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Aims & Scope

The Journal of Underrepresented and Minority Progress (JUMP) is an interdisciplinary, peer-reviewed, international, open-access journal published by STAR Scholars Publications.

JUMP seeks to advance knowledge of minority and underrepresented people in local, regional, and international settings by publishing narratives, theoretical and empirically based research articles, and reflections. JUMP is indexed in major databases.

The Journal is international in scope and includes work by scholars in a wide range of academic fields and disciplines. Contributions from researchers and professionals in fields like sociology, psychology, higher education, philosophy, education, and cultural studies are welcome in the Journal.

The Journal's audience includes scholars and researchers in social sciences who work on the issues of ethnicity and race, caste and class, religion and spirituality, gender and sexual orientation, power and privilege, wealth and income, health and well-being, beliefs and value systems, and the intersections of these issues.

For questions –

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The Pursuit of STEM: Factors Influencing Minority Entrance and Persistence

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ABSTRACT

Continual underrepresentation of racial/ethnic and female students in STEM has spurred research on the factors that inhibit and support their entrance and persistence in the field. Although informative, prior studies are limited by their focus on undergraduate students and by their tendency to examine the isolated, rather than interactive, effects of individual-, interpersonal-, institutional-, and societal-level factors. Thus, this study relies on interview data from 18 minority and/or female graduate students in STEM to explore how individual-, interpersonal-, institutional-, and societal-level factors interact with one another to influence the students' STEM entrance and persistence. Findings suggest there are important interactive effects, but they differ for STEM entrance and STEM persistence. Implications for racial/ethnic diversity and female representation in STEM are discussed.

Keywords: STEM education, STEM entrance, STEM persistence, underrepresented students

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields have traditionally been—and continue to be—dominated by White men (McGee, 2016). Thus, while the educational attainment of minority students within STEM has improved in recent decades, women and students of color continue to be underrepresented (Rincón & Rodriguez, 2021; Valla & Williams, 2012). Such underrepresentation has spurred scholars to examine not only the factors that impact entrance into STEM fields, but also the factors that impact persistence and eventual degree attainment. For instance, existing research suggests that institutional resources, including clubs and tutoring centers, can influence STEM entrance, while an individual's feelings of belonging and self-efficacy can influence STEM persistence (Rainey et al., 2018). This focus on both institutional and individual-level effects is important because it suggests that the factors impacting minority student STEM participation are likely quite varied.

In fact, interpersonal- and societal-level factors also matter for minority student STEM participation (Xie et al., 2015), and they, along with individual- and institutional-level factors, likely interact with one another, thereby impacting minority student STEM participation in complex and nuanced ways. Yet, however, existing research has not examined the degree to which individual-, interpersonal-, institutional-, and societal-level factors interact to affect STEM entrance and persistence. Moreover, existing research tends to focus on undergraduate students, and while it is possible to examine both entrance and persistence with that demographic, we contend that discussions with graduate students will allow for a deeper exploration of persistence processes.

Thus, this study relies on interview data from 18 underrepresented STEM graduate students in universities throughout California. It also uses the socio-ecological model of behavior as a backdrop for examining how individual-, interpersonal-, institutional-, and societal-level factors influence underrepresented students' efforts to enter and persist in STEM. We demonstrate that these factors do interact but the interactive processes differ for entrance and persistence, and that has important implications for racial/ethnic diversity and female representation in STEM.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Socio-Ecological Model

The socio-ecological model of behavior suggests that human actions are influenced by overlapping factors occurring at the individual-, interpersonal, institutional-, and societal-level of influence (Bronfenbrenner,

1977; Kilanowski, 2017). More specifically, individual-level factors are those that impact a person on a personal level. Within an educational context, individual-level influences could include a person's beliefs about their own abilities in a particular area of study. Interpersonal-level factors focus on how relationships impact a person's decisions. For example, relationships between students and their parents, peers, and teachers can support or hinder educational attainment. Institutional-level factors focus on how institutions impact an individuals' decisions. Universities are, by definition, institutions that can impact students' success in STEM subjects. For example, the availability of scholarships, fellowships, and research experiences can assist students along their STEM journey, while the absence of those things can hinder entrance or persistence. Finally, societal-level factors look at how social norms and culture impact a person's decisions. Within an educational context, it is possible that existing social norms and prejudices might inhibit some people's willingness to pursue certain types of degrees. For instance, research suggests that, in general, minority students are less likely to pursue STEM degrees, in part because existing stereotypes create uninviting educational environments for them (Martin, 2016).

The socio-ecological model's emphasis on individual-, interpersonal-, institutional-, and societal-level influences offers an important framework for examining the factors that influence students' educational trajectories. Because it accounts for interactions within these levels of influence, it is particularly useful for drawing attention to how factors at one level can impact factors at another level. Moreover, although existing research has explored the independent effects of individual-, interpersonal-, institutional-, and societal-level factors on underrepresented students' STEM entrance and persistence, few studies have done more than allude to the interactive effects. Thus, this study uses the socio-ecological model to explicitly draw our attention to the interactive effects that impact minority students' entrance into and persistence in STEM.

STEM Entrance and Persistence

Research on minority student entrance into and persistence in STEM is plentiful (Arcidiacono et al., 2016; Dewsbury et al., 2019; Hurtado et al., 2010). Such research suggests that although educational attainment has improved for minority students, they continue to be underrepresented in STEM and the associated disciplines reflect predominantly White and masculine culture (McGee, 2016; Rincón & Rodriguez, 2021; Valla & Williams, 2012). Existing research also points to a number of individual-,

interpersonal-, institutional-, and societal-level factors that positively and negatively influence minority student STEM entrance and persistence.

Individual-Level Influences: Characteristics of the Student

First generation, low-income, female, and racial/ethnic minority students are less likely to pursue and persist in STEM fields (Martin, 2016; Xie, et al., 2015). This is often due to financial burdens, lack of familiarity with STEM, feelings of inadequacy, and the belief that they don't belong in STEM. For instance, the more affordable tuition, flexible scheduling, and open enrollment policies associated with community colleges make them attractive to many underrepresented students (Jackson et al., 2013; Wang & Wickersham, 2018), but students who begin STEM studies in community colleges are less likely to enter four-year institutions later and are less academically prepared if they do transfer to a four-year university (Cohen & Kelly, 2020; Long & Kurlaender, 2009; Park et al., 2020; Wang, 2015). Women and students of color are also less likely to see themselves represented in STEM, which contributes to lower feelings of self-efficacy and heightened concern that they do not belong in STEM (Alade et al., 2021; Cheryan et al., 2013; Seron et al., 2015; Steinke, 2017). These kinds of negative individual-level beliefs are associated with lower levels of academic success (Heilbronner, 2011; Rainey et al., 2018; Sax et al., 2015). Notably, while these studies focus predominantly on students' individual-level characteristics, they also implicate institutional- and societal-level factors (e.g., community college resource availability, female representation in STEM). The socio-ecological model asks us to think more concretely about these interactive effects.

Interpersonal-Level Influences: Support from Networks

Interpersonal support, especially from parents and teachers, has also been shown to influence students' STEM trajectories. Emotional and financial support from parents is often critical for a student's ability to pursue a degree in STEM (Bravo & Stephens, 2023; Dotterer, 2022; Šimunovic & Babarović, 2020; Wilkins-Yel et al., 2022). Even when parents can't provide extensive financial support or existing knowledge about educational institutions, the values they impart to and the expectations they have for their children can motivate them to consider a STEM degree (Dewsbury et al., 2019; Russell & Atwater, 2005; Strayhorn, 2015). Relatedly, teachers often provide information about STEM-related opportunities that parents and underrepresented students would otherwise not know about (Bicer et al., 2020; Chelberg & Bosman, 2019; Valla & Williams, 2012). For instance,

teachers often expose students to STEM-related hobbies, science clubs, and summer camps that provide positive STEM socialization (Hite et al., 2019; Stearns et al., 2016). Teachers also help enhance students' academic preparation by offering advanced coursework, after school clubs, and supplemental information sessions for students (Cantu, 2012; Leoni et al., 2023).

These efforts by parents and teachers are important because they impact students' own feelings of STEM self-efficacy. Positive and encouraging messages from individuals in a student's network serve as powerful motivators for entrance into and persistence in STEM (Bryson et al., 2024; Dewsbury et al., 2019; Harris et al., 2023; Russell & Atwater, 2005)—but ironically, so too can negative and discouraging messages. Although unsupportive interpersonal interactions can reduce feelings of self-efficacy and hinder students' STEM trajectories (Sax et al., 2015; Seron et al., 2015), they have also been shown to benefit STEM trajectories by motivating students to overcome the negative judgements they encounter (Collins, 2018; Jackson et al., 2013; Rainey et al., 2018). The socio-ecological model helps draw our attention to the important ways interpersonal supports interact with students' individual-level characteristics to impact STEM entrance and persistence.

Institutional-Level Influences: Academic Preparation

While teachers often provide important interpersonal resources for students, high schools provide important institutional resources. For instance, the availability of advanced math and sciences courses as well as STEM-related extracurricular activities (e.g., field trips, guest speakers, clubs), encourages STEM entrance not only by piquing students' interest in STEM fields, but by providing the academic preparation necessary to gain admission into undergraduate programs (Bettencourt et al., 2020; Crisp et al., 2009; Xie et al., 2015). Students' grades, GPAs, and standardized test scores factor heavily in admission decisions, and students are more likely to be high achieving on each of these measures when their schools provide resources and experiences that promote their STEM knowledge (Bicer et al., 2020; Saw & Agger, 2021; Stearns et al., 2016).

As was true with respect to interpersonal networks, academic experiences interact with individual-level beliefs, such that positive experiences increase feelings of self-efficacy, boost confidence, and bolster the likelihood of underrepresented students entering and persisting in STEM (Conger et al., 2021; Dweck, 1986; Tyson et al., 2007). When academic institutions fail to provide resources for students, the students are less likely

to follow a STEM trajectory (Barker et al., 2023; Bettencourt et al., 2020; Xie et al., 2015). That may partially explain the link between community college attendance and lower STEM persistence. Many first generation, low-income, and racial/ethnic minority students start their STEM studies at community colleges in an effort to bolster their high school academic records (Park et al., 2020; Wang & Wickersham, 2018). Because community colleges often have fewer resources available (Long & Kurlaender, 2009; Wang, 2015), students start their STEM journeys disadvantaged and that often results in lower STEM persistence overall (Cohen & Kelly, 2020; Van Noy & Zeidenberg, 2014).

Societal-Level Influences: Cultural Stereotypes

Existing stereotypes about STEM tend to exclude racial/ethnic minorities and women from the STEM narrative (Alade et al., 2021; Cheryan et al. 2013; Seron et al., 2015). Not only do cultural stereotypes suggest STEM is predominantly for White, male students, they also suggest minority and female students lack the intellect necessary for success in STEM (McGee, 2016; Meador, 2018; Riegle-Crumb & King, 2010). Consequently, underrepresented students continually face racial bias, gender hierarchies, microaggressions, and institutional barriers that imply they do not belong in STEM (Allen et al., 2022; González-Pérez et al., 2020). These negative societal influences often cause students to either doubt their capabilities (Pronin et al., 2024; Sax et al., 2015) or overwork themselves in order to prove their competence (Carlone & Johnson, 2007; McGee & Martin, 2011). The stress associated with either situation makes entrance and persistence in STEM less likely (Heilbronner, 2011; Rainey et al., 2018). Overall, then, societal-level stereotypes interact with individual-level factors to affect minority students' self-perceptions, as well as others' perceptions of these students and the resources made available to them. The socio-ecological model of behavior draws our attention to these interactive effects.

In summary, prior studies suggest that underrepresented students' entrance into and persistence in STEM is influenced by numerous factors, including student characteristics, support networks, academic resource availability, and cultural stereotypes. And while these factors—and others at the individual-, interpersonal-, institutional-, and societal-level—interact with one another in complex ways, existing research has not yet examined all of these factors simultaneously or fully explored the important ways they interact with one another to influence minority student STEM entrance and persistence. This study fills that gap.

RESEARCH METHOD

Sampling and Data Collection Procedures

This study uses interview data with racial/ethnic minorities and/or female students who were pursuing a graduate degree in STEM in 2022. Our study focuses on graduate students for two reasons. First, most research examines minority student STEM entrance and persistence by relying on data from high school and/or baccalaureate students—research on minority graduate students in STEM is exceptionally rare (Bryson et al., 2024; Wilkins-Yel et al., 2022). Second, and most importantly, we contend that a graduate student population allows us to examine persistence in a deeper way because such students represent individuals who persisted in STEM through the baccalaureate and beyond. In short, because most studies focus on students who have not yet achieved a STEM degree, they are more limited in their ability to fully examine issues of persistence.

Participants were recruited from California universities using flyers, emails, social media postings (i.e., Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn), and purposive sampling techniques. These efforts generated interest from 29 individuals, 18 of whom agreed to and completed an interview. Using a semi-structured interview guide, participants were asked to comment on their STEM journey. Specifically, they reported on the factors that (1) initially piqued their interest in STEM, (2) contributed to their STEM entrance as undergraduate students, and (3) contributed to their persistence into graduate studies. Interviews were conducted and recorded through Zoom. The Zoom audio files were downloaded, initially transcribed using the dictation feature on Microsoft Word, and then checked for accuracy and corrected, when necessary, by the first author. Interviews were transcribed verbatim but for the purposes of clarity and brevity, common speech fillers (e.g., "um," "like," "you know") have been omitted from quotes included in the study results. Interviews averaged 77 minutes in length, with a range between 38 and 143 minutes. All study protocols and primary data collection procedures were approved by the [authors' university's] Institutional Review Board.

Analytic Strategy

To allow for an emergent research process, data analysis utilized qualitative coding techniques consistent with grounded theory and the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2014; Glaser, 1965). Qualitative analyses are particularly helpful for exposing patterns within interview data (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). As such, the authors created, refined, and applied a set of open codes to the data by reading each transcript three times. These codes were then grouped into both axial categories and

overarching themes (Straus & Corbin, 1998). For instance, open codes such as "financial assistance" and "emotional care" were part of the axial category "family support," and axial categories such as "family support," "teacher support," and "peer support" were part of the broader theme "interpersonal factors." In total, the four overarching themes for these data corresponded to the four levels of influence associated with the socio-economic model (individual-, interpersonal-, institutional-, and societal-level influences).

Coding and theming was initially completed by the first author and then reviewed by the second author. Discrepancies in coding were discussed and, when possible, resolved during the discussion. When the authors were unable to resolve differences of opinion, both sets of codes were applied to the data. This ensured that the greatest nuance and widest interpretation of the interviews was captured in the finalized data. Upon completion of coding, the authors created coding tables, wrote lengthy research memos, and referred to existing theory in order to identify and interpret patterns in the data.

Participants

Of the 18 STEM students interviewed for this study, 11 (61%) were female, 7 (39%) were male, and none identified as non-binary. Thirteen (72%) were in a PhD program and five (28%) were in a master's program. Although most students were pursuing degrees in the life sciences, there was considerable variation in students' subject areas. Specifically, three participants (16%) were pursuing degrees in the physical sciences (e.g., Chemistry and Biophysics), 11 (61%) in the life sciences (e.g., Environmental Science, Ecology, Biological Oceanography, etc.), one (6%) in the health sciences (e.g., Nursing), one (6%) in mathematics, one (6%) in civil engineering, and one (6%) in computer science programming.

Regarding the racial/ethnic demographic of participants, more than half identified themselves as Latino/a: eight (44%) were Latinas and four (22%) were Latinos. Additionally, three (16%) participants identified themselves as Filipino/a, one (6%) identified as Asian, one (6%) identified as Black/Nigerian, and one (6%) identified as White. Importantly, although White and Asian populations are not considered underrepresented in STEM, the participants who identified themselves as such were also women and therefore qualified for this study.

RESULTS

These data suggest that throughout a minority student's STEM journey, individual-level and societal-level factors often interact to serve as barriers to STEM entrance and persistence. The ability to overcome these

barriers frequently hinges on the interpersonal- and institutional-level supports to which students have access. Interestingly, though, the way these factors interact differs for STEM entrance and STEM persistence. Table 1 summarizes each of these relationships.

Table 1

Interactive Relationships

	STEM Barriers	STEM Entrance	STEM Persistence
Interactions	Societal stereotypes X Individual beliefs	Interpersonal support X individual beliefs Institutional support X Interpersonal support	Institutional support X Individual beliefs Individual effort X Interpersonal support Interpersonal support X Individual beliefs

Interactive Effects That Serve as STEM Barriers

Demographic factors, especially first-generation status, race, and gender, disadvantage underrepresented students from the outset, as do cultural stereotypes about who belongs in STEM. Together these factors hinder feelings of belonging and lessen self-efficacy. This interactive effect came up frequently among the interviewees. For instance, a Latino PhD student in chemistry said stereotypes about "science people" initially convinced him he wasn't a "science guy." He noted, "I would say that [the] thing that kind of deterred me from science [was]…I just felt like that wasn't for people like me, you know? The people who do science are smart people, right? Like [they're] just amazing, [they're] beautiful at math." Similarly, a Latina PhD student in computational biology said she struggled with a "confidence issue" because she did not feel she was "good enough to stay in math." Others noted that hearing people say things like "it's not for you" or "it's not people like you that should be doing this" made them feel very "discouraged" to pursue STEM. In short, societal-level stereotypes interacted with students' individual-level self-perceptions and caused them to doubt their fit within STEM.

Female students also reported having their knowledge and intellect continuously questioned by others, which impacted their own feelings of

belonging: “They make you feel bad, if that makes sense? Whether you're aware of it or not, I think they have more of an effect on how you feel and that has an effect on how you work.” Similarly, racial and ethnic minority students said it was “difficult…envisioning [themselves in STEM]” because the typical scientist is “a White male.” With so few role models to emulate, minority students often felt compelled to “just kind of accept…there are science people in the world and there are non-science people in the world,” and the science people are “really different” from them.

Importantly, however, the STEM students in this study were eventually able to overcome the stereotypes and feelings of self-doubt. A Latino Master’s student in civil engineering said, “I eventually got to a point where I was like, ‘You know what? There's nobody there that I can…see in this role; maybe I just have to be that person.’” How did students make this transition? It had a great deal to do with the interpersonal- and institutional-level supports that were available during their STEM journeys. Sometimes these supports worked independently of each other and sometimes they interacted with each other and/or students’ individual-level beliefs.

Independent and Interactive Effects Influencing STEM Entrance

Interpersonal Supports. Parents and teachers were crucial sources of support for students. When parents and teachers showed an interest in what the students were working on and encouraged their efforts, students felt empowered to pursue collegiate-level STEM studies. For instance, a Latina PhD student recounted her father’s reaction when she told him she was going to pursue psychology instead of neuroscience because psychology “would be a safe zone.” Her father said “You’ve never been scared; nothing should hold you back” and that helped “wipe away [her] fear” about “going for it.” Parents were also sometimes able to offer financial support for their children.

A White female PhD student said, “I ended up taking the ACT eight times. Eight! Obviously, they’re expensive. I was very lucky that my parents were willing to [pay for] that,” and an Asian female PhD student said, “[My parents] paid for my whole undergrad career…so that gave me opportunities to just study really hard, not have to work a job, and [be able to] take internships [even if they] didn’t pay.”

Teachers encouraged students’ interests by exposing them to the possibilities in STEM. A Black male PhD student in computer science recounted his high school computer science teacher bringing a computer gaming textbook to class: “He opened up the book and he pointed to a bunch of programming languages and goes, ‘You know the game you’re playing

right now? You can actually write it for yourself.'" This interaction was pivotal in helping the student believe he could pursue a career in computer science. A current Latina PhD student in biochemistry noted that a high school teacher recommended her for a summer research program at a local university. This experience, although challenging, was the impetus for her STEM journey: "Even then my understanding of science was not strong enough for me to be able to follow what we were doing, … a lot of it went over my head, but what I knew [was] I really liked doing all the hands-on bench work." The following year the student gained entrance into a baccalaureate STEM program.

Having access to teachers with existing knowledge about STEM and higher education proved vital for many of these students. Teachers frequently helped them with their college applications and entrance exams by offering extra study sessions, tips for selecting undergraduate programs, and general application guidance. According to a White female PhD student in environmental science, "If you don't have either someone directly close to you in academia who can connect you to someone who knows the process better, or if you don't get lucky with a mentor, you're just out of fucking luck and that's the really hard truth of it."

Importantly, these discussions illustrate that interpersonal supports had both independent and interactive effects on STEM entrance. They provided students with opportunities and knowledge they otherwise would not have had, and they changed students' own beliefs about their STEM capabilities. Both outcomes increased the likelihood that these students would pursue a degree in STEM.

Institutional Supports. Support from teachers was based on more than their personal desire to help. The more institutional resources teachers had available to them, the more they were able to offer to students. In this way, institutional and interpersonal supports interacted with one another and worked in tandem to promote STEM entrance. Specifically, students attending schools with advanced placement courses, living in communities with STEM-related summer camps, and/or residing near universities with outreach programs were more likely to gain entrance into STEM, in part because of their teachers' efforts to make them aware of these opportunities.

Access to these types of resources was crucial because "then [students] have people to talk to and [they] can see what [STEM] is really about." These resources were also "really good at [giving students] a list of jobs…and the industries [they] can work in," and having that knowledge was important for fostering interest in STEM. One Latino PhD student said that

learning about job prospects was vital because it helped him realize that a person working in STEM is "not just a dude with a lab coat in a lab somewhere; it's more than that."

Institutional support also came in the form of financial assistance. Although some parents were able to help with college costs, many were not. Thus, students talked a great deal about applying for "scholarships" and "fellowships," looking for programs that were "affordable," and finding ways to not "burden" their families or put themselves "into debt." In fact, students frequently had to preference program cost over program reputation when deciding which undergraduate school to attend. As a Latina PhD student noted, "I applied to a range of schools. There were some private schools, there were UCs [University of California schools], and there were a couple of CSUs [California State Universities]. I got into all of them except for one, and I chose to go to [this university] because I got a scholarship." Another Latina Master's student recounted running carwashes to raise the money she needed for tuition while she awaited the passage of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA):

> [My undergraduate university] was like, "If you don't pay the first quarter, then you can't come."… I wanted to wait it out till DACA came in because then [the university was] gonna pay for me, but they were like, "if you don't come the first quarter, we can't enroll you and you're gonna have to miss this year." So, I had to find a way to get the money for tuition, for the first quarter…I barely made it with just enough for the first quarter.

In short, without the financial aid associated with DACA, this student would not have attended college or entered STEM. Thus, as was true for interpersonal supports, institutional factors had both independent and interactive effects on STEM entrance. Advanced placement courses, community resources, and scholarships were important in and of themselves, but they also worked in conjunction with teachers' efforts and students' growing understandings of their own place within STEM.

Independent and Interactive Effects Influencing STEM Persistence

Persistence in STEM was also affected by interpersonal and institutional supports that worked separately and in tandem. Interestingly, however, an additional interactive effect arose when considering STEM persistence—students' own efforts were crucial for mobilizing interpersonal supports, especially those that could be provided by peers.

Institutional Supports. Institutional-level factors in the form of tutoring and supplemental instruction (SI) programs helped students achieve success in their classes. For instance, when discussing a key to success, a Latino PhD

student noted, “For me, a big thing was [my undergraduate university] has this program called SI, supplemental instruction, where…you can go to a mini discussion kind of class and ask questions from a senior student who’s taken the class and excelled in the class.” Similarly, a Latina PhD student in biochemistry said, “If it was not for those [SI] classes, I really don’t think I would have been able to succeed.”

One reason tutoring programs were so impactful was they helped students find the confidence they needed to persist in STEM. According to a Latina PhD student in molecular cell biology:

> I remember coming into the first [tutoring] session and I still just didn’t know what was going on. [The tutor] really took the time to stay with me and explain things, and by the end of the class, I was one of the top performing students. Then, the quarter after that, I was actually tutoring OChem to the students who were taking it at the time. So, I just feel like that kind of just shows you [that] you can start off thinking you’re not gonna know anything…[and] you’re going to fail and then you just completely turn it around. I feel like that happened to me at so many points in my undergrad career...so my motto [became] “I don’t know how I’m gonna do this, but I know I’m gonna do it.” I feel like that just stuck with me throughout this entire process, even [to] where I am now. Sometimes I’m still like, “I don’t know how I’m gonna get this presentation done or this experiment to work, but I know it’s gonna happen eventually.”

Thus, tutoring resources not only provided independent academic support, but also interacted with students’ self-perceptions by showing them they were capable of succeeding in a topic they initially worried about failing. This positive experience contradicted the common notion that individuals have to be a “natural” in STEM, and in so doing, it not only bolstered students’ feelings of self-efficacy, it promoted their persistence in STEM.

Unexpectedly, students also noted that their persistence in STEM was influenced by the emotional support they received from their institutions. What is interesting here is the focus on the actions of departments and research labs rather than specific instructors. For instance, one Latina PhD student noted that it was her experience in a research lab that ultimately pushed her toward graduate school:

> During my undergrad, [in] my last year, I joined a research lab, and they were super supportive. They would ask me all the time what my plans were after I graduated, and I didn’t have any plans. So in that lab they were able to keep me a year after I had finished my

undergrad, just to do some work and [to] get a little bit of experience in research to see if I liked it and if I wanted to do grad school.

Prior to this experience, the student did not believe she was ready for graduate school. Similarly, a Latina PhD student in computational biology shared, "The math department was super excited just to find out where I was interviewing, and they were people that I just talked to about the programs [I was] considering…. They were definitely rallying for [me], which was really nice." Others said that without the help their departments and research labs provided with respect to "graduate applications" and "personal statements," they "don't know if [they] would have gotten into any [program]." Once again, then, we see that institutional factors were not only independently helpful for students via the opportunities and encouragement they provided, they were also helpful in solidifying students' belief in themselves.

Interpersonal Supports. Interestingly, the impact of interpersonal support on STEM persistence differed markedly from its effect on STEM entrance. Whereas STEM entrance was strongly affected by the independent and interactive effects of resources offered by parents, teachers, and institutions, persistence was more strongly tied to support from peers and students' own efforts to mobilize that support. For instance, students frequently asked peers for assistance with graduate applications and studying for the Graduate Record Examination (GRE). They also noted how important it was to "find a mentor that's one or two years older than you" and make an effort to understand "what they're applying to [and] what things they are getting involved with." One White female PhD student described relying on an older peer to help find potential advisors for her PhD program: "He told me how to write the emails to introduce myself, he helped me edit my CV. [He was a] godsend. Literally, I would not be in a PhD program today if it was not for him and I mean that."

It appears, then, that as underrepresented students' STEM journeys progressed, they spent a considerable amount of time actively seeking out help from friends rather than waiting for offers from teachers. In this way, interpersonal supports interacted with individual-level factors to promote STEM persistence. And that was true for more than just the instrumental help associated with applications and GRE preparations. Students also sought out friends for emotional support and a "listening ear." That was especially true when their gender or minority status made them question their belonging in STEM. A Latino Master's student in civil engineering recounted:

> I was questioning: "What am I doing? What am I doing in this program? How did I even get in?" So, I reached out to [an]

> organization for Latinos in STEM…and I talked to them…. We had this serious conversation where I was like, "Dude, I'm having imposter syndrome and I don't know how to deal with it," and he was like, "That's okay, it happens."

And a Latina student working on her master's degree in nursing said: I joined a Latina sorority, and they were my biggest support system; [they were] like my family away from home. And they had a lot of resources too because the older sisters or the alumni were super helpful in just navigating the system and finding…resources [like] recycling books, recycling study material, telling me which professors to take and which ones not to take. That was super helpful. And then just getting through the classes with my sorority sisters—we would help each other out and be in study groups, and we would push each other and motivate each other.

Having similar others to connect with was so crucial for students' experiences in STEM that many built their own networks when pre-existing groups were not available. For instance, a Latina PhD student in biochemistry said that because of her struggle to find community as a racial/ethnic minority, she started a chapter of The Society for Advancement of Chicanos/Hispanics and Native Americans in Science (SACNAS) at her graduate institution:

> I started a SACNAS chapter just 'cuz, for me, that was another community that I felt I could go to. [It's a place] where you can bring your culture and your science background, and a lot of people are going through the same things that you are in terms of imposter syndrome or applying to fellowships or things like that. Because of that, I wanted to have [SACNAS at my graduate university].

Similarly, an Asian female PhD student in ecology helped restart and expand a club for underrepresented students. She noted, "I'm helping restart…a club that provides community for people from underrepresented backgrounds…. It's hard for grad students to find community with each other…. I want to provide that community for those people."

As these quotes illustrate, the effects of interpersonal supports were often felt because the students made a concerted effort to connect with similarly situated peers. Rather than merely being recipients of interpersonal support, as was commonly the case for STEM entrance, students relied on their own agency and the help of others to ensure their persistence in STEM. In short, they actively mobilized help from peers and that allowed them to meet the challenges associated with moving forward in STEM. Importantly, this is not to say that support offered from parents or teachers was not important for STEM persistence.

Students did discuss faculty and parents encouraging them to pursue graduate studies or assuring them that their work was important. Nonetheless, peers were discussed much more frequently and thus the interaction between students' individual-level efforts and interpersonal supports seemed more critical for STEM persistence. As one Latino PhD student noted, "You need friends. You need somebody to kind of make the moment pass, you know? That you can have a beer with [and] you can talk shit with. Something like that...that's helpful, that's super helpful." Ultimately, these students persisted in STEM and came to believe that their work was "doing good for the world," "bringing people together," and "making progress [for] the planet itself." Knowing that made them feel like they finally belonged in STEM.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Using the socio-ecological model as a backdrop, this research set out to examine the degree to which individual-, interpersonal-, institutional-, and societal-level factors interact with one another to influence marginalized students' (e.g., racial/ethnic minorities and women) entrance and persistence in STEM. Prior research has demonstrated that individual- and societal-level factors, such as race, gender, and cultural stereotypes, often serve as barriers to STEM entrance (McGee & Martin, 2011; Meador, 2018; Sax et al., 2015; Seron et al., 2015). Similarly, existing studies have pointed to the importance of interpersonal and institutional factors for promoting STEM entrance and persistence (Bicer et al., 2020; Cantu, 2012; Dotterer, 2021; Šimunović & Babarović, 2020; Valla & Williams, 2012). Although important and informative, these studies have rarely discussed the way these factors interact with each other. Instead, the interactive effects have been assumed or merely alluded to.

Our explicit exploration of the interactive effects illustrates that individual-, interpersonal-, institutional-, and societal-level factors do work together in complex and nuanced ways that vary over time. Specifically, societal-level stereotypes about who belongs in STEM influence students' own self-perceptions, causing them to doubt their fit in the discipline. Cultural stereotypes and self-doubt, thus, work together to create barriers to STEM entrance.

It is possible for students to overcome this self-doubt, but the interactive effects that make this possible appear to differ slightly for STEM entrance and STEM persistence. During a student's high school and early college years, they will be most apt to consider entering STEM when they have interpersonal encouragement from parents and teachers that undercuts their self-doubt. In short, they must be able to see themselves in STEM, and

they need to have positive experiences in the field that bolster their beliefs in their own abilities. This is much more likely to happen when institutional supports, such as advanced placement courses, clubs, and summer camps, are available in their schools and communities. When these kinds of resources exist and teachers encourage students to participate in them, students feel empowered to enter STEM. Thus, STEM entrance is seemingly influenced by the way interpersonal-, institutional-, and individual-level factors interact with one another. Notably, however, at this point in a student's STEM journey, they seem to be largely passive beneficiaries of the supports and resources offered to them by others–but that changes with time.

Once students have entered STEM, interpersonal and institutional supports that bolster their self-perceptions remain important, but they also begin to exhibit agency by actively seeking out resources and support for themselves. In short, rather than continuing to be passive recipients of help from others, they actively mobilize help from peers, find mentors, and even build large-scale support networks (such as clubs) if they do not already exist. This suggests that students' own efforts have as much to do with STEM persistence as the interpersonal and institutional supports they continue to make use of. This is not to say that students entering STEM lack agency, but it does appear that their successful entrance into the field is strongly influenced by the efforts of others, while STEM persistence is influenced by students actively seeking out the supports and resources needed to ensure their continued success, especially in the form of help from peers.

IMPLICATIONS

These findings are important because they highlight the ways individual-, interpersonal-, institutional-, and societal-level factors interact to affect underrepresented students' STEM entrance and persistence. They also suggest that the processes that foster STEM entrance differ from those that foster persistence, and that has important policy implications. For instance, because minority students generally do not see STEM as a path they can take unless they receive encouragement from authority figures, it seems clear that parents, teachers, schools, and communities need to continue to provide, and perhaps even expand, resources and experiences that will foster students' STEM self-efficacy. Students also need exposure to role-models in STEM, perhaps via guest lectures, field trips, and units of study dedicated to minority scholars. Ultimately, helping students see themselves in STEM is a crucial first step to getting them there.

Importantly, persisting in STEM requires more than access to encouraging words and institutional resources. While those things are

certainly important, these data suggest that access to the emotional supports that come from similar-others is also crucial. And while the students in our study took it upon themselves to foster these connections, teachers and institutions could facilitate this process through the creation of clubs, networking events, socializing spaces, and so forth. In short, providing supports for students' emotional, psychological, and/or social well-being is critical for their persistence in STEM, especially as they enter post-baccalaureate education.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Our study is not without limitations. For instance, the racial diversity in our study is limited–there were very few participants who identified as Black and none who identified as Native American. Moreover, participants were drawn from a pool of students attending universities only in California. Consequently, it was not possible to investigate whether entrance and persistence strategies differed by race or region of the country. Future research should use additional and more varied groups of students to further explore how individual-, interpersonal-, institutional-, and societal-level factors impact minority students' STEM entrance and persistence. Future research should also seek to verify these results with a representative, quantitative sample. For now, though, this study offers important preliminary insights into the interactive effects that impact STEM entrance and persistence among marginalized students.

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Serving African American Students at a Hispanic-Serving Institution: Black Centered Action Instruction as a Pedagogical Practice

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ABSTRACT

From a critical race perspective and the narrative view of one faculty member, this paper discusses some teaching practices implemented for undergraduate Black students who attend a Hispanic-serving institution. The findings of this work offer Black-Centered Active Instruction (BCAI) as a pedagogy to engage the students. BCAI centers the specific needs of Black students who are within the minority, pushes for active engagement with Black students both in and out of the classroom, and encourages the creation of safe Black spaces for undergraduate students. The implication of this work encourages educators to consider the history of antiblackness within American culture, primarily minority spaces, and apply this to similar practices in higher education.

Keywords: African American Students, Africana Studies, Black Studies, Experiential Learning, High-Impact Learning Practices, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Interdisciplinary Studies, Pedagogy

Abbreviation	Term
CRT	Critical Race Theory
HBCU	Historically Black College and/or University
HSI	Hispanic Serving Institution
HWI	Historically White Institution
MSI	Minority Serving Institution
PWI	Predominately White Institution
US	United States

INTRODUCTION

Many United States (US) colleges and universities, especially those that are historically White, have a long history of systemic anti-Blackness that traces back to the universities' use of enslaved Black labor and their participation in US chattel slavery (Harris et al., 2019). Today, a number of these Historically White Institutions (HWI) have transformed into Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) (Petrov & Garcia, 2021). Schools that have historically ignored the humanity in Black learners now have enough students of color enrolled that their institutions can identify as serving minority students (an MSI or an HSI). In the case of the US, the Latinx student demographic needs to be at least 25 percent of the undergraduate student enrollment for a college or university to be designated an HSI (Santiago, 2006; Garcia, 2020). These US HSIs are classified based on student population and are not necessarily based on the university's interest or ability to serve minority students (Garcia, 2020; Santiago, 2006; Laden, 2001). This is not the reality for all MSIs, as most Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) aim to serve the specific needs of their Black students (Hubbard & Stage, 2009). HSIs too must continually rethink the ways in which they are serving students (Garcia, 2021), especially their Black students.

Servingness has proven to be a racialized privilege, to which Black students are often excluded (Vega & Boveda, 2022). US HSIs are not immune to this, as schools themselves are racialized spaces where Whiteness holds power (Hall et al., 2021). US Societal institutions, such as HSIs, merely reproduce the racism evident in our society (Rosa & Díaz, 2020). This is not to frame all HSIs as negative spaces, as most are necessary institutions where some students have positive experiences and feel that they belong (Dayton et al., 2004; Musoba et al., 2013). However, it is essential to note that even when an institution is minority-serving, it still possesses the ability to overlook the needs of its Black students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Black Student Experiences at HSIs

Many Black students enter these college campuses and assume that because the HSIs are minority and/or Hispanic serving, they will be readily accepted and the colleges will provide abundant academic resources (Bonner II et al., 2015). However, students often experience the opposite, as many Black students attending HSIs indicate feelings of exclusion, and that their varying needs are not met (Pirtle et al., 2021). Specifically, some feel invisible/unseen, and that there is an expectation that they might fail or

underperform (Brooms, 2022). Black students have reported that they are underrepresented in the student population at HSIs, and that these campuses lack Black faculty (Serrano, 2022). These reasons and more could be why the students experience anti-blackness (Pirtle et al., 2021; Abrica et al., 2020), which tends to cost students a mental and emotional tax (Givens, 2016). Black students have experienced microaggressions (Joslyn et al., 2022), have been stereotyped (Stanislaus, 2021), reported that they experience barriers to graduation (Knox, 2018), do not feel a sense of belonging or welcome on the campuses of HSIs (Serrano, 2022).

Black Resistance, Survival, and Counter Spaces on HSI Campuses

As a coping mechanism for racialized experiences, Black students frequently create sub-communities in American universities where they are within the minority. Often, Black students find each other within majority-white spaces, and create communities where they can continue to practice their cultural traditions that have largely been ignored by the dominant campus community, such as joining Black Greek Lettered Organizations, which have a long history of connecting Black students to society, each other, and professional networks (Black & Bimper Jr., 2020; McClure, 2006). Students will also purposely house themselves in majority Black dormitories, as "the presence of a reasonable number of 'same-race' peers provides role models and academic, social, and cultural support for these students – critical ingredients for a successful college experience" (Altbach et al., 2002, pp. 38-39). These interpersonal relationships support Black students, enhance social experiences, and encourage academic success for Black students (Palmer et al., 2011). All of this is evidence that Black students will create avenues to advocate for themselves within racially isolating campuses. However, there is an "over-reliance on Black student organizations to fulfill the student needs" (Pirtle et al., 2021, p. 12). Although Black students have been able to find ways to counter their experiences of anti-Blackness on college campuses, institutions of learning must do their part to support student engagement.

While anti-blackness must be dismantled at a systemic level, we as educators can also do our part to dismantle it in our classrooms (Bonifacio, 2022). This can begin with our classroom pedagogies. In the contemporary era, many educators have turned to culturally relevant pedagogy, Afrocentric paradigms, and high-impact learning practices to best serve their Black students.

Culturally Relevant Pedagogy

Applying critical race theory and perspectives to education, pedagogy, and classroom practice, culturally relevant pedagogy makes "attention to race a way to help students achieve both academic and cultural excellence" (Ladson-Billings,1997, p. 134). It provides space for student academic success, allows students to learn while remaining culturally competent within their own culture, and encourages student critical consciousness to critique the larger society (Ladson-Billings, 1995). Culturally relevant teaching recommends that teachers be able to identify their own deficit thinking, recognize student cultural capital, and reject white middle-class biases hidden in education (Howard, 2003). As more traditional pedagogies devalue the cultural practices of multicultural students, culturally relevant teaching encourages educators to value the cultural and linguistic talents brought to the classroom by students of color (Colvin & Tobler, 2013). This pedagogy has also created space for culturally responsive and culturally sustaining pedagogies, which similarly center the education of diverse and multicultural students (Ladson-Billings, 2021b; Ladson-Billings, 2014).

While culturally relevant pedagogy has stemmed from the teaching practices and experiences of a Black woman educating African American students (Ladson-Billings, 2021a), and can be applied to the learning of Black students and African centered teaching (Ladson-Billings, 2000), it has evolved to be a relevant pedagogy for learners of diverse backgrounds and for a multicultural student education (Ladson-Billings, 1992; Saint-Hilaire, 2014). Though this is inclusive and important for students of different backgrounds, a practice that exclusively centers the concerns and specific needs of Black students is most important for Black Students at an HSI. African Americans, while still people of color, have unique socio-political, historical, and economic experiences in the United States, and at HSIs. Though they might share some similar experiences of oppression as other marginalized groups, African Americans have distinguishable needs. Historically, when the needs and concerns of Black people are conflated with the needs and concerns of other groups, Black needs often go overlooked, ignored, and get the short end of the stick. Therefore an education centering the specific experiences and histories of the Black people is necessary.

Afrocentric and African Centered Pedagogies

Afrology "is the transgenerational and transcontinental Afrocentric study of African phenomena," which "denotes the Afrocentric study of African concepts, issues, and behaviors" (Asante, 1998, p. 19). Used in theory and practice (Kumah-Abiwu, 2021), such pedagogies support the study of all

African people, continental and diasporic, specifically using African-centered paradigms and an African consciousness to do so (such as through African-centered values and principles). “Afrocentricity says that Africans must be viewed as being the center of our historical narratives, as the subjects of our explorations, as the resistors of White oppression and conquest, and as the mothers and fathers of human civilization” (Asante, 2020b, p. 210). There are multiple Afrocentric theories and practices (Mazama, 2001) that have been used to decolonize Eurocentric frameworks of education (Sheik, 2020), mentor students (Leslie, 2002), create scholarly disciplines (Mazama, 2021) and guide all aspects of daily life (Mazama, 2002). Such practices are anti-racist and emancipatory (Asante, 2020a).

Although described as liberatory, African-centered theories have been criticized for essentialism because they mainly focus on Africa as a basis of thought, but fail to “create a balance between examinations of the external and structural forces that condition African American life and the internal factors that reveal the social relations, cultural values, and sociopolitical architecture of the Black community” (Cha-Jua, 2000, p. 47). According to such critics, Afrocentricity seems to ignore the sociopolitical realities of African Americans and instead focuses on an African consciousness believed to be shared by all African diasporic peoples.

High-Impact Learning Practices

Regardless of the theoretical framework or pedagogy used, very important tools for education are high-impact practices (Kilgo et al., 2015). According to Anderson et al. (2019), high-impact learning can “help undergraduates develop real-world skills through hands-on applied learning” (p. 231). Some examples of high-impact learning can include “first year seminars, study abroad experiences, service learning, internships, collaborative research, and capstone courses” (Chepp, 2017, p. 163). Such active and collaborative pedagogies can yield higher retention of first-year, first-generation, and underrepresented students (Lidinsky, 2014). I have found that many of my past students have benefited from high-impact learning practices, and therefore, I make it a duty to implement some sort of high-impact learning practice each semester. With this work, I would like to explore the possibility that combining high-impact practices with Black centered study, could be beneficial to Black students attending HSIs.

METHODOLOGY

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this research is not to discredit existing pedagogies but to build upon them to create relevant practices that appeal to the specific needs of Black students who attend HSIs. Scholarly research on African American students at HWIs and HBCUs focuses on pedagogies appropriate for African American students within such institutions. For example, research suggests that at HWIs, Black students often experience race-related stressors such as incidences of racial discrimination and feelings of isolation (Neville et al., 2004), as well as offensive microaggressions (Banks & Landau, 2019). Other research has illustrated that Black students tend to do well and be socially and academically satisfied at HBCUs because the HBCUs provide supportive environments (Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002; Palmer & Gasman, 2008). However, less research has been conducted on appropriate pedagogies for African American students at HSIs. Therefore, this research hopes to contribute to the literature gap while reflecting on classroom practices in education at West Coast HIS (pseudonym) in the United States. As the researcher, I will attempt to answer the following research questions:

R1: How might Black students experience HSIs?
R2: What are some of the needs of African American students at HSIs?
R3: How can educators serve the specific needs of African American students who attend HSIs?

Theoretical Framework

Critical Race Theory (CRT) is an interdisciplinary theoretical framework that acknowledges that racism is endemic (Parsons & Plakhotnic, 2006). This means CRT understands that racism has always been, and will always be an issue within society and its institutions (Milner, 2013). This includes college campuses, academia, and all other societal establishments. Therefore, CRT considers the prevalence of racism within higher education, in order to best serve undergraduate African American Students who are engulfed in such realities. CRT at its core is liberatory, so the pedagogical practices discussed in this work aim to provide a just educational experience for Black students.

Positionality

Positioning myself within the work that I do, means understanding my privilege and power (Cooper, 2005), but especially understanding the dynamics of working as a member of the in-group, while constantly

challenging what I already believe to be true about the African American students at this particular HSI (Merriam et al., 2001). When I identify myself as a member of the in-group, I mean that my racial identity is similar to that of the students, and I would have likely had similar experiences if I were also an undergraduate student at West Coast HSI. Even considering myself an "insider" assumes that the Black community at West Coast HSI is a monolith (Merriam et al., 2001), and that is not my aim here. However, it is important to make a note that many of the undergraduate African American students I served have shared similar experiences with other undergraduate African American students at this particular HSI.

Method

Considering the verbalized needs of my students, some of the traditions of Black Studies, and the missions and goals of the department, I considered multiple ways to best serve my Black students. The students served were traditional-aged Black college students, who varied in major and minor areas of study. Many were African American Studies majors, and most were enrolled in courses offered by the African American Studies Department. The following methods were practiced and implemented during the 2019-2020 academic school year: creation of safe Black spaces, active engagement with Black students outside of the classroom, courses that center Black histories, and critical self-reflection.

DISCUSSION OF PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICES UTILIZED

Black students deserve an education that is empathetic and supportive (Johns & Hawkes, 2020), validates their history and lived experiences (Jones, 2020), and incorporates mentoring (Craven et al., 2014). This means that as educators, we should target and meet the specific needs of Black students who attend our institutions. Hoping to make a bridge between theory and practice, I hope that this work will provide some insight into how educators, can take steps toward making education equitable for Black students in US colleges and universities, especially HSIs. Considering some of my pedagogical classroom practices, I will share how I have purposely centered the unique needs of Black students who attend West Coast HSI. The pedagogies discussed throughout this work will reflect my work as a lecturer at this university.

It is important to note that although this institution of instruction is indeed an HSI, during private and public conversations, many of my African American students have referred to it as a "PWI" (Predominately White Institution). This is likely because, at this school, the campus culture reflects

a similar campus culture of PWIs/HWIs around the country. That is, they marginalize the Black students (Abrica et al., 2020). Similar sentiments have been reported in the literature. Often, the faculty of these institutions are majority White, therefore the school feels like a PWI (Pirtle et al., 2021). Last, "the Hispanics [students] here think they are White," which make the campus feel like a PWI (Bonner II et al., 2015, P. 47). Placing this into context, this means that as a minority-serving institution, the needs of Black students are often unnoticed and forgotten, similar to that of a PWI/HWI. With this understanding in mind, I purposely made it my duty to center the specific experiences and needs of the Black students within my pedagogies and practices. It is also important for me to note that I was working in an African American Studies Department, and the majority of my undergraduate majors identified as African American and/or Black. Therefore, it would have been doing my students an injustice to not center their needs within my pedagogies.

A pedagogy that I offer is Black Centered Active Instruction (BCAI). BCAI centers the specific interests of Black students and encourages active engagement with these students both in and out of the classroom. BCAI is a liberatory practice that, true to Black Studies, is descriptive, corrective, and prescriptive (Marable, 2000). That is, BCAI describes the histories, experiences, and cultures of Black People, attempts to correct past wrongs of racist education, and prescribes solutions for students. It encourages the relationship building between faculty and students, and the mentoring of students by faculty. BCAI promotes social responsibility, and understands that teaching needs to be engaging both inside and outside the classroom in order to be impactful. Therefore, BCAI is an active approach to instruction, that incorporates high-impact learning practices.

Here I will discuss specific examples of how I have implemented BCAI through the creation of safe Black spaces, active engagement with undergraduate Black students outside of the classroom, courses that center Black histories, and critical self-reflection. Although my implementation of BCAI is steeped in Black Studies, these practices can be executed in multiple disciplines. That is, BCAI incorporates teaching and learning strategies that can be interpreted and practiced throughout multiple departments and areas of study. This means that the examples of practices that I share here are not limited to students within African American Studies, and can be provided by professors of Engineering, Psychology, English, Art, or any other campus department. I am hopeful that educators of various fields will be able to recreate similar activities for their students.

Creation of Black Spaces: The Black Student Retreat

2,456 Black students applied to West Coast HSI for the Fall 2019 semester, however about half, 1,292, were accepted, and only 348 of those Black student applicants ended up enrolling. During the fall 2019 semester, there were 33, 282 students enrolled at West Coast HSI, and of that student population, only about 3% of those students were African American. Further, the larger city that houses the school, has less than a 2% population of Black people. During the 2018/2019 academic year, the university awarded a total of 6,791 bachelor's degrees, 2,830 master's, and 9 doctoral degrees. 188 of the bachelor's degrees, 59 of the master's, and 0 of the doctoral degrees were earned by African American students. These numbers are important to put the Black student population into perspective. It is my hope for the reader to understand how much in the minority African American students are within the campus and larger community.

With such small representation, it becomes extremely hard for African American students to find community amongst same-race peers. This is important because students of color tend to find peace, empowerment, and support when surrounded by other peers of color within their informal created networks at HSIs (Comeaux et al., 2021). Further, Black students tend to feel fulfilled with their institution when they are supported by positive interpersonal environments (Outcalt & Skewes-Cox, 2002). On top of the available research, many of my Black students often share with me their dreams of wanting to attend an HBCU, pursuits to apply to an HBCU graduate school, and interest in HBCU culture. One of the implications that I take from this is that students want to experience being around more Black students, need safe spaces where they can express themselves freely and culturally (Ohito & Brown, 2021), and want their social and cultural capital to be valued and nurtured (Simon et al., 2022).

Considering this, it is of extreme importance that the educators of these students provide the much-needed safe Black spaces for their Black students. Classrooms can be a great space for Black students to gain community and engage with other Black students. This is especially true with Black Studies classes, as the students get to be in classrooms where their histories, cultures, and experiences are the center of focus. However, the limitation here is that these same classrooms include the diversity of the school. That is, their peers within the classroom are not always necessarily Black, but rather the classroom is a multicultural space of learning. While a diverse student body in the classroom is more often than not, a good thing, this does hinder the importance, significance, and emphasis of a safe Black

space. Therefore, safe Black spaces usually need to be created outside of the classroom, while still incorporating student learning.

Understanding the need here, I participated in the planning and implementation of a free overnight Black student retreat. This retreat was a three-day off-campus weekend getaway, that encouraged leadership skills, community building, social and professional relationships, and the faculty mentoring of Black campus students. The Black student retreat offered workshops, group activities, team-building icebreakers, goal-setting skills, and many other student-centered activities. Some of the specific activities included the re-imagining of Black campus life, where students created memes that reflected how they imagined the Black community on campus could be post-retreat; hands-on organizing and planning tutorials to model prioritizing a daily, weekly, monthly, and semesterly agenda; and small mentoring breakout groups that allowed each faculty and staff member to have one-on-one and mini group opportunities to better assist students. Ultimately, the retreat was a safe learning space for Black students to assemble, create community, and become more involved in campus life. Based on the feedback that we received from student participants, the retreat was a success for community building, feelings of empowerment, and identity building of the undergraduates.

To recruit student participants, we created a flier that advertised the Black student retreat. The printed copies of the flier were placed in the Department of African American Studies, as well as in the Black student resource center. Digital copies of the flier were emailed to students on the list serves of the African American Studies Department and the Black Student Resource Center. The flier was also provided to instructors within the Department of African American Studies to share directly with their students. There was only space for 40 students, so all interested students had to submit an application via Google forms to participate. However, most of the students who applied had the opportunity to attend, as waitlisted students were added to the retreat once some students canceled their participation. All of the students who participated were Black, traditional-aged, undergraduate students who were enrolled at the university.

Like many pedagogical proposals, there are some challenges here. Like Black students, Black faculty and staff also experience Anti-Blackness (Vega, 2022), and feel unsupported on the campuses of HSIs (Venegas et al., 2021). The greatest challenge is that research has proven that faculty of color tend to be overworked with unpaid and unofficial duties (Gordon et al., 2022; Turner et al, 1999; Quezada & Louque, 2004). Already underrepresented and burned out (Jackson, 2018), Black women faculty especially, have reported a

low work-life balance with work taking up a significant amount of their time, and they are therefore unable to experience an equal balance between their career responsibilities and their personal life (Szelényi & Denson, 2019). "A possible explanation for this finding may be related to the high service demands that are often placed on women throughout the academic career, a burden that is even more exacerbated among faculty of color, among them African American faculty" (Szelényi & Denson, 2019, p. 651).

Adding an additional layer of unpaid work could make the emotional and physical workload for Black educators a burden. With careful strategy, however, the creation of safe Black spaces for Black students outside of the classroom could be mutually beneficial to the educator. Such activity could be credited to student service, which reflects well on the work of the educator (I also understand that service is often not as heavily weighted when being considered for tenure and/or promotion). Even more, this service to students could also be supported by university funds. For example, West Coast HSI encourages faculty to apply for extraordinary service to underrepresented groups awards. Although the name of the support could vary, I am confident that universities around the country could offer similar opportunities for funding and compensation for faculty time. Further, it must also be considered that scholars often enter the field with an understanding that much of their work will be credited to service, and not necessarily financial compensation, reimbursement, or support. I am not agreeing that such a reality is okay, however I am simply mentioning that it is indeed a common experience.

Active Engagement with Black Students Outside of the Classroom: Study Away and/or Abroad

West Coast HSI employed 2,120 faculty members during the Fall 2019 semester. Making up about 6.7%, 72 of those faculty members were Black. These statistics do not distinguish the rank, position, or tenure status of faculty, as I was unable to locate data for this. It is likely though, similar to myself, that a number of these faculty members were part-time and/or non-tenured/non-tenure track. To my knowledge, there were only 2 tenured Black faculty on campus when I started working there in the Fall of 2019. It is not clear how much time the cited faculty members spend on campus engaging with students, as part-time and non-tenure track faculty are not usually obligated to go above or beyond their contractual teaching obligations, or perform service for university students (this of course reflects some structural issues with the lack of investing in Black faculty for tenured and/or tenure track positions). I understand the inequities experienced by non-tenured/non-tenure track and part-time faculty, but still encourage all educators, regardless

of rank, to actively engage with their Black students outside of the classroom. This is especially true for those educators at HSIs.

As emphasized in the above section, student learning must happen both in and out of the classroom. However, unlike the points outlined in the previous section, the learning spaces outside of the classroom do not always have to be Black only. The important idea is that the student can engage with Black faculty (who also often serve as mentors and confidants to the students) outside of the traditional learning space. Research has suggested that students who are mentored outside of the classroom, and engaged academically with their professors in spaces other than the classroom, tend to perform well inside the classroom (Peterson et al., 2024; Ullah & Wilson, 2007). Additionally, minority students are most successful when they have support from faculty (Jones & Castellanos, 2023; Musoba et al., 2013). Further, active engagement outside the classroom could be a beneficial high-impact learning experience for the students.

In an attempt to encourage high-impact learning practices for my students, I co-organized a study away to New Orleans. This program was not limited to any racial group, and was widely advertised to the campus community. However, the study away was a credit-earning course offered through the Department of African American Studies, and my co-organizer was the lead staff for the Black student resource center on campus. Because of these two factors, most of the students who signed up to participate were students who were enrolled in my African American Studies courses, and students who frequented the campus' Black student resource center. Ultimately, all of the students who expressed interest, and signed up to participate, identified as either Black or Bi-racial (Black and Latinx) students. This turnout was significant, as such programs are typically enjoyed by white students (Edwards, 2021). So much so, the campus Study Abroad office was surprised and enthused that we were able to recruit so many Black students into the study away.

The major goal of this course was for my students to connect classroom theories and perspectives to knowledge acquired in the field. From a lens of pre and post-Hurricane Katrina, I planned for the students to study how Black communities within Louisiana have been impacted socially, politically, and economically. Myself and my co-lead also met with the students weekly to mentor and prepare them for our departure (many of the students enrolled had never been on a plane or left California). Before leaving for the proposed one-week study away, students read multiple materials on the history of slavery and race in Louisiana, the contemporary state of education and schools in New Orleans, and other available literature. While

on the trip, students would get the opportunity to visit historical sites such as Congo Square, the Whitney Plantation, Preservation Hall, and many other important local landmarks.

The class was also expected to participate in a community immersion project, where the students would engage with an afterschool program. With this project, students would be providing service to local communities through the tutoring and mentoring of k-12 students. To prepare for this, West Coast HSI students grouped themselves into teams of about 4-5, and each cluster of students created various workshops to engage with the k-12 students. Some of the workshops planned included creative writing, mindful thinking, and vision boards/journaling. Unfortunately, the trip was canceled about 3 weeks before departure, in an effort to slow the spread of COVID-19/Coronavirus. The cancelation was ordered by the school, as all university travel was forbidden during this time. There were plans in place to reproduce a similar program for the following academic year, however I relocated and started working as a post-doctoral fellow at a different institution. Even if I had stayed at my former institution full-time, it would have been unlikely that a study away trip could have happened during the 2020-2021 academic year, as the COVID-19 pandemic encouraged most institutions to continue the travel freeze for faculty and students. In fact, West Coast HSI met virtually for much of the 2020-2021 academic year because of the Coronavirus pandemic.

Although a wonderful opportunity for some students, there can be some limitations with practices such as a study away. Not all students will have access to such a program. For example, space was limited to 25 students in our course. Therefore, no more than 25 students would be able to participate in this high-impact learning. Additionally, students would need to have the financial resources to afford such a trip. While we were able to find some outside resources to assist with the costs for this program, the students were still expected to pay $1000 plus airfare and some meals. This is not to say that the costs for such opportunities are unrealistic, as some schools provide student travel awards and scholarships for study abroad/away activities. I simply want to recognize that there were and are barriers present.

Courses that Center Black Histories, Cultures, and Experiences

Many students who have been educated in public k-12 American schools have acquired a very Eurocentric understanding of History, English, Social Studies, and all major areas of study (Krueger-Henney, 2019). When these students enter college campuses, they bring with them their single understanding of those fields. Part of our jobs as educators is to provide

educational counter-narratives (Ender, 2021), and to get students to think critically about the education that they received in the past, while exposing them to new and diverse perspectives. Essentially, we have to provide humanizing stories to those marginalized groups that have not been the center of their educational understandings.

Regardless of individual student major or minor, most Black students can benefit from Black Studies courses taught by Black faculty and Black Studies scholars. This however is not a new phenomenon, theory, or revelation. As explained by W. E. B. Du Bois, "there are certain positive reasons due to the fact that American Negroes have, because of their history, group experiences and memories, a distinct entity, whose spirit and reactions demand a certain type of education for its development" (Du Bois, 1935, p. 333). That is, Black students must learn of Black histories, cultures, and experiences from the perspective of Black people. Not only is the information humanizing, but Black students often report positive interactions with faculty of their same race (Newman, 2015), and the presence, teaching, and mentorship from Black faculty could have a positive impact on Black students' academic success (Llamas et al., 2021; Hickson, 2002). This does not mean that only Black faculty can teach such courses. This does mean that the reading materials should largely reflect the understandings of Black authors, scholars, and academics, however. This is important, especially in the current societal milieu, where diverse perspectives, civic education, and critical race theory are under political attack (Miles, 2021).

I have personally instructed many African American Studies and African American History courses. Most of the courses have been instructed for African American Studies Departments/Programs, though some have also been for History, Women and Gender Studies, General Education, or other Humanities, Arts and Letters, or Social Science Departments and/or Colleges. Some of those courses have included: Education of the Black Child, Black Women in America (1619-1960), Black Women in Contemporary Society, African Americans and the Development of America's History and Government, The Humanities in African American Culture, Sociology of African American Communities, Main Themes in African American Studies, and African American History Since 1865. My course evaluations have for the most part remained favorable, and the students tend to perform well in the courses. I am hopeful that the students who were enrolled in the courses, were able to take away new and meaningful information for their personal, academic, and professional growth.

Historically, Black students have protested and fought for the creation of Black Studies departments and programs with courses to be taught by

Black faculty (Kendi, 2012). Today, students who have taken Black Studies courses have reported feelings of empowerment and self-determination (Chapman-Hilliard & Beasley, 2018). Black Studies minors have expressed a positive sense of self and racial identity (Fuller, 2016), and Black students enrolled in Black Studies courses have experienced better retention (McDougall III, 2021). In other words, courses that center Black histories, cultures, and experiences, have generally been a benefit to Black student success.

Critical Reflection of Self

I am still very new to academia, and therefore still have so much to learn. Also, I understand that even though I, or other educators, could implement such practices with all of the best intentions, students may still see or experience some inequities within such proposals. My main intention here is to serve the specific needs of Black students who attend an HSI. Although there are standard needs that remain the same semesterly, there will also be new concerns yearly. I want to be sure that my pedagogies remain recent with the needs of students, and are transformed with societal and academic trends. With this in mind, I like to reflect on my teaching semesterly in order to improve ways that I can best serve my students. Some of the ways that I have done this are through student evaluations, peer debriefings, and self-reflections.

Measuring the effectiveness of the Black Student Retreat, my co-lead and I created a Google form for students to complete following their attendance/participation. The idea for this questionnaire was to gauge the impact of the retreat on student experiences, and to understand what we could change or keep for the student retreat in the following years. What we found was that most students appreciated the activities that encouraged peer-to-peer relationship building. This was especially true for daily icebreakers. Students disliked anything that seemed similar to coursework. For example, students were required to read a chapter of an edited book. Following their individual read, we spent a couple of hours discussing the chapter as a group, and participated in discussion questions related to the chapter. Although the chapter centered student experiences, which we assumed would almost mirror some of the students' experiences, the students felt like they were in class on a Saturday, and therefore did not get the most enjoyment from the reading or the discussion. This was helpful to understand, as I nor my co-lead considered how this assigned chapter and classroom-style discussion questions would be received by students.

Additionally, I reflect on course evaluations from both my students and my peers. I typically make use of the evaluation that is crafted by the university and/or the department, which tends to inquire about whether students are retaining information from my teaching strategies. I do understand that reading the evaluations from students can sometimes be daunting, however. This is especially true for faculty of color who often experience racism in the classroom from students who often challenge the lecturer's authority, and question their instructor's scholarly expertise and capabilities (Pittman, 2010). Further, research has suggested "that minority faculty are given lower teaching quality scores and higher difficulty of course scores than are non-minorities" (Baker, 2019, p. 18).

To accommodate this, faculty can consider feedback from their peers. At West Coast HSI, faculty of all ranks have their classrooms observed and their teaching evaluated roughly once per academic year. I have found this feedback from peers to be very helpful, considerate, and critical. It can be used to reflect on one's teaching and pedagogical practices, classroom engagement, and teacher presence within the online classroom. Typically, colleagues have provided suggestions to complement their criticism. In my experiences, some peers have volunteered to share practices that have worked best for their students, suggested readings that can be implemented with specific modules, and offered other activities and resources that they have found to be helpful.

Supplementary to their feedback from evaluations, peer debriefings can help evaluate the success of student programs and activities. For example, after the Black Student Retreat's end, my colleague/co-organizer and I met multiple times to discuss the happenings of the weekend's event. We were able to collectively read over the student feedback, share ideas on how to strengthen future retreats, and provide each other feedback on what we could have done differently both individually and collectively to better serve the students. This interaction is important, as sometimes once an event is over, we as faculty can distance ourselves and move on to the next plan or project. This is understandable, as we can all be extremely busy juggling the multiple responsibilities required in academia. Reflecting on a past event can sometimes seem like a chore, and not spending time wisely. However, it can also be important for professional development.

CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND LIMITATIONS

Ultimately, we need to consider the history of antiblackness within American culture, even within largely minority spaces, and apply this to the reality of similar practices in higher education. That is, schools have a history

of practicing racist policies (Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). Even though an institution is Hispanic, or minority-serving, it is likely that similar to PWIs, the campus is somehow operating as a disservice to its Black students. Because of this, it would be helpful for educators to create safe Black spaces for Black students, actively engage with undergraduate Black students outside of the classroom, create and instruct courses that center Black histories, and critically self-reflect on their teaching practices. Keeping this in mind, this paper calls for educators to consider BCAI as a viable pedagogical tool. Some questions to consider while engaging in such a pedagogy: Is this equitable? Is the learning student-centered? How can we incorporate engaging and high-impact learning practices?

This paper is merely an introduction to possible research that could be done on this topic, and therefore there are some limitations here. First, this paper centers US institutions, however anti-blackness is a global reality (Bledsoe & Wright, 2019; Lopez & Jean-Marie, 2021). This means that it is likely that Black students within colleges and universities around the world experience anti-Blackness. Research could consider how to best serve such students globally, or how to serve the specific needs of Black students within specific countries outside of the United States. Future studies could also conduct interviews and focus groups of students to measure their individual and collective experiences as students. Such reflections could allow for HSIs to provide necessary resources for African American students enrolled at their institutions. Other studies could also consider the retention and academic performance of Black students at HSIs. The results of said studies could yield implications for whether or not the offered pedagogy, curriculum, and/or services to Black students are helpful to the academic success of Black students attending the specific HSI. Without continuing conversations centering Black student experiences, HSIs will continue practices that do not effectively serve their students.

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Minority Discourse and Social Exclusion: A Study on the Ahmadiyya Community in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

This paper explains the structure of discourse propagated by the traditional religious authorities and its role in creating social exclusion of the Ahmadiyya community in Bangladesh. Utilizing the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method, the study expanded on the relevant literature and purposively reviewed and examined eight videos about Ahmadiyya and anti-Ahmadiyya speeches collected from different YouTube channels. The study also included the discursive analysis of eight in-depth interviews with individuals from the Ahmadiyya community who lived in the Brahmanbaria district of Bangladesh and were influenced and affected by the dominant discourse. Results revealed that the construction of in-group, defamatory, and derogatory discourses cultivated a culture of social hatred and social ostracism against the Ahmadiyya community and homogeneity within the community. Thereby, the Ahmadiyya community was excluded from social participation, economic facilities, and political protections, though they partially excluded themselves following their cult. Finally, the paper recommends ideology construction, reformation in social relationships disregarding the majority-minority wall, and standard state regulation for cultural development in the behavioral aspects among the people of Bangladesh.

Keywords: Ahmadiyya community, Bangladesh, discourse analysis, religious minority, social exclusion

INTRODUCTION

The social vulnerability of religious minorities is an outcome of different social relationships in different communities that are influenced by ideological propaganda generated by the local majority. Comparative to other marginalized groups, religious groups are deprived of two forms of freedom: the freedom of religious belief and the freedom of access to minority rights (Ghanea, 2012). Because of such kinds of deprivation, religious minority groups exist in precarious positions perpetuated by social vulnerability biases and physical and mental threats (Lennox, 2010). These problems are rooted in intense pressure for coordination or absorption. Therefore, historical and contemporary social realities connect social injustices, such as depriving legal protection and violating natural rights, to marginalized inequities (MacLean, 1944).

The Ahmadiyya, one of the sects of the Muslim community, has been one of the most active and controversial movements within the Muslim world ((Connley, 2016).). Since 1889, the Ahmadiyya's inception in British India has become increasingly precarious with the growth of conservative attitudes (Connley, 2016). Many countries perceive the Ahmadiyya community as a symbol of religious and cultural diversity, promoting pluralism and tolerance as safeguarding liberal culture with political democratization, decentralization, and liberal voices (Van Bruinessen, 2013; Van Klinken, 2007). However, a few Asian countries witnessed outbreaks of violence against this religious minority. For instance, on March 3, 2023, criminals attacked and vandalized several houses belonging to the Ahmadiyya community in the northern part of Bangladesh as a response to the community's protests (“Ahmadiya houses”, 2023). Furthermore, the intensification of hostility toward the Ahmadiyya religious minority has led to increased incidents of violence and intimidation. Furthermore, the proliferation of discriminatory laws and regulations against the Ahmadiyya community has prolonged this situation, perpetuating acts of violence, intimidation, harassment, and discrimination against this minority (Connley, 2016). Additionally, the Ahmadiyya community of Bangladesh has faced severe troubles, vicious attacks, discrimination, and threats from the majority of the non-Ahmadiyya Muslim community. According to The New Age report, on March 1, 2023, two Ahmadiyya members were killed, 150 houses were set on fire, and several hundred others were looted and vandalized during a clash that significantly affected the Ahmadiyya community (“2 killed in deadly clash”, 2023). (As part of employing various strategies, the religious majority attempts to exclude Ahmadiyya from visible religious spaces and institutions by arranging processions, street rallies, and hatred campaigns

against Ahmadiyya (Kabir, 2016). These decisions impact the Ahmadiyyas of Bangladesh, causing hazardous experiences including conflicts, terrorist attacks, civil unrest, and human rights violations. In March 2023, The New Age reported unknown criminal activity resulting in about 125 Ahmadiyya houses being torched and vandalized at Panchaghar ('Ahmadiya houses', 2023; Mahmud, 2023). Unfortunately, Ahmadiyyas have experienced this form of oppression for several years (Connley, 2016). However, the increased backlash through contemporary discourses surrounding outcomes, processions, and campaigns against the Ahmadiyya have increased the vulnerability of this community. Therefore, this study's design explains the nature and role of religious discourses and the social exclusion of the Ahmadiyya community in Bangladesh.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Religious Minority and Discourse of Ahmadiyya Community

The term 'minority' conveys a broad meaning and an emotional appeal, depicting its qualities with social, cultural, and political aspects (Van Amersfoort, 1978). Gleason's (1991) reference for 'minority' indicates a difference from a larger body's group or predominant section in one or more characteristics regarding ethnic background, language, culture, or religion. Among different minorities, religions are an underrepresented group who are victimized by legal constructs, ignoring social and cultural diversities (Levine, 1996). The majority sees the practice of dominating the minority as a control of the rising social class for the exclusion of marginality, persecution, and discriminatory bias against religious minorities (Lennox, 2010). Thereby, Ahmadiyya Muslims have often been the target of discrimination, violence, and hate campaigns, which increase the communities' global vulnerability (United Nations, 2021).

History of Ahmadiyya Muslims

In 1908, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad established Ahmadiyya six years after the death of its founder, a section of Islam divided into two factions, Ahmadiyya Kadian and Ahmadiyya Lahore (Irawan, 2017). The Ahmadiyya Lahore claims that Ghulam Mirza, the founder of Ahmadiyya, is merely a sacred and holy man of God without having prophetic status and that Muhammad is the seal of prophethood (Saeed, 2007). In contrast, the locals of Ahmadiyya claimed themselves to be Muslims, focusing on the fundamental difference. At the same time, Muslims believe that Mirza Ghulam Ahmad was a promised reformer, an 'Imam Mahdi,' who was born again 'Kadian' from India in 1835; this belief stands against the majority of

Muslims (Butt, 2019). Therefore, a majority of believers protested against the Ahmadiyya movement.

Consequently, a constitutional amendment passed by the National Assembly of Pakistan in 1974 declared Ahmadiyya as non-Muslim, and referring to Ahmadiyya as Muslim is a criminal offense (Saeed, 2007). The political formation of the discourse against the Ahmadiyya has increased the exclusion of this community. From negative labeling to dissociated perspectives, the Ahmadiyya community is treated as non-believers, anti-religious, animal-like, and outcasts that are repeatedly massacred by group members in their society (Irawan, 2017). Therefore, the grievances, miseries, exclusion, and vulnerabilities experienced by the Ahmadiyya community have been extensive and far-reaching.

Social Exclusion of Ahmadiyya Community: Asian Scenario

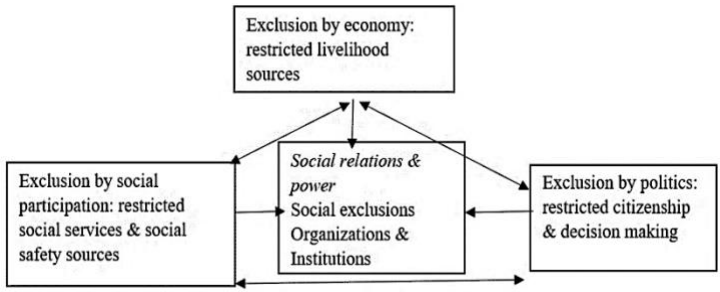
The term 'social exclusion' refers to the social relations and organizational barriers that impair the attainment of livelihoods in human development and equal citizenship (Beall & Piron, 2005) (Figure 1). A specific analysis of social exclusion highlights the inequality in employment, wage earrings, and equal working relations that deny freedoms for economic activity for fundamental, political, economic, and social functions (Thorat, 2005; Ziyauddin & Kasi, 2009). This social exclusion has multiple dimensions and divides the process into four dimensions: exclusion from adequate income or resources, labor-market and service exclusion, and exclusion from social relations (Richmond, 2002). In Figure 1 on the 'Concepts of Social Exclusion' a reference to societal identities and institutional regulations highlights the caste system of discrimination that isolates and deprives some groups based on group language, ethnicity, and religion (Beall & Piron, 2005). Those forms and dimensions of social exclusion and social vulnerabilities reflect social norms for the Ahmadiyya community. Unlike many ethnic and religious minorities, problems amongst the Ahmadiyya community are commonly seen in Asian countries where the Ahmadis make up larger populations.

Worldwide, the community has branches in more than 190 countries, with an estimated membership of 160 million; in Britain, there are over 90 branches of the community across the country that are working for their rights and privileges (Exploring Surrey's Past, n.d.). An analysis of the Indonesian Ahmadiyya communities reveals biases predicated by politicians and alleged religious leaders (Connley, 2016). As a result, Ahmadis live in a hostile environment of stigmatization by movement and adversity through media reports for which Ahmadiyya are devalued and seen as inferior in society.

Research conducted in Lahore (Pakistan) highlights that Ahmadiyya members face accusations of negligence from state institutions and mainstream society, which are exploited in forums of hatred by the general public (Naveed et al., 2014).

Figure 1

Concepts of Social Exclusion Adapted from Beall and Piron (2005)



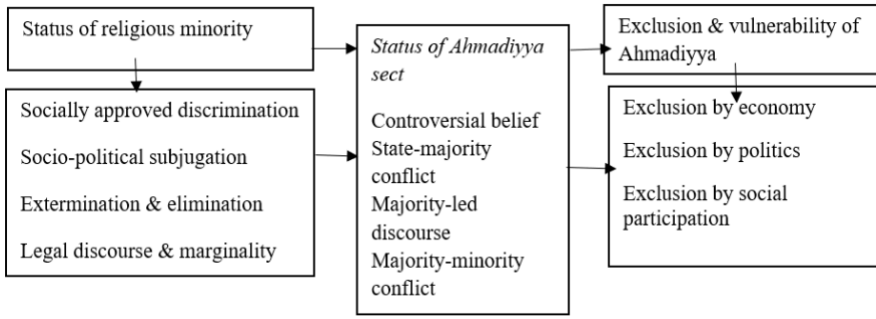
Note: Social, economic, and political exclusions are interlinked (Beall & Piron, 2005)

Alongside politicians from a few Asian countries, anti-Ahmadiyya narratives promoted ingrained discrimination directed at violence against the community (United States Commission on International Religious Freedom [USCIRF], 2018), which has resulted in heightened vulnerability and frequent unsecured incidents. Eventually, these communities excluded religious identity and their permission to perform a Pilgrimage to Mecca (Ahmed, 2014). In these environments, the Ahmadiyya community lives with restrictions, panicked by despair and threats of insecurity causing security threats and social isolation in many Asian countries (Saifullah, 2008). In Figure 2, titled 'Conceptual Framework of Interconnection between Religious Minority, Ahmadiyya Status, and Social Exclusion' the status of religious minority, the status of Ahmadiyya community, and different exclusions of Ahmadiyya community are associated.

In Bangladesh, the Ahmadiyya religious communities faced intermittent attacks, psychological violence, and aggravated deprivations for more than two decades (Khan, 2014). According to the 2022 Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) Census Report Muslims represent (91.04%) of the population, while Hindus are at (7.95%), Buddhists (0.61%), Christians at 0.30%), and other religious populations are at (0.12%) (BBS Census, 2022).

Figure 2

Conceptual Framework of Interconnection between Religious Minority, Ahmadiyya Status, and Social Exclusion.



Since the early 1900s, the Ahmadiyya community has experienced continuous growth. Presently in Bangladesh, the Ahmadiyya community comprises approximately 100,000 members (Human et al., 2005). Despite being considered Muslims, they are positioned as external to the religious majority, leading to marginalized issues of religious discrimination. Unfortunately, the Ahmadiyya are not accounted for in the census report. Alongside this identity avoidance, the Ahmadiyya community faces restrictions on freedom of movement and security.

Noticing the organized hate campaign against the Ahmadiyya community by the anti-Ahmadiyya groups, Amnesty International (2004) urged the Government of Bangladesh to ensure the safety and security of the Ahmadiyya community. Similarly, many online and print newspapers, including websites, reported that since 1994, the Ahmadiyya community of Bangladesh experienced several attacks and threats by anti-Ahmadiyya groups. Scholarly references on protests and several incidents of attacks included looting against the Ahmadiyya community from March 1995 to April 2018 and include:

•March 1995 - Office Building in Jamalpur (Human Rights Watch, 2005)

•April 2003 - Two Villages of Ahmadiyya in Kushtia and Khulna (Human Rights Watch, 2005)

•October 31, 2003 - The Ahmadiyya mosques in Jessore (Human Rights Watch, 2005)

•April 17, 2005 - The Ahmadiyya centers in Sathkira (Ashraf, 2005)

•April 2018 - The Ahmadiyya mosque in Madarganj of Jamalpur district (“Ahmadiyya mosque”, 2018)

According to the report from the Daily Star, a more devastating case is the 2015 attack—a suicide assailant exploded a bomb, killing himself and

others during Friday prayers, targeting the Ahmadiyya mosque at Chalkpara village of Sayedpur district (Ali, 2015).

Most alarming is the July 9, 2020, Ahmadiyya condemnation in Ghatura village -this UK-based human rights activism during the COVID-19 pandemic situation in Bangladesh arose amongst the anti-Ahmadiyya group, resulting in a disinterred dead body of an infant child from Ahmadiyya parent in a local graveyard in Suhilpur Union, Brahminbaria ("ARTICLE 19 condemns", 2020). Recently, on March 3, 2023, criminal attacks and vandalization of several Ahmadiyya homes in the Panchaghar district resulted in protesting an annual congregation of the Ahmadiyya community ("Ahmadiyya houses", 2023; "Tense situation", 2023). In Table 1 (Newspaper Reports From 2003 to 2023 Covering Offensive Cases Against Ahmadiyya) incidents referencing Bangladesh Ahmadiyya community living conditions highlight the devastating vulnerabilities of social exclusions.

In Table 1 (Newspaper Reports From 2003 to 2023 Covering Offensive Cases Against Ahmadiyya), information on the Ahmadiyya and society neglected by the majority influence hate-speech from anti-Ahmadiyya groups. Many hate speeches are available on YouTube also. However, Bangladesh did not enact laws against the community following the liberal agenda of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (such as education, health, gender equality, etc.) which remained the conflict between anti-Ahmadiyya and the community.; thereby, these situational controls changed in the political regime.

Theoretical Underpinnings

Discourse strategies perceived as discriminatory increase resistance against the religious minority. In the context of Critical Discourse Analysis, an assessment of social and political issues such as human rights, social security, and social justice revealed investigatory powers of abuse, social inequality, injustice, and discrimination (Irawan, 2016). The CDA asserts a connection between discourse, cognition, and society (van Dijk, 2009). In particular, it explores the complex relationships between text, conversation, social beliefs, power, society, and cultures (van Dijk, 2006). To highlight this interconnectedness, Van Dijk (2006) refers to the CDA's assumption that power - abuse results in inequality within social and political discourse. In line with Van Dijk's idea of cognitive process, text or discourse-immanent critique aims at discovering inconsistencies, self-contradictions, paradoxes, and dilemmas in the text-internal or discourse-internal structures, and the socio-diagnostic critique aims at demystifying the manifest or latent

persuasive or potentially manipulative character or discursive practices. (Reisigl & Wodak, 2009).

Table 1

Newspaper Reports From 2003 to 2023 Covering Offensive Cases Against Ahmadiyya

Major offensive incidents against Ahmadiyya community in different areas of Bangladesh	**Major offenses (Period)**	**Source of the news report**
Demonstration threatened to paralyze the country if the government failed to evict the Ahmadis from Nakhalpara mosque by January 3, 2004.	Giving pressure to Govt. (December 19, 2003)	The Daily Star, 2003
A mob led by the K.N. (brandishing sticks, machetes, and darts) attacked Ahmadis in Joytidrianagar of Satkhira district injuring twenty-five people	Cruel attack by mob (April 17, 2005)	The Daily Star, 2005
A suicide bomber detonated an explosives belt during the Friday Prayer at a mosque in a remote northern village of Rajshahi city.	Suicidal attack (December 24, 2015)	Daily Star, 2015
Villagers of *Fularpar in Jamalpur* district had converged on the mosque and began attacking them with sticks, injuring around 20 people and causing extensive damage to the newly built mosque.	Eviction process (March 30, 2018)	Daily Star, 2018
After spreading rumors at Kandipara in Brahmanbaria town, Ahmadiyya mosque and houses were under attack by the protesters	Rumor & brutal attack (January 15, 2020)	New Age, 2020
A three-day-old Ahmadiyya infant's dead body was exhumed from the grave and thrown into the road in Brahminbaria by the anti-Ahmadis protesters.	Highest brutal exhuming (July 9, 2020)	Bangladesh Post, 2020
2 killed, 150 houses were torched**,** and several hundred others were looted and vandalized during the clash.	Brutal attacks, looting, and murder (March 1, 2023)	New Age, 2023

Note: *Newspaper reports covering different offensive incidents against Ahmadiyya community* by "Ahmadiya houses", 2023; "Ahmadiyya mosque", 2018; Ali, 2015; "ARTICLE 19 condemns", 2020; "Anti-Ahmadiyyas' Ultimatum", 2003; and Ashraf, 2005.

Therefore, comprised of text analysis as descriptive, discursive practice analysis as interpretative, and social practice analysis as explanatory, which denotes study on (a) discursive practices, events, and texts, and (b)

wider social and cultural structures, relations, and processes (Fairclough, 1995). In this process, critical discourse analysis requires ideology critique that focuses on the deep understanding of the distorted set of social meanings, set of social beliefs, intersubjective meanings, perpetuating epistemic injustice, and social domination (Mahmud & Zaman, 2022; Sankaran, 2020;). Eventually, ideology critique was applied in studying the role of discourses about the Ahmadiyya community, who are the victims of contemporary discourses.

Moreover, the literature review suggests that there is minimal study about the minority grievances of the Ahmadiyya community in Bangladesh, and there is no comprehensive study about the critical discourse analysis of the Ahmadiyya community, including the opinion and talk analysis from YouTube videos and interviews. Regarding the research gap, the study deals with two significant questions following the objectives of exploring the role of discursive and discriminatory discourses in the social exclusion of the Ahmadiyya community for analysis to include:

1. How the discursive and discriminatory discourses about Ahmadiyya were constructed by the anti-Ahmadiyya protesters in Bangladesh?
2. In what manner do the discourses about Ahmadiyya contribute to the enhancement of social exclusion of the Ahmadiyya community in Bangladesh?

METHODOLOGY

Research Method

To study the role of discourse amongst the Ahmadiyya in the social exclusion of the Ahmadiyya community in Bangladesh's social setting, the Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) method was used as the most significant research method. This method analyzes texts, talks, speeches, opinions, and propaganda against the Ahmadiyya community as grounded in the critical realist paradigm, which comprises three levels: the empirical level of common-sense understanding, the actual level of social fact, and the original level of explaining social events (Fletcher, 2017). Moreover, the ideological condition and the communicative instruments, including churches or mosques, schooling, and mass media, contribute to delivering ideas on social facts and events that can sustain domination over the minority group (Althusser, 2006).

Considering the method of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the underlying problems such as discrimination, exclusion, prejudice, and psycho-social vulnerabilities vary within the Ahmadiyya community and, therefore, critically analyzed within the texts, contents, opinions, and talk

analysis to perceive realities of the Ahmadiyya community. Since anti-Ahmadiyya religious groups have formulated discourses about Ahmadiyya from dominant ideologies approached through mosques, seminars, and public meetings from traditional preachers-persecuted as disseminated on YouTube channels. The majority of believers are easily influenced by the provoking speeches which are delivered on different social and political fields including mass media as well as YouTube channels that have networking power to reach voices of anti-Ahmadiyya sermons. Therefore, local people are physically and verbally aggressive against the Ahmadiyya community due to the media discourse represented by YouTube channels -this, along with the exclusionary representation in the YouTube response section, increases victimization against the Ahmadiyya community, a critical aspect that requires explanation.

Sampling and Data Collection

This study uses Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to assess the discursive opinions disseminated by popular YouTube channels and the opinions of the experienced members of the Ahmadiyya community. (Creswell & Clark (2017) reference Bulling's model for in-depth interviews for qualitative research. Therefore, this research study conducted fifteen in-depth interviews, of which the most relevant were eight interviews, five from Ahmadiyya and three from local non-Ahmadiyya, which included demographical information for both genders and various ages. A minimum of six in-depth interviews were included in this study to analyze six from the Ahmadiyya community and three from the local people (non-Ahmadiyya) for persons living in the Brahminbaria district. The respondents were selected from the Vadhughar village and Kandipara in Brahminbaria district, of which three respondents were from Vadhughar, three were from Purbapara of Kandipara (East zone), and the other two were from Pashcimpara (West zone). In Table 2 (Distribution of Sample Size), information on orienting provides an analysis of the discourse contents selected on YouTube related to the discursive presentation of the religious minority and Ahmadiyya community denoting religious speeches while those are anti-sectarian thoughts.

Comparatively, this discourse analysis assesses anti-Ahmadiyya speech and Ahmadiyya speech and responses available on YouTube channels by Ahmadiyya members. To find relevant YouTube videos, the researchers gauged keywords such as 'Ahmadiyya speech in Bangladesh,' 'Anti-Ahmadiyya speech in Bangladesh,' and 'Debates about Ahmadiyya. Additionally, from March 1, 2019, to February 5, 2020, subscriptions for relevant videos between reviewed content for the first to the last stage oriented

to the talks and speeches against the Ahmadiyya community and their rights In the second stage, an additional subscription monitor content from September 15, 2023, to September 15, 2023 The subscribed YouTube channels consisted of sixteen channels with a review of forty-five video speeches about anti-Ahmadiyya propaganda and speeches for Ahmadiyya created by traditional religious preachers from Bangladesh. All reviewed audio and video content included the use of the purposive sampling technique for conducting interviews based on specific characteristics considering hegemonic speeches and any type of speeches about the Ahmadiyya community. In this process, eight circulated video speeches were selected which are :

- Alor Poth,
- Islamic Voice
- Islamic Tune
- Life Media BD
- Jahid Media
- Moha Shushongbad
- Spark Public
- Muslim Identity

In Table 2 (Distribution of Sample Size), the available YouTube selection consisted of hate propaganda against the Ahmadiyya community. However, in the three videos, favorable findings for the Ahmadiyya community highlighted the Ahmadiyya members, leaders, and their speakers. For this reason, a selection of five videos on anti-Ahmadiyya speech and three on Ahmadiyya speech was completed. While listening to the video speeches, researchers transcribed and translated Bengali content into American English. Besides the discourse analysis of these speeches, religious preachers in the study included a discourse analysis of responses and opinions for a qualitative interview assessment. The Dhaka Tribune reports that approximately 10,000 Ahmadiyya live in the Brahmanbaria district; at the same time, another 3,500 reside in Kishoreganj, and another 3,000 reside in Mymensingh district of Bangladesh (Mahmud, 2017Population and Housing Census-2022 report that the Muslim population rate in Bangladesh is 91.04% (“Census 2022”, 2022), on the other hand, Dhaka Tribune reports that 100,000 Ahmadiyya people or 1% of the total population are living in Bangladesh (Mahmud, 2017). This information denotes that the Ahmadiyya community (compared to the majority believers is a minority community in Bangladesh, which is characterized by a culture of homogeneity while the majority excludes them due to the difference in belief system. Regarding these features, we planned

to collect informative responses from the victims of the Ahmadiyya community that would be effective for analyzing the effects of discourse upon the community.

Table 2
Distribution of Sample Size

Data collection method	**Name of the study area**	**Number of the interviewees**	**Gender (Age)**	**Identity**
In-depth interview	*Vadhughar*	2	Female (40), Male (76)	Ahmadiyya
	Vadhughar	1	Male (35)	Non-Ahmadiyya
	Kandipara (Purbapara)	2	Male (80), female (40)	Ahmadiyya
	Kandipara (Purbapara)	1	Male (38)	Non-Ahmadiyya
	Kandipara (Pashcimpara)	1	Female (42), Male (32)	Ahmadiyya
	Kandipara (Pashcimpara)	1	Female (25),	Non-Ahmadiyya
Data collection method	*Video channels*	Number of videos	Time of video subscription for data collection	Sampling technique
Video analysis of YouTube channels	*Alor Poth*	1	11 March 2019	Purposive
	Jahid Media	1	12 March 2019	
	Islamic Voice	1	18 March 2019	
	Islamic Tune	1	1 February 2020	
	Life Media BD	1	5 February 2020	
	Moha Shushongbad	1	12 September 2023	
	Spark Public	1	13 September 2023	
	MuslimIdentity	1	15 September 2023	

Note: This Table shows 6 study areas located in Brahminbaria from which in-depth interviews were conducted with 8 respondents of both Ahmadiyya and non-Ahmadiyya individuals. Also, the Table appears 8 video channels including subscription date and identification of the sampling technique.

All participants were selected following a purposive sampling technique for a face-to-face interview based on claims of being severely affected by the dominant practices of the local Banglasdesh majority. During the field visit, we engaged in conversations with both local Ahmadiyya and non-Ahmadiyya individuals, allowing us to identify both the most vulnerable individuals within the community and those who hold anti-Ahmadiyya sentiments.

The names of the respondents were anonymously presented implying qualitative data. Interview data collection was completed in two separate phases; the first phase began July 16, 2017, and continued to July 20, 2017, and the second was from March 15, 2019, to March 18, 2019. The tap recorder transcribed the respondents' voices and provided written transcriptions for conversion into American English. Taking support from the literature review on news reports about the criminal incidents against the Ahmadiyya community, the responses of the interviewed data were analyzed critically.

Techniques of Data Analysis

Researchers explained the accomplished data through the thematic analysis to indicate critical themes such as discursive defamatory discourse about Ahmadiyya, discriminatory discourse about Ahmadiyya, Ahmadiyya discourse, and different dimensions of social exclusion (economic, political, and socio-relational exclusions). During the discourse analysis, researchers described the derogatory speeches and practices against the rights of the Ahmadiyya, specifically the propagated language structure of blaming and labeling rhetoric and derogatory and hyperbolic language, to understand the relationship between discursive discourse and the practical patterns of exclusionary discourse. Furthermore, the discriminatory Ahmadiyya discourse supported the practical roles of persuasive language, reinforcing language, emblematical, and exaggerative language, which were used against the Ahmadiyya people. Lastly, the interviewed data was examined for the effects of hegemonic discourse against the community on social relations, livelihood opportunities, access to securities, political participation, and language structure of the speeches of traditional preachers. Researchers critically analyzed the discursive presentation of language and its relation to the practical experience of social exclusion based on field experience, participatory observations, and recorded speeches.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Construction of Discursive Discourse

At first, the discourses of Ahmadiyya speech available on YouTube channels have been approached, and then the discourses of anti-Ahmadiyya speech from YouTube channels have been explored. The speeches show that Ahmadiyya and anti-Ahmadiyya preachers are constructing favoring, defamatory, and derogatory discourses. In favoring Ahmadiyya, a YouTube, *Moha Shushongbad*. (n.d.) (channel broadcasted the following views,

> There is no basic difference and no basic problem between Ahmadiyya and non-Ahmadiyya Muslims because we all follow all pillars of Islam. We know a verse from Hadith says that when the earth will find no people to bear real belief when the world will be disastrous, …then it will be necessary to unite Muslim Ummah and Allah will send the proposed Messiah Imam Mahdi to rescue us. Thereby, we believe that Mirza Golam Kadiani came down to earth as a follower of the last prophet and as the Imam Mahdi as the promised rescuer.

The purpose of statements that referencing the Ahmadiyya people as calling everywhere '*kadiani'* focuses on the birthplace of the founder named Golam Mohammad Kadiani and local origin. More importantly, the Ahmadiyyas are presented negatively by the traditional religious leaders in the yearly (public gatherings) '*Mahfils'a yearly gathering.* The most common '*fatwa'* in this regard is that the Ahmadiya are not Muslim, they are '*kafir'* (disbelievers), and their beliefs are full of '*firkas'* (diversions from religion) ('kafir', 'firkas'—these words are used by the local people against Ahmadiyya community to label them negatively). Another YouTube channel on focuses on the traditional religious preaching against Ahmadiyya as stated by a preacher (Alor Poth, n.d.)

> Among the four-basic false *Firkas*, belief in Kadiani is the most dangerous thing. ……We knew that before the final declaration of the end of worldly life, 30 'dazzals' (great devils) would announce themselves as the prophet…. Golam Kadiani is one of them.

Those statements implies that the Ahmadiyya were defamed by the words 'dangerous', '*firka*', and '*dazzal*'. That means this community was viewed as dangerous with regard to their 'false' or 'deviated' beliefs since the majority of believers thought that the belief of Ahmadiyya was different. By pronouncing the metaphor '*dazzal'*, the Ahmadiyya community was perceived by the majority as a precarious group. As approached in a public space by a traditional leader which is broadcasted by a channel (Islamic Voice, n.d.)

> Mirza Golam Kadiani…. this *beyadob* (idiot) claimed himself as a prophet…then proclaimed as Imam Mahdi…then Isa Masih. This *beyadob* died after falling into the toilet like Farao's death who died after drowning in the river.

This practice of using insulting and labeling intersect common belief with pervasive delivery for an audience or public gathering to influence for cultural hatred, intolerance, and mob-angry against the religious minority (Connley, 2016). When the founder of the sect 'Ahmadiyya' was insulted with the word '*beyadob*'(idiot) for the cause of a 'false'/ 'distinctive' belief in Golam Muhammad Kadinani as an '*Imam Mahdi'*, the audience instantly became enraged against the community. Further, the metaphoric word '*toilet*' in connection to the leader's death would produce a high degree of social hatred against the minority sect. While preachers from the community showed that the founding leader of Ahmadiyya faced a death case, similar to the historical monarchic ruler Farao; that could easily soar hatred toward the Ahmadiyya sect. When one of the non-Ahmadiyya males was asked 'do you think Ahmadiyya is anti-religious?', he stated

> I have heard they are '*kafir',* they are not Muslim and believers. I think they are '*kiddani*', foreigners; I know that they have no right to live with us since they are false Muslims. Our *Hujur* (preacher) said, they are '*kafir'*, don't meet with them, don't talk with them.

Many speeches made by traditional preachers are not only insulting but also attacking and oppressive. As approached in the public gathering (Islamic Tune, n.d.)

> Once our leader advised me to put a hand over my head that- 'would you please promise- in every field of speech you must say against the Ahmadiyya. Then I promised. He said to me… the main cause of this promise is that in our country many of the ministers of Govt. don't understand how they are *kafir* or disbelievers.

From these statements, it would be assumed that the oath of delivering a speech against the Ahmadiyya might constitute a dominant discourse that highly influenced the majority of believers. The oath of delivering a speech, in this context, is grounded on a few motives such as convincing people to accept the Ahmadiyya as *kafir* considering them as an out-group. Delivering undocumented propaganda with a false image had been a strong instrument for the formation of discursive discourse against the Ahmadiyya sect. The '*Islamic Tune'* (n.d.) channel presented the discursive knowledge in such a way that

> If the *Kadiani* are not declared as Kafir…the number of illegal children will increase, even if anyone of us makes a marital relationship with the *Kadiani* family….it will be an illegal marriage…. rather this relationship is as same as fornication, and the children will be bastard. Thus…we can say they are the most imposter and pretenders.

Those statements, as part of the anti-Ahmadiyya movement, show a discursive presentation associated with the discriminatory and exclusionary discourse that is enriched with linguistic propaganda. Different exclusionary words were used in this speech such as 'illegal marriage', 'fornication', 'bastard', 'imposter', and 'pretender', among those words; bastard and imposter are uttered frequently The speech proves that Ahmadiyya is not only a separate group but also an anti-religious and anti-social group. It was proclaimed that those who were '*kafir'* or disbelievers must be socially excluded in the sense that 'believers' should not make marital relationships with the Ahmadiyya members.

That means making marital relationships with this sect is 'illegal'; the husband-wife relationship seems to be fornication and the offspring of this family is meant to be illegal children. In our cultural practice, the metaphoric words 'illegal marriage' and 'bastard' are the most neglected terms. Moreover, the words 'bastard' 'imposter', and 'pretender' seem to be throwing kerosene into the fire. Therefore, the purposive motive for using neglected words was to instigate hostility and cruelty against the most underestimated sect.

Another linguistic technique of producing a discursive attitude is the process of hyperbole or delivering an extravagant statement. This was approached by a preacher, that the *Life Media BD* (n.d.) channel broadcasted,

> From tomorrow, whoever will go to a shop …. must talk against *Kadiani* saying that Mirza Golam Kadiani was a '*kafir'* and he drowned in a toilet, and whoever follows them they are also '*kafir*'. If anyone goes to the fish market…talk against Ahmadiyya… then you will say what is the rate of the fish.

Those statements prove that the contiguous and regular practice of labeling the Ahmadiyya as *'kafir'* with hyperbolic nature must reinforce the local people to make Ahmadiyya socially excluded and oppressed. That means the anti-Ahmadiyya linguistic system of hyperbole can be powerful to accelerate social exclusion and social eviction of the Ahmadiyya community in society.

Discriminatory Discourse as Reflected in Social Exclusion

The discursive discourse turns into discriminatory discourse when the prevailing discourse about Ahmadiyya can cause different social exclusions like economic, political, and socio-relational exclusions.

Socio-relational Exclusion

Recursive blaming against the Ahmadiyya results in socio-relational exclusion which was mentioned by a young male from the Ahmadiyya community, as stated

> My son and daughter could not continue school education in peace, since other students always neglected my kids uttering "*Kaiddany, Kaiddany*" while seeing them on the road or the field, or at school.

This response showed that the children of Ahmadiyya were so excluded and neglected that they felt an identity crisis in their living place. Also, the degree of hatred was intensified after announcing oaths in public gatherings. This form of oath declared a manifest movement against the Ahmadiyya community in Bangladesh which was closely linked with the development of discriminatory and oppressive attitudes against the Ahmadiyya community. A housewife (age 40) from the Ahmadiyya community responded,

> The local teachers are reluctant to teach our kids for our membership, and even non-Ahmadiyya students are reluctant to get any educational help from Ahmadiyya teachers. We always feel social hatred and social distance from others in our local area.

Similarly, a day laborer from the Ahmadiyya said,

> When I demanded my wage from the owner, the man attacked me and used rough language. As I am an Ahmadiyya, I always encounter bad behavior from the majority, and I have earned very little.

Above the statements depict the status of demarcation and social segregation imposed by the locals of the anti-Ahmadi group. For example, the school-going kids faced verbal attacks, and the Ahmadiyya members suffered more from the practice of social negligence and restrictions from marital relationships (Richmond, 2002). In this connection, an old man (age 62) from Ahmadiyya mentioned,

> I was a village doctor…. At once my dispensary was vandalized by the protesters. They labeled me '*Kaiddany Doctor'* saying that the medicine, which Ahmadiyya doctors provide, has no power to recover from the disease.

Even the cult of Ahmadiyya promotes otherness in terms of religious practice. For instance, an Ahmadiyya member (age 45) pronounced the practice of dis-assimilation through a video channel as represented

> I was part of the Ahmadiyya community. There are three approaches to Mirza Golam Ahmed: one is he is a reformer; he is a prophet not like the prophets who bore Allah's verses and he had characters that I looked up to as a role model. Within that cult we are discouraged from mingling with Muslims completely...it was very very scary for us to go off our mosques. One time I wanted to pray at another mosque, but I was scared about what they would think about me, and would they find me as Ahmadiyya? Ahmadiyya is a homogenous community, and even Mirza Golam Ahmed said 'you cannot make such a relationship with other Muslims which is practiced in the Ahmadiyya community' (MuslimIdentity,n.d.)

Economic Exclusion

In many cases, the majority of locals expropriated the wealth of the Ahmadiyya people, even the blind followers or criminals murdered, and tortured the Ahmadiyya member using local weapons and suicidal blasts. One of the female members of the Ahmadiyya community stated

> My husband was an employee of an organization named '*Jubo Unnayon Karmashala'*, but after marriage, he was suspended from his job only for the cause of making the marital relationship with us. Now we have to face huge suffering due to the loss of earning opportunities, and we cannot afford basic needs.

Similarly, another case of economic exclusion was portrayed by an adult Ahmadiyya male in such a way

> One of my sons-in-law was an employee of a company. He got pressured by other employees to give up his job. Due to being an Ahmadiyya member, the office told him that either you cut out his belief, or he should resign from his job…then he resigned.

In the process of social exclusion, using words of blaming was one of the powerful instruments in social practices that enhanced economic exclusion for the community.

Exclusion by Political Protection

In the political arena, a different way of linguistic expression was used in many of the speeches in public gatherings, by which the presenter could exert pressure on the political authority. A public speech of a traditional preacher was disseminated by the YouTube channel (Jahid Media, n.d.)

> Those who support the *Kadiani* will be attacked with shoes in a brutal way (…then the audience shouted with a loud voice) …..if the parliament members support the Ahmadiyya… …we want to say stop your support, otherwise, we will arrange a large gathering in Dhaka.

In line with the statements, a listener of the local area (adult male) said,

> I usually subscribe to YouTube for listening to religious speeches. I listened that *hujur* said Ahmadiyya must be banned in the whole country, they should not get state protection.

The arousal statements using harsh and loud voices against the Ahmadiyya community indicated pressure against the religious minority. The stressing words 'stop support', and 'must be banned' signaled that the Ahmadiyya sect must be prohibited by the political authority ('Anti-Ahmadiyyas', 2003). As an effect of this kind of dominant discourse, several attacks were held in the mosque where the Ahmadiyya performed praying, even some of the mosques were besieged and vandalized since they were treated as non-Muslim while the Ahmadiyya thought themselves Muslim. Ahmadiyya, thereby, realized that they were not politically safeguarded. As approached by a vulnerable Ahmadiyya adult that

> Our insecurity is not only for now but for a long time. In 1987, almost 20 persons attacked me with hard sticks and destroyed my house, then I filed a case in court. I did not get a positive result from the court. The majority see us not as people, they tell us '*kafir'*.

A non-Ahmadiyya local male in such justified this devastating situation was that

> *'Kadiani'* are not Bangladeshi, they cannot participate in political activities. Why they will be allowed to give vote….they should go back to Pakistan or India, we cannot tolerate them, why they were given national ID cards?

These responses prove that the Ahmadiyya failed to live with economic security, unsafety, and political rights because the local people thought of them as anti-religious and thereby anti-social. This pressure might enhance political exclusion and violation of political rights as well as civil rights if the community lived with their 'Muslim' identity. This kind of 'othering' strategy was developed by continuous preaching, propagation, demonstration, and agitation operated by the hegemonic majority (Kabir, 2016). A female member of Ahmadiyya pronounced the problematic issue which Spark Public broadcasted. (n.d.):

> I belong to the Ahmadiyya Muslim community. We believe that the Ahmadiyya community is known for peace, love, and unity...showing

> the true meaning of Islam. We believe that the last prophet is the law-bearing prophet and the Messiah just came to revive Muslims. However, the main reason for my father's move to another country was in pursuit of religious freedom because he did not get opportunities to live in his native country.

With the role of the hegemonic majority, thereby**,** many Ahmadiyya members were evicted from their living places, the brutal attack injured many, and many lost their earned property. Alongside the threat and losses, a few of them were killed after the brutal attack, and the hostility was so severe that the protesters used sticks, machetes, and darts to hit them, and even threw suicidal bombs that seriously injured the members of the community ("Ahmadiya houses", 2023; "Attacker killed", 2015). This brutal, nasty, and inhuman act is the result of discursive discourse constituted by the anti-Ahmadi protesters in public space by which people learned that any kind of relationship with the Ahmadiyya is prohibited, and even the dead body was barred from the graveyard (see "ARTICLE 19 condemns", 2020; Ashraf, 2005). Thus, it is confirmed that the discursive and ideology construction of discourses (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 2006) about Ahmadiyya generated the discriminatory discourse that resulted in a wide range of social exclusions like economic exclusion, exclusion by politics, and social participation.

CONCLUSIONS

The study intended to understand the extent of social exclusion of the Ahmadiyya community in Bangladesh for the role of discourses constructed by the traditional religious preachers, using the critical discourse analysis (CDA) method. The findings of the study reveal that the Ahmadiyya community as a religious minority has experienced different forms of discourses by the conventional religious authority and majority believers who always treat the Ahmadiyya as a socially excluded community in Bangladesh.

The primary reason behind the status of the Ahmadiyya is the minority position and their belief that contradicts the beliefs and practices of the majority believers. Though the Ahmadiyya confess that they are following the same fundamentals of Islam with less difference as in-group discourse, the total belief structure instigates the conflict between minority and majority and between majority and state to the extent that the majority is putting pressure upon the government to confirm the total status of social exclusion. As part of this process, the Ahmadiyya community has to face defamatory discourse created by traditional religious speeches, such as using languages of blaming (kaiddani), labeling (kafir), and rhetoric (dazzal). Furthermore, this community is always affected by the discursive discourse, which is

colored by derogatory language such as persuasive (propaganda), reinforcing (pressurizing), emblematical (language of hatred), and hyperbole (shouting against Ahmadiyya for banning) type of language (Table 3).

Table 3

Discursive Discourse and Its Effects on Different Social Exclusions

Discursive discourse	Language structure	Discriminatory discourse reflected in social exclusion
In-group discourse	Favoring: Ahmadiyya as a follower of basic Islam	Religious homogeneity and distance from the majority
Defamatory discourse	Blaming: *kaiddani*, *one-eyed* Labeling: *kafir* Rhetoric: *dazzal*	1. Exclusion by social participation: neglected in the schooling of children, social communication, cooperation by the local majority 2. Exclusion by economic conditions: evicted from job, living with the least wage, restriction from earning. 3. Exclusion by political protection: Exhuming, looting, threat, murder, and attack as sign of destruction and unsafety
Derogatory discourse	Persuasive: Promise for propaganda Reinforcing: 'Marital relation' as illegal Emblematical: Child-birth as fornication Hyperbole: Shouting & pressurizing for banning	

Source: Summary of findings developed by authors

As an effect of the role of defamatory and derogatory discourses, the Ahmadiyya community is not only living with vulnerabilities but mostly with different forms of social exclusion. Firstly, they are excluded from social participation; for example, the children of the Ahmadiyya community are neglected in schools by the teachers and local students, and they cannot pursue social communication and cooperation with the majority of believers in their local areas. Secondly, the community is excluded from economic facilities such as job opportunities and earning accessibility, so many of them were evicted from their jobs, and they have to live with the lowest wage rate.

Thirdly, the Ahmadiyya is excluded from political protection, thereby, they have been suffering from rigorous attack on mosques and homes, looting, harsh threats, brutal murder, and even the exhumation of infant baby that proved the extent of their social exclusion and vulnerabilities. That means, the rising social exclusion and vulnerabilities of the Ahmadiyya

community cannot be separated from the texts, talk, opinion, power, and culture (van Dijk, 2006), as well as from the in-group, defamatory and derogatory discourse about the Ahmadiyya community. However, Ahmadiyya itself follows in-group religious practice discouraging religious assimilation which increases minority-majority distance.

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this regard, the recommendations of the constitution of Bangladesh Article 41.1 show that every citizen has the right to profess, practice, or propagate any religion, and every religious community has the right to establish, maintain, and manage its religious institutions (Legislative and Parliamentary Affairs Division, 2019). Also, Article 27 confirms that all citizens are equal before the law, and under Article 34 (5), no person shall be subjected to torture or cruel, inhuman, or degrading punishment or treatment. In this regard, governmental safeguards for the rights of religious minorities necessitate ensuring community development in the local areas of Bangladesh. Unlike the banning of Ahmadiyya by the Pakistan legislation, Bangladesh has no law against Ahmadiyya, which is a sign of minority protection by the government of Bangladesh. Besides the national constitutional rights, Sustainable Development Goals (SDG, Goal 3.5) focuses on strengthening the prevention of substance abuse and SDG Goal 4 highlights ensures quality education and learning opportunities, while Goal 3 SDG Goal 11 addresses good health and well-being, and sustainable community life (United Nations, 2015).

The states are responsible for ensuring protection, security, and legal justice regarding the rights, including the economic and mental well-being of the vulnerable Ahmadiyya community. More importantly, religious preachers from both majority believers and minority believers should arrange inter-dialogue platforms in order to improve inter-religious communications and cultural development in local areas of Bangladesh. Furthermore, constructive ideas and lessons should be included in the formal educational curricula to enhance the cognitive quality of living with multi-social groups that would generate a harmonious environment in favor of community well-being for minority and majority believers. More importantly, many mass media programs covering print and electronic media on the issue of enhancing respect for minority people should be scheduled. The study feels that further studies of quantitative data analysis through survey questionnaires and qualitative studies with ethnographic studies are needed to generate the empirical grievances of the religious minority group.

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Exploring the Experiences of Indigenous Peoples' Mandatory Representatives in the Barangay Level, Philippines

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ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study aims to explore the experiences of six Indigenous Peoples' Mandatory Representatives in Baguio City, Philippines. Using a semi-structured interview, this study found that the participants fulfil descriptive representation through the mirroring of their constituents' ethnolinguistic identities and political practices. However, the participants are only able to attain a limited form of substantive representation by aligning their proposed ordinances with existing local and national legislation, and their insertion of Indigenous Peoples' interests in the local legislative agenda. Institutional difficulties and lack of community engagement hinder the participants' performance of their representation tasks. Overall, this paper discusses the difficulties of enacting responsive ordinances despite the presence of Indigenous Peoples' Mandatory Representatives.

Keywords: Descriptive representation, Indigenous peoples, Legislative representation, Substantive representation

INTRODUCTION

The legislative representation of marginalized sectors is a means to address their concerns and advance their interests. As posited by 'the politics of presence' (Phillips, 1998), those claiming to represent a sector must themselves be members of such a sector to craft policies that are meaningful to those represented. Mirroring the descriptive features of those represented implies the possession of knowledge and experiences relevant to the enactment of responsive laws and policies.

For the Indigenous Peoples (IPs), legislative representation is important since it provides them with the opportunity to participate in mainstream politics. Their presence in the lawmaking process allows the inclusion of IPs' concerns in the legislative agenda, and the consideration of their unique culture and traditions during legislative deliberations. This can result in the possible enactment of laws responding to their economic marginalization and consequently improving the indigenous communities' quality of life (Protsky, 2010; Villanueva et al., 2017). Also, by seeing a fellow indigenous community member engaging in a political activity dominated by the mainstream population, the indigenous population is encouraged to participate in other political activities such as attending public consultations and voting during elections (Jayma-Porquis, 2017). Overall, legislative representation can lead to improved economic conditions, cultural preservation, and increased political participation of the IPs.

Given its significance, several countries have instituted constitutional mechanisms for IPs' representation like reserved seats in the legislature as in the cases of New Zealand, Bolivia, Venezuela, and India (Hoffay & Rivas, 2016). In some countries such as Singapore, Ecuador, and Zimbabwe, they have constitutionally guaranteed indigenous representation in the executive and judicial branches (Morris, 2021). Nonetheless, studies show that despite their presence in the legislature and other decision-making bodies, the IPs remain underrepresented and marginalized (Murphy, 2008; Protsyk, 2010; Hoffay & Rivas, 2016; Templeman, 2018; Morris, 2021).

The Philippines is a Southeast Asian country with a unitary presidential form of government. Legislative representation is done through a bicameral legislative body representing national, district and sectoral concerns. The country has enacted a general policy recognizing and protecting the rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities (ICCs) within the state's development framework as provided in Art. II, sec. 22 of the 1987 Philippine Constitution. On October 29, 1997, the law fulfilling such constitutional intent was signed by former President Fidel V. Ramos. Republic Act 8371, otherwise known as "An Act to Recognize, Protect and

Promote the Rights of Indigenous Cultural Communities, Creating a National Commission on Indigenous Peoples, Establishing Implementing Mechanisms, Appropriating Funds Therefore, and for Other Purposes" was enacted to cater to the estimated 12.5-17.8 million IPs of the Philippines, occupying the mountains of Northern Luzon and the Southern islands of Mindanao, with smaller populations scattered in the Visayas and Luzon islands (Arquiza, 2005; UNDRIP, 2010). Better known as the Indigenous Peoples Rights Act (IPRA), the law is celebrated as the first legislation in Asia to focus solely on IPs' rights.

Numerous studies have focused on assessing the implementation of IPRA (Paredes, 2018; Bayot, 2019; McMurry, 2019; Theriault, 2019; Domingo & Manejar, 2020; Doyle, 2020; Andaya, 2021; Sy & Martinez, 2022). One of its most evaluated provisions is the implementation of the right to Free, Prior, and Informed Consent (FPIC) against dams, logging, and mining activities inside IPs' territory. Studies characterized the process as flawed, vague, and unclear resulting in its negotiated, varied, problematic interpretations, and defective implementation, with the need for IPs' consent transformed into mere consultation (Daytec- Yangot, 2012; Magno & Gatmaytan, 2013; Voss & Greenspan, 2013; Ibabao et al., 2013; Peñalba, 2016; Bayot, 2019; Sy & Martinez, 2022).

Another significant yet controversial provision of IPRA is the ICCs' rights to ancestral domains. Existing studies described the recognition, processing, approval, and release of the certificates for the ancestral lands and domains as lengthy and bureaucratic (Clemente, 2019; Domingo & Manejar, 2020), hollow and illusory (Bayot, 2019), as well as contradictory to the IPs' customary laws on ownership (Sy & Martinez, 2022). Additionally, the awarding of ancestral land and domain titles has created tension among the ethnic communities, and conflicts regarding territorial jurisdictions between the ICCs and the local government (Prill-Brett, 2007; Rutten, 2015; Abordo & Coronacion, 2019; Revilla, 2022).

Regarding IPs' mandatory representation in policy making bodies and other local legislative councils, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP) issued implementation guidelines through a series of Administrative Orders (AO). The initial guidelines were issued in 2009 and revised in 2018. Briefly, the current guidelines define the Indigenous Peoples Mandatory Representatives (IPMRs) as those who stand for the collective aspirations, interests, and welfare of the ICCs they represent. He/she must be a certified member of the indigenous group he/she claims to represent and must be knowledgeable of the community's culture. The process of selection is determined by the ICCs with the help of the NCIP.

Also, the guidelines require that IPs' representation shall be mandatory in the legislative council of Local Government Units (LGU) with ancestral domains.

In 2020, a resolution released by NCIP extended the IPMRs' maximum consecutive term of office. Hence, the appointed IPMR has a term of office consisting of three years and can be re-endorsed for another term but in no case shall be more than three consecutive terms. To date, there are currently 5,167 IPMRs, most of them found at the barangay level. These IPs' representatives are tasked to protect the interest of indigenous communities in local legislative bodies and to serve as advocates for inclusive and equitable local governance and sustainable development (NCIP, 2023).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Studies focused on the performance of the mandatory IPs' representatives are crucial in determining whether the representation mechanism instituted by IPRA can address IPs' concerns and interests through the local legislative bodies. However, there are only a handful of studies focused on evaluating the performance of the IPMRs despite the significance of their mandated tasks. Results from the study of the IPMRs of the Bukidnon Tribe in Mindanao, Philippines, reveal that the communication and political relationship between the mainstream local government and the tribe was enhanced through the appointment of indigenous representatives. Through their representatives, the tribe participates in the formulation of projects and activities by the local government (Jayma-Porquis, 2017). As for the IPMRs of Palayan City and Gabaldon, Nueva Ecija, Philippines, statistical information on the number of ordinances and resolutions passed between 2013-2017 reveals that Palayan City had no authorized resolutions while Gabaldon had only three. This is a relatively insignificant contribution of the IPMRs to local legislation (Villanueva et al., 2017). These two studies offer complementary yet conflicting results. While the implementation of the IPMRs has provided indigenous communities with the opportunity to participate in local legislative bodies, their presence does not automatically translate into ordinances.

Although descriptive representation is a huge step for IPs' representation, the goal is to allow them to resolve their issues and concerns as they see fit through the enactment of policies and ordinances. However, the IPMRs are faced with several difficulties in their attempt to achieve substantive representation. The identified challenges include the non-acceptance by local politicians and other stakeholders of the appointed

IPMRs, a politicized IPMR selection process (OGP, 2019), the local executive officials' lack of enthusiasm and support for the appointed IPMRs, budget constraints (Villanueva et. al., 2017), and the focus on the IPs' integration into the mainstream legislative bodies rather than allowing them to pursue culturally defined ordinances (Peñalba, 2011).

In response to these challenges, specific recommendations include the educating of the mainstream politicians regarding indigenous communities and cultural diversity on one hand, and the continued training of the indigenous representatives regarding the mainstream political processes on the other hand (Jayma-Porquis, 2017). Other suggestions include the NCIP's engagement with other civic organizations and government offices to ease bureaucratic hurdles for the IPMRs (OGP, 2019), and the LGU's strict compliance with the IPMRs provisions of the IPRA law (Villanueva et al., 2017).

Furthermore, all the studies (Peñalba, 2011; Jayma-Porquis, 2017; Villanueva et al.,2017; OGP, 2019) emphasized the need to conduct additional studies in specific indigenous communities to have a comprehensive understanding of the varied experiences, successes, and challenges of the IPMRs around the country. According to the OGP (2020), there are 30 cities, 32 provinces, 380 municipalities, and 3,852 barangays that have implemented the mandatory IPs' representation required by IPRA. So far, of these compliant LGUs, only the IPMRs of Malaybalay City, Bukidnon (Jayma-Porquis, 2017), and the municipality of Gabaldon and Palayan City, Nueva Ecija (Villanueva et al., 2017) were studied. Clearly, there is a scarcity of studies about the mandatory IPs' representation in local legislative councils.

Data from research are valuable sources for determining whether the appointment of IPMRs leads to the enactment of ordinances responsive to the concerns of indigenous communities. Narratives from the IPMRs provide reliable firsthand information about the dynamics and challenges of representing IPs' interests in the mainstream political arena. However, the lack of studies on IPMRs in other territories creates a research gap by providing a limited understanding of the implementation of the mandatory IPs' representation and the IPMRs' experiences. Given the varying cultural practices, economic development, and political integration of the numerous indigenous communities in the country, findings from a few studies focused on a specific indigenous group in a particular city or municipality cannot represent the indigenous population in other territories. This may lead to sweeping generalizations regarding the IPMRs without taking into consideration contextual and cultural differences.

Thus, this study aims to add to the limited research on IPMRs, and to enjoin others to explore the rich and varied experiences of the indigenous representatives. It aims to provide relevant baseline data about the implementation of the IPs' representation mechanism in the different LGUs in the country. These data might help in understanding the dynamics and challenges of mandatory IPs' representation. Specifically, this study answered the following research questions: 1) What are the descriptive features reflected by the barangay IPMRs of Baguio City, Philippines? 2) How is substantive representation fulfilled by the barangay IPMRs of Baguio City, Philippines? And lastly 3) What are the challenges faced by the barangay IPMRs of Baguio City, Philippines?

METHODOLOGY

This qualitative study used the phenomenological design to gain a deeper understanding of the participants' lived experiences as indigenous community representatives. The qualitative approach facilitates the understanding of a social context where multiple realities can be discovered, while the phenomenological design allows the researchers to focus on the common lived experiences within a particular group (Creswell, 2014). A phenomenological design is appropriate since the objective of the study is to gain an understanding of an experience peculiar to individuals who have gained the responsibility of representing their community in the mainstream political arena while preserving their community's unique ways of life.

Figure 1
Location of Baguio City

Source: https://en-academic.com/dic.nsf/enwiki/11730148

This study was conducted in Baguio City, located in the Northern part of the Philippines. It is particularly located in the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), Province of Benguet. Figure 1 shows the location of Baguio City in the Philippines (Tallo, et al.,2014).

Data collection and analysis

Following research protocols on IPs, the researchers requested permission from the NCIP-CAR to interview the incumbent barangay IPMRs. At the time the study was conducted, there were only six out of the 129 barangays in the city of Baguio with IPMRs. All the IPs' representatives of the six barangays, namely; Happy Hallow, Camp 7, Lucnab, Loakan-Apugan, Loakan-Proper, and Loakan-Liwanag agreed to participate in the study.

The study used a semi-structured interview protocol, which allowed the researchers to follow a particular set of questions while giving the interviewees enough room to share their stories about being an IPs' representative. After informing them of the purpose of the study and getting their consent, the interview sessions were recorded. Data collection spanned from the middle of February 2023 until late March 2023, while the interview sessions lasted from 30 to 45 minutes. The interviews were mostly conducted in a mixture of Ilocano, informal English, and Tagalog since the participants are familiar with these languages. These were then translated and quoted in this study's findings verbatim.

Data analysis was guided by the concepts of representation provided by Phillips (1998). The data gathered were categorized as either descriptive or substantive representation. Descriptive representation happens when the representative mirrors the same features of those represented. In this case, an IPs' representative is a member of the indigenous community, sharing the same cultural practices and experiences as those represented. In terms of substantive representation, this refers to the filing of proposals and enactment of ordinances responsive to the IPs' concerns. It emphasizes the notion that a representative's responsibility lies in their ability to enact ordinances that cater to the needs and interests of those they represent. The category of the challenges encountered by the participants was added based on the study's research question.

FINDINGS

The findings of this research are categorized as IPs' descriptive representation, IPs' substantive representation, and challenges faced by the IPMRs.

IPs' Descriptive Representation

Descriptive representation is attained when the representative claiming to 'stand for' the IPs shares similar characteristics with the members of the indigenous community such as ethnolinguistic identity and cultural practice.

All the participants mirror several features of the Cordillera IPs. First, their ethnolinguistic profile reveals their representation of Cordillera indigenous identities. Two out of the six participants considered themselves as Ibaloi. One participant identified with the Tuwali group, while another considered himself as a member of the Balangaw group. Lastly, the two remaining participants ascribed to multiple ethnolinguistic groups namely; Ibaloi, Kankana-ey, and Kalanguya.

Ibaloi is an ethnolinguistic identity native to the city of Baguio and its neighboring municipalities such as La Trinidad, Itogon, and Tuba (Bagamaspad & Hamada-Pawid, 1985; Fong, 2017). It is commonly acknowledged that the name Baguio was derived from the Ibaloi word bagiw which means moss, a slimy watery plant (Fong, 2017). As for the other ethnolinguistic identities of the participants, these are associated with the different provinces of the Cordillera region. For instance, the Tuwali and Kalanguya groups are both generally associated with the province of Ifugao. While the Tuwali is considered one of Ifugao's major ethnolinguistic categories known for their Alim and Hudhud chant (Uy-Jocson, 2018), the Kalanguya is described as a "silent", lesser-known group with several communities in the provinces of Benguet, Nueva Ecija, Pangasinan, and Aurora (Balangcod, T. & Balangcod, A., 2011; De Leon et al., 2016; Guinsiman, 2016). Meanwhile, the Balangao and Kankana-ey ethnolinguistic groups are generally associated with the territories of Mountain Province and Benguet.

The participants' varying ethnolinguistic ascription demonstrate the fact that Baguio City is a melting pot of different ethnolinguistic identities. Among the city's population of 366,358, almost half ascribe to non-Cordilleran identities, mostly Ilokano (27 %), and Tagalog (17 %) (PSA, 2023; Rng Luzon, 2023). Also, almost half of the population identifies with the various Cordilleran ethnolinguistic groups such as Kankana-ey (12%), Ibaloi (7%), Applai (6%), Bontok (5%), Ifugao (4%), and Kalinga (2%) (Domerez, 2021; Rng Luzon, 2023). The remaining percentages consist of other Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao identities.

Noticeably, all the participants use the term IPs to refer to themselves and those they represent rather than using their specific ethnolinguistic label. As highlighted by IPMR 3,

> I am not a representative of Balangao, I represent all the ethnic groups in the Cordillera. Nobody will be known as from Ifugao, from Abra or Kalinga or Mt. Province. Everybody will be known as IPs of Barangay Lucnab.

This statement implies that from the participant's perspective, the Cordillera IPs can represent and be represented by any other Cordillera ethnolinguistic group.

The peaceful co-existence of the different ethnolinguistic groups is an acknowledged characteristic of Baguio City. Emphasizing the cooperation among the different Cordillera IPs despite a few disagreements, IPMR 2 points out that "there are some disagreements, but we always strive to work together as IPs in our barangay. We need to be united so that we can provide better services to our fellow IPs." The ascription to an ethnolinguistic group different from some of those represented is not a concern for the IPMRs. One participant even considers himself "lucky" to serve ethnolinguistic groups different from his own.

The second feature reflected by the mechanism for instituting IPs' representatives is the political practice of the Cordillera indigenous communities, particularly the involvement of the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders is a group of respected individuals within an indigenous community chosen for their wisdom, experience, and knowledge of traditional customs and practices. They are often referred to as the "Wise ones" and are seen as the keepers of traditional knowledge and values. Generally, the Council of Elders are the decision makers among the Ibalois, Kankana-eys, Tinguians, and Bontoks (Pagandian & Eduardo, 2019; Prill-Brett, 1987).

The involvement of the Council of Elders is mainly seen in the choosing of an IPs' representative. All the participants described the selection of an IPMR as a collaborative effort between the Council of Elders and the NCIP. IPMR 5 mentioned that the Council of Elders and the NCIP are "the ones who give permission" as to who is qualified to be appointed as a barangay IPMR. IPMR 2 narrates the process in detail.

> If there are IPs in a barangay, the NCIP will be informed and they will conduct an information campaign in each barangay to inform the people about the importance of selecting an IPMR. Then, the Council of Elders will be the ones to select the IPMR. This is the latest process we did here in Baguio City. We requested the Council of Elders to select us.

In addition, IPMR 6 pointed out the involvement of the constituents themselves in choosing their representative, although the final decision still rests with the council of elders.

> Well, it is up to the council of the elders to decide but we also have the constituents of the IPs to decide if they still have the trust and confidence in me. But it is really up to the elders because we usually do it in the customary way. If there is somebody that they feel or know that is better and can do the job of IPMR better, then it is up to the elders' decision.

Aside from the Council of Elders' significant involvement in the selection process, the participants also mentioned their role in the local legislative duties of the IPMR. As pointed out by IPMR 5,

> We need to discuss with the Council of Elders of the community so we can come up with a legislation like the resolutions regarding our culture and tradition and practices. By doing so, with the advice of the elders, we are able to come up with these resolutions.

In the case of IPMR 2, the Council of Elders "has helped me in making very important decisions as they are there to give insights and guide me on how I will plan out every legislation that I have in mind for our indigenous community." Similarly, IPMR 3 expressed that "I am not alone. I also have a companion which is the elders. We work together and they assist me."

However, three of the participants had a few complaints about the Council of Elders. In the case of IPMR 6, he raised the concern of not having a registered Council of Elders for their barangay.

> Based on the provision of IPRA, there should be one. Because I believe that the elders are the right person to act on the other concerns of the city in the City Charter. Because in reality, there is no Council of Elders registered with the NCIP. . . there should be a Council of Elders because they are the right person to file an issue, to file a complaint or reaction especially when that is already a law and more so if many IPs don't have representatives. But lately, we are trying to adjust and do what we can do.

For his part, IPMR 5 called attention to the availability of the Council of Elders.

> I think sometimes we need the group, sometimes the group is not available for us. The elders, they are already at the old age so we need to go to their place. We make our self available for them, not for them to come to the barangay. We go to their residence for consultation about any resolutions.

IPs' Substantive Representation

Representation is not just about mirroring the characteristics of those represented, it is also a means to advance Indigenous interests through their involvement in policy making. The interviewed IPMRs mentioned several issues that they have tried to resolve as members of the Sangguniang Barangay (Barangay Legislative Council).

Ancestral lands

IPRA, through the NCIP, recognizes the need to resolve issues regarding ancestral land claims. As such, it defines ancestral lands as those lands occupied, possessed, and utilized by individuals, families, and clans who are members of the ICCs/IPs since time immemorial. They or through their predecessors in interest, under claims of individual or traditional group ownership, must have continuously occupied, possessed, and utilized these lands until the present except when interrupted by war, force majeure, or displacement by force, deceit, stealth, or as a consequence of government projects and other voluntary dealings entered into by government and private individuals/corporations. These lands include but are not limited to residential lots, rice terraces or paddies, private forests, swidden farms, and tree lots (RA 8371, Chapter II, sec. 3.b, 1997). These ancestral lands comprise the ancestral domain of ICCs. This definition serves as the primary basis for claims filed by members of the ICCs.

Four of the participants narrated their efforts requesting for the recognition of their barangay's ancestral lands. Their experiences reveal contrasting results. IPMR 1 takes pride in the granting of an ancestral domain certificate to their barangay and highlights the collaborative efforts between the barangay and city officials when narrating about their plans.

> Now, we are facing the amendment of the general master plan of Happy Hallow ancestral domain together with the city planning officers. With that, they are currently viewing it, the on-going harmonization with Baguio City's comprehensive use plan to merge Barangay Happy Hallow land use plan so that after that, the city council will adopt it and then convert it into city ordinance.

In contrast, IPMR 3 recounts how their barangay's application for ancestral domain was disapproved by the NCIP. He explained that "it was not me who processed the application, the individual claimants did it. Actually, they are originally from this place. If they were Ibalois, then it would have been approved, like the case of Happy Hallow." This is in

accordance with the NCIP rule that for ancestral domain claims to prosper, one must prove the authenticity of the community's ethnic identity.

Moreover, ancestral lands are reserved for the members of the indigenous community native to the territory, thus, the entry of non-IPs is regulated. IPMR 1 stated that "because there is already a lot of outsiders entering the ancestral domain, and sometimes the leaders cannot control them, we have to make a policy about the entry of migrants." For his part, IPMR 2 complained that "our problem is the squatters, since sometimes the government supports them. How about us, the legitimate ancestral land claimants. If we are driven out, where do we go?"

Furthermore, IPMR 6 highlighted how the IPRA law itself became a barrier to the ancestral land claims of the IPs of Baguio City. Particularly, section 78 of the IPRA law identifies the townsites of Baguio City as governed by the city's charter and can only be re- classified through appropriate legislation. The provision essentially provides that the town site reservations in Baguio cannot be covered by Certificates of Ancestral Land Title (CALT) and Certificates of Ancestral Domain Title (CADT) unless legislation is enacted for such. He asserts:

> We find that (section 78) is unconstitutional because it waives the existence of the Matthew Cariño doctrine which was done here in Baguio and now, we find it hard to find ownership in our lands because that is the law. This doctrine is the Native Title Doctrine, which recognizes indigenous peoples' rights over their lands has been overturned.

As of this time, issues regarding the ancestral domain and land claims remain to be unresolved. IPMR 1 expressed his frustration regarding the inability of the Philippine government to resolve the issue.

> We have not seen a concrete plan or remedy from the justice system to address all of our needs. Actually, on our side, it's like we feel like we are being bullied up until the Supreme Court. In our analogy, maybe the Supreme Court doesn't want to release its decision because they know to themselves that all of the process and filing of the NCIP for our own title was right.

Preservation of culture

In addition, four participants focused on enacting ordinances in line with the protection and preservation of the IPs culture, traditions, and institutions. As IPMR 3 reasons out, "because my barangay does not have any ancestral domain and land claims, what I focus on is the promotion of the different cultures and traditions of the Cordillera region." Meanwhile,

IPMR 2 rationalizes their barangay's establishment of a School of Living Traditions (STL).

> I cannot turn a blind eye to the future of my tribe, the young people in my area, as my gratitude to them and also for the celebration of a bright future, I, together with my colleagues, have passed the ratification of the creation of Cultural School of Living Traditions for our young people so that they shall never forget the roots of their own heritage and Indigenous Identity.

In addition, IPMR 5 shares that the community is pleased with the establishment of an SLT, saying that "the community likes the way we represent our culture" and that "they are satisfied with what we are doing."
In the case of IPMR 4, the preservation of culture is accomplished in his barangay through the enactment of an ordinance celebrating IPs' Day. According to him, it provides a platform for different ethnic groups to establish their bond in a healthy and entertaining manner while simultaneously giving them a chance to cultivate their camaraderie with one another.

> The observation of culture is why there was an IP day because here, we have many ethnic groups, not just one. There are many, so we made the IP day for this. There is a competition, or there are games—sports fest. They had a closer relationship with everyone in each district. There was camaraderie.

Other services

Lastly, two of the six participants mentioned other services that they have performed apart from proposing and enacting ordinances. IPMR 1 mentioned the "settling of disputes arising within the ICCs" saying that these are resolved "within the bounds of the council of elders." Similarly, IPMR 2 explains that "as for the conflicts among members of the same tribe, we mediate and try to come up with peaceful resolutions following the customary law." For IPMR 3, it is the rehabilitation of their barangay hall.

Challenges to IPs Barangay Representation

While going over their proposed and enacted barangay ordinances, the participants also identified several difficulties that hindered their performance as IPs' representatives. This section divides these difficulties into institutional and community engagement challenges.

Institutional challenges

In line with being an official in the lowest political unit of the country, four participants recognized the need to align their proposals with existing national and other local policies. As stated by IPMR 1, "Our proposals will not be granted if it is in conflict with the national or local laws, so we need to study our proposals well. The leaders in the local government understand our proposals, they appreciate our proposals."

However, their interaction with the higher government offices is not always harmonious. For instance, ancestral land claims are a highly contested issue between the IPMRs and several government offices. IPMR 2 described the situation, "we feel like we have two enemies, the government and the squatters (entering the ancestral land), because sometimes they are the ones supported by the government", while IPMR 1 complained that sometimes it feels like the "people in the government played with or fooled us."

Furthermore, another difficulty mentioned by four of the participants is their lack of funding. IPMR 2 explained:

> The lack of funding generally roots from the lack of support from the government as we are an independent governing body of our tribesmen. We would always need to go to the city and argue with people in the hall only to be granted a few bits of funding only for one project, so I think that is the most challenging part of being an IPMR in our community.

Expressing the same sentiment, IPMR 5 stated:

> As an IPMR, there's a lot of work, you don't have a budget with this one. You will not be able to implement activities due to the lack of budget. You need to appeal to the council in order to have a budget. There's no single penny that was provided to us from the NCIP Baguio.

Recognizing that they need money to accomplish plans and projects for the IPs, IPMR 2 mentioned that they resort to donations. "Thanks to our generous donors back in my community, and with some fundraising projects, we were able to fund all of our projects sufficiently and with transparency." With the insufficiency of funds, IPMR 1 considers his services as "voluntary acts", stating that he sometimes tries to address the issue with "his own pocket."

Community Engagement challenges

Furthermore, three of the participants pointed out that they were also confronted with difficulties coming from the side of their constituents. IPMR 6 described the challenge.

> Our constituents are very active when problems arise but during the consultation only a few will be attending and then like what I said it has always been like that. When it comes to raising their problems, that is the time they have been very active but during the consultation they are not very much participative. Maybe 25 percent only of the population participates during the consultations.

Additionally, IPMR 1 focused on the younger generation's lack of appreciation regarding their proposals and that the youth are mostly "not fully aware of the benefits that they can get from them."

Nonetheless, all the participants in this study have expressed satisfaction with their task of representing the IPs sector in their barangay. According to IPMR 2,

> It feels great. Before, there was no IPMR to take care of the concerns of our fellow IPs, so I feel fulfilled that I am able to serve them now. I represent their issues as an IPMR and I am content with my position.

In the case of IPMR 1, his satisfaction with the job comes from the fact that he is "able to bring the issues and concerns of the ancestral domain of our Indigenous Cultural Community to the local even the national government."

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study reveal that all the participants descriptively represent the IPs of Baguio City. Similar to the findings of Jayma-Porquis (2017) and Villanueva et al (2017), the IPMRs guidelines issued by the NCIP guarantee the descriptive representation of ICCs in the local legislative bodies. In this study, the various Cordillera ethnolinguistic identities and the traditional authority of the Council of Elders emerged as the IPs' features mirrored by the IPMRs.

However, one peculiar feature of demographically representing Baguio City's IPs is the presence of various ethnolinguistic groups. Although the Ibalois are the recognized inhabitants native to the city of Baguio, some of its barangay IPMRs come from various ethnolinguistic groups in the Cordillera region. While all the participants did not consider this as a concern, it brings forth the situation of advocacy representation among the different ethnolinguistic groups. This is a relevant issue

considering that in the Philippines, there are at least 110 ethnolinguistic groups within the collective term IPs, each with its unique cultural traditions and practices.

Moreover, similar to the findings of Villanueva et al. (2017), this study highlights the supervision and influence of the Council of Elders as a significant part of the IPMR selection process. This is also similar to how the Bukidnon tribe in Jayma-Porquis' (2017) study strives to protect their traditional political institutions despite their entry into the local legislative bodies. Clearly, the provision of the IPMRs guidelines requiring the use of IPs' customary processes and patterns of authority and decision-making guarantees the preservation of their traditional political structures while ensuring their representation in local mainstream politics.

In terms of substantive representation, the findings of this study reveal that, on one hand, only four of the six incumbent Baguio City IPMRs have successfully passed barangay ordinances concerning the protection and preservation of the IPs' ways of life. These are the establishment of a School of Living Traditions (SLT) and the declaration of an IPs' day. Notably, the establishment of an SLT is aligned with the previously enacted ordinance by the Baguio City Council signed on February 22, 2022. The ordinance is part of the indigenous cultural heritage revitalization efforts for students in the different schools in the city which aims to impart Cordillera IPs cultural heritage, such as history, songs, chants, dances, and lifeways, among others (Habbiling, 2022; See, 2022). Likewise, the IPs Day ordinance is a barangay version of Proclamation No. 1906, signed on October 5, 2009, by then President Gloria Macapagal Arroyo, declaring October as National IPs' Month. The proclamation aims to enhance the people's participation in the celebration and preservation of ICCs as part of the Filipino nation. Evidently, the enacted barangay ordinances line up with existing local and national policies.

On the other hand, four of the interviewed IPMRs highlighted their frustration in acquiring ancestral land titles. They emphasized the misalignment between the IPs' interests and the Philippine government regarding land ownership. While the ICCs see themselves as the vanguards of the land due to the central role it plays in their survival, the national government considers the land as an instrument for national economic development. Nonetheless, the four participants promised to consistently represent the matter in the local legislative bodies and other relevant government offices. The issue of ancestral land and domain claims demonstrates the difficulty in enacting ordinances that challenge existing national laws.

Unlike the previous studies on IPMRs (Jayma-Porquis, 2017; Villanueva, et al, 2017), this study highlights the government's unitary structure as a limitation in fulfilling the IPMRs' ordinance making power. Such limitation is demonstrated in the need to make sure that the IPMRs' proposals are in agreement with the legislative agenda of the national government and other higher LGUs. Also, as mentioned by four participants, the funding of their programs and projects is dependent upon the budget allocation determined by higher LGUs and government offices. Although these limitations ensure the consistency of legislation from national to local government and the proper use of government funds, it restrict the IPMRs from attaining substantive representation. IPs' representation is premised on the fact that the ICCs are in a different situation compared to the mainstream population, hence the need to have representatives who will cater to their distinct concerns. If the IPMRs are to enact ordinances following the mainstream-influenced legislation, this could mean the integration of the IPs' issues with the mainstream interest rather than encouraging them to legislate according to their unique circumstances.

The findings demonstrate that while the IPMRs reflect the various Cordillera ethnolinguistic identities and the traditional authority of the Council of Elders, they are still unable to substantially enact independent ordinances. It casts doubt on the 'politics of presence' argument (Phillips, 1998), which posits that descriptive representation leads to substantive representation. Similarly, it also puts into question one of the aims of mandatory IPs' representation, that by having IPMRs in the local legislative councils and policy making bodies, the enactment of ordinances catering directly to the IPs' concerns is expected.

While having a representative in the local legislative body is a significant achievement for the indigenous population who were historically marginalized and underrepresented for years, realistic expectations should be in place when talking about IPs' substantive representation. For one, the IPs' representatives can inform the mainstream local leaders of their community's concerns while keeping their fellow indigenous members updated about the ordinances affecting them. The presence of open communication lines and a feedback system can encourage the indigenous population to participate in local decision making activities (Jayma-Porquis, 2017). Consequently, the increased political involvement of the indigenous population and the presence of IPMRs in the local legislative council can lead to the inclusion of IPs' interests in the local legislative agenda. This could eventually lead to the enactment of ordinances responsive to IPs' concerns. The point is that ordinances responding to IPs' concerns cannot

miraculously appear simply because IPMRs are present in the local legislative councils. In reality, IPs' representation still needs to deal with existing mainstream political structures and institutional arrangements.

Another challenge faced by three participants in the performance of their function as IPMRs is their constituents' lack of engagement. While it is hoped that seeing somebody 'like them' in the local legislative body can inspire members of the indigenous community to engage in local mainstream politics, this is not the case for some IPs. Their indifference can be attributed to their previous experiences of political marginalization. It could also imply their belief that the IPs' representation mechanism will not make a difference. Regardless, the IPs' lack of participation in community discussions can result in the representative not knowing their sentiments and concerns, leading to misrepresentation and/or underrepresentation.

In particular, one participant mentioned the failure of the younger generation of IPs to recognize the benefits of having a mandatory IPs' representative. Accordingly, the youths are unable to appreciate the IPMRs' efforts to enact ordinances regarding the preservation of indigenous cultures, and the protection of IPs' rights. This is unfortunate since the disengagement of the IPs' youth threatens the efforts of the IPMRs to preserve indigenous culture and identity. While the current efforts of the IPs' representatives are laudable, it is through the younger generation of IPs' participation in mainstream political activities that the continued existence and protection of indigenous rights, culture, and traditions can be secured.

Overall, while some of the findings of this study are consistent with previous IPMR research, it also presents a different context for understanding how the IPs' representation mechanism is experienced and applied. Specifically, this study highlights the difficulty of translating IPs' descriptive representation into IPs' substantive representation due to limitations brought about by the existing Philippine government structure and the lack of engagement of the indigenous community members.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The ethnolinguistic identities of their constituents and the inclusion of the Council of Elders in their selection process and decision-making activities are the IPs' descriptive features fulfilled by the participants in this research. In addition, their enactment of ordinances aligned with existing local and national legislation, as well as their insertion of IPs' interests in the local legislative agenda, comprises their limited form of IPs' substantive representation. Lastly, institutional difficulties and lack of community

engagement were identified as challenges to the fulfillment of their tasks as IPs' mandatory representatives.

The findings of this study align with previous research on IPMRs (Jayma-Porquis, 2017; Villanueva et al, 2017). It reinforces the importance of the IPMRs guidelines in ensuring the IPs' descriptive representation in local legislative bodies. However, this study cautions that in terms of IPs' substantive representation, expectations must be tempered. Set within the existing Philippine government structure, responsive ordinances and legislation cannot automatically materialize by simply making IPs' representatives present in the local legislative bodies.

In line with this, additional studies need to be conducted to explore the experiences of other ICCs in achieving local legislative representation. Given the 110 IPs groups in the country with their own distinct culture and indigenous political practices (NCIP, 2023), a handful of studies on IPs' representatives will not sufficiently provide a better understanding of the limitations and opportunities brought about by the appointment of IPMRs. Also, studies on how the mandatory IPs' representatives can function within the local mainstream political institution while maintaining their indigenous political practices can help solve the institutional challenges mentioned in this study.

Finally, to help resolve the issue of lack of participation among the younger generation of IPs, this study suggests that Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) campaigns about the importance of having a mandatory representative in local legislative bodies be carried out by the NCIP office. With the younger generation of IPs having an important role in ensuring the continuity of indigenous culture and practices, studies aimed at understanding their attitudes towards their culture, as well as their interest in politics, are suggested. Information from these studies can help the NCIP office cater their IEC campaigns to the indigenous youths.

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Spirituality and Religiosity Among International College Students in the United States: The Benefits and Predictors

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how the spiritual and religious experiences of international students affect their college outcomes. Prior research has shown the significant influence of spirituality and religiosity on local students' college experiences. However, there is a notable gap in research regarding the spiritual and religious experiences of international students. Findings indicate both growth and decline in spiritual and religious qualities among international students during their college years. Moreover, certain spiritual and religious engagements are found to contribute significantly to cognitive, affective, and civic outcomes among this student population. Additionally, involvement in community service and peer interactions are identified as influential factors in the spiritual and religious development of international students.

Keywords: College experiences, College outcomes, International students, Religiosity, Spirituality

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

American higher education is now being challenged to be more conscious of students' holistic development, including nurturing the spiritual identities of students, faculty, and staff (Astin & Lindholm, 2011; Mayhew et al., 2016). To encourage students to consider their education in a more holistic way, higher education professionals have strived to nurture the balance of college students' internal and external growth by assessing students' emotional maturity, sense of self, and relationships with others as well as their academic performance. Similarly, higher education academia has examined the role of meaning, purpose, and spirituality among college students as they cope with their anxiety, stress, and depression regarding their careers, social justice, and racial issues (Astin et al., 2011a, 2011b; Bowman & Small, 2012; Mayhew et al., 2016; Park, 2013). Studies on spirituality and religiosity generally suggest that college students who actively engaged in spiritual or religious activity tended to report greater psychological well-being and better cognitive and attitudinal outcomes (Astin et al., 2011a; Jonason & Krause et al., 2013; Mollidor, Hancock, & Pepper, 2015).

While the literature has well established the positive connection between spirituality/religiosity and various outcomes for general college student population, little is known about how international college students develop their spirituality and religiosity in the U.S. higher education institutions, and how it may uniquely shape their college outcomes. To address this research gap, this study attempts to expand our understanding of the role of spirituality and religiosity on international students' learning, by examining how international college students' spirituality and religiosity affect their cognitive, affective, and/or civic outcomes and what college environments and experiences facilitate higher level of spirituality and religiosity among this population. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following three research questions: (1) To what extent do the levels of spirituality and religiosity among international undergraduate students at U.S. universities and colleges change over the college years? (2) Do spirituality and religiosity affect cognitive, affective, and/or civic outcomes among international college students? (3) If so, what college environments and experiences are associated with a higher level of spirituality and religiosity among this population?

LITERATURE REVIEW

International Students in American Higher Education.

The term 'international student' refers to "an individual from another country who is in the United States temporarily on a student visa, and who is

registered at an accredited institution of higher education" (Bevis & Lucas, 2007, p. 11). The formerly used term 'foreign students,' has been replaced by 'international students' because the term 'foreign students' was viewed to imply negative meanings such as 'underdeveloped country' and 'illegal alien' (Bevis & Lucas, 2007; Clark, 2009). For this reason, the term, 'international student' has been universally used and widely accepted in colleges and universities.

International students in the 21st century have made economic and societal influences on American higher education (Altbach & Knight, 2006; Petrisko, 2014). According to the 2019 Open Doors' annual report, the number of international students enrolled in U.S. universities and colleges in the 2018/19 school year was over 1 million (1.08 million); international students studying at U.S. universities, over the past decade, have contributed significantly to the operation of U.S. universities, by bringing in about $39 billion in national economic effects (Open Doors, 2017). The presence of international students also positively affects the U.S. campuses, nurturing a more diverse and culturally enriched educational environment (Zhao, Kuh, & Carini, 2005; Younger, 2018). For example, local American students took advantage of the opportunity to "increase their cultural sensitivities and skills in working with various people" from different racial and ethnic backgrounds (Zhao et al., 2005, p. 210). Furthermore, international students are important human resources of American higher education to build global networks (Open Doors, 2019). However, research show that American universities and colleges have not provided international students with appropriate support systems that commensurate with their economic and social benefits (Bang & Montgomery, 2013; Hyun, Quinn, Madon, & Lustig, 2007; Lee & Rice, 2007).

Spirituality and Religiosity of College Students

American higher education has become increasingly interested in research on how spiritual and religious experiences uniquely impact college outcomes (Astin et al., 2011a). As an important study of spirituality and religiosity, a national study of students' spiritual development, initiated at UCLA's Higher Education Research Institute in 2003, found that a large majority of contemporary students were actively engaged in a spiritual quest (Lindholm et al., 2011). The national study at UCLA found that many incoming undergraduate students expressed high expectations for their spiritual development by means of intentional sacred meditation. For example, two-thirds of freshmen indicated that it was either very important or essential for college to help develop their personal values and to enhance self-

understanding (Astin et al., 2011a). In addition, more than eight in ten participants reported that finding their purpose in life was at least a somewhat important reason for attending college (Astin et al., 2011a; Lindholm et al., 2011). Thus, Astin et al. (2011a & b) indicated that students' spiritual lives and religious practices in American higher education should be included as essential college experiences to improve their self-awareness, equanimity, empathy, and concern for others.

Findings from an international study of spirituality and higher education (English & Mayo, 2012) also supported the notion that many students came to college today seeking spaces where their contributions and self-worth mattered beyond salaries, GPAs, or prestigious future careers. Specifically, Lindholm et al. (2011) showed that providing students with more opportunities to connect with their "inner selves" would facilitate growth in their academic and leadership skills, contribute to their intellectual self-confidence and psychological well-being, and enhance their satisfaction with their college experience. Additionally, Astin and Lindholm (2011b) indicated that college students' academic and spiritual connections led to distinct benefits through their college experiences, including student-faculty interactions, peer interactions, and diversity experiences. While spiritual and religious qualities of college students were recently recognized and studied by American higher education scholars, research on development and support for international students' spirituality is still challenging to find.

College Experience and Outcomes of International Students

The literature has addressed the impact of students' college experience on a broad range of college outcomes, including moral and ethical outcomes, psychological and physical well-being, satisfaction, and academic achievement (Astin et al., 2011; Kim et al., 2017; Rennick et al., 2013). For example, Kim and Sax (2009) observed that student-faculty interactions were positively related to college students' outcomes, including college GPA, degree aspiration, integration, critical thinking and communication, cultural appreciation and social awareness, and satisfaction their college experience. However, Perry (2016) examined that among international students, Asian students seemed to struggle most with language issues "as many had difficulty in understanding lectures from American professors," which then ultimately affected their cognitive processes and GPA (p. 715). In general, English language proficiency played a crucial role for international students in academic areas, including active learning experiences (Wang et al., 2018), participating in personal or group projects (Li et al., 2010; Martirosyan et al.,

2015), and conducting problem-solving activities (Johnstone et al., 2002; Zhang & Mi, 2010).

Furthermore, some research, including Trice and Yoo (2007), Bista and Foster (2011), and Moore and Popadiuk (2011), examined international students' participation in educational activities, including diverse ethnic/racial students as unique experiences that related to college outcomes. Astin (2011a), Schreiner (2013), and Derrico et al. (2015) found that college students' psychological sense of community while participating in volunteer work positively impacted their cross-cultural competencies and increased social adaptability. They also described civic experiences—participating in community services, interacting with diverse cultures, and peer interaction—as essential college experiences of international students. During college, these civic experiences have been found to positively affect international students' spiritual and religious development as well as academic and social skills/abilities (Astin et al., 2011a; Coulson & Harvey, 2013; Hatcher & Studer, 2015). Moreover, cross/inter-cultural ability helped college students have a better understanding of themselves in relationships with others and the world. Additionally, cross/inter-cultural ability enhanced college students' global competency, including attitude, relational skills, communication, and humility (Taylor, 2013; Taylor et al., 2013). These various items related to global competency also positively influenced their retention and graduation rate, typical markers of student success over the years (Kuh, 2008; Zhou, 2010).

RESEARCH METHOD

Data Source and Sample

This study used the secondary dataset of the College Students' Beliefs and Values (CSBV) survey. The CSBV survey was completed by 236 institutions in the fall of 2004 involving first-year students with a two-page addendum to the four-page freshman survey administered annually by the Cooperative Institutional Research Program (CIRP) of the Higher Education Research Institute (HERI) at the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) (Sax et al., 2004). The third and final administration of the CSBV involved a longitudinal follow-up of students from 136 of the 236 institutions that had participated in the 2004 freshman survey (Astin et al., 2011).

The CSBV dataset included a total of 14,527 students who participated in the 2004 and 2007 surveys administered by the HERI at UCLA (Astin et al., 2011). The CSBV data were collected from thirteen different types of institutions based on terms of control (public or private), religious affiliation (nonsectarian, Roman Catholic, Evangelical, or other religious

affiliation), and selectivity (very high, high, medium or low SAT composite score).

Among 14,527 students who participated in the 2004 and 2007 CSBV surveys, only 216 data samples reflected undergraduate international students studying at U.S. universities and colleges. Participants in this study included international students who had completed their junior years of college before the fall of 2007. Of the international students observed, 186 students (86.1%) held a native language other than English, and 30 students (13.9%) spoke English as their first language. Table 1 provides a detailed description of the sample demographics of international students.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics (N = 216)

Characteristic		n (216)	% (100)
Gender			
	Female	100	46.4
	Male	116	53.6
Ethnic/Race			
	Asian	**99**	**45.8**
	Non-Asian	**117**	**54.2**
	Black/African	16	7.4
	Mexican/Latino	33	15.3
	White/Caucasian	38	17.6
	Others	30	13.9
Religious Preference		(*1 missing*)	
	Christian	**116**	**53.9**
	Protestant	79	36.7
	Roman Catholic	37	17.2
	Non-Christian	**99**	**46.1**
	Mormon	25	11.6
	Islamic	14	6.5
	Buddhist	10	4.7
	Jewish	7	3.3
	Hindu	5	2.3
	Other	9	4.2
	None	29	13.5

High School Grade		(*5 missing*)	
	A or A+	61	28.3
	A-	68	31.5
	B+	49	22.6
	Mostly B	22	10.3
	B-	7	3.2
	Others	4	2.5
Majors			
	STEM	**131**	**60.7**
	Social Science	49	22.8
	Biological Science	43	20.0
	Engineering	20	9.3
	Physical Science	19	8.8
	Non-STEM	**85**	**39.3**
	Business	34	15.8
	Professional	15	7.0
	Arts and Humanities	13	6.0
	Education	12	5.6
	Technical	6	2.8
	Others	9	4.2
Institutional Control			
	Public	116	53.7
	Private	100	46.3

Variables

This study's dataset contained six constructs measuring spiritual and religious qualities, cognitive, affective, and civic college student outcomes operationalized into six dependent variables, and various student characteristics and college experience variables used as independent variables for the analyses. All variables and principal component factor analysis (PCA) are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Variable Definitions and Coding Schemes

Variables	Coding Schemes
Outcome Measures	**CSBV Construct**
Cognitive Outcomes	
GPA	8-point scale: 1 = D, to 8 = A or A+
Intellectual Self-esteem	5-point scale: 1 = lowest 10%, 2 = below
Academic ability	average, 3 = average, 4 = above average, 5 =
Intellectual self-confidence	highest 10%
Drive to achieve	

Affective Outcomes	
Psychological Sense of Community	4-point scale: 1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = somewhat dissatisfied, 3 = somewhat satisfied, 4 = very satisfied
Sense of community on campus	
Interaction with other students	
Satisfaction with College Experience	4-point scale: 1 = very dissatisfied, 2 = somewhat dissatisfied, 3 = somewhat satisfied, 4 = very satisfied
Relevance of coursework to everyday life	
Career counseling and advising	
Amount of contact with faculty	
Overall college experience	
Civic Outcomes	
Social Ability	5-point scale: 1 = lowest 10%, 2 = below average, 3 = average, 4 = above average, 5 = highest 10%
Cooperativeness	
(Social) Self-confidence	
Understanding of others	
Interpersonal skills	
Global (Diversity) Ability	5-point scale, 1 = much weaker, 2 = weaker, 3 = no change, 4 = stronger, 5 = much stronger
Understanding of social problem facing our nation	
Understanding of different culture and global issues	
Ability to get along with people of different races/cultures	
Acceptance of different religious/spiritual beliefs	
Input Measures	
Student (Demographic) Characteristics	
Gender	Dichotomous: 1 = male, 2 = female
Male & Female (2)	
Race/Ethnicity	All dichotomous: 1 = Asian, 2 = non-Asian
Asian & Non-Asian (2)	
Current Religious Preference	All dichotomous: 1 = Christian, 2 = non-Christian
Christian & Non-Christian (2)	
High School GPA	8 scale: 1 = D, to 8 = A or A+
Academic Major	All dichotomous: 1 = STEM, 2 = non-STEM
STEM & Non-STEM (2)	
Institutional Features	
Institutional Selectivity	Mean score of M+V SAT (includes ACT)
Institutional Control	All dichotomous: 1 = public, 2 = private
Public & Private (2)	

College Experiences	
Student-Faculty Interaction	3-point scale: 1 = "Not at all" to 3 = "Frequently"
Assisted you in your career decisions	
Encouraged you to pursue post-graduate study	
Enhanced your self-understanding	
Taken an interest in your personal welfare	
Active Learning (Course Experiences)	3-point scale, 1 = rare, 2 = Some, 3 = Most
Portfolios	
Reflective writing/journaling	
Student evaluations of each other's work	
Student evaluations of their own work	
Student-selected topics for course content	
Diversity Experiences	3-point scale, "Not at all" to "Frequently"
Socialized with someone of another racial/ethnic group	
Community Service Experiences	3-point scale, "Not at all" to "Frequently"
Community service as part of coursework	
Performed community service	
Peer Interaction	8-point scale: 1 = none, to 8 = over 20 hours/per week
Student clubs/groups	
Spiritual/Religious College Experiences	
(Spiritual Qualities)	
Spiritual Quest	
Searching for meaning/purpose in life	3-point scale: 1 = "Not at all" to 3 = "To a great extent"
Having discussions about the meaning of life with my friends	
Are searching for meaning/purpose in life	
Finding answers to the mysteries of life	4-point scale: 1 = "None" to 4 = "All"
Attaining inner harmony	4-point scale: 1 = "Not important" to 4 = "Essential"
Attaining wisdom	
Seeking beauty in my life	
Developing a meaningful philosophy of life	
Becoming a more loving person	
Equanimity	
Been able to find meaning in times of hardship	3-point scale: 1 = "Not at all" to 3 = "Frequently"
Felt at peace/centered	
Feeling good about the direction in which my life is headed	3-point scale: 1 = "Not at all" to 3 = "To a great extent"
Being thankful for all that has happened to me	
Seeing each day, good or bad, as a gift	

Ecumenical Worldview	
Having an interest in different religious traditions	4-point scale: 1 = "Not important" to 4 = "Essential"
Believing in the goodness of all people	
Feeling a strong connection to all humanity	
Understanding of others	3-point scale: 1 = "Not at all" to 3 = "To a great extent"
Accepting others as they are	
Improving my understanding of other countries and cultures	5-point scale: 1 = "Lowest 10%" to 5 = "Highest 10%"
Improving the human condition	3-point scale: 1 = "Not at all" to 3 = "To a great extent"
All life is interconnected	
Love is at the root of all the great religions	4-point scale: 1= "Not important" to 4 = "Essential"
Non-religious people can lead lives that are just as moral as those of religious believers	4-point scale: 1 = "Disagree strongly" to 4 = "Agree strongly"
We are all spiritual beings	
Most people can grow spiritually without being religious	
(Religious Qualities)	
Religious Engagement	3-point scale: 1 = "Not at all" to 3 = "Frequently"
Attended a religious service	
Attended a class, workshop, or retreat on matters related to religion/spirituality	6-point scale: 1 = "Not at all" to 6 = "Daily"
Reading sacred texts	
Religious singing/chanting	
Other reading on religion/spirituality	
Prayer	2-point scale: 1= "No" or 2 = "Yes"
Do you pray?	8-point scale: "None" to "Over 20" hours
Prayer/meditation	4-point scale: 1 = "None" to 4 = "All"
Go to church/temple/other house of worship	
Religious Commitment	
Seeking to follow religious teachings in my everyday life	4-point scale: 1 = "Not important" to 4 = "Essential"
Religiousness	5-point scale: 1 = "Lowest 10%" to 5 = "Highest 10%"
I find religion to be personally helpful	4-point scale: 1 = "Disagree strongly" to 4 = "Agree strongly"
I gain spiritual strength by trusting in a Higher Power	
Feeling a sense of connection with God/ (Higher Power) that transcends my personal self	3-point scale: 1 = "Not at all" to 3 = "To a great extent"
Felt loved by God	3-point scale: 1 = "Not at all" to 3 = "Frequently"
Are one of the most important things in my life	4-point scale: 1 = "Disagree strongly" to 4 = "Agree strongly"
Provide me with strength, support, and guidance	

Give meaning/purpose to my life Lie behind my whole approach to life Have helped me develop my identity Help define the goals I set for myself	4-point scale: 1 = "Disagree strongly" to 4 = "Agree strongly"
Religious Struggles	
Feeling unsettled about spiritual and religious matters Feeling disillusioned with my religious upbringing	3-point scale: 1 = "Not at all" to 3 = "To a great extent"
Struggled to understand evil, suffering, and death Felt angry with God Questioned [my] religious/spiritual beliefs Felt distant from God Disagreed with [my] family about religious matters	3-point scale: 1 = "Not at all" to 3 = "Frequently"

Spiritual and religious variables. Students' spiritual and religious qualities were measured by three spiritual variables (spiritual quest, equanimity, and global citizenship) and three religious variables (religious engagement, religious commitment, and religious struggles) in this study. For the first research question, changes in these six spiritual and religious constructs from the first year of college to the end of the junior year of college were measured. Then these six variables were used as the independent variables of interest in the second research question of the study. Lastly, the items of spirituality and religiosity were used as dependent variables to answer the third research question, and control variables (students' characteristics, institutional features, and students' college experiences) that have been proven to affect college outcomes through previous research were used as independent variables (Astin et al., 2011a; Lindholm et al., 2011).

College outcome variables. The college outcomes examined in this study were tested as six separate regressions. The college student outcome measures were grouped by using the following CSBV variables: (1) two cognitive outcomes (i.e., students' overall grade point average [GPA] and intellectual self-esteem); (2) two affective outcomes (i.e., psychological sense of community and satisfaction with college experiences); and (3) two civic outcomes (i.e., social (global) ability and (cross-) cultural ability).

Control variables. To answer research question two and determine whether spirituality and religiosity affect college outcomes, control variables were grouped into three blocks by the order in which they occur: (a) student

characteristics, (b) institutional characteristics, and (c) non-spiritual and religious college experiences, followed by the independent variables of interest- spiritual and religious qualities. The first block consisted of student characteristics, including gender, race/ethnicity, high school GPA, current religious preference, and academic majors. The second consisted of institutional features including institutional selectivity and institutional control (public and private). The third block consisted of non-spiritual and religious engaged college experiences and activities since entering college. These college experiences covered the following activities: student-faculty interaction, active learning (course) experiences, diversity experiences, community service experiences, and peer interaction.

To answer research question three and determine what college environments and experience may be associated with higher levels of spirituality and religiosity among international students, three blocks of independent variables were employed. The three blocks of independent variables for research question three mirrored the first three blocks for research question two: student characteristics, institutional features, and college experiences.

Analysis

This study employed three phases of data analysis of international students' spirituality and religiosity: principal component factor analyses (PCAs), paired-sample *t*-tests, and hierarchical multiple regression analyses. First, PCAs were performed to reduce the number of variables to support conceptually-grounded factors for five of the college outcomes variables (intellectual self-esteem, psychological sense of community, satisfaction with college, social ability, and global/diversity ability) and three college experience variables (student-faculty interactions, course teaching methods, and community service experiences). The values of Cronbach's Alpha are reported in Table 3.

Secondly, paired-sample *t*-tests were conducted to compare how international students responded to the six spiritual and religious CSBV constructs during their first year in college and the end of their junior year. T-tests were used to identify any significant development or decline during the college years among this population. Third, a series of hierarchical multiple regression analyses were conducted, including student characteristics and college experiences, to determine the predictors of college outcomes in relation to the spirituality and religiosity of international students. If the regression analyses identified significant effects of spiritual and religious qualities on college outcomes of international students, additional hierarchical

multiple regression analyses were performed to determine significant predictors of those spiritual and religious qualities.

Table 3:
Composite Measures with Factor Loadings and Reliabilities for Variables

Composite and Constituent Variables	Factor Loadings Reliabilities	Internal Consistency (*alpha*)
Outcome Variables		
Intellectual Self-esteem		*.78 (n =214)*
Intellectual self-confidence	.88	
Drive to achieve	.83	
Academic ability	.79	
Psychological Sense of Community		*.77 (n =214)*
Sense of community on campus	.90	
Interaction with other students	.90	
Satisfaction with College Experience		*.76 (n =214)*
Overall college experience	.80	
Relevance of coursework to everyday life	.78	
Career counseling and advising	.75	
Amount of contact with faculty	.71	
Social Ability		*.78 (n =211)*
Interpersonal skills	.82	
Cooperativeness	.79	
(Social) Self-confidence	.78	
Understanding of others	.73	
Global (Diversity) Ability		*.77 (n =213)*
Understanding of different culture and global issues	.80	
Understanding of social problems facing our nation	.80	
Acceptance of different religious/spiritual beliefs	.75	
Ability to get along with people of different races/cultures	.71	
College Experiences Variables		
Student-Faculty Interaction		*.84 (n =213)*
Assisted you in your career decisions	.85	
Encouraged you to pursue post-graduate study	.85	
Enhanced your self-understanding	.75	
Taken an interest in your personal welfare	.69	
Active Learning Engagement		*.83 (n =214)*
Student evaluations of each other's work	.79	
Student evaluations of their own work	.77	
Student-selected topics for course content	.73	
Reflective writing/journaling	.73	
Portfolios	.67	
Community Service Experiences		*.83 (n =210)*
Community service as part of coursework	.93	
Performed community service	.93	

Composite and Constituent Variables	Factor Loadings Reliabilities	Internal Consistency (*Alpha in 2007*)
Spiritual & Religious Qualities [a]		
Spiritual Quest	9 items	***.82*** *(n =214)*
Equanimity	5 items	***.72*** *(n =214)*
Ecumenical Worldview	12 items	***.70*** *(n =214)*
Religious Engagement	9 items	***.88*** *(n =214)*
Religious Commitment	7 items	***.97*** *(n =214)*
Religious Struggles	7 items	***.77*** *(n =214)*

[a] Factor loadings of Spiritual & Religious Qualities from CSBV in 2007, developed by the HERI at UCLA.

RESULTS

Changes in Spirituality and Religiosity

The results of the paired-sample *t*-tests revealed significant longitudinal changes in most spiritual and religious qualities among the international student population ($p < .001$), excluding two variables, namely religious engagement and religious commitment.

Table 4: Change in Spiritual & Religious Qualities among International College Students

Variables	*n*	*M*	*SD*	*t*	*df*	*p*
Spiritual Qualities						
Spiritual Quest	190			5.19	189	.000***
2007		24.95	4.18			
2004		23.24	4.65			
Equanimity	178			3.50	177	.001***
2007		12.30	1.91			
2004		11.70	2.47			
Ecumenical Worldview	190			5.31	189	.000***
2007		34.88	3.78			
2004		33.07	4.74			
Religious Qualities						
Religious Engagement	196			-.742	195	.459
2007		22.98	8.93			
2004		23.29	9.08			
Religious Commitment	179			-1.08	178	.284
2007		34.57	9.79			
2004		35.05	9.11			
Religious Struggles	173			3.61	172	.000***
2007		11.60	2.88			
2004		10.84	2.50			

$N = 216$ / *** $p < .001$ ($|t| \geq 3.30$)

Specifically, all spiritual qualities of international students showed a statistically significant increase in the mean levels of spiritual quest (ΔM =

1.71, p < .001), equanimity (Δ*M* = .60, p ≤ .001), and ecumenical worldviews (Δ*M* = 1.81, Δ*SD* = .68). International students' ecumenical worldview was the largest increase in comparison to the other spiritual variables. Among the religious variables, international students reported a small but statistically significant increase in religious struggle between the freshman year (*M* = 10.84) and the junior year (*M* = 11.60), with *t*(172) = 3.61, *p* < .001. Table 4 provides the results of the paired-sample *t*-tests.

Spiritual and Religious Predictors of College Outcomes

Six hierarchical multiple regression models represented approximately 5% to 37% of the variance for international students' college outcomes (adjusted *R2* = .05 to .37). The percentage of variance attributed to international student characteristics, institutional features, and college experiences variables constituted 11% to 24% (adjusted *R2* = .11 to .24) of their college outcomes. Thus, spiritual and religious variables added an average of 12% to the explanation of international students' college outcomes. Similar to previous studies (Astin et al., 2011; Reymann et al., 2015; Walker & Dixon, 2002), this present study found growth in international student spirituality during the college years. However, unlike the previous studies that found a positive correlation between spirituality and GPA, this study did not find that spiritual and/or religious qualities made any significant contribution to GPA. While not concerned with student ethnicity or national status, the aforementioned studies demonstrated both positive (Reymann et al., 2015) and negative (Astin et al., 2011) relationships between religious engagements and GPA. Table 5 presented the results of the hierarchical multiple regression models for the aggregate analysis.

Predictors of College Outcomes

First, international students' characteristic variables are associated with their college outcomes. For example, positive correlations between non-Asian international students and their college–cognitive, affective, and civic–outcomes were found in the results of the regression analyses. Similar to the racial/ethnic regression analysis result, non-Christian religious groups among international students were also positively related to their psychological sense of community and social ability. An unusual finding was that none of the international students' characteristics and college experiences were significantly related to the cognitive outcome of GPA. Their demographic characteristics, the institutional characteristic of selectivity, and experiences with active learning did, however, significantly affect students' reported levels of intellectual self-esteem.

Second, the college experiences of international students were mixed (positive and negative) predictors of their college outcomes. Among the college experiences, student-faculty interaction had a significant positive impact on the psychological sense of community and satisfaction with college. Peer interaction also contributed to their affective outcomes and global/diversity ability. However, international students' active learning engagement had negative relationships with their intellectual self-esteem and social ability. Interestingly, community service experiences and international students' interactions with diverse individuals had no significant relationship with their college outcomes. Table 5 presents the results of the hierarchical multiple regression models for the six college outcomes.

Table 5:
International Students' College Outcomes

Independent Variables	Cognitive Outcomes		Affective Outcomes		Civic Outcomes	
	GPA	*Intellectual Self-esteem*	*Psychological Sense of Community*	*Satisfaction with College Experience*	*Social Ability*	*Global (Diversity) Ability*
Student Characteristics						
Gender: Female (2)	-.020	-.119	-.039	.138*	-.193**	.048
Race/Ethnicity: Non-Asian (2)	.016	.248(***)	.170*	.241(***)	.167*	-.010
High School GPA	.138	.160*	.016	.027	.063	-.107
Religious Prefer: Non-Christian (2)	-.141	.138	.275(***)	.075	.168*	.108
Academic Majors: Non-STEM (2)	-.154	-.263***	.039	-.203**	-.048	-.098
Institutional Features						
Institutional Selectivity	.072	.173*	.088	.078	.088	-.045
Institutional Control: Private (2)	-.031	-.122	.020	.034	-.144	-.172*
College Experiences						
Student-Faculty Interaction	-.019	.165	.319***	.201*	.103	.000
Active Learning Engagement	-.114	-.367***	-.046	.078	-.199*	.275**
Community Service Experiences	-.120	-.134	-.125	-.088	.032	.029
Diversity	.079	.103	-.116	-.032	.102	.050
Peer Interaction	-.031	-.034	.140*	.146(*)	-.088	.152*
Spiritual & Religious Qualities						
Spiritual Quest	-.092	.179*	-.197*	-.195*	.215**	-.084
Equanimity	-.030	.189*	.383***	.281(***)	.389***	.170*
Ecumenical Worldview	.071	.092	-.088	-.054	.116	.192*
Religious Engagement	.039	.037	-.208	-.085	.057	-.262
Religious Commitment	-.077	-.125	.376**	.119	-.084	.272
Religious Struggles	-.026	-.016	-.034	-.057	.021	.200**
R_2	.139	.364	.433	.359	.387	.339
Adjusted R_2	.050	.298	.373	.292	.323	.271

Note: Variables in italics are factors, which are presented in Table 3 and Appendix A. Standardized coefficients are reported.
N = 191; *p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Predictors of Spirituality and Religiosity

An additional six hierarchical multiple regression models employed to detect predictors of spiritual and religious outcomes among international students identified 8% to 31% of the variance in these type of outcomes among international students in the sample. All students' characteristic

variables, except the STEM major variable, affected their spiritual and religious qualities. For example, female and Asian international students had higher levels of their religious engagement and religious commitment compared to males and non-Asian ethnic students. Additionally, international students with a Christian religious preference had a higher level of religious engagement, commitment, and struggle than others having a non-Christian religious preference including Mormon, Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, and Hinduism. Similarly, international students with a Christian religious preference (β = -.185, $p < .05$) had a higher level of spiritual quest than the other students with a non- Christian religious preference.

Table 6

Spiritual and Religious Outcomes among International College Students

Independent Variables	Spirituality			Religiosity		
	Spiritual Quest	Equanimity	Ecumenical Worldview	Religious Engagement	Religious Commitment	Religious Struggles
Student Characteristics						
Gender: Female (2)	.10	.04	-.00	.14*	.14*	.02
Race/Ethnicity: Non-Asian (2)	-.05	.02	-.00	-.15*	-.16*	-.06
High School GPA	.01	-.04	.05	-.18**	-.06	-.03
Religious Prefer: Non-Christian (2)	-.19*	-.11	-.03	-.20**	-.36***	-.25**
Academic Majors: Non-STEM (2)	.04	.10	-.00	-.05	-.05	.06
Institutional Features						
Institutional Selectivity	-.19*	.06	-.16	-.23**	-.27(***)	-.06
Institutional Control: Private (2)	.17*	-.04	.15	.08	.03	.14
College Experiences						
Student-Faculty Interaction	.07	.17*	-.03	.06	-.08	-.23(**)
Active Learning Engagement	.12	.08	.05	-.19*	.05	.02**
Community Service Experiences	.16	.23**	.11	.35***	.26(***)	.03
Diversity	.08	.20(**)	.14	.06	.06	.17*
Peer Interaction	.05	.15*	.16*	.29***	.25***	.00
R^2	.22	.23	.14	.35	.32	.14
Adjusted R^2	.17	.18	.08	.31	.27	.09

Note: Variables in italics are factors, which are presented in Table 3 and Appendix A. Standardized coefficients are reported.
N = 191; *p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

In examining the second block of independent variables, the institutional selectivity of international students was found to negatively affect their spiritual and religious qualities, including religious engagement, religious commitment, and spiritual quest. However, attending a private college had a positive effect on the spiritual quest of international students because most of the private schools included in the CSBV survey were established based on faith-based institutions, and properly provided students' spiritual and religious activities. Finally, most college experiences of

international students in the third block were found to have significant predictive power in their spiritual and religious qualities. Most college experiences (student-faculty interaction, community service experiences, experiences with diverse individuals, and peer interaction) positively affected the equanimity. Moreover, international students' experiences with diverse individuals and peer interaction experiences positively contributed to their ecumenical worldview, religious engagement, and religious commitment. Their active learning and diverse experiences also increased the level of religious struggles. However, more student-faculty interactions reduced the level of international students' religious struggles. Table 6 presents the results of the six hierarchical multiple regression analyses for the six outcomes (spiritual quest, equanimity, ecumenical worldview, religious engagement, religious commitment, and religious struggles).

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Changes in Spirituality and Religiosity of International Students

The current study found that international students' spirituality and religiosity changed during their college years. The spiritual quest, equanimity, ecumenical worldviews, and religious struggles of international students increased between freshman and the end of junior years. However, their religious engagement and religious commitment decreased during the college years. Among spiritual qualities, the level of the ecumenical worldview of international students changed the most in this study. According to the comprehensive study of changes in the spirituality of college students conducted by Astin et al.'s (2011b), an increase in "ecumenical worldview" suggests that students are experiencing growth in their sense of connectedness and their acceptance of individuals from other countries and cultures. Like the ecumenical worldview, international students' average level of 'spiritual quest' also increased more than the non-international students during the college years. However, unlike the two spiritual qualities - ecumenical worldview and spiritual quest - their equanimity produced relatively lower mean scores compared to domestic students. This finding implies that international students are less likely to develop a sense of equanimity, which relates to activities of finding peace, a state of grace, or imperturbability during times of hardship. Moreover, international students' anxieties about the stressors attending college internationally and adjusting to a new culture, which are significantly associated with decreasing their equanimity, cause difficulties in increasing their psychological health and well-being (Philip et al., 2019).

The current study also revealed that international students' mean level of "religious commitment" and "religious engagement" declined during their college years. International students often face severe distress or even depression by adjusting to language barriers, different academic systems, homesickness, cultural conflicts, and social isolation (Hirai et al., 2015; Smith & Khawajar, 2011). Johnson et al. (2018) also reported that cultural differences related to religious conflicts of international students hindered their religious commitment. Astin et al. (2011b) examined several reasons for this decline in college students' religious engagement. First, they indicated that many college students moved away from home for college education, thus being separated from direct parental influence on attending religious services. Second, they also stated that the pressures of exams, studies, and assignments of studies were a reason for the decline in college students' religious engagement.

However, unlike international students' religious engagement and commitment declines, this study revealed that international students' mean-level of religious struggles increased during the college years. Bryant and Astin (2008) reported that college students' emotional and mental confusion were strongly connected to their religious struggle during the college years. Particularly, their religious struggles were associated with negative psychological well-being, lower self-esteem, and loneliness (Astin et al., 2011b; Bryant & Astin, 2008). In contrast, some studies found that college students' religious struggle experiences promoted their maturation, including patience, compassion, and tolerance to others/diversity (Astin et al., 2011b; Bryant & Astin, 2008; Carter, 2016). Overall, the findings indicate that international students experienced spiritual and religious transformation during their time as undergraduate students. However, discussions regarding the reason for college students' spiritual and religious changes include some speculation because empirical works on international students' spirituality and religiosity are still limited.

Spiritual and Religious Effects on College Outcomes of International Students

The findings of the current study are generally consistent with previous research regarding college students' spiritual effects on their cognitive learning, psychological well-being, and social and global life (Rodrigues et al., 2019; Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006). Specifically, this study suggested that international students' sense of equanimity was significantly connected to emotional and relational capacities, including satisfaction with college, psychological sense of community, and social and global/diverse

ability. Additionally, the findings revealed that international students' equanimity affected their intellectual self-esteem. This holistic insight regarding the effects of international students' equanimity on college outcomes was generally reflected by the studies of Astin and Keen (2006), Astin et al. (2011a, 2011b), and Astin and Lindholm (2011), which showed that college students' spirituality was an influential contributor to and/or predictor of college outcomes.

This study also revealed that international students' spiritual quest affected their holistic identity in terms of both an internal sense of self and interrelationships. Some American higher education scholars agreed that the spiritual quest engaged students within their internal development, such as values and beliefs, emotional maturity, and moral development (Palmer & Zajonc, 2010; Schreiner, 2013; Vance, 2016). Specifically, this study found that international students' spiritual quest positively contributed to their intellectual self-esteem and social ability. However, this study identified that significant but negative relationships exist between international students' spiritual quest and their affective outcomes (the psychological sense of community and satisfaction with college experiences).

Second, this study found some common psychosocial effects of international students' religious qualities. Specifically, it demonstrated that international students' religious commitment and religious struggles significantly affect, respectively, their psychological sense of community and global/diverse ability. The findings of international students' religious effects on their college outcomes can be described as a long-term process that impacts their psychosocial changes and/or development, just as Brown (1972) and Chickering (1981) found that college students' psychosocial changes or progress had emerged as a long-term college effect. For example, this study demonstrated that international students' religious commitment enhanced their psychological sense of community (PSC), defined as psychological and sociological belongingness to the campus community (e.g., sense of belonging by Sapdy [1971], involvement by Hurtado & Carter [1997], and institutional fit by Bean [1990] in higher education research). Additionally, this study demonstrated that international students' religious struggles contributed to a greater openness to their social and global (diversity) abilities, which are associated with interpersonal relationships and intrapersonal internal feelings (Baxter Magolda, 2008). Recently, Ardelt (2020) also found that international students who had reported having engaged in more religious commitments and religious struggles fostered higher psychosocial growth than others who had been less involved in these religious experiences. Thus,

the current research suggested that international students' religious commitment and struggles affected their psychosocial changes.

Predictors of Spirituality and Religiosity of International Students

This study also revealed some predictors of spiritual and religious qualities among international students. Specifically, it revealed that international students' spiritual and religious qualities were closely associated with their college experiences more than their input characteristics (i.e., gender, race, pre-college characteristics, and institutional features). International students' demographic characteristics and college experiences both positively and negatively related to their spiritual and/or religious qualities. For example, the high school GPA of international students is negatively associated with their religious engagement. Regarding international student characteristic predictors, Asian female international students were more likely to have higher levels of religious engagement and religious commitment.

College experiences and institutional features affected religious engagement and commitment more so than religious struggle and the spiritual outcome constructs. Regarding the predictors of institutional features (i.e., institutional selectivity and public/private institutions), attending private colleges and universities contributed to increased spiritual quest among international students. Similar to the results of Astin and colleagues' (2011b) research, this current study indicated that private colleges, specifically religious schools (i.e., Catholic, Protestant, and evangelical schools), were positively associated with the spiritual quest. Institutional selectivity was found to be a negative contributor to spiritual quest, and religious engagement and commitment.

Similar to previous studies (Astin et al., 2011a; Einarson & Clarkberg, 2010; Mayhew et al., 2016), this study found that international students' faculty interaction positively impacts their equanimity, psychological sense of community, and satisfaction with college. Among academic experiences of international students, this study showed that active learning engagement positively contributed to their religious struggles, however negatively related to their religious engagement. This study also revealed that international students' civic experiences, including community service experience, experiences with diverse individuals, and peer interaction, were positively associated with both their spiritual (equanimity and ecumenical worldview) and religious (religious engagement, religious commitment, and religious struggle) outcomes. Specifically, six predictors—Christian religious preference, selectivity, student-faculty interaction (SFI),

community service experiences, experiences with diverse individuals, and peer interaction–affected both spirituality and religiosity of international students. These associations were generally consistent with the existing literature on spiritual and religious research (Astin et al., 2011a, 2011b; Lindholm, 2013).

IMPLICATIONS

The current study's findings have both theoretical and practical implications for higher education researchers and practitioners. First, this study expanded theoretical implications to Astin's studies (2011a, 2011b), emphasizing the importance of spirituality and religiosity for college students' holistic development. Also, Maslow's (1943) and Chickering et al.'s (2006) student development theories may be extended to a holistic development theory by adding the spiritual and religious influential predictors of cognitive, affective, and civic outcomes. The findings provide empirical evidence supporting the importance of college students' spiritual and religious engagement as a part of student involvement and development theories in higher education. Thus, this study's results can encourage higher education scholars to include spiritual and religious engagement as an important contributor to international students' cognitive, affective, and civic development during college.

This study's practical implications include a rationale for why higher education practitioners must assist international college students with developing personal beliefs and internal commitments (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Fisler et al., 2009; Ma, 2003; Parks, 2000). Educators seeking solutions to practically overcome the challenges international students face should recognize that international students' spirituality and religiosity play an essential role in their intellectual, emotional, and social quality of life (Astin et al., 2011a). Students need proper resources and support to develop their own beliefs and methods to face and overcome unique challenges during college. Specifically, the study proved that international students' spiritual and religious activities, including prayer, meditations, spiritual conversations, or other self-reflective exercises, helped them develop their internal maturity and college outcomes. Thus, institutions should place importance on spiritual and religious development in their students' lives, which will in turn positively affects cognitive, affective, and civic outcomes as well (Astin et al., 2011a; Bryant & Astin, 2008; Carter, 2016; Wortman, 2013).

LIMITATIONS

The present study has several limitations, which can be addressed in future research. The first limitation is uncertainty as to whether CSBV survey questions used in this study are appropriate for international students with Asian, Middle Eastern, and African spiritual/religious worldviews. The measures of spirituality and religiosity on the CSBV were developed in the Western Christian context, so it is unknown as to whether international students with Eastern religions such as Buddhism and Hinduism clearly understood the Western (i.e., Christian) spiritual and religious scales used in this study. Consequently, it should be recognized that the concepts of spirituality and religiosity the CSBV used in this study may be less clear to international students than to students who are native to Western cultures, which could produce misleading data.

Second, the small sample size creates a limitation on the reliability of the research results. Specifically, 216 international students from the total longitudinal matching data from 2004 (the beginning of freshman year) to 2007 (the end of junior year) were selected to conduct hierarchical multiple regression analysis in this study. Although this study can inform educators about patterns of international students' spiritual and religious qualities, it is essential to note the presence of any limitations and threats to validity when considering the generalizability of this study's findings. Furthermore, due to the small sample size (216 total international students), this current study was conducted by grouping all international students together, combining, for example, Asian students with other international students. Consequently, this study has a limitation in that international students are classified as one or at most two homogeneous groups. Thus, it should be recognized that this study may produce misleading results because of this grouping of various international students from diverse religious and cultural backgrounds.

Third, the CSBV data used for analysis in this study were drawn from self-reported surveys rather than objective measures of the observed levels of spiritual and religious growth or frequency of student-faculty interaction, active learning engagement, for example. As previous researchers using the CSBV dataset have also reported this limitation of self-reported data to their studies (Carter, 2016), this study likewise used international students' subjective opinion of how they experience peaceful feelings in times of hardship, trusting in a higher power/God, and feeling about spiritual and religious belief. Thus, although the CSBV instrument is documented to have strong levels of reliability and validity (Lindholm, 2013), any biases derived from the use of self-reported measures should be considered when interpreting the findings of this current study.

Lastly, like previous studies using regression analyses, most findings from the current study represent correlational relationships rather than cause-and-effect relationships between variables (Creswell, 2008). Although this study was able to identify multiple significant relationships between international students' spiritual and religious qualities; and (1) their characteristics and college experiences; and (2) their college outcomes, including cognitive, affective, and civic outcomes, it is not possible to gauge the directionality of all of these relationships. As a result, higher education practitioners should interpret and apply with caution with all these limitations in mind. Nevertheless, this study provides an introductory view into an area of international students' spirituality and religiosity that has previously received little attention.

CONCLUSION

This study found the effects of international students' spirituality and religiosity varied across their college outcomes, including cognitive, affective, and civic outcomes. Specifically, three spiritual qualities (equanimity, spiritual quest, and ecumenical worldviews) and two religious qualities (religious commitment and religious struggles) of international students operated as significant predictors of their college outcomes. Therefore, American higher education institutions need to be concerned with international students' spirituality and religiosity as complementary resources to develop their college outcomes.

Moreover, international students' spirituality and religiosity are significantly related to their inner reflection and growth, as well as their characteristics of social/cultural maturity. In other words, international students' spirituality and religiosity are not only linked to college experiences (e.g., student-faculty interaction, peer interaction, and psychological sense of community), but also they play an important role in their holistic inner development–emotional maturity, moral development, and self-awareness. Therefore, American higher education scholars and practitioners, who are interested in developing international students' college outcomes, need careful attention to spirituality and religiosity as essential components to improve their college experiences including their inter and intra-relationship.

In short, this study constitutes a basic evidence in support of the proposition that American higher education should attend more to international students' spiritual and religious development. In short, this study constitutes basic evidence in support of the proposition that American higher education should attend more to international students' spiritual and religious development. However, the current study needs to be updated by re-administering the College Student Values and Beliefs Survey (CSBV) survey

to increase validity when considering the generalizability of this study's findings. Thus, it is suggested that this study become a basic study related to the spirituality and religiosity of international students, and the following future studies be continued; (1) examine the concepts of spirituality and religiosity perceived by international students, (2) design practical measures of spirituality and religiosity that can be used in higher education academia and practice, and (3) study how to measure and evaluate these findings for the future.

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Unveiling the Trauma: Discovering Pedophilia in *The Kite Runner*

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ABSTRACT

The sexual exploitation of adolescents has recently gained international attention and is a major problem in many countries. Afghanistan, a South Asian nation, is one of these countries with a startlingly high rate of sexual exploitation incidents; among these, the practice known as Bacha Bazi has attracted criticism from all sides. In The Kite Runner, *Hosseini exposes the terrible Afghan culture of Bacha Bazi, which damages the social and sexual identities of many Afghan boys and has a negative impact on their mental well-being as a result of traumatic events that cause them to exhibit PTSD symptoms. This paper explores the issue of child sexual exploitation in general, as well as the arrival of Bacha Bazi in Afghanistan and its effects on children's mental health in particular, as depicted in* The Kite Runner.

Keywords: *The Kite Runner*, Bacha Bazi, PTSD, mental health, and dancing boys.

INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

Khaled Hosseini, an acclaimed Afghan-American writer, reflects on the city where he was born and spent his childhood, observing that Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan, did not always have horrifying scenes but once it had magnificent historical monuments, art, architecture, gardens, and delectable delicacies. It was erroneously turned into an image that would always lament a fall from grace. Hosseini recalls that Kabul was not always known as the Islamic city that it is today. Women were free to choose and pursue careers, and they worked in offices alongside men. However, as Afghanistan gradually fell into the tyrant hands of the Soviet Union, Mujahidin, and Taliban, the plight of women began to loom large alongside the country's deteriorating socio-political conditions. Hosseini has expressed his concern about the plight of people in general, and women and children in particular, who have been marginalized on two fronts: by society and within the four walls of their houses, in his novels. Khaled Hosseini stated candidly in one of his 2003 interviews that the treatment of women in certain Muslim nations, including the country he belongs to, has been characterized by a significant lack of progress and respect.

Hosseini was influenced by Afghan history when he penned *The Kite Runner*, his first book. *The Kite Runner* depicts the state of Afghanistan society, which has led to major problems like racism, discrimination, and identity. Khaled Hosseini's poignant book *The Kite Runner* examines the difficulties of friendship, atonement, and the eerie legacy of the past in war-torn Afghanistan. The story is structured by the turbulent events that take place in the lives of Amir and Hassan, two childhood friends, against the backdrop of political unrest. The main theme of the book is redemption, as Amir, scarred by a childhood betrayal, embarks on a journey to seek forgiveness and atone for his misdeeds. Sohrab, Hassan's son, plays a crucial role in this redemption story. Sohrab represents the innocence lost in the middle of battle, and his terrible life serves as a mirror for the generational effects of previous transgressions. Sohrab turns into a moving illustration of the effects of violence and the wounds it causes in the wake of future generations. His adversities and resiliency highlight the larger issue of how historical and personal tragedies affect people and their potential for recovery. Finally, *The Kite Runner* skillfully crafts a story that cuts over cultural divides and offers a profound examination of interpersonal connections, shame, and the never-ending quest for atonement.

Afghanistan and Bacha Bazi

Afghan traditions and customs prohibit women and girls from the performing arts and dancing in public, and so Afghan boys as young as nine to 12 years of age, particularly those from poor and marginalized communities and considered good-looking, are targeted for recruitment as Bacha Bazi (U.S. Department of State, 2021). The translation of Bacha Bazi is a boy play (Jones, 2015). It involves the coercion or forced performance of young boys, usually between the ages of 10 and 18, as dancers and entertainers at social functions. Tragically, it frequently entails abuse and exploitation of sexual rights. Boy players, also known as Bacha Bazi, are males who enslave young boys in Bacha Bazi. These men are powerful businessmen, public servants, or militia members. Boys who are stuck in Bacha Bazi are typically orphans and poor. According to Thorson (2013): Perpetrators were very strategic, taking time to hunt for boys who fit the following criteria:

- Those unaccompanied
- Those under the age of 15
- Those from unstable family backgrounds (p.1)

Poor families occasionally sell their sons to Bacha Bazi or allow their sons to be adopted to receive clothing, food, or money. Other boys are abducted in open spaces like the market. Boys from the Bacha Bazi community are made to dress like women, put on lipstick, and dance at men's parties where they are sexually abused. The prostitution and slavery of these young boys have become rampant (Thorson, 2013). They may be physically punished if they displease their onlookers. The youngsters are subsequently shared among Afghan guys or sold to the highest bidder observed.

The Emergence of Bacha Bazi

The practice of Bacha Bazi has spread throughout Afghanistan's northern and southern countryside, where it is shockingly widespread now. The commanders of the Mujahideen who repelled the Soviet invasion in the 1980s frequently abused children. It became fashionable to keep boy conscripts around for domestic and sexual encounters. In 1996, when the Taliban took over, Bacha Bazi was outlawed as a result of the implementation of rigorous Sharia law. Those who continued to perform it did so covertly. Islamic law stipulated that offenders would be subjected to flagellation, amputation, and execution.

When the American military entered Afghanistan in 2001, it was able to overthrow the Taliban by working with the Northern Alliance, a group of former Mujahideen commanders who eventually came back to power after the Taliban was vanquished. When the warlords regained control, they

resurrected the practice of Bacha Bazi, in which powerful predators abducted, raped, and forced youngsters into sexual servitude. Afghan families with a surplus of kids are eager to give any of their kids to the local warlord or official, even though they are aware of the sexual repercussions, for the sake of money or due to certain other reasons.

Bacha Bazi and Islam

Islam, the major religion of Afghanistan, forbids homosexuality. Even though it is forbidden, cultural interpretations of Islamic scripture enable sexual offenders to escape punishment. According to a lax interpretation of Islam, it is sinful to love a male, yet it is not wrong to use a boy for sexual pleasure. Many may argue that in a strict Islamic country, such a homosexual act, performed by force and coercion, would be strictly banned. However, many Afghans say that Bacha Bazi is not homosexual and should not be regarded as such. According to the study "Pashtun Sexuality" by the Human Terrain Team Study, it is not homosexuality that propels men toward Bacha Bazi. The study says that Bacha Bazi is not un-Islamic and is ethical in nature till the man is not in love with the boy. However, civilized countries consider such statements significantly misleading (Verma, 2019).

Precisely, the practice of Bacha Bazi has grown to be a serious issue in Afghanistan since the American invasion in 2001. Islam and Afghan cultural interpretations of the Quran both fell short of putting an end to this system of exploitation and sexual servitude.

Government of Afghanistan And Bacha Bazi

According to Commission (2014), 427 of the Criminal Law forbids rape and pederasty and stipulates that those who commit it face lengthy prison sentences. It also states that if a child is the victim and the perpetrator is a tutor, servant, or teacher, the situation is deemed aggravating. Therefore, although this law clearly addresses acts of pederasty and rape, it does not specifically address the practice of Bacha Bazi. Furthermore, it excludes the sodomy, touching, massage, and other sexual behaviors that are frequently associated with Bacha Bazi. This explains the gaps and ambiguities in Afghanistan's laws pertaining to Bacha Bazi.

Regardless of whether Islamic law prohibits Bacha Bazi, United Nations officials and human rights organizations widely view it as an unacceptable form of child sexual servitude (*AIHRC Turns toward Stemming Bacha Bazi*, 2013). But unlike many forms of organized child sexual slavery, Bacha Bazi flourishes unabated, with seemingly tacit approval of the government despite its contrary treaty obligations (Werban et al., 2009). The

Security Council has flatly condemned the deplorable circumstances affecting Afghan children and urged the Afghan government to take immediate and specific measures to put an end to and prevent the perpetration of ... Bacha Bazi (S*tatement by Chairman of Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict | UN Press*, n.d.). The United Nations published a detailed manual tailored to help the Afghanistan government implement a legal framework for banning child sex trafficking (*Appropriate Legal Responses to Combating Trafficking in Persons in Afghanistan Manual for Parlia Mentarians of Afghanistan*, n.d.).

The Afghan government also signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) and acceded to the Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (General Assembly resolution A/RES/54/263, 2000). Still, the Afghan government has failed to implement an effective system of justice designed to enforce these treaty obligations and prohibit the rape of male children (Human Rights Watch, 2013). Upon receiving news that Bacha Bazi represented a grave breach of its human rights obligations, Afghan President Hamid Karzai dismissed the idea of instituting immediate measures to protect Afghan boys from sexual servitude and replied, let us win the war first. Then, we will deal with such matters (Yerman, 2012). State officials sexually abuse young boys with startling impunity, and the Afghan government is known to punish the child victims of Bacha Bazi rather than the adult male perpetrators. Some Afghan provincial governors are known to openly keep Bacha Bazi harems (Child Rights International Network, 2013).

Afghanistan's military and police officials are some of the most vigorous sexual predators (Human Rights Watch, 2011) and do not try to hide their sexual exploitation of the young boy community in Afghanistan. Numerous Afghan boys are detained and sexually assaulted in government facilities without charges or an opportunity to have the legality of their imprisonment reviewed by a court. (Cook, 2012) Frontline's documentary, The Dancing Boys of Afghanistan, presented video footage of Afghan police officers openly fondling young Afghan boys. An Afghan Thursday night tradition involves uniformed Afghan police officers lining up several pre-teen boys and taking a select few into the police station for hours at a time (Yerman, 2012). The discoveries reported in the documentary not only comport with findings made by the Security Council, but also validate reports by the U.S. State Department, which found that the Afghan government has failed to make "discernible progress in protecting victims of trafficking" and

its officials systematically engage in the "sexual abuse of boys" ((United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, 2008).

In May 2014, the U.N. Secretary-General officially designated the Afghan National Police and Local Police as "parties" that engage in the recruitment and use of children, sexual violence against children, the killing and maiming of children, recurrent attacks on schools and/or hospitals and recurrent attacks or threats of attacks against protected personnel in contravention of international law (Tremblay, 2017). Because of Bacha Bazi's resurgence after being banned by the Taliban, and the Afghan government's complicity in the practice, obtaining an accurate count of child victims of bacha bazi is virtually impossible (USAID, 2022). But at least one observer has noted that approximately half the Pashtun tribal members in Kandahar and other southern towns are Bacha Baz (Abawi, 2009). Observers claim that at least one out of every five Afghan weddings include Bacha Bazi (Londono, 2012).

Bacha Bazi so freely permeates Afghanistan that it now threatens the legitimacy and authority of the Afghan government. The woeful reality of the Afghan government's complicity in Bacha Bazi and the absence of an effective legal infrastructure to halt its growth has left scores of Afghans with a seething outrage and deep-rooted doubt regarding the international government corruption is so heightened that many Afghan citizens now prefer Taliban rule (Cockburn, 2009). Many insurgents continue to fight in Afghanistan because they view the Taliban as the only viable alternative to the existing government, which they deem too corrupt to provide basic needs such as long term employment, schools, hospitals and a justice system (Johnson, 2010) The Afghan government's failure to safeguard its populace from sexual violence has significantly undermined U.S. counterinsurgency objectives, raising serious questions about prospects for peace and security in the region. There is no denying that the safety of the Afghan people is the primary factor in the effectiveness of US counterinsurgency strategy. The United States declared in 2009 that efforts to protect Afghan civilians would even supersede efforts to eliminate the Taliban (Jones, 2014). The dangerous reality of systematic child sex trafficking in Afghanistan has made peace and security less likely, raising important concerns about whether the international community is required by the Responsibility to protect theory to act on behalf of the victims.

Effects of Bacha Bazi in Afghanistan

Bacha Bazi is a reflection of an extreme instance of the oppressive, sexually perverse Afghan patriarchy. The practice has a negative impact on

Afghanistan that is both severe and long-lasting, affecting both the individuals and the society as a whole. It is believed that Bacha Bazi violates fundamental human rights, especially the rights of the children who are impacted. It violates their right to be shielded from mistreatment and exploitation. The victim's mental capacity is severely diminished by this evil culture, which also appropriates the sexual and gender identities of boys. According to Afghan society, it is androgynous for guys to dress like women and mimic their mannerisms on the outside. Adult males use this act of gender transition to disprove any claims that they have committed homosexual violence as "the sexual act is consummated with persons whose sexual identity is no longer masculine but is a new one, culturally perceived as androgynous (Borile, 2019).

Their solitude is exacerbated by society's disgust with their sexual exploitation and development of feminine features. The victims who come from minority ethnic groups experience double marginalization: first for being a boy, then for being born into a competing ethnic group. The victims are unable to rid themselves of the traumas of their past because they lack psychosocial support. Abawi, in one of the articles, mentioned once individuals have been stigmatized as males who engage in female dance performances, they are unable to reverse or undo this label. Social isolation victims have low levels of self-respect and self-esteem for themselves. Some victims were killed by their families to restore their honor, while others committed suicide as a result of the shame, insult, and humiliation. Their innocence being violated, exploited, and abused can leave them with permanent emotional wounds that impair their mental health and may even exacerbate conditions like depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Experiencing the sexual perversity of adult males gives some Bacha Bazi victims a new understanding of male sexual appetite, and this understanding makes them spiteful as adults. As a result, their psychological trauma is only soothed when they relive their suffering on another victim, which feeds the abuse cycle.

Bacha Bazi contributes to a culture of violence and exploitation, reinforcing power imbalances and perpetuating harmful norms. It may have a detrimental effect on societal values and legitimize abusive behavior. In communities, the presence of Bacha Bazi can cause trust to break down. It fosters an atmosphere in which people take advantage of weaker members of the community, weakening social ties and escalating feelings of unease. The potential for the spread of sexually transmitted illnesses (STIs), such as HIV/AIDS, is increased by sexual activity occurring in some Bacha Bazi incidents. This presents a risk to the general public's health that could impact

not just the victims but also the larger community. The prevalence of Bacha Bazi puts the rule of law and the legal system's capacity to defend citizens—especially vulnerable children—in jeopardy. The issue may persist due to a lack of legal remedies and ineffective law enforcement.

The study, which is based on Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner*, investigates the suffering endured by Afghan boys trapped in Bacha Bazi as a result of persistent sexism and racial animosity between Pashtuns and Hazaras. The book emphasizes Pashtuns engaging in Bacha Bazi for two reasons: to exact revenge on Hazaras for the harm done to their people and to quench their sexual appetite. Esmatullah Nasari claims that the phenomenon of child abuse perpetrated by individuals in positions of authority seems to have become a regrettable facet of Afghan society. The individual persists in their actions. If left unchecked, the issue of sexual assault has the potential to proliferate and yield severe ramifications for the nation.

Najibullah Quraishi's documentary infiltrates this secretive culture by following Dastager, a key figure of Bacha Bazi. We meet Imam. Aged 15, Imam has been a 'dancing boy' for four years. Tonight, as every other night, he dresses in special women's clothing, with bells tied to his feet, and dances the night away. Gathered around him, twenty men aged 35 to 60. Their crooked smiles reveal the pleasure they take in their macabre tradition. Their eyes are vicious. When asked if Imam will be going back home with him tonight, Dastager nods: 'yes, of course'. He claims to have had about 2000 to 3000 boys stay with him: 'they come and go', he laughs. The next day, the journalist meets another man whose blond mustache has earned him the nickname 'the German' amongst his harem of prepubescent boys. 'I go to every province to have happiness and pleasure with boys. I like watching them. Some boys are no good for dancing, but they can be used for other purposes. For other bacha bazi activities'. The reporter questions him about the nature of these 'other activities'. Without a hint of remorse or shame, the German replies: 'I mean sodomy and other sexual activities. (Neyra, 2019).

What the Sources Say

Three groups of people were interviewed during this investigation: a number of local witnesses and elites, thirty-one Bacha Bazi victims, and thirty-six of the offenders. The following is a presentation of the interview findings: Of those who committed Bacha Bazi, 25% were between the ages of 21 and 30, 28% were between the ages of 31 and 40, 28% were between the ages of 41 and 50, and 8% were between the ages of 51 and 40. Overall, 56% of them were in the age range of 41 to 50. An essential and useful factor in determining Bacha Bazi incidence is literacy. The percentage of illiterate

offenders is 58%. The marital status of the offenders does not directly relate to Bacha Bazi; just 22% are single, while 78% of the offenders are married. Eighteen percent of married people have more than one wife. Over 46 percent of married individuals were wed between the ages of 18 and 25. Of those who are married, 46% say they are happy in their union. Nonetheless, 43% of them are just somewhat content with their marriage. Sixty-four percent of the criminals are considered regular members of society. Eight percent of the offenders are also the wealthy, the powerful, and the old. The majority of the victims are younger than eighteen.

However, Bacha Bazi can also affect young people who are older than 18. Of the victims, 42% are between the ages of 13 and 15. Forty-five percent of them are in the 16–18 age range. Of the victims, 13% are between the ages of 18 and 25. Awareness and literacy have a powerful correlation; the literate is less susceptible. 48% of the victims are illiterate, making up the majority. 87% of the kids affected by Bacha Bazi are unable to go to school. 75% of the offenders have admitted to only having one male at home. 14% of respondents claimed to have two boys. Nonetheless, two of them claimed to be in possession of three boys apiece. According to 81.6% of the offenders, the boys were between the ages of 13 and 16 while 14% were more interested in boys between the ages of 17 and 18. Recreation, lust, and personal interests have been identified as Bacha Bazi's main motivations, and 69.5% of the perpetrators concur. Lust encompasses a variety of behaviors, such as stroking males' bodies, making them dance at parties, and satisfying sexual cravings. According to some other offenders, they pursued the crime because it is either quite common in their communities or seen as normal; alternatively, they do it only to outdo their rivals.

According to 29% of the offenders, they paid money to purchase the boys, taking advantage of their lack of resources. 13% of respondents claimed to be able to contact the boy through their friends. Nine percent have admitted to threatening and using force to get the boys. Uncertain additional means were cited by the remaining 24% of respondents. The primary factor behind Bacha Bazi's emergence and widespread presence is poverty. Of the victims, 68% have admitted to receiving payment for their actions. 86% of the offenders have admitted that the lads' good looks are what draws them in. The other 14%, however, don't care about this. According to 39% of the offenders, they live together and have the victims under their control around the clock. 14% of respondents indicated their boys are available to them for 12 hours a day, 8% stated they have possession for 6 hours, 14% and 25% stated they have possession for 3 hours and 1 hour, respectively. Bedding and sexual use

of the victims are the most popular methods of victimization. 39% of the analysis confirms this.

The second most popular form of exploitation, accounting for 36% of cases, is dancing and having fun. Nonetheless, 31% of the victims claimed that they danced in front of the offenders to amuse them, and 33% of the victims admitted to being used sexually. 53% of the offenders have admitted to hosting drinking gatherings where they force their boys to dance and socialize with other Bacha Bazi offenders. 47 percent of people have denied doing this. While 14% of the perpetrators have disputed it, 86% of them have stated that the boys are pleased with the deed. The victims' reactions, however, contradict the aforementioned claims. 87% of respondents said they were not entrapped voluntarily. Merely 13% acknowledged having obtained consent. 81% of the victims have shown a desire to leave their current position. However, 19% of them had an unfavorable response. According to 58% of the victims, they had experienced violence. Their statements indicate that the most frequent kinds of violence against them are beatings, incarceration, and threats of death. 69% of the offenders have acknowledged that they have encountered criticism and responses from others regarding their behavior. However, 31% of them had not experienced any of these responses. According to 89% of the offenders, they were not prosecuted by the security services for their Bacha Bazi activities. Ninety percent of witnesses and local elites claim that the offenders have not faced judicial consequences.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Bacha Bazi and *The Kite Runner*

Pallavi Thakur brought attention to the Bacha Bazi issue that was touched with in Khaled Hosseini's book *The Kite Runner*. She stated Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* is a powerful narrative on Bacha Bazi, same-sex pedophilia restricted to adult men and adolescent boys prevalent in Afghanistan (Powell, 2018, 2020). She illustrated how Bacha Bazi had a negative impact on male children in Afghanistan. It clarifies the psychological anguish experienced by teenage Afghan males as a result of being sexually abused and having an imposed androgynous identity. Khan and et al. paper title determined the root causes of the Pashtun-Hazara genocide. According to this study, Hazaras were the victims of a genocide because of a historical fight that occurred in 1221 CE between the Mongols, who were Hazaras' ancestors, and the Khawarzamis, who were the Pashtuns' ancestors. The fight took on the form of a genocide because the Mongols detested the Khawazamis. Over time, it took on several forms, including cultural, social, and religiopolitical tensions. These conflicts led to the marginalization,

subordination, and death of thousands of Hazaras, and they continue to this day. Ahmad Misuari Gibran, M. Amir P, and Herawaty Abbas analyzed that *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns* tell the tale of how Afghanistan is negatively impacted by protracted conflicts and other societal issues.

The results came out to be that the Hazara characters Hassan and Sohrab — the latter being the most talked-about — are the center of attention in *The Kite Runner*. Merdekawati et al. goal was to pinpoint behaviors that demonstrate atonement. The three actions—the first, sacrifice; the second, adoption; and the third, fight — are the ones that the researchers interpreted as describing the main character's redemption. Dr. Purnima Bhardwaj and Dilkesh Kumar analyzed the sociopolitical environment, painful and moving interpersonal interactions, hollow conventions, and unsaid sadness of Afghans as they are depicted in Hosseini's book *The Kite Runner*. The paper's examination of the novel notes that Muslims in a Muslim nation subject each other to severe torment simply for holding divergent ideas. While male members endure more severe trauma than a woman could possibly imagine in her lifetime. When discussing the viewpoint of women, it can be observed that their exploitation increases by a factor of over a thousand. All they are are sex slaves. Arora and Manju (2023) used the Batsan Empathy Theory to illustrate the empathy displayed by Sohrab and Hassan. In the paper it is concluded that Hosseini brought to light what it meant to be altruistic through his characters Hassan and Sohrab. This study aims to investigate the origins of the concept of Bacha Bazi in the Afghan context, as well as the behavioral markers of PTSD in the characters and the identity ramifications of trauma resulting from Bacha Bazi.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To bring awareness among the downtrodden of the society regarding their basic rights and to enable them to ask for their rights by interweaving facts with the fiction.
2. To highlight how this sexual exploitation is the cause of many physical and psychological ailments resulting into trauma and PTSD symptoms.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research has been conducted by analyzing numerous academic and research papers and newspaper articles portraying the violation of human rights in Afghanistan, and Khaled Hosseini' has made it more sensitive by illustrating it in his literary works, specially in his novel The Kite Runner. Since the entire study is predicated on the theoretical episodes found in the

texts, it is qualitative research. *The Kite Runner* is the main source of data, and research papers and newspaper pieces are the secondary sources.

TRAUMA: A KEYWORD

A mental health disorder known as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may arise from experiencing or witnessing a stressful event. Natural catastrophes, severe accidents, war, sexual assault, and other potentially fatal circumstances are examples of traumatic events that can cause post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Stress and worry are natural after such situations, but when these feelings worsen, last longer, or get in the way of day-to-day activities, it's called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). According to Herman (1992) and others have argued that the experience of prolonged totalitarian control in association with organized violence—whether in a political, criminal, or domestic context—causes a disorder that is more severe, more complex, and more enduring than is the DSM-defined PTSD that may be caused by exposure to any traumatic event.

There are four primary categories into which PTSD symptoms are typically classified: Intrusive thoughts, memories, or dreams associated with the traumatic incident are examples of intrusive symptoms. PTSD sufferers may have flashbacks, in which they perceive themselves to be reliving the trauma. PTSD sufferers may stay away from people, places, or things that bring up the traumatic experience. They might also refrain from talking about it or feeling anything connected to it. These comprise detached sentiments, trouble focusing, pessimistic ideas about oneself or the outside world, and an incapacity to feel happy. People may exhibit self-destructive behavior, become easily startled, become more irritated, or have difficulty falling asleep. Even in the absence of a direct threat, this elevated state of alertness may endure. An individual's daily life, relationships, and general well-being can all be profoundly impacted by PTSD.

DEMONSTRATING BACHA BAZI IN *THE KITE RUNNER*

The portrayal of the character Sohrab in Khaled Hosseini's *The Kite Runner* implicitly alludes to the idea of Bacha Bazi. The book highlights the cultural and socioeconomic problems that are common in Afghanistan by hinting to the sexual exploitation and abuse that Sohrab endured. The history of Afghanistan is encapsulated in *The Kite Runner*. Afghanistan has always struggled with the racism dilemma and developing a national ideology due to its multi-ethnic background. The hostility between the ethnic groups in Afghan society was made worse by the developing affinities and pride for one's ethnicity. According to Zain (2006) stated that ethnic affinities and

identities remain high even after the unpleasant development of the last two and a half decades in Afghanistan. In *The Kite Runner*, Khaled Hosseini depicts the mistreatment of Hazara children who are lured into Bacha Bazi by Pashtun warlords in order to assuage their animosity for the opposing ethnic group.

Hassan and his family served as a vehicle for Hosseini to highlight the Hazaras' atrocities. Assef, the main antagonist, was Pashtun and felt "Afghanistan is land of Pashtuns. It always has been, always will be" (Hosseini, 2013, p. 38). Assef was extremely hostile towards Hazaras. He even disliked the friendship between the Hazara and the Pashtun. The other important character in the novel, Amir a Pashtun, was acquainted with Hassan, a Hazara. Amir used to receive threats and abuse from Assef since he was Hassan's friend. Assef used to say "You're bothering me very much. In fact, you bother me more than this Hazara here. How can you talk to him, play with him, let him touch you?" (Hosseini, 2013, p. 39). Hassan was once sodomized by Assef out of enmity and desire for retribution. Amir saw all of this, but at that precise moment, he chose not to intervene to save Hassan. When the Taliban invaded Afghanistan, Assef continued his nasty behavior and even got more vicious.

Situation of Afghanistan deteriorated after the Taliban invasion. The majority of Pashtuns flew to Pakistan or America. The situation for the remaining Hazaras in the nation was the worst. The orphanage housed underprivileged children who were malnourished and basically Hazaras. When Amir went to save Sohrab, the owner of the orphanage told him "There is very little shelter here, almost no food, no clean water" (Hosseini, 2013, p. 244). Wealthy Pashtuns took the kids from the orphanage and assaulted them sexually. Assef was one of them who participated in Bacha Bazi.

When the Taliban invaded Afghanistan, Amir migrated to America. Hassan was abandoned amid the nation that was racked by conflict. Hassan was married and had a kid named Sohrab. However, one day the Taliban killed both Hassan and his wife, leaving Sohrab an orphan. Amir learned that Hassan was his half-brother and that Sohrab was his nephew, at that time he hastened back to Kabul to protect Sohrab from the Taliban. The protagonist of the book, Amir, is deeply entangled in Sohrab's life as he seeks atonement for previous transgressions. Sohrab's path to recovery is entwined with his yearning for atonement. The work tackles themes of guilt, atonement, and the generational effects of violence through the prism of Sohrab's representation. He located an orphanage and handed the Zaman, caretaker at orphanage with the Sohrab polaroid. "Salaam alaykum," I said. I showed him the Polaroid. "We're searching for this boy" (Hosseini, 2013, p. 242). The director of the

orphanage initially rejected him because he believed Amir was a Taliban member. “I am sorry. I have never seen him” (Hosseini, 2013, p. 242). Later, the director informed him that one of the Taliban members had taken Sohrab from the orphanage, subtly warning him that he would become a victim of sexual exploitation; Hosseini (2013), in *The Kite Runner,* highlighted

> There is a Talib official, he muttered. “He visits once every month or two. He brings cash with him, not a lot, but better than nothing at all.” His shifty eyes fell on me, rolled away. “Usually he’ll take a girl. But not always”. (p.246)

Zaman also laments his inability to defend the orphanage's youngsters from the formidable warlord. “If I deny him one child, he takes ten. So I let him take one and leave the judging on Allah” (Hosseini, 2013, p. 248). This illustrates Talib's great indulgence in gratifying his sexual fulfillment through minors. Zaman admits his helplessness when he says I swallow my pride and take his goddamn filthy… dirty money. Then I go to the bazar and buy food for the children (Hosseini, 2013, p. 248). The book demonstrates poverty and helplessness are the reasons for Bacha Bazi's proliferation in Afghanistan.

Amir hurried to the location in search of Sohrab where he was kept in search of him. The sight of Assef startled him. Assef seized Sohrab only for the purpose of exacting revenge, knowing that he was Hassan's child. Assef sent his guy to bring the boy in after Amir asked for the Sohrab, while Amir listened to the jingling sound. Sohrab's appearance astonished Amir, as Hosseini (2013) described

> A boy dressed in a loose, sapphire blue *pirhan-tumban* followed. The resemblance was breathtaking. Disorienting. Rahim Khan’s Polaroid hadn’t done justice to it. His head was shaved, his eyes darkened with mascara, and his cheeks glowed with an unnatural red. (p. 268-269)

The description focuses on the reshaping of a male child's sexual identity in Bacha Bazi. Additionally, it shows Pashtuns enjoying Bacha Bazi, which was infamous for brutally punishing homosexuality. Mondloch (2013) asserts that Pashtun social norms dictate that Bacha Bazi is not unIslamic or homosexual at all. In one of her articles Shaista Gohir (2010) discusses the widespread Bacha Bazi culture in any Muslim Countries around the World. The prevalence of moral hypocrisy is highly concerning within a nation where not only is homosexuality strictly prohibited, but also subject to severe punishment, even in cases involving consenting adults. Nevertheless, individuals who engage in the act of sodomising young boys are not typically classified as homosexuals or pedophiles. Talibs were not ashamed, but by

clapping, they were encouraging this wrongdoing. They said “Wah wah! Mashallah!” (Hosseini, 2013, p. 269). Amir noticed Sohrab dancing. Sohrab raised his arms and turned slowly. He stood on tip-toes, spun gracefully, dipped to his knees, straightened, and spun again. His little hands swiveled at the wrists, his fingers snapped, and his head swung side to side like a pendulum. His feet pounded the floor, the bells jingling in perfect harmony with the beat of the tabla. He kept his eyes closed. Sohrab danced in a circle, eyes closed, danced until the music stopped. The bells jingled one final time when he stomped his foot with the song’s last note (Hosseini, 2013).Sohrab appears to be engulfed in shame and terror in this appalling situation. He suffers from both physical and psychological abuse as a child. He is frightened and filled with the nightmares of sexual assault by the Talib's presence. Sohrab stands in for the condition of Hazara boys, who are frequently orphaned and hence easily available to warlords due to their poverty. The sexual advances made by the Talib toward Sohrab were clearly visible to Amir. The small boy is head down, expressing his mute consent to the Warlord's lewd advances. “Bia, bia, my boy,” the Talib said, calling Sohrab to him” (Hosseini, 2013, p. 269). This confirms Talib’s view of the child as his property.

Talib's sexism is evident in the way he fondles Sohrab's body. The book reveals the Pashtuns' unwavering goal to eradicate all evidence of Hazara presence from Afghanistan. Aseef, the Talib explains the rationale behind the Pashtuns' choice to purge Afghanistan. “Like pride in your people, your customs, your language. Afghanistan is like a beautiful mansion littered with garbage, and someone has to take out the garbage” (Hosseini, 2013, p.274). The declaration clearly expresses the Pashtuns' unrelenting animosity towards Hazaras and other ethnic groups, which resulted in bloodbaths, massacres, cruelty, and ruthlessness in Afghanistan. Children were the victims of violence and sexual abuse due to racial prejudice. Amir questions Aseef about his unyielding resolve: “What mission is that? I heard myself say. Stoning adulterers? Raping children? Flogging women for wearing high heels? Massacring Hazaras? All in the name of Islam?” (Hosseini, 2013, p.273).

Hosseini underplays the psychological impact of Bacha Bazi on Afghan children through the character of Sohrab, in addition to emphasizing how ethnic conflict affects Hazara male children. Sohrab was rescued by Amir from Assef. He brought him to Pakistan. Sohrab enjoyed watching the Urdu program. “Just rocked back and forth, his face lit by the silver glow of the images flickering across the screen” (Hosseini, 2013). Sohrab seemed to be content and loving his life right now. He went to the mosque alone and

conversed with Amir. However, the truth was different; Bacha Bazzi had a significant impact on him. He hated himself and was terrified. He said I'm so dirty (Hosseini, 2013, p.300). He assured Amir he would be good with him. His post-traumatic stress disorder is evident from this. One of the symptoms of his PTSD is his emotional outburst.

Amir desired to accompany Sohrab to America. Amir was unable to provide evidence that Sohrab is his nephew. He was having trouble taking Sohrab to America. Hosseini (2013) mentioned

> Well, it's like this. In the aftermath of a disaster, whether it be natural or man-made--and the Taliban are a disaster, Amir, believe me--it's always difficult to ascertain that a child is an orphan. Kids get displaced in refugee camps, or parents just abandon them because they can't take care of them. Happens all the time. So the INS won't grant a visa unless it's clear the child meets the definition of an eligible orphan. I'm sorry, I know it sounds ridiculous, but you need death certificates (p. 329).

Amir made every effort—he even desired to adopt Sohrab—but this was not possible given the unrest in Afghanistan. Hosseini (2013) highlighted

> Now, a child has to be legally adopted according to the laws and regulations of his own country. But when you have a country in turmoil, say a country like Afghanistan, government offices are busy with emergencies, and processing adoptions won't be a top priority (p. 329).

Advisor also informed him "It still may not permit this adoption. In fact, even the more moderate Muslim nations are hesitant with adoptions because in many of those countries, Islamic law, Shari'a, doesn't recognize adoption"(Hosseini, 2013, p. 329). Every attempt made by Amir failed.

He advised him to remain at the Pakistani orphanage, and assured him that he would pick him up later. Sohrab tried to kill himself out of concern that he would return to the orphanage and might be trapped in the cycle of sexual slavery once more. Amir remembers Sohrab's body floating in the bathtub of the room in the hotel. The horrible experience in Afghanistan left Sohrab disturbed. His identity has been obscured. He is incapable of recalling that existence. Sohrab is plagued by intrusive thoughts and flashbacks of his orphanage days and his ordeal as a victim of Bacha Bazi. His disengagement and suicide attempt point to a reliving of the experience, which is a frequent

PTSD symptom. This narrative shows how Sohrab's current condition is still impacted by the eerie memories of the trauma.

Sohrab moves to America with Amir, but he decides to stay a recluse. Amir describes Sohrab's silence as “it was the silence of one who has taken cover in a dark place, curled up all the edges and tucked them under” (Hosseini, 2013, p. 352).

Traumatic experiences cause emotional numbness and make it difficult for people to form close bonds with others. Sohrab was devoid of feeling. Sohrab's emotional disengagement stems from his trauma. The emotional toll of Bacha Bazi is reflected in his grim posture and quietness as he struggles to communicate with people and express himself. Sohrab also has severe trust issues as a result of being Bacha Bazi's victim. It is difficult for him to connect with people because of his past, especially with adults. His early hesitation to interact with Amir and other authority officials is clear evidence of his lack of trust.

Sohrab's recovery from his abnormal life is attempted many times by Amir and Soraya, Amir's wife but most of the time they failed. The book closes on a happy note when Amir finally succeeds in igniting a flame in Sohrab's eyes through the kite flying activity set up during an Afghan gathering in Fremont. Sohrab was reluctant to participate in the activity at first, but Amir soon discovered him taking part. When he noticed Sohrab smiling, he felt at ease. Amir and Soraya's attempt to be a helping role model for Sohrab show that he understands how crucial connections are to helping people deal with trauma. The two characters' bond grows to be a source of support and reconciliation.

RESULTS

There was a time when Bacha Bazi was not even identified as a problem, as this inhuman and heinous practice was nothing more than revenge and a source of entertainment. When Khaled Hosseini wrote *The Kite Runner*, he wrote about Bacha Bazi, but his focus was on the war and the conflict between Hazaras and Pashtuns, as Hazaras were there in the minority and the innocent children of the community who had nothing to do with the political propagandas were also targeted and sexually abused. The issue of Bacha Bazi was not given as much importance as it should have been. The present research is an effort to highlight the horrors of Bacha Bazi so that necessary actions can be taken to stop this inhuman practice. Bacha Bazi is not only a physical abuse, but it is such a traumatic experience that the child Sohrab, the victim of Bacha Bazi, is not able to trust even his family members after bearing the dreadful act of Bacha Bazi. He prefers to remain silent and tries

to commit suicide, as death seems easier than to live with such a trauma within the mind. Certain psychological theories have been used in this research to prove the emergency of the situation. An effort has been made to draw the attention of the policy maker to eradicate such inhuman practices.

CONCLUSION

The heinous practice known as Bacha Bazi, which has its origins in Afghanistan, is sadly leaking into other countries too. This cruel practice of sexual and mental harassment of children destroys their innocence and makes them vulnerable to a lifetime of sexual abuse, mental anguish, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and it must be curtailed for the well-being of the posterity. The social acceptance of this exploitation, which powerful people frequently support, exacerbates it. It is a blatant violation of children's rights that requires immediate attention from the international community and needs to be identified as trauma, pedophilia, rape, and sexual and mental abuse worldwide. Perpetrators may have the upper hand, but advocacy and group efforts can defeat them. A comprehensive strategy that includes legal assistance, sex education, vocational training, mental health care, comprehensive child support programs, diplomatic pressure, and forums where children's opinions can be heard is necessary to end Bacha Bazi. It is equally important to question deeply held societal beliefs as it is to hold people accountable through punishment. Formal and informal education proves to be a potent weapon in this conflict. We will have to look at it as a sin as well as crime to eliminate Bacha Bazi.

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