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FROM CRIME TO COMPASSION: REDEFINING DEATH IN THE EYES OF THE LAW

by

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Kayla Waters**

I. INTRODUCTION

Physician-assisted suicide became a central issue in the United States in 1990. Dr. Jack Kevorkian, one of the earliest crusaders for the rights of the terminally ill, argued that these individuals had the right to choose how they died. Beginning in 1990 and ending in 1998 Dr. Kevorkian, a resident of Michigan, willfully helped over 130 patients end their lives.¹ During that time he challenged social taboos about terminal illnesses and dying while defying prosecutors and the courts. In 1991 a Michigan state judge issued a permanent injunction barring Dr. Kevorkian from assisting in suicides. That same year the state suspended his license to practice medicine. In 1993 Michigan approved a statute outlawing assisted suicide. The statute was declared unlawful by a state judge and the state Court of Appeals, but in 1994 the Michigan Supreme Court ruled that assisting in a suicide, while not specifically prohibited by statute, was a common-law felony and that there was no protected right to suicide assistance under the Michigan state Constitution.²

From May 1994 to June 1997 Dr. Kevorkian stood trial four times for the deaths of six patients. Three of those trials ended in acquittals, and the fourth was declared a mistrial. But on March 26, 1999, after a trial that lasted less than two days, a Michigan jury found Dr. Kevorkian guilty of second-degree murder. That trial came six months after Dr. Kevorkian had videotaped himself injecting a patient suffering from Lou Gehrig's disease with the lethal drugs that caused the patient's death. He was sentenced to 10 to 25 years in a maximum-security prison. On June 1, 2007, Dr. Kevorkian was released from prison after

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he promised not to conduct another assisted suicide. While he was a controversial figure, most agree that Dr. Kevorkian helped spur the growth of hospice care in the United States. His actions made many doctors more sympathetic to those in severe pain and more willing to prescribe medication to relieve it. Dr. Kevorkian died on June 3, 2011.³

II. LEGALIZATION OF ASSISTED DEATH

In 1997 the United States Supreme Court ruled in two related cases⁴ that there was no federal constitutional right to assisted suicide, maintaining that states have, “an unqualified interest in the preservation of human life...” Conversely, there is no federal prohibition against providing medical assistance in dying. Prior to this ruling, Oregon had become the first state to allow medical aid in dying. In 1994 the Oregon Death with Dignity Act,⁵ a citizen's initiative, was passed by Oregon voters. While there continues to be great controversy over the moral and ethical issues of allowing physicians to administer and assist patients in dying (known as euthanasia), it is currently legal, or will become legal, for terminally ill patients to end their own lives using physician prescribed drugs (known as physician assisted dying, assisted death, or medical aid in dying) in the following thirteen jurisdictions: California, Colorado, Delaware, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Illinois, Montana, Maine, New Jersey, New Mexico, Oregon, Vermont, and Washington. Both Delaware and Illinois officially signed medical aid in dying legislation in 2025, which will go into effect in 2026.⁶

Montana is the only jurisdiction that does not have a state statute allowing physicians to aid in a patient's death. Instead, the state's Supreme Court ruled in 2009 that doctors have a defense to murder if prosecuted for assisting in a death at the patient's request. In general, under Montana law if a victim consents to conduct that ultimately causes injury or death, that consent is a defense to prosecution. An exception, making consent ineffective as a defense, is if the conduct or the resulting harm is against public policy. The court ruled that a physician's aid in a patient's death at the request of a terminally ill, mentally competent adult is not against public policy, making that person's consent a defense to prosecution.⁷

The remaining twelve jurisdictions have statutes that legalized medical aid in dying. Initially, all required that the patient be 18 years of age or older, a resident of the state, competent and capable of communicating their wishes, diagnosed with a terminal illness that will lead to death within six months, and a reflection period between the time life-ending drugs were requested and when they were provided.⁸ While most of these

requirements remain unchanged, in 2023 Oregon⁹ and Vermont¹⁰ passed amendments that eliminated state residency requirements, thereby allowing nonresidents to travel to those states and receive medical assistance in dying. Also, Hawaii¹¹ and Washington¹² amended their statutes in 2023 to shorten the reflection period.

III. THE ETHICAL DEBATE

Proponents of physician-assisted death contend that terminally ill people should have the legal right to end their suffering with a quick, dignified, and compassionate death. They argue that the right to die is protected by the same constitutional safeguards that guarantee such rights as marriage, procreation, and the refusal or termination of life-sustaining treatment.¹³ Opponents contend that doctors have a moral responsibility to keep their patients alive. They argue there may be a "slippery slope" from physician-assisted death to murder, and that legalizing assisted death will unfairly target the poor and disabled.¹⁴

The Family Research Council believes there is no such thing as a life not worth living. Every life holds promise, even if disadvantaged by developmental disability, injury, disease, or advanced age. Since every human life has inherent dignity, they believe it is unethical to assist another person to end his or her life. True compassion means finding ways to ease suffering and provide care for each person, while maintaining the individual's life and dignity.¹⁵ Wesley Smith of the Patients' Rights Council stated, "If we legalize assisted suicide, some patients will die instead of ultimately regaining their joy in living. If we are seduced into legalizing assisted suicide, we will cheat at least some people out of the universe's most precious and irreplaceable commodity: Time. Assisted suicide isn't a choice; it is the end of all choices."¹⁶

Many proponents for legalization of physician-assisted death maintain that opposition is fundamentally religious in nature, and that secular objections are only a cloak for underlying religious convictions concerning the sanctity of life. Religious identity does correlate with attitudes towards physician-assisted death. Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox Jews, and Muslims believe, in the majority, that it is unethical to assist a death, while in general Methodists, Unitarians, Conservative Jews and Reform Jews believe assistance is ethical. Hindus are split on the issue, and Buddhists only approve of assisted death for those who have achieved enlightenment.¹⁷ It is worth noting that nonreligious organizations such as the American Medical Association, the American Geriatrics Society, the American Hospital Association, and the National Hospice and Palliative Care Organization are strongly opposed to legalization for reasons that are medical and social rather than religious.¹⁸

IV. THE FINANCIAL DEBATE

As societal values shift to recognizing the personal decision to end one's life when suffering a terminal illness, other factors exist that may distort the medical aid in dying debate: namely financial expenses and savings. These can be considered at both the institutional level and the individual level, though the most recent (2022) meta-analysis of Medical Aid in Dying cost-analysis research concludes that there is a severe lack in literature and data on this subject worldwide.¹⁹

The only cost-analysis study specific to the United States was published in 1998, shortly after Oregon enacted its Dignity in Dying Act. It used extrapolated data based on the Netherlands. This study assumed that on average, one week to four weeks of life would be foregone by patients that choose life-ending drugs. The best data for medical care costs in those final weeks came from Medicare, which is mainly used by the elderly and disabled. The study found that there would likely be a total net savings in health costs foregone when compared to the cost of receiving care during those final weeks. Ultimately, the study concluded that the total savings would be a very small portion of the total annual health costs of the country and, therefore, should not be viewed as a deciding factor.²⁰

In 2017, a study was published in Canada that built upon the 1998 US study. The relative amount of living foregone still ranged from one week to one month. This study assumed that of the 1%-4% of the population that would use medical aid in dying, 80% would be cancer patients, and 50% would be more than 60 years in age. At the time there was no standardized set of care in Canada for those seeking medical aid in dying, so low-cost and high-cost estimates were used. A reduction in health care spending was again confirmed, but the authors stressed that they were “not suggesting medical assistance in dying as a measure to cut costs. At an individual level, neither patients nor physicians should consider costs when making the very personal decision to request, or provide, this intervention.”²¹

At the individual level in the US, insurance companies have the power to determine whether or not they will cover the cost of life-saving drugs. Medicaid may cover some drug costs in some states, but Medicare, as a federally run program, will only cover palliative care costs, and not the cost of life-ending drugs.

For individuals who do not have insurance coverage, Internal Revenue Code Section 213 allows for the deductibility for various “medical care” expenses should those exceed Adjusted Gross Income by 7.5%. While Revenue Ruling 97-09 and Treasury Regulations 1.213-1(e)(1)-(2) do not allow for the deductibility of illegally prescribed drugs, the Supreme Court affirmed in 2006 that “even if a drug falls within the Controlled

Substances Act, a doctor can prescribe it for a patient if it is allowed in the context of assisted suicide for terminally ill individuals under state law.²² None of the jurisdictions that have death with dignity laws have specific language to allow or disallow the deductibility of these life-ending drugs as medical expenses. One might argue that if the medical expense to die may be covered by insurance, or at least be tax-deductible, this financial aspect is, once again, at least neutral. Of course, tax deductibility does not always equate to fiscal feasibility for lower-income individuals.

There may be a benefit to choosing to end one's life in a particular tax year for the very rich, assuming their "six months to live" fall in the second half of a given calendar year. The estate, gift, and generation-skipping transfer tax exclusion has been permanently raised to \$15 million as of January 1, 2026, with indexed amounts in future years.²³

From an institutional perspective, it is estimated that a net savings would result if medical aid in dying is allowed. However, the amount of savings in terms of society as a whole is not great. Therefore, savings should not be a deciding factor. However, from an individual's perspective, saving on health care costs or inheritance taxes may be an important factor for those with very low- or very high-income levels. When contemplating policy considerations, confirming that the patient's advisor or advocate does not have any entitlement to the individual's estate may prove a useful stop-gap.

V. PROPOSED LEGISLATION

Lawmakers in ten states are actively considering bills which would allow physicians to prescribe life-ending drugs to terminally ill patients.²⁴ Despite continuing skepticism from the medical establishment, this controversial policy is gaining new momentum because of personal experiences, data from states that were among the first to allow it, and changing attitudes partly driven by the pandemic's devastation. People watching their loved ones spend their final days in the hospital during COVID-19 without having the ability to say goodbye put a spotlight on the importance of end-of-life circumstances, affirming that how one dies matters.²⁵

The New York State Bar Association, the nation's largest voluntary state bar organization, voted to support passage of New York's Medical Aid in Dying Act.²⁶ The proposed legislation gives terminally ill adults who meet strict criteria the option to end their suffering on their own terms and timeline. After an extensive review process, the patient may get a prescription from a physician, which they may, or may not, use to end

their own life. New York's proposed legislation closely follows the requirements set forth in the statutes of the other states that previously passed medical aid in dying acts.²⁷

On April 29, 2025, the New York Assembly passed the Medical Aid in Dying (MAID) Act by a narrow margin of 81 to 67 following hours of debate.²⁸ The New York Senate, on June 9, 2025, passed the bill with a 35-27 vote.²⁹ On December 17, 2025, Governor Kathy Hochul announced that she would sign the Medical Aid in Dying Act into law after coming to an agreement with the New York State Legislature on additional safety guardrails.³⁰

New York's proposed MAID Act authorizes health care providers to prescribe self-administered, life-ending medication to qualified individuals. In order to qualify, an individual must be over the age of 18, mentally competent, and terminally ill. In addition, qualified individuals must complete a written request for the medication, (unless unable to do so, then the request may be oral) the written request must be signed by two witnesses, and the individual must voluntarily submit this request to their health care provider. Witnesses may not be relatives or domestic partners of the individual, nor may they be entitled to any portion of the patient's estate. Proxies and agents are prohibited from submitting these requests on behalf of a terminally ill patient.³¹

While final statutory language has not yet been released, Governor Hochul's announcement highlighted a number of additional safeguards that lawmakers and the Governor have agreed to incorporate in the new law in order to meaningfully address any concerns. The additional requirements to be included in the final bill include:

- Residency Requirement: Access to medical aid in dying will be restricted to New York residents.
- Mandatory Waiting Period: Patients will be required to wait a period of 5 days between the date the prescription is written and filled.
- Specific Requirements for Medical Evaluation: Patients' initial evaluation by a physician prescribing the medication will be required to be in person.
- Mandatory Mental Health Evaluation: Patients will be required to undergo a mental health evaluation by a psychologist or psychiatrist in order to confirm they are mentally competent to make the decision to utilize medical aid in dying.

- **Restrictions on Oral Requests for Access to Medical Aid in Dying:** Any oral request made by a patient to access this medication will be required to be recorded by video or audio. Additionally, any person who may benefit financially from the death of a patient will be disqualified under the law from serving as a witness to the oral request or as an interpreter for the patient.
- **Opt-Out Allowance for Religious Care Providers:** Hospice providers who are “religiously-oriented” will be permitted under the law to opt out of offering medical aid in dying to its patients if it conflicts with their religious beliefs.
- **Violation of the Law’s Requirements Categorized as “Professional Misconduct”:** The agreement calls for a violation of the Medical Aid in Dying Act to constitute “professional misconduct” under the New York State Education Law, creating an additional deterrent for those who may otherwise disregard the law’s safeguards and requirements.
- **Effective Date of the Bill Extended Six Months:** Under the agreement Hochul struck with lawmakers, the bill will not take effect until six months after it is signed. This, Hochul says, will allow the New York State Department of Health enough time to enact regulations required to implement the new law, and provide health care facilities sufficient opportunity to properly train and prepare their staff for how to lawfully provide this assistance to patients availing themselves of Medical Aid in Dying.³²

If the health care provider complies with the law’s requirements and determines in good faith that an individual is qualified and is making an informed decision, they may prescribe a self-administered, life-ending drug without facing professional repercussions. Under New York’s MAID Act, the qualified individual’s terminal illness or condition will be listed as their cause of death.³³

VI. THE HISTORY OF ADVANCE DIRECTIVES AND THE “RIGHT TO DIE”

In the United States end-of-life issues have long been the cause of intense debate, focusing on questions concerning patient autonomy, quality of life, and the withholding or withdrawal of life-sustaining treatments. Advances in medical care and technology have

blurred the boundaries between life and death and have challenged our expectations about how individuals should experience the end of life. In the 1960s the patient rights movement sought to free terminally ill patients from aggressive and ultimately futile life sustaining treatment.³⁴ This resulted in the earliest form of advance directive, the living will. Living wills are designed to maintain the patient's "voice" in medical decision making and empower individuals to dictate the terms of their own medical care at the end of life.³⁵

Initially it was the states, rather than the federal government, that moved to give legal force to living wills. However, there was no uniformity in the state statutes, and they were hard to compare because they often appeared under ambiguous or unrelated titles. After the landmark Supreme Court decision in *Cruzan v. Director, Missouri Department of Health*³⁶ in 1990, the importance of advance directives became a national issue. Nancy Cruzan remained in a persistent vegetative state after suffering brain damage due to a lack of oxygen from a traumatic car accident, being kept alive by life-sustaining treatment. Her parents wished to discontinue the treatment, testifying that their daughter had previously expressed that she would not want to continue in such a state.³⁷ The Court found that her parents had not met the required burden of proof of clear and convincing evidence, so the life-sustaining treatment could not be withdrawn.³⁸ While the request to withdraw treatment was denied, this was the first time the Court recognized that there exists a constitutionally protected right to refuse life-sustaining treatment, more commonly known as the "right to die."

The "right to die" allows terminally ill patients with decision-making capacity to hasten death by stopping life-sustaining treatments or refusing food and water. While not eating and drinking is a reasonable option for some patients, it takes a week to ten days before a person dies, and it is a difficult process. Palliative or hospice support, in addition to family support, is ordinarily needed. It can be argued that medical aid in dying already occurs throughout the country, but it is done "underground" in states where it is not legal. Proponents of physician assisted death believe that the practice should be legal throughout the country and reasonably regulated. Physicians and family members should not be at risk of punishment.

VII. ASSISTED DEATH INTERNATIONALLY

Australia, Austria, Belgium, British Columbia, Canada, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Portugal, Spain, and Switzerland have legalized medical aid in dying. It is also legal in Colombia, Italy, and Germany, but formal procedures are yet to be

established.³⁹ Switzerland was the first country to allow physician-assisted death, passing legislation in 1941. As these countries have relaxed safeguards, the number of physician-aided deaths has ballooned⁴⁰ The accounts shared in the following cases are disturbing.

In Belgium, after a lethal injection failed to kill a 36-year-old woman with terminal cancer, the presiding physician smothered her with a pillow. Young patients in Belgium have died by physician assistance for a range of reasons, including a botched sex change, sexual exploitation by a psychiatrist, unresolved post-traumatic stress disorder, and hearing loss.⁴¹

In Canada, physician-aided death is available for the mentally ill. Suicidal patients seeking medical care for suicide prevention were prompted to consider physician-aided death instead of given coping skills.⁴²

In the Netherlands, twelve-year-old children are eligible to request physician-aided death. While minors may make the request, the consent of the parents or a guardian is mandatory for those under the age of sixteen. Sixteen and seventeen-year-olds do not need parental consent, but their parents must be involved in the decision-making process. Dozens of patients have qualified for medical aid in dying due to autism. In a case that led to criminal charges, a patient that requested physician-aided death apparently changed her mind. The physician sedated his patient in order to administer life-ending drugs, even though the patient repeatedly attempted to fight off the physician. The physician was later acquitted.⁴³

VIII. CONCLUSION

In the United States the justice system considers a human life “priceless”. Traditionally the laws of this nation have supported this principle. Recent years have seen a shift in societal values, resulting in laws that recognize personal autonomy over the sanctity of human life. One of the areas impacted is medical aid in dying. While there continues to be great controversy over the moral and ethical issues of physician-assisted death, a growing number of states are expected to pass medical aid in dying acts.

At the core of medical aid in dying is the presumption that there are safeguards, and the safeguards work. Consent of the patient, the most important safeguard, prevents physician-assisted death from slipping into rampart homicide or suicide contagion. Patients should not be asked, because of their illness or disability, to consider whether their lives are worth living. This hurts those who are most vulnerable, those who do not want to die, but wish to be helped to live.

ENDNOTES

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²⁴ Death with Dignity National Center. Retrieved Jan 2026, from <http://www.deathwithdignity.org>. The following states are actively considering legislation: Arizona, Connecticut, Florida, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Missouri, and Pennsylvania.

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⁴³ *Id.*

**COMPASSIONATE COMMUNICATION:
ARE YOUR WORDS BUILDING WALLS OR BRIDGES?**

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the crucial distinction between violent and compassionate communication, utilizing Marshall Rosenberg's Nonviolent Communication (NVC) framework as a guide for resolving conflict. Violent communication—characterized by blame, shame, and manipulative language—creates emotional distance and entrenches conflict. In contrast, NVC builds bridges by focusing on empathetic listening, honest self-expression, and recognizing universal human needs. The principles behind NVC are not new; they are rooted in various religious and philosophical traditions. From the Hebrew concept of *lashon hara* (the prohibition of evil speech) to the Eastern principle of *ahimsa* (non-harm), the power of language to either heal or wound has been universally recognized. By illustrating practical, side-by-side comparisons, this paper shows how rephrasing destructive language into needs-based communication can turn confrontational interactions into collaborative problem-solving sessions. The analysis also extends to the broader societal consequences of communication, revealing how violent language contributes to political polarization, workplace toxicity, and relationship deterioration. Ultimately, this paper argues that NVC is a foundational tool for promoting healthier relationships and cultivating a more compassionate, collaborative society. Unless we adopt a communication framework that builds bridges instead of walls, society risks fracturing under the weight of its own words and tearing down the very connections it needs to survive.

Keywords: nonviolent communication, compassionate communication, violent communication, conflict resolution, Marshall Rosenberg, interpersonal relationships, political discourse, workplace communication, *ahimsa*, *lashon hara*, DEI

I. INTRODUCTION

Every sentence you speak either heals or wounds—there is no neutral ground. Unless we learn to communicate without violence, society will fracture under the weight of its own words. The difference between "You're so self-centered" and "I am feeling somewhat overwhelmed and would be so grateful for your help" could save your marriage, your career, and possibly your life. Most people are unknowingly weaponizing language in ways that destroy their closest relationships. Boardrooms erupt into battles. Congressional debates devolve into warfare. Social media feeds fuel hatred. Dinner table discussions end relationships. Your words, unknowingly, become a weapon, creating division instead of unity.

There is a proven way to turn that conflict into a connection. Compassionate communication, also known as nonviolent communication (NVC), is a comprehensive framework for resolving conflict and strengthening relationships. Developed by psychologist Marshall Rosenberg (2015), the central premise of NVC is that conflict often arises from unmet needs and that all individuals possess an innate capacity for compassion that can be cultivated to bridge divides. Rather than merely avoiding or suppressing disagreements, NVC provides a structured approach for encouraging respectful and constructive dialogue. It empowers individuals to engage with their differences in a way that prioritizes connection and collaborative problem-solving. Ultimately, this method transcends surface-level communication to promote a deeper understanding and empathy, enabling participants to address the root causes of their disputes and collaborate toward mutually beneficial outcomes.

Distinguishing Nonviolent from Violent Communication

Building on the principles of NVC, it is essential to understand its opposite: *violent communication*. While NVC cultivates harmonious interactions, violent communication poses a significant threat to personal well-being, relationships, and societal cohesion. Violent communication (VC) encompasses not only overt aggression. It includes any form of expression that blocks compassionate connection, demeans an individual, or ignores their fundamental needs. VC prioritizes being right over being connected, leaving both parties feeling unheard and disconnected. The goal is often to induce shame, guilt, or fear. Its language creates emotional distance and conflict. This can manifest in subtle but damaging ways that undermine trust and perpetuate conflict. It might involve blaming, criticizing, judging, moralistic evaluations, and coercion.

VC weaponizes language to control, punish, or manipulate others. It manifests in several destructive ways. Labeling attacks the person's character rather than addressing specific behaviors—for example, calling someone "selfish" when they decline a request, or telling a child, "You're so irresponsible," instead of discussing the unmade bed. Blame-shifting language, such as "You ruined my day" or "You are stressing me out," makes others responsible for our emotional reactions rather than owning our feelings.

Demands disguised as communication often carry implicit threats: "A good friend would help me move" or "If you truly cared about this family, you'd be home for dinner." These patterns

also include comparisons that shame ("Why can't you be more like your sister?") and generalizations that trap people in negative narratives ("You never listen" or "You always interrupt"). This communication style ultimately creates defensive responses, erodes trust, and damages relationships by making people feel judged, blamed, or coerced. Unlike NVC, which seeks mutual understanding and collaborative solutions, this approach creates conflict and division.

Sometimes, it is unclear whether communication is violent or nonviolent. Thus, asking "Why are you yelling?" can be a form of VC, as it often acts as a judgment rather than a genuine question. This phrase can be used to deflect from the actual issue by criticizing someone's tone, a tactic known as tone policing. By labeling someone's voice as "yelling," even if they are just passionate or upset, the question can make them feel misunderstood and escalate the conflict.

The key distinction lies in the intent behind the question. If asked with genuine curiosity to understand the other person's emotional state, it could be a part of nonviolent communication. However, if the question is used as a veiled criticism or an accusation, it can shut down the conversation. Nonviolent alternatives focus on expressing personal observations and seeking to understand the other person's feelings, for example, by saying, "It sounds like this is really important to you. Can you help me understand what is going on?"

Side-by-Side Comparison: Violent vs. Nonviolent Communication

Violent Communication (Builds Walls)	Nonviolent Communication (Builds Bridges)
"You're so self-centered."	"I feel overwhelmed and need your help. I like to feel we are part of a great team."
"You ruined everything," or "This is all your fault."	"I'm disappointed that this did not go as planned. What did we do wrong? Let's work together and try to solve this."
"You never listen to me."	"I have something on my mind that I would really value your perspective on. Is now a good time to talk?"
"You always miss deadlines; you are totally unreliable."	"I'm concerned about the missed deadline for the [Project Name] report. This has an impact on our team's ability to reach our goals. Can you please provide some insight on what happened so we can work together to ensure future deadlines are met?"
"Stop being so sensitive."	"I can see that you really seem deeply affected by this. Would you be willing to share more about what you are experiencing?"
"You are impossible to talk to."	"It feels like something might be getting lost in our communication, and I would deeply appreciate finding a clearer path forward together."
"You are always so difficult."	"I want to be sure I'm on the same page as you. Would you be open to sharing more so we can figure this out together?"
"I hear you" (with a dismissive tone).	"That makes sense, and I'm grateful you brought this to my attention." Or, "What I'm understanding is... [summarize their points]."
"See what you made me do."	"I'm not satisfied with the outcome. What steps can we take together to improve this for next time?"
"You never pull your weight on this team."	"The project's workload feels uneven, which might put our deadlines at risk. I'd like to discuss how we can adjust responsibilities to ensure that everyone on the team feels supported and we meet our goals."

Nonviolent Communication as a Foundational Tool for Constructive Conflicts

Nonviolent communication offers a clear framework for moving beyond aggression and hostility, navigating disagreements, and transforming potential conflicts into constructive dialogues. By focusing dialogue on empathetic listening, honest self-expression, and the recognition of universal human needs, NVC facilitates exchanges where conflicting viewpoints can be expressed and negotiated in a respectful manner. The principles of NVC thus serve as vital tools for managing nonviolent disagreements, allowing participants to address differences constructively while maintaining mutual dignity and understanding.

In psychology and management, the term "*constructive conflict*" refers to disagreements that are managed in a way that yields positive outcomes, such as stronger relationships, innovative ideas, and improved solutions. Closely related is Nonviolent Conflict Resolution (NVCR), which refers to the peaceful process of managing disputes through communication, negotiation, and mediation. Both terms, based on Marshall Rosenberg's concept of NVC, highlight a central idea: disagreement can be a productive, rather than destructive, force when handled with the right tools and mindset.

Attacking another person's character or placing the entire blame on them is the wrong way to open up a conversation. When a boss or HR representative responds with "I hear you," while well-intentioned, this phrase can sometimes leave employees feeling unacknowledged or as though the conversation is being closed prematurely, particularly when they do not feel their concerns have been fully understood.

A systematic literature review by Adriani et al. (2024) shows that NVC is a powerful tool for improving interpersonal relationships in healthcare. This approach offers a practical strategy for managers and leaders to resolve existing conflicts and prevent aggression among healthcare professionals, particularly in situations involving moral or psychological stress. By adopting NVC principles, healthcare environments can become more collaborative and less prone to conflict.

The key takeaway is that there are always more constructive ways to express ideas that strengthen collaboration and connection, rather than focusing on problems and shutting down conversations. A separate and serious issue we're currently seeing is the use of AI-generated videos, or deepfakes, to create embarrassing and humiliating content or to spread hateful messages.

II. SPEECH ETHICS ACROSS RELIGIOUS AND PHILOSOPHICAL TRADITIONS

For millennia, diverse religious and philosophical traditions have independently recognized the profound power of words to either inflict harm or promote healing. Despite developing in different cultures and eras, these frameworks, from the Hebrew concept of *lashon hara* to the Eastern principle of *ahimsa*, reveal a shared understanding of ethical communication. Examining these cross-cultural perspectives on responsible language use offers valuable insights into universal principles of compassionate speech and how different societies have addressed this fundamental challenge. The wisdom from both Western and Eastern traditions provides

comprehensive frameworks that help us understand how words can either build community or cause significant harm.

Evil Speech (*Lashon Hara*): A Biblical Perspective

The Torah has strict laws against *lashon hara*, or "evil speech." This includes any derogatory or insulting speech, regardless of its truthfulness. Leviticus 19:16 states, "You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people." Deuteronomy 24:9 also says, "Remember what the Lord your God did to Miriam on the way, when you were leaving." Miriam spoke negatively against her brother Moses after he married a Cushite woman (Numbers 12). As a result, she was afflicted with *tzaraat*, a severe skin disease. This example illustrates that truth is not a defense against *lashon hara*.

The Babylonian Talmud (BT) further addresses this serious transgression. It interprets the curse in the Torah (Deuteronomy 27:24), "Accursed is one who strikes his fellow stealthily," as referring to *lashon hara*. It can be challenging for someone to regain their human dignity if others continually gossip about their past misdeeds.

Malicious speech is a grave offense according to Torah law, and medieval rabbinic authorities imposed severe punishments on slanderers, including flogging, excommunication, and fines, even when the speech was truthful. The Talmudic sages used moral warnings, teaching that those who shame others lose their share in the world to come (Avot 3:11). The Talmud even compares this sin to murder (BT Bava Metzia 58b).

Several statements in the Talmud emphasize the severity of this transgression (BT Arakhin 15a). For example, Rabbi Yochanan, in the name of Rabbi Yosi ben Zimra, taught that a person who speaks maliciously is considered as if they have denied the fundamental belief in God. An even more striking teaching comes from Rabbi Yishmael, who stated that malicious speech can increase a person's sins to the level of the three cardinal transgressions: idol worship, forbidden sexual relations, and bloodshed. Additionally, the Talmud notes that hateful speech can cause the death of three people: the speaker, the listener, and the one about whom the speech was said.

The Talmud (BT Arakhin 15a) illustrates the severity of the punishment for malicious speech through the fate of the *meraglim* (spies) who defamed the "trees and rocks" of Israel. They maligned the climate of the Promised Land, saying it was a "land that devours its inhabitants" (Numbers 13:32). Thus, if the punishment for defaming inanimate objects is so harsh, then all the more so will be the punishment for vilifying another person, even when true.

The story of Doeg the Edomite is a powerful example of the harm caused by *lashon hara* (I Samuel 22). When David was fleeing from King Saul, the priests in the city of Nob aided him in good faith, as they were unaware of the conflict between the two men. They also knew that David was the king's son-in-law. Seeking to punish the priests, Saul consulted only with Doeg the Edomite. Doeg slandered the High Priest Ahimelech, falsely claiming that he had intentionally helped David, the fugitive. As a result, Saul ordered his guards to kill the priests of Nob, but the

guards refused, recognizing the injustice (I Samuel 22:17). Doeg then carried out the order himself, slaughtering the city's residents, men, women, and children, as well as their livestock.

This ancient rule against harmful speech, even when true, aligns with the Nonviolent Communication (NVC) approach, which also focuses on preventing harm. After all, truthful statements can be just as hurtful as false ones. Historically, truth was not always a defense against defamation, with the pre-19th-century legal principle "The greater the truth, the greater the libel" suggesting that truthful but damaging statements were especially harmful. While later centuries established truth as an absolute defense, leading to the modern belief that defamation must be false, Helmreich (2024) argues this view is too narrow. He points out that truthful statements can still be used to defame and cause significant injury, a problem not sufficiently addressed by current defamation or privacy laws.

Friedman (2024), in his discussion of harmful speech, concludes that Jewish law suggests applying the following four-part filter before speaking about another person: (1) Does it constitute *lashon hara*? (2) Does it amount to *onaat devarim* (verbal oppression—hurtful words that cause psychological or emotional distress)? (3) Does it shame the other person? and (4) Does it promote peace and harmony rather than strife in the world?

Collaborative Inquiry in the Talmud

In the Babylonian Talmud (BT), scholars would engage in a cooperative debate with a partner, called a *bar plugta*. This was a collaborative practice focused on a shared pursuit of knowledge, not on winning an argument. For this system to work, both partners had to be fully present and attentive to each other's ideas. A famous example of this partnership is the relationship between Abaye and Rava, two influential sages from the 3rd and 4th centuries CE, whose frequent discussions are integral to the BT. Despite their frequent disagreements on interpretations of Jewish law, Abaye and Rava maintained a deep and lasting friendship. Their strong bond was so respected that they were buried together, symbolizing that their relationship transcended their intellectual debates. This collaborative approach to scholarly discourse, which prioritized respectful exploration over contentious argument, became a key characteristic of Talmudic study and continues to influence Jewish learning to this day.

The Talmudic method of debate, which requires participants to actively listen and engage with each other's arguments, is a historical parallel to Daniel Kahneman's concept of adversarial collaboration. A Nobel laureate and the author of *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Kahneman (2011) championed this approach as a critical tool in scientific inquiry.

In adversarial collaboration, researchers with opposing viewpoints conduct experiments together, sometimes with the help of a neutral third party. This process is designed to minimize confirmation bias, or the unconscious tendency to favor information that confirms existing beliefs. By integrating diverse perspectives, scientists can produce more reliable research. The goal of this method is not to "win" an argument, but rather to collectively uncover the truth, which requires participants to be open to changing their initial positions (Cowan, 2022; Pappas, 2025).

In one notable instance, the Talmudic debating system faced a serious challenge. During a period of intense discussion on Jewish law, a debate between the Academies of Shammai and Hillel regrettably became hostile. In a concerning departure from the norms of respectful intellectual exchange, some disciples of Shammai reportedly used intimidation, brandishing swords to influence a vote. Historical accounts suggest this incident may have resulted in the tragic loss of life among the Hillelites (BT, Eruvin 13b; Jerusalem Talmud, Shabbat 1:4; Lau, 2007, pp. 223-224). This event, which occurred just a few decades before the destruction of the Second Temple in 70 CE, marked a troubling departure from the principles of peaceful intellectual debate that had long defined these discussions.

In response to this problematic situation, a "heavenly voice" intervened, declaring that while both opinions were "the words of the living God," the law aligns with the School of Hillel (BT Eruvin 13b). The reason was that the Hillelites embodied qualities of kindness and modesty. They not only diligently studied their own views but also those of the School of Shammai, respectfully presenting the Shammaite perspective before their own. This reflects a core principle of NVC: understanding and acknowledging another's perspective, even in the midst of a disagreement.

This Talmudic narrative offers a timeless lesson. It teaches that intellectual growth thrives not in isolation, but through actively listening, engaging with diverse ideas, and approaching disagreements with a genuine desire for understanding. The Hillelites exemplified this by deeply considering the views of the Shammaites, a practice that enriched their own learning and led to a more compassionate outcome. The story encourages us to move beyond adversarial approaches and embrace collaborative exploration, seeking solutions that honor all perspectives rather than simply aiming for personal victory.

Throughout history, various religions have been responsible for the persecution and murder of people whose only offense was holding different beliefs about the proper way to worship God. This tragic pattern of violence against those with differing theological views underscores the dangers of violent communication.

In this context, VC is not merely about verbal attacks; it represents a mindset that dehumanizes others, reducing them to an enemy to be eliminated rather than a person with a different viewpoint. It is the antithesis of NVC, which seeks understanding and shared solutions. When religious disagreement escalates into bloodshed, it moves from a debate of ideas to the physical annihilation of those who disagree, serving as a powerful and grim reminder of what happens when empathy and mutual respect are abandoned (Friedman, 2025a).

Ahimsic Communication: Eastern Approaches to Non-Violent Speech

In ancient Eastern philosophies such as Hinduism, Buddhism, and Jainism, the core concept of *ahimsa* (non-violence) is central. Ahimsic communication applies this principle, focusing on interaction without causing harm. This approach extends beyond merely avoiding physical aggression; it seeks to prevent psychological, emotional, and verbal harm in all interactions. The core idea is to use words to build and enhance connection rather than to cause

division or pain. It is a conscious practice of compassion and respect, recognizing that our language has a significant impact on our relationships and the well-being of others.

This form of communication is built on several key practices. Mindful listening is fundamental, which involves giving the speaker our complete attention without judgment or interruption. Another key element is empathy, the act of understanding another person's feelings and perspective, even when we disagree with them. It also emphasizes honest and clear self-expression, often through "I" statements, which allow us to convey our own needs and feelings without placing blame or criticism on the other person.

Ultimately, the goal of ahimsic communication is to create a safe and respectful space for dialogue, where differences can be acknowledged without being invalidated or dismissed. It challenges us to move away from a language of judgment and blame towards one of understanding and connection. By focusing on universal human needs and expressing ourselves with care, this approach helps to resolve conflict, build trust, and stimulate healthier, more compassionate relationships in all areas of life (Barnett, 2024; Glenn, 2025). This philosophy is the spiritual and ethical precursor to NVC's goal of ensuring that communication serves to connect and heal, rather than harm.

Building on this rich history of ethical speech and Marshall Rosenberg's work, modern frameworks have emerged to provide practical tools for navigating communication challenges. One of the most influential contemporary approaches is Nonviolent Communication (NVC), a concrete method for applying principles of compassion to modern-day debates. NVC offers a foundational tool for turning potentially destructive disputes into opportunities for connection and mutual understanding, making it particularly effective for nurturing constructive conflict.

III. SOCIETAL/POLITICAL CONSEQUENCES OF VIOLENT COMMUNICATION

Violent communication, which goes beyond personal interactions, harms society as a whole. Aggressive and dehumanizing language creates widespread problems that damage social unity and how democracies function.

Political Discourse and Democratic Erosion

In today's politics, the spread of hostile and divisive language is a significant contributor to societal breakdown. When politicians and organizations consistently use inflammatory rhetoric to demonize their opponents, it becomes much harder for people to empathize and solve problems constructively. This type of communication fuels "affective polarization," which is a deep emotional animosity toward opposing political groups that goes far beyond simple policy disagreements.

The results of this trend are a fundamental challenge to democratic government. The link between online hate speech and real-world violence is a growing concern, as trends in hate crimes around the world often reflect changes in the political climate. These communication patterns reinforce an "us versus them" mentality and an adversarial mindset, which makes compromise and collaborative governance much more difficult. Ultimately, this poses a threat to the very deliberative processes that are essential for a healthy democracy (Lupu et al., 2023; Miller and Schwarz, 2022).

Many scholars believe that toxic polarization and hyper-partisanship pose a threat to American democracy and could lead to civil war (Marche, 2022; Walter, 2022). This is ironic, given that the United States was founded on the principle of compromise (Friedman and Kleiner, 2022; Walter, 2022).

Violent Communication and Mass Violence

Individuals can be influenced by a combination of psychological, social, and external factors to participate in mass violence. The United Nations (2014) released a report on how to prevent such "atrocious crimes" as genocide and ethnic cleansing. Four factors were identified:

- *Deindividuation*: This happens when people in a large group lose their sense of individual identity and responsibility. Anonymity reduces accountability, making it easier to conform to group behaviors, even those that are destructive. This is often the psychological reason behind the phenomenon of "mob mentality."
- *Deference to Authority*: The Milgram experiment (1963) showed that people are disturbingly willing to follow orders from an authority figure, even when those orders conflict with their personal morals and involve harming others.
- *Groupthink*: This is a phenomenon where people in a group suppress their personal beliefs to maintain harmony and conform to the majority opinion. The desire for group consensus often leads to poor decision-making and the justification of violence.
- *Dehumanization*: This is the process of viewing a group of people as less than human. When a group's moral worth is diminished, it becomes easier to justify violence against them.

The internet significantly amplifies the psychological and social factors that can lead to mass violence. Each of the four factors identified in the U.N. report is amplified in online environments, thereby accelerating the spread of misinformation and hate speech. It can also result in mass killings and genocide. According to Walther (2022), online hate is a search for social validation. People create hateful messages to gain a sense of camaraderie and support from others who share their dislike for the same things. This dynamic reinforces their biases and boosts their sense of well-being.

Deindividuation: The anonymity provided by online platforms, social media, and forums significantly alters people's behavior. Hidden behind usernames and avatars rather than their real identities, individuals often feel a diminished sense of personal accountability. This psychological distance from consequences can lead people to engage in behaviors they would typically avoid in face-to-face interactions. Harassment, hate speech, and joining in mob-like dynamics become easier when the repercussions feel abstract and removed from their everyday lives.

Deference to Authority: The internet has given rise to new forms of authority, including influential leaders of online communities, social media influencers, and charismatic figures who disseminate conspiracy theories. Users may be conditioned to defer to these figures without questioning their motives or the accuracy of the information they provide. Algorithms on social media platforms can also function as a form of authority by curating a user's content and reinforcing their existing beliefs, making it difficult to encounter alternative viewpoints.

Groupthink: Online communities and social media can create powerful "echo chambers" or filter bubbles, where individuals are primarily exposed to content and opinions that align with their own. This can be exacerbated by algorithms designed to display content that users are most likely to engage with. This environment can lead to a stronger sense of group unity, but also to an unquestioning acceptance of a group's beliefs, shutting down dissent and making it easier to justify extreme actions.

Dehumanization: The internet facilitates dehumanization by making it easy to create and share stereotypes, caricatures, and hateful content about "out-groups." Anonymity and the lack of face-to-face interaction can make it easier to view people as abstract entities rather than individuals with feelings and dignity. Online harassment, trolling, and hate speech are typical examples of how the digital world can reduce a person to a mere target, making violence against them seem more acceptable.

A 2020 poll revealed that similar percentages of both Democrats and Republicans, 11% and 12%, respectively, believed it was at least "a little" justified to kill opposing political leaders to advance their own political goals. The only way to stop this trend, which could eventually lead to rioting, is for political leaders to speak to their supporters and discourage violence while encouraging NVC. (Kleinfeld, 2021).

DEI's Communication Paradox: Fostering Division Instead of Unity

DEI is currently under significant political and legal attack across the United States. What went wrong? The noble intentions behind Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives, particularly in their aim to address historical injustices and foster a sense of belonging, have often been undermined by an unwitting reliance on what can be termed 'violent communication.' Instead of cultivating genuine understanding and connection, many DEI training programs have inadvertently employed methods that create division, blame, and resentment, thereby failing to teach the true value of inclusion. The "blame and shame" approach is not an effective way to teach empathy for others (Friedman, 2025b; Friedman, Vlady, and Friedman, 2023; Hamerling, 2024).

Traditional DEI approaches, by framing complex social issues through a binary lens of 'oppressor' and 'oppressed,' have fostered a climate of emotional polarization and fragmented dialogue. This emphasis on group-based identities, while attempting to highlight systemic issues, has often led to a form of 'identity politics' that, rather than building bridges, erects artificial barriers between groups. When concepts like 'white supremacy culture' are presented without nuance, or when a 'blame and shame' approach is adopted, the communication becomes inherently violent. It attacks, accuses, and assigns guilt, rather than inviting empathy, dialogue, and shared responsibility. This method, far from fostering unity, can lead to increased defensiveness, resentment, and a hardening of existing prejudices, making constructive engagement nearly impossible. Unsurprisingly, overly ideological approaches often backfire, deepening social divisions rather than promoting understanding and unity (Brest and Levine, 2024; Friedman, 2025b).

Academic settings, as discussed by Lukianoff and Haidt (2018), can sometimes cultivate cognitive distortions that weaponize the concept of microaggressions. The authors challenge whether seemingly innocuous phrases, such as "melting pot," "the most qualified person should get the job," or "where are you from?" are genuinely aggressive. This environment, where individuals are consistently encouraged to view themselves as victims, can lead to a hypersensitive mindset that perceives the world as inherently hostile. This perspective can create a destructive cycle of resentment, ultimately eroding social cohesion.

Instead of rushing to "cancel" individuals for possibly offensive remarks, we should consider the speaker's intent. Often, these comments stem from a lack of awareness rather than genuine malice. This immediate rush to judgment creates a culture of public shaming rather than one that values empathy and education. Instead of allowing for apology and growth, which are crucial for a healthy society, we jump to condemnation. This approach can stifle open dialogue, as people may become afraid to speak, learn, or engage for fear of misspeaking.

For a community or organization to truly thrive, the focus should shift from punishment to constructive dialogue and collaboration. Public shaming should be a last resort, not the first reaction. When we give people a chance to understand their mistakes, apologize, and learn, we cultivate a more tolerant and resilient society. This approach fosters personal accountability and growth, strengthening our social fabric through correction and understanding rather than division and alienation (De Jong, 2023, p. 170).

Research on the emergence of a 'victimhood culture' further illuminates how violent communication can manifest within DEI frameworks. When individuals are encouraged to view themselves primarily as victims, or when a 'grievance-centered discourse' emphasizes differences over commonalities, it cultivates a hyper-vigilant worldview. This perspective, often fueled by a systematic indoctrination into a victim narrative, perceives pervasive hostility and fuels a destructive cycle of resentment. Instead of empowering individuals with agency and self-efficacy, this approach can foster learned helplessness and divert focus from collaborative problem-solving. The competition for 'victim status' that can arise from such communication diminishes the gravity of real hardships and elevates minor grievances, further eroding social cohesion (Friedman, 2025b).

Moreover, the critique of DEI initiatives, as seen in the closure of programs like the University of Michigan's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, often points to the ineffectiveness of these 'violent' communication strategies. When DEI's emphasis on race and gender overlooks other forms of discrimination, it communicates a narrow and exclusionary message, rather than one of universal belonging. A truly inclusive approach would recognize that 'everybody counts or nobody counts,' acknowledging the diverse range of experiences and challenges faced by individuals beyond just race and gender. The failure to adopt nonviolent communication, characterized by empathy, mutual respect, and a focus on shared humanity, has meant that many DEI training programs have inadvertently contributed to social division rather than encouraging the unity and understanding essential for genuine inclusion (Friedman, 2025b; Friedman and Vlady, 2024; Friedman, Vlady, and Friedman, 2023). Applying NVC principles is essential for any organizational change, not just for DEI.

According to Harmeling (2024), many Americans have moved away from joining positive communities based on mutual respect, understanding, and solidarity. Instead, they are now part of angry, hostile identity groups. These groups are often defined by their perceived enemies, such as immigrants, people of color, and women on the right, or a variety of oppressors" on the left. This focus on finding an enemy has brought hostility and antagonism into the recent debate about DEI's past and future.

Personal/Relational Consequences of Violent Communication

Conflict is a natural and unavoidable part of human relationships, occurring more frequently and intensely as our connections with others deepen. It is not a sign of a failing relationship but rather an inherent part of meaningful human interaction. Disagreements arise in all social contexts, from family to work, because they are a fundamental byproduct of people interacting, not a result of specific environments or personalities. The stakes also become higher the closer the bond; a minor issue with an acquaintance can become a significant point of contention with someone you are deeply invested in. This heightened emotional sensitivity, combined with accumulated history, can cause even trivial disagreements to escalate into significant conflicts (Cahn and Abigail, 2021, pp. 5-10).

As relationships deepen, more frequent interaction and emotional investment create more opportunities for misunderstandings and different needs to arise. When handled poorly, conflict can destroy relationships. Instead of building understanding, poor conflict management erodes the core of a healthy bond: mutual respect, trust, and emotional connection. Within intimate and family relationships, violent communication is especially devastating. Recognizing conflict as an inevitable part of close relationships allows us to approach disagreements with a mindset of growth rather than viewing them as threats to the relationship's foundation.

Destructive Patterns in Conflicts

Conflicts often manifest in destructive patterns. One person may dominate the conversation, while the other consistently gives in, creating an imbalance of power. Other harmful behaviors include using personal attacks, resorting to manipulation and dishonesty, refusing to compromise, or altogether avoiding the issue. Over time, these toxic approaches chip away at the relationship. As trust erodes and resentment builds, partners may begin to withdraw or engage in increasingly negative interactions. This downward spiral, if left unaddressed, can ultimately lead to the collapse of the relationship. This is why mastering constructive conflict resolution skills is crucial for building and sustaining strong, lasting connections.

Constructive conflict resolution—characterized by active listening, perspective-taking, and collaborative problem-solving—has the potential to foster trust, strengthen relational bonds, and promote long-term stability. Conversely, destructive strategies such as criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling undermine emotional safety and contribute to the deterioration of relationships (Bailey, 2013; Gino, 2020; Lisitsa, 2013). Stonewalling, often expressed through withdrawal or avoidance, prevents meaningful engagement with the issue at hand and signals disengagement from the relational process. Similarly, dismissive and disrespectful behaviors such as sarcasm, mocking, or eye-rolling communicate contempt, which research has identified as one of the most corrosive factors in intimate partnerships.

Defensiveness further exacerbates this cycle by deflecting responsibility and minimizing consideration of the partner's perspective, which obstructs opportunities for mutual understanding. Taken together, these destructive patterns are unproductive, escalate conflict, and jeopardize both the immediate quality and the long-term viability of the relationship. Emotion regulation, the wife's ability to quickly regulate her negative emotions during a marital conflict, is a strong predictor of both her and her husband's current and future marital satisfaction. Moreover, this effect is mediated by the wife's use of constructive communication, highlighting the benefits of a wife's emotional downregulation for the long-term happiness of a marriage (Bloch, Haase, and Levenson, 2014).

Debating with someone who prioritizes winning over finding common ground is both frustrating and unproductive. These individuals aren't interested in truth or compromise; their sole focus is victory. They often employ a range of destructive tactics to achieve this goal, such as bringing up past grievances, making personal attacks, or even fabricating false statements. A particularly manipulative strategy they use is the straw man fallacy, where they misrepresent your argument to make it easier to attack. They then mock your fabricated position, essentially debating a point you never made.

Since a "win-at-all-costs" mindset makes genuine listening and productive dialogue impossible, it is often pointless to engage with someone who uses these methods. Indeed, one should avoid discussions with those who have no interest in listening to other viewpoints and are not interested in truth (Gunther, 2017).

Verbal aggression, even when it stops short of physical violence, can inflict profound and lasting emotional trauma that reverberates through individuals' psychological well-being for years

to come. The wounds created by hostile words, personal attacks, and emotional manipulation often prove more enduring than physical injuries, creating deep-seated insecurities, anxiety, and damaged self-worth that can persist long after the conflict has ended.

Given these serious consequences, mastering the principles of nonviolent communication becomes not just beneficial but essential for anyone committed to maintaining healthy relationships. Destructive arguing patterns do not simply fail to resolve issues; they actively poison the relationship dynamic. This creates cycles of escalation that can irreparably damage even the strongest family bonds. When we choose aggressive communication, we risk transforming our closest relationships into battlegrounds where trust is shattered and emotional safety becomes impossible to maintain. This makes it crucial that we develop constructive alternatives to handle inevitable disagreements.

Professional/Institutional/Workplace Consequences of Violent Communications

Julia et al. (2024) contend, in their literature review, that compassionate communication extends beyond merely reducing suffering. They argue it is an essential tool for de-escalating non-physical violence that can otherwise lead to physical harm. The authors also emphasize its importance in professional settings, such as medicine and law, and as a powerful method for conflict resolution.

In professional contexts, violent communication often manifests as destructive criticism, verbal abuse, threats, or hostile nonverbal behaviors. This type of interaction contributes to a toxic organizational climate that diminishes productivity, undermines morale, and drives employee attrition. The prevalence of verbal aggressiveness within teams frequently escalates into interpersonal conflict, disrupting collaboration and impairing collective performance.

Abusive supervision refers to the frequency with which employees feel their bosses are consistently hostile toward them, through their words and actions, but not physically. Empirical evidence suggests that employees exposed to such communication are more susceptible to heightened stress, anxiety, and emotional exhaustion, which can compromise job satisfaction and psychological health. Over the long term, these dynamics erode interpersonal trust, hinder effective teamwork, and pose significant barriers to sustainable organizational success (Gui, Bai, and Wang, 2022; Li and Xu, 2022; Liu et al., 2025). Proper communication enhances employee engagement and has positive effects, often resulting in improved safety outcomes (Nahrgeng, Morgeson, and Hofmann, 2011).

The Life-and-Death Stakes of Communication in Healthcare

Numerous studies have demonstrated that effective communication between doctors and patients plays a crucial role in enhancing patient satisfaction and overall well-being. Effective communication goes beyond just gathering information for accurate diagnosis; it also helps minimize the stigma associated with illnesses and disabilities. Speaking with compassion can help others feel acknowledged, understood, supported, and connected, while also easing their suffering

(AdventHealth, 2024). Furthermore, when patients feel connected to their doctor and believe their opinions are valued, they are more likely to follow treatment plans, experience better outcomes, and report a more positive overall experience (How compassionate communication, 2019).

Hurtful words, on the other hand, can have a damaging effect, leaving a patient feeling more isolated and disbelieved, and deepening any existing sense of hopelessness, uncertainty, fear, and vulnerability (AdventHealth, 2024). It is no surprise that rude doctors face more lawsuits than those who are caring and compassionate. According to Console (2021), the way physicians communicate with patients and the way they make patients feel can significantly influence whether doctors are confronted with malpractice lawsuits.

Medical errors are the third leading cause of death in the U.S. after heart disease and cancer, according to the Johns Hopkins study led by Dr. Martin Makary (Sipherd, 2018). According to *The New England Journal of Medicine* (Jena et al., 2011), by the time physicians reach 65, 75% of them have faced a malpractice claim, even in low-risk specialties. The same source also reports that just 1% of all physicians are responsible for 32% of paid malpractice claims.

Overwhelmingly, those doctors are the ones who do not communicate well with their patients. They fail to listen, explain, and inspire confidence. Many of them even shout at patients (Console, 2021). Compassionate communication requires active listening, but a study revealed that 67% of patients were interrupted after speaking, and only 36% of doctors asked questions that allowed patients to steer the conversation. On average, doctors spent just 11 seconds listening to a patient's reason for the visit before interrupting (Interrante, 2018).

Nonverbal communication accounts for over 70% of how we communicate, so healthcare professionals can gain valuable insights by observing their patients, not just listening to them. However, multitasking—like reviewing a chart or taking notes while a patient is speaking—can hinder the ability to pick up on these nonverbal cues (Ryan & Sharp, 2021).

With patients gaining easier access to their health records under the 21st Century Cures Act's 'open notes' provision, the language used in clinical documentation has become more critical than ever. Choosing words carefully in notes and professional communication is crucial. Communication errors are responsible for more than 70% of malpractice lawsuits, underscoring the importance of effective and compassionate communication in building strong relationships with patients and their families (Ryan & Sharp, 2021).

IV. CONCLUSION

This paper examines the stark contrast between compassionate and violent communication. It focuses on Nonviolent Communication (NVC), a framework created by Marshall Rosenberg, as a prime example of an empathetic approach. NVC moves beyond superficial disagreements by focusing on identifying unfulfilled desires and wants of others and cultivating innate compassion. This process enhances understanding, resolves conflicts constructively, and ultimately strengthens relationships. Conversely, violent communication actively undermines trust and perpetuates

conflict. Characterized by language that blames, shames, criticizes, judges, and manipulates, this approach creates emotional distance and hinders genuine connection.

This study effectively illustrates the practical application of NVC by providing clear, side-by-side comparisons of violent and nonviolent expressions. These examples show how rephrasing destructive language into empathetic, needs-based communication can transform confrontational interactions into collaborative ones. The paper then broadens this perspective by tracing the roots of this communication shift to ancient religious and philosophical traditions. It specifically references the Hebrew concept of "*lashon hara*" (evil speech) and the Eastern principle of "*ahimsa*" (non-harm). By connecting these historical perspectives, the document reinforces that the profound power of words to either inflict harm or promote healing is a universal and timeless concept.

Violent communication powerfully articulates the broader societal consequences, especially within political discourse. It reveals how aggressive and dehumanizing language contributes to social breakdown and fuels affective polarization. By eroding trust and hindering compromise, this type of communication ultimately threatens democratic processes. This analysis underscores the pressing need for more effective communication strategies to maintain social cohesion and promote effective governance.

Ultimately, Nonviolent Communication is a foundational tool for navigating disagreements and transforming potential conflicts into constructive dialogues. By prioritizing empathetic listening, honest self-expression, and the recognition of universal human needs, NVC empowers individuals and societies to address differences respectfully. It serves as a vital approach for building bridges rather than walls, promoting healthier relationships, and cultivating a more compassionate and collaborative world.

Prioritizing the teaching of NVC is vital for the survival and flourishing of our society. This educational imperative primarily falls on families and educators, who must instill its principles from the earliest stages of development. NVC provides a framework for compassionate connection, moving beyond judgment to understand the unsatisfied longings of others. By equipping individuals with the tools to express themselves honestly and listen with empathy, we can transform conflict into a cooperative effort. The media also bears a significant responsibility to champion these values, shaping a culture that prioritizes understanding over antagonism. Unless we change how we communicate, society will fracture under the weight of its own words and tear down the very bridges we need to survive.

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**SURVIVAL IN THE INTELLIGENCE AGE:
STRATEGIC PIVOTING
AND THE
NEW RULES OF CORPORATE RESILIENCE**

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ABSTRACT

With Fortune 500 tenure projected to fall to 14 years by 2026 and CEO tenure at a record low of 6.8 years, corporate survival now depends on adaptive capacity rather than stability. Organizational longevity in an era defined by artificial intelligence, hyperconnectivity, and rapid digital change requires continuous transformation, not periodic adjustment. This paper analyzes how major companies have navigated near-collapse through strategic pivoting, drawing lessons from successful turnarounds such as Apple, IBM, Netflix, and Microsoft, as well as failures like Kodak, Nokia, and Blockbuster. Nearly 90 percent of Fortune 500 companies from 1955 have disappeared, underscoring that institutional inertia has become the primary threat to survival. The rise of agentic AI systems capable of making multistep decisions intensifies competition by dissolving traditional industry boundaries and outpacing leaders' ability to redesign processes and workforce models. Companies that successfully rebound share common traits: visionary and humble leadership, strong operational discipline, customer-centered innovation, and cultures that support experimentation and learning from failure. The paper identifies eleven practices that strengthen organizational resilience, arguing that survival in the Intelligence Age requires treating transformation as a permanent condition and proactively reinventing value propositions before disruption forces change.

Keywords: Age of Disruption, Agentic AI, Digital Transformation, Strategic Pivot, Organizational Resilience, Humble Leadership, Corporate Longevity, Competency Trap.

I. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era of AI, hyperconnectivity, cultural shifts, and digital transformation, the nature of competition has shifted beyond recognition. We are now in an 'Intelligence Age' defined by a cognitive revolution. The most significant threats to organizations no longer stem from traditional rivals but from unforeseen disruptors at the intersection of technology and globalization. This accelerating technological convergence leaves firms constantly vulnerable to strategic obsolescence as agile disruptors overturn centuries-old business models. Ultimately, the greatest risk is institutional inertia. The most dangerous thing a CEO can say is, 'This has worked for us in the past, so let's keep doing it.' (Friedman and Lewis, 2021; Reichenthal, 2025).

The difficulty of modern strategic planning is captured by Cascio (2020), who notes that seeing the big picture is nearly impossible when events continually 'color outside the lines.' This unpredictability renders old forecasting tools, such as linear extrapolations and regression models, largely ineffective. Because we now operate in a non-linear world, past patterns offer very little insight into the future relationship between cause and effect.

A few recent changes are noteworthy. About one-third of consumers now use AI tools to assist with shopping tasks (NPR, 2025). Many consumers consult ChatGPT, Gemini, and other AI platforms to find the right products to purchase, such as anniversary gifts, gourmet dish ingredients, power equipment, beauty products, and others. Amazon and Walmart have responded to this trend by introducing their AI shopping assistants, Rufus and Sparky.

Beyond commerce, many people are turning to chatbots as friends and confidants, and researchers have even developed a test to measure sycophancy in these systems. AI chatbots can provide meaningful, often immediate support for lonely Americans by offering round-the-clock, nonjudgmental conversation, mental health assistance, and opportunities to build communication skills—particularly for seniors and socially isolated people, a serious public health problem in the U.S. However, studies suggest that excessive reliance on these tools may intensify loneliness, foster dependence, and replace genuine human relationships, underscoring the delicate balance between digital support and genuine social connection ("Chatbots turned to," 2025).

Emerging evidence suggests that individuals with serious mental and social difficulties may rely on chatbots more heavily and, in some cases, even discuss suicidal thoughts with them (Hill and Valentino-Devries, 2025). AI platforms are now updating their algorithms to identify and reduce suicide risk by examining user data, social media activity, and even speech patterns for warning signs. When risks are detected, these systems may respond by offering crisis resources or connecting users to support, though concerns about privacy, consent, and accuracy remain significant challenges.

Classic examples illustrate the speed of such upheavals. The integration of computing, entertainment, and photography into smartphones reshaped consumer expectations and obliterated once-dominant sectors, from film cameras to standalone GPS devices. Ride-sharing platforms like

Uber and Lyft have revolutionized urban mobility, eroding the market share of taxis worldwide. Furthermore, Robotaxi has been replacing human drivers in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Phoenix, and other areas. In a similar vein, services such as Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Spotify redefined how audiences access entertainment by freeing content from the constraints of physical media.

Amazon exemplifies how agile digital strategy can redefine industry boundaries. What began as a small online bookstore in 1995 evolved into a global ecosystem spanning retail, cloud computing, and logistics. By contrast, legacy firms like Sears and Toys "R" Us succumbed to digital inertia, unable to anticipate or adapt to shifting technological landscapes and consumer behaviors. Sears, despite pioneering mail-order retail, failed to extend that advantage into the emerging e-commerce paradigm it had effectively invented. Likewise, companies such as Kodak, Nokia, and iRobot demonstrate how even market leaders falter when organizational inertia eclipses innovation capability.

As digital ecosystems expand through AI, blockchain, and platform-based competition, organizational resilience depends on adaptive learning, data-driven agility, and continuous innovation. The digital age rewards firms not for stability but for their capacity to reimagine themselves before disruption forces them to. Successful organizations proactively identify when legacy business models fail and possess the agility to execute a necessary strategic pivot.

In addition, a new class of systems known as agentic AI is erasing traditional boundaries. Rather than acting as reactive instruments, these autonomous systems evaluate and evolve without manual intervention or oversight. Increasingly, they function as autonomous teammates, capable of executing multistep processes while adapting in real time. Most respondents to a global executive survey viewed agentic AI more as a coworker than a tool. Its rapid proliferation across enterprises is outpacing leaders' ability to redesign processes, assign decision rights, and rethink workforce models (Ransbotham et al., 2025).

II. THE IMPERATIVE OF TRANSFORMATION: DIMINISHING CORPORATE LONGEVITY AND SHRINKING LEADERSHIP HORIZONS

The lifespan of even the world's largest corporations is shrinking at an unprecedented rate. A striking comparison of the Fortune 500 lists from 1955 and 2019 reveals that nearly 90% of the original companies have vanished due to bankruptcy, mergers, or severe decline, leaving only 52 survivors. The average tenure on this elite list has collapsed from 33 years in 1965 to 20 years in 1990, and is projected to plummet to just 14 years by 2026 (Perry, 2019). In practical terms, the current CEO of a Fortune 500 company faces roughly even odds of seeing their company disappear from the list within the next decade.

This shortened corporate horizon is mirrored in leadership roles. CEO tenures have grown alarmingly brief, falling from 9.2 years in 2023 to a record low of 6.8 years in the first half of 2025 (Tilo, 2025). Volatile markets, relentless competition, economic uncertainty, rapid technological disruption, and shifting stakeholder expectations force boards to replace executives who cannot

keep pace with innovation. In this era of accelerated change, corporate survival now hinges on adaptive, visionary leadership capable of driving continuous, rapid transformation.

III. RESILIENT LEADERSHIP AND ANATOMY OF A FIRM'S COMEBACK

Across business history, certain firms have faced near-collapse and executed dramatic, astonishing comebacks. Companies like Apple, Marvel Entertainment, Lego, Domino's Pizza, IBM, and Netflix provide powerful examples of transforming crisis into opportunity. Although each company battled deep structural, strategic, or market failures, they successfully reinvented themselves by harnessing vision, agility, and unrelenting innovation.

Apple's 1997 comeback stands as an iconic case study. The company was on the brink of insolvency until it brought Steve Jobs back. His guiding "think different" philosophy immediately reignited Apple's spirit of superior design and radical, user-centered innovation. The resulting product ecosystem, beginning with the iMac and extending to the iPod, iPhone, and beyond, accomplished more than a brand resurrection; it permanently reshaped several industries (Friedman & Lewis, 2021).

IBM's transformation is another classic example. Confronted with the decline of its once-dominant hardware division, IBM reinvented itself as a data-driven leader in artificial intelligence and cloud computing, demonstrating that corporate resilience depends on foresight and long-term strategic renewal (Cortada, 2019). Lego, too, bounced back from near bankruptcy in the early 2000s by rediscovering its creative identity, streamlining operations, establishing new storytelling partnerships with Hollywood, and entering digital gaming spaces to reach younger audiences. Likewise, Marvel Entertainment, after filing for bankruptcy in 1996, reimagined its intellectual properties as cinematic assets, creating the Marvel Cinematic Universe and transforming into one of the most valuable entertainment franchises in the world.

Firms that achieve such remarkable turnarounds share a core set of characteristics. They possess transparent leadership willing to acknowledge hard truths, coupled with an unwavering focus on operational discipline and customer experience. They innovate purposefully and use technology not as an ornament but as a catalyst for efficiency, differentiation, and growth. Domino's Pizza, for example, responded to widespread criticism by reformulating its recipes, launching a bold marketing campaign that embraced vulnerability, and investing heavily in digital ordering platforms, ultimately reclaiming its market leadership. Netflix, initially a DVD rental service, disrupted its own model by pivoting to streaming and then content creation, illustrating the power of proactive self-disruption. The firm's leadership recognized that previous approaches no longer worked and had to try new ideas.

These organizations recognize that survival transcends cost reduction; it requires proactively rebuilding trust, fundamentally redesigning value propositions, and cultivating exceptional organizational agility. They consistently execute strategic partnerships, adopt emerging technologies rapidly, and champion cultures that reward experimentation while normalizing learning from failure. This approach allows them to convert adversity into a crucible for innovation, ensuring they emerge not merely recovered, but significantly stronger and

redefined for long-term success. Foremost, these organizations require leaders with vision. Not all organizations can make that strategic pivot and turn a firm around.

IV. THE PERILS OF COMPLACENCY: ANATOMY OF CORPORATE DECLINE AND FAILURE

Consider the fate of once-dominant companies like Xerox, Kodak, Blockbuster, Enron, BlackBerry, Radio Shack, Tower Records, Napster, Polaroid, MySpace, Pan Am, Enron, Compaq, Circuit City, Yahoo!, Nokia, Toys "R" Us, Sears, Pets.com, Borders Books, Woolworths, and A&P. Despite their former glory, these organizations failed to adapt to changing markets, technological disruption, and financial realities, ultimately suffering dramatic declines or collapse.

The "Kodak Effect" identifies the severe adverse outcomes suffered by organizations that neglect adaptation and innovation, instead stubbornly protecting obsolete business models. In 1975, Kodak management reacted to engineer Steve Sasson's introduction of the first self-contained digital camera by suppressing the information. The decision stemmed from the company's reliance on high-profit film sales, which the new technology threatened (Deutsch, 2008). Kodak's failure is the ultimate cautionary tale: the company invented digital imaging, yet its management refused to commit to the technology, fearing it would cannibalize lucrative film profits. This critical error illustrates that market-leading firms, even those with revolutionary technology, are susceptible to rapid decline and irrelevance if they fail to recognize and respond forcefully to disruptive environmental changes.

The term "competency trap" is also used to describe the kind of mistake Kodak made. It occurs when an organization's high proficiency in its existing practices (core competency) breeds complacency, leading it to neglect or resist emerging disruptive technologies, thereby stifling its capacity for long-term adaptation.

Nokia phones once defined the industry, celebrated for their legendary durability, intuitive simplicity, and remarkably long battery life. However, the company faltered at the dawn of the smartphone revolution, responding too slowly and clinging to its outdated Symbian operating system as rivals pivoted to touchscreen technology. Driven by a belief in the invincibility of its brand, Nokia misjudged how quickly software innovation and user experience would overtake hardware as the primary driver of consumer preference. This decline was further accelerated by entrenched internal bureaucracy and a belated partnership with Microsoft that ultimately failed to challenge the thriving app ecosystems established by Apple and Android.

Beyond these cases, the business world is littered with industries that failed to pivot strategically. We see this in the struggle of traditional hotels against Airbnb, the decline of shopping malls amid e-commerce, and the displacement of taxi companies by Uber and Lyft. Similar patterns of inertia are evident in shifts from cash to digital payments, from print newspapers to social media, and from television commercials to targeted online ads.

A particularly modern example of this phenomenon is the displacement of Skype by Zoom. Despite Skype's long-standing dominance in the VoIP space, it became bogged down by a cluttered

interface and technical instability. Zoom capitalized on this by offering a 'frictionless' experience, allowing users to join meetings instantly via a web link without an account or cumbersome software downloads. This effectively rendered Skype's aging infrastructure obsolete.

The military has learned the dangers of "fighting the last war" and understands the risks of neglecting game-changing new technologies. Numerous wars were lost by generals who made the mistake of sticking to the old ways of waging war and failing to recognize that the rules of warfare had changed. Notable military visionaries who redefined the art of war include Alexander the Great, Genghis Khan, Gustavus Adolphus, Napoleon, Heinz Guderian, and Vo Nguyen Giap. Some new technologies that are being studied include drone warfare, swarms of drones that fly in sync, cyberweapons that shut down electrical grids and financial systems, and AI-designed bioweapons engineered to kill only those with specific genetic characteristics (Editorial Board, 2025).

SpaceX's Starlink has emerged as a crucial communications infrastructure during the Russia-Ukraine war. Palmer Luckey's Anduril develops AI-powered autonomous weapons, such as Altius drones, Anvil (unmanned aircraft system), and Fury (unmanned fighter jet), all coordinated by its AI platform, Lattice (Brustein, 2019). The company is now developing an autonomous submarine ("Anduril unveils," 2025). Palmer Luckey said, "For too long, the US military has relied on overpriced and outdated technology. A Tesla has better AI than any US aircraft, and a Roomba vacuum has better autonomy than most of the Pentagon's weapon systems ("Palmer Luckey on," 2025)." Luckey also challenged the traditional military procurement structure. Typically, a defense contractor presents an idea to the Pentagon, and the Pentagon pays the company to develop it, whether or not it succeeds. Anduril, on the other hand, makes the product first and then sells the working weapon ("Palmer Luckey on," 2025).

V. STRATEGIC PIVOTING

Strategic pivoting occurs when a company deliberately shifts its business model or primary focus to better align with market realities. This change may involve targeting a new audience, adjusting a product, or uncovering a different revenue stream. Such transitions are typically proactive responses to fresh insights or emerging challenges. By evolving in this way, a company can move away from stagnation and toward long-term growth. Even as the strategy undergoes a significant transformation, the core vision often remains intact, encouraging both adaptability and resilience. The following are examples of companies that successfully pivoted.

Google

Google started as a search engine founded by two Stanford University graduate students that analyzed "backlinks" to determine a website's importance. Google pivoted and redefined online advertising. While other platforms were cluttering screens with intrusive ads (taking a billboard approach and using disruptive banner ads), Google shifted the paradigm toward user intent. By prioritizing relevance over distraction, they transformed the ad from a nuisance into a helpful extension of the search query. Ads were treated as helpful answers.

Today, Google has become a multiproduct ecosystem. This refers to a strategic organizational model in which a firm develops and delivers a portfolio of interrelated products and services (Gmail, YouTube, Android, Maps, Chrome, and Gemini). These offerings are intentionally designed to operate in concert, thereby creating a cohesive and integrated user experience that enhances value and reinforces the firm's competitive position.

YouTube

YouTube's original business model was a video dating site that transformed into an open video-sharing platform. It democratized publishing by allowing anyone with a smartphone to generate and share videos. As a result, many musicians, artists, dancers, researchers, commentators, coaches, instructors, comedians, and other creators who might have gone unnoticed have gained recognition.

Netflix

Netflix began as a DVD-by-mail rental service before pivoting into streaming in 2007. Blockbuster stuck to the brick-and-mortar video rental model, built around physical stores and in-person browsing. The Blockbuster approach failed because consumers preferred the convenience of streaming, and the company went bankrupt. Today, Netflix is a significant and influential content creator that has evolved into a powerhouse producing popular original series and films.

Amazon

Amazon evolved from an online bookstore. Today, Amazon is a diversified global enterprise that seamlessly integrates technology and commerce. Because its operations span e-commerce, cloud computing, advertising, logistics, and artificial intelligence, it has formed one of the most influential and comprehensive business models in the world.

IBM

When IBM realized the PC hardware business was not lucrative enough due to hardware commoditization, it shifted to consulting and enterprise services. Today, IBM is a highly important and foundational player in AI and a pivotal leader in quantum computing.

Microsoft

Under Satya Nadella, Microsoft evolved from its desktop-centric roots to prioritize cloud computing and artificial intelligence. This transition changed the company's core business from selling individual software packages to building the essential digital infrastructure for the modern era. This strategy echoes Bill Gates's early foresight, recognizing that the true value of computing lay in owning the operating system rather than the machine itself. While IBM focused on its hardware dominance and missed the importance of software ownership, Gates secured a non-exclusive licensing deal that allowed Microsoft to power an entire industry of "clone" PCs. By

encouraging a culture of collaboration and openness, Nadella's modern vision has built upon that foundation, establishing Microsoft as a primary force behind global digital transformation.

Slack

Slack was originally a video game company and became a workplace communication tool. It has replaced email for many office workers by offering flexible, searchable conversations.

PayPal

Initially, a company called Confinity, PayPal pivoted from an infrared "money beaming" service for Palm Pilots to a universal digital payment system using email addresses. Similar to how Bill Gates prioritized software over hardware, the PayPal founders realized that tying payments to the Palm Pilot created a bottleneck, so they treated the email address as the real platform for money. This shift enabled the company to scale rapidly on eBay by replacing slow paper checks and money orders with instant digital transfers at a time when eBay had not yet developed a comparable integrated payment tool. Rather than serving as literal infrastructure for the entire early web, PayPal became a critical piece of payment infrastructure for early online marketplaces, especially auctions. Over time, it evolved from a niche auction utility into a standalone global payments company that today underpins major segments of online, mobile, and peer-to-peer commerce.

Nintendo

Originally a 19th-century manufacturer of playing cards, Nintendo pivoted from physical goods to electronic entertainment, becoming a titan of the gaming industry. Just as Bill Gates prioritized the value of the operating system over the machine, Nintendo shifted its focus from the hardware of toys to the software of play, using creative interactive experiences to redefine its brand. While competitors often fixated on raw processing power, Nintendo adopted a philosophy of using mature, inexpensive technology to deliver inventive gameplay, allowing it to rescue the North American market after the 1983 industry crash. This strategy moved the company from a niche card maker to a global leader that maintains total control over its interactive entertainment ecosystem, ensuring its proprietary hardware remains the perfect vehicle for its iconic software.

Adobe

Originally centered on the PostScript printing language, Adobe pivoted from a system-level utility to becoming the dominant "operating system" for the creative world. Adobe moved away from its early dependency on physical printers and transitioned into a subscription-based cloud model that prioritizes access over ownership. Today, the company has reshaped its identity around artificial intelligence and digital infrastructure, establishing its Creative Cloud as the essential framework for global content production.

Starbucks

Initially a specialty retailer of high-quality whole beans, teas, and brewing machines, Starbucks underwent a vision shift when Howard Schultz returned from Milan. He recognized that the brand's future was not just about selling products but about cultivating a premium coffeehouse experience.

Twitter (now X)

Twitter began as a side project at the podcasting company Odeo, born when its founders pivoted away from a fading medium to embrace short-form mobile messaging. While Odeo chased audio content, the team discovered a bigger opportunity: a status-update service built for the 140-character world of SMS. They recognized, as Bill Gates once did with operating systems, that the real value lay in the social graph and the real-time flow of information, not the hardware used to access it.

This pivot turned a failing startup into a global town square. By prioritizing software over traditional media constraints, Twitter allowed users to broadcast thoughts instantly to the world. As legacy media missed the social revolution, Twitter emerged as the primary platform for breaking news. Once a minimalist messaging tool, it has evolved into a global influence network that shapes culture and politics, and its expansion forces us to grapple with the complex realities of online moderation and misinformation.

VI. LEADING THROUGH DISRUPTION: BUILDING THE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR A SYSTEMIC FUTURE

The aforementioned examples demonstrate that mastering and encouraging a quick pivot is now a vital competency for any leader. Success requires a vision that accurately identifies emerging threats. For a firm to survive, the entire organization must be ready to shift course at a moment's notice. Consequently, leadership must focus on building trust and inspiring stakeholder confidence while making agility a primary objective (Reichenthal, 2025).

To survive and thrive in today's shifting markets, companies must prioritize "constant reinvention" as a core competency. This is supported by research (Ly, 2024; Zhang, Ding, & Xiao, 2023) showing that leadership style and agility are the driving forces behind successful digital transitions.

A culture of agility requires employees who are not afraid of technology and are willing to work alongside automated systems, even robots. The strategic goal of this integration is to automate repetitive tasks, allowing the workforce to focus on creativity and high-level problem-solving. By prioritizing these advanced skills, a company can better share knowledge and elevate the inherent potential of its people.

Employees must not only respect diversity but also understand it as a cornerstone of innovation and organizational intelligence. Diversity of thought challenges assumptions, broadens perspectives, and promotes the creativity essential for solving complex problems (Duarte et al., 2015; Edmans, 2025; Phillips, 2014). Constructive disagreement is more than a social skill: it is a strategic capability. The ability to engage in respectful debate enables teams to refine ideas, make better decisions, and conduct successful negotiations. Conversely, when employees cannot disagree productively, collaboration breaks down, morale suffers, and workplace harmony deteriorates (Friedman & Kleiner, 2022). Cultivating this skill is vital for sustaining innovation, resilience, and a positive organizational culture.

As organizations build this capacity for rapid adaptation, they must also recognize that agility alone is no longer enough. Global expectations have shifted dramatically, with 80 percent of people worldwide calling on organizations to take an active role in addressing significant societal challenges (De Jong, 2023, p. 157). This rising demand for purpose and social impact now shapes how companies are evaluated. In the United States, 70 percent of consumers believe companies should work to improve the world, and 77 percent prefer to purchase from businesses that demonstrate a genuine commitment to positive global impact (Stobierski, 2021).

The workforce reinforces this shift, particularly younger generations who expect their employers to stand for something meaningful. Deloitte reports that 86 percent of Gen Z and 89 percent of millennial professionals view a clear corporate mission as essential to their well-being and job satisfaction (Deloitte, 2024). Their expectations carry real consequences: about 40 percent of professionals are willing to reject job offers that conflict with their values, and 70 percent will not work for companies without a defined purpose (Stobierski, 2021). In this environment, successful leaders must articulate compelling visions that align ethical commitments with strategic goals, delivering measurable positive impact while sustaining long-term profitability.

The following actions are essential for building a resilient culture and giving organizations the capacity to shift direction quickly when circumstances demand it.

1. Organizations need visionary leadership that anticipates both technological and cultural shifts. Because customer behavior and needs evolve rapidly, firms must remain proactive and adaptable. Effective leaders should inspire confidence, communicate transparently, and establish clear priorities that align with stakeholder expectations. Building trust among customers, investors, and employees requires ongoing, open communication and a clear strategic vision that prepares the organization for continuous change.
2. Organizations need leaders who model humility and empathy to strengthen engagement and performance. Humble leadership fosters trust by encouraging open dialogue, valuing feedback, and acknowledging mistakes. By recognizing the strengths and contributions of others, such leaders create a psychologically safe environment where employees feel respected, valued, and motivated to perform at their best (Kelemen et al., 2023). This culture of trust and inclusion not only enhances retention but also fuels innovation and agility; these qualities are essential in today's dynamic, knowledge-driven economy. Empathy is another leadership skill with many

positive effects, including stimulating innovation and resilience (Nakamura et al., 2025; Rae, 2024).

Empirical research consistently demonstrates that humble leadership produces measurable benefits at both individual and organizational levels. Studies link humility to higher engagement, greater job satisfaction, stronger creative performance, improved psychological safety, and reduced turnover intentions (Chan, Hekman, and Foo, 2024; Knox, 2023; Liu et al., 2024; Owens, Johnson, and Mitchell, 2013; Zhang and Song, 2020). Luo et al.'s (2022) meta-analysis further shows significant positive correlations with affective commitment, trust, creativity, engagement, leader–member exchange, job satisfaction, organizational identification, psychological empowerment, self-efficacy, task performance, and employee voice. These outcomes underscore humility as a strategic asset for building resilient, high-performing organizations.

3. Creating a culture of appreciation. De Jong (2023, pp. 72–73) argues that cultivating a culture of appreciation is essential for building trust within an organization. Genuine verbal recognition is not simply courteous behavior; it communicates genuine appreciation. Research shows that this kind of acknowledgment activates the same brain reward centers as financial incentives, thereby significantly increasing motivation and performance. This neurological effect highlights why a culture grounded in authentic appreciation plays such a decisive role in strengthening engagement and improving organizational outcomes (Boothby, Zhao, and Bohns, 2021).
4. Leaders must develop and promote active listening. In a digitally saturated world where "phubbing" has become common, active and undistracted listening is essential for building strong relationships and demonstrating genuine respect. For leaders, allowing devices to interrupt conversations signals disregard. It undermines the trust that effective leadership depends on, a challenge that will only grow as technologies like smart glasses and smartwatches become more pervasive (Friedman and Fireworker, 2025). Research shows that phubbing reduces satisfaction and increases negative emotions in interactions, leaving people feeling dismissed and disconnected (De Jong, 2023, pp. 126–128). Developing consistent, focused listening skills is therefore not only a matter of courtesy but a critical leadership practice for understanding others, gathering accurate information, and effectively supporting teams.
5. Leaders must promote and encourage a culture of productive dissent. In today's complex business environment, a CEO's most important responsibility is not to possess every answer, but to create conditions where the strongest ideas emerge through healthy, constructive disagreement. The organizations that excel are not those driven by a single visionary voice, but those where leaders encourage diverse perspectives and invite challenges to existing assumptions from every level of the hierarchy. Vigorous debate fuels better decisions by bringing hidden information to the surface. This is why an atmosphere that encourages diverse opinions is required for a resilient organization. Constructive argumentation expands the shared pool of knowledge, enabling everyone involved to make more informed and effective choices. Limiting an organization's perspectives to a narrow socioeconomic or demographic group creates an echo chamber

that guarantees stagnation and a lack of creative problem-solving (Friedman and Kleiner, 2022; Mylovanov and Zapechelnjuk, 2024).

6. Leaders must ensure that an organization is agile, adaptable, and resilient. A silo mentality, characterized by departments or groups hoarding knowledge, fosters tribalism and turf battles, actively hindering collaboration and information sharing, which are essential for success in today's economy. This means creating a culture of resilience where employees work with leaders to solve problems and innovate. This also means building an agile structure and flattening hierarchies. Investing in AI and technology is also crucial.
7. Leaders have to build a purpose-driven organization. A purpose-driven organization is humanity-centered and depends on a deeply rooted ethical culture that guides decisions, builds trust, and attracts people who want their work to matter. When leaders integrate moral principles into daily practice, support transparent communication, and protect those who speak up, they create an environment where employees feel safe, engaged, and aligned with the mission. This integrity becomes a source of innovation and long-term advantage, especially as new technologies introduce complex ethical challenges. Purpose cannot be faked, and organizations that live their values earn the confidence of stakeholders, strengthen their reputation, and ensure that powerful tools such as AI are used responsibly and for the public good (Friedman and Pham, 2023).
8. Leaders have to be trained in risk management and know how to thrive in uncertainty. Moreover, they have to be proactive in identifying and mitigating threats.
9. Organizations must encourage continuous learning to help employees remain adaptable. Employees must respect diversity and share knowledge to become a learning organization (Senge, 1990). A learning organization prioritizes continuous and collective learning, collaboration, and knowledge sharing, alongside a commitment to lifelong learning.
10. Employees must be empowered, and the culture must shift toward experimentation and learning from mistakes.
11. The organization must be trained in scenario planning and "what-if" exercises to prepare for possible multiple futures. This enables rapid strategic pivoting if the business environment changes abruptly.

VII. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE LEGAL PROFESSION

The legal profession offers a particularly instructive case study for understanding how disruption affects even heavily regulated industries. Large law firms often assume that regulatory barriers provide insulation from market forces. This confidence is misplaced. History demonstrates that no sector is immune to technological disruption, regardless of regulatory complexity. Real estate agents believed their expertise was irreplaceable until Zillow transformed property

transactions. Online trading platforms displaced traditional stockbrokers, and travel agents saw their industry contract almost overnight when digital booking systems emerged.

Legal professionals are aware of the impact of AI. According to Thomson Reuters' Future of Professionals Report, 80 percent of respondents believe AI will have a high or transformational effect on their work within the next five years, up from 3 percent in 2024. Seventy-two percent responded that AI was a force for good ("How AI is transforming," 2025).

Artificial intelligence is now exerting unprecedented pressure on legal practice by automating the workload traditionally performed by junior and mid-level practitioners, such as document review, legal research, and contract analysis. This transformation reduces the human labor necessary for each case while simultaneously lowering barriers to entry for alternative service providers. Because these non-traditional competitors can now perform high-level legal work using AI-powered tools, the industry faces a fundamental restructuring. The results are already visible in leaner staffing models, movement away from billable-hour pricing, and a fundamental shift in how clients perceive the value of legal expertise.

However, this disruption need not inevitably lead to the decline of traditional law firms. Proactive organizations can pivot into a new era of opportunity by recognizing that while automation handles routine tasks, emerging fields such as cybersecurity law, data privacy regulation, digital forensics, AI governance, AI-generated content's copyright issues, and complex questions of internet jurisdiction are driving massive demand for sophisticated human judgment. Firms that strategically invest in these technical niches, develop deep expertise in the ethical and regulatory dimensions of emerging technologies, and reposition themselves as strategic advisors rather than document processors can redefine their value proposition and secure distinct competitive advantages in the digital age.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The transformation sweeping through contemporary business environments is not a temporary adjustment, but rather a permanent recalibration of competitive dynamics. Today, organizations operate within an Intelligence Age defined by agentic AI systems, accelerating technological convergence, and radically shortened corporate lifespans. The sobering reality is reflected in the data: nearly 90 percent of the Fortune 500 companies from 1955 have disappeared, while average corporate and CEO tenures continue a precipitous decline toward historic lows. These metrics underscore the fundamental truth that institutional inertia has become the primary threat to organizational survival.

The vivid contrast between successful turnarounds and catastrophic failures illuminates the path forward. Industry leaders like Apple, IBM, Netflix, and Lego prove that recovery from the brink is possible when leadership marries vision with operational discipline. These organizations thrive by leveraging technology as a catalyst and fostering a culture where experimentation is normalized. Conversely, the fates of Kodak, Nokia, and Blockbuster serve as sobering reminders that even dominant market power provides no shield against obsolescence for those who cling to legacy models and resist disruptive change.

Strategic pivoting, defined as the deliberate realignment of business models to match evolving market realities, has emerged as a core competency for survival. Yet pivoting alone is insufficient without the foundational elements that enable rapid adaptation. This agility requires visionary leaders who anticipate shifts rather than merely reacting to them and humble executives who foster psychological safety and trust. It thrives in cultures of appreciation that activate intrinsic motivation and prioritize active listening to build genuine understanding. Ultimately, organizations must support this evolution by encouraging productive dissent, flattening hierarchies to eliminate silos, and empowering employees to experiment within a framework of robust scenario planning.

The eleven practices identified in this paper form an interconnected system. Organizations cannot cherry-pick one or two elements and expect transformation; resilience emerges from the integration of visionary leadership, humble engagement, operational agility, and cultural adaptability working in concert. The firms that master this integration do not simply survive disruption; they position themselves to create it.

The choice facing today's leaders is absolute and unambiguous: will you disrupt yourself, or wait for someone else to do it for you? History has rendered its verdict on those who choose the latter. Every organization mentioned in this paper once dominated its industry. Every CEO believed their competitive advantages were sustainable. Every board assumed they had time to adapt. They were all wrong.

The question is no longer whether your organization will face existential disruption, but when and whether you will be prepared to respond. The companies that thrive in the Intelligence Age will be those bold enough to cannibalize their own business models before competitors do, humble enough to learn from every level of their organization, and agile enough to pivot when the data demands it. They will recognize that in an era of agentic AI and accelerating change, yesterday's best practices are today's liabilities.

What will distinguish organizations that endure from those that fall behind is straightforward but demanding. It requires the courage to act on the changes leaders already know are necessary, the discipline to carry out transformation while keeping current operations steady, and the wisdom to understand that resilience is not a final goal but a continuous commitment to adaptation. The Intelligence Age favors organizations that view transformation as a lasting capability rather than a temporary initiative. The future will be shaped by companies that choose to evolve on their own terms, before competitive pressures remove every other option. The real question is whether your organization will be among them.

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**HOW ACCESSIBLE PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES CAN ENHANCE SOCIAL MOBILITY
FOR THEIR STUDENTS
THROUGH COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORT SERVICES**

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ABSTRACT

This study examines how accessible public universities can enhance social mobility for their students through comprehensive support services. Drawing on qualitative data from interviews with 25 students at Brooklyn College, we explore the impact of financial assistance, academic support, social and emotional resources, career services, and community engagement on student success and social mobility. Our findings suggest that these support services play a crucial role in helping students overcome barriers to higher education and improve their socio-economic prospects. We conclude with recommendations for public universities to enhance their support systems and promote greater social mobility among their student populations.

I. INTRODUCTION

Higher education has long been viewed as a pathway to social mobility, offering students the opportunity to acquire knowledge, skills, and credentials that can lead to better career prospects and improved socioeconomic status. However, for many students, particularly those from underrepresented or economically disadvantaged backgrounds, the journey through higher education is fraught with challenges that can impede their progress and limit their potential for social advancement. Public universities, with their mission to provide accessible and affordable education, play a crucial role in promoting social mobility. By offering comprehensive support services, these institutions can help level the playing field and provide students with the resources they need to succeed academically and professionally. This paper examines how accessible public universities can enhance social mobility for their students through a range of support services, including financial assistance, academic support, social and emotional resources, career services, and community engagement.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The role of public universities in enhancing social mobility through comprehensive support services is well-documented in academic literature. This review focuses on five key areas: financial assistance, academic support, career services, social and emotional support, and community engagement.

Financial Assistance and Accessibility

Research indicates that grants and scholarships directly support student persistence by alleviating tuition costs and reducing reliance on loans (Castleman & Long, 2016). This financial relief allows students to invest more time and energy into their studies. Additionally, Programs that provide on-campus work opportunities help students balance academic responsibilities with the financial need to work (Brotton & Goldrick-Rab, 2018). Furthermore, proximity to campus through work-study programs has been shown to positively influence academic engagement and campus involvement.

Targeted Academic Support

Academic support programs, including tutoring, writing centers, and mentorship, are foundational in aiding students, especially those who are first-generation or come from underserved backgrounds. Research by Bettinger and Baker (2014) shows that tutoring and other learning improve student grades, academic confidence, and retention rates, particularly among students struggling with core subjects. Furthermore, peer and faculty mentorship positively impact students' academic trajectories by providing tailored guidance and insights (Crisp & Cruz, 2009). For first-generation and low-income students, these relationships offer critical academic and career knowledge that may not be otherwise accessible.

Career Services and Networking Opportunities

Career services bridge the gap between education and employment, which is essential for social mobility. Internships offer practical experience that enhances students' employability and helps them establish early networks within their chosen fields (Hassouna & Zaazou, 2024). Research also finds career services that provide resume workshops, mock interviews, and career counseling to build students' job-seeking skills. According to Bandura's social cognitive theory, career counseling can enhance self-efficacy by empowering students to envision achievable career paths (Bandura, 1986).

Social and Emotional Support

Social and emotional support through counseling, resource centers, and peer groups has been shown to enhance well-being and belonging among students. Psychological research emphasizes the role of counseling centers in reducing stress and promoting mental health, which is essential for students to succeed academically and socially (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). Mental health services directly contribute to improved academic performance and retention by helping students manage stress and life changes. According to Strayhorn's (2018) theory of sense of belonging, identity-based centers (e.g., women's centers, LGBTQ+ centers) provide students with a supportive community and a sense of inclusion, which are critical for engagement and retention.

Community and Cultural Engagement

Community engagement and cultural programming are powerful tools for creating an inclusive campus environment. Tinto's (1993) model of student retention identifies social integration as a key predictor of student persistence. Participation in clubs and cultural events builds peer networks and a sense of community, helping students feel connected to their institutions. Institutional programming, such as career fairs and cultural celebrations, promote cross-cultural interaction and networking. This facilitates the development of social capital, which is essential for long-term career and personal success (Putnam, 2000).

III. METHODOLOGY

This study employed qualitative research design, utilizing semi-structured interviews with 25 students at Brooklyn College. To situate the site, Brooklyn College is a public campus within the City University of New York, and students have access to established support services, including the Learning Center, the Women's Center, the LGBTQ Resource Center, and the Magner Career Center. Conducting interviews here allows us to hear from students who already navigate multiple services, yet can specify what they still need, where awareness or fit is missing, and how supports could be strengthened. Naming the site clarifies why the setting matters and positions our findings for accessible public universities rather than for a generic or highly selective campus.

Participants were selected to represent a diverse range of backgrounds, including first-generation college students, international students, and students from various ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Interviews were conducted either in person or through Zoom, depending on the participants' preferences, and lasted between 20 to 40 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed with the participants' permission. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the study or skip questions at any time.

IV. FINDINGS

Financial Assistance and Accessibility

Many participants highlighted the critical role of financial aid in their ability to pursue higher education. Students reported benefiting from various forms of financial support, including scholarships, grants, work-study programs, and emergency financial assistance. For example, Aliyah mentioned, "I have federal work study... and good financial aid, so I don't have to pay for my tuition out of pocket" (Transcript).

However, some students reported challenges in accessing financial aid information and navigating the application process. Several participants suggested improving communication about available financial resources and expanding scholarship opportunities to better support students from economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

Academic Support

Participants consistently praised the value of academic support services, such as the tutoring centers, and mentorship programs. Samaya shared, "I've gone to tutoring multiple times over the years...and it's always been super helpful...my grades went up as well" (Transcript). Students emphasized the importance of these services in helping them overcome academic challenges and improve their performance.

Sydney also noted, "I certainly used the Learning Center that helped me a lot, specifically with organic chemistry. Shout out, Ryan Chen." (Transcript).

Some participants noted that awareness and accessibility of these services could be improved. Suggestions included better promotion of available resources and expanding support in high-demand subjects.

Social and Emotional Support

Many students highlighted the importance of social and emotional support in creating a sense of belonging and fostering resilience. Identity-based resource centers, such as the Women's Center and LGBTQ+ Resource Center, were frequently mentioned as valuable sources of support. Aliyah

stated, "The Women's Center is the most valuable resource to me on campus...the professional staff...help me...get advice or just emotional counseling" (Transcript).

Aaron also noted, "With that support system, it helped me to find other like minded folks and so and in the LGBTQ Resource Center, I'm able to express myself freely without any judgment" (Transcript).

Participants suggested expanding mental health services and peer mentoring programs to address gaps in emotional and mental wellness support for students facing social and economic adversity.

Career Services and Networking Opportunities

Students recognized the value of career services in preparing them for post-graduation success. Internships, career counseling, and networking events were cited as particularly helpful. Samaya shared, "I participated in an alumni mentorship program through the Magner Career Center...She gave me her insights...looked over my resume...It was a very effective experience in helping me plan and strategize for the future" (Transcript).

Daniella noted that networking events and the campus's Office of Sustainability allowed her to "network with a lot of local environmental justice and nonprofit organizations" (Transcript).

However, some participants noted a lack of awareness about available career resources. Suggestions included improving the visibility and accessibility of career services and providing more industry-specific networking opportunities.

Community and Cultural Engagement

Many students emphasized the importance of community engagement and cultural programming in fostering a sense of belonging and building social capital. Participation in cultural clubs and events was frequently cited as a source of support and connection. Laith noted, " I actually met a few people because they had a MSA events ... I met people there that were Muslims like me ... having that kind of group is nice." (Transcript).

Michael noted, "I think we are a pretty good reflection of New York City... people from all over attending here, and there are also several different ... student led organizations that ... establish a home for ... all types of communities at Brooklyn College." (Transcript).

Participants suggested expanding and better promoting multicultural events and student organizations to further support students' integration into the academic environment.

V. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study underscore the critical role that comprehensive support services play in enhancing social mobility for students at accessible public universities. Financial assistance, academic support, social and emotional resources, career services, and community engagement all contribute to creating an environment where students can overcome barriers and maximize their potential for success. These findings align with previous research highlighting the importance of holistic support in promoting student success and social mobility. The experiences shared by participants demonstrate how targeted support services can help level the playing field for students from diverse backgrounds, providing them with the resources and opportunities needed to succeed academically and professionally. However, the study also reveals areas for improvement, particularly in terms of awareness and accessibility of support services. Many participants noted that they were unaware of certain resources or found them difficult to access, suggesting a need for better communication and streamlined processes.

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study, we offer the following recommendations for accessible public universities seeking to enhance social mobility for their students through comprehensive support services:

1. Expand and diversify financial aid options, including emergency grants and food assistance programs like food vouchers, to better support students facing economic hardship.
2. Improve communication about available support services through targeted outreach, particularly to first-generation and underrepresented students using email, physical and digital flyers on campus.
3. Enhance academic support services by expanding tutoring and mentoring programs, with a focus on high-demand subjects and support for first-generation, international and undocumented students.
4. Increase investment in mental health services and peer support programs to address the social and emotional needs of students.
5. Strengthen career services by improving accessibility, expanding internship opportunities, and providing more industry-specific networking events.
6. Promote and support a diverse range of cultural organizations and events to foster inclusivity and help students build social capital.
7. Develop comprehensive evaluation systems to regularly assess the effectiveness of support services and make data-driven improvements.

VII. CONCLUSION

Accessible public universities have the potential to play a transformative role in enhancing social mobility for their students. By providing comprehensive support services that address the multifaceted challenges faced by diverse student populations, these institutions can help level the playing field and create pathways to success for all students, regardless of their background.

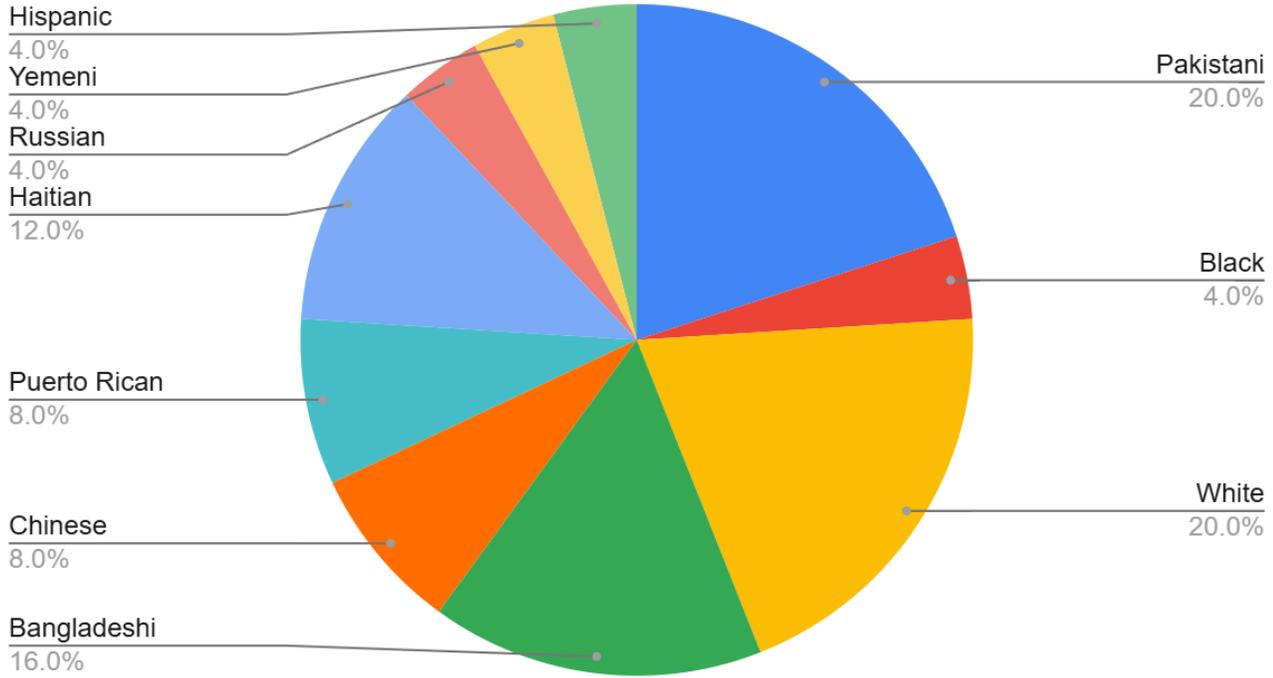
This study highlights the positive impact of existing support services at Brooklyn College while also identifying areas for improvement. By implementing the recommendations outlined in this paper, public universities can strengthen their support systems and better equip their students to overcome barriers, achieve academic success, and improve their long-term socioeconomic prospects. Future research should focus on quantitative assessments of the impact of comprehensive support services on social mobility outcomes, as well as comparative studies across different types of institutions. Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking students' post-graduation trajectories would provide valuable insights into the long-term effects of these support services on social mobility.

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Appendix A: Table of Participants	
Name	Age
Aaron	21
Abigail	20
Aisha	19
Alec	20
Aliyah	21
Amber	22
Daniella	24
Danish	20
Emily	23
Esther	20
Francis	21
Furhan	21
Gabriela	18
Kashree	23
Laith	19
Lily-Beth	22
Melanie	20
Michael	23
Mubashir	19
Price	22
Saifuzaman	21
Samaya	20
Sanaa	22
Sydney	21
Yulin	20

Appendix B: Table of Ethnicities



Appendix C: Age Distribution of Participants

