

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

ABOUT OUR HONORS PROGRAM

EDITORIAL BOARD

2018/2019 HONORS STUDY TOPIC

RESEARCH AND PROJECTS

TRANSFORMING HEALTH THROUGH MUSIC THERAPY 7

Alpha Epsilon Phi Chapter
Bergen Community College
Paramus, New Jersey

**ASSESSING THE CHALLENGES OF ORGAN DONATION: CREATING AWARENESS
AND CHANGE WITH THE IOWA DONOR NETWORK 12**

Beta Zeta Mu Chapter
Western Iowa Tech Community College
Sioux City, Iowa

**THE ECONOMIES OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS: RECOMMENDING
CHANGES BY LISTENING TO STUDENT VOICES 16**

Alpha Rho Lambda Chapter
Jackson College
Jackson, Michigan

**DYNAMICS OF DISCOVERY: THE IMPACT OF NUDGING STUDENTS TO ENGAGE
IN A COLLEGE COMMUNITY..... 21**

Beta Zeta Nu Chapter
Cañada College
Redwood City, California

**FOSTERING A GREATER SENSE OF COMMUNITY ON CAMPUS BY CREATING
A SAFE, INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT..... 26**

Omicron Psi Chapter
Grayson College
Denison, Texas

**PREPARE. CONNECT. SUCCEED. – TRANSFORMING SOFT SKILLS NECESSARY
FOR THE WORLDS OF WORK 31**

Omicron Zeta Chapter
Somerset Community College
Somerset, Kentucky

**DOES TECHNOLOGY UNITE OR DIVIDE US? TEACHING CYBER SAFETY
AND UNPLUGGING TO FIFTH GRADERS 36**

Alpha Sigma Zeta Chapter
Onondaga Community College
Syracuse, New York

TRANSFORMING NETWORKS OF LIFE: RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT CHANGES IN THE GREAT LAKES 41
Alpha Rho Pi Chapter
Northwestern Michigan College
Traverse City, Michigan

THE POWERS OF CONNECTION: CREATING A COLLEGE WEBSITE TO PROMOTE INCLUSIVITY 46
Alpha Sigma Rho Chapter
Reading Area Community College
Reading, Pennsylvania

TRANSFORMING THE WAY WE DISCUSS DEFORESTATION BY RAISING AWARENESS WITH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS 51
Beta Gamma Zeta Chapter
Ivy Tech Community College
Logansport, Indiana

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN IMMIGRANTS AND CITIZENS 56
Alpha Kappa Alpha Chapter
Normandale Community College
Bloomington, Minnesota

BREAKING FREE: RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT SEX SLAVERY IN EAST TENNESSEE THROUGH AN AWARENESS EVENT 61
Alpha Iota Chi Chapter
Northeast State Community College
Blountville, Tennessee

TRANSFORMING HEALTH AND INCREASING HAPPINESS BY ENCOURAGING OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS 66
Rho Kappa Chapter
Elgin Community College
Elgin, Illinois

RAISING AWARENESS OF THE IMPACT OF POLLUTION ON SEA TURTLES TO TRANSFORM A COMMUNITY IN THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANES FLORENCE AND MICHAEL 71
Beta Alpha Tau Chapter
Community College of Baltimore County, Dundalk Campus
Baltimore, Maryland

PROMOTING AWARENESS TO TRANSFORM SOCIETY’S VIEWS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS 76
Alpha Delta Eta Chapter
Kankakee Community College
Kankakee, Illinois

VOTING HABITS AND THE 2018 U.S. MIDTERM ELECTIONS 81
Beta Eta Xi Chapter
Cloud County Community College, Geary County Campus
Junction City, Kansas

A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

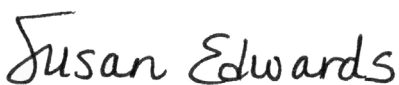
Welcome to the 2019 edition of *Civic Scholar: Phi Theta Kappa Journal of Undergraduate Research*. First published in 2018, *Civic Scholar* emphasizes Phi Theta Kappa's mission to recognize academic achievement of college students and to help them grow as scholars and leaders. We are proud to publish research conducted by community college students who have developed and implemented research-based projects that have had an impact on their communities.

The articles published in this edition of *Civic Scholar* include both substantive research and intentional college and community engagement. These Honors in Action Projects began as explorations of Phi Theta Kappa's interdisciplinary 2018/2019 Honors Study Topic, *Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change*. Each chapter focused on one of the nine themes related to the topic and developed a research question to guide its study of transformations. Students analyzed their research conclusions to determine what action they could take in their communities that would have both short-term and potential for long-term impact.

This year, we received 469 admissions for possible inclusion in this journal. We are pleased to publish 16 of those submissions. They represent 16 community colleges from 15 of the United States. Students' research illustrates diverse lenses through which to investigate Phi Theta Kappa's biennial Honors Study Topic, as well as varied action elements of the projects about which they wrote.

We are proud of all the chapters who took the opportunity to develop, implement, and write about their Honors in Action Projects this year. They are conducting research that matters, and their work has engaged people on their college campuses and in their communities. A special congratulations to the chapters whose work is published in these pages. Your work inspires us and highlights something we have known all along: community college students are central to the production of new knowledge and meaningful scholarship.

Happy reading,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Susan Edwards". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Susan Edwards

Associate Vice President of Honors Programming and Undergraduate Research
Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society

ABOUT OUR HONORS PROGRAM

The Phi Theta Kappa Honors Program is designed to engage students in informed action that fosters student success and helps fulfill our mission to provide college students opportunities to grow as scholars and leaders.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participation in the Phi Theta Kappa Honors Program contributes to personal, academic, and career development and affords students opportunities to have an impact on their campuses and in their communities by addressing challenges related to their Honors Study Topic research. Members who participate in the development and implementation of an Honors in Action Project will be able to:

1. Evaluate multiple, global perspectives of a theme as it relates to Phi Theta Kappa's Honors Study Topic.
2. Demonstrate undergraduate research fundamentals by identifying sources, appraising their credibility, and formulating conclusions based on evidence.
3. Demonstrate critical thinking and reflective skills throughout the research process.
4. Design, organize, and implement a plan of action that solves a real-world problem related to the Honors Study Topic.
5. Form and develop teams that collaborate and communicate with college and community partners to enhance the impact of the project.
6. Provide evidence of project impact through the use of quantitative and qualitative assessments.
7. Compile a report using clear, correct, and effective language.

Achievement of these learning outcomes builds the analytic and collaborative problem-solving and leadership skills necessary and valued in advanced academic pursuits, work places, and communities.

EDITORIAL BOARD

The *Civic Scholar* Editorial Board is comprised of members of Phi Theta Kappa's Honors Program Council and Student Engagement Team.

The Honors Program Council is responsible for making recommendations to Phi Theta Kappa Headquarters staff about the new Honors Study Topic and Honors in Action Program; assisting with the compilation and editing of the biennial Honors Program Guide; and serving on the Editorial Board of *Civic Scholar*. Made up of Phi Theta Kappa chapter advisors, Headquarters staff, and consultants, Honors Program Council members are selected for their broad knowledge of the Honors Study Topic and Phi Theta Kappa's integrated approach to the Hallmarks of Scholarship, Leadership, Service, and Fellowship, as well as their balance in academic disciplines.

The Honors Study Topic on which the projects selected for inclusion in this edition of *Civic Scholar* are based was the 2018/2019 topic, *Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change*.

DR. ROSIE BANKS

Humanities Representative

Harold Washington College
Chicago, Illinois

LARA ROEMER

Service Learning Representative

Carl Sandburg College
Galesburg, Illinois

DR. BLAKE ELLIS

Senior Associate Vice President of Student Engagement

Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society
Houston, Texas

DR. TERRI RUCKEL

Humanities Representative

Pearl River Community College, Forrest County Campus
Hattiesburg, Mississippi

STEVE FRITTS

Leadership Development Representative

Ozarks Technical Community College
Springfield, Missouri

JENNIFER STANFORD

Associate Vice President of Program Implementation

Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society
Keller, Texas

DR. PATTY HALL

Technical/Workforce Representative

Cañada College
Redwood City, California

DR. MITCHEL STIMERS

STEM Representative

Cloud County Community College, Geary County Campus
Junction City, Kansas

RAHUL KANE

STEM Representative

Century College
White Bear Lake, Minnesota

DR. JOHANNAH WILLIAMS

Associate Vice President of STEM and Workforce Programs

Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society
Jackson, Mississippi

CASSANDRA POWELL

Social Sciences/Communications Representative

Richard J. Daley College
Chicago, Illinois

2018-2019 HONORS STUDY TOPIC

TRANSFORMATIONS: ACKNOWLEDGING, ASSESSING, AND ACHIEVING CHANGE

THEME 1: Networks of Life

How do relationships among organisms, their environments, and the systems in which they exist transform each other?

THEME 2: Economies of Everything

How are economic systems transforming to meet contemporary needs and future expectations?

THEME 3: Politics of Identity

How do the ways in which people and communities identify themselves and others transform societies?

THEME 4: Dynamics of Discovery

How have changes in research and technology transformed the process of inquiry and discovery?

THEME 5: Channels of Creativity

How does our broadened view of the arts and entertainment transform us and the world around us?

THEME 6: Visions of Justice

How are shifting views of justice transforming global realities, and how are communities responding?

THEME 7: Powers of Connection

How are the ways we connect evolving and transforming the world?

THEME 8: Worlds of Work

How are global trends transforming the work we do, and how do we navigate these changes?

THEME 9: Systems of Belief

How do systems of belief change, and how do they have the power to transform us?

TRANSFORMING HEALTH THROUGH MUSIC THERAPY

ALPHA EPSILON PHI CHAPTER

Bergen Community College

Paramus, New Jersey

THEME 5: CHANNELS OF CREATIVITY

ABSTRACT

Our exploration of the Honors Study Topic, *Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change*, began with a discussion of recent breakthroughs that changed seemingly irreversible health conditions. During our initial research, we watched the documentary “Alive Inside,” which demonstrates music’s ability to combat memory loss in Alzheimer’s patients. The revelation that music has the ability to activate more parts of the brain than any other stimuli launched our study into how health conditions can be transformed by the use of art and music.

OBJECTIVES

Our research objectives were to 1) gain a better understanding of the Honors Study Topic and the “Channels of Creativity” theme by exploring how art and entertainment are used to transform healthcare and 2) divide the chapter into six research teams to collect and annotate at least 30 academic sources of diverse viewpoints to serve as the cornerstone of our project.

Our collaboration objectives were to 1) identify and contact Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR) experts in the scientific community and gain insight into cutting-edge research and practices and 2) collaborate with Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) faculty to develop an undergraduate scientific study.

Our action objectives were to 1) complete the National Institute of Health (NIH) Certification to gain the qualifications necessary to conduct a study using human subjects and 2) obtain a sample size of at least 50 participants to identify statistically significant trends.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

As the chapter discussed the Honors Study Topic, the conversation led us into the world of current innovations in healthcare. Mentioning various medical breakthroughs, we acknowledged the amazing transformations that are happening on a daily basis. Once we began researching these discoveries, we learned about music therapy and its unique ability to stimulate the human brain. As we expanded our analysis, the driving research question became, how can mental health be transformed by the use of art and entertainment?

CONCLUSIONS

Our research demonstrated that music therapy is widely used in Europe and Asia to treat a variety of health conditions. Scientific studies suggest that classical music may be an effective treatment for anxiety. The studies also introduced us to a new phenomenon called Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR). ASMR is a physical response that consists of light and pleasurable tingles, typically felt in the head, that cause a deep and soothing feeling of relaxation. Although all sounds could potentially cause ASMR, common audio triggers include low voices, tapping on different objects, and crinkling paper. Our research indicated that some experts contest the viability of listening to ASMR media by asserting that any potential benefits are caused by

the placebo effect. However, due to the limited number of studies conducted on ASMR, we concluded that there is not sufficient data available to assess its effects.

ACTION

Based on our research conclusions, we conducted a double-blind undergraduate research study to analyze the cognitive effect of ASMR media using electroencephalographic (EEG) brainwave monitoring. We particularly focused on measuring the short-term effects on anxiety of ASMR media in comparison to classical music. We shared our findings by organizing a panel, publishing an article in our school newspaper, and submitting our research to a regional STEM conference. To ensure that the sample for the study was random and met our action objectives, we sent an email to all students at the college inviting them to participate in the study. Within 48 hours, 213 individuals expressed interest in the study, which indicated that anxiety is common at our institution. This overwhelming response posed a major challenge for us because our IRB approval was contingent on a limited number of study subjects. Although our study was delayed by two weeks, the revision process was an educational experience for us and ensured our study met established scientific guidelines.

We used a variety of Google applications to create a detailed schedule for EEG scan appointments. Our communication with study participants included phone calls, emails, and text reminders. Our team rotated shifts from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. every weekday over a two-month period and were able to conduct a total of 86 EEG sessions.

Upon completing the scans, we collaborated with BrainMaster Technologies and qEEG Pro, two companies that specialize in EEG analysis. They helped us upload our data to SARA software, which eliminates artifacts from EEG scans. We also consulted Dr. Jacqueline de Vries, a certified neurotherapist and director of the Crossroads Center of New Jersey. She explained that we should focus on the analysis of Beta and Hi-Beta brainwave frequencies between 19-20 Hz and 20-24 Hz, which represent anxiety levels. Throughout the process, we also met with Dr. Coleen DiLauro weekly to ensure that we remained organized and met our objectives.

We shared our findings with the college community by hosting a panel and writing an article that was published in our college newspaper. Furthermore, our study was accepted by a regional STEM conference, and we presented our research at the conference in April 2019. To assess how art and entertainment are used to change health conditions, our team split into six research groups. We collected and annotated a total of 58 academic sources that served as the cornerstone for our project. We discovered a variety of scientific studies that indicated that music therapy is widely used around the world to treat anxiety in patients, often replacing the use of medication.

Among the first we came across were five peer-reviewed studies that analyzed the effectiveness of music-based treatments for pregnant women suffering from maternal anxiety. They revealed that music therapy caused a significant reduction in their anxiety levels.

Similar results were uncovered by a study from the *Indian Journal of Psychiatry* that tested different types of music on participants' anxiety levels before they entered surgery. However, we also discovered an American study that tested the use of music-therapy on patients, and their results indicated that there is no significant difference between the experimental group that listened to music and the control group that did not. We noted that the studies used different types of music. This difference in methodology led us to consider the importance of music genre and shifted the focus of our research. We discovered that classical music was found to be the most effective genre for reducing anxiety. This was particularly true of Beethoven's "Symphony no.6." Our analysis into effective types of music also led us to discover ASMR, a physical response that is triggered by certain sounds that are referred to as ASMR media.

Unlike classical music, ASMR media is a newly discovered phenomenon. There are currently 10 peer-reviewed publications on the subject, nine of which are based on self-reported data. While

most of these publications agree that listening to ASMR media causes immediate relaxation in participants, one study found that ASMR is not an effective treatment. The researchers claimed that the participants expected ASMR media to produce relaxing results, inadvertently creating those sensations through a placebo effect. As part of our research, we had the unique opportunity to interview Dr. Craig Richard, the author of *Brain Tingles* and founder of the ASMR University. He shared with us that he believes ASMR research could be improved through the additional studies that are not based on self-reported data.

Upon concluding our research, we were uncertain if there is sufficient evidence that change can be achieved through ASMR treatments. We concluded that there is a need for more comprehensive research on ASMR media focusing specifically on brain activity. The only study which used a Functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging (fMRI) to study the effect of ASMR media focused on the areas of the brain that are activated by ASMR but did not explore the actual effects on human behavior. Realizing this need for further research and quality data collection, we recommend a focus on the effects of ASMR on human behavior with a larger a sample size and brainwave monitoring.

IMPACT

Our project is the most comprehensive study conducted on ASMR to date. Our research team collected and annotated 58 diverse academic sources that served as the cornerstone for our project. Our study included 86 participants and utilized EEG brainwave monitoring to analyze the effects of ASMR media and classical music on anxiety. Our research indicated that there is not sufficient data to provide conclusive evidence regarding the effects ASMR has on reducing anxiety. Our study addressed this issue through extensive data collection that incorporated both brainwave monitoring and self-reported responses.

The study is the largest undergraduate research project organized in Bergen Community College's history. The article that was published in the college newspaper reached an audience of over 14,000 students, faculty, and staff. The panel we organized was attended by 62 individuals who included study participants and the general public. We also presented our research to over 200 people at a regional STEM conference. The project helped improve our professional skills. Our team of 24 members completed an electroencephalogram (EEG) training and was certified by the National Institute of Health (NIH) Certification to conduct a study using human subjects.

The project significantly enhanced our understanding of the Honors Study Topic and increased our appreciation for informed action as a lifelong endeavor. A team member stated, "This project did not only teach me how to acknowledge transformations in our world, but also how to effectively assess progress, and use informed action to achieve the desired change. I learned that I have the potential to contribute to the scientific community through academic endeavors, which will serve me for the rest of my life."

We were able to improve our communication skills by collaborating with different departments on campus and national experts in neurology. Dr. Jacqueline de Vries shared that she believes our research has great potential and should be presented to the scientific community, while Dr. Craig Richard asked us to share with him our final results so that they can be posted on his official ASMR website. Furthermore, the STEMatics Grant director stated that "the study exemplifies the mission of our program and supports our objective to promote undergraduate research at community colleges." Our team is currently working on a detailed report of our study to submit to an academic publication. It is clear that our findings will have a long-term impact and will contribute to the scientific community.

RESOURCES

Barratt, E.L. & Davis, N.J. (2015). Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR): A flow-like mental state. *PeerJ*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4380153/>

This study focuses on the tingling sensation that ASMR invokes through analyzing self-reported data. The findings suggest that ASMR can serve as an alternative treatment for anxiety and is more effective than medication. It immediately led us to focus our research on ASMR media.

Cash, D.K., Heisick, L.L., & Papesh, M.H. (2018). Expectancy effects in the Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response. *PeerJ*. Retrieved from <https://peerj.com/articles/5229.pdf>

This study demonstrates that the effects of ASMR media depend on the participants' expectations. It highlights the role of the placebo effect in causing ASMR. The author also notes that there is little empirical work that has investigated the underlying mechanisms of ASMR since most studies are based on self-reported data.

Lochte, B.C., Guillory, S.A., Richard C.A.H., & Kelley, W.M. (2018). An fMRI investigation of the neural correlates underlying the Autonomous Sensory Meridian Response (ASMR). *BiolImpacts*, 1-9. Retrieved from <https://bi.tbzmed.ac.ir/FullHtml/bi-17613>

This is the only ASMR study that does not use self-reported data. Researchers used fMRI to identify where ASMR originates in the brain. However, their sample included only 10 participants, and they did not study the effect of ASMR on any health conditions.

Packiam, V.T., Nottingham, C.U., Cohen, A.J., Eggener, S.E., & Gerber, G.S. (2018). No effect of music on anxiety and pain during transrectal prostate biopsies: A randomized trial. *ScienceDirect*, 34-43. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/29709434>

This study used classic rock radio to test the effectiveness of music therapy on anxiety and pain management. Researchers found no significant difference between the control and experimental group. Their choice of music led us to consider the importance of genre as a critical element.

Padam, A., Sharma, N., Sastri, O.S.K.S., Mahajan, S., Sharma, R., & Sharma, D. (2017). Effect of listening to Vedic chants and Indian classical instrumental music on patients undergoing upper gastrointestinal endoscopy: A randomized control trial. *Indian Journal of Psychiatry*, 59(2), 214-218. Retrieved from <http://www.indianjpsychiatry.org/article.asp?issn=0019-5545;year=2017;volume=59;issue=2;spage=214;epage=218;aulast=Padam>

This study analyzed the effects of two types of music on patients' anxiety levels prior to surgery and compared the results to a control group that did not listen to music. The study demonstrated that music therapy is an effective treatment to reduce anxiety, particularly having an immediate short-term effect, and is commonly used in India to improve mental health.

Richard, C., and Lauw, M. (2018). *Brain Tingles*. Avon: Adams Media.

Brain Tingles provides a comprehensive overview of ASMR, including its triggers and benefits. After reading the book, we conducted a two-hour interview with Dr. Craig Richard and asked him specific questions about cutting edge ASMR experiments and opportunities for further research.

Van Willenswaard, K.C., Lynn, F., McNeill, J., McQueen, K., Dennis, C.-L., Lobel, M., & Alderdice, F. (2017). Music interventions to reduce stress and anxiety in pregnancy: a systematic review and meta-analysis. *BMC Psychiatry, 17*, 1-9. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28750631>

This source provides a systematic review of five different studies that tested music-based interventions to reduce stress and anxiety in pregnant women. It shows that music therapy may be an effective treatment without the use of medication.

ASSESSING THE CHALLENGES OF ORGAN DONATION: CREATING AWARENESS AND CHANGE WITH THE IOWA DONOR NETWORK

BETA ZETA MU CHAPTER

*Western Iowa Tech Community College
Sioux City, Iowa*

THEME 9: SYSTEMS OF BELIEF

ABSTRACT

There is a negative disparity between supply and demand of organs due to the lack of understanding and the global “Systems of Belief” regarding organ donation. Our team investigated how research and medical advancements are transforming these perceptions. The research analysis revealed that despite these advancements, there are many barriers that donor advocacy organizations face. These barriers include, but are not limited to, ethical and emotional challenges among healthcare providers, families, and the general public, as well as systems of belief based on lack of public health education on this topic. We discovered that there are cultural barriers to donating organs among select populations and religious denominations, which also has an impact. We concluded that there is a strong need for increased community education and financial support to change misconceptions about organ donation to find a long-term solution.

Through their combined efforts, the Beta Zeta Mu Chapter team collaborated with the Iowa Donor Network (IDN) to provide a professional presentation at an educational forum for our college campus and community. After the presentation, a group of four panelists spoke about the personal challenges they endured as recipients or family members of organ donors. Following the forum, our team conducted several events that promoted awareness, public discussion, and an opportunity to register willing attendees as organ donors. Other efforts included hosting a silent auction to raise funds for the Iowa Donor Network and helping them establish a memorial to honor donors. These efforts had a significant impact on the systems of beliefs of members of our community and the Western Iowa Tech Community College student body and is a step toward global progress.

OBJECTIVES

Our team’s main research objective was to understand public perceptions about organ donation and the global transformation in organ harvesting. We also wanted to learn how technological advances are affecting organ donation. Due to the extensive variety of academic research topics available, our investigations had to be narrowed down to focus on topics relating to the global impact of organ donation. Once the new objective was formulated, research branched in many directions. However, there was one common need identified: the overwhelming need for educational awareness and understanding to reshape a global system of belief that prevents selective populations from participating in organ donation. To this end, we set a new objective to raise awareness at Western Iowa Tech Community College and in our community about organ donation. Beta Zeta Mu chapter members chose to focus on providing educational awareness for both the college and community and to initiate fundraising for the Iowa Donor Network (IDN). To augment our objectives, the team collaborated with IDN Coordinator John Jorgensen. As a father who made the choice to donate his son’s organs to save six lives, John taught our members more about this topic than any textbook.

To accomplish our objectives, the team collaborated with Western Iowa Tech Community College Activity Director Mike Brown, Student Senate representatives, College Cafeteria personnel, Campus Security, Campus IT Department, college administrators, staff, the Public Relations and Marketing Department, the Audio Engineering and Photography Departments, and faculty. Beyond the college, the team collaborated with local media.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

Our analysis revealed many barriers to organ donation. Despite many technological advances in algorithms, transplant procedures, lab-grown organs, and organ preservation, the demand for healthy organs is far greater than the available supply. Many of these barriers are the result of personal belief, cultural barriers, and misconceptions surrounding organ donation. After compiling and organizing our research, we reached out to the Iowa Donor Network (IDN) and conducted an extensive interview with the coordinator, John Jorgensen. Jorgensen was able to provide the chapter with more research and personal accounts of the challenges the IDN faces, from financial endeavors for conducting research to promoting awareness through educational opportunities.

CONCLUSIONS

After analyzing our research, our team reached three conclusions. First, there was a need to educate the community to overcome misconceptions about organ donation. Second, there was a need for help to fund research for scientific advancements and innovative methods of organ donation and raising global awareness about the need for organ donors as well as getting other agencies involved. Third, education about organ donation using varied platforms was necessary to reach a global audience.

ACTION

The action component of our project stemmed from the need to raise awareness and understanding about the challenges faced by advocates of organ donation among select populations. The team accomplished this by 1) organizing a community-wide educational forum, 2) creating opportunities to promote further discussion and awareness while providing access to register as organ donors, 3) collecting donations for a silent auction that produced \$1,000 for the IDN, and 4) participating in a simulated training event for healthcare providers, engaging in Organ Donation Awareness Month, and committing efforts toward aiding the IDN in creating a memorial garden in honor of donors.

To fully complete the action component of our project, we collaborated with myriad college and community partners. John Jorgensen, the IDN Coordinator, helped the team organize the educational forum. He also provided literature for awareness events. Larry Wentz, a local TV news station personality and organ donation recipient, shared his personal account of his experience of being on the transplant list and the improvement in his quality of life because of organ donation. Gwen Hall, another donor recipient, shared her personal story of waiting for an organ at the Mayo Clinic, and Sharon Dykshorn, the Western Iowa Tech Community College librarian, whose father was an organ donor, provided the perspective of the aftermath of organ donation for the family of the donor. She read letters of gratitude from recipients who received her father's organs.

Auxiliary collaborators whose impact provided a quality educational environment for Western Iowa Tech Community College students and the citizens of Siouxland included, among others, the Student Senate, Activities Director Mike Brown, and the campus Public Relations Department. Local news media promoted our forum.

IMPACT

During summer 2018, our team attended Phi Theta Kappa's Honors Institute where they learned valuable leadership skills. As a result, we were able to develop the scope and timeline needed to execute extensive academic research that would create the framework for our action plan. As part

of our action plan, we reached out to more than 150 business leaders and thousands of people in the Siouxland community.

The educational forum hosted by our team promoted local, national, and global awareness regarding how organ donation transforms lives. Western Iowa Tech Community College students, faculty, administration, and community members learned about organ donation and systems of belief that both support and create barriers to the practice. We also focused on how to overcome barriers to people signing up to be organ donors. We balanced academic data with personal stories that provided perspectives of donors, donor families, and transplant recipients at the forum to help us convey the significance of organ donation.

Approximately 200 people from Western Iowa Tech Community College and the Siouxland community attended our educational forum. All three local television channels were present to report on the event, and Coca-Cola, Inc. donated 250 cans of soda for event participants. Our team also solicited and collected more than 150 items donated from community businesses for the silent auction. The auction raised \$1,000 for the Iowa Donor Network (IDN). For the rest of the academic year, our team held organized awareness events on campus to promote awareness of organ donation. We provided people opportunities at these events to register as organ donors. Our on-campus awareness events beyond the panel discussion reached 170 receptive people.

Our team grew as scholars and leaders as a result of our Honors in Action Project. We learned the impact awareness events can have on a community. We raised awareness about organ donation even before our events occurred. Afterwards, we heeded the call of the IDN as volunteers for a training simulation event at Unity Point Health St. Luke's. Our team has also committed to participating in Organ Donation Awareness Month. Finally, our team is committed to helping the IDN accomplish its goal of building a memorial garden in Sioux City to honor organ donors in our community.

RESOURCES

Bresnahan, M.J., & Mahler, K. (2010). Ethical debate over organ donation in the context of brain death. *Bioethics*, 24(2), 54-60. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/19076119>

This article examines the ethical debate over the definition of brain death as it relates to organ donation. The authors explored the controversies that family members may face when making decisions about organ donation within the context of the world's five major religions: Buddhism, Hinduism, Judaism, Islam, and Catholicism. The authors suggested that in the absence of a spiritual advisor, family members may turn to Internet search engines such as Google for guidance on the definition of brain death and organ donation. The article examines the discrepancies between the information provided by donor agencies and Google searches.

Davidai, S., Gilovich, T., & Ross, L.D., (2012). The meaning of default options for potential organ donors. *PNAS*, 109(38), 15201-15205. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3458339/>

This article examines experiments the authors conducted examining the effect of default options on potential organ donors. Their experiments were designed to determine the meaning placed on an opt-out or opt-in option for organ donation.

Jorgensen, J. (2018). Interview with John Jorgensen, Donor Services Coordinator with the Iowa Donor Network. Jojorgensen@iadn.org.

After reading many research articles, the team invited John Jorgensen, Donor Services Coordinator for the Iowa Donor Network, to attend a chapter meeting to give us a local and state perspective on organ donation. He agreed to travel from Des Moines,

three hours away, and meet with chapter members. In an hour-long meeting, Jorgensen discussed the local and state statistics as well as challenges facing the local donor network. Jorgensen also answered the many questions chapter members had regarding items uncovered during their research and discussed ways the chapter could be of service in bringing awareness to organ donations. Furthermore, because of his own personal tragedy as a father of an organ donor who saved six lives, Jorgensen's data had enormous credibility and added stronger validity to our research findings.

Miller, J., Currie, S., & O'Carroll, R.E. (2018). What if I'm not dead? Myth-busting and organ donation. *British Journal of Health Psychology*, 1-18. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/pdf/10.1111/bjhp.12344>

This article examined myths surrounding organ donation. The authors conducted an experiment to determine if refuting myths would erase emotional barriers to organ donation. This experiment was conducted in the United Kingdom, so the results may not generalize to a global population.

Rodrique, J.R., Crist, K., Roberts, J.P., Freeman, R.B. Jr., Merion, R.M., & Reed, A.I. (2009). Stimulus for organ donation: A survey of the American Society of Transplants membership. *American Journal of Transplantation*, 9, 2172-2176. Retrieved from <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1600-6143.2009.02741.x>

This paper examined the results of a survey of transplant surgeons in the United States about strategies to increase organ donations. The strategies discussed ranged from legislative action to recognition or financial incentives for donor families.

Shaw, D. (2017). The consequences of vagueness in consent to organ donation. *Bioethics*, 31(6), 424-431. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/28032367>

This journal article examined the effects of vagueness, or lack of concise information, in the organ donation system. These effects are not only a problem for potential organ donors but donor families as well as donor recipients. With the need for donor organs far outpacing organ donations, resolving these issues would greatly improve organ donor participation.

Shaw, D., Gardiner, D., Lewis, P., Jansen, N., Wind, T., Undine, S., Denie G., Rutgar P., & Broderick, A., on behalf of the ELPAC Working Group on Deceased Donation.(2018). Conscientious objection to deceased organ donation by healthcare professionals. *Journal of the Intensive Care Society*, 19(1), 43-47. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1751143717731230>

In this journal article, the authors discuss the causes of many healthcare professionals' objections toward participating in organ donation procedures. These objections may be for religious or moral reasons. Other healthcare professionals may be concerned about the effort and expense involved in transplant procedures. Having healthcare professionals object to organ donations sends a conflicting signal to the public on the benefits of organ donations. The authors suggest that physicians and other healthcare professionals be allowed to at least voice their rationale for their objections, dialogue being essential to resolving these issues.

Watson, C.J.E., & Dark, J.H. (2012). Organ transplantation: Historical perspective and current practice. *British Journal of Anaesthesia*, 108(51), 129-142. Retrieved from https://academic.oup.com/bja/article/108/suppl_1/i29/237577

This journal article covers the history of organ transplantations and the technological advances made in both transplant procedures and organ preservation in the last century. The article summarized all of the major improvements as well as challenges and future directions for study. Despite all of the technological advancements, a shortage of donors is still the greatest challenge.

THE ECONOMIES OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS: RECOMMENDING CHANGES BY LISTENING TO STUDENT VOICES

ALPHA RHO LAMBDA CHAPTER

*Jackson College
Jackson, Michigan*

THEME 3: ECONOMIES OF EVERYTHING

ABSTRACT

Our investigation at Jackson College of the Phi Theta Kappa Honors in Action theme “The Economies of Everything” focused specifically on the economies of the college student. We learned that the economies of a college student include the careful management of available resources, food, housing, transportation, books, and tuition, as well as their mental and physical health. Our team investigated the national and global costs of these resources and the ways other institutions had helped students lower expenditures. We also learned from Jackson College President Dr. Dan Phelan that Jackson College (JC) has made considerable financial decisions about securing housing, lowering food costs, offsetting transportation costs, and providing on-campus physical and mental health clinics with student economies in mind. Our research conclusions led us to believe these decisions can be better conveyed to Jackson College students, so they understand JC’s commitment to sustaining the whole student (TCS² — Total Commitment to Student Success).

From facilitating nine student focus groups, we learned there are other economies that impact students’ retention and success. Students expressed their desire for better communication about a variety of issues, including: 1) transparency about administrative decision-making, 2) the existence of the JC food pantry, 3) community support systems, 4) online one-stop shop for conducting scholarship searches, 5) meal plan selection and healthier food choices, 6) a college process for peer-to-peer textbook exchanges, and 7) extended hours of operation for the JC library, tutoring services, and student activities on campus.

Student voices can play a key role in helping fellow students learn about managing their economies. By launching student-to-student communication and an increased student-focused social media presence, we want encouraged students to have reasonable expectations and awareness of current JC decision-making processes for students in an effort to transform students’ quality of life.

OBJECTIVES

Before examining Phi Theta Kappa’s Honors Program Guide, our Honors in Action team set objectives to inspire us as we developed our project. Our objectives included 1) communicating our research with intelligence and respect, 2) becoming empathetic listeners, 3) deepening our research methodologies, and 4) opening a dialogue about the economies of everything with faculty, staff, administrators, students, and community. Next, we examined the meanings implicit in “transformations” to help guide us as we researched our theme. We examined transformations and were particularly drawn to the idea of transformations as positive changes toward something more useful, more connected, and more ideal. We shared our personal experiences about where transformations had occurred. For example, our team discussed how we have been able in the past to change individual habits in ways that lead to increased personal success and

achievement. We kept in mind one of the ideas expressed in Phi Theta Kappa's Associate Vice President of Honors Programming and Undergraduate Research Susan Edwards' opening essay in the 2018/2019 Honors Program Guide — disasters can incite and trigger transformation at great cost. For two of us, walking away from abusive relationships (disasters), as example, led to re-examining our motivations and choices and shifting to more ideal purposes.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

As a team we agreed to select a theme that would academically challenge us. The theme we found initially most boring and uninteresting became our chosen research theme — "Economies of Everything." Initially we misread "Economies" as "Economics," and our etymological investigation of these two words revealed significant differences between the two.

"Economics" has much to do with systems of commercial exchanges between producer and consumer, while "economy" refers to thrift, careful budgeting, saving, scrimping, and frugality. This initial discovery was an "a-ha" moment for us. Unwittingly, we had happened on a theme whose actions and consequences we were familiar to college students. We were already learning the thrift and economy of having to balance academics with athletics, work, family, friends, eating, sleeping, health and automobile insurance, and well as transportation expenses. We knew our personal decisions meant costly time and money expenditures and, through our research, understood our economies of everything could be extrapolated to larger audiences of students. Our research also led us to discover how to sustain our energies while surviving the costs of a college education.

We wondered whether some colleges — public or private — had substantially helped students with the economies of their lives. Thus, our initial research questions were: What are the financial and emotional economies college students face? How can college costs be offset? To what extent is transformation of college students' economies possible?

CONCLUSIONS

Once we completed our research, our objective was to find a correlative action that was integrally related to what our research had revealed. We found that scrimping and saving done by students to survive procuring a college education impacts societies globally and packs a heavy economic punch for many students. Student indebtedness affects housing markets, lowers credit ratings, slows economies, and lessens productivity in the marketplace. The idea that receiving a college education results in great benefits to students once they complete their degrees or certificates may be exaggerated. Many students who pursue a college degree never complete that degree. Why? What costs have an impact on students dropping or stopping out of higher education? We found these statistics and examples that illustrate the economic burden of college for students:

- Senator Elizabeth Warren recently reported over \$100 billion is the national student debt amount, which contributes 10 percent of America's total debt.
- Sixty-seven percent of community college students across the country are food insecure and 14 percent are homeless. In April 2018, 48 percent of college students in two- and four-year institutions reported food insecurity in the last 30 days.
- College students report experiencing discrimination, harassment, mistreatment on the job or not being hired at all because of their academic schedules.
- Twenty percent of 67,000 college students surveyed have reported suicide attempts and have severe levels of anxiety and clinical depression. Only 1.6 percent of the general population has attempted suicide.
- State funding of community college education has decreased significantly in the last three decades, and the increased costs are redirected to students through increased tuition and fees. Jackson College's budget can be broken down as follows: 1) Michigan appropriations fund — 28.1 percent; 2) Property taxes — 11 percent; 3) Other revenues — 4.7 percent; and 4) students' tuition and fees — 56.2 percent.

Our choice of this research theme met our objectives, challenged our perceptions, and continued to raise questions in our minds about how students could change their economic circumstances. Is securing limited resources for higher education a price too high to pay?

Our collaborators for our Honors in Action Project included many people and organizations at Jackson College and in the community. Dr. Dan Phelan inspired us with his stories of the college's commitment to sustaining the whole student. The JC Vice President of Instruction suggested using Achieving the Dream Public Agenda materials. The JC Vice President of Finance confirmed JC budget allocations, and the college's Institutional Effectiveness staff assisted in drafting unbiased focus group questions. Student Services administrators and staff provided more corroboration of first-generation student needs and invited a member of our team to serve on its Customer Service Committee. Phi Theta Kappa alumni critiqued our marketing proposal, and JC's Marketing Director and Media Specialist helped us launch our communication with student stakeholders

Throughout our research, we continually worried about how we could change or improve the status quo. Once we realized that student voices had no significant role in JC's TCS2 efforts, we knew we needed to listen to fellow students' diverse perspectives and make recommendations to the college administration to integrate students' views into future JC policies. We conducted nine focus groups with the following groups: 1) students associated with Jackson Preparatory Early College, 2) Men of Merit, 3) Sisters of Strength, 4) TRiO, 5) international students, 6) honors students, 7) non-traditional students, 8) Phi Theta Kappa members, and 9) Student Government Association officers.

ACTION

Initially, we believed our service/action was dedicated to listening to student voices through focus group interviews and then sharing what we learned with JC's approximately 50 Administrative Council members. We wanted to trust that this process would inspire change, though as we learned from our research, even college stakeholders are not doing as much as they could to integrate students' collective voices into action. After listening to often angry, anxious, and frustrated student voices, we realized that we needed to take another step. Students longed for information, and we knew we could potentially help lessen some of their unrealistic expectations and fulfill their information needs. This was the impetus for the communications proposal made to the JC Marketing and Administrative Council. Our marketing proposal included student-written scripts for short skits to be played in loops on JC television screens; informative services and support fliers; advertisements in all academic and campus housing buildings; distribution to all JC students of one-page weekly "What you always wanted to know about...." broadsides, as well as packets of information concerning their students' questions and concerns about college processes by Navigators and Student Success instructors.

Our quantitative results consisted of speaking to 70 students in nine focus groups, as well as 150 members of the community and the college staff, faculty, and administrators. We presented our findings to JC's Administrative Council at its January 2019 meeting.

Our qualitative outcomes included successfully advocating for a one-stop-shop location for online scholarship searches that has been implemented and the extension of night and weekend tutoring hours. Focus group students expressed their appreciation for our willingness to listen. We recognize that all of these issues of student economies will need to be monitored and assessed for continual quality improvement.

RESOURCES

Achieving the Dream (2018). Holistic student supports redesign: A toolkit for redesigning advising and student services to effectively support every student. Retrieved from https://www.achievingthedream.org/sites/default/files/resources/atd_hss_redesign_toolkit_2018.pdf

The toolkit provides overarching strategies to support quality interactions, a safe and productive college environment, and a supportive and respectful community that are essential for the well-being of a whole student. Also included were setting goals, planning for action, and crafting a communication strategy to transform the students' approach toward college. The Achieving the Dream Toolkit helped us plan our focus group facilitations and helped us formulate our launch of new student-focused media strategies.

Broton, K., Gates, C., Goldrick-Rab, S. (2013). Clearing the path to a brighter future: Addressing barriers to community college access and success. Association of Community College Trustees. Retrieved from <http://theeduooptimists.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/White-paper-barriers-to-community-college-access-success.pdf>

The authors point out the main obstacles community college students must navigate in order to achieve success — financial, informational, and connective needs. The article counters “the dark side of college” by offering positive solutions: modernized services to address student access to resources and reformed financial aid to support students with financial insecurity and ineligibility. We cannot directly change Jackson College’s policies or statewide educational reductions. However, as Phi Theta Kappa leaders, we can listen to student concerns, elicit PTK members in these efforts, and better inform other students as well as staff, faculty, and administrators of our voices and perceptions.

Chamie, J. (2017 May 18). Student debt rising worldwide. YaleGlobal Online. Retrieved from <https://yaleglobal.yale.edu/content/student-debt-rising-worldwide>

Regarded as essential in a competitive global job market, post-secondary education has been credited for increasing prosperity for individuals and communities. However, demographer Chamie notes that rising college costs force many students to assume significant debt for years. We knew this was a reality in the U.S., but we learned that increasing student debt is occurring in both developed and underdeveloped countries. What we found hopeful was that 40 countries’ public colleges charge no tuition. Similarly, 17 states provide tuition-free education for community college students. Michigan, suffering from an out-migrating population and experiencing economic decline, has little money for providing tuition funding. Our Jackson College students pay the highest tuition of all 28 Michigan community colleges.

Goldberg, M. (2015, June 8). The gentrification of higher ed. *The Nation*, 22-27. Retrieved from <https://vocesdecasamaria.org/2015/09/27/the-gentrification-of-higher-ed-at-the-university-of-arizona/>

Arizona state schools are increasingly relying on out-of-state tuition and cater to wealthy students. But after the 2008 economic crash, almost every state has cut its higher education budget. Per-student spending is down more than 40 percent in some states. In Michigan, money earmarked for community college aid has been derailed for road repair and other non-educational special interests. Inequity of accessing higher education is deepening. Higher education has returned to its medieval beginnings — an entitlement for the affluent and elite, with crushing debt to many who are working class or poor, while free higher education is also espoused.

Goldrick-Rab, S. (2016). *Paying the Price*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 233-260.

Chapter 10, "Making College Affordable," acknowledges the current financial aid system is failing. No longer is college affordable for hard-working students from lower-income families. Some senators see this statement as a myth and believe community college is relatively free. They perceive the costs of all those other student economies as non-educational — gas, food, rent, even books. This belief also encourages policymakers to think students' financial situations do NOT affect their academic performance. Seventy-two percent of the richest Americans (who hold over 98 percent of the nation's wealth) believe college should NOT be accessible to everyone. These are the same privileged voices that determine public policy.

Goldrick-Rab, S., Richardson, J., Hernandez, A. (2017). Hungry and homeless in college: Results from a national study of basic needs. *Insecurity in Higher Education*. Retrieved from https://www.acct.org/files/Publications/2017/Homeless_and_Hungry_2017.pdf

This national study reports basic needs insecurity results gathered from a survey delivered to over 33,000 students from more than 70 community colleges. Jackson College, to our surprise, was listed as one of the contributing institutions to this project. Little did we know that President Phelan was a critical participant when he shared his passion for the college's responsibility in sustaining the "whole" student. In our September conversation with him, he provided specific examples of our college efforts: lessening cafeteria costs by offering a 3-for-\$3 food option; offsetting public bus transportation costs with a \$59,000 stipend so students pay only \$1; effectively designing a food pantry, medical and dental clinics, and the Oasis Center for students' mental health needs.

Kever, S., Lenfestey, K. (Ed.). (2016, 2017). *Every student has a story: Personal narratives from first-generation college students* (Vols. 1-2). Scotts Valley, California: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform.

The personal narratives of TRiO students at Indiana University reinforced what our JC TRiO students told us during our focus groups. Struggles with social and cultural adjustments, personal family situations, and physical and mental health issues shaped their early college experiences. As fellow students, we are unable to address these kinds of personal crises. However, their stories of feeling overwhelmed with academic and college processes helped us realize that informed students have less anxiety and helped us find an appropriate Honors in Action Project action — better communication and information sharing.

Public Agenda (2012). *Student voices on the higher education pathway: Preliminary insight & stakeholder engagement considerations*. Retrieved from https://www.publicagenda.org/files/student_voices.pdf

This initiative by Public Agenda and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's Postsecondary Success Strategy conducted focus groups in which students shared their experiences and concerns about college educational systems. Five main themes came to light. Students needed greater exposure to career choices; a pre-existing knowledge of available resources on campus; importance of an end-goal; useful advisors; and up-to-date information. Also included in reform recommendations was this important strategy: students' voices should be emphasized and should be at the center of all education reform plans in order to bring legitimacy, effectiveness, and sustainability to proposals. This confirmed we were on the right path in listening to and communicating with JC student stakeholders.

DYNAMICS OF DISCOVERY: THE IMPACT OF NUDGING STUDENTS TO ENGAGE IN A COLLEGE COMMUNITY

BETA ZETA NU CHAPTER

Cañada College

Redwood City, California

THEME 4: DYNAMICS OF DISCOVERY

ABSTRACT

Community college students experience unique obstacles that can prevent them from participating in academic and social programs vital to their success. Improving student engagement is a frequent topic of research, with the growing field of behavioral economics showing strong potential to increase student involvement in on-campus activities and groups, and data analysis techniques from big data enabling more effective evaluation of various interventions.

Our research began by examining seminal works in behavioral economics and big data and culminated with an interview with an expert in behavioral economics and its applications on community college campuses. Based on our research, we used proven techniques in behavioral economics to improve student engagement with a variety of different organizations tied to student academic success. Students involved in our project showed markedly higher levels of engagement and participation than students who did not.

The benefits of our project were not limited to the students directly involved. Analysis of the results of our project indicates that when correctly targeted, relatively small modifications in communication and outreach can have substantial effects on student participation at a relatively low cost. These results were shared with student government, the faculty association, and the college president so that they could use them to improve the effectiveness of future outreach programs.

Throughout our year-long project, our guiding principle was to be deliberate, thoughtful, and reflective. Due to our limited resources, we realized that we would be best suited to focus our efforts on individual student groups rather than the campus as a whole. Specifically, we decided to work with college programs that promote student success and excellency.

OBJECTIVES

Our research objectives were to 1) intentionally explore the data corresponding to our anecdotal evidence that students in community colleges generally have low success rates and take a long time to graduate or transfer, 2) discover specific, innovative, measurable strategies to increase student engagement in well-documented college success programs and campus resources, 3) consider assumptions and misconceptions about what behavioral economics, and particularly, big data, that could skew the direction of the action piece of our Honors in Action Project, and 4) conduct authentic academic research that is informative and comprehensive with the assistance of research librarians and industry experts.

Our collaboration objective was to join forces with specific student success programs across a variety of student populations, including Bridge to Opportunities Peer Mentorship Program

(BTO), International Students, Beta Zeta Nu, Middle College students, STEM Center participants, and the Premedical Club members, to help them achieve the college mission.

Our action objectives were to 1) implement a series of nudges that would increase student participation in activities designed to increase student success and to 2) share our findings with students, faculty, staff, and administrators so they could transform the way they reach students to be more effective and increase engagement in established college success programs and campus resources.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

To launch our investigation into this year's Honors Study Topic, *Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change*, we started by studying the Honors Program Guide. Each member of our team selected a theme to investigate, and we presented our findings during chapter meetings. Polling revealed that issues presented in themes two and four were the most compelling to chapter members. From there, our conversations about Theme Two, "Dynamics of Discovery," consistently brought up our previous concerns about student persistence, engagement, and success.

Our curiosity prompted us to seek out statistical information such as the success rates on our own campus. We reached out to our Dean of Research and Planning, who directed us in finding further research on nationwide and Cañada College student success rates; not only were success rates low at Cañada, they were low at almost every community college in the country (Justkiewicz, 2016). Motivated by our experiences as Phi Theta Kappa members and by research demonstrating a strong link between participation in campus groups and student success, we sought ways to improve student engagement on campus (Chande et. al., 2015).

After attending a PTK Catalyst 2018 educational forum on big data and behavioral economics, we began to think about how those methods of research and discovery could be used to promote higher student engagement. Intrigued, we read through academic journals and seminal books covering a wide range of topics within the areas of behavioral economics and big data. From this, we formed our research question: How can discoveries in big data and innovative techniques in behavioral economics be used to transform the way we communicate with students in order to increase engagement in college programs designed to promote higher success rates across a variety of student populations?

Thaler and Sunstein (2008) outlined a two-system thinking model; people either operate on a "Spock" system of thinking, where they prioritize reflective thinking, or a "Homer Simpson" system of thinking that works off impulses instead of rational economic calculation. Thaler and Sunstein define a nudge as something that "alters people's behavior in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives" (p. 6). Similarly, Stephens-Davidowitz (2017) discusses the tendency for people to be dishonest about their personality traits and desires when asked direct questions. We became aware that finding out the motivators of students would not be as simple as creating direct surveys; our nudges would have to be subtle.

CONCLUSIONS

Having established the effectiveness of nudges as a tool for changing behavior, Chande et al. (2015) provided experimental evidence confirming their effectiveness in education, albeit primarily in the context of adult education specifically. Furthermore, Hume et. al. (2018) provided more robust evidence demonstrating the effectiveness of nudges on a broader population that more closely resembles a typical American community college student body.

ACTION

Our discussion with Moore (2018) focused on the application of nudges on our campus specifically and indicated that for community college students, nudges that appeal to a sense of identity are likely to be more effective than small external incentives, such as providing food at an event. Furthermore, nudges that use multiple methods of communication and increase accessibility have been shown to increase both student engagement and achievement in community college environments. Moore (2008) also revealed that when testing nudges on large groups of students, such as those on a school mailing list, data analysis techniques used with Big Data can be used to determine the effectiveness of multiple nudges within the same email.

In accordance with our project objectives, we sought out a variety of campus organizations to collaborate with, and we built our nudge experiences around the findings of our intentional, specific research. We synthesized nudges targeting four different populations: students eligible for Phi Theta Kappa membership that hadn't signed up yet, students enrolled in the Bridge to Opportunities (BTO) Peer Mentorship Program, students registered as STEM majors, and students enrolled in Middle College.

The Middle College and STEM student cohorts were dropped as we gained a better understanding of the specific needs of those students. And new cohorts, the Premedical club and students in the Learning Center, emerged as we felt custom nudges would be implemented to greater effect. These cohorts were integral to our action because our objective was to increase student participation, and programs like BTO frequently put on campus events geared toward increasing student success. Our nudges were modeled on examples from Thaler and Sunstein (2008) and refined and targeted through discussion with Moore (2018).

The resulting nudges were implemented on the following student cohorts:

Cohort One: BTO Mentees

For our first nudge experiments, we sought to increase attendance to pre-existing BTO workshops that covered topics relevant to the success of mentees in the program. Based on our research, we tested the effectiveness of email prompts offering prizes for attendance, location changes to increase accessibility, and face-to-face encouragement from peers or authority figures. Attendance statistics were compared with those of a control group.

Cohort Two: Phi Theta Kappa

This group involved prospective PTK members who had not yet joined. This population was approximately 300 students who we randomly split equally into our control group and our nudge group. Our control group received one standard email inviting them to a PTK orientation, while a treatment group received repeated emails that were both personalized and utilized "ego boost" language that appealed to the students' pride.

Cohort Three: Premedical Club

We aided the Premedical Club in increasing attendance for their community event, using repeated reminder nudging as indicated by Thaler and Sunstein (2008). The control group was sent one email a week before the event, and the test group was sent a follow up email the morning of the event.

Cohort Four: Students in the campus Learning Center

Our previous experiments, as well as discussion with Moore (2018), indicated that face-to-face communication and improved location were our most successful nudges. Our chapter created and presented a workshop on successful study techniques for final exams. It was located in a convenient area, and we had PTK members approach students individually and invite them to participate. Attendance figures were compared with those from other workshops.

Following each of these nudge experiments, we evaluated our data, compared our results to those from a workshop with no nudges, and drew conclusions about nudges' effectiveness and scalability. We then compiled our results and produced a research report that we shared with student support programs, academic departments, division offices, and administrative divisions, including the college president. Collaborating with different groups on campus including the Premedical Club, BTO, and the Learning Center allowed us not only to execute the nudges, but also bolstered diversity in the sample cohorts so we could draw accurate conclusions regarding the whole campus.

IMPACT

After conducting five nudges, involving more than 300 students and reaching a variety of student populations, we concluded that accessibility and face-to-face communication provided the most effective nudges; our most successful nudge brought a twelve-fold increase to student attendance at an on-campus workshop. Subsequent to our nudges, we realized that our work could be upscaled by our campus administration to have a larger effect on student involvement and success rates. We leveraged the impact of our research by sharing our findings with over 20 campus programs and every student club. Thus, enabling them to use our discoveries to implement changes in their outreach programs that will extend the effect of increased engagement. Amongst those groups were the Cañada College public library and the campus DREAMERS organization, which both interact with local community organizations and public schools.

In addition to discovering what nudges worked, we shared strategies what didn't work so groups can avoid these. For example, emails were one of the least effective ways to encourage students to participate; our multiple efforts to write and send nudge emails yielded poor results. Interestingly, email is the most common medium colleges use to communicate with students. Armed with our results, we hope that our collaborators will change the ways that they communicate with students.

Our chapter conducted creative and comprehensive research on Big Data and behavioral economics, created and implemented nudges, worked cohesively as a team to modify our objectives and overcome obstacles, and shared our findings with the college community. The early failure of our original nudges encouraged us to think outside the box and adapt our research efforts to our campus population. Chapter members were encouraged to participate in all phases of the project, with individuals taking a variety of roles in leadership, documentation, authorship, and communication. The importance of our findings was confirmed by our Learning Center Director, who was impressed by our ability to get a roomful of students for a workshop. Utilizing a clear understanding of the barriers that students encounter as they attend college, we were able to use research and data to transform student behavior and potentially increase student success for individuals and the college.

RESOURCES

2018 Cañada College student success scorecard. (N.d.). Retrieved from <https://scorecard.cccco.edu/scorecardrates.aspx?CollegeID=371>

Confirms that success rates are low at our own campus, showing that there was a need for us to find out how changes in research and technology could be used to promote student success.

Chande, R., Luca, M., Sanders, M., Soon, X.Z., Borcan, O., Barak-Corren, N., Linos, E., Kirkman, E., & Robinson, S. (2015). Curbing adult student attrition: Evidence from a field experiment. SSRN, Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2563757>

Analyzes the results of an experiment conducted at Harvard Business School in which student groups with low-attendance rates were sent encouraging text messages throughout the semester. The success of this text-based experiment encouraged us to think about the variety of mediums we could use for our own nudges.

Hume, S., O'Reilly, F., Groot, B., Selley, E., Barnes, J., Soon, X.Z., Chande, R., & Sanders, M. (2018). Retention and success in maths and English: A practitioner guide to applying behavioral insights. London: British Department for Education, Behavioral Insights Team.

Documents the success of nudges at improving educational outcomes for different student demographics within the British Department of Education. Also includes specific policy recommendations for particularly successful nudges.

Justzkiewicz, J. (2016). Trends in community college enrollment and completion data. Washington, D.C.: American Association of Community Colleges. Retrieved from https://www.aacc.nche.edu/wp-content/uploads/2017/11/TrendsCCEnrollment_Final2016.pdf

Demonstrates that Cañada College is not an outlier, and success rates are low at community colleges nationwide. This informed us that the way we designed our nudges should not entirely rely on the behaviors of Cañada College students but should be modeled on the behavior of community college students in general.

L. Moore, personal communication, October 17, 2018.

Senior Advisor at Behavioral Insights Team North America trained us in behavioral economics tactics and how we could use them to develop nudges to encourage students to take advantage of college resources.

O'Neil, C. (2016). Weapons of math destruction: *The dangers of big data*. Maryland: Crown Publishing Group.

Presents an opposing point of view that computer programs are not indiscriminate and inherit dangerous biases. From this, we realized our nudges and experiments would have to connect to students in a personal manner and not just be based on general, computer-generated statistics.

Stephens-Davidowitz, S. (2017). *Everybody lies: Big data, new data, and what the Internet can tell us about who we really are*. New York: Dey Street Books.

Discusses how conventional sources of data tend to be lacking in accuracy because of human inclination to give a perceived "correct" answer, rather than answering honestly. The text inspired us to think about innovative methods of accurate data collection.

Thaler, R., & Sunstein, C.R. (2008). *Nudge: Improving decisions about health, wealth, and happiness*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

The seminal book on nudge psychology. Describes how to apply behavioral economics and the power of nudging to boost college enrollment, student engagement, and student success rates.

FOSTERING A GREATER SENSE OF COMMUNITY ON CAMPUS BY CREATING A SAFE, INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

OMICRON PSI CHAPTER

Grayson College

Denison, Texas

THEME 3: POLITICS OF IDENTITY

ABSTRACT

Labels are ubiquitous in society, promoting both feelings of inclusion and isolation. After exploring the prevalence of labels in society, Grayson College Phi Theta Kappa members learned how those labels influence politics and the impact they have on society. Members created teams to research identity politics and the LGBTQIA community. This group's fight for equality has been at the center of contemporary political debate, notably on college campuses as LGBTQIA members seek inclusion in sports, housing, and bathroom access. These issues were central to a local political campaign, making this a relevant issue for further research and action.

The team concluded that true societal transformations require concerted effort from allies of marginalized groups. Members further concluded that creating opportunities for people to transform the way they think about marginalized groups could provoke those transformations in society and desired to create an awareness campaign regarding marginalization and its effects, particularly for the LGBTQIA community. This awareness campaign fostered a greater sense of community on campus and has the potential of provoking a long-term impact when taken into communities. These are powerful lessons in understanding Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change.

OBJECTIVES

To set the objectives, members and advisors met weekly throughout each stage of the project. The team started with research objectives and, as the project progressed, added or amended objectives as needed.

The team's objectives were to 1) read the Honors Program Guide to better understand the Honors Study Topic, Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change, 2) conduct independent research to identify possible themes and questions for investigation, 3) provide opportunities for regular reflection of research during weekly meetings, 4) create opportunities and provide training as necessary for members to grow as scholars and leaders, 5) review the research and use conclusions to develop an action component, 6) develop a better understanding of issues related to marginalization and bullying, 7) collaborate with college administrators, faculty, staff, and students to create awareness activities and events about bullying, as well as the prevalence and effects of bullying on members of the LGBTQIA community, and 8) share the chapter's project with the campus, community, and beyond.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

When members began researching Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change, they were encouraged to explore various themes and research questions related to this topic for discussion at weekly meetings. In preparation for conducting academic research, members arranged research training with the college librarian. Utilizing new skills, members

advocated for research themes based on their findings and presented proposals for further investigation. Members narrowed their focus to Politics of Identity and Visions of Justice, then further centered on issues of stereotypes and labels and the effect that labeling has on individual groups and society. Having gained a deeper understanding of the continued prevalence of labels in society, members learned how those labels influence politics and societal norms. The team realized this direction fit best within the scope of the Politics of Identity theme and began further exploration of labels and identity politics as agents of transformation.

Labels are pervasive, as not only do people place labels on others, but also label themselves. The team learned that while labels can be used to give people a sense of identity and belonging, they can also be used to divide and persecute. Discussion shifted to Valerie Hefner, a local candidate for the Texas House of Representatives. Hefner was motivated to run due to her experiences raising a gay son and transgender daughter. There was significant controversy in the school district about Hefner's daughter; labels were used frequently in these debates to ostracize people. Wanting to learn more about her experiences, the team asked to interview Hefner. Officers trained with communications and political science professors on how to conduct an interview and prepared questions related to identity politics and labels. From Hefner, members learned how her children, particularly her daughter, have been bullied and ostracized both in school sports and even in simply trying to use the bathroom. The bullying, while also transitioning from male to female, has weighed heavily on her daughter's mental health. Hefner shared she was motivated to run because she wanted to be an advocate for all LGBTQIA, just as she has been for her children.

CONCLUSIONS

Members' research, coupled with Hefner's interview, demonstrated how marginalized the LGBTQIA community remains, prompting the team to focus specifically on this group. Research explained how marginalized groups experience mental health issues that often devolve into self-harm. LGBTQIA, particularly, are often the victims of violence and are frequently ostracized by their families and friends, removing vital support systems. LGBTQIA students can struggle in school without adequate support, both in policy and from faculty and administrators.

The team learned that LGBTQIA marginalization is not unique to the United States. As members of those communities, they face the same and sometimes more severe issues in many countries. Members discovered it was common in some countries for LGBTQIA to be rounded up and beaten or even killed simply for being LGBTQIA. Compounding the campaign for acceptance and inclusion is the fact that in many cases those who oppose acceptance and equality for LGBTQIA are motivated by religious beliefs. But just as religion has been used in the past to justify racism, members realized that over time, through education and awareness, it is possible to change people's beliefs. Understanding this, members developed the research question, "How can awareness about LGBTQIA issues transform members of our campus and community?"

In researching this question, members focused on queer theory. The theory posits that differences in gender and sexual identity, as much as race, are worthy of study. Queer theory has a long history of political activism, surfacing in the 1990s with HIV/AIDS awareness. It is a way to understand the push LGBTQIA are making toward acceptance and inclusion.

We also learned that politics has long been marked by competition, and in many cases conflict, between groups with "opposing" labels: black and white, male and female, Catholic and Protestant; these types of conflicts have been drivers of societal change. The team looked again to history and concluded that allies of marginalized groups were instrumental in evoking societal transformations. These allies are individuals within a privileged group who advocate on behalf of the marginalized to help them gain acceptance. Understanding this, members concluded they needed to work as allies to bring attention to the struggles marginalized groups face, particularly the LGBTQIA community.

ACTION

Thinking critically about the breadth of their research provided members with tremendous insight into *Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change*. Members realized their own personal transformations into allies of marginalized groups can be used to encourage transformations in society.

In investigating *Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change*, members learned allies have been essential to combating marginalization. Specifically, when members of a majority group experience personal transformations and become allies, this has historically led to movements that eventually change society at large. This prompted the team to begin planning awareness activities and events, for both the campus and community.

As conflict arose during the planning of the awareness activities, the team realized the sensitive nature of the topic. An officer, due to religious beliefs, was concerned about working on the project promoting LGBTQIA issues. After discussions with the team and chapter advisors, the officer agreed she could participate on the anti-bullying aspects of the project. This conflict helped the team understand, too, that framing their activities as part of a broader movement about ending bullying and marginalization would help unite a larger audience. LGBTQIA issues were not neglected, but members incorporated them into a larger conversation to gain widespread support.

Officers met with the Grayson College's Marketing Department to receive guidance on branding their awareness activities. They also identified college events during which some of these activities could be conducted. Marketing created anti-bullying signs for the chapter to be used in pictures with students. Additionally, Marketing personnel created a banner that people on campus and in the community could sign as a pledge to stand against bullying. These items were branded with the slogan, "Vikings Don't Bully." Members planned an Awareness Week on campus during which they invited students, faculty, staff, and administrators to take pictures with the signs that were shared on the chapter's social media. Members also held signing events on campus throughout the week.

We learned through research that marginalized groups often feel isolated without a voice and hoped providing bullying victims with an opportunity to share their experiences would decrease those feelings. Keeping in mind that individuals may feel more comfortable sharing anonymously, members decided to display whiteboards on campus for students to share their stories. Officers met with the librarian to ask if they could have space in the library, one of the most highly trafficked areas on campus. The librarian agreed, and the display was kept in place for a month.

To promote positivity and inclusion, members worked with the Marketing Department to create "Take What You Need" signs, which were posted across campus. These signs had tear-off strips with words on them, such as love, peace, strength, kindness, and forgiveness. Members also collected facts about LGBTQIA marginalization, which Marketing staff shared on digital announcement boards.

In hopes of reaching a broader audience, we decided to create a series of videos focused on bullying, along with education and awareness of LGBTQIA issues. Members brainstormed topics and created content outlines, which they shared with Marketing for guidance. Using that feedback, members created five videos including an explanation of types of bullying, LGBTQIA issues around the world, a "What Would You Do?" video, LGBTQIA trailblazers, and a video that focused on the humanity of all people. Marketing provided guidance on how to film the videos and loaned production equipment to members. Because members did not have experience editing videos, advisors arranged for staff from the Information Technology Department to provide training. Once completed, the videos were loaded onto the chapter's YouTube channel to be shared, ensuring this project reached not only the campus, but the community and beyond.

We coordinated with Marketing and the Athletics Department to hold an anti-bullying day during two basketball games. These were advertised on the college's social media channels, as well as in the paper and on television and radio. Marketing also displayed the "Vikings Don't Bully" slogan on the scoreboard during the games. Before the game, student athletes signed the anti-bullying banner, along with community members in attendance. A radio station hosted a live broadcast during the game, and Marketing arranged for one of the officers to speak on-air about the project, sharing this project with the broader community. During halftime at the second game, members presented to the college president the signed anti-bullying banner.

IMPACT

Chapter members grew tremendously through their research, learning to set aside preconceived notions to investigate multiple perspectives. Twenty chapter members worked together on the project, improving their communication, research skills, and leadership attributes. Members also learned to work through differences of opinion when they sought resolution with the officer who was uncomfortable with the LGBTQIA aspect of the project. Through this project, though, the officer transformed her way of thinking. The officer grew to acknowledge that the issue at hand was about simple human kindness and fairness, beyond the scope of politics or religion.

Seventy students took pictures with the anti-bullying signs and more than 250 people signed the anti-bullying banner, demonstrating a sizeable group on campus is committed to combating bullying and marginalization. Twelve people shared their bullying stories on the whiteboards in the library, and 40 students used the "Take What You Need" flyers. Creating the video series brought together four student organizations and six campus departments, again helping to make this a larger college initiative.

Members learned through this process how strongly Grayson College is committed to creating a safe learning environment for all students. This project inspired feelings of community and acceptance on campus. More importantly, though, members know this awareness has the potential for greater long-term impact as students leave the college and go into various communities.

Hopefully people experienced personal transformations in how they view marginalized groups, including LGBTQIA, and use that to inspire societal transformation.

Finally, members have grown as scholars and leaders. Through their weekly discussions and project updates, they felt empowered. They learned how to use information they researched, connect it to issues within the community, and actively address those issues to improve themselves and society. All who participated in the project feel they have grown and better understand, as well as find value in, leading a life of service. They recognize now that it is the only way to ensure transformation and progress.

RESOURCES

Calasanti, T., & Giles, S. (2018). The challenge of intersectionality. *Journal of the American Society on Aging*, 41(4), 69-74. Retrieved from <https://www.asaging.org/blog/challenge-intersectionality>

This article examines the marginalization of various groups. Their status of inequality leads to oppression and harmful practices. The authors' arguments illustrate the ways in which marginalized people suffer from these practices.

Edwards, K. (2006). Aspiring social justice ally identity development: A conceptual model. *NASPA Journal*, 43(4), 39-60. Retrieved from <http://www.keithedwards.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/AAIDNASPA.pdf>

This article explains the important roles allies, as members of a dominant group, play in ending the marginalization of oppressed groups. The author posits student affairs professionals must develop social justice allies to enact social change. The study demonstrates individuals who were willing to be allies did not act until given an opportunity to do so; therefore, institutions must provide allies with those opportunities. This supports the project's focus on creating an awareness initiative that provided allies with opportunities to take action.

Fox, R. (2010). The lunacy of labels. *ETC.: A Review of General Semantics*, 67(1), 15-16. Retrieved from <https://www.generalsemantics.org/our-offerings/periodicals/etc-a-review-of-general-semantics/>

This article argues that labels do not consistently represent instances of reality. Labels can lead to misinformation due to negative association and hasty generalization, which contributes to unwarranted fear and often, marginalization.

Hatzenbuehler, M., & Keyes, K. (2013). Inclusive anti-bullying policies and reduced risk of suicide attempts in lesbian and gay youth. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 53(1), S21-S26. Retrieved from [https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X\(12\)00354-0/fulltext](https://www.jahonline.org/article/S1054-139X(12)00354-0/fulltext)

This article explains that bullying of LGBTQIA students elevates suicide rates. The authors believe implementing LGBTQIA anti-bullying policies in schools could lower these numbers and offer an opportunity for greater acceptance.

Hili, A. (2009). To be gay in post-invasion Iraq. *New Internationalist*, 426, 9-10. Retrieved from <https://newint.org/features/2009/10/01/different-voices>

This article details the marginalization of LGBTQIA and the challenges they face globally. This author shares the morbid realities of this community regarding regular harassment, life threatening conversations, and their murders.

Jewell, L.M., & Morrison, M.A. (2012). Making sense of homonegativity: Heterosexual men and women's understanding of their own prejudice and discrimination toward gay men. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 9(4), 351-370. Retrieved from <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2012-23720-009>

This article outlines the issues heteronormative individuals have with LGBTQIA, which include believing homosexuality is a choice, unnatural, or against religious values. The results of this research project allowed the authors to conclude continued research and discussion could help define a LGBTQIA accepting world.

Mba, C. (2018). Conceiving global culture: Frantz Fanon and the politics of identity. *Acta Academica*, 50(1), 81-103. Retrieved from <http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/aa/article/view/3556>

This article analyzes the effects of negative labeling on cultures and how it is encouraged through politics. The author gives various examples of political figures who criminalize or belittle the identities of multiple cultures.

Watson, K. (2005). Queer theory. *Group Analysis*, 38(1), 67-81. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0533316405049369>

This article provided an overview of queer theory, a qualitative research design used in social research. It outlined the long history of political activism in the LGBTQIA community, including how it relates to the categorization of gender and sexuality, which remain central to the group's contemporary political struggles.

PREPARE, CONNECT, SUCCEED: TRANSFORMING SOFT SKILLS NECESSARY FOR THE WORLDS OF WORK

OMICRON ZETA CHAPTER
Somerset Community College
Somerset, Kentucky

THEME 8: WORLDS OF WORK

ABSTRACT

As we began our Honors in Action Project, our chapter officer team identified a common interest in promoting student success. This led us to explore three themes related to the Honors Study Topic: "Worlds at Work," "Powers of Connection," and "Economies of Everything." We ultimately decided to focus our research on "Worlds of Work." To identify important factors related to student success, we conducted interviews with campus and local business leaders and reviewed publications on student success. We found multiple sources indicating a need for training in professional skills known as "soft skills" among community college students. As a result, our chapter developed a mini-conference called "Prepare. Connect. Succeed."

The conference was designed specifically to address the need for soft skills training as well as stimulate engagement between students, faculty, staff, and prospective employers within our community. In collaboration with student services and academic divisions across Somerset Community College, we offered workshops, a panel discussion on the topic of employability featuring local business leaders, a networking expo, and a special guest speaker who offered practical, motivational guidance on navigating academic and career pathways. Thanks to cooperation with our college marketing and recruitment specialists, we were also able to invite area high school students and community members.

OBJECTIVES

In the collaboration phase, our goal was to raise awareness of the need for soft skills training and identify community and campus partners to assist with hosting and executing the event. We utilized the expertise of our international student advisor to make sure that international students were aware of the event. Campus "Early Alert" coaches who specialize in student support agreed to help spread the word about the event. Our campus bookstore supported our goals and sponsored a lunch and keynote speaker for the event. Our campus career coach expert, who assists students in identifying career paths that suit their talents and interests, agreed to design a workshop to guide attendees through a personal, professional evaluation and career coaching. Utilizing our local chamber of commerce, chapter officers invited business leaders to serve as panelists in a discussion on employability and promote their businesses through a networking expo. We received overwhelming community support from a variety of businesses, including participation from the executive director of the Somerset-Pulaski Chamber of Commerce, two human resources professionals, and a Somerset Community College dean.

Our primary objective in the action phase of the Honors in Action Project was to educate community college students on the importance of communication and offer training on soft skills. To achieve this goal, we offered workshops and a panel discussion on employability, and we asked that our keynote speaker specifically address the topic of soft skills as they relate to academic and professional success.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

Phi Theta Kappa's Honors Study Topic, *Transformations, Acknowledging, Assessing and Achieving Change*, inspired our chapter to research strategies for supporting college students through personal and educational transformations. Reviewing literature on community college success, we found connections between communication, academic experiences, and employability. We narrowed our focus as we discovered correlations between communication, academic success, employability, and overall student success. We found unique challenges for females, international students, and individuals making career transitions and saw a common need for soft skills training among these groups (Herold (2017), Vogel (2013), Womujuni, (2007)). We learned that community college students from various backgrounds need assistance in engaging and communicating effectively with potential employers. Chapter officers identified an opportunity to offer a soft skills training event and recognized the need to collaborate with others to offer this kind of training. As the project developed, we met with our college president for guidance and approval. He encouraged us to establish specific and measurable outcomes for the event.

The Honors Study Topic led our research team to consider the transformations that are most challenging for community college students. Our officer team held personal interests in challenges facing international students; gender disparities in Health, Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (HSTEM) careers; and the challenges associated with career transitions. Following exploratory research in these areas, students identified the common need for "soft skills" training and community networking.

We formed two additional research questions to help us set specific, measurable goals for the Honors in Action Project:

- What factors promote successful employer/employee relations?
- What factors inhibit successful employer/employee relations?

Further literature review and interviews with campus and community leaders revealed punctuality, personal care, professional attire, teamwork, dependability, and critical thinking as key factors in successfully securing a job and maintaining positive employer/employee relations (Loretto (2015), Simmons (2018)). While we found significant agreement and overlap in the general types of professional skills desired by employers, we encountered a variety of perspectives on gender issues and gender disparities. While Wang (2017) and colleagues reported specific factors related to gender disparities in STEM fields, Khazan (2018) reported more complex factors contributing to gender disparities related to broader economic, social, and cultural trends. Herold and colleagues (2017) indicated that the need for soft skills training, however, is not gender specific.

CONCLUSIONS

Evidence that the need for soft skills training transcends gender and culture was also supported by Vogel (2015), who reported differences in language and culture as challenges to successful employer/employee relations for international students. We conducted interviews with international students on our campus to identify any additional factors that might present a barrier to their success. In these interviews, students expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to effectively communicate with prospective employers, affirming the report from Vogel. The results of interviewing local students and prospective employers and of reviewing literature point to communication skills and professional etiquette as challenges facing community college students from a variety of backgrounds, regardless of gender. Soft skills training programs encompassing training in communication, professional etiquette, critical thinking, and team building may be a mechanism for overcoming these challenges.

The Honors in Action research process led our chapter to develop a student success-themed mini-conference offering workshops to provide soft skills training, a panel discussion with community business leaders on employability, a keynote speaker addressing the relationship

between soft skills and success, and a networking expo providing an opportunity for college students to interact with campus and community representatives.

ACTION

Our “Prepare. Connect. Succeed.” conference opened with morning workshops offering training in team building, career coaching, communication styles, and networking. Ten workshops took place, and each workshop was led by a college professor, a business leader, or a Phi Theta Kappa officer. These workshops exposed attendees to a variety of the soft skills that are considered most important to employers. During lunch, attendees participated in a panel discussion moderated by our keynote speaker. Panelists included the executive director of the Somerset-Pulaski Chamber of Commerce, human resources specialists from two large, local businesses, and our Dean of Health Sciences. Phi Theta Kappa officers developed specific questions for the moderator to encourage each panelist to address the key factors for success identified by research. Panelist responses affirmed our findings and allowed attendees to hear firsthand about the importance of specific soft skills in familiar, local businesses.

The panel discussion was an important opportunity for students to ask questions of business leaders. Brian Simmons, former business consultant and founder of BEST Edutainment, served as keynote speaker. He offered a professional’s perspective on soft skills in an engaging and entertaining manner that captured all the attendee’s attention. The mini conference culminated in a networking expo designed to provide an environment for students to meet business leaders, put the soft skills they learned into practice, and learn about employment opportunities. This helped business leaders engage with prospective employees, and students, conversely, learned more about specific employer expectations in our community.

As a chapter, we learned that our “Worlds of Work” are key elements in the process of positive transformation. Specifically, we learned that by networking with members of our campus and local community, students can gain essential soft skills for success in the work environment. It was encouraging to find campus partners ready to help students develop the skills they need most. These soft skills range from simple habits like punctuality to more complex issues like team building and work ethic. As an officer team, taking on this project gave us the opportunity to practice all of these skills and more.

IMPACT

To assess the project, our chapter collaborated with college marketing and research experts to create a survey for attendees. The survey included a variety of questions designed to assess the effectiveness of the event in raising awareness of the importance of soft skills and of the understanding of specific soft skills recognized as most important in our research. The survey also included an area for attendees to provide general comments on the event. Through attendance records and survey analysis, we obtained both quantitative and qualitative data from event participants. We surveyed all attendees, not just students, allowing us to draw conclusions about interactions that occurred during the event.

Among the 223 registered participants, seventy-five completed the survey. The response rate of 34 percent provided a sample for assessment and included a combination of high school students, college students, and other guests. In each category, the responses were overwhelmingly positive. Ninety-five percent of high school students gained a better understanding of communication, and 90 percent learned a new soft skill. Eighty-four percent of college students gained a better understanding of communication, and 96 percent learned a new soft skill. Among other guests, 90 percent gained a better understanding of communication, and 50 percent learned a new soft skill.

A college student who took part in the event stated that she had only come to the event for the extra credit but ended up learning a lot about soft skills. In the comments section of our

event survey, one of the high school student attendees mentioned how the event helped her “know herself better.” Even the presenters and business owners complimented our chapter on the success of the event, and all guests who served as presenters reported gaining a better understanding of communication and reported learning a professional skill.

As a chapter, we learned several things while researching and planning this event. First, we learned that the importance of soft skills is often underestimated but extremely important for the career success of every individual. Second, we learned that although people may have heard about soft skills, they may not have a clear understanding of soft skills or the opportunity to practice them. This can be rectified if colleges organize events that provide training and opportunities for interaction between students, business, leaders, and prospective employers. Third, we learned that building relationships is extremely important for success. As our guest speaker Brian Simmons so emphatically stated, “It’s all about the connections gained through relationships.” It was because of the relationships that each one of our chapter members had with college faculty and staff, business and community leaders, and other students that we were able to succeed in planning and accomplishing such a successful event for our community.

RESOURCES

Doyle, A. (2018). Soft skills list and examples. The balance careers. Retrieved from <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/list-of-soft-skills-2063770>

This article described communication, leadership, and critical thinking as examples of soft skills needed in the workplace.

Herold, B. (2017, March 22). Appalachia has STEM jobs available. Will students have the skills to fill them? *Education Week*. Retrieved from https://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/DigitalEducation/2017/03/appalachia_stem_jobs_students_skills.html

Herold interviewed business leaders who indicated that recent male and female graduates are in need of soft skills in the workplace.

Khazan, O. (2018, October 31). The more gender equality, the fewer women in STEM. *The Atlantic*. Retrieved from <https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2018/02/the-more-gender-equality-the-fewer-women-in-stem/553592/>

Khazan summarized gender disparities on an international level citing social equality, opportunity, and socioeconomic status as important factors influencing gender balance in STEM careers.

Loretto, P. (2015, April 24). The top 10 work values employers look for. The balance careers. Retrieved from <https://www.thebalancecareers.com/top-work-values-employers-look-for-1986763>

This article lists strong work ethic, motivation, dependability, and responsibility as the key attributes employers desire in employees.

Simmons, B. Personal interview. 8 Oct. 2018.

In this interview, Simmons shared his personal perspective as a human resources specialist on key factors for personal and professional success. He offered insight on what he looks for in employees when interviewing candidates for his multiple businesses.

Vogel, G.M. (2013). Language and cultural challenges facing business faculty in the ever-expanding global classroom. *Journal of Instructional Pedagogies*, 11. Retrieved from <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1097143.pdf>

This article addresses cultural and language barriers faced by international students in the classroom and job market.

Wang, M.T., & Degol, J.L. (2017). Gender gap in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM): Current knowledge, implications for practice, policy, and future directions. *Educational Psychology Review*, 29(1), 119-140. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-015-9355-x>

Wang and Degol reviewed research journals crossing many different fields and summarized six explanations for gender gaps in STEM-related career paths.

Womujuni, V. (2007). The challenges international students face in adjusting to their new status as graduate students: An exploratory case study. Portland State University library. Retrieved from https://pdxscholar.library.pdx.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=4995&context=open_access_etds

Womujuni performed a case study at Portland State University exploring the challenges international students face as college students.

DOES TECHNOLOGY UNITE OR DIVIDE US? TEACHING CYBER SAFETY AND UNPLUGGING TO FIFTH GRADERS

ALPHA SIGMA ZETA CHAPTER
Onondaga Community College
Onondaga, New York

THEME 7: POWERS OF CONNECTION

ABSTRACT

The technological world in which we live is ever changing and continuously transforming how we communicate and connect. We can communicate across the globe instantly and connect through social media with people we might otherwise never meet in real life. At the same time, technology can disconnect us from those immediately around us. While there are many benefits to using technology and social media, there are dangers, like cyberbullying and addiction to our devices. Increasingly children are at the highest risk of these cyber dangers. The elderly are also using technology and social media to connect, but sometimes struggle with how to use their devices. Our research armed us with the information we needed to transform the online experiences of both children and seniors in our community and to help them strengthen their powers of connection. Specifically, we partnered with an elementary school and a senior citizen community center and taught both populations how to stay safe when connecting online, how to use technology to connect, and how and why to unplug.

We were intrigued by the concept of connection and its association with transformations. As we discussed the Honors Study Topic theme, "The Powers of Connection," the conversation turned to technology and social media. Our team was divided on the role that technology plays in connection. Some felt technology and social media increased our connection, but others felt they were more disconnected because of technology.

Therefore, our main research question asked, do technology and social media connect or disconnect us? We scoured the academic literature on both perspectives and found that both perspectives are valid. Technology does have the power to connect us but, at the same time, can and does disconnect us.

As we dove deeper, our focus moved to the power technology has to connect children as well as senior citizens. Research shows that children are increasingly using technology to connect. While there are many benefits of connecting with technology and social media, there are dangers, including cyberbullying and cyber predators. Also, children are increasingly becoming addicted to technology, which can have detrimental mental and physical health effects. Further, the elderly are also using technology to connect, which also has benefits and risks. Seniors often struggle with using technology, which can prevent them from connecting virtually. Also, predators and criminals often target the elderly online to scam them or steal their identity.

OBJECTIVES

Our main Honors in Action Project objectives were to 1) educate ourselves on the importance of cyber safety and prevention of/response to cyberbullies when using technology, social media, and gaming, 2) educate people on the importance of unplugging from technology to connect with those around you, and 3) help senior citizens learn how to better use technology and stay safe online in order to increase virtual connections.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

Our research focused on the juxtaposition of connectedness and disconnectedness. Our main research question was: do technology and social media connect or disconnect us? Research shows that we can be connected and disconnected at the same time. We live in a world where connection through technology is greater than ever before. We can communicate across the globe instantly, and we can connect through social media with people we might otherwise never meet. At the same time, technology can disconnect us from those immediately around us. We can be pulled into a virtual world, hidden behind our cellphones and computers, and removed from the physical, social world. Research shows that technology can be particularly beneficial to senior citizens, who are often physically isolated. However, using technology is often more difficult for older populations, which can deter them from connecting online. When senior citizens do use social media and technology, research has found many positive effects on mental health and longevity.

Conversely, research shows that social media can increase anxiety and feelings of depression, based on the comparative nature of social networking. Users sometimes feel that their life or accomplishments don't measure up to others. At the same time, for those plagued with social anxiety, social media and technology can create platforms that make connection and communication easier.

CONCLUSIONS

Our research showed that while technology has changed our ability to connect in many positive ways, it has also created new challenges and dangers, especially for both the youngest and oldest in our society. Scholars show that there are many benefits of social media and technology, like communication, education, and socialization, but warn that through social media and technology we can connect with predators and/or experience cyberbullying and isolation from the physical social world.

Overall our research on the power of technology to connect and transform us showed us that there is not one nice and neat conclusion to our research question. Therefore, we had to create a nuanced and multi-tiered approach to our action. Technology is here to stay and is constantly transforming our society, communication, and social world. Our research also showed that we needed to focus on teaching children how to stay safe when connecting online and how and why to unplug, and help senior citizens learn how to use technology to connect.

ACTION

We collaborated with McKinley Brighton Elementary School because we wanted to help children be safer while using interactive technology. We met with the principal to discuss what we had learned from our research and whether our informed service was needed at the school. We learned that cyberbullying and overuse of gaming and social media were significant problems for his students, which framed our chapter's programming at the school. The principal invited us to visit the entire fifth grade three times during the fall 2018 semester to teach about cyber safety and unplugging.

We created three committees: social media, gaming, and unplugging. Each committee researched their topic and created an hour-long interactive lesson. We collaborated with an early education professor who reviewed our lessons. She attended three of our meetings and helped us revise our lessons to make them more fun, interactive, and age-appropriate.

For our first visit, we separated the fifth grade into two classrooms, one focused on social media and the other on online gaming. Each lesson consisted of a short presentation followed by interactive stations led by a Phi Theta Kappa member. Our early education professor suggested that the presenter move from station to station instead of the children. As a result, teachers were very impressed with our class management abilities. At each station, students learned about an

aspect of cyber safety, like dealing with cyberbullies, specifically aimed at either social media or gaming.

Our plan for our following visit was that students would attend the opposite program. However, the day before our second visit, the school's principal canceled our class because of an overlooked awards ceremony. While we were disappointed, we refocused and amended our third and final visit so students didn't miss any important material.

For our final visit we invited Jon Clark, a Phi Theta Kappa alumnus and CEO of CNY Unplugged to speak to the students. CNY Unplugged helps people put down their phones and connect in person. Jon gave a 20-minute talk on unplugging, sharing how he lost his dad to suicide in part because of depression caused by disconnection. He wished that he had put his phone down and connected more with his father in person. Afterwards, students visited five interactive stations on social media, gaming, and unplugging.

Second, we collaborated with a senior center to teach the elderly how to use technology. We met with the senior center's director, and she explained that their seniors often express the desire to better understand technology, which supported our research findings. The senior center advertised our seminar and encouraged their members to bring their devices to the training. Thirteen senior citizens attended our student-led hour-long technology seminar, and we provided one-on-one instruction on each person's technological needs, as well as a short presentation to the group on staying safe online.

Third, we wanted to educate our campus community on cyber-safety and unplugging. We held an hour-long presentation on campus and invited Jon Clark to discuss CNY Unplugged and our team presented on our research, project objectives, and outcomes.

Our research armed us with the information we needed to transform the online experiences of both children and seniors in our community and help them strengthen their powers of connection. Interestingly, our team also benefited from the interpersonal connections we made. After each visit/event, our team was excited for the next chance to teach and serve. We knew we were making a difference. The technological world that we live in is ever changing and continuously transforming how we communicate and connect. Our project helped both the youngest and the oldest in our society learn how to connect safely online, as well as how and why to disconnect from technology.

On each visit to the school we taught 75 fifth graders. We created interactive educational programming that was age-appropriate and fun. By visiting more than once, we were able to assess what information had been retained and could focus on the topics that needed reinforcing. For example, in our "Post It or Don't Post It" game, 70 out of 75 children remembered what they should or should not post on social media or online in general. In our Social Media station, only half of the kids remembered the information on social media age restrictions. Therefore, the group leader adapted and focused more on the topic. In our Cyberbullying Scenarios station, only about half answered the questions correctly, which meant we needed to go over in more detail how to respond to bullies.

IMPACT

While our focus was on technology and connection, the students learned even more than we had expected. They were intrigued with the college experience and asked us questions about college, how much homework we have, and what we did for fun. These students are from a very impoverished neighborhood where it is more common to have family members incarcerated than college-educated. This made our visits even more meaningful, and we could feel and see the connection we were making and the lifelong transformation that was taking place. This was the best outcome we could have envisioned. The school was so impressed with our visits that we have been asked to continue to perform outreach with the fifth grade indefinitely.

At the senior center, 13 senior citizens attended our training. As with most training, the task is easier when someone is right there walking the student through each step, but when the trainer is gone, it becomes more challenging. Therefore, we created personalized handouts addressing each person's needs, so they could have step-by-step instructions to help after we left. We also provided other handouts on the basics of social media, cyber safety, and iPhone/Android shortcuts. We had attendees practice their skills by emailing us. This helped connect each team as well, so that the participant could email us if help was needed in the future, which made our impact more long lasting. Like at the elementary school, we were surprised that a strong connection was made in such a short amount of time. The seniors were appreciative to have someone talk with them, listen to their needs, and take time to help them. Immediately following our visit, the director asked us to return next semester for another training, which showed us that our action made a difference.

Our team gained so much from both the research/planning process and the service we completed. We set deadlines, worked and communicated with community partners, and set and met goals. Our team divided and conquered, which helped us learn the importance of accountability. And most importantly, through our service we learned that lasting connections can be made, even in a small moment. We helped both the children and seniors learn how to connect more safely with technology and, in turn, made connections that showed us the power of connection.

RESOURCES

Bonetti, L., Campbell, M.A., & Gilmore, L. (2010). The relationship of loneliness and social anxiety with children's and adolescents' online communication. *CyberPsychology, Behavior & Social Networking*, 13(3), 279-285. Retrieved from <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/abs/10.1089/cyber.2009.0215?journalCode=cyber>

The authors found that children who mostly discussed very personal/intimate topics online were more depressed and lonely than children who talked about these things in person. However, those that discussed intimate things online did so because of their anxiety of face-to-face communication. This article showed us that online communication can't and shouldn't replace face-to-face relationships, but at the same time serves an important purpose for those with social anxiety.

Chopik, W.J. (2016). The benefits of social technology use among older adults are mediated by reduced loneliness. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 19(9), 551-556. Retrieved from <http://europepmc.org/articles/PMC5312603/>

This article showed that social media can have positive effects for seniors, but that the inability to use technology can cause frustration and anxiety. Seniors who use social technology have better overall well-being and health and less depression.

Clark, J.L., Algoe, S.B., & Green, M.C. (2018). Social network sites and well-being: The role of Social connection. *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 27(1), 32-37. Retrieved from <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0963721417730833>

This article showed that social media has the power to connect us but, at the same time, make us feel disconnected and isolated. The authors argue that social networking sites are beneficial when used to make true social connections and cause harm and isolation when the focus is on social comparison.

O'Keefe G.S., Clarke-Pearson, K., & Council on Communications and Media. (2011). Clinical report: The impact of social media on children, adolescents, and families. *Pediatrics* 127(4), 800-804. Retrieved from <https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/pediatrics/127/4/800.full.pdf>

The authors argued that children are increasingly using all types of social media and technology. They argue that there are many benefits, like communication, education, and socialization, but warn that technology can connect kids with predators and/or cyberbullies and cause isolation. This article showed us the importance of education on the benefits and dangers of technology to keep kids safe online.

O'Reilly, M., Dogra, N., Whiteman, N., Hughes, J., Eruyar, S., & Reilly, P. (2018). Is social media bad for mental health and wellbeing? Exploring the perspectives of adolescents. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 23(4), 601-613. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/324687215_Is_social_media_bad_for_mental_health_and_wellbeing_Exploring_the_perspectives_of_adolescents

The authors found that young people believe that social media is harmful to their mental health because it can be addictive, cause anxiety, and encourage cyberbullying. This article showed us that many young people perceive social media to be negative, yet they continue to use it.

Tromholt, M. (2016). The Facebook experiment: Quitting Facebook leads to higher levels of well-being. *Cyberpsychology Behavior and Social Networking*, 19(11), 661-666. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/309895983_The_Facebook_Experiment_Quitting_Facebook_Leads_to_Higher_Levels_of_Well-Being

The author argued that social networking can be harmful to life satisfaction and emotional well-being. He found a causal relationship between quitting Facebook and increased positive life outlook/satisfaction. This helped us understand how unplugging can benefit mental health, even if the break is short.

Tsai, S.H., Shillair, R., Cotten, S.R., Winstead, V., & Yost, E. (2015). Getting grandma online: Are tablets the answer for increasing digital inclusion for older adults in the U.S.? *Educational Gerontology*, 41(10), 695-709. Retrieved from <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4748942/>

The authors found that technology can benefit seniors by reducing loneliness and depression, and increasing feelings of connection and independence. This helped us understand how seniors who do not know how to use technology get excluded from the benefits of the digital world.

Wang, V., & Edwards, S. (2016). Strangers are friends I haven't met yet: A positive approach to young people's use of social media. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 19(9), 1204-1219. Retrieved from <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/13676261.2016.1154933?journalCode=cjys20>

This article suggested that social media can be positive/constructive for young people. The authors argued that young people build relationship skills online that they then use in face-to-face communication. Further, social media provides young people opportunities to connect with different types of people. The authors argue that social media provides more benefits than risks. This helped us see that social media can be beneficial to socialization and connection.

TRANSFORMING NETWORKS OF LIFE: RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT CHANGES IN THE GREAT LAKES

ALPHA RHO PI CHAPTER

Northwestern Michigan College

Traverse City, Michigan

THEME 1: NETWORKS OF LIFE

ABSTRACT

Our team examined the nine themes in Phi Theta Kappa's 2018/2019 Honors Program Guide that are related to Phi Theta Kappa's 2018/2019 Honors Study Topic, *Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change*. We felt inspired by the first theme, "Networks of Life." Our college is surrounded by natural areas and sits between two bays of Lake Michigan, one of the five Great Lakes, that harbor 20 percent of the water on the Earth's surface.

We explored how we contribute to the various forms of damage to our environment, including pollution, invasive species, algae blooms, and habitat degradation, and focused our research on how to facilitate improvement to the health of the Great Lakes ecosystem. Our research began with the very broad concept of ecosystem imbalance. While we found climate change and pollution to be pressing issues in our community, our focus turned to invasive species as we reflected upon the changing landscape of our Great Lakes. This research is especially relevant to our college, as we have a renowned Freshwater Studies program and house the Great Lakes Maritime Academy that trains engineers, deckhands, and officers for the Great Lakes shipping industry. Our research is also critical to our community, as tourism and recreation are core drivers in our regional economy. Our research resulted in our acknowledging and assessing the changes to the Great Lakes Watershed by invasive species. We discovered dwindling native species populations as a result of the presence of invasive species — organisms that are both non-native to the area and cause harm to the local ecosystem. These aquatic invaders include sea lamprey, round goby, and quagga mussels.

To be a catalyst for change, our chapter hosted a documentary and facilitated an educational panel with environmental experts in our Milliken Auditorium. Our goal was to inform our community about invasive species in the Great Lakes Watershed in order to influence legislators to change policies regarding the Great Lakes. This project was able to impact both students and community members, those attending the event, and those following our posts online. Through this project, our chapter grew in several ways: we gained new members interested in getting involved because of their passion for this topic; we developed our leadership skills including planning, organizing, marketing, facilitating, and evaluating events; and we learned how to become better environmental stewards and to advocate for legislative change.

OBJECTIVES

Our first objective was to identify an urgent need not only relevant to our community, but also reflective of a bigger issue of our ecosystem on a national or even global scale. Our second objective was to both educate our campus community on what we learned and to inspire local residents to take action. To examine a specific issue facing our community, our team needed to investigate networks of life in our local community. Many of our members are passionate about the environment, so we wanted to influence positive ecological change.

Another objective was to ground our efforts with research that helped us learn more about the effects of invasive species. We met to create a research list of diverse expert sources. Subsequently, academic journals, documentaries, our school's own extensive records, government data, and interviews were among our final source materials, in addition to our own personal experiences from living in the area. We decided during our research that advocacy, as well as improving our skills through collaboration, would be key to this year's project.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

Our research on the "Networks of Life" theme began with another topic, microplastics, spurred by the anti-straw movement. While investigating microplastics, we felt a connection between networks of life and all of the species in our own backyard that we never knew were invasive. With this realization, our chapter discovered this new-found knowledge was incredibly valuable and worth expanding. Our research questions included a desire to understand how these relationships between species affect our ecosystem and affect us, not only in our local ecosystem, but in the global ecosystem.

Our local region has many organizations with which we could work that focus on environmental advocacy. We sought to involve regional organizations, governmental groups, and local businesses. It was crucial for our team to involve Doug Craven, the local natural resources director for the Grand Traverse Band of Odawa Indians, not only because he holds a very unique cultural perspective, but also because he was one of the experts in the "Making Waves" documentary. We invited four different environmental groups to participate in a panel during our educational forum. This meant another objective was to convey the importance of our project to our community and establish professional connections. These skills will be applicable to our team in the future as we continue to advocate for other causes. Our chapter's goals for action included having both community and campus members in our audience. We created a survey in order to get detailed feedback about our event. This helped our chapter with following the progress of this project and with sponsoring more productive events in the future.

We asked "How has the presence of invasive species in our local area had a long-term, detrimental impact?" This question is integral in dissecting the history of this issue, which must be understood in order to make determinations about possible solutions. We explored the effect invasive species have on native species in our waters, which revealed the network of species in our local ecosystem. For instance, the presence of quagga mussels, an aquatic invader, has decimated the diporeia population, a native shrimp-like crustacean that is important to the Great Lakes food web, as it is a critical food source for many fish species.

CONCLUSIONS

Much of the research we consulted was focused on mitigation efforts with ways to kill quagga mussels and control which rivers the sea lamprey populations are allowed to inhabit. We found both successes and failures in invasive species legislation, including regulations regarding ballast water and the movement of small watercraft. This meant that we needed to educate the public on watershed issues and who they elect as their legislative representatives. If community members are not knowledgeable about which laws are absent or in place to protect the environment, they cannot raise concerns. Our research also stressed the long-term outcomes of the presence of invasive species and concluded that education is the most crucial component in alleviating the stress brought by invasive species on our ecosystems. We asked "How can residents in our community help restore our ecosystem's balance by improving the survival of our native species through awareness and action?"

ACTION

While researching, we came across the documentary "Making Waves: Battle for the Great Lakes," a fascinating study of the impact of invasive species in the Great Lakes. After our chapter viewed the documentary, we knew it was an excellent vehicle for promoting awareness and insight of the devastation wreaked by invasive species not only in the bays near our campus but the

entire Great Lakes Region. The movie was insightful, but we felt that for change to be achieved, answering questions raised by the documentary accurately and effectively was imperative. Our goal to help transform the health of our Great Lakes meant we needed to create a lasting impact on the audience so they would not only absorb information but become activists and advocate for lasting environmental change.

We reached out to four local experts from our community to participate in a panel following the documentary. We invited the Invasive Species Network coordinator from our local conservation district, the natural resources director from the Grand Traverse Band of Odawa Indians, an exchange student in the Freshwater Studies program at our college, and Inland Seas Education Association director, a local water education association. These collaborations were crucial because each expert had a different focus, whether it was an emphasis on aquatic or terrestrial species, how each of us can be an important agent for change by changing our own behaviors while enjoying the Great Lakes, or advocating for improved legislation and funding to protect the Great Lakes.

Additionally, we partnered with Oryana, a local environmentally focused co-op market, to provide citrus-infused water for our participants to enjoy. They also provided educational literature about adopting more environmentally sustainable practices. This both supported awareness of Oryana's mission for a healthier community and environment and allowed for a better event for attendees. We also partnered with our Dennon Museum Center to use their auditorium as our venue. Finally, through utilizing both posters and social media, we invited the community to join us for our event.

IMPACT

We reached 692 individuals on social media interested in our event. Only 15 individuals, outside of our chapter members and the panelists, attended. This number could be a result of the event occurring a week before final exams and the wintry weather. The event connected aquatic and terrestrial issues with invasive species and allowed our expert panelists to interact with the audience and illustrate just how personally relevant these issues are. By providing enough time for community members to ask questions, we provided tools the general public can use in their everyday lives. Involving community members in the discussion is crucial because we all benefit from the health of our ecosystem, whether it is through gardening, fishing, or enjoying recreational activities in the Great Lakes.

Attendees were surveyed upon conclusion of the event, and they remarked the event combined "facts, science, opportunity, and hope." Every person surveyed responded they felt more knowledgeable regarding invasive species and actions they could personally take to improve the watershed. The feedback also provided us with insight we can apply for future events. Furthermore, we were able to distribute educational literature to every attendee, providing them with knowledge and insight to be a part of the solution. Looking forward, we know how to advertise more effectively.

Our team gained a more comprehensive idea of how to communicate with groups to sync and confirm schedules. One of our officers served as the panel moderator, allowing her to develop her public speaking skills. Our chapter plans to host another environmental educational forum in the future, and we are in discussion with college administrators to start an environmental endorsement that students can earn by participating in environmental programs and projects on campus. The goal of this endorsement would be to encourage environmental awareness and activism and allow students to have this notated on their transcript. Through acknowledging, assessing and achieving change, we can not only transform our campus, our community, our watershed and our world; we can also transform ourselves.

RESOURCES

Caddick, J. (2018, November 14). Great Lakers applaud senate action to improve bill on aquatic invasive species. Retrieved from <https://greatlakes.org/2018/11/great-lakers-applaud-senate-action-to-improve-bill-on-aquatic-invasive-species/>

This article allowed us to investigate where positive changes are occurring in legislation and where other potential improvements can be made. Fifty million dollars was recently provided for monitoring newly introduced invasive species in the region. The source also discussed certain provisions that are in the works and the potential barriers this legislation may face, expressing how crucial it is for citizens to become involved. Some barriers include compromise over areas that will receive priority protection and how the legislature may vary over borders.

e Stasio, B.T., Schrimpf, M.B., & Cornwell, B.H. (2014). Phytoplankton communities in Green Bay, Lake Michigan after invasion by Dreissenid Mussels: Increased dominance by cyanobacteria. *Diversity* (14242818), 6(4), 681-704. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.proxy.nmc.edu/10.3390/d6040681>

This study identified the detrimental effect the presence of one species can have on a total ecosystem. The disruptions caused by these invaders are numerous and can have many negative effects on native organisms. This study noted a decrease in native species' diversity.

Knight, W., & Bocking, S. (2016). Fisheries, invasive species, and the formation and fracturing of the Great Lakes system. *Canadian Geographer*, 60(4), 446-457. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12298>

This article discussed the complexity behind the issue of invasive species in Great Lakes waters. Care for this rich ecosystem is a responsibility that transcends country borders and different cultures. This source stresses the need for compromise in order to produce positive environmental changes and prevent further ecological damage. Efforts like restocking fish are becoming more commonplace, revealing the urgent imbalance of the aquatic ecosystem. The article discusses the changing conditions of the Great Lakes over time in a way that clearly demonstrates the detrimental effects that occur as a result of an action. In this case, those actions include introducing an invasive organism for recreational purposes or an absence of environmentally protective legislature.

Sandoval, E. (2016). *Aquatic invasive species?: Federal activities and costs of addressing threats and impacts*. New York: Nova Science Publishers, Inc. Retrieved from <https://login.proxy.nmc.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=e000xna&AN=1286308&site=eds-live>

This report documented the progress being made by the Aquatic Nuisance Species Task Force, a federally run organization. Roughly \$130 million is spent federally every fiscal year toward this task force's aquatic invasive species prevention efforts. There are still management problems with government agencies that are given the responsibility to research methods for lowering invasive species populations; many agencies are not reporting data and trends. Increased reporting could improve the efficiency of these task forces, especially with changing global conditions. Increasing trade and climate change trends are expected to increase the threat invasive species pose because of more mild habitats that allow the different species to spread farther.

Sax, J.L. (1969, January). "The Public Trust Doctrine in Natural Resource Law: Effective Judicial Intervention." *Michigan Law Review*. 68(471), 471-566. Retrieved from uvm.edu/gjee/research/greentax/PA-CDAE395-VCAT/articles/sax.pdf

The notion of water serving as a public, human right that demands protection finds its origins not in the 21st Century, but in Roman and English law, which states natural resources, including water, are too important to be possessed by any one individual. It is the government's responsibility to preserve these natural resources for public good, which translates into the legal case for public trust.

Sinclair, K. (2018). Combatting lake invaders: A proposal for ballast water standards to save the Great Lakes from invasive species. *Ecology Law Quarterly*, 45(2), 473-483. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.proxy.nmc.edu/10.15779/Z385X25C8H>

This academic journal addresses the weaknesses of the Environmental Protection Agency in creating adequate legislation to combat the introduction of more invasive species on a national level.

State of Michigan. (2018). Invasive species laws. Retrieved from <https://www.michigan.gov/invasives/0,5664,7-324-68071---,00.html>

This government source provided a list of current laws in place to assist in the fight against invasive species in the state of Michigan. The page even delves into regulations regarding ships and laws about the movement of firewood.

Walsh, J. (Producer), & Walsh, B. (Director). (2016). *Making Waves* [Motion picture]. United States: Great Lakes Media.

This documentary connected the environmental and economic issues the Great Lakes are currently facing. The documentary discussed potential solutions and looked toward the future of the Great Lakes and the survival of its native species. The documentary focused on several key species disrupting the balance of the ecosystems in and surrounding the Great Lakes.

THE POWERS OF CONNECTION: CREATING A COLLEGE WEBSITE TO PROMOTE INCLUSIVITY

ALPHA SIGMA RHO CHAPTER

Reading Area Community College

Reading, Pennsylvania

THEME 7: POWERS OF CONNECTION

ABSTRACT

As the only community college in Pennsylvania offering specialized support for a large local Hispanic community (Hispanic Serving Institution — HSI), our chapter has had special interest in the divisive nature of the current conversation in our country and how it related to Phi Theta Kappa’s 2018/2019 Honors Study Topic, *Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change*. With this in mind, and after revising our research question multiple times, our chapter developed the question, “With the current state of division, polarization and partisanship, how can we use the ‘Powers of Connection’ to teach others to transform divisive debate into collaborative communication?” We theorized that connectivity could be enhanced by demonstrating and encouraging best practices of communication. This prompted us to research topics such as political correctness, sources of media bias, inclusivity, and diversity.

Realizing we needed to obtain primary research from college stakeholders to properly assess the ways in which communication facilitates or obstructs connections, we developed primary and secondary research teams. In order to connect on as many levels as possible, our chapter decided we needed to reach out in multiple ways: in person, via social media, or online. We met with campus administrators and community stakeholders to share our plans, our project, and our research results. We obtained video interviews and set up multiple on-campus activities and events to reach as broad an audience as possible.

OBJECTIVES

Our goal was to develop a shareable, custom-designed website for our campus and other Phi Theta Kappa chapters as a communication resource and connection between us all. As part of our action to present the website on our campus, we planned a Symposium. After some communication failures within our own team, we canceled this forum, concentrating instead on creative outreach via social media and in person. Our Honors in Action Project culminated in a new website resource for our college and our chapter with significant on-campus and external reach.

Our overarching objective was to evaluate the effectiveness of the connections formed through various types of communication, with the intention of improving communication within our campus. We planned multiple actions to convey that information in a variety of ways, including multiple events on campus for participants to experience interaction and effective collaboration.

To accomplish this, we created several measurable objectives. Since our topic, “Powers of Connection,” suggested various avenues of research, we organized a chapter team to work during the summer, collecting primary research data and solidifying our research question. Simultaneously, we organized an additional team to undertake secondary research, detailing their findings in online Google Sheets for annotation and analysis.

Our objectives regarding collaborative outreach included meeting with college administrators to discuss research, communication, and action plans; identifying and inviting participation from

important stakeholders from our campus and our community, including Democratic Pennsylvania State Senator Judy Schwank and Republican Pennsylvania State Representative Mark Gillen, who are known for accomplishing bipartisan legislation; and obtaining video interviews from these stakeholders for our website.

Our objectives for our action plan were to disseminate the information we obtained in the most effective way possible, transforming the climate of communication on our campus.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

Our chapter's research questions underwent some revisions throughout the first months of our brainstorming, but after analyzing some initial primary and secondary research, we found ourselves refining the research question to the following, "With the current state of division, polarization and partisanship, how can we best use the 'Powers of Connection' to teach others how to transform divisive debate into collaborative communication?"

We began by organizing multiple workshops throughout the summer, brainstorming the various HIA themes to narrow down our topic to "Powers of Connection." Initially, given the diversity among Reading Area Community College students and discussions about DACA prevalent at the time, our chapter began by discussing how to bridge the partisan divide in public discourse. This led to multiple discussions about how different generations handle social media and communication conflict, which prompted our first research question: How do we connect across generations? We began our secondary research into the general topic of communication, which led us to question the forms of effective communication. Chapter officers resolved to obtain primary data from an upcoming Middle States Regional Leadership and Honors Institute. We were specifically interested in the most effective forms that allow us to connect with others.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of the data gathered showed us that connection with others requires multiple levels in today's digital society, incorporating multi-media forms of communication. What we also discovered was that no matter the type of communication, there are always some people who refuse to participate. This creates a natural divide between the connected and the unconnected. As Carolyn Johnson put it in her 2018 *Washington Post* article, "far from bridging the gap, the wrong kind of contact might entrench people deeper in their partisan views." Analyzing our secondary research led us to develop strategies for best practices in face-to-face communication, as well as suggesting an increased multi-media component. Additionally, through our research we discovered useful strategies in critical evaluation and analysis of the vast quantities of misinformation and bias permeating our public discourse.

Our research led us to the conclusion that careful and effective communication on multiple levels is crucial since both primary and secondary research demonstrated that while communicating on a single level can be successful, the addition of multiple layers of communication increases the connection factor exponentially. The importance, however, of communicating effectively cannot be overstated. As Joyner reports in his 2002 article in *Computing Canada*, learning to "vary your style of communication to best get your message across to different people" is a skill that can be taught.

ACTION

Based on analysis of our academic research and the primary data gathered from our Pho's Rocks activity, we completed the following action components. We developed a plan to incorporate some of the strategies discovered from primary and secondary research into all chapter activities over the course of several months, such as Commit to Complete, our annual Mental Health Fair, our new College Project (Volunteer Fair), and Club Rush. We created pop-up events using the game app Factitious, challenging students to test their social media and news content analytical skills in a fast-paced and educational social media game. We distributed a one-page Media

Bias Chart to the student body, illustrating where on the bell-curve a media outlet, whether factual, political, or entertainment, might fall. We provided a Best Practices handout to college administrators, faculty, and staff, encouraging them to use strategies such as Factitious or the Media Bias Chart with the objective of improving critical analysis of communications. We conducted "Student on the Street" video interviews, with the goal of providing personal insight into how people connect with others using different types of communication, Hispanic and non-Hispanic, in their own words. With a standard question format designed by our video team, each student or faculty participant was asked the same questions in front of a hand-held camera in an informal setting, then a compilation of the different answers to the same questions was put together by the team and uploaded to our website to be shared via social media.

We worked with college stakeholders to enable us to create a custom-designed website with the objective of sharing our research and providing a new college resource filled with shareable data such as downloadable PowerPoint presentations on communication best practices and active listening skills. We invited community and college leaders to present on video their thoughts and strategies for effective communication. Our initial intention was to present all research and speakers on campus at a symposium designed to demonstrate effective interactive communication and present our website to the campus. However, major communication failures within our own chapter, as well as research and data obtained throughout our project, led us to realize the symposium would be the least effective way to disseminate our findings. Three weeks prior to the symposium, our chapter canceled this event, since our research suggested more creative ways to drive student participation with our website. We chose to focus on marketing the website directly to students.

IMPACT

Regarding quantitative outcomes, our custom-designed website was our best tool for measuring quantitative outcomes and accomplished our goal of connecting with and providing resources to college students, campus administrators, and outside Phi Theta Kappa chapters. Unique visitors to the website totaled 1,679 from the period October 11, 2018, to December 31, 2018, while pages visited totaled 4,596, and website hits totaled 57,156. This demonstrated not only a significant number of visitors, but that each visitor was interacting with data on the website.

By utilizing the best practices and strategies we learned through our research, we significantly improved participation outcomes in all our chapter events and activities. Our Commit to Complete involvement increased from last year's 173 students to 275 new student commitments in 2018. Our Mental Health Fair involvement increased from 152 students to 173 participants. Our College Project Volunteer Fair, a new initiative, attracted 176 participants and was one of the most successful initial events ever held at our college.

We conducted 31 "Student on the Street" interviews with students and faculty on our Reading Area Community College campus with the goal of providing alternative viewpoints to our diverse student body on various topics. This resulted in 778 views on Facebook as part of the compiled "Student on the Street" interview video. Once loaded, we experienced a dramatic increase in website hits to the video link.

Qualitatively, students have told us that watching the video has broadened their perspective on how others might receive information or communicate in a different way. Additional quantitative results were obtained from our Factitious pop-up events. The first short event yielded 11 participants. The second event more than tripled original attendance by utilizing multi-media advertising and communication techniques, involving 32 students on laptops and smart phones, with six faculty members also participating. Qualitatively, since the results ranged from 40-94 percent correct answers, lower-scoring participants were often surprised, leading to successful distribution of multiple Media Bias Charts.

Because this project involved so many research and action components, it provided multiple opportunities for members and officers to participate and/or take the lead in organization and action. The primary research team had the opportunity to interact with other chapters, student, and faculty on-campus and design, analyze, and write conclusions for their research, while the secondary research team could take the lead on academic research and writing. The many chapter activities and events held allowed non-officers as well as officers to hold leadership positions, gaining valuable experience and knowledge. The “Student on the Street” interviews allowed our chapter member interviewers to create question formats and utilize their video-editing experience. These interviews promoted a deeper connection for the interviewers and the chapter with our student body, while providing experience in their related technology fields. Writing proposals, creating the website, and collaborating with college administrators provided members with new perspectives on working within organizational structures, while engaging with our State Senator and State Representative allowed members to gain valuable experience in dealing with government officials.

Overall, the impact of our project has been far-reaching and has begun a transformation in how faculty, staff, and students communicate with one another. Our on-campus interviews gave participants a sense of being heard and of belonging. We have also heard from other chapters regarding our interview videos and chapter initiatives and how much they appreciate the resources we have made available to other chapters through our website.

RESOURCES

Alpha Sigma Rho Chapter of Phi Theta Kappa. 2018. Pho’s rocks. Interactive game. Attendees at Middle States Region Leadership and Honors Institute.

Our research team connected with 176 student participants from 36 chapters, using multiple forms of communication, including social media, in-person, fliers, and public announcements. The data gathered from the effectiveness of the various communication strategies helped define our research question and drove the development of our project objectives. The game involved hiding several painted rocks throughout the college campus during the Institute while chapter members attempted to find the rocks, return them to us for a winner “selfie” on social media, then re-hiding the rocks in different places so that chapters could continue their retrieval efforts. The winning chapter was the one who found the most rocks. We tracked the efficacy of the various modes of communication about the interactive game; the numbers of participating members and chapters; the increasing interest over the three-day weekend in the competition; and the multiple and improved connections the chapter made with other chapters in our region.

Botez, S. (2018). The aspects of communication in the educational organization, the communication contract. *Euromentor Journal*, 9(2), 55-60. Retrieved from <http://euromentor.ucdc.ro/euromentor-june-2018.pdf>

This article discussed how communication fundamentally works in sending and receiving messages and related it to an educational setting as an unwritten contract between student and professor. This paper helped us define the fundamentals and expectations of the communication process.

Crisler Jr., D. (2015). Four factors in organizational communications. *Sheriff*, 67(6), 24-25. Retrieved from <https://www.sheriffs.org/sites/default/files/11%20Nov-Dec%202015.pdf>

This article was a training perspective of best practices, including specific steps and directives for improved organizational communication. We utilized this article to improve our own communication strategies in implementing our action plan, while incorporating much of the data into our downloadable PowerPoint presentations.

Johnson, C. (2018). Talking to the other side can stoke polarization. *The Washington Post* 9(8). Retrieved from <https://search.proquest.com/docview/2100738799>

Johnson reported on how the “wrong type” of communication between polarized groups can actually increase division rather than bridge the gap and provided direction on what not to do in terms of effective communication. This article, in providing a somewhat opposing viewpoint in its suggestion that talking can sometimes hinder real communication, enabled us to refine our hypothesis that training in effective communication “best practices” is an important strategy.

Joyner, J. (2002, Feb 15). Communication skills are a solid IT investment. *Computing Canada*, 28, 27. Retrieved from <https://www.itworldcanada.com/computing-canada>

Joyner discussed the importance of verbal and written forms of communication in the Internet Technology field and provided us with the training suggestions and strategies to build our chapter communication website as one of the main foci of our action plan.

Muszynska, K. A concept for measuring effectiveness of communication in project teams. *Journal of Economics & Management*, 33, 2018, 63-79. Retrieved from <http://cejsh.icm.edu.pl/cejsh/element/bwmeta1.element.cejsh-d1105c8c-cbc6-44f1-bb40-df0aa6825668>

Muszynska discusses her research specifically aimed at measuring effectiveness of communication, helping us determine the data most appropriate to collect in our primary research and finalizing our action plan.

Perju-Mitran, A., & Budacia, A. (2017). Age differences in response to marketing communication techniques used in online social networks. *A Journal of Information Systems & Operations Management*, 385-395. Retrieved from <http://www.rebe.rau.ro/RePEc/rau/jisomg/WI17/JISOM-WI17-A16.pdf>

This study of online social networking sites and marketing posts looks at the generational attitude differences towards online communication. This research led us to change our project action from an on-campus forum to an interactive, sharable online medium.

Ryding, M. (2018). From where I sit... effective client communication-A refresher on in-person communication. *Journal of Pension Benefits*, 25(3), 18-21. Retrieved from <https://www.mtrustcompany.com/search/site/Ryding%2C%20M.%20%282018%29.%20From%20where%20I%20sit...%20effective%20client%20communication-A%20refresher%20on%20in-%20person%20communication.%20Journal%20of%20Pensio?audience=86>

This article discusses in-person communication while providing details on how to effectively communicate through e-mail, conference call, and voicemail. This research provided the guidelines for our chapter’s collaboration with college and community stakeholders involved in our action plan.

TRANSFORMING THE WAY WE DISCUSS DEFORESTATION BY RAISING AWARENESS WITH ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

BETA GAMMA ZETA CHAPTER

Ivy Tech Community College

Logansport, Indiana

THEME 1: NETWORKS OF LIFE

ABSTRACT

After extensive discussion during the spring 2018 semester, the chapter met for its annual summer planning meeting on May 22, 2018. We reviewed the Phi Theta Kappa Honors Study Topic and, to move forward, chose theme one, "Networks of Life." Upon additional discussion, we decided to investigate how the relationship among organisms and their environment has been transformed by deforestation. Chapter members looked at the effects of deforestation, the plant life cycle, and conservation. We used scholarly sources, getting help from our campus librarian to access the Ivy Tech Virtual Library. By the beginning of the fall semester, the chapter learned how deforestation affects the biosphere and the different types of pollution. We also learned about the full plant life cycle and how to help in conservation efforts.

At the first meeting of the fall semester, we determined we wanted to pursue an education project at a local elementary school. We wrote a proposal, speaking to and working with school officials to get permission to do the project, developed lesson plans, purchased supplies, and implemented the three-day project at the elementary school. School officials were extremely excited about our project idea due to the "need for creative projects" and how well our project objectives lined up with the third grade science curriculum.

Over three weeks per school, we taught a total of 226 local third graders how deforestation and pollution affect the world, about the life cycle of a plant, and about conservation efforts. We collaborated with many faculty members to get all the components of the project in line and to figure out what science experiments we were going to do after each lesson during the program. Reflecting on the project, we learned a lot about teaching, effective communication, and project planning and organization. We also know our hard work generated a lot of enthusiasm and excitement among school officials and students.

OBJECTIVES

Objectives for our Honors in Action Project were to 1) understand how much deforestation affects us and the world, 2) understand the plant life cycle and different conservation efforts, and 3) learn how to effectively create and execute a lesson plan and work with elementary school kids.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

For our chapter to properly explain the dangers of deforestation and the importance of conservation, a substantive amount of research needed to be conducted. While there may be a plethora of materials available on those topics, we needed to find information that was accurate. Our research question was "How has the relationship among organisms and their environment been transformed by deforestation?" The question helped us to focus on searching for only relevant materials on our topic.

We discovered many factors that change relationships between organisms and their environments. For example, illegal poaching and putting roadways through forests oftentimes causes animal species to become either endangered or extinct. Humans are adversely harmed by deforestation as well, due to trees being a natural protection against greenhouse gases. Additionally, our chapter learned the negative effects of deforestation are not just a problem for certain countries; it is a global problem, because the consequences of deforestation in one country soon travel to other areas. Fewer trees equal more carbon dioxide, and the end result is less oxygen for us to breathe.

CONCLUSIONS

In the end, education and alternative resources are key to saving our forests and our planet. The articles for our research discussed several ways people can get involved in conservationism. For example, some countries are choosing to build roads going around nature reserves instead of going through the reserves. Scientists in Peru left large trees over a pipeline that was being built so canopy animals can still get across (Mangabay, 2017). Something simple like turning off lights or shutting off the sink when brushing your teeth can be done by even the youngest conservationists. Our chapter learned deforestation can be slowed, and conservation can be done in a feasible manner; it just takes the effort of everyone all over the world.

ACTION

After finding and analyzing our research, chapter officers met with the superintendent for local elementary schools and proposed a project plan that would take the chapter into the elementary schools and teach students about deforestation, the life cycle of a plant, and conservation. After successfully proposing this idea to the superintendent, the chapter got approval from the Ivy Tech Community College administration and the superintendent to contact school principals. Next, the chapter president contacted the principals from the local elementary schools to see what weeks would work best with them since the project would span a three-week time per school, with a different topic and experiment each week that built on the previous week's lesson.

We met with and learned from several professors on campus to be able to successfully implement the project. The team met with a communications professor, so they would be prepared to communicate to third graders in an understandable way. We also met with an education professor to learn how to effectively create lesson plans and best work with elementary school students. We met as well with an English professor and a biology/science professor. The English professor helped us develop clear, concise presentations, and we met with a science professor to ensure our research was accurate.

At each elementary school, we presented a lecture and facilitated a science experiment for each session. The first session at each of the four schools focused on deforestation and its effects. The lesson plan consisted of a presentation and an activity where the students planted either lima beans or mixed seeds of green or albino corn. The second session highlighted the life cycle of a plant. The students were presented an interactive presentation where the students were given a chance to answer questions as the presenter went over the life cycle. The activity for this lesson consisted of teaching the students how to observe their plants, collect data, and record their results over a three-week span.

On the last and final class session, the focus was conservation and what we could do to help preserve our plant and our resources. During this session, students listened to a presentation on conservation strategies that they could do. The final activity consisted of the students sharing the data they collected over the three-week break, as well as writing a short paragraph on what they learned over the six weeks and what they could personally do to help solve the problem of deforestation and lack of conservation that faces so many global communities. The most exciting data reporting from the corn was the fact that some corn stalks were green and some were white. The data from the lima beans was that it was cool how the roots grew so fast and out of

the baggies. To complete our project, the members collectively gathered and had the student's writings bounded into classroom booklets. Then, the members visited the individual classes and presented the booklets to the teachers and students.

IMPACT

Quantitatively, our project began with 31 research articles. For our action we wrote one project proposal and presented that proposal to the Logansport School District superintendent. We also worked with four local elementary school principals, nine teachers, and six aides to complete the project. The project had an impact on 226 third graders. The lesson plans developed covered 12 sessions of 90 minutes each delivered over six weeks. Altogether, 93 person-hours were volunteered for the action component of the project.

At the conclusion of the project, we had the third graders take a survey. The results showed 218 students enjoyed or really enjoyed the project. Eight students did not like the project, and 168 learned something new. The teachers had a similar survey devised, and all nine of the teachers responded. Seven out of nine teachers were satisfied or very satisfied with the program, and two of the teachers were somewhat satisfied. Seven out the nine teachers were satisfied with the content presented and commented that our endeavors enriched their curriculum and gave the students an insight of how at a young age they could help preserve the planet. The two teachers that were somewhat satisfied commented that they would have liked to have seen better results with the students' plants.

Qualitatively, this project was incredibly challenging to get started. At our first summer planning meeting in June 2018, we thought we had ideas set for research; but as our team delved into the research, some members took a step back and looked at the big picture and realized that what we really wanted to research did not fit with our community. At our second summer planning meeting in July 2018, we reopened the idea of Honors Study Topic Theme One, "Networks of Life," for discussion. We decided to go in a completely different direction. Members split up the research and reconvened in August 2018. During this meeting, members came up with an action component based on our research conclusions and the needs of our community and all global communities. When looking at the curriculum for elementary school age children, we saw there was a need of additional science curriculum. We settled upon a science outreach project that included 14 different Indiana Core Curriculum standards for third graders. As we reflected upon our experience, we learned better time management, new leadership skills, and how to be flexible when things do not go exactly as planned. We also learned to better communicate with one another and how to teach third grade students science. This was a gratifying experience to know we had made an impact with the students and in our community.

RESOURCES

Gokkon, B. (2017, December 5). Deforestation in Sumatra carves up tiger habitats into even smaller patches. Retrieved from <https://news.mongabay.com/2017/12/deforestation-in-sumatra-carves-up-tiger-habitats-into-ever-smaller-patches/>

Tiger habitats in Sumatra are being divided into smaller patches as a result of deforestation. In this article, author Basten Gokkon discusses how wildlife is affected by the loss of forests. In places like Sumatra, native tigers have been driven to the brink of extinction due to habitat loss, the farming of oil, and other problems like poaching. The article defines how the tigers and other wildlife can be saved through limiting deforestation and eliminating poaching.

Mazhukhina, K. (2016, August 9). Why deforestation affects everyone, not just neighboring communities [Blog post]. Retrieved from The UW Sustainability Blog: <https://green.uw.edu/blog/2016-08/why-deforestation-affects-everyone-not-just-neighboring-communities>

This article explores the global impact caused by deforestation. The author, Karina Mazhukhina, effectively points out that the devastation of forests millions of miles away can harm people and animals all over the world. Eliminating forests can create the extinction of animal species and take away our protection from harmful greenhouse emissions.

Mongabay. (2012, September 27). Agriculture causes 80% of tropical deforestation. Retrieved from <https://news.mongabay.com/2012/09/agriculture-causes-80-of-tropical-deforestation/>

This article from Mongabay.com shows the relationship between agriculture and deforestation. Agriculture is now the second-largest driver behind deforestation, and about 80 percent of tropical deforestation is due to agriculture. In Borneo, mass deforestation was done on oil palm plantations. In Latin America, major sources of deforestation are cattle ranching and large-scale agriculture. Likewise, cattle ranching and extensive agricultural work are factors behind deforestation in Africa.

Mongabay. (2017, November 16). What is conservation? [Grade 3]. Retrieved from <https://kidsnews.mongabay.com/2017/11/grade-3-conservation/>

This informative page educates students at the third-grade level about conservation and why it is important to people, animals, and the planet. Further into the reading, students are taught about different ways they can help conserve our planet's resources. Additional examples of conservation projects are given, and the question is raised about how to preserve resources while using what is necessary. This article helped the chapter develop a lesson plan for the third graders at Fairview Elementary to learn concepts of conservation.

Plumer, B. (2018, June 27). Tropical forests suffered near-record tree losses in 2017. *The New York Times, Climate*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/27/climate/tropical-trees-deforestation.html>

According to this article from *The New York Times*, the world lost around 39 million acres of trees last year. The article goes on to state the need for expansion and natural disasters like hurricanes as two examples of what can affect the world's forests. One of the reasons for the need for expansion was in Indonesia, where farmers were burning land to grow crops such as palm oil. These practices can cause harm to the forests and potentially cause wildfires.

Slezak, M. (2018, March 4). 'Global deforestation hotspot': 3m hectares of Australian forest to be lost in 15 years. *The Guardian, Environment*. Retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/mar/05/global-deforestation-hotspot-3m-hectares-of-australian-forest-to-be-lost-in-15-years>

Australia is going through a crisis where too much of their forests are being destroyed. Around 1,500 football fields worth of forests are being destroyed every day in Australia. This poses a big threat to Australia's landscape and wildlife. Australia is known for its rich landscapes and biodiversity, and the deforestation crisis is amplified by little-to-no restrictions on the farming of Australia's forests. Australia is home to many types of animal species whose habitats are negatively affected by the farming of forests.

Stubblefield, M., & Painter, S. (n.d.). Effects of clear cutting. Retrieved from <https://greenliving.lovetoknow.com/environmental-issues/effects-clear-cutting>

Clear cutting is a controversial practice that is widely applied in forest managed for wood production in many parts of the world. It can have a major effect on the environment, including the harming of local ecosystems, as it is intrusive to animals and plant life. It can take years for an ecosystem to find a new normal, and indigenous species can be harmed in the process. Soil chemistry can be changed, animals start to go into new territory often where humans reside, carbon dioxide levels can change, and it causes erosion. Clear cutting has a large impact on the environment as a whole.

The World Counts. (2014, April 15). Deforestation facts and statistics: Our blue and green planet. Retrieved from <http://www.theworldcounts.com/stories/deforestation-facts-and-statistics>

In the scientific article "Deforestation Facts and Statistics: Our Blue and Green Planet," statistics are shown about how many hectares of forests are being destroyed globally in real time. Facts are displayed in the article, including the number of forests that are protected, which is 10 percent. Other details displayed in the article are ways the wood from our forests is utilized and suggestions on how anyone can get involved with saving and protecting our forests.

BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN IMMIGRANTS AND CITIZENS

ALPHA KAPPA ALPHA CHAPTER
Normandale Community College
Normandale, Minnesota

THEME 3: POLITICS OF IDENTITY

ABSTRACT

Through our extensive research into the “Politics of Identity” as it relates to Phi Theta Kappa’s 2018/2019 Honors Study Topic, *Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change*, we developed a project about bridging the gap between immigrants and non-immigrants. Our initial broad research was focused on defining politics and identity. After narrowing our research, we discovered the need to educate non-immigrants and serve immigrants, both in the Normandale community and communities beyond Normandale Community College. We established three goal areas: meeting immigrant needs, educating non-immigrants, and bridging the gap between the two communities. To achieve these goals, we worked with a variety of campus and community partners. To reach our goals, we conducted a household necessities drive, a fundraiser, a panel discussion, a campus-wide naturalization survey, and a multicultural community cookbook. The impact of our project was far-reaching. It impacted Normandale students and staff, the local community, and people we will never meet across the state and the globe.

OBJECTIVES

Our research objective for the Honors Study Topic theme “Politics of Identity” was to investigate multi-ethnic/cultural groups to which we did not belong to see the challenges immigrants face and to understand how policies and politics at various levels have an impact on them. After extensive research, we focused on immigrants by exploring how they identify themselves and learn to live in their new country. Our team set out to assess and acknowledge the best of what immigrants and non-immigrants bring to society. We desired to know how Phi Theta Kappa at Normandale Community College could use that research in an action project to transform those in our immediate and distant communities.

We wanted to collaborate with campus organizations and clubs to incorporate non-members into the project. We also wanted to find and collaborate with some of the organizations in the community, to learn from and work with them.

Our main objective for the action project was to bridge the gap between the immigrants and non-immigrants on campus and in our community. We learned of challenges that immigrants face coming to the United States, and we wanted to help make non-immigrants aware of the difficulties. To reach our goal, we used service and action projects to engage students and the community with our Honors in Action Project.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

After we selected our theme, each team member was tasked with researching a certain subject, including achievement gaps in housing, education, and career fields, as well as the role of media bias in these areas. Our research questions were: How do political views affect social interactions and the way immigrants identify themselves in the U.S.; what achievement gaps exist for immigrants in the career, education, and housing fields; and do any media biases exist, and how do they impact immigrants?

Researching the achievement gap in careers pointed out an unconscious bias Americans have toward immigrants in the U.S. One article pointed out training that could happen in the corporate world to reduce many of the unfair biases that were held, including the idea that Americans lose jobs to people who immigrate here. The education gap for immigrants and non-immigrants is staggering. The difficulties faced by immigrant children leads to performance rates much lower than for their non-immigrant counterparts.

Housing tends to be a very difficult part of immigrating to America, especially for families that require more than a small apartment. Immigrants often don't have the resources needed to obtain loans for housing and end up renting poorly cared for housing in less-than-desirable neighborhoods.

Media bias commonly created more of a gap between immigrants and non-immigrants due to stereotypes and miscommunications.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on our research, we concluded that immigrants face many challenges that non-immigrants do not understand, face, or even realize exist. Therefore, we decided that we needed to help bridge the gap between immigrants and non-immigrants by educating non-immigrants and supporting immigrants.

The Honors in Action team learned that there were many issues facing the immigrant population and that non-immigrants knew very little about the challenges faced by immigrants. We wanted, therefore, to both educate the non-immigrant population through multiple venues and serve the immigrant population on and off campus. The service areas we chose to address were the actual material needs immigrants face, as well as some of the everyday emotional stresses. The education piece included a panel of experts in the field and a focused exploration of naturalization. A final bridging project was a multicultural cookbook.

ACTION

The first direct service to immigrants we organized was through a local organization called Bridging, Inc., a non-profit organization that takes donations of new and gently used furniture and household goods, then distributes them to clients in need of service. At our monthly meeting, a Bridging speaker talked about their mission and how they help the immigrant community. About 7 percent of their clients list immigration as the first cause of their need for Bridging, with even more mentioning it as a secondary issue, along with financial concerns. We then had a donation drive on campus and collected 125 items — household appliances, linens, dishes, and more. A second service to immigrants (which also had an educational piece we had not anticipated) was to better understand and address the added stress and concern immigrants face for the people they left in their home countries. To demonstrate care in a practical way, we looked into the needs and difficulties in Yemen due to the current war, especially the women and children.

While our college system's policies do not allow us to fundraise on campus, we searched out a reputable charity group and a local restaurant we could team up with that would donate a percentage of an evening's sales to the charity group in return for bringing in more customers and working in the restaurant for those hours. We ended up collaborating with the International Rescue Committee for Yemen (IRCY) and with the local Culver's restaurant. The unexpected benefit we discovered was that in asking people to come and eat there that evening, we could also educate them on what is happening in Yemen, creating conversation beforehand and even with non-Phi Theta Kappa customers during the event, as well as the management, thereby sharing the importance of the project.

For our education part of our project, we originally planned a series of Brown Bag lunches with a different guest at each to focus on various issues immigrants face. However, as we realized the difficulty in getting commuter students to take the time to come to events, we decided to have a single panel presentation, with a light lunch served afterwards. We collaborated with panelists in different fields that interact and work closely with immigrants, as well as people who have undergone the process of naturalization or are still in the process. Our panel consisted of an immigration lawyer, a realtor, an interpreter, an NCC Biology professor who immigrated from Argentina, and an international student from Ethiopia.

Our second educational piece was aimed at gaining a better understanding of how little non-immigrants understand the naturalization process for immigrants. We conducted a citizenship test survey on campus. We passed out 200 cards with a question from the citizenship test to students on campus. Of the 75 cards that were returned, 75 percent of them were answered incorrectly. At the chapter's monthly meeting (open to all students), we played an interactive online game with 10 questions from the naturalization test. We also gave a PowerPoint presentation on the naturalization test with a video of a mock interview. We then provided a 50-question civics exam to see if attendees could pass (all but one did). In discussing this experience, many expressed their surprise at the history and civics that new immigrants would need to know, and some suggesting we could set up study groups to help immigrant students prepare for the test.

The bridging piece of putting together a multicultural cookbook, including brief biographical information from each submitter, stemmed from the Dias-Edelman article that shared the impact of stories to create unity. We hoped to bring together all the submitters for an international buffet where we give out copies of the cookbook.

IMPACT

Our first service project of meeting material needs of immigrants through Bridging netted over 125 items donated. The speaker impacted the audience, with one participant saying she went home and looked through her linen closet for items to donate, as the speaker challenged us to think why we should store so many extras when some people have nothing. The second off-campus project aimed at addressing stress and emotional concerns of immigrants through the IRCY and Culver's partnership brought in more than \$375 and shared the message with over 100 diners. Members of a local mosque shared their appreciation for our understanding of their concerns.

For the educational arm of our project, we printed out 200 cards for the citizenship survey, each containing one of four questions, including "If both the President and the Vice President can no longer serve, who becomes President?" and "How many voting members are in the House of Representatives?" The AKA officers received 75 completed cards.

Approximately 75 percent were answered incorrectly, proving that the information that we would provide throughout the project was necessary for the non-immigrant population. This exercise also brought attention of the student body to the action project and research that we were conducting.

The panel discussion was attended by over 50 students and staff. The 90-minute event included questions that were submitted by the audience members. Questions ranged from, "Are there immigration attorneys who consult for free?" to "Are doctors and other health providers being told the dangers of cutting a visit short due to frustration with interpreting?" We allowed 30 minutes for the question portion and didn't have enough time to get to all 17 questions submitted, addressed at all five panelists. The panelists shared that they enjoyed the experience and felt that, besides being able to share their knowledge, they learned from the other speakers.

One professor who attended gave her students extra credit if they wrote a summary of the discussion and their reaction. One student admitted that she had a vague idea of the visa process

for immigrants but felt more informed about the enormity of what immigrants go through, and she was most surprised about some of the housing issues that the realtor shared. During the discussion, this student was inspired to research being an interpreter as a career option. Another student wrote that she now feels more confident speaking to immigrants, saying, "It was comforting to be told that questions are welcomed if I have an open mind and a listening ear. I am often concerned that my questions could be stupid or rude."

The cookbook bridge project has collected 20 recipes from various cultures represented on campus, and the publication and party took place during the spring 2019 semester.

Members of the Honors in Action team experienced growth as scholars and leaders throughout the project. This was especially true about their use of college databases both in how to search for sources and how to determine what was a scholarly source and what constituted just an abstract. One member, in her fifth semester, learned more about researching widely and before a project is decided instead of the other way around, remarking, "I found it difficult to not have anything specific to research besides a very broad topic. It felt backwards but turned out to be a great process." Another student became much more confident speaking in front of people, and now is "comfortable planning and executing meetings." The officers who planned the panel discussion grew in their ability to reach out to community members, learning the importance of timely communication and follow through. As always with chapter events, we learned the importance of thorough and timely advertising, especially to target audiences.

RESOURCES

Diaz-Edelman, M.D. (2014). Working together: multicultural collaboration in the interfaith immigrant rights movement. Boston University, Open BU website. Retrieved from https://open.bu.edu/bitstream/handle/2144/15108/DiazEdelman_bu_0017E_10601.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y

This article discussed a study between people of different faiths and cultures. Its main focus was social cohesion. This study discovered that stories of change played a key factor in unity. This helped us discover ways people have worked to unify different groups of people.

Enns, R., Kirova, A., & Connolly, D. (2013). Examining bonding and bridging activities in the context of a common spaces approach to integration. Canadian Ethnic Studies Association. Retrieved from <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/531084>

This article discusses how making common spaces and activities has helped to bond immigrants and non-immigrants. This helped us by showing ways that have previously worked to bridge the gap.

Gelatt, J., Adams, G., & Huerta, S. (2014). Supporting immigrant families' access to prekindergarten. The Urban Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.urban.org/sites/default/files/publication/22286/413026-Supporting-Immigrant-Families-Access-to-Prekindergarten.PDF>

This article explains how children of immigrants have barriers in education, partly due to their limited access to effective prekindergarten programs. The article lays out ways that communities and schools may engage immigrant children in pre-K programs through outreach, assistance with enrollment, engagement with parents, and building immigrant-friendly pre-kinder programs. This helped us discover methods of helping bridge the gap for immigrant children.

Misik, R. (2016, December 1). The Freedom Party's second chance in Austria. *New York Times*. Retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/01/opinion/the-freedom-partys-second-chance-in-austria.html>

This article discussed how Austria is not very welcoming to immigrants, partly due to the rise of the Freedom Party, which is far right and was founded originally as a postwar refuge for Nazis after World War II. The Freedom Party today is Euroskeptic, anti-elite, anti-foreigner, anti-Islam and anti-globalization. It is also anti-Austria's two-party system, made of the center-left Social Democrats and center-right People's Party. This source showed us the power of politics to impact the immigrants' experience.

Point: Sanctuary cities protect local economies and communities. (2017, October 1). *Points of View: Sanctuary Cities*, 1. Retrieved from <https://pointofview.net/viewpoints/sanctuary-cities/>

This debate covered the importance of sanctuary cities on the security of immigrants. It explained how sanctuary cities try to limit the amount of immigration law the government is to enforce while staying within the law. It also strove to oppose stereotypes of United States immigrants. This helped us to realize some cities across the United States are recognizing the needs of immigrants and taking radical steps to help bridge the gap.

Skerry, Peter. (2000, March 1). Do we really want immigrants to assimilate? Brookings Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/do-we-really-want-immigrants-to-assimilate>

Although this article was older than many others we looked at, it had valuable theoretical background information to help shape our thinking. It questioned the idea of assimilation — what it really is, how it happens, and when it happens. It showed that assimilation is not the simple activity that some think it is.

Soehl, T.G. (2014). Modes of difference and connection: Language, education, and religion in migrant families. *Ethnic NewsWatch*. Retrieved from <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/03x4v93m>

This article discussed the difficulties that migrant parents face when raising children born in their destination country. Soehl considered how language and religion affect assimilation, out-of-country relationships, and the prejudice these children face in school. This helped us to further understand some of the key factors in creating the gap between immigrants and non-immigrants.

Suárez-Orozco, C., Yoshikawa, H., & Tseng, V. (2015). Intersecting inequalities: Research to reduce inequality for immigrant-origin children and youth. Retrieved from <http://wtgrantfoundation.org/library/uploads/2015/09/Intersecting-Inequalities-Research-to-Reduce-Inequality-for-Immigrant-Origin-Children-and-Youth.pdf>

This paper pointed out where immigrant-origin children are at a disadvantage academically in several aspects. After expanding on those topics, the authors discussed the importance of family and education, which are key to alleviating unequal opportunities and outcomes. Finally, the article discussed future research that can be done to help lessen the inequalities that immigrant-origin children face. We used this article to learn about the issues that immigrants are facing from an academic standpoint.

BREAKING FREE: RAISING AWARENESS ABOUT SEX SLAVERY IN EAST TENNESSEE THROUGH AN AWARENESS EVENT

ALPHA IOTA CHI CHAPTER

Northeast State Community College

Blountville, Tennessee

THEME 6: VISIONS OF JUSTICE

ABSTRACT

After exploring Phi Theta Kappa's 2018/2019 Honors Study Topic (HST) and its themes, we chose "Visions of Justice" as it relates to acknowledging, assessing, and achieving change. Through an extensive research process, we examined scholarly sources and monitored news outlets. We eventually focused our research on sex trafficking. We discovered that local men had recently been charged with sex trafficking, evidence that the crime exists in rural East Tennessee. We then developed a research question: What is sex trafficking, how prevalent is it in our community, and what do experts suggest are the most effective ways to combat this growing problem? Our research showed that sex trafficking persists because communities often fail to acknowledge when it occurs. This is exacerbated by law enforcement and social services under-reporting. Even after acknowledgement, communities lack access to resources and information needed to combat the problem and achieve change.

We formed a committee of local experts with whom we met regularly to discuss our research findings and with whom we collaborated to develop action objectives. Together, we identified two primary needs: 1) community awareness and 2) law enforcement training. Thus, we organized Breaking Free: Modern Day Sex Slavery in East Tennessee (Breaking Free), a community awareness event, and Unmasking Traffickers and Turning Victims into Survivors (Unmasking Traffickers), a law enforcement training workshop. We reached over 200 community members and law enforcement officials while fostering inter-agency cooperation.

OBJECTIVES

We developed four sets of objectives. Phase One research objectives covered initial considerations of the Honors Study Topic and selected themes. Phase Two research objectives drove our research as we identified one theme — and eventually one issue — on which to focus. We developed collaboration objectives after completing the two research phases, using these objectives to form a committee of experts with whom we designed action objectives that stemmed from both phases of research and our collaborations.

Our Phase One research objectives were to 1) form research teams to examine the HST and its themes, 2) determine themes about which we are most passionate, 3) form smaller groups to explore issues in selected themes; for each issue, identify and examine scholarly sources, 4) monitor related current events at the local, regional, national, and global levels, 5) present findings during weekly chapter meetings, and 6) select one theme to ground Phase Two research. Our Phase Two research objectives were to 1) examine the chosen theme and consider various issues within it, 2) prepare group research reports for weekly meetings, 3) narrow theme to one community need-driven issue of interest to chapter members, and 4) develop an overarching research question to guide exploration of the issue.

Our collaboration objectives were to 1) form a committee of community experts to discuss findings and develop action objectives, 2) consult Dr. Blake Ellis, Phi Theta Kappa's Associate

Vice President of Outreach and Engagement, to clarify project requirements, 3) enlist Beth Ross, chapter alumna and Harvard J.D./Ph.D. candidate, to lead professional research strategies workshop and provide write-up feedback, and 4) invite Northeast State Community College faculty, staff, and students to assist in project planning, promotion, and implementation. Our action objectives were to 1) raise awareness about sex trafficking among community members/law enforcement and 2) develop evaluation instruments to assess project's impact.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

This project developed after an initial research phase. We divided into research teams to explore the Honors Study Topic and its themes. Teams presented findings on theme-related issues, using the Honors Program Guide (HPG) as a foundation. The "Visions of Justice" team's findings consistently resonated with chapter members, so we selected this theme. During the second research phase, smaller research groups explored issues ranging from homelessness to dog fighting. We considered sources in the HPG, then broadened our inquiry to examine the issue at local, regional, national, and global levels. Teams consulted scholarly sources and monitored news outlets to identify connections to issues under consideration. The team investigating sex trafficking shared their discovery that 11 local men had been charged with sex trafficking. None of us knew the problem plagues rural East Tennessee. Therefore, we attended a Department of Children's Services (DCS) workshop, Human Trafficking 101. Because sex trafficking relates to the Honors Study Topic and the theme "Visions of Justice," we narrowed our focus to trafficking and developed our overarching multi-pronged research question: What is sex trafficking, how prevalent is it in our community, and what do experts suggest are the most effective ways to combat this growing problem?

To explore this question, we created research teams, recorded findings on our Google site, and met weekly for discussions about our research findings. Teams examined various aspects of sex trafficking: what it is, why it persists, who it involves, contributing factors, trafficking laws, the role of the Internet, best practices when working with vulnerable populations, and gaps in confronting this problem. Throughout our research phases, we utilized the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) of 2000's definition of sex trafficking, "a commercial sex act...induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such an act has not attained 18 years of age." Our findings challenged notions that sex trafficking victims are abducted and are only from high-risk populations. Experts and survivors emphasize that traffickers typically build trust with victims, and even young people living with loving parents are vulnerable.

Using a Visions of Justice lens, we examined underlying social justice issues—specifically poverty and gender inequality—that create trafficking markets. Minors from impoverished communities are especially vulnerable, and a lack of resources contributes to victimization. Sex traffickers (usually male) profit as a result of women's lower rank in society, a product of pervasive gender inequality and negative stereotypes about women and girls (Riegler, 2007). Though fewer males are trafficked, service providers are likely to overlook their cases because males rarely self-report, and many associate sex trafficking with females.

We encountered a debate over methods to combat sex trafficking. Some contend that a prosecution-only approach diverts attention from underlying issues that sustain the market. Others emphasize the conflation of consensual sex work and sex slavery, arguing that failing to make the distinction is dangerous and leads to law enforcement focusing on all sex work, potentially placing consensual sex workers at higher risk of victimization (Alptraum, 2018). Our collaborator Natalie Ivey (Community Coalition against Human Trafficking) also emphasized the need to examine cultural attitudes toward women but prioritized increasing awareness that local trafficking exists; educated communities are the best defense.

To better understand local sex trafficking, we formed a committee of local experts with whom we shared our findings. Through personal interviews, committee members educated us on the magnitude of sex trafficking in our region, noting that approximately 1,000 of reported Tennessee runaways are trafficked. However, in 45 percent of Tennessee counties with known trafficking,

law enforcement reported zero cases. This revealed a gap in law enforcement awareness of sex trafficking. Collaborator Thomas McCauley (Assistant US Attorney) cited the opioid epidemic as a regional catalyst for sex trafficking and highlighted law enforcement's misconceptions about sex trafficking versus prostitution.

CONCLUSIONS

We concluded that trafficking thrives due to the opaque nature of the crime, lack of awareness, and under-reporting. Local law enforcement, consumed by the region's opioid epidemic, often fails to recognize that individuals arrested for drug crimes could be victims. Many East Tennesseans are especially vulnerable due to the complex intersection of generational poverty and an opioid epidemic that contributes to trafficking. The first steps in achieving lasting change include raising awareness about sex trafficking and the cultural forces and societal conditions that help sustain the market.

ACTION

To meet collaboration objectives, we contacted local and state agencies and consulted with the Northeast State Community College's Criminal Justice Society to identify law enforcement partners to join our steering committee. Research shows local officials must participate in the process. Our committee members, including Natalie Ivey, Thomas McCauley, Tennessee Bureau of Investigation Agent Jamesena Walker, Federal Bureau of Investigation Agent Bianca Pearson, and Family Justice Center social workers, helped us identify existing and successful local efforts and critical gaps in confronting sex trafficking while working with our team to develop action objectives. People often doubt that sex trafficking occurs locally, even after awareness campaigns. However, the committee emphasized a need for awareness. Therefore, we organized "Breaking Free and Unmasking Traffickers." Because research shows the power of survivor stories, we collaborated with our college's Cultural Activities Committee to secure the \$1,300 fee so trafficking survivor Angie Conn, from the Rebecca Bender Initiative, could speak at both events. We partnered with the Department of Child Services, faith communities, and local schools to disseminate our Save-the-Date information. We appeared on local news programs and coordinated with the college's marketing team to design marketing materials and a social media campaign.

Breaking Free had three objectives: 1) increase awareness of and dispel myths about local sex trafficking, 2) promote resources, and 3) facilitate positive change. Ivey dispelled myths that traffickers abduct victims by describing the — frequently online — grooming process. Walker discussed law enforcement strategies. Conn shared her survivor's story, stating trafficking is today's greatest social justice problem. McCauley and Pierson joined presenters for a panel discussion, while social services organizations provided information on survivor resources.

Unmasking Traffickers had one primary objective: train law enforcement to recognize trafficking. Conn explained victims fear law enforcement more than their captors and provided officers with tools to identify potential trafficking victims. Two break-out workshops followed: Ivey conducted a social services training, and Walker offered POST-certification training for law enforcement. Afterward, McCauley discussed trafficking from a prosecutor's perspective.

Sex trafficking is complex, and achieving change is difficult. However, transformation is possible when communities acknowledge the problem and gain access to resources. We have taken these steps, but we are extending our collaborative awareness campaign to benefit our community's most vulnerable: middle schoolers. We are producing a 10-15-minute awareness video that administrators will incorporate into the freshman experience curriculum. We will present our research at Northeast State Community College's 2019 Honors Research Conference.

IMPACT

To meet our action objective of developing an evaluation instrument, we created and distributed post-event evaluations with open-ended questions and questions using a 5-point Likert scale: 1=Very Poor, 2=Poor, 3=Neutral, 4=Very Good, 5=Excellent.

Over 200 community members attended Breaking Free:

- 86 percent rated speakers as excellent
- 96 percent agreed the event enlightened them about sex trafficking
- 88 percent agreed they felt equipped to discuss trafficking with others
- 98 percent felt inspired to act and knew where to locate additional information

When asked which aspect of the event impacted them most, attendees responded:

- “Angie Conn impacted me the most because I am also a survivor and knowing she faced the same issues I am now, and overcame them, gives me courage to face the future.”
- “The reality that human trafficking is a major problem, not only in larger cities, but in our own backyard!”
- “The story given by Angie Conn, it relates to my childhood. I went through years of abuse, and her story was very similar.”

Twenty-five law enforcement and social services professionals attended Unmasking Traffickers:

- 79 percent rated the workshops as excellent
- 85 percent felt better equipped to recognize signs of trafficking
- 69 percent felt more equipped to combat the problem, with 31 percent feeling somewhat equipped
- 92 percent strongly agreed they knew where to locate additional information

Respondents commented:

- “I liked how detectives, deputies, etc. started bouncing ideas off each other on how to combat sex trafficking.”
- “This is a valuable introduction to the topic. It could easily be a week-long course.”
- “The frequency and access to communication impacted me most. I didn’t realize the ease [for traffickers] to communicate with [potential] victims.”

Inter-agency collaboration accomplishments included:

- Local police officers shared frustrations about a local man they believed was adopting foreign-born children to sexually exploit. The children are still in the home despite multiple removals. McCauley agreed to join forces with officers, stating, “Send me what you have. We’ll get this guy.”
- Believing middle schoolers should be learning about sex trafficking, a police officer and a social worker partnered to develop a middle school-level internet safety training.
- The Johnson City and Blountville Family Justice Centers are now collaborating. Local law enforcement has found an ally in McCauley.

Through this project, we developed an evidence-based understanding of sex trafficking, its prevalence, and best practices to combat it. We grew as scholars through intentional research of an answerable question, which stimulated critical thinking regarding source validity and multiple viewpoints. We developed as leaders when we embraced individual responsibility to ensure team success. Completing this project has equipped us to help others to 1) acknowledge sex trafficking in East Tennessee, 2) assess the problem and potential solutions, 3) achieve change through promoting awareness, and 4) transform the perceptions of public officials and community members regarding sex trafficking and its survivors. With this vision of justice, we can shape a community that actively works to unmask traffickers while helping survivors break free.

RESOURCES

Cole, J., & Sprang, G. (2015). Sex trafficking of minors in metropolitan, micropolitan, and rural communities. *Child Abuse & Neglect*, 40, 113-123. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chiabu.2014.07.015>

This study found that 83.1 percent of victims know their traffickers; poor parental relationships and financial instability increase vulnerability; and, lack of awareness about male victims places them at additional risk and leads to overlooked cases involving males.

D'Adamo, K. (2016). Prioritizing prosecutions is the wrong approach. *Anti-Trafficking Review*, (6), 111-113. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.14197/atr.20121668>

D'Adamo argued prosecution-only approaches to combating trafficking divert attention away from victims and fail to address underlying causes. Our event highlighted the cultural issues creating vulnerability to traffickers.

Farley, M., Franzblau, K., & Kennedy, M. (2013). Online prostitution and trafficking. *Albany Law Review*, 77(3), 1039-1094. http://www.albanylawreview.org/Articles/Vol77_3/77.3.1039%20Farley%20Franzblau%20Kennedy.pdf

This study revealed that most online prostitution cases align with the TVPA definition of sex trafficking, wherein third parties control sex workers. Often, prostitution is a "gendered survival strategy," and the anonymity of the Internet leads to sex trafficking.

Flores, T.L. (2010). *The slave across the street: The true story of how an American teen survived the world of human trafficking*. Boise, ID: Ampelon Publishers.

Enslaved while living with her family and attending public school, Flores shattered myths about victims while revealing that trafficking is often an invisible crime, even to first responders.

Hepburn, S., & Simon, R.J. (2013). *Human trafficking around the world: Hidden in plain sight*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

This book provided a global overview of human trafficking and a history of trafficking laws. Traffickers share common strategies to control vulnerable populations. The authors clarified differences between human smuggling and human trafficking by framing trafficking as slavery, which we communicated in the title of our awareness event.

Miller-Perrin, C., & Wurtele, S. (2017). Sex trafficking and the commercial sexual exploitation of children. *Women & Therapy*, 40(1-2), 123-151. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1080/02703149.2016.1210963>

This article highlighted connections between sex trafficking and the commercial exploitation of children. We recognized that victims come from every socioeconomic background, but certain populations are more vulnerable. Risk factors for males include sexual identity and sexual preference; females with a history of abuse or poor familial relationships are at risk. Awareness is crucial when working with at-risk populations.

Tennessee Bureau of Investigation. (2013). *The geography of trafficking in Tennessee 2013*. Retrieved from <https://www.tn.gov/content/dam/tn/tbi/documents/2013%20The%20Geography%20of%20Trafficking%20in%20Tennessee.pdf>

This report updated a 2011 report, highlighting state-wide progress and outlining remaining needs. Domestic issues, opioids, and poverty influence crime in Tennessee, and two local counties rank in the top 21 for sex trafficking. Despite trafficking activity, lack of resources and training prevent law enforcement action.

U.S. Department of State (2018). *Trafficking in persons report*. Retrieved from <https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/282798.pdf>

This report assessed nations in compliance with the TVPA and concluded that educated local law enforcement and engaged communities combined create the strongest defense against sex trafficking. An emphasis on a trauma-informed approach underlined a need to include service providers in our event.

TRANSFORMING HEALTH AND INCREASING HAPPINESS BY ENCOURAGING OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES FOR ELEMENTARY SCHOOL STUDENTS

RHO KAPPA CHAPTER
 Elgin Community College
 Elgin, Illinois

THEME 1: NETWORKS OF LIFE

ABSTRACT

Our Phi Theta Kappa chapter chose to research the “Networks of Life” theme related to the 2018/2019 Honors Study Topic, *Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change*. After reading *The Nature Fix* (2018) by Florence Williams, we developed this research question: How does our connection, or disconnection, to nature affect the way we think and behave? Our research into this topic led us to Dr. Francis Kuo, director of the Landscape and Human Health Laboratory at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, and Dr. Richard Taylor, physicist and fractal researcher at the University of Oregon, who shared their current research into the effects the environment has on mental health. Once our analysis of our sources was completed, we concluded: our connection to nature has been broken but can be fixed; this disconnect has detrimental effects on mental and physical health; people have positive responses to natural environments; and these positive effects can be replicated in human-made environments. We partnered with a charter school, public elementary school, and Girl Scout troop to teach children outdoor education curriculum. Our campus group used the research findings to support campus improvement projects, including a nature mural, nature preserve, and placing plants in campus buildings. Chapter members also shared the research with college faculty and students during different campus events to raise awareness of what we discovered.

OBJECTIVES

Our research objectives were to 1) improve the research and interview skills of Elgin Community College students and 2) collect 10 or more relevant pieces of quality research related to our theme. Our collaborations objectives were to 1) meet with the college president and other administrators to share our findings and gain support of potential actions and 2) work with a variety of campus and community organizations and institutions to share our findings and further the reach of our action. Our action objectives were to 1) design inclusive, thoughtful actions that align with the Honors Study Topic and promote our findings, 2) achieve meaningful change on our campus and in the community, and 3) share our research findings with the general population and raise awareness of our topic.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

The 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 Honors in Action officers chose Williams’ (2018) *The Nature Fix: Why Nature Makes Us Happier, Healthier, and More Creative* to start, as it highlights recent and relevant research and combines our chapter’s two main interests: mental health and local environmental issues. For the fall 2018 semester, we continued our collaboration with the Honors Program and once again established an Honors in Action course to critically examine the text and focus our research question. The themes and ideas in the text led us to develop our research question: How does our connection, or disconnection, to nature affect the way we think and behave?

CONCLUSIONS

Humans have evolved in nature, but the technological advancements that have been made in the 20th Century completely transformed the way humans spend time. Everything from conversation to the spaces we inhabit has been constructed according to human-defined principles. This drastic change has had detrimental effects on cognition and behavior. One of the most significant problems facing college students today is stress, but researchers from separate studies around the world, including Japan, South Korea, Finland, and the United States, have found that spending just 15 minutes outside reduces cortisol, epinephrine, and norepinephrine levels, hormones that are all related to increased stress (Williams (2018), 19, 37, 65, 125). While all senses play a role in these effects, eyesight is essential. Dr. Richard Taylor (2018) shared his research into how looking at natural imagery, even if it is a picture on a wall or a video on a television, can have similar effects on stress hormones. We also worked with Dr. Francis Kuo (2018) to better understand how nature and nature education impacts children in and out of the classroom, including improved memory retention, focus, and a lifelong desire to protect and be a part of natural environments. From the research, we concluded that 1) humans have positive mental and emotional responses to nature, and this effect can be replicated in human-made environments through the use of biophilic design principles; and 2) due to the increase in access to entertainment technology, humans are not spending as much time outdoors as they used to, which has detrimental effects on their mental and physical health. Teaching children about nature can mend the disconnect and promote biophilia.

ACTION

To begin, we split into three distinct groups, with one group focusing on using Dr. Gray and Dr. Birrell's (2014) biophilic design principles to place plants around campus, another concentrating on sharing research and raising awareness of our topic, and the final group working to implement Dr. Taylor's (2018) visual fractal system in a mural. Initially, the plant group worked with Todd Alberger, a Library Assistant on campus who takes care of the plants throughout the library, to establish a list of plants that could be grown in the college. The mural group worked with the Honors Program Director to find a suitable wall. Both groups then drafted proposals for their projects to the Deans of Communication and Behavioral Sciences, who were in charge of the floor where the mural would be located. The deans and the college president were supportive of the plans, and both of the projects were approved. The plant group worked with the Chicago Botanic Garden to design a comprehensive care plan that meant the plants could be enjoyed and adequately cared for well into the future. After holding a plant drive to raise money and collect plant donations, chapter members created an indoor community garden in which students bring in plants to grow the collection. The mural group partnered with the college's marketing department to design and implement the mural. It was placed near the indoor garden as part of our plan to transform a standard student lounge into a lush, nature-themed area that boosts student success through biophilic design.

Our awareness group completed actions throughout the community. Members interviewed Laura McCoy, the supervisor of Nature Programs for the St. Charles Park District, on how she develops programs that inspire a love of nature in children. They also volunteered at one of her events. The awareness group designed outdoor education curriculum for kindergarten students using the information she provided. The group was able to teach the curriculum to a kindergarten class at Fox Meadow Elementary School and a local Girl Scout troop.

Members also participated in Fox Meadow Elementary School's Fall Family Literacy Night, in which K-6 grade students participated in a book swap. At the Literacy Night, members shared our research with parents, handed out informational pamphlets on local forest preserves, and helped students create nature journals that encourage the children to go outside and pay more attention to nature.

Chapter officers and members collaborated with the Elgin Math and Science Academy (EMSA) during their "Field Fridays." EMSA is a public charter school designed using EL Education

guidelines, a nonprofit dedicated to improving student achievement through expeditionary learning. One of the core principles of EL Education is the importance of a direct and respectful connection with nature. Students of EL schools learn to take care of and protect the environment for future generations. Once a month, officers and members volunteered at the academy by leading small groups of kindergarten through third-grade students through outdoor education activities. The awareness group also designed and taught curriculum for one of EMSA's first-grade classes.

While it is relatively common knowledge that spending time outdoors can make someone feel better, the actual science behind it has only been acknowledged recently. Our research findings were simple: spending time in nature has real, concrete benefits to one's mental and physical health; however the majority of students at Elgin Community College did not know this information. One of our members, Tanairy Fernandez de Lara Pe, stated, "I never knew how important it was to go outside. This was never something I was taught in school, and I wish I knew this sooner." This prompted the awareness group to hold an event on campus that allowed members to share their research findings in a fun and engaging way. The Art of Shinrin-Yoku was a student art and experience exhibition that was separated into two rooms: the Sight Gallery and the Sense gallery. The Sight Gallery featured nature-inspired student art, an Oculus 360 VR demonstration, and a variety of National Geographic environmental education videos. Located in the sense gallery were various experience booths related to nature and the five senses, along with a potted plant sale. Each of the different sensory booths, stations, and experiences were directly inspired by chapters from *The Nature Fix* and additional collected research.

IMPACT

Building from the research our team collected, chapter officers drafted a proposal to the Elgin Community College President, Dr. David Sam, asking him to set aside unused college land as a nature preserve for students to utilize. This proposal was then presented, and Dr. Sam approved the plans. In a partnership with the Head of Grounds, the college arborists, the manager of Campus Prairies, and the University of Illinois Master Gardeners, the preserve will be designed to bring students outdoors in a safe, accessible way.

The awareness group directly taught 52 students the outdoor education curriculum they had designed, and volunteers from the chapter assisted in teaching curriculum to 208 students overall. Volunteering and teaching at the Elgin Math and Science Academy continued throughout the spring 2019 semester, allowing many chapter members to continue to grow as leaders. Ten members volunteered their time to share research with 20 families, help children create 65 nature journals, and pass out informational handouts on local natural areas at the Fall Family Literacy Night, which had over 200 attendees. Multiple families said they would actively try to improve their children's time spent outdoors and visit the nature sites that were on the handouts. The parents also attested to the behaviors and attitudes seen in children when they have been lacking time outside and described seeing their children as more relaxed and focused after being outdoors. By teaching these students the importance of going outside and promoting our findings to children and parents, we hope to instill a lifelong love of the environment that mends the disconnect between modern life and the natural world in future generations.

Each participant in the Shinrin-Yoku Guided Forest Walk took a pre-survey that asked them the last time they visited a forest preserve, the last time they spent an hour outside, and how stressed they felt. After the walk, participants took the post-survey, which asked about their stress levels after the walk, and what they took away from their experience. Eighty-two percent of responders said their stress levels were lower after the walk. The fact that they felt calmer after the walk was reinforced in the reflection question of the post-survey. The Art of Shinrin-Yoku had 68 attendees, with six student artists featuring work, 14 plants sold, and \$67 raised to purchase plants for placing around campus. Attendees responded positively to the event, with many saying they never knew how essential nature and the environment were to maintaining our mental health.

Many chapter members volunteered to aid officers in the planning and execution of these events. Members of each group were given a chance to lead activities of their choice, with support and guidance from the officers. As a reflection activity, members held a Shinrin-Yoku event at a local forest preserve. Participants each received a “walkthrough” guide designed using the research on Shinrin-Yoku and the various “power trails” featured in *The Nature Fix*. During reflection, members described completing research into the topic, but also using that research to change their attitudes and habits concerning nature. Additionally, many members expressed how powerful completing an Honors in Action Project was for them. Robert Adame, a chapter member, stated, “This was the first class I’ve had where we were expected to have some kind of impact ... it was nice to be pushed to think critically about how to go about finding solutions to real issues.” This project fueled our members’ drive for informed action and taught them the importance of acknowledging, assessing, and achieving change.

RESOURCES

Gray, T., & Birrell, C. (2014). Are biophilic-designed site office buildings linked to health benefits and high performing occupants? *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph111212204>

This article described the preliminary results of a study on redesigning an office using biophilic principles with an emphasis on plant life. It also compiled the results of similar studies related to the effects of greenery in human environments.

Kuo, F. (2018, October 17). Email interview.

We worked with Dr. Francis Kuo, director and founder of the Landscape and Human Health Laboratory at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and pioneer in the study of the relationship between humans and their physical environment, to understand how nature impacts everything from the management of ADHD in children to crime rates in dense, urban areas.

Kuo, M., Browning, M.H.E.M., & Penner, M.L. (2018, January 4). Do lessons in nature boost subsequent classroom engagement?: Refueling students in flight. Retrieved from Frontiers in Psychology database (Accession No. 1664-1078)

This article describes the effects outdoor education has on children, including strengthening their connections to nature, allowing them to seek out and protect natural areas as adults. It directly influenced how we designed the outdoor education curriculum.

Miyazaki, Y. (2006). Science of nature therapy. Retrieved from Chiba University Center for Environment, Health, and Field Sciences. Retrieved from website:[http://www.fc.chiba-u.jp/research/miyazaki/assets/images/natural%20therapy\(07.06\)_e.pdf](http://www.fc.chiba-u.jp/research/miyazaki/assets/images/natural%20therapy(07.06)_e.pdf)

Throughout our research, Shinrin-Yoku was often mentioned. Shinrin-Yoku directly translates to “forest bathing” but is as simple as walking through a natural area while using all of your senses. The Japanese government has spent many years researching the cognitive effects of forest bathing and has compiled the results into this document.

Repke, M.A., Berry, M.S., Conway, L.G., III, Metcalf, A., Henson, R.M., & Phelan, C. (2018, August 22). How does nature exposure make people healthier: Evidence for the role of impulsivity and expanded space perception. Retrieved from PLOS One database. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0202246>

This was an in-depth look at the benefits of nature. It provides clear and easy-to-understand evidence of nature’s abilities, which we adapted into the handouts and presentations used at multiple events.

Taylor, R.P., Juliani, A.W., Bies, A.J., Boydston, C., Spehar, B., & Sereno, M.E. (2018). The implications of fractal fluency for biophilic architecture. *Journal of Biourbanism*, (6), 23-40. Retrieved from <https://journalofbiourbanism.org/2019/01/19/jbu-volume-vii-1-2018/>

This research on fractals and the effects they have when incorporated into natural images was supplied by Dr. Richard Taylor, Physics Department Head at the University of Oregon and researcher of the visual science of fractals. Before we discovered Dr. Taylor's work, our goal was to bring people into nature. This article allowed us to consider bringing nature to people and led to the creation of our community garden and nature mural.

White, R.L., Eberstein, K., & Scott, D.M. (2018). Birds in the playground: Evaluating the effectiveness of an urban environmental education project in enhancing school children's awareness, knowledge and attitudes towards local wildlife. Retrieved from *PLoS ONE*, 13(3), 1-23. <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0193993>

The effects of an outdoor education program at an urban school are described in this article. It provides examples of successful program structure, along with concrete evidence of improvement in children's environmental awareness.

Williams, F. (2017). *The nature fix: Why nature makes us happier, healthier, and more creative*. New York: W.W. Norton.

The Nature Fix was the text that guided our thinking through the beginning stages of the project. Williams, an investigative journalist, compiles interviews and research from scientists all over the world related to the connections between mental health and the environment. It directly led to the creation of our research question.

RAISING AWARENESS OF THE IMPACT OF POLLUTION ON SEA TURTLES TO TRANSFORM A COMMUNITY IN THE AFTERMATH OF HURRICANES FLORENCE AND MICHAEL

BETA ALPHA TAU CHAPTER

*Community College of Baltimore County, Dundalk Campus
Baltimore, Maryland*

THEME 1: NETWORKS OF LIFE

ABSTRACT

In spring 2018, our chapter browsed Phi Theta Kappa's 2018/2019 Honors Program Guide. Over the summer, we began to explore the theme "Networks of Life" as it relates to *Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change*. Our team wanted to answer the question, "How do relationships among organisms, their environments, and the systems in which they exist transform each other?" As we began our research, a video of a local man sweeping trash from the streets into a storm drain a few short blocks from our campus was posted on Facebook. This placed the topic of pollution at the forefront of our minds, and we acknowledged that litter is a problem in our community. We used the questions, "How does pollution transform us and our environment?" and "How do we transform pollution?" to guide our research. We went to the library and searched online. In August and September, Hurricane Florence hit the United States, followed in October by Hurricane Michael. We were subsequently bombarded by news headlines about debris in our oceans, mass deaths of ocean species, and "red tide," which depletes oxygen in the ocean. Preservation advocate John Muir said, "When we try to pick out anything by itself, we find it hitched to everything else in the universe." When we assessed our research, we found this to be true. People and pollution are directly connected, and both transform our environment.

OBJECTIVES

Our chapter's project objectives were sorted into three categories. Our research objectives were to 1) understand and identify pollution's impact on wildlife through the evaluation of sea turtles, 2) understand and identify the connection of all living systems through the evaluation of sea turtles, and 3) understand how the choices people make affect other living systems and identify the right decisions that work toward bettering ecosystems and wildlife. Our collaboration objectives were to 1) work with organizations/clubs within the college to expand our chapter's outreach and advocacy, 2) work with organizations within the community to expand our chapter's outreach advocacy, and 3) work with an organization outside the state to expand our chapter's outreach and advocacy. Finally, our action objectives were to 1) support conservation efforts for sea turtles, 2) support legislation that benefit endangered species and our oceans, 3) petition against legislation that harms endangered species and our oceans, and 4) raise awareness of the importance of everyday conservation efforts.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

Our team began by exploring Phi Theta Kappa's 2018/2019 Honors Program Guide. We then discussed the overarching topic of "transformations." This led us to question how activities in our state have an impact on us and the world beyond our local community. We brainstormed ideas, eventually naming litter/pollution as our main topic of study. Our team sought to answer the question, "How do pollution and human impact affect wildlife, and do these effects change the relationships held between organisms?" In order to answer this question, we began locally

by contacting Maryland's Department of Natural Resources to discover which species are endangered in our state. Each of us then chose a species to research. We decided to explore three components related to each species: 1) the species' geographical location(s), 2) its extinction status, and 3) reason(s) for its current status. To efficiently and effectively answer our research question, we needed a species whose location was spread not just in Maryland but throughout the world. We also needed the reason(s) for the creature's endangered status and whether it was humans who created the situation that led to endangered status. Sea turtles are located throughout the world, all seven sea turtle species are endangered, and the main reasons for endangerment are human-related pollution, habitat, climate change, and by-catch.

In Maryland, blue crabs are essential to the economy. They account for 50 percent of all catches and contribute \$600 million in annual revenue. Blue crabs feed on sea/bay grass. Sea turtles also feed on the grass, but they feed on dead pieces of sea grass which allows the new grass to flourish. In that way, blue crabs are supported by sea turtles. Beyond Maryland, we discovered that sea turtles are essential to coral reefs, as they feed on sponges. Sponges cannot be eaten by many animals since the sponges have physical and chemical defenses to protect them. As a result, sponges damage coral reefs and take up space. When turtles eat sponges, it allows new coral to grow, which attracts fish to eat and some sea life to take shelter. Further, we found that sea turtles provide shelter for small prokaryotic organisms that live on the shells of the turtles. Prokaryotic organisms are eaten by fish and shrimp. So, sea turtles provide a food source for species that eat small prokaryotic organisms. Another contribution sea turtles make to networks of life involves them eating jellyfish. Jellyfish feed on fish eggs and larvae, which contributes to declines in fish populations. Finally, sea turtles lay eggs on sand dunes, which is a difficult environment for vegetation to grow. Sea turtle eggs provide vital nutrients that assist in the growth of vegetation.

CONCLUSIONS

Analysis of our research suggested that humans have an impact on wildlife via pollution. Choosing to study sea turtles specifically, we found that sea turtles are mistaking plastic bags for jellyfish, an aforementioned food source for them. They are breathing in plastic straws and cutlery. This deterioration in the sea turtles population has impact on networks of life for humans as well as other species. The impact of pollution on networks of life has an impact on the economy, which, in turn, has an impact on humans.

We realized that the answer to our research questions about how human-made pollution has an impact on wildlife, and whether the effects change the relationships among organisms, was yes. Humans pollute. Sea turtles are both directly and indirectly affected by human pollution. When sea turtles decline in population, that, in turn, has an impact on other species. One of those species, the blue crab, is vital to our local economy in Maryland. When the blue crab population decreases, Maryland's economy suffers. Humans, therefore, are affected by a problem created by their habits.

ACTION

The action part of our Honors in Action Project reflected our research conclusions and was broken into four distinct categories:

Legislation: In our research we found that there are laws and regulations, such as the Endangered Species Act, in place to protect wildlife. This law is at risk of being unfunded or eliminated. To combat this, our chapter asked students to sign petitions protecting laws that protect the environment and species affected by a lack of protection. We asked our local and state politicians to speak out against these changes. We also researched local litter laws and asked local law enforcement about the enforcement of these laws. They are not enforced much, if at all. We included a request to change this in our communication with our elected officials.

Recycling: To decrease the debris in the Atlantic Ocean, we joined with college's Office of Student Life and Student Government to facilitate the collection of plastic bottles. Collaborating with them allowed our team to reach more Community College of Baltimore County students and collect more bottles. We used these plastic bottles to make plastic jewelry. We collaborated with the honor society for teacher education majors to collect shoes to give to those in need. This collaboration was chosen as both groups were working on similar projects. Again, we reached a bigger audience via the collaboration.

Fundraising: Conservation organizations we contacted wanted financial contributions. Our chapter decided to fundraise for the Sea Turtle Conservancy by selling the jewelry we made from the plastic we collected. The college's Sustainability Committee commended our idea and donated to our cause. We also recycled old cell phones to raise money for the Sea Turtle Conservancy.

Conservation: With our research demonstrating that pollution was the major cause of marine problems, we worked with the local Cub Scout Pack to clean up trash at North Point and Marshy Point State Parks. We collaborated with them to collect more trash and to educate them about our research and the actions we were taking to address our conclusions. At all events, we discussed the impact we were having on sea turtles, why this mattered, and what the average person can do to stop destruction of their environments. We also partnered with the Sustainability Committee on their Sustainability Day to teach members of our Community College of Baltimore family about pollution, its effects on sea turtles, and why destruction of sea turtles' networks of life has an impact on the Maryland economy. We understood changes are hard to make and that children are the world's future. We went to Norwood Elementary School to educate students about the importance of recycling and conservation.

IMPACT

We raised \$187 by selling jewelry made from recycled plastic and \$159 from collecting 58 old cell phones, and we contributed the money to the Sea Turtle Conservancy. We distributed nine petitions supporting current laws assisting sea turtles and our oceans. We collected 55 pounds of trash at two state parks, and our events attracted a total of 365 participants. In addition to our quantitative outcomes, we adopted a Sea Turtle through the Sea Turtle Conservancy. We educated students at Norwood Elementary about recycling and planned a project for them to create from recycled materials. A student said to us, "I am going home to make more stuff," and others asked, "When can we do this again?"

Through our Honors in Action Project and its focus on sea turtles and their environments, we were able to raise awareness about the impact of human actions on networks of life. We encouraged people to recycle and repurpose. The children with whom we worked loved having random things to use to create whatever their imaginations inspired them to do. Many people who purchased our jewelry said they were inspired in turn by our creations.

We reached beyond our comfort zones by working with children, presenting to others, seeking resources within the college and in the community, and learning to persevere when obstacles arose. Our perseverance helped us fulfill our objectives. Moving beyond our comfort zones helped us develop and strengthen leadership skills and overall teamwork among chapter members. We learned that everyone's contribution is valuable to promoting healthy networks of life.

RESOURCES

Fujisaki, I., Lomont, M., Carthy, R. (2018). Temporal shift of sea turtle nest sites in an eroding barrier island beach. *Ocean & Coastal Management*, 155, 24-29. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0964569116303702>

We discovered that beach erosion is a natural occurrence, but climate change has increased the rate of erosion. Wildlife are losing their habitats, not all species can relocate and adapt. Sea turtles are an example of this. This provided further information on the problems faced by sea turtles.

Gillespie, A. (2006). The slow swim from extinction: Saving turtles in the South Pacific. *International Journal of Marine & Coastal Law*, 21(1), 57-82. Retrieved from <https://doi-org.ccbcmd.idm.oclc.org/10.1163/157180806776639484>

This reference provided a global perspective of how sea turtles are impacted by the world. Globally sea turtles face five problems of incidental catch, international trade, subsistence use, habitat destruction, and oceanic pollution. To confront these problems domestic, regional, and international organizations must work together to create legislation for conservation of sea turtles. This shaped our action, providing us with the problems faced by sea turtles and how to help correct them.

Matiddia, M., Hochscheid, S., Camedda, A., Bains, M., Cocumelli, C., Serena, F., Tomassetti P., Travaglini, A., Marra, S., Campani, T., Scholl, F., Mancusi, C., Amato, E., Briguglio, P., Maffucci, F., Fossi, M.C., Bentivegna, F., & de Lucia, G.A. (2017) Loggerhead sea turtles (*Caretta caretta*): A target species for monitoring litter ingested by marine organisms in the Mediterranean Sea. *Environmental Pollution*, 230, 199-209. Retrieved from https://indicat-europa.eu/cms/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/2017_Matiddi-et-al_debris-ingestion-Caretta.pdf

This journal concurred with the prior, that plastic was a leading pollution source. Because sea turtles migrate worldwide and eat from both the surface and the bottom of our oceans, they are used as pollution indicators. Samples of all seven species of sea turtles (dead) were examined and biopsied. All sea turtles had ingested plastic. In some there was evidence that the plastic was the cause of death.

McClellan, C.M., Read, A.J., Cluse, W.M., Godfrey, M.H. (2011). Conservation in a complex management environment: The by-catch of sea turtles in North Carolina's commercial fisheries. *Marine Policy*, 35(2), 241-248. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0308597X10001764>

This article explained how commercial fisheries are important to the economy and culture of coastal states. There is an ongoing dispute between agencies and fisheries. Fishermen use nets and hooks to catch fish they are legally allowed to catch, but they catch and kill other marine animals via by-catch. Conservation agencies in turn set limits and regulations to how much fisheries can catch in order to reduce the marine animals that are caught and killed mistakenly. Limiting catch also limits the profit the fisheries and communities make. This article provided evidence of the conflicts in the sea turtle world.

Schneider, F., Parsons, S., Clift, S., Stolte, A., Marcel, C., McManus, M.C. (2018). Collected marine litter — A growing waste challenge. *Marine Pollution Bulletin*, 128, 162-174. Retrieved from <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0025326X18300146>

This article explained how all pollution, land and air, ultimately ends up in our oceans. Once in our oceans, the pollution is called "marine litter" or "marine debris." Marine litter is a threat to all marine life including plants, as well as human health and our economy. Marine litter includes plastics, metals, glass, ceramics, textiles, paper, and timber. The largest and most harmful portion of marine litter is plastic, macro and micro. It is estimated that every year 4.8-12.7 million metric tons of plastic waste enter our oceans. Reuse and recycling is an effective long-term plan; but due to the rate of pollution, we need more action now. People need to be on the frontlines of our beaches removing trash.

Taylor, M., Lamm, A.J., Israel, G.D., & Rampold, S.D. (2018). Using the six Americas. Framework to communicate and educate about global warming. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 59(2), 215-232. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/328467702_Using_the_Six_Americas_Framework_to_Communicate_and_Educate_about_Global_Warming

In this article, the skepticism regarding climate change is discussed. Public officials in the U.S. have openly questioned or denied it. The key to improving climate change is education, which is one of the reasons we chose that as part of our action.

Wallace, B.P. (2014). The case of the green turtle: An uncensored history of a conservation icon. *Copeia*, (2), 408-410. Retrieved from <https://awionline.org/awi-quarterly/2012-fall/case-green-turtle-uncensored-history-conservation-icon>

This article educated us about the importance of sea turtles in our ecosystem. Green turtles existed 65 million years ago, surviving the mass extinction of dinosaurs. The book calls them "conservation icons" because sea turtles have been used to represent change. This source provided an unbiased history.

Witt, M.J., Hawkes, L.A., Godfrey, M.H., Godley, B.J., & Broderick, A.C. (2010). Predicting the impacts of climate change on a globally distributed species: The case of the loggerhead turtle. *Journal of Experimental Biology*, 213(6), 901-911. Retrieved from <http://jeb.biologists.org/content/213/6/901>

Information garnered in this article strengthened our case for why we needed to work to change the conditions leading to the endangerment of sea turtles. Sea turtles are impacted by the warming of our oceans. Sea turtles have temperature-dependent sex determination. Warm temperatures produce more females and cool temperatures produce more males. Climate change is creating a world of female sea turtles.

PROMOTING AWARENESS TO TRANSFORM SOCIETY'S VIEWS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS

ALPHA DELTA ETA CHAPTER

Kankakee Community College

Kankakee, Illinois

THEME 2: ECONOMIES OF EVERYTHING

ABSTRACT

With the initial goal of exploring Theme Two, “Economies of Everything,” of Phi Theta Kappa’s Honors Study Topic, our chapter began with the question, “How are communities attempting to combat the impact that homelessness can have on college-aged students?” From there, we conducted research to find statistics about different parts of the homeless population; discover the ways that homelessness can impact a person’s life and the ways that community involvement can reduce that impact; and identify what services were operating in our community to assist homeless individuals. After discovering that one service, Fortitude Community Outreach, was working to begin a nightly shelter to fill the gap left when our local Salvation Army shelter closed months ago, we decided to develop our action with the organization in mind. We conducted a fundraiser securing donations and sleeping outside for a night in November. We also held a community forum, where we presented our research findings and provided the executive director of Fortitude with a platform to speak about the organization. Ultimately, we raised \$330 for Fortitude and, in the process, became much more aware of the hardships that homeless individuals face every day. Our project allowed us to better advocate for their needs.

OBJECTIVES

Our first objective was to conduct research into the subject of student homelessness, its causes, and its impact. Our second objective was to connect with relevant leaders on our campus and in our community that were playing a role in alleviating homelessness. Our third objective was to identify an organization fighting homelessness in our community that we could assist through fundraising and increasing awareness. We hoped to create a long-term impact for chapter members and community members by highlighting the discussion taking place on the subject of homelessness in our community.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

Before beginning our research, we reviewed the Honors Program Guide that highlights Phi Theta Kappa’s Honors Study Topic, *Transformations: Acknowledging, Assessing, and Achieving Change*, and felt that Theme Two, “Economies of Everything,” would be the best fit for the direction we originally wanted to explore. Going into the project, we thought that we would focus heavily on the economic factors, both in terms of the situations that led to homelessness and the state of the resources that were available to homeless individuals. From there, we set out to answer our research question, “How are communities attempting to combat the impact that homelessness can have on college-aged students?” After discovering few statistics focused solely on college-aged students, our research changed directions to discover what effects communities can have on their homeless population, the impact that homelessness can have on individuals, and the ways that they interact.

Our first priority in discovering how our local community was serving our homeless students was establishing the size of our homeless student population. It was here that we realized that our research question was too specific and couldn’t be answered with much of the existing literature as few, if any, studies existed to find the population of homeless college students. According to

some of our research, many colleges don't keep records of their homeless population. Covenant House, an agency that provides services to homeless youth, states that 4.2 million youth experience homelessness in a year, but that number is not specific to college students. To try to get a more accurate local measure, we contacted Dr. Francesca Catalano, who works closely with disadvantaged students as the director of our campus food pantry. However, neither she nor the other campus offices we contacted were able to give us any estimates on the population size, though it was unclear if this was because they couldn't disclose the information or because records of this information are not kept. We found that students might be less willing to disclose that they are experiencing homelessness out of embarrassment or fear that they may lose access to services they are depending on.

After failing to find any sort of statistics for the student homeless population, we broadened our focus to try to find an estimate for our community's general homeless population, but we also struggled there. We contacted local government officials to see if they kept records on the homeless population, but never received a response from them. We contacted campus and community librarians with the hope of finding new research leads and were directed to Dr. Dawn Broers, the executive director of Fortitude Community Outreach, an organization striving to aid those experiencing homelessness in our local area. From Dr. Broers, we learned that there were approximately 100 truly homeless individuals in our area.

CONCLUSIONS

Though we ultimately ended up with an estimate of the homeless population, the process of finding these statistics led to us conclude a few things about homelessness from multiple perspectives. First, the stigma that society places around homelessness is so oppressive that some people would rather potentially miss out on helpful resources than admit that they are homeless. Second, statistics of the homeless population seem to be almost entirely reliant on organizations that provide services directly to homeless individuals. These two conclusions, when combined, could mean that population estimates are inaccurate, as people must be willing and able to utilize services to be included in the record.

We also conducted research into some of the reasons that students and the general population might experience homelessness and the short- and long-term impact that homelessness might have on their lives. One area we found of particular interest was that there were high rates of homelessness among those that aged out of the foster care system due to a lack of preparedness once they left the program. Finally, we researched what resources existed in the area for individuals that currently or are close to experiencing homelessness. We found that, at present, while there are many food banks and groups providing supplies, there are not many resources targeted toward helping homeless individuals recover stability in their lives. Our local Salvation Army shelter closed down months ago, leaving people with few or no options of a safe place to spend the night. Other shelters do exist, but they have restrictions for who they will serve. Some are only for survivors of domestic abuse, while another requires patrons to commit to a highly restrictive lifestyle to use their services.

One organization, Fortitude Community Outreach, focuses on meeting individuals on their own level, committed to helping them still feel human despite the stigma of homelessness. They are currently working on establishing a shelter that would rotate between several churches in the community throughout the week and take in anyone wishing to use the service. From that, we felt that the best way we could serve our community through action was to assist Fortitude Community Outreach in their fundraising efforts for the shelter and other components of the program.

ACTION

As the central action component of this project, our chapter decided to participate in a modified version of Covenant House's Sleep Out America event in which participants across the nation simulate homelessness by sleeping outside for a night to raise money and awareness for the issue of homelessness. Our chapter decided to direct our donations to Fortitude Community Outreach,

a local organization striving to aid those experiencing homelessness in our area, so that our efforts could assist those in our community more directly, aligning with our objective to contribute to the success of a local organization. We committed to sleeping outside on a night in November, regardless of the weather, and spread the word around campus. Interested individuals were given the opportunity to participate as well, but even though some seemed interested at first, the only ones that committed to the event were Phi Theta Kappa members.

Participating chapter members went to local businesses to find cardboard boxes large enough to sleep in, a task intended to open a dialogue between business leaders and chapter members about homelessness in our community. We hoped to encourage them to support our endeavors through providing us with cardboard boxes to shelter us for the night as well as make a donation to our fundraiser. We found a safe location to host the event on campus, and we received approval from various campus officials. On the night of the sleep out, participants gathered in our approved location and set up for the night. Multiple discussions were held over the course of the event about our experiences and feelings about the situation, allowing us a place to openly voice our opinions about the reality of the situation. Following this event, we hosted a community forum where we shared our research findings and our experiences with the sleep out. We also invited Dr. Dawn Broers, the executive director of Fortitude Community Outreach, to speak to our campus about her work with the organization. Members of the audience were given an opportunity to gain more knowledge about the issue, converse closely with a notable figure combating it in our community, and to connect with opportunities they have to help alleviate the situation. To conclude the forum, our chapter presented Dr. Broers with the funds we raised from the sleep out as well as donations that were given by audience members during the presentation. Later, a news release was posted on the college website, allowing individuals who might not have been able to attend the forum to become aware of Fortitude's mission.

IMPACT

With our Sleep Out America fundraiser, we raised \$330 that was given as a donation to Fortitude Community Outreach, which, according to the organization's website, is enough to shelter everyone using the service for one night. In addition to this, the experience was invaluable to the chapter members that participated, making us more aware of the situation and more capable of empathizing and understanding the hardships that these people experience. Everyone that participated concluded that, while it was tough, it could never compare to the hardships faced by the homeless community who face it nightly with no other option. Our forum connected 15 attendees with Dr. Broers and Fortitude Community Outreach, making them aware of their ongoing activity in the community and ways that they and other services can be assisted. As the majority of the attendees were members of the college faculty, including the college president and two of the college vice presidents, holding this forum on campus will hopefully push the college to consider factors of homelessness as they implement college policies in the future. Several attendees voiced high levels of interest in getting involved with Fortitude.

RESOURCES

Britton, L., & Pilnik, L. (2018). Preventing homelessness for system involved youth. *Juvenile & Family Court Journal*, 69(1), 19-33. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1111/jfcj.12107>

This article examines how the process of children aging out of foster care can be a somewhat major contributing factor to youth homelessness. It is stated that the foster care system is typically inadequate at preparing its youth for adulthood and independent life, resulting in high percentages of these individuals experiencing homelessness soon after aging out of the foster system. It is established that foster youth need to be provided with more in-depth planning to help them prepare for independent life. Strategies are suggested to help implement this into already existing programs. We found that this article provided important perspective into a major cause of youth homelessness, discussing both short- and long-term impacts of homelessness before addressing how the current system is failing to alleviate the problem and what it needs to improve upon to stop more youth from falling into homelessness.

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. (2014). Gaps in educational supports for Illinois homeless students. Illinois. Retrieved from <https://www.chicagohomeless.org/progress-illinois-new-report-finds-gaps-in-educational-supports-for-illinois-homeless-students/>

This report by the Chicago Coalition for the homeless details resources that are supposed to be implemented in public schools and explains that while they are present, they are often underfunded and unable to meet the needs of students. This was of particular interest to our research due to our finding that statistics on homelessness are often tied to utilization of services and, if the service is unable to serve everyone that needs it, population sizes will be underestimated.

FAQs/Studies. (2018). Chicago Coalition for the Homeless. Retrieved from <http://www.chicagohomeless.org/faq/>

This list of statistics and studies composed by the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless provided insight into how a person might get into contact with a needed service, as well as gave detailed statistics from geographically close areas, allowing us to see what is being done to address the issue of homelessness in other locations outside of our county.

Fortitude Programs. Fortitude Community Outreach. Retrieved from <https://fortitudecommunityoutreach.org/programs/>

This web page details Fortitude Community Outreach's trauma-based approach to serving the homeless, focused on fostering relationships and trust. This stands out from the rest of the resources available in the community, where relationship building doesn't seem to be a priority, even though it plays an important role in helping people be more open about their situation.

Gupton, J.T. (2017). Campus of Opportunity: A qualitative analysis of homeless students in community college. *Community College Review*, 45(3), 190-214. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1177/0091552117700475>

Gupton's study looks at the stories of four students recovering from homelessness, discussing how community college provided them with a goal and a sense of stability. This work provided a perspective specifically for community colleges to identify how we can better serve homeless students and meet them where they are, so that they have an opportunity to work toward a better future for them.

Hallett, R.E. (2010). Homeless: How residential instability complicates students' lives. *About Campus*, 15(3), 11-16. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1002/abc.20023>

This article discusses the hardships that housing-insecure individuals face when trying to achieve their education, both from high school and post-secondary institutions. It is identified that these students may have a harder time managing their financial aid and finding housing, among other hardships, and that they will be more likely to drop out. This article was invaluable for exploring the impact that homelessness can have, specifically toward students.

Sulkowski, M.L. (2016). The student homelessness crisis and the role of school psychology: Missed opportunities, room for improvement, and future directions. *Psychology in the Schools*, 53(7), 760-771. Retrieved from <https://doi.org/10.1002/pits.21936>

Sulkowski establishes the important mentorship role that school psychologists can play in the lives of homeless students, discussing how if psychologists do their job properly, it can help lessen the stigma of homelessness and help these students succeed. The importance of psychologists working with resources like those discussed in Gaps in Educational Supports for Illinois Homeless Students is highlighted (Bill of Rights for the Homeless Act, 775 ILCS §§ 1-99 (2013)). The Illinois Bill of Rights for the Homeless Act outlines rights that are guaranteed to homeless individuals, in an attempt to help lessen the impact of homelessness and help homeless individuals be free from discrimination and other hardships. Many of these rights are meant to make sure that homeless individuals are treated the same as people with more stable housing conditions. This document provided us with insight about the current state of legislation available that is intended to protect homeless individuals, and knowledge about steps being taken on a state level to help lessen the negative impacts of homelessness. It helped us see that there was at least some recognition of this issue from the government. The fact that it originated at a state level rather than a federal one made us question the situation in other states and whether they had similar acts to protect this disadvantaged population.

VOTING HABITS AND THE 2018 U.S. MIDTERM ELECTIONS

BETA ETA XI CHAPTER

Cloud County Community College, Geary County Campus

Junction City, Kansas

THEME 3: POLITICS OF IDENTITY

ABSTRACT

Chapter officers and members met during the spring 2018 semester and, after reviewing the Honors Program Guide, decided to conduct a survey focused on the 2018 midterm elections. Relevant research was located on the relationship between media and politics, prior voting habits, and group loyalties, then a questionnaire was produced to collect answers to questions that arose from the research gathered. Additionally, we wanted to gain information about voting habits; we determined that the problem of voters being unregistered and uninformed could be partly alleviated by hosting a voter registration booth in collaboration with the Student Senate. Our survey was approved by Cloud County Community College's Institutional Review Board on September 19, 2018, approval number 1003.

Members conducted several sessions to analyze the data collected, examined the data (N=693) using basic descriptive statistics, compared results filtered by political party affiliation, and performed a binary logistic regression analysis. We reached several conclusions, however, those that offer important insight concerning voter beliefs included that respondents were 1.8 times more likely to state they are informed on a candidate if they also felt that media outlets are accurate, as opposed to those that believe media outlets are inaccurate. Further, respondents were 1.5 times more likely to state they are informed on a candidate if they trust their news source(s), as opposed to those that distrust established news outlets. We also found that individuals that closely follow politics were 14 times more likely to state they were informed on a candidate. Males were 2.2 times more likely to state they were more informed on a candidate than females.

There is potential for further impact through further research, sharing research findings outside of the community, and continued voter registration drives. Chapter members and the advisors are exploring the possibility of writing an academic journal article based on this work.

OBJECTIVES

To further explore the research question, our chapter handed out and sent surveys via email to students and faculty colleges across the U.S. It is concluded that many people turn to various news outlets to gain information; however, with there being so much potential bias in the media, we sought to explore how that might influence people's decisions during an election cycle. With the 2018 midterm elections approaching, our chapter was determined to get answers as to whether or not media bias sways expectations for the midterm elections across political parties and if voters trust political information they obtain from the media. We surveyed staff and students from other community colleges to compare how data from the survey would differ based on political party affiliation. After we collected an adequate sample size of responses, we planned to use it in a probability analysis exercise and later review to see if the voter predictions were accurate. With all the data we collected from our survey and analysis, we then presented it at a T-Bird talk in April 2019, open to the community.

ACADEMIC INVESTIGATION

When we began our research, we posed the question, “Does media bias sway political parties’ expectation for the midterm elections?” To aid in addressing this question, we used binary logistic regression. Our dependent variable was “how informed respondents felt about the candidates,” and for our independent variables we used age, race, highest education level attained, income, military relations, whether they had previously voted, gender, state in which they live, employment status, if they felt certain news outlets were biased toward a particular political party, how they felt the economy would be affected, how the Senate and House would change, and how effective as a president Donald Trump has been thus far. We also sent out surveys to multiple colleges across different states in an effort to get as diverse an answer as we could manage.

Depending on political affiliation the respondent selected, whether the respondent believed a particular news source was biased toward a particular party was affected. In examining the responses holistically, and based on selected political affiliation, the responses indicated the perceived bias of media outlets toward a particular political party. Research also showed, for instance, filtering results on those that identified as Republicans (n=208), the majority believed the Republicans would maintain control over both the House and Senate, whereas, those identifying as Democrats (n=187) believed they would take the House but not the Senate. Furthermore, news outlets such as ABC and NBC had a varying degree of perceived political bias based on which party was indicated by the respondent. Based on our analysis, we conclude that media bias did, in fact, sway political party expectations regarding the outcome of the election.

For the logistic regression exercise, we identified our dependent variable as how informed someone is on the candidate, and our independent variables as gender, political affiliation, how closely they follow politics, media accuracy, and the trust in news sources. The resulting odds ratios (adjusted Beta coefficients) show that respondents were 2.2 times more likely to state that they are informed on a candidate if they were male. Respondents were 1.5 times more likely to state they are informed on a candidate if they identified as Democrat or independent. Respondents were 14.1 times more likely to state they are informed on a candidate if they follow politics closely. Respondents were 1.8 times more likely to state they are informed on a candidate if they stated that media outlets are accurate. Respondents were 1.5 times more likely to state they are informed on a candidate if they trust their news source. The Cox & Snell R-squared value was 0.113 and the Nagelkerke R-squared value was 0.116. We acknowledge that the R-squared values were lower than desired; however, low R-squared do not necessarily indicate poor models (Gomez-Benito et. al., 2009).

CONCLUSIONS

When we filtered our survey results on Democrats only and again Republicans only and then examined whether they found President Trump to be an effective or ineffective president, 89 percent of Democrats found Trump to be ineffective while 73 percent of Republicans found Trump to be effective. This shows that only two-thirds of Republicans (who are typically in favor of Trump) find him effective. Once we compared this question to another question where we asked whether the respondents intend to vote in the midterm elections this year, we found the results to be proportional. Ninety-two percent of Democrats say they intend to vote in the upcoming election, while 83 percent of Republicans intend to vote. These statistics align with the current feelings the political parties show toward President Trump.

When asked what political party respondents foresaw becoming the majority in the House of Representatives, we conclude that belief in what party would become the majority was strongly tied to party affiliation. When we examined responses by Republicans only and Democrats only, roughly two-thirds of each party felt their party would win the majority — this is indicative of the strong partisan divide in American politics.

When considering answers to “Is [given media outlet] biased toward a particular political party?” Independents seemed to vary the most in which news stations were biased toward a particular party. For instance, regarding NPR (National Public Radio), Independents said that NPR was Independent-leaning in its political affiliations, whereas, Republicans said it was more Democratic-leaning.

One of the more surprising differences in answers between political parties was whether the respondent voted based on facts, emotions, or both. Independents and Democrats reported being more likely to vote based on both, whereas Republicans were more likely to vote based on facts alone.

ACTION

Our initial action component featured a voter registration booth in collaboration with the Geary Campus Student Senate. The booth was an effort to encourage students to check their registration status and their polling location. In working with the Student Senate, the voter booth was better-staffed, received support from the college staff and faculty, and enjoyed more publicity. This resulted in a greater turnout in registered voters and increased knowledge concerning where to vote.

In addition to the voter registration booth, we presented our research findings to a select group of faculty and staff members to help us determine areas for improvement. We decided to work with the faculty and present our research findings to them first, as we knew they would advise us in creating a high-quality presentation. The faculty provided excellent advice, helping us determine new perspectives for data analysis, which components to focus on in presentations, and adapting to different audiences. We used their feedback to present our second “T-Bird Talk,” a TED Talk-style presentation hosted by the college, in April 2019.

IMPACT

A total of 782 individuals responded to our survey; however, only 693 individuals were eligible to vote (and thus, complete the survey) since they were 18 or older (final: N=693). Our respondents are from a combination of 17 colleges in 16 states. Of our respondents, 196 identified themselves as Independent or other political affiliation, 187 identified as Democrat, and 208 identified as Republican.

Collaborating with Student Senate provided leadership development for both organizations due to determining which organization was responsible for organizing various components of the booth. Qualitatively, the booth led to a greater turnout in registered voters and increased knowledge concerning where to vote in the local area.

The chapter faced a challenge when three officers resigned within the first six weeks of the fall semester. However, this provided a bonding opportunity for the remaining officers, as they needed to assume additional responsibilities of the Honors in Action Project. When conducting the survey and analyzing the data, chapter members had opportunities to grow as scholars; the advisors hosted sessions on how to interpret the basic descriptive data, look for patterns and interesting relationships when filtering on political affiliation, and build logistic regression models. An introduction to these statistical analysis methods was a great learning experience, as the advisors took the time to carefully explain and instruct us on how to work through a fairly large dataset, as well as conduct modeling in SPSS. The opportunity to engage in this type of deeper research, typically is not afforded freshmen and sophomores, highlights one of the Hallmarks of Phi Theta Kappa — scholarship.

The presentations that have and will be presented allow faculty, students, and community members to become more informed on the importance of voting and relationships between media, voting habits, midterm expectations, and other variables. This aids in addressing the issue of voters being uninformed, not registering to vote, and understanding the relationship between

media and politics. Finally, the chapter members were excited about the opportunity to develop a detailed presentation and deliver a public lecture on this research, as it has been an excellent learning experience for us all.

RESOURCES

Barnidge, M., Gil de Zúñiga, H., & Diehl, T. (2017). Second Screening and Political Persuasion on Social Media. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 61(2), 309-331. Retrieved from doi:10.1080/08838151.2017.1309416

Individuals who receive information from more than one media source are more likely to be persuaded by social media. Moreover, persuasion is more likely to occur when social media is already used for news or social interaction. Therefore, we wondered what media sources voters relied on and how many different sources were being relied upon.

Bennett, W.L. (2012). The Personalization of Politics: Political Identity, Social Media, and Changing Patterns of Participation. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 644,1. Retrieved from doi:10.1177/0002716212451428

This article creates a framework for understanding collective action that is often coordinated through digital media. Social fragmentation and the decline of group loyalties have given rise to an era of personalized politics in which individuals express personal action in many protest causes. It also highlights that the trend can be spotted in the rise of rapidly forming political participation aimed at a variety of targets. With the decline of group loyalties, our chapter pondered whether political affiliation would be impacted for the 2018 midterm election cycle.

Doyle, W. R., & Skinner, B.T. (2017). Does Postsecondary Education Result in Civic Benefits? *Journal of Higher Education*, 88(6), 863-893. Retrieved from doi:10.1080/00221546.2017.1291258

Postsecondary education has been linked to individuals being roughly 7.7 percent more likely to vote in the 2018 election. This finding led our chapter to question whether education plays a role in an individual's voting habits, if an increase in voters would occur during the 2018 midterm elections, and if any other contributing factors, such as political affiliation, exist that affect one's likelihood of voting.

Elejalde, E., Ferres, L., & Herder, E. (2018). On the nature of real and perceived bias in the mainstream media. *PLoS ONE*, 13(3), 1-28. Retrieved from doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0193765

This source is important because it shows the media is becoming increasingly biased. People expect to gain the unfiltered, unbiased, and raw truth from our media sources, but instead, they gain filtered and biased knowledge (the so-called "echo chamber"). This has led our chapter to question how biased media plays a role in influencing the decisions

Johnson, S.J. (2018). Donald Trump, Disruptive Technologies, and Twitter's Role in the 2016 American Presidential Election. *Widener Law Journal*, 27(1), 39-82. Retrieved from <http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&AN=128076288&site=ehost-live>

As we saw with the 2016 election, many news outlets were confident in the fact that Hillary Clinton would become president; however, many were shocked with Trump winning the presidency. It was said that what aided in his win was his active participation in social media and communication with voters. This ultimately led our chapter to question whether people trusted their news source with the upcoming midterm elections, since predictions were largely wrong concerning the 2016 election. This also had our chapter questioning whether people believe Trump has been an effective president.

Pierce, D., Redlawsk, D., & Cohen, W. (2017). Social Influences on Online Political Information Search and Evaluation. *Political Behavior*, 39(3), 651-673. Retrieved from doi:10.1007/s11109-016-9374-4

Voters can be influenced simply by making judgments based off of their already informed counterparts. When people turn to the Internet to obtain political information they gain more than just news — they also gain reactions. These social cues often can be positive or negative, and the cues will often reflect on the people consuming the information given off. This source shows its importance by displaying how others' opinions can influence people's perceptions.

Schulzke, M. (2017). Interpreting and Reinterpreting the Political Significance of Popular Media: The Importance of Seeing from a Range of Perspectives. *Political Studies*, 65(4), 930-946. Retrieved from doi:10.1177/0032321717693028

Media from multiple sources can be interpreted differently and have various roles depending on the audience and their existing ideological biases. Our chapter was curious what media sources individuals turned to for political information and what, if any, bias was associated with such sources. Furthermore, we sought to determine if bias from media leads to certain expectations concerning the midterm elections.

Warner, R.B. (2018). *Modeling Partisan Media Effects in the 2014 U.S. Midterm Elections*. *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 95(3), 647-669. Retrieved from doi:10.1177/1077699017712991

Media provides intergroup cues that enhance the importance of partisanship as a social identity. Individuals value adopting diverse media environments despite the tendency to be biased toward partisan identity. These findings inspired us to investigate the possibility of achieving similar results through further research.