Transcript of a Presentation by Alysha Ramirez Hall (Arizona State University) & Michael Medina (University of California, Davis), July 15, 2022

Title: Emerging Adults' Daily Well-Being, Social Experiences, and Academic Persistence in the Context of the COVID-19 Pandemic

NSF Project #: 2028034

YouTube Recording with Slides

July 2022 CIC Webinar Information

Transcript Editor: Lauren Close

Transcript

Michael Medina:

Slide 1

Wonderful and thank you - thank all of you for coming. I appreciate your time. Again, my name is Dr. Mike Medina and I'm so excited today to discuss research conducted by myself and a team of my colleagues across the country on changes that college students have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic across different social contexts.

Slide 2

Now, among educators especially, one of the most obvious and talked about such changes to college students' lives from pre- to mid-pandemic is the transition of schooling from an in-person format to a virtual or more of a hybrid format. This was and continues to be a major social context shift that has touched the lives of, at least to some degree, nearly every single student and educator in the country.

Slide 3

Much has been said and lots and lots of research has been done to capture the extent to which there were hardships and detriments associated with this historic shift. But that being said, there were accounts of students and teachers who preferred elements of remote learning and appreciated the opportunities for peace and differently paced schooling that that kind of remote instruction provided.

Slide 4

So with these and other kinds of COVID-related shifts in mind, our team sought to answer two questions. One is: what are some of the other social contexts in which college students' lives shifted unexpectedly prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic? And [two]: how did such shifts impact students' lives, either positively or negatively, currently and in the long term?

Slide 5

We drew data from a very large and ethnically diverse sample of STEM college students. Now, it wasn't our intention to draw data about COVID-19 because we started surveying them well before the pandemic began. Instead, we were looking for a diverse nationally representative sample of college students to gather information about their social, emotional, and personal and academic experiences during the college years. However, after the pandemic began we saw an opportunity. We reached out to them again about a multitude of changes and experiences they might be facing during COVID-19. Specifically, we saw a chance to compare how they were before the pandemic to how they were handling life and its unexpected changes during the pandemic. We have a lot of data on this I'm really excited to answer your questions about college students' experiences before and during the pandemic. But right now we're going to be talking about three of the social context that college students were able to illuminate for us during that time. Specifically, we're going to discuss some of the changes to their social support systems mid-pandemic, the content they were consuming from the media during that time, and their academic experiences and preferences.

Slide 6

Regarding their social supports, one of the starkest contrasts for students during the pandemic was the shift to living at home. Prior to the pandemic, students were reporting living at home less than 10% of the time. It's a very normative time for young people to be leaving the nest and living with roommates or romantic partners or on their own. Well, that number expectedly skyrocketed during the pandemic to nearly 50% - nearly half of college students that we surveyed either were living at home or moved back to home during the pandemic. Now, with the college years being a pivotal developmental period for the development of interpersonal relationships and personal autonomy, this change has the potential for really wide- reaching implications for this whole cohort of students' social development. And indeed, in our findings we found that living at home was something of a double-edged sword for students. They were receiving positive messages during that time about their culture, their ethnicity, and their race, likely because they were seeing examples of other cultural members among their family at home. But, at the same time, they were experiencing a lot more academic and social pressure, specifically experiencing feelings of stereotype threat and considering racial barriers to a greater extent than they would if they were living elsewhere in terms of how well they think they would do in their future careers. I think many of us can relate to the idea of feeling pressure from our family in relation to our academic and professional success. Now imagine you're living with your family throughout the pandemic during college and you can imagine I think what some of these students were going through.

Slide 7

Of course families aren't students only source of socialization. When we ask students about their media consumption and how they saw their ethnicity and their race portrayed on the news and social media every day, well, before the pandemic college students were reporting mostly neutral ratings. They were seeing positive and negative depictions of their cultural background. But beginning in early 2020 that all changed. The number of days that students reported seeing negative portrayals of their race significantly increased. Now this was particularly true for two groups: one were the Asian and Asian American students who were likely reporting this because of ties that were being linked between the COVID-19 pandemic and Asia and Asian American culture. And also white students, which we believe were reporting higher rates of negative racial depictions because co-morbid with the pandemic were a number of racialized incidents of police violence throughout the country. This is an example of the fact that while COVID-19 was all-encompassing and overwhelming in its impact on students' lives, I don't think any of us would be shocked to remember that 2020 was full of a number of other negative and highly detrimental events that we believe would have long-term impacts on students' social [and] emotional well-being.

Slide 8

Now, of course, as educators were interested in how these changes coexisted with students' experiences in schools. During the pandemic, students reported unfortunately feeling a significant lack of teacher support, even lower than pre-pandemic levels. [This is] very likely due to that shift I mentioned from in-person schooling to virtual or hybrid formats. Now that said, students had no shortage of peer support during this time which maintained very high levels across both time points - prior to and mid-pandemic. Lastly, students of color - as was the case prior to the pandemic and is unfortunately, historically the case - reported feeling underserved by their academic institutions even mid-pandemic. They were faring off worse than white students at every time point, reporting lower levels of feelings like they belonged in school and higher levels of feeling like their race and others' depiction of their ethnic racial group would hold them back from professional and academic success.

Slide 9

On balance, these and a number of other findings that we have painted for us a fairly vivid picture of the changes that college students have been and continue to experience over the course of the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, as educators and researchers, we may be inclined to focus our attention primarily on that shift from in-person to virtual, back to in-person schooling. But what our finding suggests is that students are experiencing simultaneously a number of other changes across various social contexts, all of which need to be considered when working to support students continued social and social emotional success. Going forward, our team is digging a little deeper into each of these contexts that I discussed with you and how they might have lasting impact on college students. So, for example: what are some of the long-term developmental differences we may see based on where students chose or were forced to live during the pandemic. How did that negative media consumption spike shape students' identity

beliefs in the long term? And how might peer support and the opportunity to have contact with diverse peers' support currently under-service students of color?

Slide 10

We hope that these and other findings serve for a more smooth transition for college students and we look forward to your questions about that. Thank you so much.