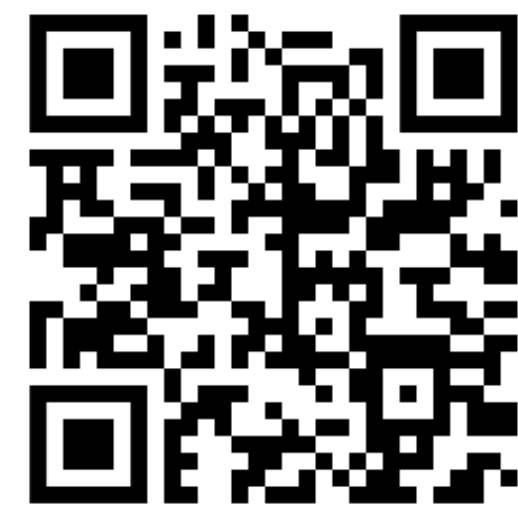


Working with Low Income Students: Ideas and concepts to create a more inclusive classroom

B. Katherine Smith¹, Cara Pace², Marc Kissel²



code and copies available at:
<https://github.com/MarcKissel/AAPA2019>

¹ School of Social Sciences and Global Studies, The University of Southern Mississippi ² Department of Anthropology, Appalachian State University

Introduction

Universities are currently serving a diverse population of students with different races, ethnicities, gender identities, religious affiliations, and socioeconomic (SES) statuses. However, current research shows that lower SES students are underrepresented at the university level, whether in representation through faculty, or in materials and scholars covered in class (Holley and Gardner 2012). Moreover, we are seeing great disparity in academic outcomes of students with lower SES. Current studies show that 52% of high school graduates from schools with low poverty rates achieved a four-year degree (after 6 years), while only 18% of graduates from schools with low poverty rates completed degrees (collegeforamerica.org). Additionally, students are receiving less financial support than ever before (Figure 1). As anthropologists, we are uniquely situated to address diversity in the classroom to allow for more inclusivity. While we have worked to be more inclusive in some areas, we suggest syllabi construction is a novel way to be more inclusive to lower SES students.

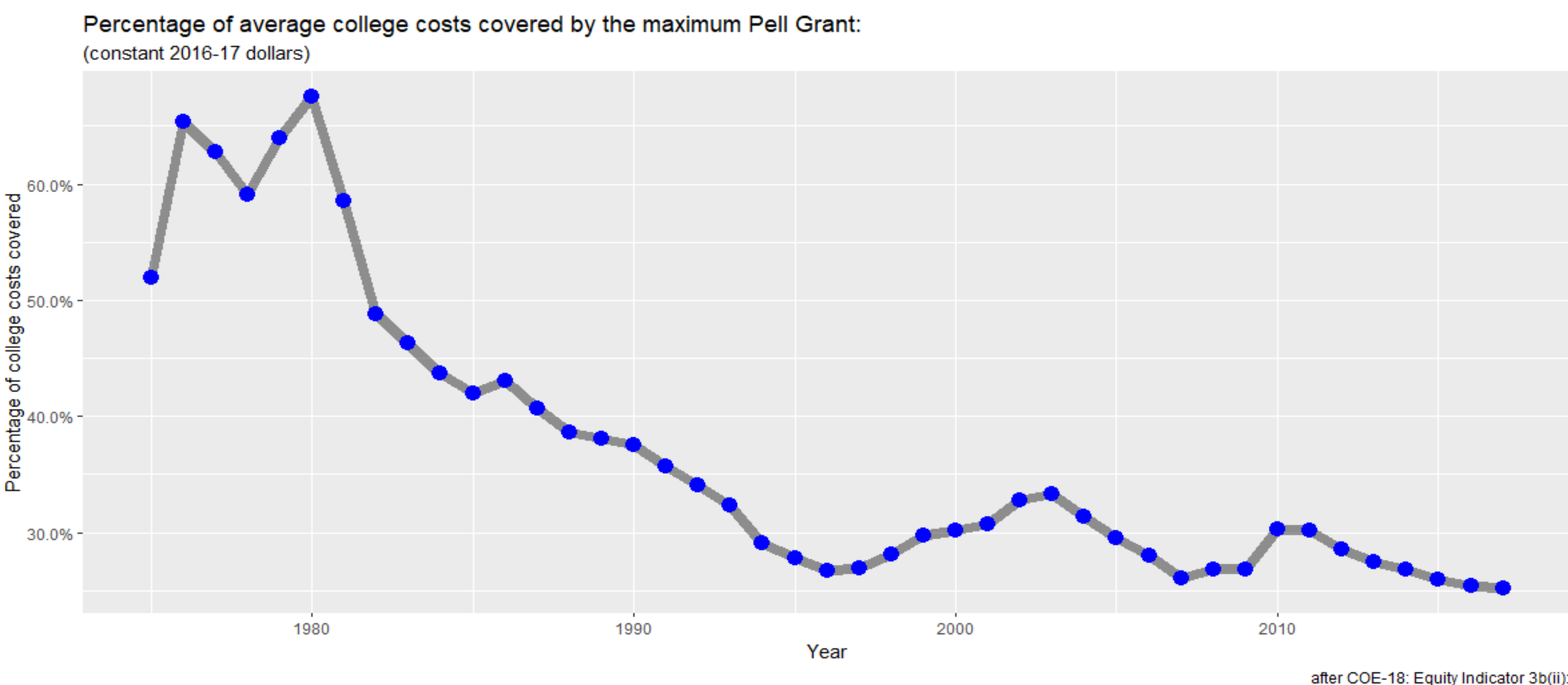


Fig. 1: Percentage of average cost covered by Pell Grant

Methods

We analyzed publicly available syllabi being used in introductory anthropology classes across universities in the U.S, to examine every time a syllabus discussed services available to low income students, (such as food banks), the content covered in class, and assumptions of the cultural capital necessary to succeed in class.

Results

Sentiment analysis using the NRC Emotion Lexicon (Mohammed & Turney 2013) shows that syllabi are generally positive (Table 1). However, there are also a significant amount of times that ‘negative’ and ‘fear’ words show up, with some syllabi being more “aggressive” than others. Table 2 shows the most frequently occurring terms (appearing more than 100 times), while Figure 2 shows the frequency at which those words are seen.

Sentiment	n
positive	158
trust	82
anticipation	57
negative	46
joy	35
fear	24
sadness	23
surprise	15
anger	11
disgust	6

Table 1: Sentiment Analysis of Syllabi Using Tidytext R Package.

Frequently Occurring Terms
Assign
Culture
Discuss
Due
Exam
Grade
Lecture
Read
Require
Student
Will

Table 2: Frequently Occurring Terms in Syllabi.

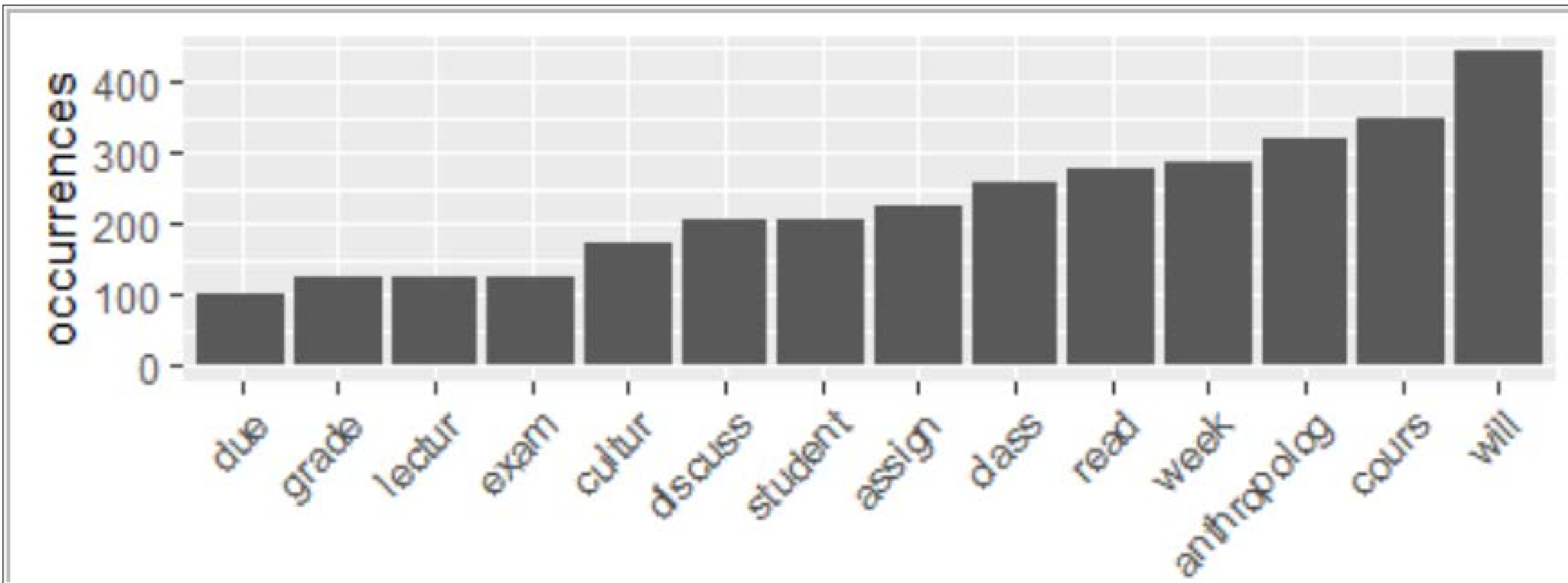


Fig. 2: Most common words in syllabi. Note that words have been stemmed & stopwords removed

Discussion and Conclusion

Social and academic support are necessary for college success. Many scholars do not explicitly take socioeconomic class into account (though the majority do refer to other forms of discrimination). Anthropology is well suited to be more open to lower-income students and encourage ways in which we can avoid gatekeeping and promote a more inclusive classroom. Steps such as (1) allowing students to send in work electronically, (2) informing them of the research opportunities, (3) reaching out to them personally, (4) giving them the social capital necessary to succeed, and (5) building more inclusive syllabi can all prevent opportunity hoarding.

Sources:
<http://pellinstitute.org/indicators/>
<https://nscresearchcenter.org/hsbenchmarks2016/>
Mohammad, S. and Turney, P. (2013) Crowdsourcing a Word-Emotion Association Lexicon 29 (3), 436-465
Holley, K. A., & Gardner, S. (2012). Navigating the pipeline: How socio-cultural influences impact first-generation doctoral students. Journal of Diversity in Higher Education, 5, 112– 121.