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Introduction

Based on data collected for *College Internship Study*, a national, mixed-methods, multi-sited, longitudinal investigation of college internships.

Our qualitative analysis of focus group participants in the study identified how multiple social factors coordinate and compound to obstruct internship participation for some students.

Following intersectionality theory (Cho, Crenshaw, & McCall, 2013), we call this process of coordinating and compounding *intersectional amplification*, and we identify four types of amplification which can transform an obstacle to internship participation into a nearly intractable barrier:

1. Legal intractability
2. Temporal intractability
3. Mobility intractability
4. Multifactorial intractability

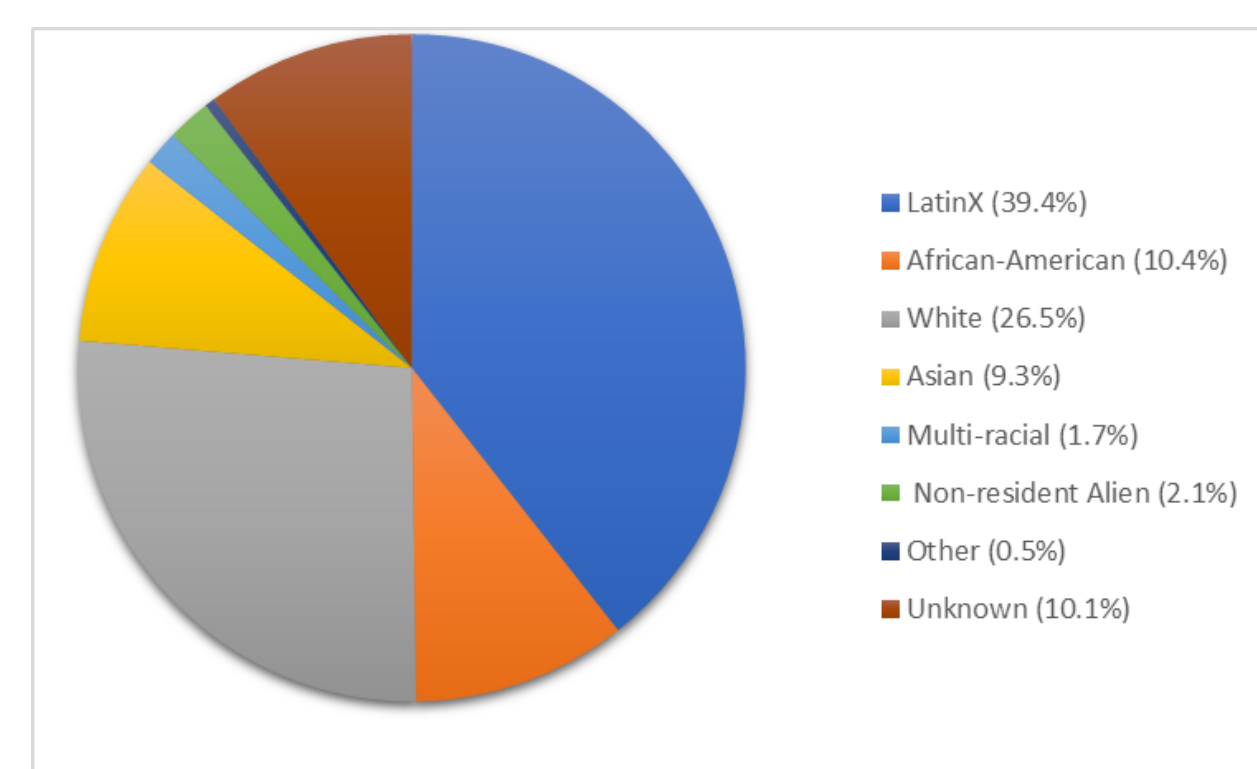
Research Question

How do social and cultural factors combine to amplify barriers to internship participation for minoritized college students?

Data and Analysis Methods

This poster presents an analysis of student focus groups (N=24) conducted at an urban, access, minority-serving, comprehensive university, in which the students provided rich narrative accounts of how different aspects of their social identity impacted their ability to access and succeed in an internship.

The research site is designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution located, located in an urban area in the Midwest, which serves a largely minoritized student population, with high percentages of non-traditional students (31%), of first-generation college (46%), of transfer students (58%), and of students of color (see chart).



We conducted focus groups with students who had and who had not participated, and discussed concerns and barriers to participation and success in an internship.

The focus groups were transcribed, and we did thematic coding in MAXQDA and developed case study analyses.

Barriers	Definition
Legal Intractability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersectional social factors are amplified by legal constraints enforced upon a student which establishes an intractable barrier to pursuing education and career goals. • Undocumented students can face legal intractability on pursuing internships and career goals.
Temporal Intractability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersectional social factors are amplified by constraints on the student's time available to pursue education and career goals, and by creating intractable scheduling conflicts. • Working students, in particular, those older students who have work full-time along with family care commitments, can face temporal intractability.
Mobility Intractability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersectional social factors are amplified by constraints on the student's mobility which establishes an intractable barrier to pursuing education and career goals. • First-generation college students, female students, and students with disabilities can face mobility intractability.
Multifactorial Intractability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intersectional social factors are amplified by compounding obstacles, one-upon-the-next, to establish an intractable barrier to pursuing education and career goals. • Students who are disadvantaged by social class, and simultaneously face struggles associated with gender, race, sexual identity, age, disability, immigration status, and other discriminatory or exclusionary factors, can face multifactorial intractability.

Legal Intractability

This student is a Hispanic woman who discussed a combination of struggles as a first-generation college student (such as a lack of knowledge and networks in the family to support college and internships), and a need to work for pay and concerns about mounting debt. In her efforts to work through those barriers she was proactive in her search for internships; but ultimately:

"They send like internships, and one of my problems is that, like, most of them require that you be a U.S. citizen... and I'm not a U.S. citizen." (FG3)

Temporal Intractability

This student is an African American woman who wants to do an internship but finds needed full-time work, academic and family care obligations, combined with needed travel for internships, create an intractable time conflict:

"I think that it would be nice [to do an internship] ... The ones that I see that are interesting to me, that I get in the emails, they're always far and require travel, or just a -- you have to kind of, abandon what you already have going on. And for me, that's a bit difficult because I'm in school part time. I work part time, and then I have two children. So, it's kind of like, I would have to just -- yeah, like drop everything. I feel like I haven't found one or seen one that would work with my schedule, really."

Multifactorial Intractability

This student is a Hispanic female student who—similar to other students in our sample—faces a combination of barriers that compound to create an intractable situation.

While serious financial constraints and challenges associated with transportation and being a first-generation college student are frustrating, the family care responsibilities required of her as the only daughter in a Hispanic family that follows traditional gender roles has caused her to self-select not to apply for internships, even though she is well-aware of their potential benefit to her future career:

"Because, I don't know, I just-- but at the same time, like the thought of having like an unpaid internship, like, just because it's like unpaid, like, I mean you're getting experience, but at the same time, like, of course it's going to look good on my resume and what not, but I mean I still have bills and like, obviously, like my parents want me to just be done with school and just graduate already and just go into the workforce, but like they won't understand that-- they're very traditional Latino parents, so... [and she later continues to explain] Like I want to be able to help out my parents because I mean that's what I'm supposed to do."

Mobility Intractability

This student is a man with middle-eastern background, who discussed a combination of challenges related to a need for fulltime paid work and extensive family care responsibilities. He was able to obtain support from family to relieve enough of the family care responsibilities so he could return to college, but the transportation and time requirements of an internship proved intractable:

"Like I mean I really wanted to do it [an internship]. You don't, you know, come by these kind of opportunities all the time...But then if I'm going to waste an hour and a half every day on the train ... but I can't."

Conceptual Framework:

Intersectional Amplification of Barriers

- Intersectionality theory is a conceptual lens, emerging from feminist legal theory and critical race studies (Crenshaw, 1991), which places analytical focus the multiplex of social factors, identities, and ideologies—racism, sexism, classism, ableism, heteronormativity, and more—that impact a person's experiences and possibilities.
- The approach of intersectionality theory departs from traditional sociological approaches, which tend to isolate particular factors for analysis, and psychological approaches, which tend to focus on individual-level phenomenon.
- Attention to this complex of factors (sometimes called the "matrix of oppression" [Collins, 2002]), can highlight how these factors combine, amplify, and impact individuals in particular situations, and how institutional and socio-cultural contexts inform this process.

Discussion and Conclusions

- Internships are often associated with positive academic and employment outcomes (Silva et al., 2016; Townsley et al., 2017), and are being promoted as a "high-impact practice" (Kuh 2008), however, more research is needed on the barriers to internship participation (Hora, Wolfgram, & Chen, 2019).
- We find that while the common sociological indicators of social class such as low-income and first-generation college status are important factors that can curtail access to internships, that such factors can be acutely amplified when compounded by additional factors such as a student's race, gender, sexual orientation, and immigration status.
- We argue that research on barriers to internship participation would benefit from a more clear recognition and analysis of the intersectional nature of the factors that impact student access.

Works Cited

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