

consilium

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The Student Research Journal of the
UCR SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY

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Julia Baroi is a first-year student at UCR. As a Political Science/Public Service student and a member of Associated Students of UCR's Office of External Affairs, Julia has always been interested in different avenues for political change, such as grassroots movements and writing public policy proposals. This is her first glimpse into public policy and she hopes to continue learning how to contribute to societal improvement.



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Sonali Bhakta is a junior majoring in biochemistry and minoring in law & society at UC Riverside. As a Riverside native, her piece is inspired by her observations and experience of the quality of STEM education from the K-12 and now collegiate level, particularly in a post-pandemic environment. When she's not studying metabolic pathways or reading about judicial politics, Sonali spends her free time with family, reading, and traveling.



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A Message from the Dean



Anil B. Deolalikar, Ph.D.
Founding Dean
UCR School of Public Policy

Over the course of my time as Founding Dean of the UC Riverside School of Public Policy, I have come across a large number of students, each with a varied policy interest as well as a differing vision of his or her career path. Some students seek to bring about change in society through policy-making, while others seek to make a difference as policy practitioners or community leaders. Yet others seek to conduct research that underlies and advances policy.

It was a group of precocious undergraduate students passionate about research who proposed the idea to me of a policy journal a year and a half ago, and it is those same bright-eyed students who have led it to fruition. Here before you is the first issue of *Consilium*, the UCR School of Public Policy's official student research journal.

Naming it *Consilium* was the idea of our student editor-in-chief, Sana Jaffery. A Latin word that roughly translates to “policy, debate, and discussion,” the term embodies the UCR School of Public Policy's goal of creating “Solutions for the Region, Solutions for the World.” Undoubtedly, many of our students will go on to become future senators, councilmembers, city managers, and legislative analysts. But *Consilium* seeks to ensure there will always be an outlet for students interested in conducting research that results in bold new policy solutions to pressing societal problems.

I commend our founding editorial team—**Sana Jaffery**, **Alma Arreola**, and **Baranie Khant**—for their valiant efforts to realize this vision. They hosted workshops and spent an extensive amount of time editing and honing the articles written and submitted by the five scholars and authors featured in this issue. I am indebted to their labor of love for this project.

Join me now in celebrating this important milestone in the UCR School of Public Policy's history—the very first issue of *Consilium*.

A Note from the Editor

In December of 2020, a classmate and I publicly released a survey to students across the UCR School of Public Policy, and later across UCR. What we found inspired the creation of our journal.

Students were interested in the creation of a School of Public Policy journal, but the possibility of support and resources along the way made this project an especially exciting opportunity for many students. Taking a leap of faith, we used this survey data to put together a proposal for the establishment of *Consilium*. With the support of the UCR School of Public Policy leadership team, our journal was approved.

Months of long Zoom meetings, budget approvals, and countless spreadsheets led to our first few info sessions and workshops. By the fall of 2021, we were finally ready to accept submissions. Any expectations we had about the submissions were blown out of the water.

While this journal's primary mission was always to present bold new solutions, my goal as editor-in-chief was to provide an enriching experience for our student authors. Over the past few months, I saw each author grow tremendously in their skill and understanding of policy writing. I was also able to witness each individual's writing style develop through every stage of editing. I don't think I've ever been so proud to be a UCR School of Public Policy student.

I'm honored to share *Consilium*'s first annual edition with you all and am forever grateful for the opportunity to be a part of this journal.



Sana Jaffery
Founding Editor-In-Chief
Consilium

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Vivek Kakar, Founding Executive Director of the Roosevelt Network at UCR. This journal wouldn't exist without you. Thank you for being our partner in the establishment of this journal. We appreciate your continued support these past two years.

Authors **Julia Baroi**, **Sonali Bhakta**, **Ridhima Desai**, **Crystal Hammond**, and **Aaron Sanchez**. Our world is a better place with bold thinkers like you. Thank you for taking a chance with your policy ideas. It's been an honor to work with you all.

Thank you all.

The Plight of Undocumented Students

- Julia Baroi -

The United States is currently experiencing the largest migratory wave in history and current policy does not reflect the needs of this growing demographic. 98,000 undocumented students graduate from high school each year¹, with only five to ten percent of these 98,000 students continuing their education in a college². A low statistic of five to ten percent certainly calls into question the potentially unfair political climate that undocumented students face when navigating college applications. Roberto G. Gonzales, University of Washington faculty member, describes the plight of the undocumented children of the “1.5 generation,” who fit between first-generation immigrants who chose to migrate here and second-generation immigrants who were born here. These bicultural individuals juggle two worlds—born elsewhere and having spent time elsewhere, but whose primary identification is affected by experiences growing up as Americans. Though these students are oftentimes academically high-achieving and have high aspirations, the lack of federal law protecting these students from discriminatory margins has barred them from necessary financial aid, in-state tuition, and even the ability to apply to college. Congress has failed to publish any substantial policies to make it possible for undocumented students to pursue higher education with the same ease that American citizens and permanent residents are granted.

Policy that can solidify undocumented students' accessibility to higher education is crucial, especially after several failed attempts to ratify the DREAM Act³. This legislation introduces a pathway for undocumented immigrants, who came to the U.S. relatively young, to become legal citizens. It achieves this pathway through several conditions of naturalization. First, it allows for the individual to become a conditional permanent resident if they immigrated to the U.S. as a child, graduated from high school, have been admitted to higher education, and have not been convicted of any crimes. Next, they can qualify as a lawful permanent resident after obtaining a higher education/degree, completing military service, or occupying a job for specified periods of time. After five years of being a lawful permanent resident, an individual can apply to become a U.S. citizen through the normal naturalization process. The Dream Act was first introduced in Congress in 2001 followed by numerous versions revised to expand or restrict the educational opportunities of undocumented students. Nevertheless, Congress has failed to establish substantial legislation to protect the educational rights of undocumented students.

When states disenfranchise undocumented students from college admission or necessary aid, this not only halts any progress toward equity among students but it prevents a more educated future generation. Oftentimes, students who immigrate to the U.S. are propelled by unmatched perseverance and tenacity to achieve a demanding career. Currently, Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 prohibits undocumented students from receiving federal student aid, such as the Pell Grant.

In states such as Arizona, Georgia, Indiana, and North Carolina, legislation has been passed prohibiting undocumented students from receiving in-state tuition, meaning that they would have to pay double or even triple the amount of tuition regardless of whether they live in the state of the college they wish to attend. Furthermore, under the Alabama HB 56 law, undocumented students are completely barred from applying to public colleges in the state of Alabama. There are also states such as Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, Alaska, Louisiana, West Virginia, and Vermont that do not have any statewide policy that provides guidelines for in-state tuition, state financial aid, or admission for undocumented students. The lack of guidelines in these states can allow for colleges to be incredibly discriminatory towards undocumented students as there are no repercussions to be faced from lawsuits.

The mere possibility of attending college without state tuition rates is unattainable for immigrant students whose parents have limited earning power. In the 1982 *Plyer v. Doe*, the Supreme Court ruled that states must provide all students, with a K-12 education regardless of citizenship. Oftentimes, high schools emphasize the importance of higher education, highlighting how an increase in years of education correlates with a decrease in unemployment. While high schools greatly advocate for their students to attend college, they fail to recognize how difficult it is for undocumented students to do so. Higher education not only allows for the economic mobility of students to increase, but has been proven to correlate with economic growth. In the study, “The economic impact of universities: Evidence from across the globe” in the *Economics of Education Review* journal, researchers found that increases in university presence are positively associated with faster subsequent economic growth⁴. A 10% increase in the number of universities is associated with over 0.4% higher GDP per capita in a region. By improving the accessibility and affordability of higher education for all students, economic growth would be at unprecedentedly higher levels.

The prospect of receiving in-state tuition, state aid, and federal aid incentivizes students to graduate high school in good standing and attend college to contribute to the development of a state's society. Broadening who is eligible for these aspects of college admission would only benefit our future generations' educational and economic success. According to *Plyer v. Doe*, “the deprivation of education takes an inestimable toll on the social, economic, intellectual, and psychological well-being of the individual, and poses an obstacle to individual achievement,” and this remains true for higher education as well, though there continues to be a lack of policy broadening the accessibility of higher education.

There are also arguments against policies allowing undocumented students in-state tuition and federal aid. For example, granting more students in-state tuition is costly both in terms of our tax dollars and limited

enrollment spots for citizens and legal immigrants. It is also argued that allowing undocumented students the same opportunities takes away those opportunities from immigrants that came to the U.S. legally and thereby punishing them. In reality, allowing for a more competitive student force would drive students to strive for academic excellence and an attractive personal statement for college admissions. Consequently, this would cultivate an intelligent and determined generation of future graduates entering society's workforce. It would not hinder or discourage students from applying, but incentivize them to match their undocumented peers who are oftentimes persevering and dream-oriented given their immigrant background. In fact, according to a report in 2007 by the American Immigration Council, the 10 states that have laws qualifying undocumented students for in-state tuition have not received an influx of new immigrants⁵. Nor have they experienced financial burdens in their educational systems. What they do experience is an increase in revenues as students who would have otherwise been unable to afford college are paying in-state tuition.

For a more equitable future in which undocumented students have a chance to fulfill their educational aspirations, several steps must be taken at the federal level. All undocumented students that choose to attend a college located in the state that they reside in must be eligible for in-state tuition. All students, regardless of immigration status, must have the ability to apply for federal financial aid rather than being limited to state aid or no aid at all. Finally, colleges may not be allowed to reject students based on their immigration status. The equity of all students seeking higher education and a well-educated future workforce would be immensely improved by giving undocumented students the same options for college as their peers. By depriving students of equal opportunities, undocumented students have less incentive to emerge prosperous from their immigrant journeys. Out-of-state tuition and limited financial aid options are unnecessary obstacles to a diverse and well-educated society. By equalizing college opportunities amongst all students, we allow the most deserved students—who could be “undocumented”—the chance to contribute to future economic and social mobility. Without the inclusion of undocumented students in the college admissions process, it is simply impossible for the most deserved students to emerge from higher education. One cannot preach for a more educated future society without also advocating for the educational rights of undocumented immigrants.

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Rectifying Learning Loss in Post-Pandemic K-12 Education

- Sonali Bhakta -

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, science has rapidly advanced to protect humanity. This in turn has encouraged the public to forge a stronger bond with the scientific community, as an understanding of science knowledge leads to better informed decision-making that potentially results in societal progression. A comprehensive science education has the possibility to begin in a K-12 classroom, but oftentimes foundations are established without connection to real world problems. Scientific phenomena such as climate change and food insecurity should be discussed in the classroom so students may be exposed to worldly issues that can positively or negatively affect the future of the people and the planet. However, with the halt of in-person learning due to the pandemic, the quality of STEM education decreased in favor of teaching mathematics and humanities¹. Students were faced with a screen and a video displaying experimentation rather than carrying it out themselves. This lack of active hands-on experience leads to discouragement of interest, learning, and quality of education. With the return of in-person learning comes “learning loss.” In pre-pandemic settings, the academic term “learning loss” was associated with the loss of knowledge retention that occurs over summer break. In the post-pandemic environment, there is a serious lack of knowledge absorption in classrooms due to a nearly full year of remote learning. This paper will discuss the effects of “learning loss” in a post-pandemic environment and relevant policy solutions. Moreover, it will propose additional measures focusing on integrating science back into education budgetary spending and policy.

The issue in question concerns the learning loss created by the COVID-19 pandemic in K-12 classrooms. Rectifying learning loss will allow students to gain an interdisciplinary education and introduce opportunities in higher education and potential careers in STEM fields. Defined by the Los Angeles Times Editorial Board, learning loss occurs when students “didn’t learn as much as they would have during a normal, in-person year”². This disconnect from in-person learning easily permitted students “who have disengaged from school [to slip] backwards, losing knowledge or skills they once had.” This disruption had substantial effects, with McKinsey & Company reporting nearly three million students across the U.S. “are four months behind in mathematics and three months behind in reading compared with students in matched schools in previous years.”³ The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on K-12 education are demonstrated by statistics demonstrating that high school seniors—particularly those from low-income communities—are less likely to pursue higher education. It’s estimated that students learning in the COVID-19 environment may earn \$49,000 to \$61,000 less throughout their lives—a systemic issue that would be exacerbated by COVID-19’s impact on the economy in the long-run. McKinsey reports that the lack of current students in the workplace, resulting from these educational barriers caused by COVID-19, could create

irreversible financial implications. McKinsey states, “the impact on the U.S. economy could amount to \$128 billion to \$188 billion every year as this cohort enters the workforce” (2021). It is imperative to amend learning loss to prevent this potential sink in societal progression.

Authorized by the California Department of Education’s 2020-21 budget package, the Learning Loss Mitigation Fund (LLMF) appropriates \$355,226,000 from the CARES Act Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) funds, \$4,439,844,000 CARES Act Coronavirus Relief (CF) fund, and \$539,926,000 from the state General Fund “to be allocated to local educational agencies (LEAs) in order to support pupil academic achievement and mitigate learning loss related to COVID-19 school closures.” With the funds being allocated to schools in two increments since September 2020 and quarterly beginning January 2021, there is no recent feedback as to the success of the policy. Moreover, on the federal level, science education improvement and spending has been implemented into the Federal STEM Education Strategic Plan since 2018. The purpose of this plan is “to ensure all Americans have access to high-quality STEM education throughout their lifetime.” A subset of the Federal STEM Education Strategic Plan is the “Charting a Course for Success: America’s Strategy for STEM Education” colloquially referred to as the Strategic Plan. In a December 2021 update of the Strategic Plan, approximately \$2.67 billion was distributed over 100 agencies, permitting each one to invest in programs that promote STEM Education across the education spectrum. This active plan is considered to be successful thus far as it has continued to supply funding for science education throughout the pandemic. However, it has not incorporated any additional funding nor plan to improve training for educators as they currently work through learning loss. Additionally, the Strategic Plan does not detail an education plan that holds instruction to promote more science learning post pandemic⁴.

Despite being acknowledged by Congress, the existence and extent of learning loss is debated. Mario Mabruccho, writer of *The Medium*, believes that “BIPOC students, homeless youth, those with learning disabilities, with mental health issues have always faced ‘learning loss’ because of the systemic oppression built into schooling,” effectively ‘canceling out’ this COVID-19 enforced learning loss⁵. Nevertheless, these students have accumulated more problems with lack of resources and a proper educational environment. While this socioeconomic and racial disparity is evident, the learning loss contributed to the pandemic only increases the gaps in education between students in one grade that will move onto the next. Stephen Merrill, in his *Edutopia* article, *Too Much Focus on ‘Learning Loss’ Will Be a Historic Mistake*, discusses how the extent of learning loss isn’t what educators, administrators, and parents make it out to be, and the pressure of putting learning loss on children will cause them to lose their love for learning. Merrill interviewed Ron Berger, an

author of eight education books and former teacher of 25 years, suggests that “educators need to assess students’ abilities in a way that motivates them to grow,” and utilize data to “guide our responses to individual student needs—and spend our time and resources on creating an asset-based culture where everyone belongs”⁶. This is instrumental to the process of remedying unfinished learning. However these suggestions are not considered due to the wide-scale of manpower that will be needed to oversee each student’s progress. Instead, policy must include adequate procedures that will lessen the stress on teachers and rather train the teachers to new methods that will provide a holistic benefit for the class.

Due to the fact that the pandemic began two years ago, current policy spending is dedicated to supplying resources such as electronic devices and classroom supplies. Furthermore, there isn’t sufficient policy specificity for STEM due to the recent nature of the pandemic. The policy being proposed includes the following: designated budgetary spending for researching the relationship between learning loss and science education, investment in the Department of Education’s Teacher Quality Partnership program to provide quality training and resources for K-12 STEM educators, and an emphasis on science in STEM Education policies that will foster exposure to K-12 students. This policy will allow funds to be dedicated solely to the betterment of understanding how elementary students’ science knowledge was impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research is significant as it allows educators and policymakers to gauge how far along these students’ scientific education is in comparison to a pre-pandemic environment. This in turn will allow for adjustments in K-12 curriculums, as it is the utmost priority for students to have a well rounded scientific education in order to be responsible citizens of the world. Additionally, with stronger training and preparation, teachers can shape their science curriculum around more effective guidelines, guidelines that will prioritize scientific education in parallel with humanities and mathematics, that will ultimately bring more scientific knowledge into the classroom.

The inequities in science education deserve to be transformed, as more jobs are opening specifically for the STEM workforce. With the presence of STEM in American classrooms, future technologies may be forged to safeguard the country and its progeny. It is essential to provide this knowledge for the betterment of the U.S. economy and global competitiveness. The majority of efforts in amending this learning loss during the pandemic are guided towards analyzing literature and mathematical trends; there are not enough resources dedicated to understanding the relationship between learning loss and

K-12 science education, which ultimately puts American children at a disadvantage.

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Telehealth SART

- Ridhima Desai -

Introduction

Every year in the United States there is an average of 463,634 survivors of sexual assault. An estimated 31% of incidents are reported to police, 5.7% are arrested, 1.1% are referred to a prosecutor, 0.7% are convicted of a felony and only 0.6% are incarcerated¹. There is a considerable disparity between the stages of reporting a sexual assault to the police compared to the accused being convicted. One alarming factor contributing to this disparity is the lack of forensic nurses to complete a rape kit following an assault. Rape cases do not require forensic examinations to be done. However, according to past testimonies and data, completion of sexual assault forensic examinations has shown an increase in guilty pleas and conviction rates.² Former San Bernardino County District Attorney- Michael Ramos attested to the importance of forensic exams in sexual assault cases. Ramos stated Sexual Assault Response Team (SART) exams, “are absolutely crucial for sexual assault cases. The rape cases I handled always had a SART exam and a SART nurse that explained to the jurors just what it meant. A lot of the time it is the victim’s word against the suspect’s word. The defense may use the defense of consent and this corroborates the victim’s testimony. You can prove non-consensual sexual intercourse with the evidence in the exam.”³

Evidence shows that conviction rates can be positively impacted if there are more SART exams done. Be that as it may, there are very few trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners or SANEs in contrast to the sexual assault rate in the United States. In the past, the United States federal government has implemented telehealth SART exam programs to assist states in addressing the shortage of SANEs. A handful of states including Texas and New York have implemented this program with promising results. California, however, is one of many states lacking a proper telehealth SART examination system. The lack of SANEs in the state of California is further magnified by it being a large and populous state. Many rural areas in California have even fewer, if any, trained SANEs. To rectify the lack of SANEs in California, the United States federal government including the Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), and Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) should work with the California state government and well qualified medical programs/ health centers to implement an efficient telehealth SART examination system throughout California. A statewide telehealth SART examination system would help address the shortage of SANEs in California, which has hindered many survivors of sexual assault from obtaining SART exams.

Significance and Background

Sexual assault has always been an issue, but now there are new policy avenues that can be taken to help combat the problem and deal with repercussions. Rape and sexual assault negatively impact society including men, women, and gender non-conforming individuals.

A study done by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Institute of Justice found that 1 of 6 U.S. women and 1 of 33 U.S. men have been victims of a completed or attempted rape. Because this statistic is also only based on respondents who were willing to talk about their experiences, there could likely be more individuals who have also experienced sexual assault but did not feel comfortable reporting it.⁴

To prosecute such violent criminal acts, the justice system in the United States heavily relies on SART exams. SART exams are also commonly referred to as Sexual Assault Forensic Exams (SAFE), Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Exams (SANE exam), or most informally as rape kits. Getting a SART exam completed after the occurrence of a sexual assault is significantly more difficult than commonly thought. In many cases, individuals who are assaulted will go to a general hospital under the impression that exams are administered there. Unbeknownst to them, only specialized nurses called SANEs (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner) can administer such forensic exams. These nurses are also usually located in obscure medical centers that are not easily accessible to the public, especially those without their own form of transportation. SART exams have strict 72-hour time limits under which the exam can be conducted and be admissible as evidence in a court of law. Also relevant, is the case of an individual being drugged and/or taking drugs on their own. “Date rape” drugs may only be detected during a small window of time. Detecting drugs such as Gamma Hydroxybutyrate (GHB), a central nervous system depressant, can be very difficult as they typically only last in the system for 12 hours. Unfortunately, there are also very few nurses and hospitals that administer SART exams in the US. According to an NBC analysis, there are only 800 to 900 sexual assault nurse examiner programs out of the 6,000+ hospitals in the United States.⁵ Scheduling an appointment to have a SART exam is also very difficult since there is a backlog of victims who have to wait their turn to be seen. Within the trained specialized nurses that can conduct these tests, many of them suffer from burnout and quit over time, making the shortage worse.

There are currently many different localities and states enacting their own policies to combat the issue of sexual assault. Implementation of telehealth SART exam services can already be found in a handful of states such as Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, New York, and Texas. Pennsylvania State University and Texas Agricultural and Mechanical College have received funding from the U.S. Department of Justice to implement telehealth sexual assault examination programs with a handful of local hospitals in their respective states. In 2016 and 2019, the Department of Justice (DOJ), Office of Justice Programs (OJP), and Office for Victims of Crime (OVC) implemented the *Using Telehealth to Improve Care, Access and Quality of Sexual Assault Forensic Exams* program which allowed universities and medical programs from all over the nation to apply for grant money. Applicants chosen would

design and implement their own version of a telehealth SANE/SAFE program. Texas A&M received additional funding through state legislation SB 71 which provided \$1 million to develop and implement a telehealth SART exam program within two years.⁶ The Massachusetts Department of Public Health, which was the first agency to implement telehealth SART exams, has expanded to assisting nurses in six communities in California, Arizona, and Massachusetts. In New York, the St. Peter's Health Partners in Albany have also launched a telehealth program in partnership with United Concierge Medicine to improve medical care for sexual assault survivors.⁷ University of California, Davis led a breakthrough study in 2014 showing that telehealth services for sexual assault survivors greatly impacted the quality of service given over time. This study was done specifically on 183 pediatric patients in rural hospitals. Of those patients, 101 were evaluated at telemedicine hospitals while 82 were evaluated at hospitals that had their own non-telehealth sexual abuse programs. According to the overall result of the study, "Rural hospitals using telemedicine for pediatric sexual abuse forensic examination consultations provided significantly higher quality evaluations, more complete examinations, and more accurate diagnoses than similar hospitals conducting examinations without telemedicine support."⁸ Another study done involving six sites in three states showed similar results. This included rural, tribal, military, and community hospitals and took place between May 1, 2015, and March 31, 2018. Both of the studies show that the implementation of telehealth SANE/SAFE examination services has a positive impact on the quality of the SART exams.

Theory and Argument

There are currently no state-level policies in California nor federal level policies in place to properly address the shortage of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners and Sexual Assault Forensic Examiners. The DOJ, OJP, and OVC did enact the *Using Telehealth to Improve Care, Access and Quality of Sexual Assault Forensic Exams* program in 2016 and 2019 but have not announced any plans to bring the program back. The shortage of SANE nurses is now further exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic which has taken a massive toll on hospitals all across the country. The California state government along with assistance from the DOJ, OJP, and OVC, should reinstate the previous *Using Telehealth to Improve Care, Access and Quality of Sexual Assault Forensic Exams* program. Reinstating this program would provide grants to well-deserving, competent medical programs around California to help set the foundation for a well-functioning sexual assault telehealth examination system. Based on the original 2019 program's guidelines, the eligible applicant pool would be limited to state health departments, nonprofit organizations and for-profit organizations, institutions of higher education, accredited schools of nursing, academic health centers, and public, private or nonprofit hospitals.⁹ An ill-equipped facility or health center can potentially invalidate evidence that would be needed to build a case against an assailant. SART exams can also further traumatize sexual assault survivors, if not handled with the utmost professional standards and care.

It is also worth considering that since the

COVID-19 pandemic started, the demand for nurses has drastically increased. Recruiting nurses, let alone specialized forensic nurses is a daunting task, requiring more financial resources making it less politically and economically feasible. Administering a telehealth SART exam system will give survivors of sexual assault more accessibility to the collection of forensic evidence which has been seen to be crucial in getting convictions of perpetrators. Former San Bernardino D.A. Ramos corroborated this claim and added that SART exams, should be expanded across California and the country as it helps prosecutors seek Justice for victims of sexual assault, especially rape victims.¹⁰ With many rapists/ sexual perpetrators being repeat offenders, more convictions and incarcerations could reduce the number of sexual assaults that occur yearly. Facilitation of a telehealth SART exam system would also reduce the stress and pressure many SANEs have been facing. This policy proposal does not target the root cause of states lacking SANE nurses and facilities to conduct these examinations, but alleviates the proximate effects of the current SANE nurse shortage.

A telehealth SART examination system would allow more sexual assault survivors to go through the process of an examination that could be used in a court of law to support their case. This evidence would assist in prosecuting and potentially convicting violent sex offenders. The U.S. government and every state government must assure its citizens' safety including from sexual assault. Therefore, the California state government in conjunction with the OVC, OJP, DOJ, and a certified California medical program should implement a telehealth SART examination system to help address the concerns of sexual assault survivors and convict rapists/ sexual perpetrators of their heinous crimes.

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Analyzing State Accessibility for Undocumented Students

- Crystal Hammond -

Introduction

It is common for undocumented students to feel alienated from their peers due to their status. Legal barriers, financial insecurity, and uncertainty in well-being can be huge obstacles for undocumented students. Whether a student is born within or outside of the United States, it is ideal to make education readily available for everyone, including students without legal status.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight primary factors impacting undocumented college students. I will analyze financial assistance and access to social services in the states of California and Georgia. California has developed policies that allow undocumented students to access emergency state funding, healthcare, and higher education. In contrast, Georgia prohibits any form of assistance for undocumented students, where they are left to find support within their own communities¹. I will also highlight the effects of these areas to provide a basis for discussion and suggest policy action to be implemented across the nation.

Significance

Having access to quality education is a human right. More than 450,000 students who are enrolled in U.S. higher education institutions are undocumented, where 27% are in California² and three percent are in Georgia³. Unlike Georgia, California is one of the few sanctuary states, where schools are safe and accessible to all residents, regardless of legal status. California passed Assembly Bill 540 in 2001, allowing high school graduates to be exempt from paying nonresident tuition in college⁴. This allowed undocumented students to pay in-state tuition and receive financial aid as California residents. Although this was a victory for those who pursue college, thousands of students who did not complete high school or GED within the state are ineligible.

The California Dream Act was passed nearly ten years later, and its legislation allowed for some financial aid policies to be implemented. State grants such as Cal Grant A and B awards are given out to thousands of undocumented students every year, assuming that they have met the academic requirements. These grants are disbursed per quarter/semester and are used primarily for food, healthcare, shelter and school materials. This development offers financial relief since these students are ineligible for any type of federal aid, including FAFSA grants and work-study⁵. In 2012, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) came into effect, allowing eligible immigrant youth to receive employment authorization and temporary lawful status. Students who have employment authorization through DACA are qualified to receive state and college aid, because they have the flexibility to work off-campus or particular on-campus jobs. Regardless, these supplemental aid awards do not fully fund all the costs associated with college.

In Georgia, undocumented students do not receive financial support because they are classified as

non-resident aliens, and therefore ineligible to receive federal aid. There are no statewide guidelines that provide students with in-state tuition rates, since it would require lawful presence. Lawful presence determines if a person is legally authorized under federal law to stay within the United States. Private universities such as Emory University have the option to support undocumented students since they primarily receive private funding through tuition, donations, and grants, but state policy restricts the access and aid students can receive⁶. The Board of Regents Policy manual discusses in Section 4.3.4 that verifying students' lawful presence is required for in-state tuition⁷.

State policy adds more challenges to the barriers that these students face since students with DACA cannot obtain a state ID or driver's license to navigate throughout the state. They must find other means of transportation to arrive and leave their workplaces and campuses. This negatively impacts students who need an identification card and license to own a vehicle. It is common to face potential delays with public transportation and driving without a license can lead to severe legal consequences⁸.

AB60 allows undocumented individuals to apply for a driver's license in California. State agencies and various community organizations within California, (e.g. Immigrants Rising, Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights, Black Alliance for Just Immigration, and Asian Americans Advancing Justice) have partnered with college campuses to provide resources for community organizing, legal assistance, and financial relief. In May 2020, The California Department of Social Services developed a temporary project called Disaster Relief Assistance for Immigrants to distribute funds for undocumented adults through local nonprofit organizations¹⁰. The program lasted roughly two months and was estimated to assist 150,000 individuals. Georgia has immigrant organizations, such as the Georgia Latino Alliance for Human Rights¹¹, that focus primarily on legal assistance for undocumented individuals, since financial aid is not provided to these students at public institutions.

Theory and Argument

Undocumented students from mixed-status households often support their families due to financial hardship, which makes it more difficult for them to pay for college costs. This can inhibit their ability to succeed because they are unable to afford college and focus on their studies. Furthermore, it is harder to find a secure job due to having no legal status. In California, both Dreamers with and without DACA can have access to state funds through an academic internship or fellowship.

This is not the case for the state of Georgia, where students have no access to state funds and are required to pay out-of-state tuition. During the pandemic, undocumented students have been discouraged from applying for financial aid. Many students feel uncertain

about returning to campus because of concern about safety measures within class environments. There are health risks associated with taking in-person classes due to the increasing rates of virus transmission. Contracting coronavirus would be a costly disruption of time and money. These students would have to inquire about possible insurance coverage, payment plans for potential hospital fees and catching up on Zoom classes remotely from home, assuming that they have internet access. Undocumented students face a great deal of stress and anxiety due to uncertainty of safety, due to financial concerns, and risks of potential deportation at any given time. Undocumented students cannot afford the rising costs of healthcare, especially if they financially support their families.

Furthermore, the last two years have affected students' finances because of the coronavirus shutdown. Undocumented students have had to find other means of financial assistance through their own social networks. The amount of stress and anxiety has likely tripled since the pandemic due to their legal status prohibiting them from unemployment assistance. DACAmented students would be eligible to apply for most jobs, but without permanent residency, there is a stigma associated with these recipients¹². Employers are often hesitant to hire them due to the unfamiliarity of DACA guidelines, which makes it more challenging for recipients to find work¹³.

A COVID-19 survey¹⁴ developed by the California Student Aid Commission reported that many students provided written feedback and describe how they were impacted:

"COVID-19 changed my plans for college financially, considering that my mom was working two jobs, and both had to close. Now she is doing the best she can by selling 'gelatinas' but is barely making enough money to put food on the table."

"...the money that I had designated for school has been going to support my family. For me to become a full-time student for the fall semester won't be a possibility this year."

"The biggest challenges I face with pursuing my college degree are financial hardships. Because I am out of work, I'm uncertain on how I am going to move forward. My degree is important, but bills are not going to wait for me...I have to pay them."

Undocumented students experience heightened levels of anxiety, depression, and other forms of distress that can affect mental health. Mental health is tied to our overall being, where decline in mental health leads to lack of focus. It was found that 46% of undocumented students failed a course during their semester while 10% of these students have below a 2.5 GPA¹⁵.

The previous administration heavily enforced the public charge rule. This rule disadvantaged immigrant communities, which led them to be hesitant in applying for public benefit programs¹⁶. Public charge determines "admissibility based on reliance" on public cash assistance from state and local cash assistance programs^{17,18}. This rule further drove away those who needed help.

While the Latinx population is often discussed in matters of migration, there is very little representation for undocumented Black people. According to the Pew

Research Center, 619,000 black immigrants without legal status live in the U.S.¹⁹ Almost 15% of the undocumented students in higher education are Black, while DACA-eligible recipients make up about seven percent.

Undocumented Black students are often camouflaged, as they may blend in with African Americans due to the racial stereotypes and assimilation of American culture. Due to racial profiling, they are more than likely to be incarcerated. In solitary confinement cases against Caribbean and African migrants, they were more likely to be confined for disciplinary reasons²⁰. In addition to the harsh treatment they endure, these students are often excluded from policy initiatives that protect their well-being, such as mental health resources and social services.

States should promote more collaborative efforts between agencies and community-based organizations to develop an immigration services fund. As previously mentioned, California created the Disaster Relief Assistance for Immigrants, which was a one-time state-funded grant that was given to undocumented individuals, regardless of whether they were a student or not. The grant varied between \$500 and \$1,000 depending on financial need. This program was a great initiative to develop because financial emergencies can happen to anyone, regardless of immigration status. The state of Georgia does not have any social services that undocumented immigrants are eligible for. Therefore, an emergency fund should be established for undocumented individuals who reside within the state. This initiative can be distributed through immigration organizations and affiliated agencies.

Another pathway for financial assistance that Georgia should consider is paid community service programs. The California Student Aid Commission recently expanded their student grants, allowing eligible undocumented college students to volunteer at an approved organization. After completion of volunteer hours, students receive a stipend through the Dream Service Incentive Grant Program²¹. This initiative encourages undocumented students to remain enrolled in school instead of taking a leave of absence to find financial relief elsewhere.

Conclusion

Undocumented students who are entering higher education institutions will face several structural barriers. With risks of financial insecurity and limited mobility, students find it challenging to focus on classes. Expanding state mobility by increasing financial resources and social services can contribute to economic growth in immigrant communities. Expanding state programs to supplement undocumented students through their higher educational journey will increase the likelihood of college retention and completion.

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What Underlying Factors are Responsible for the Excess Mortality Amongst California's Latino Background Population Due to the SARS-CoV-2 Virus?

- Aaron Sanchez -

Background

The SARS-CoV-2 Pandemic exhibited the highest rates of excess mortality and infection on California's Latino population in comparison to all other racial demographics. This finding has been consistent through multiple studies, but the cause for the strong correlation between Latino ethnicity and COVID-19 mortality remains unclear. This comes at a moment of heightened national discussion on building better models of care that produce more equitable outcomes.

Previously, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) released findings on COVID-19 infection data from its national database on hospitalizations and death rates amongst minority ethnicities by state. They found that Latino populations were 2.8x more likely to be hospitalized and 2.3x more likely to die from COVID-19 than of any other ethnic background.¹ At UCSF, a team utilized mortality data on race, age, and occupation demographics which found statistically significant disparities in COVID-19 infections amongst essential workers, especially amongst Black and Latino populations. Their follow-up study found that working-age immigrants who came from Mexico or Central America as essential workers experienced the greatest mortality rates.⁴ The findings focused chiefly on country of origin and the educational variable was only included as a control, but they wished they had investigated the relationship further. This suggests that disparities in COVID-19 mortality outcomes attributable to educational achievement may play a stronger role than initially anticipated.

This research paper aims to investigate this gap in knowledge by asking a few key questions: does educational attainment increase, decrease, or have negligible effects on the probability of death by COVID-19? Is this effect overshadowed, magnified, or obfuscated by income, ethnicity, or gender? Which of these variables is the strongest predictor of COVID-19 mortality when considered alongside educational achievement? In this research

project, I analyzed the effect of educational achievement on the probability of dying from COVID-19 within California's Latino population using publicly available data. This study hypothesizes that higher educational achievement will significantly correlate with a decrease in the likelihood of death by COVID-19.

Methodology

This research paper is a large-n longitudinal study of publicly available data on all California adults aged 25 or older. In many instances, the data analyzed consisted of tens of thousands of entries.

Cumulative data on COVID-19 deaths by California county were sourced from USAfacts.org⁵ and were sampled between February 7th, 2020 and November 23rd, 2021. This data was used to estimate COVID-19 mortality as shown in Table 1. Californians who contracted COVID-19 and were confirmed to have died from the virus were recorded over time, and these deaths were annualized by dividing by the time that has elapsed since the first confirmed death on February 7th, 2020 (1.806 years). These values were then taken as a proportion of the average number of annual county deaths over a 5 year period⁶ to estimate the likelihood that a death during this given time period was attributable to SARS-CoV-2. This will serve as "COVID-19 mortality", the dependent variable in the subsequent statistical analyses.

As for the independent variables, demographic data on county ethnicity, gender makeup, median household income, and educational attainment was sourced from the California Department of Public Health open data portal⁷ and from the American Community Survey (ACS).⁸ Ethnicity is defined as the percentage of the county population that identified as Latino recorded by the ACS. Educational attainment data was available in two groups: the proportion of each county population with a high school diploma or above, and the proportion with a 4-year college degree or above.⁹ Gender was recorded as

Table 1 - Estimated Percentage of Annual County Deaths Attributable to COVID-19*†

| Total COVID-19 Deaths | | CA Deaths 2014 - 2019 | | | | | | | | | | Estimated COVID-19 Mortality |
|-----------------------|--------|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|----------|----------|-----------|----------|------------------------------|
| County | Deaths | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 | 2018 | 2019 | Average | St. Dev. | St. Error | Estimate | |
| Kings County | 358 | 772 | 782 | 829 | 896 | 869 | 890 | 839.67 | 54.01 | 22.05 | 23.61% | |
| San Diego County | 4317 | 19965 | 20891 | 21396 | 21716 | 21780 | 22151 | 21316.50 | 785.46 | 320.66 | 11.21% | |
| Yuba County | 60 | 575 | 609 | 639 | 715 | 672 | 610 | 636.67 | 50.34 | 20.55 | 5.22% | |

* as of 11/23/2021. † (Three randomly selected counties). The larger version of this table includes values from all 58 counties and the data estimate a per-county adjusted, annualized COVID-19 mortality rate. Sources: "Death Profiles by County", California Department of Public Health; ⁶ "California Coronavirus Cases and Deaths", USAfacts.org. ⁵

Table 2 - Correlation Matrix of the Five Independent Variables and COVID-19 Mortality.

| | Latino | High school + | Bachelor's + | Income | Gender | COVID-19 mortality |
|--------------------|------------|---------------|--------------|------------|------------|--------------------|
| Latino | 1 | | | | | |
| High school + | -0.9053759 | 1 | | | | |
| Bachelor's + | -0.3192504 | 0.52552851 | 1 | | | |
| Income | -0.083442 | 0.30006031 | 0.86201793 | 1 | | |
| Gender | 0.05676811 | 0.12232828 | 0.33591946 | 0.20236609 | 1 | |
| COVID-19 mortality | 0.79038701 | -0.6958811 | -0.262948 | -0.1194956 | -0.0076424 | 1 |

*Values in this table are correlation coefficients of the respective dependent-independent variable relationships.

the percentage of the population that was born female. Median household income was the final variable recorded through the ACS. Compatibility between all data sources was made possible through a county-level analysis. Each California county was considered an individual entry to the table, resulting in 58 separate rows with 6 columns.

To test the proposed hypothesis, the 5 independent variables (High school+, Bachelor's+, Gender, Income, and Latino) were individually assessed in a correlation matrix with the estimated COVID-19 mortality rates to identify which were significantly correlated, as shown in *Table 2*.

Results

The correlation matrix indicated that only Latino ethnicity, a high school education +, and a Bachelor's degree + had statistically significant effects on COVID-19 mortality—in decreasing order, respectively. *Table 2* provides evidence that higher levels of educational attainment in a population are only strongly correlated with lower incidence of COVID-19 mortality up until the end of a high school diploma. The effects of educational attainment on mortality seem to wane after completion of secondary education.

Table 2 shows that in all counties considered, low high school completion rates were strongly correlated with higher COVID-19 mortality. Surprisingly, a high school-level education was a much stronger predictor

than a Bachelor's degree, as Bachelor's degrees showed a weaker significant effect on COVID-19 mortality. In concordance with previous studies, Latino ethnicity was also strongly correlated with mortality. The strongest correlation by far was between low high school completion rates and larger Latino populations. Median household income was not significantly correlated with mortality, but it showed a very strong correlation with a Bachelor's degree or higher, suggesting that its benefits to the individual are largely financial. Gender had the weakest correlation with the dependent variable, showing no significant effect.

To further assess the differences in mortality due to educational attainment in the Latino community, two separate groups were formed to hold constant potentially confounding variables that come as a result of different educational choices: "High School+" and "Bachelor's+" (the variables included in these two groups are best illustrated by *Table 3*). Separation of the two groups helps account for social and life factors that could confound our analysis. Some examples of these confounding variables are occupation and access to routine, preventative medicine, on which educational attainment is shown to have a large influence.¹⁰ By separating the two levels of educational attainment, our models can independently analyze the effect of different levels of education within two separate populations.

However, the multiple regression models in *Table 3* show that when all variables are considered in union,

Table 3 - Outcomes for the Multiple Regression Analyses*

| High School+ Regression [‡] | | Bachelor's + Regression [†] | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------|
| | Covid-19 Mortality | | Covid-19 Mortality |
| Latino Ethnicity | 4.10E-03 (8.85E-04) | Latino Ethnicity | 3.24E-03 (3.73E-04) |
| Highschool Diploma + | 3.19E-03 (2.35E-03) | Bachelors Degree + | 1.55E-03 (1.21E-03) |
| Median Household Income | -4.04E-07 (3.57E-07) | Median Household Income | -9.39E-07 (6.77E-07) |
| Gender | -2.84E-03 (2.94E-03) | Gender | -3.03E-03 (3.02E-03) |
| R ² | .64 | R ² | .64 |
| N | 58 | N | 58 |

* Both of these regression models were conducted at the 95% confidence level.

‡ Adjusted R² value is 0.614, ANOVA F value = 23.70, Significance F = 2.84E⁻¹¹

† Adjusted R² value is 0.613, ANOVA F value = 23.58, Significance F = 3.08E⁻¹¹

Table 4 – P-value Results of the Multiple Regression Analyses

| High school + Regression | | Bachelor's + Regression | |
|--------------------------|----------------|-------------------------|----------------|
| | <i>P-value</i> | | <i>P-value</i> |
| Intercept | 0.54306018 | Intercept | 0.25188632 |
| Latino | 2.4143E-05 | Latino | 9.3913E-12 |
| Highschool + | 0.1809176 | 4 Year + | 0.20304404 |
| Income | 0.26185741 | Income | 0.17118009 |
| Gender | 0.33725488 | Gender | 0.3203968 |

Latino ethnicity is the strongest predictor of the model, and it overshadows the effects of all other variables—even the strong correlation with a high school education.

Table 4 shows that the only statistically significant predictor of higher COVID-19 mortality in both models was Latino ethnicity. (Remember: when looking at *p-values*, we look for any variables with a *p-value* < 0.05, this serves as a significance threshold; all variables with a *p-value* above have insignificant effects on mortality). Every other independent variable is overwhelmingly eclipsed by the influence Latino ethnicity has on increased COVID-19 mortality, especially when a Bachelor's degree or higher is the level of educational attainment considered. A high school education does mitigate this substantial skew by over 7 orders of magnitude. Income and gender were not significant predictors of COVID-19 mortality in both models.

The data, therefore, disproved our initial hypothesis: higher levels of education only marginally decrease the likelihood of death by COVID-19 and high school graduation was the only level of education with a strong correlation to a decrease in mortality. Counties with larger populations of 4-year degrees or above, in many instances, experienced similar mortality rates as counties with small 4-year populations. Moreover, lower high school completion rates are most strongly associated with a larger percentage of a county's population that identifies as Latino. Efforts should be made to address this staggering disparity.

Policy Implications

Given the findings, policies should instead focus on addressing the socio-cultural factors of ethnicity as it is the strongest skew. The data and results presented in this study provide strong evidence against the promotion of higher education as a means to reduce COVID-19 mortality. While a college degree or graduate degree does help, the effect is not strong enough to justify promotion as a policy solution. As a recommendation to reduce COVID-19 mortality through education policy, additional funding should be earmarked for secondary institutions and programs that significantly increase retention rates. The value here is not in pushing for more, but in bringing up the bottom line. Equity-based approaches could best accomplish this goal because they allocate more to populations that struggle to achieve equality in outcome. In this case, it is Latinos with no high school diploma or who are at risk of dropping out.

Latino ethnicity and its strongest correlation with low high school graduation rates show that increas-

ing retention rates should be of chief concern and it may have considerable spillover effects on the health of the Latino community. An implementation of senior year vocational mentorships would allow an option for students to substitute the classroom setting in the second half of their senior year for graduation credit. This approach could incentivize graduation if a student shadows a position in a career they have an interest in, they could begin their transition to the job market and still receive their diploma that would have otherwise served as a barrier to entry for a multitude of opportunities. Moreover, California's Latino population is a vital backbone of our economy, so we should attempt to address systemic disproportionalities that affect this group.

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