

Analyzing Medical Student Call to Action Letters after the Black Lives Matter Protests of 2020

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Introduction

- Racism has affected medicine and medical education since its origins.¹
- The 1910 Flexner Report revolutionized medical education, but it also led to the closing of all but two black medical schools (Howard and Meharry), exacerbating already critical shortages of black physicians, particularly in the Southern U.S.
- Despite increased attention on diversity, equity, and inclusion, representation of black and other historically marginalized students and medical school faculty has been slow to materialize.
- The deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor in 2020 encouraged national dialogue around the need for more effective DEI initiatives and greater inclusion of issues of racism in medical school curricula.²
- Organizations like White Coats 4 Black Lives developed “call to action” letters to medical school administration across country.³

Aims and Objectives

- Characterize the response of medical students following 2020 BLM protests
- Identify common themes and individual differences across data
- Provide framework for further investigations into diversity in medical education

Methods

1. 15 student letters sent to medical school administrations collected and analyzed
2. Line-by-line coding strategy used to classify the codes into categories and themes
3. Each idea analyzed for prevalence and inclusion
4. Themes and nested categories represented in Fig. 1.

Results

Six major themes plotted in Fig. 1:

1. Efforts for transparent and responsive communication with administration
2. Design of a thorough, longitudinal curriculum to promote diversity and cultural competency
3. Measures to improve the diversity of student, faculty and physician body
4. Reevaluation of the relationship of the police force with the medical school
5. Open conversations over the history of racism in medicine and public health
6. Examinations of the impact of racism on the mental health and well-being of minority students

Conclusions

- There were a variety of concerns such as campus policing and mental health of minority students were reflected across multiple letters.
- Results reflect broad need for increased diversity, mental health, and safety in U.S.
- There is a need for further study, particularly around:
 - Strategies for increasing funding for diversity initiatives and the effectiveness of such efforts.
 - Greater elaboration of patterns in the data by region, school type, school class composition

References

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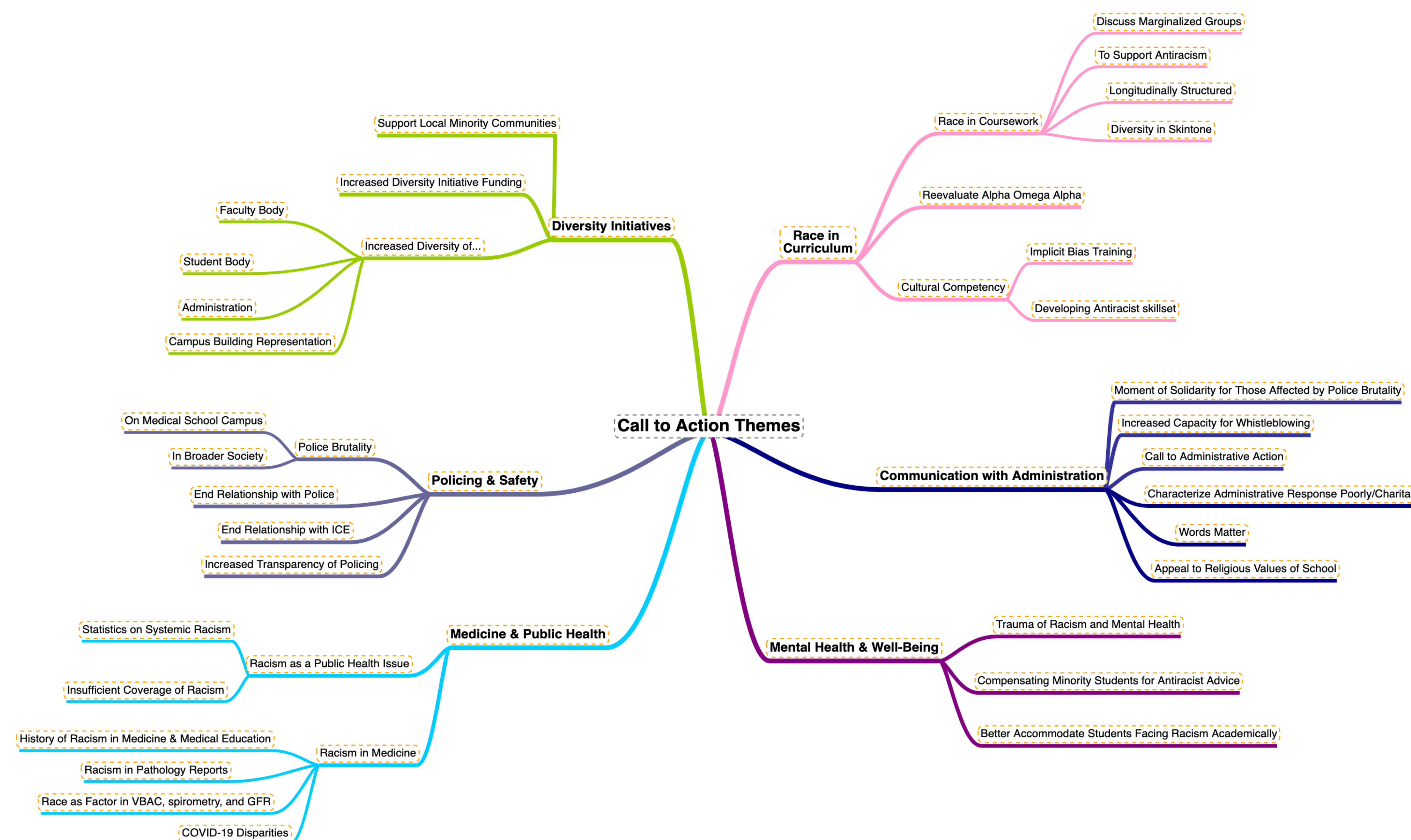


Fig. 1. Mind map of themes and categories common to the 15 letters