily explain the reasons for people's attitudes towards police brutality against unarmed Black Americans, but rather addresses the overall scope of how people view the treatment of Black people in general. Arguably this dearth of understanding is contributing to tolerance of abuse and police brutality against African Americans. Simply put, public structures, policies, and laws can disproportionately place African Americans at a higher risk for "justifiable" violence (Jeffries and Jeffries, 2017). We must understand the factors contributing to the public's opinion in order to save Black lives.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Another conception to be taken into consideration in relation to police brutality against unarmed Black men is the historical context of the perception and treatment of Black Americans since the inception of this country. Race theorists contend this is the belief that history has had an influence in the present trend of Black men being killed, and legally justified, by law enforcement. It's rooted in our country's history and systemic anti-Black structures. The treatment of African Americans, and specifically Black men in the United States, as foundational to what we see today in terms of classism, racism, mass

incarceration, systemic oppression, and the common use of deadly police brutality. Historically, African American men have been demonized in this country, and as such, the White establishment has created a practice of unlawful and heinous behavior that has been accepted by society under the shield of law and order (Alexander 2020).

Authors Anthony A. Braga, Rod K. Brunson, and Kevin M. Drakulich (2019:539), speaks to this truth in their article when they state,

> policing, however, strike[s] an especially raucous chord with people of color, who possibly view contemporary policing strategies through historical lenses. For example, historians have uncovered that, in addition to functioning as slave patrols, surveilling and limiting blacks' physical movement, early law enforcement officers were instrumental in a wide range of illegal activities: mob action, torture, and countless killings of freed blacks.

Furthermore, the authors also postulate that

> Southern blacks' experiences with lynching are well-documented in American history...The police—as well as the criminal justice system more broadly—have long participated in efforts to suppress and exploit Black Americans, including enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act, Black Codes, Jim Crow laws, and the convict leasing program, as well as enforcing the so-called tough on crime laws. (Braga, Brunson, & Drakulich 2019:539)

Additionally, scholars Devair and Rhonda Jeffries (2017) address the issue of police brutality in their analysis using *"Marxist Materialism and Critical Race Theory"* frameworks to call codified culture into questioning the establishment of style as an act of assigning or opposing with regard to the proliferation of the dubious and reprehensible treatment of Black males by law enforcement. Jeffries and Jeffries states that,

> Materialists point out that conquering nations universally demonize their subjects to feel better

> about exploiting them...For materialists, understanding the ebb and flow of racial progress and retrenchment requires a critical look at conditions prevailing at different times in history. Circumstances change so that one group finds it possible to seize advantage or exploit another. (Jeffries and Jeffries 2017:3)

They also go on to propagate that racial categorization has and continues to permeate American culture, and Black men are the targeted subjects. It is indeed factual that the United States has steadily harbored discrimination against people of color throughout its history. This is currently demonstrated through instances of injustice, especially with the disproportionate number of police brutality cases against Black males in recent years.

Social scientist Marcelo Diversi (2016) also provides his perspective on this in relation to the historical connotations of the treatment of Black Americans in his research and critique of police brutality against unarmed Black men.

> We are living more than 400 years since the first slave ship landed on our Atlantic shores, more than 238 years since the Declaration of Independence proclaimed us free from the tyranny of a faraway King, more than 151 years since the Emancipation Proclamation, more than 149 years since the end of the American Civil War and the passage of the Thirteenth Amendment (and that we had to pass two more amendments to spell out Black people's rights to citizenship and voting after that), more than 50 years since the passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Yet, brutality against people of African ancestry continues to be justified by the American establishment. (Diversi 2016:247)

Diversi also goes on to assert that, "This is the logic of a hatred that is older than the birth of this country, a hatred that continues to make Black people fair game for police harassment, abuse of power, and perverse brutality. This is the logic of politically correct lynching" (Diversi 2016:248). In this case, *lynchings* are

what we see today in terms of Black men being brutally killed by law enforcement with no consequence.

POLICE-MINORITY COMMUNITY RELATIONSHIPS

Previous studies highlight the relation of police brutality with the existence of strained relationships between law enforcement and the Black communities in which they serve. According to an article written by Anthony A. Braga, Rod K. Brunson, and Kevin M. Drakulich (2019), in many destitute communities of color, deficient relationships between law enforcement and residents undermine effective policing. This, in turn, leads to inequitable practices and contemporary proactive policing strategies that are hostile and associated with racial disparities. This exemplification demonstrated the effect of ineffectual police-minority community relationships and the ways police-community members' interactions may differ in Black communities in contrast to non-Black communities. There is also official data to validate claims such as, "African Americans experience substantially more contact with police than do whites. African Americans are significantly more likely to be stopped, searched, frisked, and arrested by police than similarly situated whites" (Braga, et al. 2019:539).

One can surmise that there are indeed poor relations with the community and law enforcement, in which Black men have become targets of harassment and encounters with law enforcement without committing a crime. This was evident recently with *Derrick Cooper*, a resident and founder of the L.A. City Wildcats Youth Academy in Compton, who was wrongfully detained and humiliated in his home by LA County Sheriff's deputies after responding to an alleged attempted burglary call (DuBose, Fenoglio, and Wynter 2023) With poor community relations, there will also exist an erosion of trust and general disdain for police officers, thus, resulting in a higher propensity for overly aggressive police tactics being exerted by officers in everyday encounters with Black residents. We find a variety of situations like this exemplified in everyday media in which use of deadly force is quickly utilized in confrontations with regular civilians, as opposed to a more rational, humanistic approach. In specifically marginalized communities where there exist poor or

non-existent relationships between law enforcement and the community in which they are obliged to serve, we can expect high numbers of police brutality against Black Americans, as prior studies have suggested (Braga et al. 2019).

Additionally, authors Keon L. Gilbert, Rashawn Ray, W. Carson Byrd, Joseph Richardson, and Odis Johnson, Jr. (2019) affirm these notions when they assert in their article that,

> The world has received a front row seat to view the erosion of community trust in some police officers and their departments. This view has been provided by social media outlets and body cameras worn by police officers raising many questions about safety, police excessive use of force, crime in the US, and whose life matters more, blue, black, or all? (Gilbert, Ray, Byrd, and Johnson 2019:172)

Based on this knowledge, what seems plausible is that if law enforcement is stationed in cities where they are not liked or where they have no equity or community accord, they will have encounters with residents. We can expect hostile and confrontational behavior by the police which often leads to these community residents being brutalized or even killed. An exemplification of this is how the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) operates and patrols in areas of South and East Los Angeles. They utilize overly aggressive tactics in routine encounters with residents, including traffic stops and house raids in which, under then police chief Daryl F. Gates, utilized armored trucks with battering rams to enter the homes of alleged minority offenders (Lindsay and Martin 2017).

This is compared to law enforcement agencies in a city like Manhattan Beach, California that has an overwhelmingly White population and have no such practice within their city's department. Indeed, CRT posits that,

> Critical race theory not only dares to treat race as central to the law and policy of the United States, it dares to look beyond the popular belief that getting rid of racism means simply getting rid of ignorance, or encouraging everyone to get

> along...racism is part of the structure of legal institutions. (Delgado and Stefancic 2012:28).

MEDIA INFLUENCE

The role of popular media through television, radio, social media platforms, and other outlets was most influential in my findings and provided the most relevant context to date in terms of people's attitudes toward police brutality against Black men. Understanding the power of both media and cultural influences provided a more in-depth reasoning as to why people may arrive at some of their sentiments. Scholars *Devair and Rhonda Jeffries* divulges in their article the significance of this, stating that, "the basis on which technology acquires power over society is the power of those whose economic hold over society is greatest" (Jeffries and Jeffries 2017:4) In this way, people are presented ideals about influence and power on a regular basis through a number of forms. These types of technologies, including radio, television, and film, have seemingly diverse purposes. Media and its various platforms have the ability to influence people, for better or for worse.

This has always been the case for Black Americans. Jeffries and Jeffries (2017:5) states that,

> Society constructs the social world through a series of tacit agreements mediated by images, pictures, tales, blog postings, and other scripts. Much of what we believe is ridiculous, self-serving, or cruel but is not perceived to be so at the time. Attacking embedded preconceptions that marginalize others or conceal their humanity is a legitimate function of all fiction."

With this being the case, media technologies heavily influence the subjects that people should be concerned about, the ways in which they should be concerned about them and validate the everyday existence and continuation of the seemingly crazed status quo of the demonization of Black Americans. These scholars urge people to challenge the images and representations they are fed on a regular basis in which Black people are viewed negatively through various means and to not merely just accept them.

In consilience with the media influences of hip-hop, the point can be made that indeed hip-hop manifests itself in various media forms that contribute to the very stereotypes and negative attitudes creating the ideal atmosphere for police brutality, commencing with the "blaxploitation" movies of the 1970s, which employed the aggressive *Black Buck* stereotype -A figure regarded as "a brutal, animalistic, hypermasculine and threatening African American man" (Jeffries and Jeffries 2017:9). Note the keyword mentioned being *threatening* in the description of this *prototypical* Black man. This characterization brings the media's influence that the authors speak of; stereotypes as such that were fashioned in the early nineteenth century as a means to dissuade and overtly prevent miscegenation and were also used as a mechanism to make the Black man in this country a feared individual.

With this presumption of fear, one could be justifiably lynched by the White man well into the twentieth century if he transgressed any laws or appeared to pose any threat, real or perceived. This is a practice that continues and permeates our society today and confirms, in part, why police brutality against Black Americans persists. Without question, the media also plays its role in maintaining this propriety. There are not many days that will pass without local news or talk radio shows reporting of at least one Black male who has allegedly robbed, raped, or otherwise threatened the presumed purity of American society (Unnever 2014). Though, it should be acknowledged that we do now have heterogeneous examples of positive portrayals of African Americans in various media platforms, such as in the syndicated broadcasts of *The Cosby Show, A Different World, Family Matters, and The Parent 'Hood,* to name a few.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

For this analysis, I interrogated the question of intuition and included, *What factors contribute to negative attitudes towards police brutality against unarmed Black men?* The purpose of this thought has been to ascertain a general understanding of how many people feel when they hear of the many exemplifications of unarmed Black men being brutalized or executed by law enforcement officers across the country by use of state-sanctioned violence. I am also interested in the ways in

which race and how the application of CRT may further expound on this. If those aware of these senseless murders of Black men are not Black, how will this impact their attitudes on this delicate topic? Previous analysis and research on this topic focused on the underlying reasons for police brutality itself, and the way in which we have become desensitized to these occurrences. Police brutality has been justified many times over time, despite repeated evidence showing it unjustifiable.

In instances in which media depictions of African Americans are negative, degrading, and portray Black men in a violent, threatening manner, people generally will be more prone to accept the practice of police brutality, especially if the narrative has been manipulated by popular media and the message has been conveyed that the victim or perpetrator exhibited threatening behavior. Imagine one contemplating, "maybe he deserved it." Or "The news said that he was a convicted felon…so he had it coming." This was the case with police brutality victims *Rodney King* (Linder 2015) and most recently with Jacob Blake (O'Donnell 2020) in which their prior criminal convictions were used by various media outlets to demonize them, thus, giving a sense of consent for the enormities that they would suffer. Prior research and scholarship contend that, indeed, there exists a relationship between people's attitude towards police brutality against unarmed Black men and a multiplicity of factors including racism, and media influences.

With my thorough examination of police brutality against unarmed Black men, while also applying the CRT to this discourse of reviewed articles, literature, and information that was probed, it was fair to deduce that this inquiry has more complexity than one would originally contemplate. There is no straightforward or 'one size fits all' methodology to this issue. The historical, cultural, and social experiences of Black Americans in this nation are all of relevance when contextualizing this scholarship with its subsequent findings. In consonance with this, people's sentiments on this polarizing topic have variances, and as highlighted in earlier sections of this analysis, these variances can be wide-ranging and racially motivated. In this research, we first have the issue of police brutality in itself; and then come to an understanding of why people may feel about it in ways that

reinforce the status quo. Some individuals may or may not know someone that has been the victim of police brutality, may have friends or family members that are in law enforcement or could be the victim of police brutality themselves, which is the case with me. Then we couple that with the current trend of victimization of unarmed Black men, which introduces the role of race into this study. It is reasonable to assume that indeed White people, Black people, and other people of color view police brutality from different perspectives.

Previous research on this topic speaks to how and why police brutality occurs, specifically to African American males. There are even explanations presented as to why American society has grown to accept this. Most, if not all, of the available research on this topic alluded to the ills of racism, media influences, and the historical implications of what is taking place today. Since the formation of the race concept, African Americans have been and continue to be the victims of violence, in which this has evolved over time to what we witness presently with police brutality, in addition to the tragic and senseless killings of unarmed Black men. Not only does the prior research highlight the actuality of this, but it further brings due awareness to the countless number of Black men that have been executed by law enforcement across the nation. In this way, we can discern for ourselves the proper application of CRT to this phenomenon and the horrors of police brutality, in addition to the dangers presented by simply being a Black man in America. The killings that we see daily in news reports or read about in the daily newspaper of unarmed Black men by law enforcement are no different than the lynchings of years past; and the justifications of these murders with officers constantly being absolved of accountability continue to validate the claim that some lives mean less than others.

It is through research like this that I hope to continue to bring awareness to this injustice and also challenge society to look at their own implicit biases in how their own personal attitudes may be impacted in relation to police brutality against unarmed Black men. Future research would continue to bring awareness to the issue of police brutality against unarmed Black men and would be potentially the most relevant, amongst many other developing social issues, contribution to the field of sociology. Additionally,

further research could be modified to include other sociological theories and develop ways to measure people's attitudes according to age groups, political parties, geographical locations, and so on.

Other individuals interested in expanding this research could perform field studies that examine people's attitudes towards brutality by modifying the category of victims to being unarmed immigrants, homeless veterans, women, Latinx men, or gang members as examples. Furthermore, this information gathered through data collection and statistical analysis could be used to bring awareness to various diverse communities in Los Angeles in hopes of providing informed education and creating dialogue about ways in which we can build better working relationships and support our collective calls for social justice and racial equality. In this way, we can demystify the "divide and conquer" mentality that has permeated many of the formidable communities here in Los Angeles and alternatively stand in solidarity.

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Difference of Receipt of Gratitude: A Comparative Analysis of the Experiences of Vietnam and Operation Desert Storm Veterans

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INTRODUCTION

Scholarship has long understudied the veteran population in the United States in part because civilians generally lack the military exposure to adequately understand the lived experiences of veterans. Few studies analyze how the receipt of gratitude by the U.S. public is internalized by veterans, as well as the ways in which their experiences "returning home" depend on the war in which the veteran served. Namely, Vietnam veterans were ostracized upon returning to the U.S. civilian life they once knew so well. They lacked widespread social acceptance due to negative opinions regarding the Vietnam War. Reintegration into society became challenging and led to internalized schemas among veterans that their military participation was morally wrong. This contrasts with the social support attributed to Operation Desert Storm veterans. Operation Desert Storm (ODS) was a war in which American causalities were at an all-time low for the first time in U.S. war history (Hillen 1993). Civilians' opinions were less harmful and contributed to the veterans being welcomed back with relatively open arms, though gratitude also is subjective and can be perceived differently by individuals within each cohort.

Gratitude associated with military veterans has become normalized in the U.S. over time. We now have specific rituals and aestheticized scripts celebrating veterans and their services to the country that were not present during the Vietnam War. The political climate surrounding the Vietnam War made the context surrounding the receipt of gratitude different from that of an ODS participant. However, the existing literature does not sufficiently examine how the context of reception affects different cohorts of veterans receiving gratitude differently.

From a symbolic interactionist perspective, I seek to describe the subjectiveness of gratitude and how it differs when comparing veterans from two separate wars. Symbolic

interactionism claims that an individual's thought processes modify the interpretation of a symbol. In this case, Vietnam veterans' interpretation of receiving gratitude is unique due to their adverse experiences with stigma following the war. Symbolic interactionism further emphasizes that meaning arises from people's social interactions. The meaning of gratitude is thus perceived differently when comparing Vietnam veterans with ODS veterans. ODS veterans are positively associated with gratitude based on U.S. society's relative appreciation for their military endeavor. Contrarily, Vietnam veterans experienced hostility in society, which led to different interpretations of gratitude by veterans. Vietnam veterans perceive gratitude as a complex process. Therefore, they interlinked gratitude with their negative experiences with the war; thus, they assigned a different meaning of gratitude than ODS veterans who assigned a more positive meaning.

GRATITUDE AS A RITUAL

Gratitude can be interpreted as a state of being thankful or exhibiting appreciation. “Gratitude puts its benefactor into an emotion or state of consciousness resulting from both an awareness and appreciation of that which is valuable, meaningful, and fulfilling” (Bryan, Young, Lucas, and Quist 2018). In contemporary society, there are social mores regarding interacting with veterans, such as expressing our appreciation with “Thank you for your service.” Society has emphasized the rhetoric of viewing veterans as “heroes” and/or “victims.” For civilians, communicating gratitude is an expected ritual that attests to the “debt” civilians internalize regarding the veterans' service to ensure our safety and freedom (Robillard 2017). This “directed duty” overshines the individual's moral reasoning for introducing gratitude dialogue, perpetuating a lack of understanding of the veteran experience (Robillard 2017).

Robillard (2017) suggests that gratitude is subjective, and its value depends on what meaning is attributed to the population in the question of getting thanked. The two populations being studied clearly differ in how “Thank you for your service” has been conveyed due to varying levels of stigma associated with the Vietnam War and Operation Desert Storm. Gratitude can also be

perceived differently according to the individual receiving it. As such, when we introduce discourse comparing wars, we also acknowledge nuanced within-group experiences.

INTERNALIZATION OF GRATITUDE

Mcguire, Fogle, Tsai, Southwick, and Pietzak (2021) theorized that dispositional gratitude is directly linked to mental health. The authors felt that military veterans served as an "ideal population" due to their increased likelihood of having experienced various forms of trauma and psychological stress (Mcguire et al. 2021). Their findings support the hypothesis that receipt of gratitude is divergent depending on if the veteran is suffering from "psychiatric morbidities" (Mcguire et al. 2021).

The internalization of trauma also affects the veteran's perception of receiving gratitude. Kashdan Uswatte, Steger, and Julian (2006) address a link between self-esteem and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) experienced by military veterans. The instability of an individual's self-esteem can contribute to personal attachments to external environmental events and internally generated experiences (Kashdan et al. 2006). Suppose the interpretation of gratitude corresponds with the veteran's mental state. In that case, it is safe to assume that a Vietnam veteran would struggle immensely with receipt of gratitude compared to an ODS veteran.

Internalized gratitude can have positive impacts on veterans. Kashdan et al. (2006:1611) find that, "upon examining the benefits of gratitude, it becomes apparent that they counter the emotional and social dysfunctions reported by veteran trauma survivors…The experience of gratitude requires a mindful, present-moment awareness of positive things received, and the causal chain to specific benefactors. Gratitude promotes a desire to engage in altruistic behaviors toward others and feeling grateful on a given day has been shown to build positive social interactions and relationships, counter negative emotions, and lead to greater emotional well-being, less social comparisons with others, and greater frequency of healthy behaviors."

Straus et al. (2019) explain that veterans with higher levels of social connectedness had lower levels of PTSD and alcohol use disorder (AUD). This finding suggests that Vietnam

veterans likely suffer from higher mental health problems due to the prejudice they endured coming home. “Gratitude may be a key factor in buffering the effects of depression, in particular among those high in ambivalence over emotional expression, as gratitude allows one to reappraise burdensome situations in a better light” (Bryan, Young, Lucas, and Quist 2018). Gratitude was an avoided subject when associated with the Vietnam War.

DIFFERENCE OF TREATMENT

There has been an enormous paradigm shift in about how gratitude is delivered and expected to be expressed by civilians to veterans. Anti-war movements promoted throughout the U.S. spread the narrative that the war was morally wrong. Unfortunately, the soldiers became victims of the hostile political climate surrounding the Vietnam war. “Two other symbolic attitudes were more specifically related to the Vietnam War: attitudes toward ‘the military’ and toward ‘anti-war protesters’” (Brown and Sears 1978). The severe lack of support during reintegrating into society led many veterans to internalize their patriotism as shameful or wrong. “Rather, the more important determinants of attitudes toward the war were symbolic attitudes toward various political symbols associated with the war” (Brown and Sears 1978). Struggling with feelings of guilt, veterans began to feel alienated by society. The unwelcoming they endured catered to their already fragile mental state. “These participants spoke of being overwhelmed with societal betrayals, including hostile treatment and marginalization on homecoming…Being scapegoated for unpopular military and political decisions contributed to feelings of alienation and a growing sense of isolation in their social communities” (McCormack and Joseph 2014). The stigma associated with the war still affected civilian perspectives of veterans and justified the mistreatment and marginalization of Vietnam veterans. “In general, veterans suffered from a longstanding experience of social rejection, abandonment, and even betrayal following the war, including pervasive stigmatizations and perceived “weaknesses, and their own preferences for self-reliance over inattentive social and governmental institutions” (Desai, Harpaz-Rotem, and Rosenheck 2015:229).

The trauma the Vietnam veterans endured extended further than the war:

> First, much discussion on the effects of war has dealt simply with the tensions and problems produced by returning from the combat theater to a civilian society in which the war was not popular and in which veterans received little moral support for the sacrifices they had made for their country. (Laufer, Gallops, and Frey-Wouters 1984)

The ostracism and moral questioning directly contributed to the veterans' trauma worsening upon arrival home:

> It has been widely noted that the Vietnam War was new to the American experience in at least two important ways. First, Vietnam was not primarily a war of confrontation, but a war of infiltration - a guerrilla war. It was not a war of fronts, but one in which the enemy was fluid, mobile, and, it often seemed, ubiquitous. Second, the scope and intensity of guerrilla activity placed the noncombatant status of all civilians in question. (Laufer, Gallops, and Frey-Wouters 1984).

Laufer et al. (1984) highlight the conspicuous elements of the Vietnam War experience; this improves the development of a reframed perspective of how a veteran is affected by their particular war.

This process has allowed for a new generation of veterans to be celebrated. “After returning to the United States, Vietnam Veterans felt unwelcome joining the Veterans of Foreign Wars and the American Legion. That is how the Veterans of America got its start” (Anthony 2015). Modern society is still developing a deeper understanding of the wrongs committed against Vietnam veterans, which led to mistreatment and lack of gratitude:

> The earlier war/post-war portion of their experience was characterized by feeling unwelcomed when returning home, difficulty connecting with others, thwarted attempts to start a fulfilling post-service life, and finding

> themselves having to deal with life on their own in the face of inattentive others or unresponsive social institutions. (Desai et al. 2015)

These veterans came home reflecting on their war experiences and began to internalize the preconceived notions that civilians had associated with them. These actions have ultimately contributed to the already impacting variables experienced by these veterans:

> In many cases, Vietnam veterans felt ostracized and stigmatized. Their social world became constricted, and they felt they could not trust or open up to others, profoundly exacerbating the already enormous challenge of being able to build a new life and reintegrate into social relationships. (Desai et al. 2015)

The lack of support for these troops changed how gratitude is received later in life. Rosenthal (1975:89) states, "Furthermore, recent reports indicate that Vietnam-stationed veterans are suffering delayed rage and guilt reactions after their return to civilian life." Vietnam veterans are starting to unravel many emotions now that frameworks regarding soldiers' participation in war have been reframed. This has affected their internalization of gratitude, seeing as veterans are now "allowed" to feel everything they were once forced to suppress (Rosenthal 1975).

PARADIGM SHIFT OF RECEIVING GRATITUDE

During this new era, perceptions of war in society had been altered. The unfavorable ideas once affiliated with war and soldiers began to subside. Civilians developed a better understanding of the functions and societal benefits of a soldier. The military's positive associations enticed individuals, and being a veteran became a position of admiration and pride. Griffith et al. (1993) suggest, "What needs further examination, however, is (a) how experiencing the military meets the expectations of the enlistee for military service and (b) how experiencing the military should be represented..." That is not to say that this population of veterans endured trauma on multiple fronts. "In addition to individual difference factors, the impact of trauma is influenced by the nature and severity of stressful experiences and the unique

characteristics of adverse circumstances" (Sukter, Uddo, Brailey, and Allain 1993). ODS veterans were met with support and newfound knowledge of veterans' experiences while at war.

> Research efforts to discover the origins of negative sequelae to traumatic events and to identify population subsets who may be at greatest risk for negative impact, or conversely, resilient to adverse psychological residuals, are of crucial significance for increasing stress resistance and stress recovery among military recruits and people more generally. (Sukter, Uddo, Brailey, and Allain 1993)

With the knowledge that positivity contributed to better mental health for veterans, civilians began to understand their responsibility for expressing gratitude. It was easier for civilians to positively associate with the ODS veterans because of the overall outcome of the war versus Vietnam's aftermath:

> Once the use of force was initiated, it was used to gain an overwhelming advantage, one so overpowering that it allowed us to sustain the lightest casualty rate in the history of warfare. The architects of Desert Storm had no desire for protracted war. (Hillen 1993)

The historically low casualties and positive outcome of the ODS made the transition to civilian life more manageable. Additional comparisons were made to the outcomes of the Vietnam war. "Like the Korea stalemate before it, the Vietnam War revealed the tragic limitations of a strategy of limited war with no definitive objectives" (Hillen 1993). The blame was put on the soldiers for doing their jobs, while the government that ordered the attack was conveniently left out of the discussion. "A conscious decision was made to fight a war of attrition as opposed to a war of annihilation. The result was a costly and largely wasted effort that left a heavy burden on the professional military" (Hillen 1993). The soldiers were the scapegoats; this influenced the negative perceptions and unwelcoming. ODS veterans thus had organization and support from the people.

The newfound support for the troops triggered Vietnam veterans. They found it upsetting to witness a new generation of

soldiers be praised for fulfilling their duties when they had experienced only harassment:

> Operation Desert Storm brought memories of Vietnam abruptly into the consciousness of the Vietnam veteran. The American people were concerned that the war be definitively won, the objectives be clear, and the troops be taken care of and then welcomed back at the conclusion of the war. These elements were missing in Vietnam. (Vellenga and Christenson 1995)

Vietnam veterans struggle to understand the ostracism they endured due to the opinions of the war and how that has shifted significantly to public demonstrations of gratitude now enacted towards veterans. “This process of making the connection between the war and their life struggles engendered anger and resentment, for instance, at not being given the same support that the veterans returning from current wars are receiving” (Desai et al. 2015). The domestic controversy surrounding the war and the lack of support for soldiers returning home was something only Vietnam veterans experienced. (Vellenga and Christenson 1995).

The shame that the Vietnam veterans internalized was not something that widely occurred for the ODS veterans:

> A sense of shame was understood by these veterans in two very different ways... The second type related to being a part of such an unpopular endeavor and the response of the American public to the war. They alienated themselves so as not to be singled out as 'baby killers or one of those Vietnam bums,' as one veteran put it (Vellenga and Christenson 1995:8).

The difference in receipt of gratitude reflects the change of perspective regarding soldiers:

> Because the Vietnam War was perceived so negatively by most people, an inevitable result for these veterans was an unavoidable isolation. The experience was too critical to shut out, and too unpopular to share, so a natural consequence for these subjects was to isolate themselves (Vellenga and Christenson 1995)

If Vietnam veterans are affected by higher rates of self-isolation and shame, we can assume their internalization of "Thank you for your service" to be different from that of an ODS veterans.

Existing literature acknowledges that gratitude is beneficial for veterans and their self-esteem. What the literature lacks is a lens comparing two different wars and taking into consideration how society has played a role in the internalized schemas of two separate veteran populations. One population of veterans experienced positivity and support, while the other experienced negativity and a sense of othering. With this in mind, we must address that gratitude is perceived differently due to each unique situation. In this study, I seek to fill the void in the literature and theorize the connections between treatment received and how that has contributed to the difference in their receipt of gratitude.

Through analyzing veterans' experiences returning home, I answer the question: How do veterans' experiences of receiving gratitude differ by the type of war in which they served? Through the utilization of symbolic interactionism, I examine how the process of the receipt of gratitude is different depending on the meaning ascribed by the individual receiving it. When veterans have had negative interactions in society due to their military participation in a specific war, their perception of gratitude is altered. Further, when analyzing a separate population who has had positive social interactions and appreciates gratitude, we see that becomes a trigger to the population with uncomfortableness with gratitude. Newly implemented rituals displaying gratitude by civilians to veterans in contemporary society have led to unique perceptions and experiences of gratitude for an older military generation who feels unacknowledged. These new practices marginalize these populations further because gratitude comes after the trauma has been internalized. Thus, gratitude is interpreted differently among Vietnam and ODS veterans.

Through my data collection, I have identified specific trends and recurring themes emerging from the interviews I conducted. I have analyzed previous research and found similarities. Newer generations of veterans have compared themselves and their experiences to veterans from the Vietnam era. They have suggested that their experiences participating in the civilian world were more manageable due to less stigma

associated with their generational cohort. Vietnam veterans were ostracized, and their trauma extended beyond the barriers of combat. Their traumas worsened upon their arrival "home." This has led me to believe that receiving, "Thank you for your service" is internalized differently. How is receiving gratitude interpreted differently depending on the war in which it was served? Is there a difference? Does the stigma of the war have anything to do with this different interpretation?

METHODS

I approach this research study based on the question: How do war veterans' experiences of receiving gratitude differ by the type of war in which they served? I examine how gratitude is interpreted differently and how social interactions have contributed to differing interpretations. In the current study, I have conducted semi-structured interviews with four self-identified U.S. veterans who were actively involved in combat either in ODS or the Vietnam War. One participant self-identified as a Vietnam war veteran, two self-identified as ODS veterans, and one participant participated in both wars. I developed an interview guide to steer myself through the interviews and ensure I was collecting all the necessary information for analysis. The interviews were semi-structured and I did not follow the same sequence of questioning for all participants, allowing the interviews to be as organic as possible. The interview guide emphasized the concepts of disclosure, stigma, and gratitude. The questions regarding disclosure were used to measure the differences in experiences with civilians. The questions asked about stigma allowed me, as the researcher, to contextualize whether some veterans are affected by societal stigmas at higher rates than other veterans. These led to questions about gratitude, the focus of my study.

I utilized a convenience sampling methodology by advertising this research project in Los Angeles area Elks Lodges with high populations of veterans. Members tend to be active participants at the Department of Veteran Affairs. I gained access by leveraging my own Elks membership. I used a gatekeeper to increase veterans' trust and participation, making them more accessible. This ensures my ability to expand my research. If participants

perceive me as an ally and trusted friend, they will be more willing to discuss their experiences. At multiple lodges, I announced that I am looking to recruit participants who identify as either a Vietnam or ODS veteran. I briefly described my project, as the comprehension of my project critical to potential participants. I intend for participants to understand the meaning of the project to develop trust that their stories and perspectives will be heard and acknowledged.

To increase validity, I utilized an audit trail by keeping record of all my data collected. I opted for this method due to the sensitive nature of the topic and to ensure that participant messages were accurately communicated. As a researcher, this takes a lot of trial and error, including revisiting the raw data to make accurate comparisons. The second method I used to increase validity is member checking. I wanted participants to know that my intention is not to speak for them, but with them. Member checking allows participants to actively participate in the research process and provide feedback.

The strengths of my methodology lie in the semi-structured interview process giving veterans the opportunity to narrate attitudes about receiving gratitude and what they experienced to have this perspective. The interview style allows for rich discussions and data. Member checking also validates the participant's depiction of their experiences and allows me to collect more data from their reflection. As I adjust research and analysis as trends organically emerge, the use of audit trails ensures no outstanding details go unnoticed.

FINDINGS

Respondents were asked directly whether they chose to disclose their veteran status to others. This question was followed up with probing questions addressing why they feel inclined or deterred from disclosing their veteran status to others. Sage, an ODS veteran stated:

> Normally I don't, unless they ask or unless, ughh, normally no. Between military people who are buddies, they talk and sometimes the story gets a little bigger and bigger especially after a couple of beers, but normally no. You know, the ones

> who, who really, you know most people are quiet about it, the ones who brag about it really didn't do anything.

Sage is reflecting on his reluctance to disclose to civilians, expressing that he is more comfortable disclosing to other veterans. He goes on to share that there is a lack of understanding by civilians regarding military exposure and experience.

Participants were then asked to examine if there was a conscious awareness of stigma attributed to those with military status. This was followed by asking the respondents to reflect on the possibility of their ever having felt stigmatized due to their military experience. I probed further and asked participants if specific military populations were more stigmatized than others. Most veterans shared that specific groups of veterans have been more stigmatized than others. Sage stated, "Vietnam war it was the nastiest war, it was the longest war…they called it the first televised war…a lot of [Vietnam veterans] still feel stigmatized from going over there." As an ODS veteran, he was very mindful of how other generations of veterans before him experienced massive social stigmatization. Civilian perception of veterans was a trend that emerged organically. Respondents spoke of how perceptions of specific groups of veterans are vastly different depending on the war served. Perception emphasizes the individual experiences of possible ostracization or acceptance by society. It also highlights the symbolic interactionism framework where individuals ascribe meaning to certain things depending on their social interactions. Marty, a veteran of both wars expressed:

> Anybody that came back veterans that were in the late 60's early 70's all experienced the same thing. Everybody's got the same type of atmosphere, organizations like the VFW didn't want Vietnam veterans in as part of their organization because we weren't as good as they were, cuz we weren't in a war, we were in a conflict. So, that's the, the assumption that people make. That we weren't in a war. …I still won't join the VFW even now. Because they said, we don't need you Vietnam veterans, now they do need Vietnam veterans. We're the Vietnam

> veterans are the old guys, it's the same thing with Iraq and Afghanistan, so it kind of goes in a circle. It's a little bit different it took a lot of time, but I'm around it all the time.

Treatment was another key finding that surfaced organically. While analyzing the "stigma" section, I decided to differentiate treatment in hopes of highlighting that every generation of military men are treated differently. Respondents spoke of their experiences of how they are perceived and how it is different depending on the war in which they served. Even resources made available to them after their service are different Sage conveys:

> I believe yes, I would say so. You know right now the thing to do is when you see them, you know say, 'Welcome home', that's the main thing that most of them never got to hear was 'Welcome home', they never, I mean never got that. They got everything but that. All they wanted to hear was, 'Hey, welcome home', that and 'Thank you for your service'. And they're content with that, that's what they never got, a formal welcome home. They brought them back and kicked them off the bus and so you know, whenever I see them, I say, 'welcome home.'

Formal recognition of service was not allocated equally. I was interested in this particular response and wondered if the participant who served more than one war felt similarly or had corresponding experiences. Mick was asked to reflect upon his experiences arriving home. Mick shared:

> It sucked. Flew out of a[n]Airspace base out of the Phillipines…the terminal at LAX was blocked, and it was blocked by people. My girlfriend, this is back when your girlfriend was allowed to pick you up at the airport. I saw her, and I had to physically push people out of my way to get to her.

Gratitude is the center of the research study. Within the context of the interviews, I highlight that gratitude is subjective. I ask participants to discuss why that is. Their experiences with

arriving home are different when compared. These positive or negative experiences gratitude look and feel different depending on the individual. With gratitude being reframed from generation to generation, scripts have been composed about implementing gratitude and making veterans feel appreciated. For Vietnam veterans, they say it is too little, too late. Marty shares:

> All the veterans appreciate each other. Like the 29th of March is Vietnam day, you know Vietnam war day. So, it's a recognition of you get kind of recognized but not, cuz, it's over now. So, they were trying to do a drive by at the VA hospital, to be a drive by is like going to the hamburger stand, getting a hamburger, and going home. So, I told them thank you, but no thank you type of situation. I live three miles away from the VA hospital and I wouldn't even go.

Marty implies that gratitude was not given equally to each generation of veterans. Stigmas surrounding the Vietnam conflict overrode the need for gratitude to be given.

DISCUSSION

Gratitude is a subjective emotion that can be interpreted differently depending on who receives it. When comparing the experiences of veterans from the Vietnam conflict and Operation Desert Storm , we must realize that they are qualitatively different. The present literature does not examine how veterans' individual experiences of being welcomed or not welcomed have influenced how they receive recognition. Utilizing a symbolic interactionist framework, I describe the subjectiveness of appreciation and how it differs when comparing soldiers from different conflicts. I highlight personal narratives and experiences to display their altered perceptions of gratitude.

When comparing both populations of veterans, I find that their interactions with civilians were different. ODS veterans' interactions were positive while Vietnam veterans still face echoes of stigmatization due to their participation in an unfavorable war. Through the symbolic interactionist framework, I reflect on these differences and how the meaning of gratitude has become subjective. ODS veterans appreciate gratitude, while Vietnam

veterans face a complex relationship with gratitude. Further, the rituals of gratitude expressed by civilians has unintentionally contributed to the marginalization of one group of veterans in comparison to the other. Having only two comparison groups produces ungeneralizable data.

In future research, I could conduct a survey of veterans from a randomized or representative sample, which would permit me to make generalizations. I could also analyze additional wars, including Korea, Iraq, Afghanistan to expand the sample.

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"Now What?": *Drowning in the American Dream* Mural

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Talavera-Ballón working on the mural. Photo credit: Dr. Gabriela Fried.

"Drowning in the American Dream" is a mural produced at Cal State LA, painted by Claudio Talavera-Ballón, a Peruvian artist based in the Bay Area, depicting the challenges of migrant border crossings. The project originated in a collaboration between faculty and students of the Latin American Studies Student association (LASS) and the artist, with the Dreamer Center and the Cross-Cultural Center, and co-sponsored by the Sociology Department, the College of Natural and Social Sciences (NSS), the College of Ethnic Studies, the Ethnic Studies Student Group (ESSG) and the University Library, hosted by the Special Collections and Archives Division. The mural project culminated in an inauguration event at the John F. Kennedy Memorial Library at Cal State LA in the Fall of 2022.

The purpose of the project is to instill pride and raise awareness of migrant rights. Dr. Gabriela Fried, the head of the

project and professor in the Latin American Studies Program and the Sociology Department, plans to circulate the mural to different university locations. She also looks forward to having more collaborative efforts between students, faculty, university organizations, and the community. Dr. Fried also envisions future murals covering blank walls at the university bringing "more color to the campus" (Ivie 2022). The mural belongs to the office of Latin American Studies and is currently on display in the JFK Memorial Library.

Many of Talavera-Ballón's pieces capture the experiences of migrants (Ivie 2022). "Drowning in the American Dream" brings to light important stories experienced by migrants crossing our border. It depicts migrant families crossing rivers and deserts to greener pastures. The artist illustrates border patrol on horseback, representing the hardships that migrants face against those in power. The mural also displays students in graduation attire, concluding a story of achievement for the children of immigrants. Butterflies scatter the mural, a symbol reflecting migrants traveling to safer homes.

The author Hiroshi Motomura (2007) argues in his book, *Americans in Waiting*, that immigrants wait in limbo for their opportunity to gain legal status while acting as full members of American society. Motomura's ideas and Talavera-Ballón's work reflect the lives of Dreamers and other immigrant students from different parts of the world here at Cal State LA.

In the center of the mural, a student depicted in graduation attire holds a sign that asks, "NOW WHAT?" Cal State LA, home to both this journal and the mural, serves many students who are immigrants themselves or belong to immigrant families. Immigrant students here at Cal State LA enroll in the United States education system, where they experience the culture, learn the language, and achieve all that is expected of them. These students may consider themselves Americans, but their legal status does not reflect that. After enduring migration, growing up in the United States education system, and living in the constant stalemate of migrant legality, it is understandable for this student to ask, "NOW WHAT?" While there are many opportunities ahead of them, they may be limited due to their legal status.

"Drowning in the American Dream" as photographed in the JFK Library at Cal State LA. Photo credit: Victor Mojica.

If you find yourself asking the question "now what?", you are not alone. If you are a Cal State LA student seeking help, visit the Dreamer's Resource Center, where they can connect you with CARECEN for legal services. If you want to learn more about migrant issues and how to support the community, visit the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Services.

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Social Constructs Creatively Deconstructed: A Collection of Six Poems

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Author's Acknowledgement: Dr. Lisa Montagne Galloway holds the honor of being the mentor who patiently encouraged Taryn into pursuing and attending higher education, correctly guessing that Taryn would thrive in academia.

Cost of Living

My currency
Is energy
Charged by the second

My peace of mind
A piece not mine
Claimed by every fear

My balance is overdrawn
Ideals of saving-up forgone
Checks constantly voided

My daily wage lump sum
Of living income
Comes in with no proper credit

The Masquerade of the Perfection Parade

Paint up your faces and hide any traces
of imperfection while you join in the races
as we go through our paces-
This festival façade is our lifetime legacy

Where individuality is hidden
Creativity, forbidden
and all manner of originality is driven
to seclusion in the illusion
that perfection is the only presentation
acceptable to make a friendly connection

Mistakes will only lead others to say,
"My goodness, what weakness they betray-
too risky and messy,
too childish to relay any sense of dignity and propriety
so we piously look down our nose at any who suppose
their misdeeds are forgivable and not taken personal
as we lead the masses
to flawless performance to all who glance our way."

So then fear keeps us in line,
convincing others that we're fine
behind our masks
tired eyes the only sign
of our weariness doing time
in hopes this fulfills our deepest wishes and longing
to one day be thrown a rope and be pulled into freedom
safely away from this chaos and madness
to throw off crippling sadness
and be shown genuine kindness
that will clear away blindness
our masks have led us in

But the only rope we've been given
binds us together in this prison
of going through the motion
to deceive each other in the notion
that we are spotless
and therefore-
please love us.

Pretty|Ugly (The Beast of Beauty)

We've been taught to value patterns over people
The carefully fabricated versus the naturally featured
Smoothed out, glossed over, dolled up
Youthful faces prematurely aged and grayed
By the heavy expectations applied
Around eyes, tweezed brows, hollowed cheeks
Died hair, plumped lips, turned up noses
Senses told to stop the function of design
Composed behind plastered smiles reflected in
Mirrors entreating to have a seamless surface
Of contoured features concealing a raging inner turmoil

The fountain of youth proves a siren's song
Luring us to a superficial sound
Drowning us in deep dissonance
Evened out, painted over, propped up
Exclusive is just a term to sell more magazines
Not caring about the individual but the
Masses
Size is subject to scrutiny where anyone can weigh in
But the one on the scale

Silence is fool's gold, glittering in hollow glory
Distracting from the internal distinction
Screaming for attention
But fearing it as well
Wondering what will be the tipping point
Of authentic acceptance
If everything is stripped away
And all that remains is plain as day
Clearly seen
Will the blunt edges be received with the truest intentions?

Can vulnerability pull down walls of resistance
Built from every stone cast in fear
From an endless war on genuine integrity
Because a whole and undivided force can't be reckoned with
And control can't be cast out from the power hungry
Indulging on every defenseless innocent
A famine of fresh focus
Perfection is the only permissible presentation

School of Love

Social Studies said we were the perfect match
Then things changed and we found ourselves detached

Math has never been my strong suit
Why can't we make the figures compute?

They say relationships are a Science
Though they never detail the alliance

Our Chemistry devolved in volatility
Pressure, vaporizing equilibrium to futility

We started to Artfully combine palettes
But somewhere along the lines, we no longer synced talents

English was our main communication
Until we lost our common foundation

A Physical Education filled in the gaps
Preventing us from realizing our lapse

We sought solace in Literature's plots
Avoiding all the second thoughts

Drama consumed our after hours
Where barbs were thrown instead of flowers

The pathways we traveled drifted away
Geography now dictates our choices each day

History is what the *Texts* book us as
Those daily "hi"s, "goodbye"s, now stuck in the past

So here I'm left, Creatively Writing out my soul
An Essay on the effect of the emotional toll

Invested

Taking stock
Of what I value
Energy spent
As time went

Bye
The arrow
Up and down
Like a rollercoaster
Track
Cycling round and round
There is nothing new
Under the sun
But still it's how we
Keep
Count of our days
Averaging the data
Tallying the points
Finding purpose
And meaning in the numbers
Suggestions
Of how the world really works
How we echo each other
Looking to each other for
Directions
Reliving the past
Forgetting the present
The future trapped in
Projections
Spending moments
In hopes of a larger payout
Playing the market
In turn for the chance to
Profit
Audit our intentions
Our perceptions
My perspective
What's worth it
Am I doing this
Right
Risky business
More manageable
When the odds
Are bet on
Myself

The Great Deception

One imagines at some point
The idea of putting a price
On everything would make it
All fair
And lower the odds
Of deals going sideways
Making a marker of honesty
To compare
That everyone had equal
Opportunity to access
Labor and goods
To share
Instead humans Capitalized on value
Now being externally monetary
Instead of intrinsically held
And yet
What was lost was the care for each other
In community and consideration
Only owing kindness & goodwill
No debt
Being held over each other through
Greedy lusts of power
And obsession with hoarding
The net
Sum of all things desirable
Manufacturing scarcity of resources
Just to be in ultimate control
Bah Humbug
To the scrooges who haven't
Met the ghosts of those
Whose lives they've impacted for worse
So smug
In not having a bone of generosity
To give, live and let live freely
Instead willfully indenturing and enslaving
An amount
So largely oppressed and mistreated
By this perpetual patriarchy
Not a nurturing nature to be saved but held
To account

Sociological importance for chosen pieces:

I have been writing poetry and prose for over 20 years. Growing up, I was always on the outside looking in - having been homeschooled through all of grade school - which I have discovered works very well for the sociological imagination. As I came into adulthood and started branching out in the world, my writing reflected those changes and growth through more serious themes full of questioning. Now that I have been studying sociology for several years, I see so many sociological observations and imagination interwoven throughout my pieces. These selected pieces span the last decade.

Cost of Living explores working a minimum wage job under the burden of capitalism, while experiencing alienation from oneself due to division of labor.

The Masquerade of the Perfection Parade woke me up from a dead sleep, begging to be written. This piece investigates why humans conform to the same societal norms when they obscure individual authenticity. *Masquerade* further investigates imposter syndrome, fear of being found out to not measure up through never ending performance, while people are often hiding behind masks to fit cultural expectations.

Pretty|Ugly (The Beast of Beauty) covers a cross section of cultural norms and capitalistic messaging. Marketing and social media present idealized images of the perfect, happy life to sell more products while typically leaving the buyer feeling empty and wanting more.

School of Love studies romantic interpersonal relationships within the framing of school subjects or academic fields as an attempt at a whimsical yet poignant look at how im/maturity and societal expectations impact intimate relationships.

The Great Deception and *Invested* were both written in 2020, the former around the beginning of the COVID-19 lockdown and the latter at the end of that tumultuous year. *Invested* was inspired by the thought "What if I was investing in MYSELF?"; another exploration of alienation and trying to reconnect with one's own authenticity. *Deception* exposes a capitalistic mentality that over-values money instead of camaraderie.

How The Devil Influenced Rock and Metal

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INTRODUCTION

If folktales are to be believed, the Devil seems to have quite the interest in music. From the satanic imagery in metal, the legendary fiddle duel in "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," to the legend of Robert Johnson selling his soul to the Devil at a crossroads. It would appear that the Prince of Darkness likes a good tune as much as you and I. He has been present every step of the way in popular music throughout the last century. The relationship between the Devil and music goes back centuries, but this paper begins in the Delta with Tommy Johnson and Robert Johnson (no relation) and how they both made deals with the Devil, continues with an analysis of how the Devil influenced rock and metal as we know today, and concludes with an examination of how Satan remains as the most powerful symbol of absolute rebellion in music today.

Erving Goffman and Emilie Durkheim were sociologists who each had concepts relating to society and how society viewed those concepts and theories of stigma, symbols, ritual, and sacred. Stigma is behavior, attributes, or reputation viewed as socially discrediting. Basically, stereotyping and negative connotations associated with the thing being stigmatized and in this case it's Rock and Metal. Symbols, ritual, and sacred are religious concepts by Emile Durkheim which all represent sacredness in a way because they are deemed as so by how society views them. Rituals and symbols are things that are viewed as highly respected and commonly practiced forms of devotion but if we flip it to our point of view you can see Rock and Metal as forms of rituals and it too has symbols of devotion too. Sacred is something deemed as such because society and individuals in society deem it as so. Now as these concepts are treated as sacred by how individuals and society views them, we can also use these concepts as a way to destigmatize how Rock and Metal are viewed as "Devil's music" and how they are misrepresented and how they're seen through a different sociological lens. With the help of these concepts. But

first we have to dive into how this stigma got started and the person that is commonly associated with the "Devil's music".

HISTORY OF THE DEVIL IN JOHNSONS' MUSIC

Before we dive into Robert Johnson, we must first have a little backstory that led up to him at the crossroads and another blues player before him. Tommy Johnson was a blues player from 1914-1956 who recorded in the late 1920s who came before Robert and was so good on the guitar that he was instrumental in creating the Delta blues sound along with its accompanying mythology. According to the legend, Johnson's older brother, LeDell, claimed that at one point his brother had sold his soul to the Devil:

> He returned two years later an accomplished performer, which, according to LeDell, Johnson attributed to a meeting with a mysterious figure at a crossroads. The story involved Johnson handing over his guitar to a large black man who tuned it for him. (Mississippi Blues Commission 2022)

Johnson's stage presence was one of curiosity that led credence to this idea. He showboated on stage like a man overcome by something supernatural. He played his guitar behind his head, between his legs, and using a falsetto voice unmistakable to contemporary blues fans and which can be heard in the tune "Big Road Blues." Tommy even eventually took up the mantle that he did indeed sell his soul to the Devil.

Tommy Johnson's legend would soon be overshadowed by Robert Johnson. The infamous story of Robert Johnson begins around 1929 with meeting bluesman Son House and Willie Brown in Robinsonville, Mississippi where they had settled and played the local area. Johnson would accompany them and play with them around the local spots, on some occasions after a gig, Brown, House and another accompaniment named Patton would all belittle Johnson and his embarrassing lack of guitar skills. Son House said of Robert, "Such another racket you never heard! lt'd make people mad, you know. They'd come out and say 'Why don't y'all go in there and get that guitar from that boy?" (Compagna 2000). Shortly after crossing paths, Robert left for

Martinsville, Mississippi; two years later, Robert returned to Robinsonville where his ability to play now blew both locally based notable bluesmen Son House and Willie Brown away. By the time Robert Johnson became known in the mainstream, his myth and legend had already had decades to grow and warp. When Tommy Johnson told his tale and when Robert Johnson sang about the crossroads, neither of them could have possibly known the huge changes they were about to bring on, because the crossroads and the Delta blues that they helped to create were not the final destination. Instead, they're a key landmark in the incredible journey that brought on rock and roll and metal. In doing so, they changed the world forever.

ROBERT JOHNSON'S INFLUENCE IN ROCK

Robert Johnson is seen by many today as the grandfather of rock and roll. That comes not only from how he played but also from his mythology. It is foundationally why rock has been labeled as "Devil's music." Many musicians who followed in Johnson's footsteps have since played with occult imagery, including The Rolling Stones, who were influenced by Robert Johnson, Muddy Waters, and other famous bluesmen. In the book *Me and the Devil Blues*, J.D. Wells connects Johnson and the Stones, stating that:

> The influence of Robert Johnson is particularly evident in terms of individual values and themes. Johnson's songs, like the Rolling Stones, are rooted in honesty and social realism which uncovers an often brutal account of the world through the expressive characteristics of the human voice. (Wells 1983: 17)

In other words, Johnson sang about what was around him, and what others were going through during the Great Depression. The Rolling Stones and other popular rock bands of the 60s and 70s reflect a consonant attunement to social observation and critique.

Robert Johnson influenced early rock and roll musicians through his musical talent and qualities, lyrics, and legend. Adam Compagna (2000) argues that:

> According to black folk culture, Johnson had a number of traits that might have been seen as

> demonic: he had a cataract in one eye; he often played with his back turned to other musicians, causing people to believe he had something to hide; and he favored unusual guitar tunings.

Even in his music there is Devil imagery. In "Hellhound on My Trail," Johnson sings that he became a traveling vagabond in the middle of a run-in with the Devil and that hellhounds are following him. You can also see it as the middle of a song trilogy and his legend coming to an end. "Cross Road Blues" is the beginning of his tale and where he sold his soul, "Hellhound on My Trail" in the middle where he has run-in with the devil, and then the trilogy ends with "Me and the Devil Blues" in which the opening lyrics are Johnson opening his door to see the Devil standing there and Johnson replying, "Hello Satan, I believe it's time to go." A year later, after he had recorded "Me and The Devil Blues" on June 19, 1937, on August 16, 1938, the Devil came for his part of the deal and took Johnson's soul. He was poisoned by a jealous husband and died at 27 years old.

'DEVIL MUSIC' AND STIGMA

Erving Goffman was a Canadian-born sociologist, social psychologist, and writer, considered by some the most influential American sociologist of the twentieth century. His theory about stigma applies to how others view rock and metal as "Devil's music." Stigma is defined as signs that expose something about a person. During the 1950s, when rock and roll was becoming popular, parents could have a visual on how they could distinguish kids who were listeners of the "Devil's music." They could tell by rock and roll lovers' appearance, leather jackets, Levi's, and boots compared to the more conservative kids. That appearance of the leather jacket and boots was and still is by some the official uniform of rock and roll, punk, and metal. This was a uniform that both distinguished and stigmatized them. Goffman said that "A stigmatized person is 'blemished' and is 'disqualified from full social acceptance.'" Scared parents during this era believed that if their kids liked this music, they might also emulate deviant acts of the musicians they idolized.

According to Goffman's Stigma (1963), "most people experience the role of being stigmatized …at least in some

connections and in some phases of life." At first, those who loved rock and roll were treated as a “blemish” and this disqualified them from social belonging in line with societal norms. However, the strongly stigmatized often holds the "blemish" as a badge of honor, showing others that: yes, I am what I am, and there is nothing you can do about it. That type of resistance emerged in rock and roll lovers in the 50s and continues to be sort of a battle cry of musical rebels today. A great example of this was when John Lennon of The Beatles remarked that they were bigger and more popular than Jesus Christ. This sparked a ton of controversy about the real “message” of the music. The Beatles were stigmatized by conservative segments of society for a while but it never actually stopped their popularity.

‘DEVIL MUSIC’ AS SACRED RESISTANCE

Emile Durkheim was a French sociologist and was the first academic sociologist. He formally established the academic discipline of Sociology along with Karl Marx and Max Weber, who are commonly cited as the principal architects of modern social science. According to Durkheim, the sacred is defined as the extraordinary, that which is set apart from and “above and beyond” the everyday world. In other words, anything can be deemed sacred if socially defined as such. People who mark blues, rock, and metal as sacred see those genres as such specifically because they have formed communities around the act of marking the art as sacred (Sociology Guide 2023). When rock and roll and metal were labeled “Devil’s music,” it did not deter listeners of the music. It, in fact, did quite the opposite. It brought more and more and more listeners to those genres and made them even more popular.

An excellent example of the concept of sacred put into practice was in the 1980s when Tipper Gore and the Parents Music Resource Center (PMRC) went after heavy metal bands and their songs deemed in their eyes as the “filthy fifteen,” which included Twisted Sister’s “We’re Not GonnaTake It”, Black Sabbath’s “Trashed”, and Venom “Possessed” to just name a few. The goal was to make children not listen to them since they purportedly promote violence and occultic activity. Well, like that saying goes, tell someone “no don’t do that,” and they’ll do it anyway. This has

been called the forbidden fruit effect (Binder, Matthes, Naderer 2020). That parental advisory sticker did the opposite and caused new listeners to go and listen to these songs from these bands and any other album that dawned that sticker (“Tipper Sticker”). Labeling the music "explicit" made the regular listeners and fans that much more adamant and determined never to abandon their beloved genre.

ROCK AND METAL AS RITUAL

Durkheim’s concept of ritual is defined as a highly routinized act (e.g. taking communion, praying towards Mecca or Jerusalem, and so forth). You could say that listening to rock and roll and metal is a ritualistic form for devotees. They listen to it religiously because they love the bands, like how Catholics take the host every time at Mass because they love Jesus Christ. People attend mass or Sunday Service for social support and to rejoice in God’s love. When I asked my friend why he loves rock and metal, this is what he had to say, “Being at metal shows and rock shows breaks down all barriers and allows people who love the music to share their passion with others. I have seen and met so many cool people at these shows.” As Catholics, Christians, Muslims, and Jewish people all go to their places of worship to share their love with God, rockers, metalheads, and punks all go to shows to share their love with others for the band playing.

An example of shows being a ritual is when I went to my second festival, Punk in the Park. I saw all the older punks and the new generation of younger punks like myself all together outside at Oak Canyon Park in Silverado, CA. You can even compare it to those outdoor churches. In the outdoor churches, you sometimes have food and drink offered after service as we did at the festival, with food trucks and beer. Everyone was enjoying themselves, eating some good food, having some good beer, and making new friends over the love of the different bands that were playing that day. Again, much like people who go to their places of worship to rejoice in their love for their God, rock and metal fans rejoice in the love of our musical gods. The fans stuck with it because of the aforementioned community bond over deeming the genres sacred.

THE ROLE OF SYMBOLS IN MUSIC

Durkheim's concept of symbols is defined as something that stands for something else, a representation that calls up collective meanings. Places of worship have their symbols, such as the sign of the cross, as does rock and metal music. The symbol for rock on is index finger up, middle fingers down, pinky up, and thumb in. A prime example of the rock on symbol being widely recognized and popular was through its use by Black Sabbath. In 1979, Ronnie James Dio replaced Ozzy in Black Sabbath. Osbourne had his double peace sign he would do on stage, so Dio felt the band would not be Black Sabbath without one. Dio many times explained to media outlets that he took the hand sign from his Italian grandmother. In an interview he gave with EvilG of the online service Metal-rules.com, Dio mentions that "It's not the devil's sign like we're here with the devil. ... It's to ward off the Evil Eye or to give the Evil Eye, depending on which way you do it. So, it's a bit like "knocking on wood" (EvilG 2006). Even if you have never listened to rock and metal music you have seen this symbol of rock on at least once in your life. This is much like people who aren't religious and or atheists know what the symbol of the cross is because they too have seen it once in their lives. These symbols are engrained in our minds.

DEVIL INFLUENCES IN MUSIC

Many people say that heavy metal first started and began with Black Sabbath, including myself. Black Sabbath's first debut album had the most amazing artwork for the album cover: it had an inverted cross on the inner sleeve. The distortion of the image of the woman in the cloak wearing nothing underneath (the photographer mentions that), just added fuel to critics saying they were Satanists and occultists. But they rolled with it and brushed it off, and now Black Sabbath are considered the fathers of heavy metal. To add to the play of Satanists and occultists, the album was released on Friday 13th in February 1970. As we know Friday 13th is associated with the horror franchise but it was also controversial because of the number 13 being a superstitious number and bad luck. Since then, the imagery of the Devil has been prominent, from Venom having a goat head in a pentagram in their *Welcome to Hell* album, to Ghost having an inverted cross

which they call the Grucifix, to countless other metal bands. Many other people would say that the Devil is playing the instruments, putting hidden messages in songs. In the 80s, Christian organizations and TV shows were against heavy metal and against their child listening to such 'vile Devil music'. One anonymous critic said, "listen to heavy metal music and the devil will make you kill your mom." In the article "Heavy Metal Kids: Are they playing with the devil?" it talks about how listening to heavy metal will promote violence, suicide, and Satanism, as said by the author, "The popularity of heavy metal music with young people has grown dramatically; among adults, concerns about its influence have also grown. It is alleged that heavy metal promotes violence, suicide, Satanism, and the occult" (Trzcinski 1992). This is roughly the same thing parents of the 50s said about rock and roll: that it promotes sex, violence, delinquency, and crime. The Satanic panic of the 1980s helped fuel the rebellious nature of heavy metal and gave kids something that could really piss off their parents, just like early rock and roll did in the 1950s.

When thinking of The Beatles, you wouldn't think of Satan, would you? Well, my friends, you would be wrong. In the book *Lucifer Rising, Sin, Devil Worship & Rock and Roll*, the author Gavin Baddeley (1994) mentions this about The Beatles:

> Christians suspicious of the Beatles were confirmed by detailed perusal of the cover of their catchy, innovative *Sgt. Pepper* album. The cover design is a collage of people admired by The Beatles, all standing behind the band: among them, in the top row can be seen Aleister Crowley. (2016)

Crowley himself is a prominent force in metal songs such as "Mr. Crowley" by Ozzy Osbourne to Iron Maiden's song "Moonchild." The reason why is that Crowley had such a rock star mystique about him, shocking everyone with his indulgence in sex and drugs until his death at the age of 72. When The Beatles were recording their album *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*, they were on a spiritual rebellion, because as I mentioned before, Lennon had remarked that they were more popular than Jesus Christ. Because of that remark they had a somewhat terrible U.S. tour and vowed that they wouldn't tour again and be a studio-only

band. In my opinion, I think John Lennon saying that was a good thing because we wouldn't have this amazing album, where they expanded on their sound and experimented with different instruments. This was also a time of expanding on the mind as well through mind-altering, eye-opening drugs such as LSD. So, The Beatles took that label of being Satanists and Devil's music and ran with it, releasing an amazing album.

CONCLUSION

Satan is one of the strongest concepts that any artist could draw on. From Tommy Johnson's tale, to Robert Johnson's legend, to Elvis' gyrating hips, to The Beatles infamous long hair, Satanic concepts have riled up the public - promoting the bands more than any advertising could instead of keeping their children away from the "Devil's music." Durkheim's and Goffman's concepts help to paint rock and metal in a different picture; a picture of understanding instead of misunderstanding. We saw how Durkheim's concept of ritual applied to places of worship, but we also saw how it can also apply to these genres. As long as art and music exist, Satanic themes and imagery do not equal Devil worship. They are just that: themes and imagery, nothing more nothing less. Stories of the Devil are essential in the history of human creativity and the Devil has helped to shape pop culture. Without the Devil we wouldn't have the blues and without the blues, we wouldn't have the amazing genres that followed the blues pattern. No rock and roll, no punk, no metal, no country, no pop, no R&B, and no rap to just name a few of the big genres.

Even at the 2023 Grammys, we saw another return of the Devil back in the music game. Sam Smith and Kelly Petras did a duo performance of the song "Unholy" to some backlash by some conservative people, as this news article talks about the highlight of the night:

> Surrounded by long-haired acolytes in identical red sheaths, Smith kicked off the performance in an outfit of latex and a devil-horned top hat before Petras made her grand entrance in a giant cage guarded by a trio of she-devils. 'Mummy don't know daddy's getting hot/ At the body shop, doin' something unholy,' the duo belted in hellish

> harmony as a wall of fire erupted on stage behind Petras' personal prison. (Rowley 2023)

I think the Devil should be awarded a Grammy for his help in the music business, that is if he is real. It all comes back to that age-old question, is the Devil real? As is said, the greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn't exist.

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My Postpartum Depression Consumed Self

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ABSTRACT

This paper seeks to examine my personal experience of motherhood as it relates to navigating through postpartum depression. Through the methodology of autoethnography, scenarios and encounters were analyzed to depict my marginalized position as a new mother in a traditional Hispanic family and in a contemporary white supremacist hetero-patriarchal society. The theoretical framework of deviance, in particular labeling theory, was used to introduce alternative frameworks to the traditional culture of motherhood. Key themes included cultural values seen as gendered scripts that dictate the place of women within the motherhood realm. discussion of what the dominant culture deems normal is utilized to demonstrate the conflicts that an individual may experience when internalizing stigma around resisting the traditional roles womanhood. marginalization and implicit acts of othering, condoned by those perpetuating hetero-patriarchal values exhibiting normalized ideals, exacerbate the subordination of those who do not fit in this idealized matrix of motherhood.

INTRODUCTION

Motherhood is a very challenging experience to navigate. If you fail, your child will be a direct reflection of that failure. There are cultural expectations for how a child should be brought up, how one should present themself as a mother, how a mother has a 'natural' ability to nurture. What is not spoken about, is the possibility that a woman can have a child and not be equipped with unrealistic characteristics. Postpartum depression can suck the life out of a new mother. With little information being circulated about the condition, it can make one feel extremely isolated. Developing postpartum depression is something deemed deviant to the social world. It marginalizes a new mom, progressing to the sense of othering. My experience with postpartum depression was a life

changing experience. However, rallying the strength to recover was one of the best things I have experienced in life.

After her birth, I lacked a natural bond with my daughter - a bond I was told would come naturally. It was very confusing to me as a new mom. I knew this stemmed from my lack of ability to breastfeed her, but I was internally conflicted. I felt robbed of the experience everyone raves about when they bring a new baby home. I let my husband and parents take charge of her caregiving because I felt that I had already failed her. I could not provide my daughter with the one thing she needed to thrive, something my body was supposed to do naturally. How could I succeed at anything else? I didn't realize I was experiencing postpartum depression until my daughter was nearly six months old. That was a very challenging time for me. I wasn't so much in denial, but it wasn't something I was ready to open up and talk about. I come from a fairly traditional Mexican family. Postpartum depression is taboo and implies that you are not meant to be a mother. My family believes that once you become a mom, you put all your emotions aside and pride yourself on raising your child the best that you can. How could I fulfill these expectations when I could not even identify a connection between us?

When I finally came forward to my husband about how I was feeling, we cried together. I knew that was the first step to my mental and emotional healing. We were ready to venture through this journey together side by side. That is what gave me the strength to push through. I became more involved and present with my daughter. I was balancing school and parenting much more efficiently. My mom noticed a shift in my behavior and sat me down to discuss her previous concerns. I was confronted by a mirror I could no longer evade. This is when the term that I avoided for so long surfaced – postpartum depression. It felt like a bomb exploded within me. My mom is a mental health facilitator and MATT coordinator for the Department of Child and Family Services. She knew exactly what she was talking about. I thought I was prepared for all the questions she would ask me. I wasn't prepared when she asked if I had ever considered harming my child. As someone with long term experience, looking back now, I don't feel like I reacted properly. I stormed out of my mom's house and sped home where I had a two-hour breakdown waiting

for my husband to get home. How could my own mother ask me that? How could she think I was capable of committing such a monstrous act? My mother has seen a lot of ugly in this world, and she had to do what she felt necessary to protect the grandchild she had been helping raise for half of a year. To society, I was a threat to my daughter, a failed parent, and a disgraced mother.

Gendered scripts tell us that I was supposed to be a 'natural' nurturer. I was supposed to be able to feed my child with my own production of milk. I was supposed to put her first the minute she came out of me. Eventually I realized that all of expectations were reflections of the patriarchal society we live in, not a reflection of who I was or who I wanted to be. I was an unfortunate individual who had to take a step back, analyze the situation, and implement changes.

I rarely speak about my journey, but there was one specific instance where I decided to educate my sister on the subject. This led to her frowning upon me and making the statement, "I never felt that way with any of my kids. Some people are just not meant to be parents. I could never imagine hurting my children". It took everything in me not to blow up, as anyone would naturally do. Instead, I took the high road and relayed that I never once thought about hurting Nalani, my daughter, and walked away from the situation. Mom-shaming comes and goes, I use those instances as fuel to be positive. I refuse to allow the opinions of others and what they deem normal be utilized as a tool to marginalize others. Everyone's experiences of parenthood are vastly different, what one experiences may not be the case for other families.

There are many misconceptions postpartum depression. Every woman experiences it differently. The lack of awareness allows for false information to spread. One thing I had to overcome was the ideology that I wore the postpartum depression, that it was performative. My struggle with postpartum depression is ongoing, my daughter is almost two and there are some days that are definitely harder than others. I have accepted that my normal differs from the norms of society and the dominant culture. There is always a power struggle when conversing with other moms. There's constant criticism about how I navigate through motherhood. To say that it does not affect me would be untrue. I

have had to reframe my whole ideology of parenting. I conceptualized ideals that I felt would benefit my daughter and me - a new set of expectations I set for myself, to aid me in my adventure of raising my child. I believe parenting is a process where trial and error is progressive. I have allowed myself to become ambivalent when others force their own beliefs upon me. I am my own critic, and it pains me to admit that it took quite a while before I comprehended that my experience would not be similar to those I've witnessed.

Patriarchy determines that as a woman, we are subordinate and being a mother is my entire purpose of life. Lacking the 'natural' instinct and creating my own system of parenting threatens the norms already in place. Adapting to my situation and creating my own expectations jeopardizes the preexisting scripts we are expected to act out in the social world. I am an example of how acceptable it is to target those who threaten societal norms. Society can be cruel, if 'normal' people think you are a threat, they shame you to the best of their ability. They make you feel subordinate in attempts to sway you to become adherent. There is a gender hierarchy in place. If women change the system, imagine what power they could hold. Changes in society should be welcomed. Unfortunately, the act of "othering" triumphs over open-mindedness.

I could never assimilate properly into society due to 'normal' people othering me. A 'normal' person rejects the idea of my conformity because they fail to relate to my experience. When a 'normal' person hears my story, they become overwhelmed. It makes them feel sad, which is followed by ignorance, because there's a barrier of understanding. Their discomfort is a result of in my rejection to conformity. I am different from them, which ultimately leads to my being labeled an outcast. They themselves have not felt what I feel, and they do not understand how severe a situation can become. The 'normal' people view my postpartum depression as an excuse for not wanting to face my own inadequacies of being a parent. Not asking for help reflects my negligence, and reiterates the negative stigma held against me. How could I step forward and speak about something, knowing what the outcome would be? They could not conceive how the birth of my daughter, something that should be celebrated, had the

ability to make me feel inferior and sad. A 'normal' person shames me because they could not understand how a mother could feel that way.

Oftentimes, normal people utilize the act of othering to tackle my endeavors of maneuvering through parenthood. There have been occurrences where this method was prosperous, but I look at it now as character-building. I needed those negative occasions to help myself become stronger willed, for both my daughter and me. Now, when someone challenges my experiences with postpartum depression and parenting, I provide the individual with insight. I share my experience with them. What they choose to do after that is their prerogative. I have found this route to be more impactful - when I show any sign of fear or sadness, I give them power over me. I have learned how not to allow others to get the best of me when addressing one of my biggest vulnerabilities. Their attempts to berate me will not have the intended effect. Instead, it made me a much stronger woman, and a better mother.

As a sociologist in training, I was fortunate enough to determine that the looking glass self was destructive to me. As I mentioned before, one of the biggest struggles was shifting the notion that I performed postpartum depression. There was a point where I thought everyone in public knew I was struggling just by looking at me. I became a reflection of what I knew everyone thought of me. I needed to abandon this idea and adopt a new sense of self. I wanted to highlight my distinctions from others, I wanted to praise my authenticity. Having felt like my experience with postpartum depression was a personal fable, it became crucial to develop a deeper understanding that it can happen to any woman. I was not exempt from any potentialities that are associated with childbirth, and I needed to remember that. When I finally understood that my experience with postpartum depression didn't define me, my sense of self-identity became much more positive. I realized my negative experience could be helpful to someone else one day, and that I needed to come to terms with it. I could not let the depression consume me any longer, I needed to act, and I needed to do it fast. I learned that it could get better. Only I could decide what type of relationship I wanted with my daughter. I

learned that I must allow love to overtake the bad, and I learned to love my very dysfunctional motherhood experience.

The theory of deviance that best describes my encounter with postpartum depression is Labeling Theory. Cox (2018:122) pointed out that:

> Labeling theory also includes analysis of the processes of the labeling, or the stereotyping (Schur 1971) that is involved. Stigmas are powerful because of this process of typification, which refers to the stereotypical terms under which culture has created a standardized and simplified category to describe all bearers of the deviance. Indeed, the stereotypes often extend beyond the attribute and constitute a master-status. (Huges 1945)

Labeling theory is demonstrated in my experience because I subconsciously began to absorb the criticisms I was receiving. I internalized the negative labels. The views people had of me began to mold my self-identity. I was becoming all of the negative things those 'normal' people saw in me. Although I was informally labeled, being labeled as deviant took a dramatic toll on my self-esteem. It wasn't until I had my epiphany that I realized if I was already considered deviant, what would I be considered if I created my own terms of motherhood? That is precisely why labeling theory best fits my situation. Oftentimes, when individuals are defined or labeled as deviant, it creates an inclination to become more deviant in society because you are already a victim of stigma. When I decided that I was going to challenge the unrealistic expectations of motherhood, it was because I was already negatively viewed and stigmatized. I thought to myself, how much worse can it get?

As a survivor of postpartum depression, I feel it necessary to state: life goes on, and there is a light at the end of the tunnel. Moving away from the darkness takes time and patience. Change does not occur overnight. Trauma is an ongoing process that you learn to cope with for the rest of your life. Having setbacks should be expected, do not allow them to discourage you. Keep pushing and remind yourself that you are your child's role model. Create the ultimate parent in your mind and apply those attributes through

actions you take. Being negatively labeled, although hurtful, will break you only if you allow it. Use the negativity to push forward to be the best parent to your child. Love your child and educate them. Change can happen over time if enough people want it to.

My deviating behavior in its entirety, was experienced as having to guide myself along a route foreign to me. Overcoming my Postpartum, although a prosperous conquest to me, was seen as an unfavorable act to normal people. Having felt negatively at all during my time in new motherhood, I was constantly reminded about my disappointment as a parent. Normal people intended to break me for being different, I allowed them to for quite some time. I was unintentionally oppressing myself in the midst of self-victimization. Their attempts to other me, ended the minute I reframed parenting for myself. My sense of self was being altered to cater to what I felt was positive. I am thankful for my journey, the good and the bad. It has made me who I am today.

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Book Review: *Divide & Conquer: Race, Gangs, Identity, and Conflict (Studies in Transgression)* by Robert D. Weide

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When you hear the term "gangs" what is it that comes to mind? Los Angeles is notoriously known for its subculture of gangs and subsequent gang violence, from the likes of Crips co-founder Stanley "Tookie" Williams as well as Sylvester Scott, who is credited with the advent of the original Blood gangs. Popular media is obsessed with stories of these gangs and its members– whether in sensationalized reports on Fox 11 News or fictionalized stories playing out in TV shows or box office movies, like *Boyz in the Hood* or *Colors*. Such portrayals become in fact dehumanizing by reinforcing a narrative of depravity instead of recognizing the reality that gang members are among "the most marginalized, demonized, and criminalized population in America and throughout much of the capitalist world" (Weide 2022:7-8). This insider participant observation ethnographic case study serves as an in-depth look into the humanity and nuance of the lived experience for *Sureño*-affiliated, Crip and Blood gang members in Los Angeles.

Robert D. Weide, Ph.D. is an Associate Professor of Sociology at California State University, Los Angeles. Weide teaches various courses on the history of anarchy, criminology, and critical theory on the intersectionality of class, race, and gender. He is also an expert witness on cases involving gangs in which he is summoned across the country to present his knowledge in numerous, and often high profile, cases. As uplifted from his biography in the introduction of the book, Weide's heritage includes that of his father being an ethnic Kurd born in Iran, as well as being of half-Prussian and half-Russian descent on his mother's side. His birth name is actually an Iranian surname with Kurdish tribal affiliation, but during his youth, Robert's parents chose to legally change his last name to Weide – in reflection of his maternal grandfather's Prussian roots – to protect him from the intended violence targeted at ethnic Middle Eastern and North African people at that time. Coupled with growing up

in the West Los Angeles area, as a teen he was a member of a street gang comprised of childhood friends and fellow 'taggers.' Weide is passionate about looking past labels of identity based on race and the assumptions of how people should conduct themselves solely on physical appearance.

Though this book is an ethnographic research project about gangs, it also serves as a cohesive overview for the evolution of the race concept and its modern manifestation through identity politics and ethnonationalism ideology. As explained by Weide, gangs are both the epitome and antithesis of the surplus labor population whose existence fuels the capitalist power play of "divide and conquer" to keep the working class stuck on in-fighting, to detract them from 'rising up' and overthrowing the ruling class. Weide notes:

> It is no accident that the prior use of the word *gang* in the English language was in reference to a group of workers, whereas by the turn of the twentieth century the word has been transformed into a negativistic slur used to demonize and criminalize workers whose labor is no longer useful to capital. Gang members represent not just the lower class, but, moreover, the permanent underclass of American society – what Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels called the lumpenproletariat, unable to identify the cause of their material deprivation and therefore unable to focus their rage against those whose unimaginable wealth is possible only at their expense. (2022:8)

Therefore, modern gangs often attract the surplus labor population that capitalism forcibly keeps unemployed to depreciate the value of the workers. However, this often leads to gang members becoming the antithesis of a surplus labor population because they have found a way outside of traditional employment constructs to make money and might not be willing to fall in line with the constricting atmosphere of brick-and-mortar capitalist businesses. One way the ruling class still contributes to gangs is through the perpetuation of the race concept and its self-fulfilling mechanism of creating division between in-group and out-groups by doubling

down on ethnonationalism affiliation. These identity politics create an internal system of unconscious reinforcement through gang members fueling the myth of both threat and incompatibility divided along racial identities.

Divide & Conquer is an engaging read that starts from the ground up. The introduction sets the tone for Weide's personal experience with gang-related killings and leads to his desire to conduct an ethnographic research study on gangs in Los Angeles. The first chapter chronologically explores the historical foundations of ethnonationalism and identity politics through what Weide deems the three pillars: capitalism, the race concept, and nationalist ideology. The second chapter deconstructs identity through theoretical foundations, emphasizing anarchist theory to critique ethnonationalism and identity politics. After establishing this framework, the rest of the book details *Sureños,* Crip and Blood affiliated gangs throughout Los Angeles County.

The third chapter explores the invisible wall of division created between these gangs by their different cultures and identities. Chapter four closely examines how gangs can be unintentional identity police by reinforcing racial bias and boundaries through their rivalries, primarily in jail facilities. This idea is explored even deeper in chapter five through the narrative the police and the media create about tensions amongst rival gangs being so-called race wars, with direct citations for case studies of racialized conflicts. Chapter six focuses on transracial gang members who cross the boundaries of race identification and effectively proves that the concept of race does not necessarily hold up in actual practice. Then chapter seven details the resilient progress that respected gang leaders acting as peacemakers made in 2019 to create a cease-fire between warring gangs while also detailing the resistance working to keep up the elite power to divide and conquer the marginalized people groups. Finally, the conclusion wonders if the future will be one of reform or revolution.

This book is solid from cover to cover. I (Taryn) was first introduced to this book by taking Weide's class in the Fall of 2022 at Cal State LA: SOC 3480 Sociology of Class, Race/Ethnicity, and Gender. His chapter laying out the interweaving history of capitalism, racism, and nationalism is an amazing and accessible

collection all in one place. Building on that strong foundation, Weide uses his expertise to create rapport by tapping into different sides of his personal history and current interests when interviewing *Sureño*-affiliated, Crip and Blood-affiliated gang members as well as a handful of law enforcement officers specifically overseeing gang enforcement. Overall, Weide personally conducted formal interviews with sixty-seven *Sureño*-affiliated gang members, thirty Crip and Blood gang members, and seven gang enforcement officers. It is impressive to see someone having such success spanning these three groups that are usually violently pitted against each other.

Divide & Conquer is a revolutionary piece of research literature that should hopefully serve to open the mind of anyone willing to read it. This book is highly recommended for anyone curious about Los Angeles gang culture, even if they have not been to Los Angeles, to understand some of the dynamics of the subculture that exists. Weide's approach proves that holding space with empathy allows even the most stigmatized and marginalized to express themselves in ways that showcase their humanity. Cultural understanding is the key to overcoming the systems in place that divide and conquer through defaulting to an "otherizing" mentality of those perceived as different. Everyone has a reason for what they do; instead of immediately writing people off by their appearance, seek to hear one another out. If everybody did that, there might just be unification in making sure everyone is being supported and cared for day to day.

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Book Review: *Politics is for Power: How to Move Beyond Political Hobbyism, Take Action, and Make Real Change* by Eitan Hersh

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What does politics mean to you? Is it spending hours consuming news and arguing with people on the internet about social issues? Or is it about gaining power, multiplying your vote, and making a real change in your community? To Eitan Hersh (2020:3), "participating in politics by obsessive news-following and online 'slacktivism'" is not politics, but what he considers as political hobbyism. In his book *Politics is for Power: How to Move Beyond Political Hobbyism, Take Action, and Make Real Change*, Hersh argues that politics should be about seeking power and influence to make meaningful change, rather than for expressing one's values and for one's self-gratification. Hersh shows an alternative way to do politics.

Eitan Hersh is an Associate Professor in the Department of Political Science at Tufts University where he teaches on American politics. As a data analyst, he studies civic participation, voting rights, and U.S. elections. His take on our political climate is relevant to sociological research as it addresses sociological concerns on political participation, social movements, media, and privilege.

Hersh's book is packed with historical context, statistical data, and real-life stories of volunteers engaging in politics, all of which highlight the impact of political hobbyism on American politics. The author contrasts between shallow, unproductive activities such as consuming news, participating in partisanship, using social media, making donations, and signing petitions, and more meaningful activities like deep canvasing and local organizing. Hersh argues that most people engage in politics as a shallow hobby and for knowledge-seeking rather than as power-seeking activity. The author argues that treating politics as a hobby is counterproductive because political hobbyists practice the wrong skills, seek the wrong news, and pursue wrong goals. The book ends with Hersh sharing his own journey of political

participation and offering tips to readers on how they can start engaging in politics for power. He encourages readers to redirect their attention from social media and national news to learning about their local community and finding ways to support it. Ultimately, Hersh calls on the readers to take action and become more actively engaged in politics.

The strength of Hersh's argument comes in the success stories of people in local politics. He writes about men and women who are 19 to 98 years old. He tells the stories of people like Drew, a college student who establishes a precinct organization to get students involved in politics beyond the campus; Lisa, a woman who travels from Brooklyn to Staten Island to have deep, open conversations with complete strangers; and Naakh, a man who commands a thousand votes amassed through his history of assisting retired immigrants in his neighborhood. The experiences in local politics Hersh highlights in this book shows that anyone can make a difference. These accounts also strike at the heart of his argument: change starts with people talking to others within their community.

This book is an inspiring read for anyone who is interested in learning what amassing real political power means - which certainly includes professors and students wanting to increase their own knowledge, especially for sociological relevance. If you are spending hours of your day thinking about politics but find it purposeless and fruitless, *Politics is for Power* "is about you" (Hersh 2020:5).

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Film Review: *Women Talking* by Sarah Polley

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The title *Women Talking* initially comes off as passive. However, the women featured in this story are actually working to put words into action after a shocking revelation about the strange and violating experiences all female-bodied residents of an isolated Mennonite community have been waking up to for years. When seeking explanations, the male elders of the colony gaslight the women by attributing the assaults to Satan, ghosts, bids for attention, or hysterical female imagination. Finally, one of the men is caught in the act and gives up the names of the other perpetrators while revealing the use of cow tranquilizer to pull off the attacks. During the two days while the male perpetrators are jailed in the city, the women are left behind at the colony. They are told to use this time to forgive the attackers or be banished from the colony. Their banishment also means being barred from heaven due to their unforgiveness. Instead, the women decisively use this time to host a referendum, which leads to talking out a tie between choosing to stay and fighting or leaving the colony.

Canadian director (and former child actor) Sarah Polley won the Academy Award, Critics' Choice Award, and Writers Guild of America Award for "Best Adapted Screenplay" for her screen adaption of *Women Talking* (2022) based on the 2018 novel of the same name by award-winning Canadian writer Miriam Toews. The writing motivation for Toews was partly inspired by actual events in a Bolivian Mennonite colony paired with the questioning that had built up during her time growing up in a Canadian Mennonite colony. While the sexual assault did not happen in her own colony, the circumstances of patriarchal power dynamics could have easily led to such a situation.

Women Talking is sociologically relevant because the entire story hinges on women who have essentially been trapped in an extreme societal construct of a religious colony coming to terms with the reality of the power dynamics of abuse that they had all been subjected to. The narrator of the film specifically notes that this restrictive community does not talk about women's

bodies, so there is no language for violation which leaves a horrific gaping silence that erases any chance of empowerment. Additionally, one of the women is considered a spinster but is carrying a child as a byproduct of the sexual assaults. At one point, she articulates that she chooses to remain single to be true to herself – a surprising act of autonomy and empowerment for a woman raised under strong indoctrination. The takeaway implied is that if the parameters of the societally constructed concept of being a spouse do not allow you to be yourself, then do not settle for betraying your true self.

The idea of forced forgiveness not being true forgiveness is a central theme throughout the film. This includes the men threatening the women with banishment and eternal damnation if they are not ready to forgive the perpetrators and live alongside them. Additionally, one of the women has been subjected to domestic abuse but all the while was advised by the elders, including the matriarchs, to forgive her husband. Her bitterness, fear, and resignation act as foil to the other women throughout the heated discussions. Another theme is power, with one woman specifying that the men want power and therefore need people to have power over, in this case the women. This also speaks to the internalized misogyny of patriarchal culture that enlists women in keeping their fellow women down and subservient.

When the woman who has been subjected to domestic abuse wonders if the imprisoned men might not even be guilty, one of the other women proposes the idea that the conditions set up by the men of the colony led to the circumstances perpetuated by the men. In that case, everyone in the colony are victims of the system. Later on, concerns about the logistics of choosing departure separating them from the boys leads to conversation over "not all men" being evil. They also discuss at what point in time do boys become men who become perpetrators. One of the women has a panic attack during this debate over whether males can join their exodus, which leads to her sister accusing this behavior of being attention seeking. The woman explains that the gaslighting making her disbelieve her own self is personally the worst part for her to wrestle with from the trauma.

I appreciate the decision made by director Sarah Polley to purposefully not show any of the men's faces. Any scenes that

include the perpetrators and enabling adult males of the colony are framed in ways that leave the men undistinguishable. The women and their passion are the main focus here. However, one of the other qualms I had with the film was trouble keeping track of who everyone was until about halfway through. The majority of the screentime is focused on eight women from two households. It was confusing figuring out the relationships between the two elder matriarchs, the four middle aged women, and the two teenagers.

The movie also includes a transgendered character: Melvin played by nonbinary actor August Winter. The narrator explains it was later on that Melvin reveals it was not the sexual assault that "turned" him into a man, but that this led to undeniable proof that he had never felt like a woman. After being impregnated (possibly by their own brother) and suffering a miscarriage of the baby due to malformations, the trauma leads Melvin to refuse to speak with anyone but the children. This bond with the children gave Melvin the role of watching over them while the women figure things out. Unfortunately, Melvin is deadnamed multiple times. Near the end of the film, one of the matriarch elders finally calls Melvin by his chosen name and he speaks to her, thanking her for saying his name. As much as I disliked the constant deadnaming, this moment seemed to be a way to show how community accepting and honoring a person's chosen name that aligns with their gender identity is important.

Women Talking certainly tackles a heavy topic with rage and righteous indignation. We do not get to see the group settled post-departure. Though I prefer explicit closure, having one of the teenaged girls as the narrator for this film adaptation helps it feel like this ending is one of hope. The story overall is empowering and I highly recommend watching it. However, if any of the content warnings below are of personal concern, make sure to be in the right head space to experience. As a woman who was raised under fundamentalism (though not in a colony), I personally had an intense watching experience. *Women Talking* is a passionate and raw depiction of women advocating for safety and body autonomy while also recoiling from realizing they have been living in a barely veiled toxic patriarchy.

Content Warning: Mentions of Sexual Assault, Miscarriage, Suicide, Deadnaming, Domestic Violence. Blood (but not really gore) is featured throughout the film. While no act of sexual assault is depicted on screen, the whole film revolves around conversations on how to handle the truth of violating sexual assaults and subsequent actions to be taken.

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Film Review: *Everything Everywhere All At Once* by Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert

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Everything Everywhere All At Once (*EEAAO*) is the second feature film by directors known as the "Daniels," and it has broken numerous records since releasing in March 2022. Under distribution through indie house A24, the film was originally only given a limited run but quickly increased to a nationwide release due to popular demand – even while the movie theater business struggled to bounce back from pandemic conditions. *EEAAO* was recognized during awards seasons since its release, setting a high bar with upward of 300 nominations and becoming the first film to sweep the Oscars in all the "above-the-line" categories for which it was nominated: Best Picture, Best Original Screenplay, Best Director, Best Actress, Best Supporting Actor, and Best Supporting Actress. Clearly this film has had an impact.

The "Daniels" writer/director team is made up of Daniel Kwan and Daniel Scheinert. They met while majoring in film at Emerson College, located in Boston. For Kwan, Emerson College was just 40 minutes from where he had been born and raised by parents who are immigrants from Taiwan and Hong Kong. On the other hand, Scheinert was born and raised in Alabama before moving to Massachusetts. Since 2010, the duo's initial rise to fame came from directing (as well as often appearing in) odd yet eye-catching surrealist music videos for popular musicians, such as "Turn Down For What" by DJ Snake and Lil Jon.

This film perfectly portrays a person struggling to fulfill competing demands, a concept sociologists refer to as role conflict. Evelyn Wong is constantly being pulled in different directions because of her roles and she cannot meet their demands. She is torn between her positions as a homemaker, business owner, person with their own aspirations, and as an interdimensional heroine. We see in the opening scene Evelyn prepares a meal for the family while the dinner table is scattered with paperwork related to her laundromat business. As a homemaker, she is

expected to tend to the needs of her husband, daughter, and father but her responsibilities as a business owner are making it difficult for her to fulfill those responsibilities. The consequence of this conflict is husband Waymond serving divorce paperwork to Evelyn. She is presented with a new role of an interdimensional heroine by an alternate universe version of Waymond. Her newfound role eventually comes into conflict with her role as a business owner and homemaker as she struggles to save her business at an IRS office while fighting an interdimensional villain at the same time. Despite the science fiction premise, Evelyn Wong's situation beautifully reflects the lives of women juggling their roles in daily life.

EEAAO is a multiverse-hopping, genre bending movie about realizing one's potential and choosing the life that is most authentic to oneself. While Evelyn is trying to sort out her taxes, counterparts from "the Alphaverse" start showing up in the bodies of her family and acquaintances. Alpha Waymond explains that their Evelyn discovered how to cross between parallel universes through "verse-jumping" into the bodies of counterparts by engaging in strange actions that the individual normally would never do. Unfortunately, Alpha Evelyn's zeal for pushing her daughter Joy to her fullest potential accidentally broke Joy's mind and created an irreverent entity going by Jobu Tupaki. Jobu in turn killed Alpha Evelyn. Ever since, the Alphaverse has been looking for an Evelyn that can stop Jobu from obliterating everything. Alpha Waymond has a realization that this Evelyn is the greatest failure out of every Evelyn in the multiverse, which means she actually has the most pathway connections to verse-jump into other versions of herself who succeeded in specific talents. She eventually realizes that the only way to defeat Jobu is to become like her. At first, Evelyn also falls prey to nihilism, but then Waymond's reminders to be kind breaks through the noise and allows Evelyn to engage in empathy. This empathy then allows Jobu to also turn away from nihilism and embrace community support.

The film has great strengths in showcasing how to be true to oneself, even amid chaos, while also highlighting how different personalities can create a truly supportive community. Though Evelyn is the main character, the film shows the struggles of

assimilation and intergenerational trauma through the presence of her father Gong Gong and her daughter Joy. Evelyn fears that Gong Gong will see Joy's identity as a lesbian, who is also dating a non-Asian woman, as a personal failure of Evelyn's parenting. Joy was born and raised in America, so is the most assimilated into American culture. Gong Gong is visiting but does not speak English and upholds a lot of traditional Chinese perspectives. Evelyn is in the middle, feeling pulled in multiple directions on what she should be embodying.

The trauma of assimilation bleeding into intergenerational issues is evident between Evelyn and Joy each fearing disappointing the generation that raised them. Evelyn takes refuge in universes where she did not marry Waymond, causing Joy to not exist. While at first Evelyn sees these as signs that her life would have been better if she had rejected Waymond, it turns out that what she really needed was time and space to find her true self. She realizes she loves Waymond and that he has always done what he can to support her and Joy. Once Evelyn embraces her own identity, she is able to give space and support for Joy/Jobu to make the choices that are best for her own self as well.

The movie addresses topics of roles, mental health, support systems, assimilation, but the positive messages may get lost in the absurdist aspects of the plot. I (Darron) imagine that children of immigrant parents want to share this film with their parents to show them an example of how families support the very different lives of their assimilated children. However, between scenes of characters trying to sit on a trophy to induce verse-jumping and an odd hotdog finger world, children of immigrants may be hesitant to share with a generation that may find these gags inappropriate. Despite those scenes, families should give the movie a chance!

While not explicitly stated in the film, the "Daniels" have explained that Evelyn has undiagnosed ADHD. When looking into real-life examples of a person who is constantly being distracted and/or dissociating, they came across the explanation

for undiagnosed ADHD in adults. This sparked a revelation that Kwan openly explains:

> I started taking some ADHD tests. I started realizing . . . as tears were falling down my face . . . 'Oh, no, maybe this is who I am. Maybe this is why I had such a hard time in school and still have such a hard time in my day-to-day life.' Even without trying to put in ADHD, this movie was going to be infused with it from the very beginning. The DNA of it was all going to be there. (Kwong, Lu, and Grayson 2023)

Individuals diagnosed with ADHD as an adult may resonate with Evelyn's journey trying to manage distractions and waves of hyperfocus while also feeling pressure from societal expectations of what an adult "should" be doing to support everyone. Overall, this movie does a wonderful job of showing how everyone embracing their own personality truly builds the strongest support network.

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