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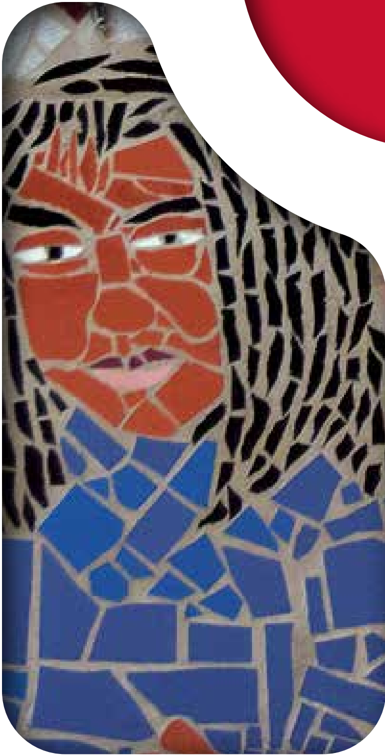

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EDITORIAL – Social Work Values in Research in *Perspectives on Social Work*

Social work doctoral student scholarship often seeks to empower vulnerable populations and advance justice. *Perspectives on Social Work* is a student-led social work doctoral student research journal that serves as a space to promote student scholarship while also offering students the opportunity to publish articles, participate in the peer review process, and connect with other doctoral students.

This issue of *Perspectives on Social Work* features two articles and a book review that align with social work's mission and seek to promote wellness among vulnerable populations. Diaz (2023) outlines how volunteerism may be harnessed as a mechanism to promote well-being among refugee youth and utilizes social change theory to identify facilitators and barriers to engaging these youth in volunteer work within a variety of organizations. Caffrey et al. (2023) offer findings from a study investigating how COVID-19 stressors affected academic achievement and mental health among students at a Hispanic-serving institution. They found that Hispanic/Latinx students, especially first-generation students, experienced more COVID stressors, including changes in employment, than other students and made recommendations for social workers, university faculty, and policymakers on addressing disproportionate impacts of the pandemic on Latinx communities. Lastly, Mauer (2023)'s book review on *Queer Theory Now: From Foundations to Futures* highlights how a queer theory lens within social work education, practice and research can lay a foundation for critically examining cisheteronormativity in social work and create space for gender expansiveness and intersecting identities. As seen in these articles, social work doctoral students aim to enhance well-being among historically disenfranchised groups through their research.

We continue to be so proud of the work that the social work doctoral student community puts into making each issue of *Perspectives on Social Work* a success—from our student peer reviewers and authors to our editorial board. As my time as Editor-in-Chief ends, I would like to thank each of you for your commitment to doctoral student scholarship. It has been an honor to serve in this role and to have the opportunity to witness our community's enthusiasm and dedication to social work ethics, research and advocacy. It is also my pleasure to introduce Riya Bhatt, the current Editor-in-Chief of *Perspectives on Social Work*.

We would like to encourage social work doctoral students to join our community as authors and peer reviewers to gain insight into the publication process, as well as join us for networking and training events. *Perspectives on Social Work* strives to serve as a platform for sharing the important research, practice, and policy contributions of social work doctoral students.

Caitlyn Mytelka, LMSW
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Former Editor-in-Chief

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Engaging Refugee Youth in Social Change: The Application of Social Theory to Inform Volunteer Programming in Organizational Settings

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Abstract

This analysis explores volunteerism within organizational settings as a relevant mechanism for the promotion of refugee youth well-being. It provides a theoretical rationale for the benefit of promoting volunteerism in this population both for the youth and for advancing organizations' broader social change missions. It then applies Self-Determination Theory to explore ways in which organizations may thoughtfully engage refugee youth in mutually beneficial volunteer programs and motivate them to volunteer. The Dominant Status Model, then, offers a framework for anticipating possible barriers to refugee youth volunteerism. Taken together, understanding the motivators and barriers to volunteerism provides a foundation upon which refugee youth can be better integrated into organizational social change work.

Keywords: refugee, youth, volunteer, well-being, organizational practice

Engaging Refugee Youth in Social Change: The Application of Social Theory to Inform Volunteer Programming in Organizational Settings

Few would question whether volunteerism is desirable for society. Indeed, volunteers add an estimated $297.5 billion of value to the nonprofit sector each year (Learning to Give, 2019). Without the assistance of volunteers, many nonprofits could struggle to maintain their level of capacity to fulfill their mission to advance social change. The effects of volunteerism, and civic engagement broadly, is also evident at the individual level, as volunteers themselves benefit from their volunteerism in a wide range of domains including improvements in mental health outcomes, social cohesion, and skills development (Carlton, 2015; Wood et al., 2019). For youth who volunteer, these positive effects can carry through to adulthood, thus augmenting the quality of life long-term (Langstedt et al., 2016). With the positive effects of volunteerism being well established in the literature, the promotion of volunteerism has great potential to

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positively impact the lives of individuals. This may be especially true for refugee youth, who may struggle in their journey to navigate new and complicated systems (Woodgate & Busolo, 2021) and who can face multiple significant barriers to accessing care, including language and distrust of systems (Heidi et al., 2014).

The objective of this analysis is to explore the promotion of volunteerism among refugee youth in particular as a strategy for enhancing well-being in this population. Aligned with the United Nations Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) (1951), refugees are defined here as individuals who have left their country of origin and are unable to return due to "a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, membership of a particular social group or political opinion" (Article 1). The analysis begins by outlining some of the known benefits of volunteerism for individuals and making the case for how these benefits may be particularly advantageous for refugee youth. It then moves to consider Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as it can inform our understanding of refugee youth motivations to volunteer with implications for how organizations can appeal to this population to recruit and retain them in volunteer capacities. It then examines the Dominant Status Model (DSM) as a second theoretical perspective that can illuminate barriers to refugee youth volunteerism. Taken together, understanding the motivations and barriers to volunteerism in this population can inform organizational practices to engage refugee youth as volunteers, thus augmenting social change missions of organizations while accruing significant benefits to the well-being of these youth. The discussion, then, ties together these findings and suggests relevant areas for future research.

Benefits of Volunteerism

Volunteerism can promote resilience to a wide array of mental health struggles including depression, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), dissociation, substance use issues, generalized anxiety, and grief and loss (Betancourt et al., 2012; Gušić et al., 2018; Marshall et al., 2016; Posselt et al., 2015). Volunteerism also predicts long-term positive outcomes such as increased general life satisfaction, "environmental mastery" (control over one's life), and life purpose (Bowman et al., 2010). It can support resilience in trauma-impacted youth by advancing a sense of mastery and skills development (Yap & Davidson, 2011) and by providing youth opportunities for positive stress (Webb, 2017). Among racial minority youth, volunteerism - and civic engagement broadly - can facilitate optimism for one's future (Chan et al., 2014). Refugee youth in post-disaster contexts can find benefits to their sense of well-being, belonging, and the emergence of leadership skills (Carlton, 2015). Relatedly, Wood et al. (2019) examine African refugees living in Australia and find that volunteering promotes their self-worth, sense of belonging, and general mental health; and Ellis et al. (2016) reflect on how this engagement can create social norms that prevent violent and delinquent behavior. Further, volunteerism can serve as a critical component in developing social capital (Melamed et al., 2018) while allowing volunteers the ability to feel positive in their ability to "give back" (Makhoul et al., 2012).

While these benefits are known to accrue to youth generally, it is clear that refugee youth may be in the position to benefit more greatly from this volunteerism. Firstly, refugees - by definition - will have experienced significant trauma related to their flee from persecution in their home communities (George, 2010; Tribe, 2002). As such, refugees face higher rates of a wide array of mental health conditions, including PTSD, anxiety, and depression (Hameed et al., 2018) Additionally, refugees can experience significant discrimination in their host countries that can undermine their sense of social cohesion

(Buchanan et al., 2018). Developing social networks, such as can be achieved via volunteerism (Wood et al., 2019), can foster resilience in refugees who may be at risk of social isolation (Melamed et al., 2018; Pieloch et al., 2016). Refugees often experience unique struggles accessing unemployment (Disney & McPherson, 2020) that can render acquisition of social capital more relevant to their lives, and they face numerous barriers to service delivery when attempting to meet their various needs (Heidi et al., 2014). One particularly salient barrier to service delivery includes the stigma that is commonly attached to the concept of mental health services in many cultures around the world (Ellis et al., 2011). Because refugee youth face a higher risk of mental health needs (Hameed et al., 2018) that may go untreated (Heidi et al., 2014), increasing volunteerism among this population may provide a creative way for social workers and other helping professionals to promote well-being and resilience while avoiding the stigma associated with mental health services and remaining culturally relevant.

Given volunteerism's documented ties to individual-level benefits for volunteers - as well as its benefits for addressing the unique needs of refugee youth, in particular - it then becomes necessary to explore logistical considerations for organizations that would facilitate volunteer promotion among refugee youth. To this end, we turn now to using Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to understand how the theory can inform the ways in which organizations may tailor their volunteer recruitment efforts to most effectively target this population.

Table 1
Overview of Theories Used and How They Work Together to Inform Present Analysis

Theory	General Purpose	Application to Augmenting Understanding of Volunteering Among Refugee Youth
Self-Determination Theory	Used to understand factors that drive motivation to complete a task or to engage in a particular behavior; predicts that individuals are motivated by a drive to fulfill three core human needs: 1) autonomy, 2) relatedness, 3) competence	Illuminates how autonomy, relatedness, and competence are 1) uniquely relevant to the needs of refugee youth, and 2) provides implications for designing organizational volunteer programs when seeking to engage refugee youth in volunteerism; directs organizations to maximize the pull factors that can bring refugee youth to volunteerism
Dominant Status Model	Predicts that those who are in dominant social positions are more likely to volunteer, and those in less dominant social positions are less likely to volunteer due to increased barriers to participation	Illuminates how refugee youth may face increased barriers to volunteerism; directs organizations to proactively address the push factors that can prevent refugee youth from volunteerism

Self-Determination Theory

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) was established by psychologists Edward Deci and Richard Ryan (Deci & Ryan, 2012). Co-researchers in the field of human motivation, Deci and Ryan refer to SDT as an "organismic theory," which focuses on people as complex beings. This position, they argue, is in contrast with perspectives in psychology that consider people to be machines who invariably work in predictable ways (Deci & Ryan, 2004). Within SDT, there are three key concepts that are said to underlie

motivations, all of which relate to one's universal human needs. For Deci and Ryan, people are motivated to engage in activities as a result of their fundamental drive to satisfy these needs. These three needs include: 1) *autonomy*, 2) *relatedness*, and 3) *competence* (Deci et al., 2017). *Autonomy* is the feeling of being one's own person, capable of making choices for oneself, and being free of coercion. *Relatedness* is the feeling of meaningful, positive connection to others, either on an individual level or on a more macro level, such as seen in a connection to one's community, country, or world in general. *Competence*, the third primary motivator underlying human behavior, refers to one's ability to feel skilled and "good enough" at tasks and activities of personal value. Each of these motivators is discussed in turn.

Autonomy

While maintaining autonomy is an essential component underlying human motivation, it is also the case that youth often have their autonomy challenged across a variety of contexts, including within households (Benito-Gomez et al., 2020) and schools, which may serve as sites of social control (Fisher et al., 2018). Refugee youth may feel a heightened lack of autonomy, as refugees are forced to flee persecution and are not merely relocating of their own free will. Additionally, the acculturation process to a new culture may feel forced, and they may struggle to find agency to maintain identities and practice of personal importance (McBrien & Day, 2012).

To understand the role of autonomy in behavior, SDT underscores the importance of different *types* of motivation (autonomous versus controlled), which Deci and Ryan believe are more influential in determining a person's behaviors than the amount of motivation they are thought to possess (Deci et al., 2017). Autonomous motivation, they argue, is achieved when one is acting with a full willingness to carry out an action, as opposed to feeling as though they are acting as a puppet to another's whims. Possessing fully autonomous motivation predicts whether one will be motivated enough to carry out an action more so than the presence of controlled motivation. Controlled motivation, by contrast, may be coercive or seen when one is motivated due to external forces that do not fully align with what they wish to do (Deci & Ryan, 2019). Relatedly, SDT maintains that rewards for autonomous behaviors are counterproductive, as they can thwart one's autonomy. An example may be seen if one is autonomously motivated to volunteer, but then is offered tangible recognition such as gift cards. In this case, SDT would predict that the additional motivating component of the gift card may counterproductively reduce one's motivation and the likelihood that one would continue to be motivated to volunteer (Deci & Ryan, 2008).

Implications of Autonomy. Because rewards can undermine a sense of autonomy, organizations seeking to recruit and engage refugee youth as volunteers would be wise to refrain from material or other forms of external incentives. Organizations can further appeal to refugee youth's autonomy by remaining attentive to both *what* the youth do and *how* they do it. Supporting autonomy in *what* the youth do could entail providing youth with a wide array of volunteer opportunities from which youth may choose, rather than only maintaining one way to engage them. It also could include seeking youth input to determine if there are new opportunities where they would like to contribute that do not already exist within the organization and then being responsive to their feedback.

Supporting autonomy in *how* they volunteer can be accomplished by giving youth the power to decide the terms of their involvement and not requiring a minimum number of hours per week or weeks per year. It can also be achieved by offering flexible times for engagement, rather than having opportunities

scheduled for specific times as determined by the organization's needs. Organizations would further be wise to provide volunteer roles that confer a degree of power where youth can make decisions that then are enacted within the organization, such as by allowing youth to determine what activities to host at a nursing home or how to decorate for an event and then allowing the youth to implement those decisions. Lastly, a critical element in maintaining youth autonomy is not *requiring* that they volunteer, as may be the case in school-based service learning requirements.

Table 2

Overview of Autonomy and Its Application to Promoting Refugee Youth Volunteerism

<table>
<tr><th>SDT Motivating Factors</th><th>Brief Definition of Concept</th><th>Unique Added Relevance to Refugee Youth</th><th>Implications for Organizations When Applying SDT's Motivating Factors to Volunteer Programming (Examples)</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="4">AUTONOMY</td><td rowspan="4">People need to feel autonomous in their decision-making; people are motivated to engage in behaviors that satisfy this need</td><td>Youth often have autonomy curtailed by parents, schools, and broader society</td><td>Avoid using external incentives (e.g., offering organizational swag) as these can make the decision to volunteer feel coerced</td></tr>
<tr><td>Refugee youth, in particular, lost autonomy in forced migration</td><td>Allow youth to set the terms of their engagement (e.g., number of hours, the day of week, or the time of the day that they volunteer) and offer a wide range of volunteer opportunities to choose from</td></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="2">The acculturation process may undermine autonomy as youth are forced to accommodate a new cultural milieu</td><td>Create opportunities that give the youth the power to make meaningful decisions for the organization (e.g., how to decorate for an event)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Avoid requiring volunteer service (e.g., school-directed service learning)</td></tr>
</table>

Relatedness

SDT predicts that individuals are fundamentally motivated to action by a desire to achieve relatedness. Volunteerism, in general, can serve as a powerful tool to promote belonging and to eradicate social isolation by allowing people to connect to issues broader than themselves while meeting others in their communities (Crittenden, 2019). For refugee youth, this sense of belonging can be a particularly relevant and beneficial motivator (Carlton, 2015). Refugee youth are at heightened risk of social isolation due to a common need to adjust to the norms of new school cultures (such as those around body language and attire), possible language differences with their peers, and an insufficient awareness of diversity and inclusion promotion among staff within their new schools (Xuemei & Grineva, 2016). Additionally, both being the objects of bullying (Mthethwa-Sommers & Kisiara, 2015) and broader societal discrimination (Beiser & Feng, 2016) can undermine relatedness.

Implications of Relatedness. To appeal to refugee youth motivations, organizations may frame the opportunity to volunteer around the ability of volunteer roles to promote relatedness, rather than framing them as opportunities to help meet an organizational need. This can include marketing the ability to work

alongside peers, the ability to meet new people, and the ability to connect to their broader community. Moving beyond mere marketing to substantive changes in volunteer programming, organizations seeking to outreach to refugee youth in particular should be intentional to create volunteer opportunities that *maximize* opportunities for relatedness. This means that a hands-on group activity, such as working together to maintain a community garden, may be more motivating to a refugee youth than an activity such as sitting alone in a room stuffing envelopes and other administrative tasks. Beyond ensuring the opportunity to be in a community, organizations can be thoughtful in structuring team-building in their volunteer groups, such as by regular icebreakers that facilitate communication and bonding.

Table 3
Overview of Relatedness and Its Application to Promoting Refugee Youth Volunteerism

<table>
<tr><th>SDT Motivating Factors</th><th>Brief Definition of Concept</th><th>Unique Added Relevance to Refugee Youth</th><th>Implications for Organizations When Applying SDT's Motivating Factors to Volunteer Programming (Examples)</th></tr>
<tr><td rowspan="5">RELATEDNESS</td><td rowspan="5">People need to feel connected to others, to their communities, and to broader society; people are motivated to engage in behaviors that satisfy this need</td><td>Refugee youth are at an increased risk of social isolation</td><td>Market volunteer roles as an opportunity to connect with others and the broader community</td></tr>
<tr><td>Refugee youth may face language differences with their peers that make communication difficult</td><td rowspan="2">Maximize opportunities that involve connectedness and working in a team (e.g., working together to maintain a community garden) rather than siloed work (e.g., stuffing envelopes alone in an office)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Refugee youth are at a heightened risk of experiencing bullying</td></tr>
<tr><td>Refugee youth face an increased risk of experiencing discrimination</td><td rowspan="2">Infuse team building into the volunteer program (e.g., regular icebreakers and ongoing bonding activities)</td></tr>
<tr><td>Refugee youth may find themselves in schools and other settings that are not DEI-informed</td></tr>
</table>

Competence

The third and final factor that SDT suggests underlies motivation and behavior is the universal need for humans to feel competent. The concept of competence is especially significant for this population as youth are inherently in a stage of their life where education and skills development are paramount to their futures (Redmond & Dolan, 2016). Because refugee youth may have low self-efficacy (Khayyat & Mousa, 2022), they can be well-positioned to benefit from opportunities to *feel* competent and *develop* competence. Additionally, the multitude of structural barriers that they face to formal educational attainment, including their socioeconomic status (Lambrechts, 2020), can render volunteer opportunities an additional support to their developing competence.

Implications of Competence. Similar to relatedness, incorporating the concept of competence should include both modifications to the framing of volunteer opportunities (e.g., marketing that the role can allow the volunteer a space to learn new skills) as well as substantive changes to the volunteer opportunities presented for this population. Substantive changes to volunteer opportunities can focus on

two aspects: 1) helping refugee youth to feel competent, and 2) helping refugee youth to develop competence. Organizations can help refugee youth feel competent by allowing for volunteer opportunities where the youth can contribute the specialized skills that they may already have. Facilitating refugee youth to develop competence, then, requires the provision of opportunities that are intentional to assist youth to gain new skills. For greatest relevance, SDT predicts that these should be skills that youth find personally meaningful, which requires volunteer programs to maintain a responsiveness to the interests of individual youth, rather than relying on an established and inflexible list of opportunities. Organizations may also prioritize volunteer opportunities that develop skills that can be transferable to assist youth in other contexts, such as developing their employment prospects and long-term career goals. These opportunities should be intentional to ensure that learning occurs, such as by allowing youth to work closely with more seasoned volunteers or staff who can act as mentors and apprentice in their development. Further, appealing to one's sense of competence means celebrating volunteers for the unique value of their contributions, thus necessitating strong volunteer recognition mechanisms. Lastly, it requires a commitment to regularly checking in with volunteers to assess the degree to which they are learning what they want to learn, if they are contributing the skills they want to contribute, and if their goals for their involvement have expanded or otherwise changed over time.

Table 4
Overview of Competence and Its Application to Promoting Refugee Youth Volunteerism

SDT Motivating Factors	Brief Definition of Concept	Unique Added Relevance to Refugee Youth	Implications for Organizations When Applying SDT's Motivating Factors to Volunteer Programming (Examples)
COMPETENCE	People need to feel competent; people are motivated to engage in behaviors that satisfy this need (both by allowing them to *exhibit competence* they already have and by allowing them to *deepen their competence* in areas personally meaningful to them)	Youth, generally, are at a stage in life where developing skills/competence is paramount to their future	Market the volunteer program as an opportunity to use/develop one's skills
		Refugee youth may face lower rates of self-efficacy that may render them particularly motivated by opportunities to exhibit and develop competence	Allow for volunteer opportunities that build on skills youth already possess (i.e., allow them to *exhibit* their competence); take a strengths-based approach and assume that they already have areas of competence that can be utilized
		Refugee youth often face increased barriers to formal educational attainment, and thus are limited in pursuing other avenues to developing/exhibiting competence used by youth generally	Explore what skills youth *want* to use or to develop and then incorporate that feedback to develop tailored volunteer opportunities
			Promote skills development that can be transferrable to other settings such as employment

Dominant Status Model

Advancing volunteerism among refugee youth is a product of attention to motivational components as well as maintaining a proactive consideration of the barriers one may face to volunteerism. To this end,

the Dominant Status Model provides a relevant critical framework for assessing possible barriers. This model asserts that those who are of a more dominant status within society are more likely to volunteer (Andronic, 2014). Many aspects of one's being can confer a dominant status; among these are gender, race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, nationality, occupation, and age (Bonnesen, 2018).

Being of a less dominant status in society can affect volunteerism for many reasons. Examples include an inability to afford transportation to a place where one can volunteer, not living in a neighborhood where volunteer opportunities are available, incapacity to afford daycare for one's children while one volunteers (or lacking the social capital to have friends or family watch one's children for this purpose), not being the age necessary to volunteer at the places where opportunities are available (as may be seen in the case of youth volunteers), or lacking the resources necessary to allocate time for engaging in unpaid labor.

Some identities can be more predictive of one's volunteerism, and the identities that affect one's "opportunity structures" (Bonnesen, 2018) for volunteerism can vary by age. Gender, for instance, is more of a determinant of volunteerism in older volunteers than it is with youth, but education – and, in particular, access to higher education – plays a strong role in providing an entryway to volunteerism among young people (Bonnesen, 2018), leading to what Bonnesen refers to as an "educational elitism in volunteering." Aligned with what one would expect with the Dominant Status Model, this would suggest that those who do not attend higher education institutions may be less likely to volunteer, and thus less likely to receive the benefits of volunteering in their lives. Lack of access to higher education may also be linked to coming from a family with low financial resources, which in itself is another factor known to predict lower rates of volunteerism and civic engagement generally (Astuto & Ruck, 2017; Mason et al., 2011). Pantea (2015) additionally looks at barriers to volunteerism among youth - who generally hold a less dominant position within society (Evans, 2007) - and finds that youth volunteerism may be thwarted by insufficient volunteering infrastructure, a prevailing lack of trust in the "third sector," pressure from family and society to focus on school and paid employment, and a society-wide focus on consumerism. Jain et al. (2019), then, find that exposure to violence predicts lower levels of civic engagement among youth.

Implications of the DSM. When applying the Dominant Status Model to understanding volunteerism among refugee youth, it is clear that refugees, who occupy a less dominant position within their countries of settlement, may face significant barriers in their "opportunity structures" (Bonnesen, 2018) to volunteerism. Refugees may face financial instability (O'Donnell et al., 2020), low access to reliable transportation (Vais et al., 2020), and significant obstacles to higher educational attainment (Naidoo, 2021). Because of the high incidence of unemployment and underemployment (Jamil et al., 2012), they may find it necessary to prioritize paid employment over volunteerism. Further constraining their volunteerism, the effects of exposure to violence is especially relevant to the population of refugee youth, as refugees almost invariably have been exposed to violence in their home countries, which has resulted in their refugee status in the first place (Isakson, Legerski, & Layne, 2015).

Applying this model, thus requires organizations that seek to engage refugee youth as volunteers to be proactive in assessing the barriers these individuals living in their communities may face in volunteerism. This requires putting aside possible assumptions that everyone has equal access to volunteer opportunities. Proactively assessing barriers will allow organizations to develop plans to address them, such as by offering offsite opportunities for those with limited transportation, providing flexible volunteer

hours to work around work or school schedules, or offering on-site childcare for those with caretaking responsibilities.

Discussion

As social workers, we are committed to healthy development for all youth, eliminating social isolation, and promoting well-being (Grand Challenges for Social Work, 2021), and it is imperative for us to advocate for innovations that allow us to more effectively reach underserved populations. As the present analysis demonstrates, the intentional inclusion of refugee youth in volunteer programming may be especially meaningful for addressing the common needs of this population. Volunteerism is known to promote mental health and well-being (Betancourt et al., 2012; Gušić et al., 2018; Marshall et al., 2016; Posselt et al., 2015), and the increased rates of trauma and mental health illnesses among refugee youth (Hameed et al., 2018) combined with their increased barriers to traditional service utilization (Heidi et al., 2014), render volunteerism a viable tool for enhancing their well-being in a creative way.

In this analysis, SDT illuminates concrete measures social workers can advance to motivate refugee youth to engage in volunteer programming. Yet, we also know from the Dominant Status Model that refugee youth may be less likely to volunteer due to an increase in barriers. As such, the Dominant Status Model adds to our understanding of how we may tailor volunteer programming to engage refugee youth, as it facilitates consideration of ways to address the barriers that may push this population away from volunteerism and how these barriers may be proactively resolved.

It is important to note that organizations that have a mission that is not explicitly focused on refugee youth may not feel compelled to incorporate measures that target refugee youth, in particular, into their volunteer programming, regardless of the unique potential of volunteerism to promote well-being in this population. As a result, work to incorporate refugee youth in volunteer programming may need to originate with refugee-serving organizations who then partner with other organizations that possess volunteer programs. An employee at a refugee resettlement agency, for example, may reach out to a homeless shelter and make the case for partnering to engage refugee youth in the shelter's work. The refugee agency may do this by focusing on how the shelter will be better positioned to meet its mission with the resulting increase in the number of volunteers. The two organizations can then work together to devise a plan for how to incorporate refugee youth using recommendations deriving from this analysis. In this way, both the refugee-focused organization and the organization hosting volunteers advance their respective missions in a mutually beneficial partnership.

While this analysis is intended to start a conversation around incorporating refugee youth in volunteer programming as a tool to promote well-being, advocating for these measures may be met with numerous obstacles. For example, because ageism is deeply engrained in society (e.g., Clay & Turner, 2021; O'Donoghue & Strobel, 2007), many adults overseeing volunteer programs may be uninterested in measures that promote the autonomy of young people. Even for those adults who are not ideologically opposed to supporting youth autonomy, organizational needs may trump youth needs, and this can leave organizations unwilling or unable to allow youth the opportunity to determine the parameters around their involvement including the roles they hold or when they volunteer. Organizations operating with limited resources may additionally feel that they are unable to tailor their practices to the degree necessary to fully implement programmatic changes that support relatedness and competence. Infusing teambuilding into volunteer roles, for instance, requires additional time and resources such as adequate volunteer

programming staff to develop what this can look like. Similarly, exploring which skills an individual wants to use or develop in a volunteer role takes resources that may not be fully there.

Despite these potential organizational barriers, organizations are not required to implement every recommendation derived from the present analysis. Instead, they may use the examples provided here as a launching point for developing their volunteer programming incrementally in ways that move the needle on inclusive volunteer engagement of refugee youth. Future studies may build upon this analysis by empirically examining the degree to which *autonomy*, *relatedness*, and *competence* influence volunteer recruitment and retention in this population. Future studies, additionally, may empirically examine the most common barriers to volunteering that refugee youth report and how these barriers may best be addressed.

Conclusion

The present analysis argued for the incorporation of refugee youth in volunteer programs as a tool to promote common issues faced in their well-being and barriers to their service use. In doing so, it used Self-Determination Theory to understand how volunteer programs can be tailored to appeal to refugee youths' motivations to volunteer. It then used the Dominant Status Model to draw attention to the need to proactively address possible barriers to their engagement in volunteer programs. These two theoretical frameworks, when combined, pave the way to modify organizational practices to effectively engage refugee youth as volunteers.

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Effects of COVID-19 on Student Academic Success at a Hispanic-Serving Institution

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted some university students educationally, psychologically, and financially. The transition of educational systems to online formats exposed technology access challenges, heightened mental healthcare access barriers, and resulted in food and housing insecurities. Further research showed that Hispanic students experienced greater anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic. This study aimed to examine pandemic effects on undergraduate and graduate university students, specifically (a) exposure to multiple COVID-19 stressors, (b) mental health effects, (c) student academic achievement, and (d) contributions of sociodemographic factors. A convenience sample of students (N = 309) was drawn in the summer of 2020 from a private Catholic Hispanic-Serving university utilizing an online survey. The survey asked questions about student experiences during the spring 2020 semester. Results demonstrated increased stress, depression, and anxiety levels. A bivariate chi-square analysis indicated single, first-generation Hispanic students ages 17 – 25 years old were more likely to experience an employment status change, have a family member or close friend die from COVID-19, and experience more COVID-19 stressors than all other participants. These findings are significant in realizing Hispanic students experienced multiple COVID-19 and mental health stressors, hindering their academic success. These challenges can obstruct their pathway to education and higher socioeconomic gains. It is essential for social work practitioners and educators to re-envision the role they play in ensuring the academic success of this population.

Keywords: COVID-19, education, Hispanic college students

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Effects of COVID-19 on Student Academic Success at a Hispanic-Serving Institution

The COVID-19 pandemic led to sweeping unprecedented changes that reverberated throughout higher education and that are anticipated to have lasting impacts on students, educators, and universities. Student lives were impacted to varying degrees psychologically, financially, and educationally (Bowie-Viverette et al., 2020). Many universities quickly adapted by transitioning courses abruptly to fully online learning. This transition led to some students' withdrawal as attrition rates for online students tend to be higher than for in-class face-to-face students, and oftentimes online students do not return to the academic environment once they have withdrawn (Jaggars et al., 2010). Student course requirements largely remained unchanged although some universities offered some students a choice of pass or fail as a course outcome versus a letter grade. Previous studies focused on natural disasters, such as Hurricane Katrina, and epidemics, such as the Zika virus, have tended to examine students' knowledge, risk perceptions, and stigma (Clements, 2020; Koralek et al., 2015; Koralek et al., 2016; Koskan et al., 2012), and some included a focus on academic impacts (Bowie-Viverette et al., 2020). A report from the Health Minds Network (2020) examined a random sample of approximately 19,000 students from across the country and found that financial stress was compounded for students. The study noted that one-third of the students changed their living situations and 60% could not access mental healthcare. Depression increased in prevalence in Spring 2020 compared to Fall 2019; however, anxiety remained the same, at 31%, and binge drinking and illicit drug use reduced from 38% to 24% of students surveyed (The Healthy Minds Network, 2020).

Since a crisis of this degree has not ensued since the early 1900s, the authors of this study questioned the effects of this phenomenon on university students' academic success. The authors showed that single, first-generation Hispanic students were more likely to have employment changes, to have a family member or friend die of COVID-19, and to experience more COVID-19 stressors than other racial-ethnic groups during the Spring 2020 semester, which is the semester that the United States President announced national guidelines in response to community spread of the virus. The authors contributed to the limited knowledge of the effects on marginalized students who are at greatest risk for degree incompletion and helped to inform policy and social work practice with a goal of mitigating these effects on students. The following research questions guided this study: 1) what personal, social, and university-related factors posed challenges for university students during the active semester in which the COVID-19 pandemic transpired? and 2) what was the impact of these challenges on academic success by the end of the active semester in which the COVID-19 pandemic transpired?

The purpose of this study was to explain how students' social, personal, and university factors impacted their academic success during the COVID-19 pandemic through the resiliency theory lens. Student social factors (Greenway, 2006; Wang & Eccles, 2013) included students' personal diagnosis with COVID-19, having a family member or close friend diagnosed with COVID-19, having a family member or close friend die from COVID-19, having adequate social support, having adequate housing, and having endorsed increased levels of stress, and depression and/or anxiety. Personal factors included: a change in caregiving duties, a change in employment status, adequate financial support, access to the internet, and having access to a computer or device (Patrick et al., 2007). University factors included class delivery method (defined as in-person face-to-face, fully online, or hybrid), a reliance on classmates for assistance

with course assignments and professor instructions before and during the pandemic, as well as if professors were perceived as organized, engaged, and provided a safe, stimulating environment before and during the pandemic (Houtveen, et al., 2014; Reynolds et al., 2011). These collective factors were hypothesized to affect academic success in Hispanic university students more than students of other ethnicities.

Literature Review

Pandemics are widespread infectious diseases that can cover a broad geographic area and can cause crisis-related disruption with a negative impact on financial, economic, health, diplomatic and social sectors. Smolinsky et al. (2003) noted pandemic trends likely will continue to intensify as evidence suggests pandemics have increased because of increased global travel and integration, urbanization, changes in land use, and greater exploitation of the natural environment. COVID-19 raced across the globe causing havoc among humanity. The COVID-19 pandemic also affected educational systems worldwide with near-total closures of schools, universities, and colleges, leading to a need to quickly pivot coursework to online formats. McGowan (2020) notes that the impact on students in higher education included digital learning, internet services, food insecurity, homelessness, housing, access to childcare and health care, as well as a mental health crisis. For many, the COVID-19 pandemic brought extreme challenges; however, additional stressors were faced by members of marginalized racial or ethnic minority groups including stress related to trauma (Lund, 2020). Zhou et al. (2020) confirmed that Hispanic populations experienced greater anxiety during the COVID-19 pandemic. Previous research indicates that joint factors such as personal, social, and university-related factors contribute to student academic success. Other researchers found academic support from peers, such as providing clarity on assignment instructions and teacher directions, is strongly associated with GPA (Dennis et al., 2005; Patrick et al., 2007; Wang & Eccles, 2013).

Impact on Personal and Social Aspects

Many Hispanic families face economic and societal disparities. According to the American Psychological Association (2020), individuals from many marginalized racial and ethnic communities experience poverty, economic hardships, and low socioeconomic status. The U.S. poverty rate for Hispanics is 19.4% compared to 9.6% for non-Hispanic whites (Fontenot et al., 2018). Inequities of Hispanic families are historically deep-rooted, affecting health, quality of life, and risks (Williams & Cooper, 2019). These disparities can often impact responsibilities. Blankstein et al. (2020) noted in their findings that roughly one in three students reported concern regarding food or housing security. This study also indicated 50% of the students struggled with balancing family, household, and school responsibilities as well as time management. While some research on the impacts for university faculty, staff, and students is still forthcoming, much more is still needed to understand the overall impact on students and their academic success during the initial closure of universities through the end of the active semester in which the pandemic transpired. Previous research had addressed temporary shutdowns for particular geographic areas and proactive measures taken for future devastation; however, COVID-19 cases increased worldwide and U.S. campuses closed with students concerned about safe housing, food, and reports of elevated levels of stress, anxiety, and depression (Aristovnik et al., 2020).

Impact on University-Related Aspects

The United States has not experienced a pandemic in over 100 years requiring the level of quarantine and closure of higher education institutions seen in the recent COVID-19 pandemic. What is largely unknown is to what degree personal, social, and university-related factors contribute to student academic success during a traumatic global event such as a pandemic. When reviewing research studies on college campuses, including crises such as school shootings, 9/11, natural disasters such as hurricanes, tornadoes, flash floods, and wildfires, or other epidemics such as Swine Flu or H1N1, Zika virus, and the Ebola outbreak, most primarily examine college students' knowledge and perception of risk, and stigma (Clements, 2020; Koskan et al., 2012; Koralek et al., 2015; Koralek et al., 2016; Schlenker et al., 2013).

While students and faculty slowly adjusted to the fall 2020 semester, the challenges faced at the onset of the pandemic were more difficult because of their unexpected nature. Blankstein et al. (2020)'s spring study noted students faced the most difficulty with group projects/presentations and research laboratory exercises/reports; further, online testing, including online quizzes or tests, were of significant difficulty. Their study also determined that students had difficulty with short written responses or reactions to assigned readings within an online forum or discussion board, noting an 80% difficulty rate. Aucejo et al. (2020) also noted the impact of COVID-19 on student experiences, indicating in their findings that 13% of students delayed graduation, 11% withdrew from classes, and 12% of students intended to change majors. Finally, satisfaction with teaching quality (i.e., organization, effective learning strategies, and safe and stimulating environments (Muijs & Reynolds, 2011) has a high impact on student success, with previous research (Houtveen et al., 2014) indicating an approximate 15-25% difference in student achievement attributed to teaching quality.

The COVID-19 pandemic presented unique challenges to students in all disciplines across academia and at all levels of higher education. The campus closed on March 12, 2020 with an extended spring break to allow time for faculty to flip courses to online formats. In addition, like many colleges and universities, computer labs closed, library services closed and students returned to parental homes or made other housing arrangements in a condensed manner. When the university moved to the first phase on June 9, 2020, they offered curbside services for the library and computer labs, and made adjustments for social distancing. As adjustments mirror many universities across the country, all courses moved online after the Thanksgiving holiday in 2020 to reduce the spread of COVID-19 that often accompanies the surge in travel during the Thanksgiving holiday (Bowie-Viverette, 2020).

Theoretical Perspectives of the Impact of COVID-19 on Higher Education

Online learning is a standard method of modern social work education. Many universities have contingency plans for natural disasters, crisis events, and pandemics, with many universities reporting online course substitution as a component of the plan. During the H1N1 pandemic, Allen and Seaman (2010) reported 72 percent of all public institutions with contingency plans indicated online course substitution as a component of the plan. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, 19.4% of Americans live in rural areas (Ratcliffe et al., 2016). One of the most telling examples of impeding factors on distance education is the attrition rates of online classes versus their face-to-face counterparts. A review of 36 studies concluded students are more likely to withdraw from online classes when compared to traditional classes. Those same students were found to be less likely to return to college after withdrawing from

online courses (Jaggars et al., 2010). To examine a student's potential success in an online environment, the research directs us to theories on online learning.

Theoretical Perspectives on Online Learning

Bell (2007) examined the effects of self-regulated learning and epistemological beliefs on individual learner levels of academic achievement, and briefly states that self-regulated learning (SRL) is an element of social cognitive learning theory. He posits that learner behaviors and motivations as well as aspects of the learning environment affect learner achievement. He further notes self-regulated learning is an element of social cognitive learning theory and has a positive influence on academic success. Additionally, students reported that the initial expectation that online courses required less work proved unrealistic (Bell, 2007). A critique of self-regulated theory relies on motivation, and unfortunately, not all students are self-regulated learners.

Resiliency Theory

Modern psychology and social science define resilience as "the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress" (American Psychological Association, 2012, paragraph 4). A pandemic can be a challenging time with elevated levels of stress, loss of employment, problems with health care, and challenges with extreme emotional turbulence. Ivanov (2020) notes resilience has been put to the test worldwide due to an unprecedented series of shocks caused by COVID-19. To get through the COVID-19 pandemic, Rosenberg (2020) encouraged individuals to be deliberate about navigating the middle of the resilience process, which she describes as "the part between getting through and looking back" (p. 817). To gain insight into how students develop a sense of resiliency, this study will investigate important concepts underpinning the impacts of demographics, well-being, and education amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

To the best of our knowledge, at the time of this study, there were no studies that focused solely on the social, personal, and university factors affecting student academic achievement and mental health within Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) in the context of the COVID-19 global pandemic. This study aims to add to the knowledge base of the effects this pandemic has had on HSIs and to examine (a) exposure to COVID-19 stressors, (b) mental health effects, (c) student academic achievement, and (d) sociodemographic factors contributing to each of these factors.

Methods

The present study was conducted at a small, private Catholic HSI located in the mid-southern region of the United States and was approved by the Institutional Review Board. The overall student body includes predominantly Hispanic students (66%), with White (13%) and African American (11%) students being the next largest student population (Our Lady of the Lake University, 2020). With the quick onset of the pandemic, and to better understand its effects on Hispanic students, a convenience sample was drawn from this institution.

Procedures

309 surveys were collected from participants in the summer of 2020 across two months. Qualtrics was used to construct the survey. The Qualtrics survey link, along with information about the survey's purpose, was sent in three email blasts by the Office of Academic Affairs to students registered at the university during the spring 2020 semester. All students who began the survey completed the survey and no data were missing at random. The first page of the survey allowed students to consent to the study or opt-out. Once students submitted their consent, they began the survey. Once the survey was started, students had the flexibility of closing out of the survey at any point without any consequences. The survey was written in English, included 48 items, and covered five specific areas; (a) demographics, (b) social factors, (c) personal factors, (d) university-related factors, and (e) mental health factors associated with challenges students potentially faced due to the pandemic.

Participants

The primary sample for this study included undergraduate and graduate students who had been enrolled in courses at a mid-southern, private Catholic university during the spring 2020 semester in which the COVID-19 pandemic transpired ($N = 309$). Most participants ranged in age from 17 to 25 years ($n = 156$), with the second largest group of participants reporting ages from 26 to 40 years ($n = 89$). There were more undergraduate students ($n = 234$) than graduate students ($n = 75$), and the majority of students identified as first-generation students ($n = 123$). Of particular interest in this study were the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Hispanic students in relation to other races. Published data since the beginning of the pandemic demonstrates that Hispanic populations and other people of color are more likely to have higher unemployment rates (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2020; McCormack, 2020), and be disproportionately affected by coronavirus (Despres et al., 2020) than White populations.

In addition, considering the federal government's requirement for a 2-year or 4-year degree accredited, not-for-profit institution of higher education to have at least 25% of their enrolled undergraduate students be of Hispanic descent and more than 50% identified as low-income individuals (Contreras et al., 2008) to be designated as an HSI, our sample provides a good representation of the Hispanic population and the effects experienced during the pandemic. The racial and ethnic breakdown of our sample closely matches the university's population data.

Measures

The 48 items on the survey administered were developed to measure five specific areas; (a) demographics, (b) social factors, (c) personal factors, (d) university-related factors, and (e) mental health factors associated with challenges students potentially faced due to the pandemic.

Demographic Characteristics

For the demographic variable to define gender, five categories were used: male, female, transgendered male, transgendered female, other, and prefer not to say. The ages of participants were presented in three groups: 17 to 25 years, 26 to 40 years, and 40 or more years. There were eight exclusive categories used to define ethnicity/race: Hispanic, non-Hispanic White, African American, Asian, Native American,

Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Other (including multiple races) and prefer not to say. Marital status was collected in five defined categories, including single – never married, married, widowed, divorced, and prefer not to say. Academic discipline was an open-ended question, allowing students to type in their specific academic major. Finally, academic generation was defined as first-generation college students or not first-generation college students. First-generation college student was defined as having parents/guardians who had not completed a bachelor's degree.

Social Factors

Eight social factors were assessed based on previous research documenting specific social factors that contribute to student academic achievement (Greenway, 2006; Wang & Eccles, 2013). The social factors assessed included: personally having had COVID-19, having a family member or close friend diagnosed COVID-19, having a family member or close friend die from COVID-19, having adequate social support after COVID-19 transpired, having adequate housing after COVID-19 transpired, and having increased levels of stress, depression, and/or anxiety. All participants were asked to answer "yes" or "no" to each of these items. For example, one item asked the participants if they had personally had COVID-19.

Personal Factors

There were five personal factors assessed in this study that are related to student academic success, based on previous research (Patrick et al., 2007). These five personal factors included: a change in caregiving duties, a change in employment status, adequate financial support after COVID-19 transpired, having access to the internet, and having access to a computer. Participants were asked to respond "yes" or "no" to each of these items. For example, one item asked the participant if they had a change in caregiving duties after the onset of COVID-19.

University Related Factors

The university-related factors assessed in this study included class delivery method before COVID-19, reliance on classmates for help with course assignments and professor instructions before and after COVID-19 transpired, as well as organized and engaging professors in safe, stimulating environments before and after COVID-19 transpired. The selection of the university-related factors was based on research (Houtveen, et al., 2014; Muijs & Reynolds, 2011) that documented these factors as having a high impact on student academic success. Participants were asked to respond "yes" or "no" to each of these items. For example, one item asked participants to indicate if they relied on their classmates for help with course assignments before COVID-19 and then again after COVID-19.

COVID-19 Stressors

Previous research has documented trauma stressors related to COVID-19 for Hispanic populations (Altiraifi & Rapfogel, 2020). This study included 13 trauma stressors labeled COVID-19 stressors to assess their impacts on students. The 13 stressors assessed were: employment status change, class delivery method changes (face-to-face and hybrid to remote), ability to rely on classmates for help during remote learning, instructor's organization and engagement level in a remote learning environment, adequate housing, adequate social support, adequate finances, COVID-19 diagnosis, a close friend/family member's COVID-19 diagnosis, a close friend/family member's death due to COVID-19, increased

stress, increased depression, and increased anxiety. Participants were presented with a list of 13 trauma stressors and were asked to select all the stressors they had experienced because of COVID-19. These COVID-19 stressors were recoded to 0 if not selected and 1 if selected. Experiences with COVID-19-induced stressors were evaluated based on frequency distributions.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study included three assessments: (1) demographics, (2) bivariate chi-square analyses, and (3) multivariable logistic regression. The analysis of the demographic data was conducted to identify who the participants were and how the pandemic had affected each subpopulation overall. The bivariate chi-square analysis examined the association between the demographic characteristics and social, personal, and university factors related to academic success. Finally, the multivariable logistic regression was utilized to estimate odds ratios and 95% confidence intervals for the 13 COVID-19 stressors.

Results

The sample for this study included mostly female (82%) participants ages 17 - 25 (42%) and of Hispanic ethnicity (67%). The sample was predominantly single (71%), first-generation students (63%), and experienced six or more (53%) of the 13 COVID-19 stressors listed on the survey. Table 1 shows the overall demographic characteristics of the sample, employment status change, COVID-19 illness, and COVID-19 deaths across the demographic groups. There is a significant difference in age groups and employment status change after COVID-19 transpired. Participants 17 to 25 years were more likely to experience an employment status change (64%) than any other age group. Similarly, Hispanic participants were more likely to experience employment status change (52.2%) than White (17.1%) or Black/African American (33.3%) participants, while all other races combined (Pacific Islander, Asian, Native American, Multiple Races) were the most likely to experience employment status change (60%).

Table 1

Prevalence of Employment Status Changes and COVID-19 Illnesses/Deaths Across Demographic Sample Characteristics

	Total (N = 309)		Employment Status Change (n = 209)		COVID-19 Illness (n = 281)		COVID-19 Deaths (n = 54)	
Characteristic	n	%	%	*p*	%	*p*	%	*p*
Total		100.0	46.4		9.1		17.5	
Gender				.768		.634		.272
Male	54	18.2	43.3		7.4		13.0	
Female	243	81.8	46.2		9.5		19.3	
Ages (years)				.001		.880		.864
17 – 25	152	42.4	64.0		7.9		19.7	
26 – 40	87	35.5	40.3		10.3		16.1	
40+	57	22.1	20.5		10.5		17.5	

Ethnicity/Race				.001		.206		.017
Hispanic	136	67.0	52.2		11.2		21.8	
Non- Hispanic White	35	17.2	17.1		3.8		5.7	
Black/African American	12	5.9	33.3		0.0		9.3	
Other (incl multiple races)	20	9.9	60.0		10.0		5.6	
Marital Status				.002		.881		.128
Single (incl divorced/ widowed)	143	70.8	52.4		9.0		20.3	
Married	59	29.2	28.8		9.6		12.3	
Academic Level				.065		.680		.844
Undergrad	234	75.7	64.0		10.4		20.1	
Graduate	75	24.3	60.8		6.5		16.5	
Academic Discipline				.126		.846		.137
Social Work	40	19.7	35.0		9.8		25.5	
Other Disciplines	163	80.3	48.5		8.9		16.7	
Academic Generation				.898		.131		.023
First Generation	123	63.4	45.5		12.5		25.0	
Not First Generation	71	36.6	46.6		6.5		13.0	
COVID Stressors				.045				.002
Experience 5 or less stressors	34	45.9	29.4		0.0	.010	15.8	
Experience 6 or more stressors	40	54.1	52.5		17.5		40.0	

Finally, single participants, including those who were divorced or widowed, were more likely to have experienced an employment status change (52.4%) than married participants. Among all racial/ethnic group participants, Hispanic participants (21.8%) and first-generation students (25%) (those whose parents or guardians have never received a bachelor's degree) were more likely to have experienced a family member or close friend who died from the COVID-19 virus. Lastly, those reporting five or fewer COVID-19 stressors were less likely to experience an employment status change (29.4%) than those participants who reported experiencing six or more COVID-19 stressors (52.5%). Table 2 indicates the distribution of all 13 COVID-19 Stressors measured.

Table 2

Frequency Distribution of COVID-19 Stressors

COVID-19 Stressors	Yes %	No%
Personal Factors		
Employment Status Change	73.0	27.0
Adequate Housing	37.0	63.0
Adequate Social Support	61.8	38.2
Adequate Finances	60.0	40.0
Social Factors		
COVID-19 (self)	9.1	90.9
COVID-19 (family/friends)	51.0	49.0
COVID-19 Deaths (family/friends)	18.0	82.0
Academic Success Factors		
Class Delivery Method Change (f2f vs. Remote)	47.0	53.0
Reliance on Classmates' Help	51.3	48.7
Engaged Instructor	80.3	19.7
Increased Stress	67.0	33.0
Increased Depression	45.0	55.0
Increased Anxiety	59.0	41.0

Note: $N = 277$

Table 3 demonstrates the prevalence of increased levels of stress, depression, and anxiety among Hispanic students as compared to students from all other racial groups combined. Hispanic students were more likely to report increased levels of stress, depression, and anxiety than all other racial groups. Approximately 44% of Hispanic students reported increased levels of stress compared to students from all other racial groups (23%). Hispanic students also reported increased levels of depression (29%) and anxiety (38%) more so than other racial groups (16% and 20%, respectively). Furthermore, there were statistically significant differences between Hispanic students and students from all other races combined in experiences with COVID-19. For example, Hispanic students were more likely to have had a diagnosis of COVID-19 (X^2 (1, n = 309) = 3.957, $p < .05$); to have had a close friend or family member who had a diagnosis of COVID-19 (X^2 (1, n = 309) = 6.734, $p < .01$); and to have had a close friend or family member who had died from COVID-19 (X^2 (1, n = 309) = 6.119, $p < .01$) than students from all other racial groups combined.

Table 3

Prevalence of Increased Stress, Depression and Anxiety

Variable	Hispanic %	All Other Races %
Stress	43.7	23.3
Depression	29.1	15.5
Anxiety	38.2	20.4

Note: N = 297

After controlling for the demographic characteristics of gender, age, and race/ethnicity, multivariable logistic regression was completed to examine the relationship between the 13 COVID-19 stressors and students' academic success at the end of the first semester in which the pandemic first transpired. Table 4 shows the results of the full model in which student academic success was negatively affected by an employment status change (X^2 (1, n = 309) = -1.123, $p < .05$) and positively affected by the instructor's organization and engagement (X^2 (1, n = 309) = 2.036, $p < .01$). These appear to be the only statistically significant factors affecting student academic success during this time.

Table 4

Multivariable Logistic Regression with COVID-19 Stressors and Academic Success

Source	β	$SE\ \beta$	*Wald* χ^2	p	*OR*
Employment Status Change	-1.123	.602	3.477	.042	3.025
Class Delivery after COVID	.444	.351	1.603	.205	1.559
Rely on Classmates	.018	.615	.001	.977	1.018
Instructor Organized/Engaged	2.036	.735	7.664	.006	7.658
Diagnosed with COVID	-.689	.878	.615	.433	0.502
Friend/Family with COVID	-.704	.687	1.051	.305	0.494
Friend/Family Died from COVID	.836	.769	1.182	.277	2.306

Adequate Housing after COVID	-1.230	.696	3.123	.077	0.292
Adequate Social Support after COVID	.039	.674	.003	.953	1.040
Adequate Finances after COVID	-.180	.669	.072	.788	0.835
Increased Stress	1.316	1.335	.972	.324	3.730
Increased Depression	-.113	.658	.030	.863	0.893
Increased Anxiety	-1.979	1.290	2.352	.125	0.138

Discussion

This study aimed to contribute to the knowledge base on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on Hispanic university students as minorities tended to be disproportionately affected by the pandemic. The authors sampled private Catholic university students in the Mid-South, which to the authors' knowledge, was the first to sample Hispanic private Catholic university students' experiences using these factors. The first finding included that first-generation students experienced pandemic effects more often than non-first-generation students. Hispanic students were disproportionally affected by the pandemic compared to other groups, which aligned with our hypothesis and research. Although students aged 17 to 25, in general, were more likely to experience an employment change, Hispanic students were more likely to undergo this change as noted in well-documented differences in ethnic disparities in employment in minority groups. These findings were consistent with knowledge of minorities confronting experiences of economic hardships and low socioeconomic status (APA, 2020). Ivanov (2020) noted resiliency would be put to the test during this time. These students demonstrated resilience. Despite their employment status change and the likelihood of having a family member or friend die from COVID-19, they returned to school that semester and are thought to have life-purpose insights contributing to their levels of engagement in their academics (Greenway, 2006). This resiliency is also apparent as Hispanic students were at risk to discontinue their higher education with the abrupt transition to fully online learning due to social distancing requirements, which could have heightened the risks to their academic pursuits. Students' motivations and learning behaviors could explain their resiliency towards success to continue in their educational efforts.

Evident is the prevalence of self-reported COVID-19-related personal and social stressors, and well-documented evidence of changes in mood-related symptoms associated with national crises, such as natural disasters and times of widespread distress (Balaban, 2006; Bromet, 2014; Kar & Bastia, 2006; Karatzias et al., 2020; Maguen et al., 2012; North & Pfefferbaum, 2013; Wang et al., 2020a; Wang et al., 2020b). College students, specifically, were found to have devastating effects on their psychological well-

being during previous crises (Rudenstein et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2020a; Wang et al., 2020b). Students with five or fewer COVID-19-related stressors were less likely to experience an employment change, COVID-19 illness, or having a family member or friend die from COVID-19 than those who endorsed six or more COVID-19-related stressors. Zhou (2020) found that Hispanic students tended to experience greater levels of anxiety during the pandemic. This is consistent with our findings demonstrating that Hispanic students endorsed increased stress, anxiety, and depression levels. An interesting note is that a great proportion of these students acknowledged access to and use of mental healthcare services despite an employment status change, suggesting their employment status may not have been affiliated with their mental healthcare access. Hispanic individuals tend not to access traditional mental healthcare services compared to the majority ethnic group (Alegria et al., 2008), and in 2018, approximately 9% of Hispanics received mental healthcare services (SAMSHA, 2019). This finding is interesting and contradictory to repeated findings examining the cultural difference in Hispanic beliefs in mental healthcare treatment as they tend to underutilize mental healthcare (Cabassa et al., 2006), have negative beliefs about this treatment (Cooper et al., 2003), and experience stigma (Gary, 2005; Nadeem et al., 2007; DeFreitas et al., 2018). They pervasively lacked health insurance, an issue for many Latinos, as 49% of Hispanics were uninsured in 2017, which is lower compared to approximately 75% of other groups (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2019; Artiga et al., 2020), with university students being the most uninsured of groups (Terriquez & Joseph, 2016).

Before the government announced the nationwide observance of social distancing which resulted in shutdowns of non-essential services, many of these students were online students. How students processed, perceived, and interpreted these experiences helped to lend an explanation for how this affected their academic success, according to resilience theory, and aligned with this study's results showing students engaged in distance communication interactions. Despite the lack of traditional connection in the flipped classroom and known constraints in communication efforts, such as delayed responses to email, most participants in this study relied on their classmates for help. Also, an overwhelming amount indicated their professors were well organized, which suggested students' experiences were associated with their professors' instructional responses in the online classroom context (Meyer & Turner, 2002). Konak et al. (2018) found that over half of students relied on classmates for help, which is different from findings by a follow-up study noting online programs' challenges in fostering teamwork. This difference suggests students connected with their peers, exhibiting the self-regulation necessary to have academic success (Bell, 2007). Although Abell and Galinsky (2002) explained the difficulty in interpersonal interactions in online learning environments, this difficulty is circumvented with students reaching out to promote virtual interaction and receiving virtual responses of help needed to accomplish their tasks.

Implications

Our findings provide a unique understanding of these students' experiences and inform implications. Universities, faculty, and social workers, as faculty and practitioners, can reduce short-term COVID-related health and academic impacts. A human rights approach to addressing COVID-19's disproportionate effects on students involves framing public policies to address human dignity and welfare and note systemic inequities. Considering the Grand Challenges for Social Work (2022), social workers are called to action to advocate for policies that are aligned with a right to healthcare. Student changes were associated with food insecurity, lack of access to healthcare, and some low-income adults

living in Southern states, especially Blacks or Latinos, may be vulnerable to decreased access to healthcare due to unemployment and financial barriers (Figueroa et al., 2022; Singleton et al., 2022). This may include universal health coverage, paid leave, and the strengthening of mental healthcare service access for students (Vasquez, 2020). Therefore, social workers' attention to food assistance, community resources, and informing students about these resources may be beneficial. Additionally, social work practitioners' completion of a detailed assessment of students' academic experiences would be useful to identify areas of co-occurring concern. Identified students should be referred to university campus activities and supports as well as other resources to increase their retention.

Universities are suggested to shore up culturally competent mental health services, including continuing to offer telehealth psychological services for increased student access and retention, offering workshops on stress management, substance use, wellness, and self-care, and offering students expanded options for advising and support (Benjet, 2020; Ibarra-Mejia et al., 2022). Additionally, universities may utilize orientation sessions to address first-generation students' social support by providing sessions specific to first-generation students' needs and aimed at emphasizing social support by encouraging students to join campus activities and engage in developing social community among university peers (Suwinyattichaiporn & Johnson, 2022).

Concerning faculty, Hebert et al. (2022) found that 73% of faculty in their study had some online pedagogy training before transitioning to pandemic-related online teaching and many sought mentoring and formal training, which may contribute to enhanced organization and student engagement. Universities should also provide opportunities to faculty for mental health first aid training to aid faculty in identifying, intervening as appropriate, and referring students who can benefit from mental healthcare (National Council for Mental Well Being, 2018). In addition, universities could promote employee assistance programming access and workshops that may be beneficial for faculty self-care and coping with pandemic-related stressors (Kirk-Jenkins & Hughey, 2021; Velez-Cruz & Holstun, 2022), which may affect student engagement. Also, professors from all disciplines are recommended to integrate an understanding of racial-ethnic differences into their style of online teaching, and to include individual connections to students who have poor engagement and connect them to advisors. Although this is a commonplace task of some social work or human service professors, heightened sensitivity and online engagement from all university professors, such as by posting video check-ins in the online course, is needed during this time.

Limitations and Future Research

There are several limitations to consider**.** First, this study used cross-sectional data. Future research should focus on the longitudinal impacts of marginalized university students, address technology access and barriers, and location differences. Second, the results are not generalizable as data were collected from a convenience sample, and third, the authors relied on student self-report of mood and stress-related changes as opposed to the use of reliable and valid tools, which is less reliable. Moreover, future studies are suggested to include mixed methods and qualitative exploration of these experiences to further understand the impacts of this phenomenon as it relates to their day-to-day experiences, how this has impacted their families, and to learn about their resiliency during the pandemic. Despite the limitation of reliability and validity in examining students' psychological experiences in this study, future studies should include the use of depression, anxiety, and stress scales to inform evidence-based behavioral

health practice efforts. Students' substance use experiences were not examined in this study; however, future research should consider this factor. Finally, future research should address university telehealth services access and utilization concerning the accessibility of these services.

Conclusion

This data contributed to an understanding of students' personal, social, and university-related experiences during the pandemic. Threats to their academic success were paramount, yet they have exhibited resilience in continuing their educational pursuits despite these losses and unexpected transitions. Hispanic students, especially first-generation students, are at significant risk for the incompletion of their academic journeys. It is the responsibility of those in authority to recognize racial-ethnic differences in experiences during this unprecedented worldwide crisis and advocate for equitable policies to address these areas of need, and for social work practitioners and universities and their faculty to foster an awareness of continuing inequities that are perpetuated to appropriately intervene when engaging these students in the classroom and the practice arena.

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Social Work and *Queer Theory Now*: A Book Review

Review of McCann, H., & Monaghan, W. (2019). *Queer theory now: From foundations to futures*. Red Globe Press.

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Social Work and *Queer Theory Now*: A Book Review

Social work education, research and practice rarely engage with queer theory. In a comprehensive review of the literature, Hillock and Mulé (2017) found a lack of studies and scholarship on queer persons, communities, and philosophies. Queer theory is not often mentioned in conversations about queer-affirmative practice, which advocates for community level interventions and encourages cultural humility toward the cultural aspects of queer people (Hicks & Jeyasingham, 2016). To differentiate between the two, queer theory is a means of using critical reflection to understand how cisheteronormativity disadvantages sexual and gender expansive individuals. Queer-affirmative practice can be utilized by social work practitioners to provide queer individuals with culturally informed care. Queer-affirming practice models do not require the application of theory addressing structural or normative issues regarding sexual and gender expansiveness, and therefore often serve as a band aid in place of larger systemic changes. Promoting such models as the solution for addressing homophobia and transphobia discourages social workers from being advocates for systemic progress.

Regardless of the scarcity of engagement of social work pedagogy and practice with queer theory, key literature has addressed this issue. Todd and Coholic (2015) share that Foucault's theory of sexual diversity is imperative for social work practice that supports queer individuals. However, such frameworks are often foreign to social workers who have been socialized with gender essentialism and fixed classifications of sexuality. Using interdisciplinary comparative analysis between queer theory and anti-oppressive social work theory, MacKinnon (2011) posits that social work philosophy permits heteronormativity to remain unchecked because it focuses on challenging heterosexism, transphobia, and biphobia while reinforcing perspectives about categories of sexuality. Queer theory, on the other hand, offers a lens through which to examine how social work discourses are constructed and mold societal ideologies of sexual expansivity (MacKinnon, 2011).

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Amid strong anti-queer sentiments and movements towards queer erasure, such as Florida's "Don't Say Gay" bill, *Queer Theory Now: From Foundations to Futures* offers a liberatory path forward by outlining queer theory's development and how today's current discourse can be put into practice (Fla. Legis. House Bill 1557: Parental Rights in Education, 2022; McCann & Monaghan, 2019). The authors begin by grappling with definitions of 'queer' and 'queer theory', and then introduce the work of French philosopher, Michel Foucault. Foucault argued that the same identity categorization used to pathologize 'homosexuality' allowed queer activists to connect and organize around gaining equal rights and rejecting systemic cisheterosexism. McCann and Monaghan (2019) go on to explore the contributions of feminist theory, the crisis and activism surrounding the AIDS epidemic, the groundbreaking work of Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick and Judith Butler, the birth of identity politics, the emergence of Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectional theory, and the ideologies of queer emotions and time. Definitions and contextual explanations of vital queer theory terminology are offered throughout the text. Additionally, through text boxes and recommendations for further readings and videos, *Queer Theory Now* provides readers with the terms and relevant theories (such as 'discourse' and 'normativity') needed to gain foundational knowledge of the evolution of queer theory. The design with which they organize the book make complex concepts accessible, inviting lay readers—and particularly well-positioned readers like social workers—into the discourses existing in queer theory today.

McCann and Monaghan (2019) aspire to cultivate in readers a deeper understanding of queer theory's development while also acknowledging counter arguments to some of the theory's foundations. Though Foucault, Sedgwick, and Butler are recognized as fundamental founding queer theorists, the text highlights the ways their work failed to consider trans experience. *Queer Theory Now* asserts the usefulness of queer theory in critically reflecting on the construction of sexual and gender identities, particularly as it relates to the oppression of queer and gender expansive individuals. The authors' approach educates teachers, students, and any persons interested in understanding the history, growth, and relevancy of queer theory today.

Queer Theory Now will serve as an essential text in the field's canon, outlining genealogy and highlighting current discourse relevancy, consequently memorializing where queer theory stands today. In reading this text, social workers will be challenged to recognize and confront the effects of cisheteronormativity. McCann and Monaghan (2019) elucidate how queer theory challenges the limits of liberal homonormative politics, in which movements for equality in traditional, state-backed practices like marriage and childrearing are prioritized to the detriment of equal education, housing, and employment. Although many (particularly white and cis) lesbian, gay, and bisexual people consider marriage equality to be monumental progress, McCann and Monaghan (2019) push readers to grapple with the equality efforts that are neglected when marriage is marketed as the most important queer legislative issue.

Critics of *Queer Theory Now* may argue that despite encouraging readers to adopt queer praxis, the authors ultimately follow traditionally hegemonic (read: non-queer) academic guidelines in the book's construction. With queer theory being irreverent and fighting definition, the authors could have more intentionally queered the format of the book itself. However, despite the authors' use of rote layout, the content is logically sequenced for readers making otherwise densely academic theory far more relatable. Although queer theory and its theoretical foundations can feel ambiguous to newcomers, McCann and Monaghan (2019) argue that its slippery nature better positions it to confront, investigate, and threaten cisheteronormativity by maintaining an open interactive nature.

McCann and Monaghan (2019) tactfully condense the nuanced and ever-fluid field of queer theory, disrupting its exclusionary roots and demonstrating its connection with and divergence from sexual and gender experience. In discussing race and racism, the text problematizes queer theory's traditional attachment to whiteness and white-centric discourses—an effort closely aligned with racial justice movements in social work. The authors trace the original pathologization of homosexuality back to white supremacist colonization, critiquing Foucault's western, white-centric view of sexuality, and highlighting the work of various Black theorists such as Kimberlé Crenshaw, Sharon Patricia Holland, and E. Patrick Johnson. McCann and Monaghan (2019) expose the longstanding silencing of intersecting experiences often invisible within queer spaces and discourses—particularly Black, Brown, disabled, and trans populations. Though generally written for educators, students, and persons hoping to increase their awareness of queer theory and the systemic issues surrounding gender and sexual expansiveness, these learning outcomes are particularly apt for social workers tasked with uprooting pervasive systems of oppression. *Queer Theory Now* offers a comprehensive overview of queer theory and is thus strongly recommended for social workers looking to expand their understanding of queer ideology and experience.

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