

# Exploring The Factors Underlying The Lack of Diversity In The Undergraduate Field of Communication Sciences and Disorders

Jenny Ortega



## Introduction

Multicultural constituency groups aim to promote clinician's cultural competence and improve the quality of speech, language, and hearing services (ASHA, 2021). Cultural competence requires constant exposure, and interpersonal interaction between individuals and the community. Undergraduate minority students have experienced being censored, and forced to assimilate due to prejudice and socio-economic factors (Dockery & Koshy, 2016). The percentage of racial and ethnic diverse minority students enrolled in Undergraduate Communication Science and Disorder programs averaged 23.7% over the eight year period. The number of undergraduate degrees granted increased from 2010 - 2017, then slightly decreased from 2018 - 2019 (ASHA, 2019). Exploring the factors underlying this phenomenon and identifying potential barriers to the participation of minority students in the field, could potentially result in higher diversity in the future, greatly benefiting our multicultural communities.

## This Study

This study's short-term goal is to investigate the observed imbalance in representation in the CSD field. The long-term goal includes identifying the factors behind this phenomenon.

Conclusion

Research questions:

1. Are ethnic minorities required to uphold institutional rules that run against their cultural beliefs in the CSD field?
2. For ethnic minorities, is there a perception of exclusion from certain activities compared to white peers?
3. How did the recent pandemic affect the academic progression of undergraduate minority students with low socioeconomic status in the CSD major?
4. How did COVID-19 impact undergraduate minority students' education and self-esteem?

## Predictions

H1. Diverse minorities uphold institutional rules and are more likely to be excluded in school-related activities than their white peers.

H2. Students with low SES were more affected by the pandemic, which led to higher rates of withdrawal or reduction in their academic progression compared to students with high SES.

H3. COVID-19 caused additional stress on minority students compared to white students, leading to the effects on their education and self-esteem.

## Materials & Procedure

- A survey was designed using Google Forms and administered virtually via Whatsapp
  - Speech Majors group chat (a group chat that holds over 120 Brooklyn College CSD undergraduate and graduate students)
  - Other CSD undergraduate students that the author had networked with.
- The duration to complete the survey was approximately 10 minutes.

## The Survey

25 questions in random order, targeting the anonymous participants' demographic and educational background, as well as their experiences in the field of CSD.

- 4 Likert-scale (1-7)
- 16 multiple choice
- 5 open-ended

## Participants

Diverse undergraduate respondents	White undergraduate respondents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ 4x Bilingual Hispanic registrants</li> <li>□ 3x Monolingual Asian registrants</li> <li>□ 2x Monolingual Black/African American registrants</li> <li>□ 5x First Generation parents immigrated to U.S.</li> <li>□ 4x Second Generation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>□ 10x Bilingual White registrants</li> <li>□ 3x Bilingual Middle Eastern registrants</li> <li>□ 2x First Generation parents immigrated to U.S.</li> <li>□ 11x Second Generation parent born in the U.S.</li> </ul>
Age: 21-30; Mean age: 24	Age: 19-36; Mean age: 23

## Survey Results

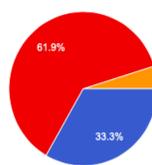


Figure 1. (Top Left) This figure illustrates each participant's annual socio-economic income.

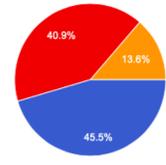


Figure 2. (Top Right) This figure illustrates the participants' dependency and independency.

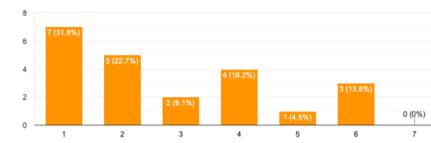


Figure 3. (Top Left) The graph shows the impact of COVID-19 vs. educational status

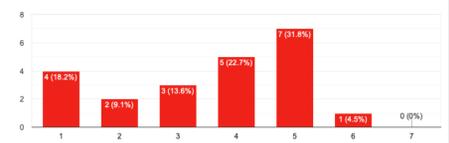


Figure 4. (Right) This graph shows the impact of COVID-19 vs. self-esteem.

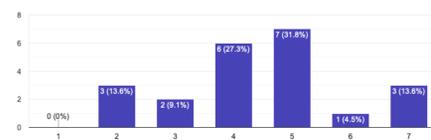


Figure 5. (Top Left) This graph indicates participants' responses to the diversity of peers in their CSD classrooms.

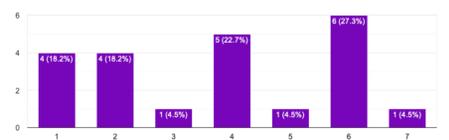


Figure 6. (Top Right) This graph indicates participants' responses on the diversity of professors in their CSD department.

## Conclusion

This study provided existing literature on the insufficient diversity in Communication, Sciences, and Disorders among undergraduate students. Similar to previous studies with different populations, results yield evidence of cultural disparities and socioeconomic effects on undergraduate students in the exist. Results yield the following:

- Students from minority groups retrieved repetitive memories of exclusion, abiding by following institutional rules, and feeling culturally and linguistically restricted in their institution than white groups. Supporting prediction such that diverse minorities do uphold institutional rules and are more likely to be excluded in school-related activities than their white peers.
- Minority and White students who reported their annual income to be below \$26,000, and who did not receive Financial Aid/TAP had to put their education on hold. Supports prediction such that students with low SES were more affected by the pandemic, which led to higher rates of withdrawal or reduction in their academic progression compared to students with high SES.
- Results found no significant effects of COVID-19, and the duration of the pandemic on most minority and white registrants. The impact of COVID-19 did not caused additional stress on minority students compared to white students, leading to the effects on their education and self-esteem.

## Limitations

- Due to COVID-19 restrictions
  - Lifespan of the study
    - The survey's duration having a 48-hour publication to obtain responses
    - Low numbers of participants due to time restrictions
  - The anonymous participant component
    - Participant response
    - Duration of the participants' activeness
    - Multiple submissions per participant
    - Level of transparency

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