



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Understanding Diversity in American Egyptology

Results of the 2021 Egyptology State of the Field Survey

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Abstract

The field of Egyptology in the United States lacks the demographic, educational, and occupational data necessary to improve educational environments, identify new career opportunities, and diversify the field. The Egyptology State of the Field (ESotF) is an independent, collaborative, volunteer project developed to address this data gap with two components: an online survey of Egyptologists trained or working in the United States and a supplementary, optional semi-structured interview on career trajectories. The ESotF team adopted an inductive approach in our survey design, which allows questions to be formed as data are acquired, rather than collecting data with a specific set of research questions determined at the outset. This report presents the results of the demographic ESotF data collected through the online survey, which is compared with relevant external data sets in Egyptology, academic contexts, and the United States as a whole. These data demonstrate the degree to which American Egyptology lacks diversity in comparison to the United States population. It is our intention that educators and students, as well as academic and curatorial departments, use ESotF data to understand the makeup of Egyptology in the United States, improve educational and occupational environments, develop initiatives and programs aimed at diversifying and strengthening the field, and generate new studies to track changes to the composition of our field over time.

Keywords: climate survey, diversity, equity, accessibility and inclusion (DEAI), history of Egyptology, employment and education trends in the US

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محاولة لفهم التنوع في علم المصريات الأمريكي: نتائج استبيان مشروع حالة علم المصريات الميدانية لعام 2021

الملخص

ينقص المجال انخاض بعلم المصريات العديد من المعطيات الضرورية كالبينات الديموغرافية والتعليمية والمهنية التي يلزم وجودها للعمل على الارتقاء بالبيئات التعليمية، والتي أيضا تعمل على المساعدة في إيجاد فرص مهنية جديدة، إلى جانب أهمية دورها في إضفاء التنوع إلى المجال. لذا مشروع حالة علم المصريات الميدانية (ESotF) يمكن وصفه أنه مشروع مستقل إلى جانب كونه تعاوني وبتطوعي، تم إعداده خصيصا لغرض سد الفجوة التي يعاني منها المجال فيما يتعلق بالبيانات وذلك عن طريق وسيلتين أي وهما: القيام باستبيان عبر الإنترنت لعلماء المصريات الذين تم تدريبهم أو يعملون في الولايات المتحدة، ويلحق ذلك القيام بمقابلات اختيارية تكون شبه معدة لمناقشة مسارات حياتهم المهنية. عمل فريق ESotF على اتباع نهج استقرائي في تصميمنا للاستبيان، بحيث تم صياغة الأسئلة عند تحصيل البيانات، عوضا عن تحصيل البيانات من خلال مجموعة من الأسئلة البحثية المحددة التي تم وضعها مسبقا. يعمل هذا التقرير على عرض النتائج الخاصة ببيانات ESotF الديموغرافية التي تم تحصيلها عن طرق الاستبيان عبر الإنترنت، حيث يتم مقارنة هذه البيانات بمجموعات من البيانات الخارجية المشابهة في مجال علم المصريات والسياقات الأكاديمية والولايات المتحدة بأكملها. إذ تظهر هذه البيانات إلى أي مدى يفتقد علم المصريات الأمريكي إلى سمة التنوع خاصة مقارنة بتنوع سكان الولايات المتحدة. لذا فإن هدفنا هو أن يستخدم كلا من المعلمين والطلاب، وكذلك الأقسام الأكاديمية والتنظيمية، بيانات هذا المشروع للعمل على فهم ماهية تكوين علم المصريات في الولايات المتحدة، كما نسعى أيضا إلى الارتقاء بالبيئات التعليمية والمهنية، إلى جانب القيام بطرح مبادرات وبرامج تهدف إلى تنوع وتقوية المجال، علاوة على ذلك القيام بإنشاء دراسات جديدة تعمل على تتبع التغيرات التي تطرق على تكوين مجالنا مع مرور الوقت.

الكلمات الدالة: الكلمات الدالة: استطلاع المناخ، مفاهيم التنوع والتكافؤ وسهولة الوصول والمشاركة (DEAI)، تاريخ علم المصريات، اتجاهات التوظيف والتعليم في الولايات المتحدة.

1 Introduction

1.1 State of the Field

With the decline of positions in higher education, a decrease in humanities education overall, and ancient studies ([SAVE ANCIENT STUDIES ALLIANCE](#), 2020, 2021) in particular, Egyptology stands at a crossroads. University professionals at all levels need to acknowledge the dearth of career opportunities within the field. For Egyptology to be a viable disciplinary option, students require both qualified instructors in place at institutions of higher education as well as career opportunities within and outside traditional academia at the conclusion of their studies. At the same time, the discipline is reckoning with its colonial history and lack of diversity, which impacts the nature, quality, and breadth of Egyptological research. American Egyptology, however, currently lacks the demographic, educational, and occupational data necessary to identify and improve career opportunities and diversify the field, and it is unwise to make sweeping changes to courses or programmes without first making a proper assessment.

In contrast, professional organisations such as the American Historical Association ([AMERICAN HISTORICAL ASSOCIATION](#), 2018) and the American Chemical Society ([AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY](#), 2015) collect, analyse, and disseminate these data on a regular basis, subsequently using them to develop, amend, or discontinue programmes and initiatives such as, for example, grants and training programmes for historically marginalized and underrepresented students ([AMERICAN CHEMICAL SOCIETY](#), 2019, n.d.). Without regular data collection to determine where inequalities reside, university departments and employers cannot develop appropriate corrective opportunities. As the field's professional organisations do not aggregate or disseminate information such as

PhDs awarded, dissertations submitted, job announcements, or job placements, there is a lack of equivalent data for Egyptology in the United States.

The Egyptology State of the Field (ESotF) Project begins to address this gap through two initiatives undertaken in 2020–2022: an online survey, which collected quantitative data, and individual interviews of around 45–60 minutes, which added qualitative data. This report focuses on a subset of the online survey, specifically the initial demographic data. Educational and occupational data as well as the results of the interviews will appear in subsequent ESotF team publications and, we hope, additional collaborations. Our goal here is to present a clear, concise snapshot of the demographics of the survey participants, with interpretation largely being drawn from comparisons with external datasets (e.g., the United States Census). A discussion of the broader survey as well as an important discussion of the limitations faced by the ESotF survey follows.

In the on-going shift towards accountability within academic departments, Egyptology has yet to meaningfully adapt to the expectations of the next generations of scholars. It is our wish that educators and students, as well as academic and curatorial departments, use these data to understand the makeup of American Egyptology and to improve their educational and occupational environments. These data can also be applied in making decisions to modify course requirements, internships, or skill-building training, as they amplify the experiences and needs of students as they adjust to trends in higher education and employment. Academic departments that teach Egyptian history can simultaneously encourage students to navigate American culture and their relationship to the past. The reception of ancient Egyptian history across the United States, from the Washington Monument (GORDON, 2016) to pyramid imagery incorporated into the reverse side of the Great Seal featured on the U.S. one dollar bill, should be understood as more than derivative—indeed, as integral—to the American cultural landscape. Understanding both ancient Egypt and its role in contributing Egyptianising elements in the present relies heavily on issues of accessibility and opportunity in structured university programmes. Educational and occupational details, along with demographic information, are essential in evaluating the relevance of academic programmes and their effectiveness in recruiting, retention, and graduation as well as ensuring meaningful job prospects for graduates.

1.2 Project Background

The impetus for the ESotF project reaches back nearly twenty years to when ESotF Founder and Team Lead Stacy Davidson was a graduate student. In trying to understand who Egyptologists were, what they studied, how many Egyptology doctorates were awarded each year, and where graduates found jobs, she encountered only anecdotal evidence from peers and faculty members. The contrast between what she found for her chosen field of study and the information available to those in other disciplines and professions proved bewildering. These data continued to be missing in the following years, with the exception of a survey conducted by Carl Walsh, Justin Yoo, and Paul van Pelt in 2017 that focused on graduate students/recent graduates (WALSH et al., 2018).

Following a general call for interest by Davidson in 2020, the ESotF team formed organically and began work during the upheavals in the Spring of that year caused by the COVID-19 global pandemic and ongoing civil unrest in the United States in reaction to the murder of George Floyd, among other injustices. Each team member brought their personal experiences to this work, which benefited team dynamics, decision-making, and the composition of the survey and interview questions. ESotF team members are diverse in terms of racial and ethnic background, occupation (including post-bac researchers, PhD candidates, adjunct/contingent faculty, tenure-track and tenured faculty, museum professionals, and independent scholars), educational experiences, socio-economic background, first-generation college student status, sexual orientation, religious practice, [dis]ability status, and geographic location and origin. All team members participated in the survey, incorporating their data into the results presen-

ted herein. We recognise that some of our team members may possess implicit biases or privileges because of their identities. Nevertheless, the team recognises that while we do not represent all identities or experiences of Egyptologists in the United States, we are actively seeking new voices and perspectives for collaboration as we move forward.

In order to move the field forward in a sustainable fashion, it is necessary to generate datasets that can be used to evaluate the legacy and current impact of American Egyptology. ESotF data can be used in future studies, pedagogical reforms, and vocational initiatives. Scholars have published research on the exploitative and colonialist frameworks in the field of Egyptology for decades (e.g., COLLA, 2007; HANNA, 2021; REID, 1985) and on how Egyptological knowledge has been used to promote ideas such as racial pseudoscience and eugenics (CHALLIS, 2013; DAVIES, 2018; SHEPPARD, 2010; SMITH, 2007). These origins have not only coloured the information and theories upon which much of Egyptology's intellectual traditions were built but have also excluded diverse voices from contributing to the field for a disproportionately long time. The effort to understand the present ramifications of Egyptology's disciplinary origins is an ongoing, malleable process that frequently appears already congealed or irrelevant, dismissed as a trend or "just how it is." Current political and social events have, however, stressed how necessary this discourse is to the field (JOHNSON, 2021; NAUNTON, 2020). Practitioners of Egyptology have the power to alter intellectual traditions and encourage a more diverse profile of voices. These conversations have the potential to adjust how we construct knowledge of the past, relocate the centres of power in the field, and expand who is heard and supported. But departments, programmes, and employers do not currently have the information they need to make meaningful and necessary change without an examination of who Egyptologists in the United States are, how they were trained, what their possible careers look like, and where they feel systemic problems exist.

In the interest of supporting these conversations, we designed our project to interrogate the state of Egyptology and Egyptology-adjacent fields in a way that includes and supports its diverse practitioners. We understand that no previous comparable baseline data were available for Egyptology in the United States. We therefore designed our project to actively gather a wider range of voices into our research than are traditionally visible in Egyptological literature. The ESotF project accomplished this goal with two main components: one, developing and implementing a demographic, educational, and occupational survey of United States citizens and foreign nationals who had obtained graduate-level education in Egyptology and/or were working in Egyptological jobs in the United States; and two, facilitating and conducting qualitative interviews with a subset of survey participants who elected to take part. Interviewees responded to semi-structured interviews, contextualizing their experiences in Egyptology programmes or in Egyptology jobs with additional information that elucidate the opportunities and barriers impacting career opportunities, inclusion, and diversity in our field.

Both the survey and interviews focused only on United States citizens and foreign nationals who were educated and/or have worked in the United States. The primary consideration for restricting our study in this way was to generate useful data that could be compared to other higher education and occupational datasets in the United States, specifically in order to improve learning, teaching, and occupational experiences for Egyptologists in the United States. Each country has unique higher education structures and working conditions, which cannot easily be compared to United States institutions. There are also legal challenges to surveying students who live and study outside the United States, and distributing an international survey properly would require translation into dozens of languages. We further excluded undergraduates from this study, focusing on those currently positioned to contribute professionally to the field of Egyptology.

2 Methodology

2.1 Survey Design

The ESotF team adopted a “generic inductive approach” to our research programme (CAELLI et al., 2003; LIU, 2016; THOMAS, 2006), which is particularly common among the “climate surveys” that proliferated in recent years (see for example, HUBBARD, 2018). As a form of collecting qualitative data, inductive approaches to surveys allow questions to be formed through the acquired data rather than collecting the data with a specific set of research questions determined at the outset. Similar to the outcome from surveys on university campuses, adopting an inductive approach will help us “illustrate lived experiences from the participants rather than trying to speak for the entire [field]” (HUBBARD, 2018: 8). The ESotF, therefore, began with the general directive of exploring the state of the field of Egyptology in the United States, but we will let the data guide the more specific questions we answer in subsequent studies.

ESotF team members sought to develop a survey of United States Egyptology based on collaboration and inclusivity. Our aim in survey design was to establish a baseline for demographics in American Egyptology and compare those to relevant surveys in American, Egyptological, and academic contexts. Our project also aims to isolate challenges and identify roadblocks in the completion and retention of graduate students and early career scholars to explain current demographic trends better. We consequently developed additional questions specific to training and career preparation in graduate programmes. The final survey questions queried: demographics, educational background, educational experiences, and professional experiences both inside and outside of academia.

These demographic questions were designed to be comparable to relevant surveys in academia as well as the United States census. However, we also wanted to allow for more flexibility for participants whose identities do not align with available categories. Consequently, demographic survey questions related to sexual orientation, gender identity, race,¹ and ethnicity allowed individuals to choose multiple responses and/or self-describe (see Supplementary Materials). For example, an individual could choose to self-describe as “Egyptian” in place of any of the racial or ethnic categories presented. These questions were designed by consulting comparative surveys, such as the United States Census, and revised in group discussions until all team members agreed on language and options.

Another broad aim of our survey was to establish in concrete terms the kinds of systemic roadblocks individuals experienced during their academic careers by including questions focused on inclusion and educational/professional experiences. In particular, questions about negative experiences were framed with data from the survey by the Equity and Diversity in Canadian Archaeology (EDCA) survey in mind (HODGETTS et al., 2020). Questions focused on whether individuals felt their identities related to demographic variables were a disadvantage and/or underrepresented within the field.

After the questions were drafted multiple times with input received from all project team members, our survey, informed consent language, and research design were approved from the Institutional Review Board of the University of Missouri System, through Missouri S&T.

¹While race is not a valid biological concept, it retains incredible social meaning with real, lived consequences for individuals and populations—especially in the United States. Here, and throughout, the term is used by the authors to speak to the social construct(s) of race in the U.S. and as a response category required by the U.S. Census. For more information on the concept of race in U.S. historical, scientific, and social contexts, visit the *Understanding Race* website (RACE PROJECT, 2012–2024), which developed out of the traveling exhibition, RACE: Are We So Different?, from the Science Museum of Minnesota and with the support of the American Anthropological Association.

The ESotF survey was conducted using Qualtrics survey software.² The online, anonymous survey began with our informed consent document (see Supplementary Materials) and required all participants to agree to participation prior to completing any questions. Because our survey is focused on American Egyptology, it began with two key screening questions:

- Are you currently or have you ever been in a graduate programme (Masters or PhD) in Egyptology or an Egyptology-adjacent field in the United States? (Q2.3)
- Do you or did you work in an Egyptological job in the United States? ³ (Q2.4)

Respondents were required to answer “yes” to at least one of these questions before beginning the survey. The survey was also designed to allow respondents to skip or decline to answer questions. To reduce survey duration, the design incorporated skip logic, when possible, to reduce the number of questions each respondent needed to answer. Consequently, the total number of respondents for any one survey question varies (Figure 1).

The survey was available to participants from 27 January 2021 until 31 August 2022. In order to gather participants for the survey, we used a snowball sampling approach based on multiple forms of outreach. These included emails to administrators at any United States university with an Egyptology or Egyptology-adjacent degree programme; faculty our team identified who had Egyptological training or taught Egyptology classes at universities without an Egyptology or Egyptology-adjacent degree programme; administrators and/or curators at any United States museum with an Egyptological collection; and individuals known to the team to be in careers outside of Egyptology. We additionally posted information on Egyptological email lists (i.e., Agade, Egyptologists’ Electronic Forum, and PapyList), advertised on social media platforms (i.e., Facebook and Twitter), offered direct access on the Egyptology State of the Field website (www.egyptologystats.org), and requested participation at the end of presentations at the following conferences: *Save Ancient Studies Alliance* (SASA, August 2021), *American Society of Overseas Research* (ASOR, November 2021), and *American Research Center in Egypt* (ARCE, April 2022).

Of the 370 responses recorded before data cleaning, most were filled out in February 2021 (93%, n=345) with the last response recorded on 23 April 2022. The initial emails, email lists, and social media posts were, therefore, most successful in gathering responses to our survey, as there was no significant increase in responses after conference presentations.

2.2 Data Cleaning

While there were 370 initial submissions to the survey, data cleaning reduced the final number of valid surveys that we include in our present analysis to 246. We cleaned our initial results using the following steps:

- Surveys marked “Survey Preview” by Qualtrics were removed.
- Surveys where respondents did not consent to take our survey in Q1.1 were removed. These entries were empty, as the participant was not allowed to continue without consent.

²The survey conducted for this paper was generated using Qualtrics software, Version April 2022 of Qualtrics. Copyright © 2022 Qualtrics. Qualtrics and all other Qualtrics product or service names are registered trademarks or trademarks of Qualtrics, Provo, UT, USA. <https://www.qualtrics.com>.

³An Egyptological job is a paid job in which the primary focus of research or occupational duties is the study of Egypt (for example, in teaching, collections/archives, museums, archaeology, writing/editing, etc.).

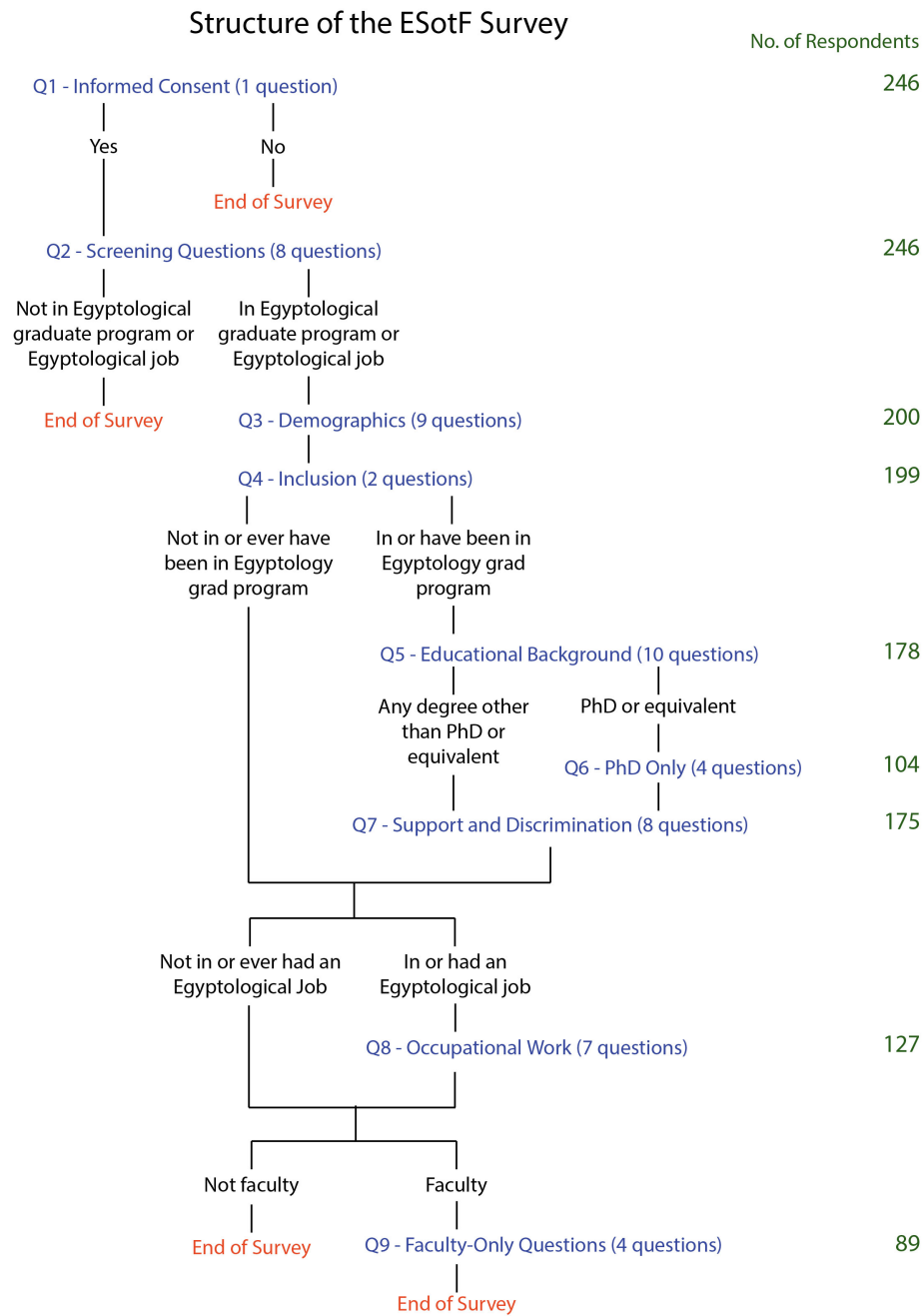


Fig. 1: Structure of the ESotF Project online survey as designed in Qualtrics with the number of questions and respondents per section.

- Surveys where the same IP address appeared on multiple entries were examined more closely. Of these, several included a pair with one complete survey and one empty survey, the latter of which was removed.
- Surveys where Qualtrics recorded “False” for whether the survey had been finished were examined more closely. 44 of these were empty after the informed consent in Q1.1 and were removed.
- One survey which was not caught in any of the previous steps but was empty and open for only a few seconds was removed.
- One survey which had the same IP address with nearly identical information in both. The survey that was more complete was kept and the other removed.

This group of 46 surveys were removed from the dataset and are referred to as non-participants in our results. These steps left 246 surveys in our dataset, or two-thirds (66%) of the data Qualtrics initially collected. There remain 12 surveys that Qualtrics recorded as “False” under Finished, as the participants completed some questions, but closed the survey before reaching the end. These were noted and retained in our dataset. The median response time for the cleaned dataset was about 8 minutes (491 seconds), while the average response time was about 54 minutes (3288 seconds) owing to several extreme outliers, likely from those who left the survey open unintentionally.

3 Results

3.1 Egyptology Screening Questions (Section Q2)

While work or study in the United States was required to participate, the survey was open to all nationalities, so our first question of section 2 (Q2.1) established respondents’ status in the United States. Of those who answered this question, 81.3% were either citizens of the United States or permanent residents (Figure 2). Of those who chose “Other,” five wrote in a specific national and/or ethnic origin, and three participants left this question blank. Owing to these low numbers, detailed “write-in” answers are withheld from this report to protect participants’ privacy.

With the responses of non-participants (n=46) removed, the percentage of United States citizens or permanent residents increases to 89% (n=178) of the total.

Questions Q2.2 and Q2.3 respectively asked for the respondent’s highest level of degree achieved in Egyptology or an Egyptology-adjacent subject and whether any of their graduate degree(s) had been achieved in the United States. When non-participants were removed from responses to Q2.2, 89.5% (n=179) of participants had a graduate degree (Figure 3).

Of those who answered “Other,” one left the text blank, while the others (n=7) are all enrolled in graduate programmes but had not yet received them. The most common write-in was “ABD [All But Dissertation].”

The next three questions asked respondents about their careers. Q2.4 qualified respondents for the survey, as we wanted to know if they were or are employed in Egyptology in the United States. A follow-up question asked respondents whether they were still in an Egyptology or Egyptology-related career (Q2.5), and if they were not, why they had left (Q2.6).

The majority of respondents answered “Yes” to being in an Egyptological career (Figure 4). Of those who said “Yes,” four-fifths (n=113) are still in that career (Figure 5).

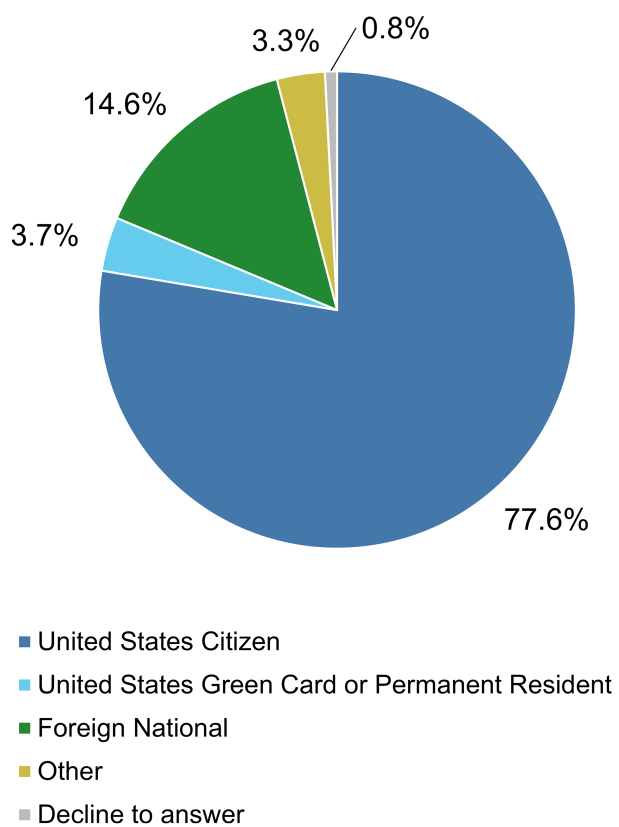


Fig. 2: Distribution of respondents to Q2.1 by nationality (n=246).

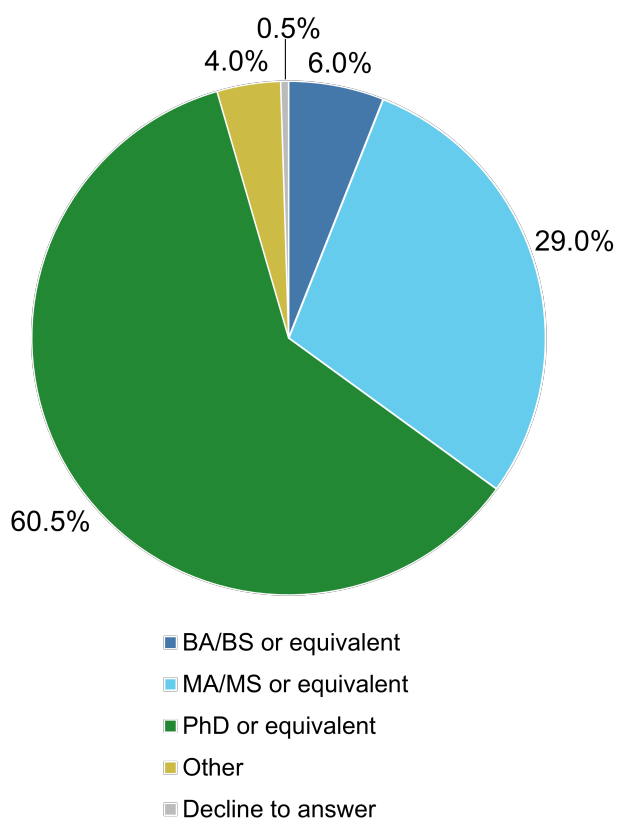


Fig. 3: Distribution of highest degree achieved (Q2.2) among participants (n=200).

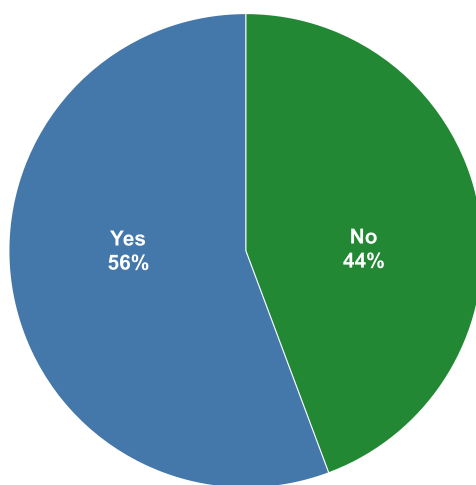


Fig. 4: Respondents who are in an Egyptology or Egyptology-related career (n=137) and those who are not (n=109) in response to Q2.4.

Those who answered “No” to Q2.5 were then prompted to answer Q2.6: “Briefly describe what factors led you to no longer be in a career related to Egyptology” (n=15). Of those who answered (n=12), the most common reason for leaving Egyptology was lack of employment (n=5), including low pay and instability among existing positions. Some mentioned “lack of support,” “toxic environment,” and “problems” in a graduate programme as having prompted their departure from Egyptology (n=3). Two respondents were adjuncting but in non-Egyptological fields, and two cited family reasons for leaving the field. A single individual mentioned returning to a graduate programme as a reason for leaving a career.

Individuals were then asked whether they are currently faculty (Q2.7), which was broadly defined to include anyone who identified as a faculty member at an institution of higher education such a college or university, whether on the tenure track or in a contingent position. This question served the dual purpose of collecting information about our respondents and determining whether an individual could answer faculty-specific questions. From the participant group (n=200), there was a slightly larger percentage of non-faculty participants (55%) who completed the survey.

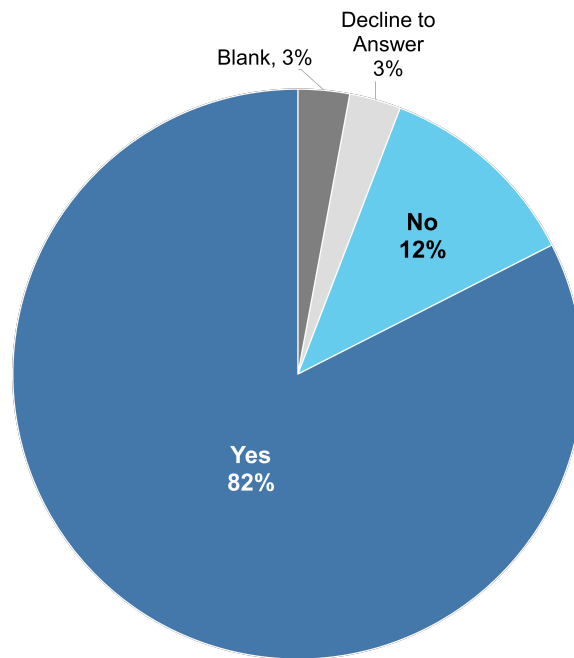


Fig. 5: Subset of respondents who answered YES to Q2.4 (n=137) with a breakdown between those still in and those who have left the field of Egyptology (Q2.5).

The final question in section Q2 asked individuals whether they self-identify professionally as an Egyptologist (Q2.8). As the survey was open to those who were in Egyptology as well as those in Egyptology-adjacent fields, this question gave us the distribution between those who self-identified as Egyptologists and those whose work was associated with the field but did not consider it their main source of professional identity (Figure 6).

A minority (n=34) did not identify primarily as Egyptologists but nevertheless completed the survey. Of that

group – who had to have had either an Egyptological job or degree – more of them had been in an Egyptology graduate programme (n=28) than had an Egyptology career (n=18), with 12 respondents having had both.

Of the 200 participants who went on to complete the survey, we know that 90% (n=180) are or were in an Egyptology or Egyptology-adjacent graduate programme in the United States, while 67% (n=133) are or were in an Egyptological job in the United States. More than half of participants answered yes to both questions (n=113).

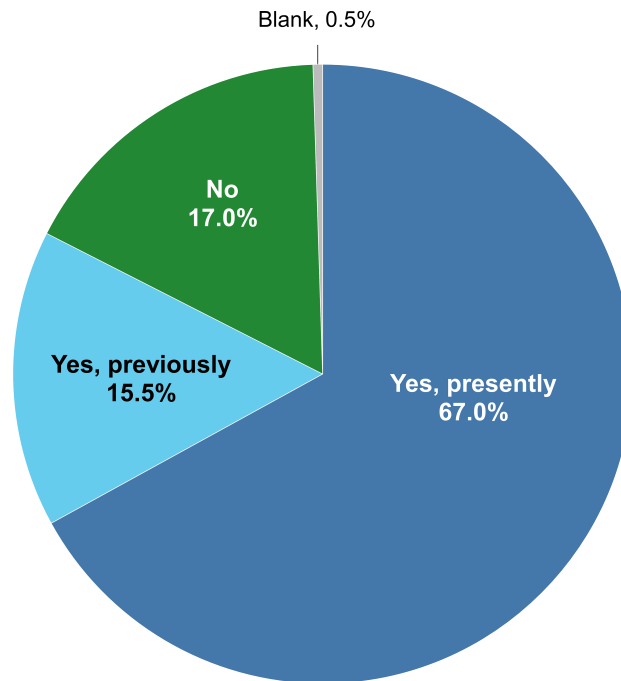


Fig. 6: Percentage of participants identifying as Egyptologists in Q2.8 (n=200).

3.2 Basic Demographics of Participants (Section Q3)

For data collected from Q3.1 onward, there was a sample size of 200 surveys. Participants were asked to provide information about their identity as the first step of the survey. A summary of these data is presented here, while a more comparative analysis of how these categories intersect with other questions is provided in our discussion below. The questions related to:

- Age (Q3.1)
- Race/ethnicity (Q3.2)
- Gender (Q3.3, Q3.4)
- Sexual orientation (Q3.5)
- Religion (Q3.6)

- Ability (Q3.7)

Two additional questions asked participants to provide the number of dependents they had (Q3.8) and whether they are or have ever been a member of the United States Armed Forces (Q3.9). Questions later in the survey asked about family background and economic status, but these were not included in this section.

3.2.1 Age (Q3.1)

Participants wrote in their age, which resulted in a higher-than-average number of blank responses for this question (27%, n=54) than for other questions of personal identity. Of the remaining 146 responses, the survey skewed younger, with an age range of respondents between 23 and over 80 in 2020 and corresponding dates of birth between the 1930s and 1997 (Figure 7).

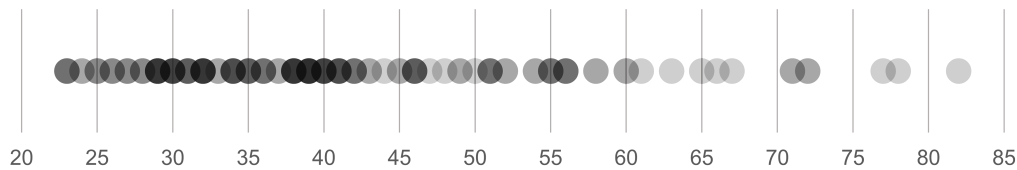


Fig. 7: Distribution of respondents by age. Darker circles represent more respondents (n=146).

When these data are grouped by the Pew Research Center generations—Generation Z (1997-2012), Millennials (1981-1996), Generation X (1965-1980), Boomers (1946-1964), and the Silent Generation (1928-1945)—we can see that the majority of survey respondents fall into the category of Millennials (n=78) with a progressive decrease in respondents by generation (Figure 8; [PEW RESEARCH CENTER, 2019](#)). The small number of participants categorized as Generation Z is because a screening question (Q2.3) filtered out participants who did not have or were not in the process of completing a graduate degree, thereby eliminating those under 23 in 2020.

3.2.2 Race/ethnicity (Q3.2)

The descriptive categories used in this question were modeled after the United States census. Unlike the United States census, however, “Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx” as well as “Multiracial” and “Biracial” were listed as options, rather than as separate questions, and respondents also had the choice to self-describe, decline to answer, or skip the question entirely.

Since respondents could select as many categories as they wanted, there are two outcomes visible in the survey. The first is the total number of responses per race/ethnicity category (Figure 9). In this case, no individual is identified by their choices. Most participants chose only one race/ethnicity category (n=181), while only 16 participants chose more than one category.

The second compilation of these data is by respondent. Given the small number of respondents who did not identify as “White” only, we have chosen not to give the breakdown of the specific responses to protect the identity of any one participant (Table 1). Instead, those who selected more than one race/ethnicity are grouped together using United States census categories.

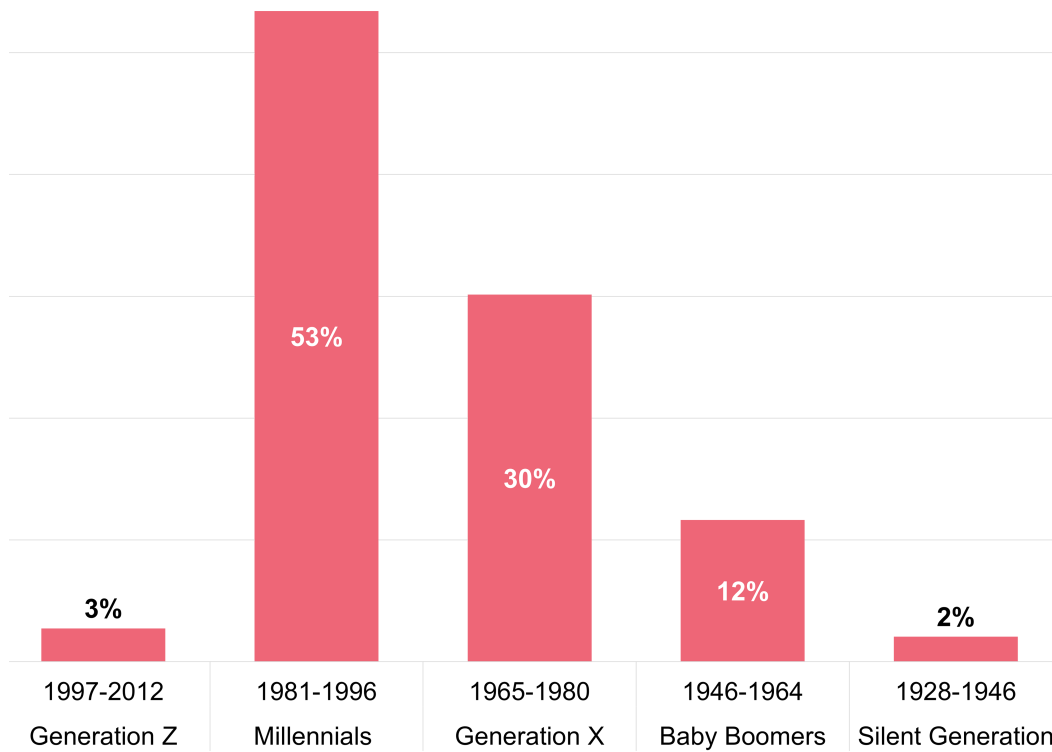


Fig. 8: Percentage of respondents by generations as defined by the Pew Research Center (PEW RESEARCH CENTER, 2019).

Tab. 1: Individual responses by race/ethnicity category (n=200).

White alone	146
Population of two or more races (including bi-/multiracial)	18
Asian or Asian American alone	8
Black or African American alone	4
Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx alone	4
Prefer to self-describe	9
Decline to answer	8
Blank	3

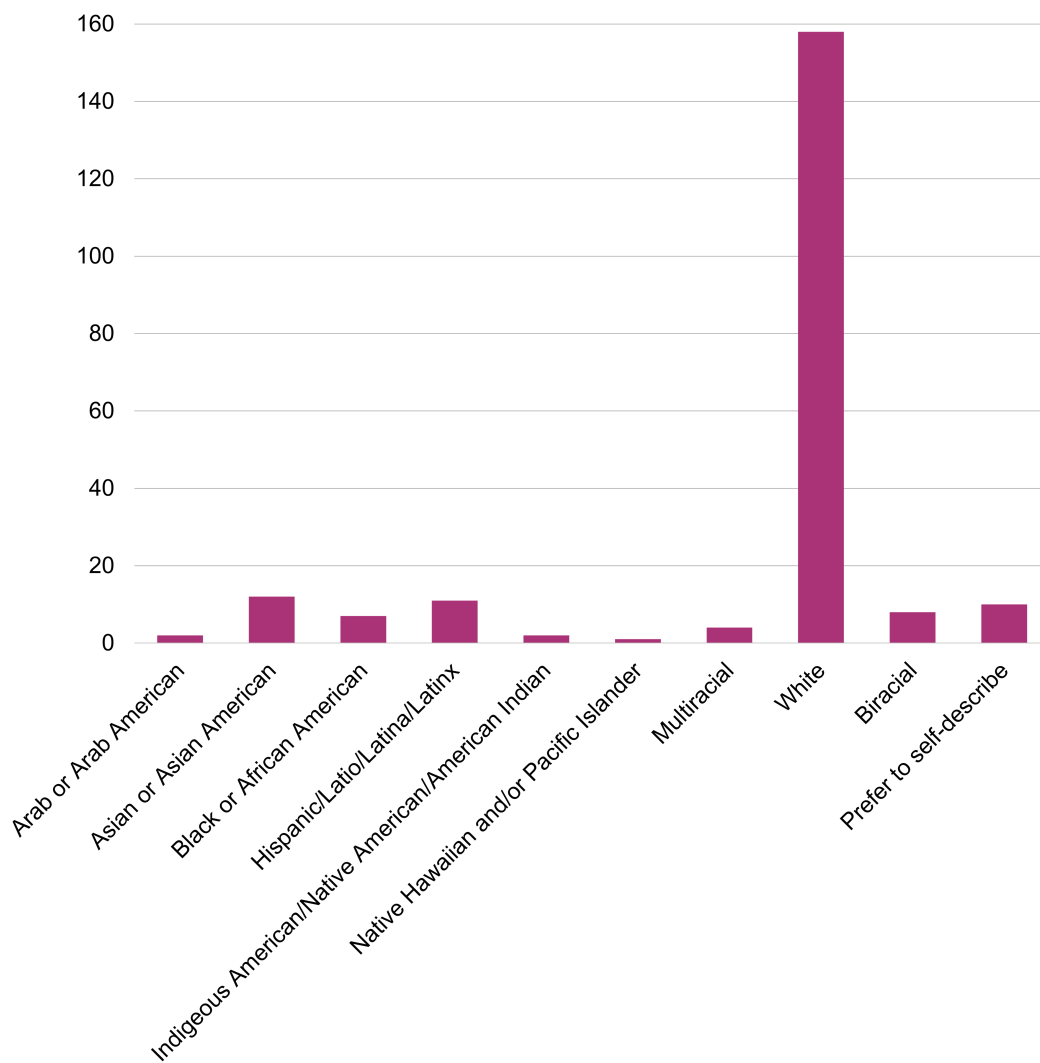


Fig. 9: Total count of each race/ethnicity category; participants could select multiple categories.

In this question, 73% (n=146) of respondents identified as “White,” while a minority of respondents chose other race/ethnicity categories. In the category of “Prefer to self-describe,” write-in answers largely included those who chose to identify as having a more specific racial or ethnic origin than what was offered (e.g., “Slavic/Greek” or “Egyptian”).

When juxtaposed with the 2020 United States census data, we can assess the degree to which our data compare with the distribution of the general population of the United States (Figure 10). While the census includes a separate question regarding Hispanic or Latino origin, we chose to include this as a race/ethnicity category. We therefore grouped any ESotF participant who selected this category, either alone or in combination (n=11), together in order to compare percentages accurately between the two datasets.

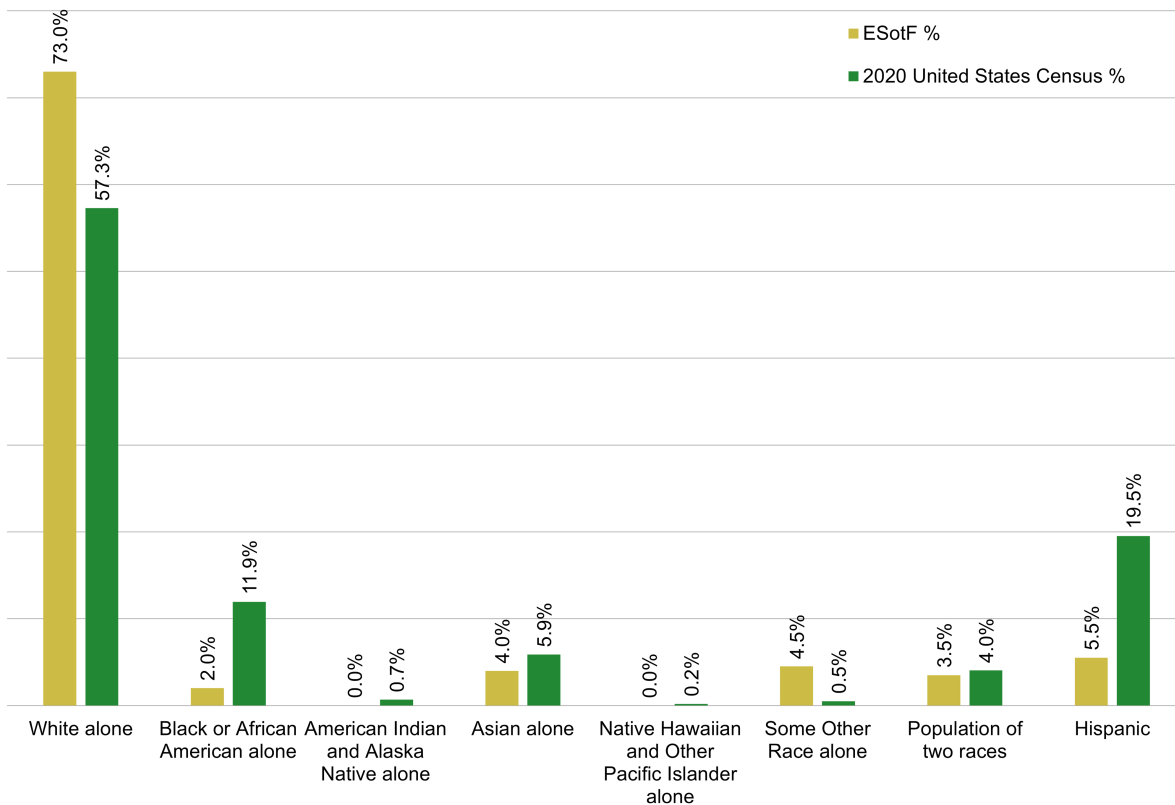


Fig. 10: Percentage of participants in the ESotF survey as compared with 2020 United States census data on race by ethnicity and Hispanic origin (UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU, 2021b).

Most glaringly, “White alone” participants in our survey are overrepresented by race and ethnicity in comparison with the United States census. Every other race/ethnicity in the United States is underrepresented except those who identify as “Some Other Race” alone. The ESotF answers for this category come from the participants who chose “Prefer to self-describe.”

3.2.3 Gender (Q3.3 and Q3.4)

Two questions were asked about gender identity: the first asked participants to identify their gender (Q3.3), and the second was a yes/no question about identifying as transgender (Q3.4). In Q3.3, participants were given the option to choose “Gender non-conforming/Gender fluid/Non-binary” or “Prefer to self-describe.” As there were few responses beyond “Woman” and “Man,” however, the others have been grouped together to protect individual privacy (Figure 11).

Two-thirds of participants identified as women in contrast with the United States population which is nearly evenly split ([UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU, 2020](#)), though the United States census only offered “Male” or “Female” as choices for gender identity.

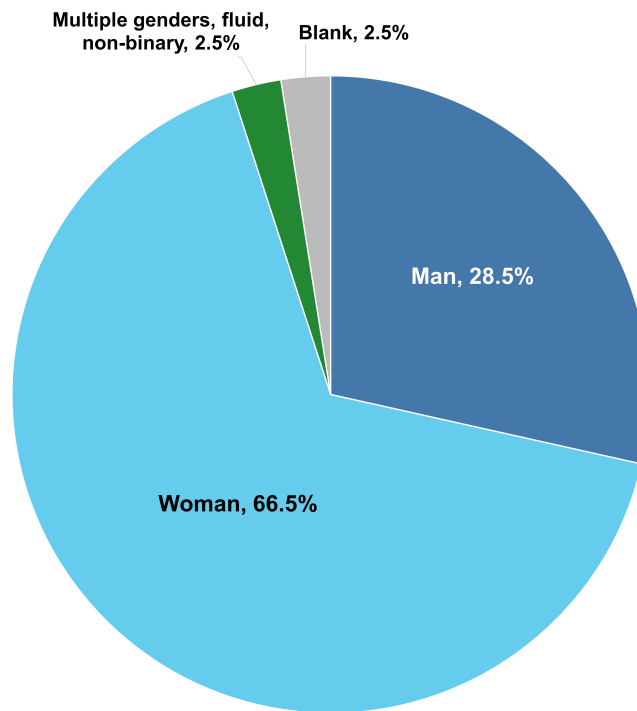


Fig. 11: Distribution of respondents by gender identity (n=200).

In Q3.4, most participants did not identify as transgender (n=190), while the remaining participants answered “Yes” or declined to answer the question (n=10).

3.2.4 Sexual Orientation (Q3.5)

Participants could only choose one option to answer the question about sexual orientation (Q3.5). Nearly three-quarters (73%; n=146) of respondents identified as “Heterosexual/Straight,” while 17% (n=34) participants chose another option (Table 2). This particular question resulted in several “Decline to Answer” and blank responses, with 8.5% (n=17) of respondents choosing not to provide an answer.

Although the United States census does not collect data on sexual orientation, several other studies have

Tab. 2: Individual responses by sexual orientation category (n=200).

Heterosexual/Straight	146
Gay or Lesbian	14
Bisexual	10
Asexual	5
Queer	4
Prefer to self-describe	1
Decline to answer	12
Blank	5

collected or amalgamated such data. A 2011 brief by Gary Gates at the Williams Institute of Law at the University of California, Los Angeles offered a general estimate of the number of those with same-sex orientation at 19 million Americans (8.2%) (Figure 12) and a 2022 Gallup poll estimates 7.2% of the population identifies as LGBT (JONES, 2023). It should be noted that other polls (e.g., JONES, 2021) are even more conservative in their estimates of LGBTQ+ populations.

In comparison with our survey, the number of those who identify as gay/lesbian, bisexual, and queer is 14% (n=28) of our sample. These data indicate an over-representation of survey participants who identify as gay/lesbian, bisexual, and queer in comparison to United States population estimates.

3.2.5 Religion (Q3.6)

Participants identified their religion in a two-part question. They were first asked whether they identified with or practiced a particular religion (Yes/No/Decline to answer) (Figure 13). If they answered “Yes,” then a second question prompted them to write in that religion.

Among our survey participants, 56% (n=112) indicated they did not practice or identify with a specific religion. This result is noticeably higher than comparable surveys of the U.S. in general as well as in higher education. In a 2014 Pew Research Center “Religious Landscape Survey” (PEW RESEARCH CENTER, 2015), 23.4% of all respondents and 25% of those college graduates chose “Unaffiliated” (24%) or “Don’t know” (1%) when asked about their religion.

Of the 112 people who identified as religious, 64 wrote in answers when asked to provide their religious affiliation. This offered flexibility in terms of response but also led to variation between answers (e.g., Catholic vs. Roman Catholic, or LDS vs. Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints). Several respondents also added specific details to their answers. The most common was to qualify a religious identification as “cultural;” such was the case with “Christian,” “Catholic,” and “Jewish.” Owing to these discrepancies and the small sample size for this part of the question (n=64), individual answers are not provided so as to protect the privacy of individuals.

3.2.6 Ability (Q3.7)

Participants were asked whether they had a physical, mental, or emotional condition that impacted their ability to study or work and that requires accommodations (Q3.7). 10% of participants (n=21) responded “Yes” to this question (Figure 14).

There are differing figures for disability in the United States. The United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention estimated in 2020 that 61 million (or 26%) adult individuals in the United States are living with

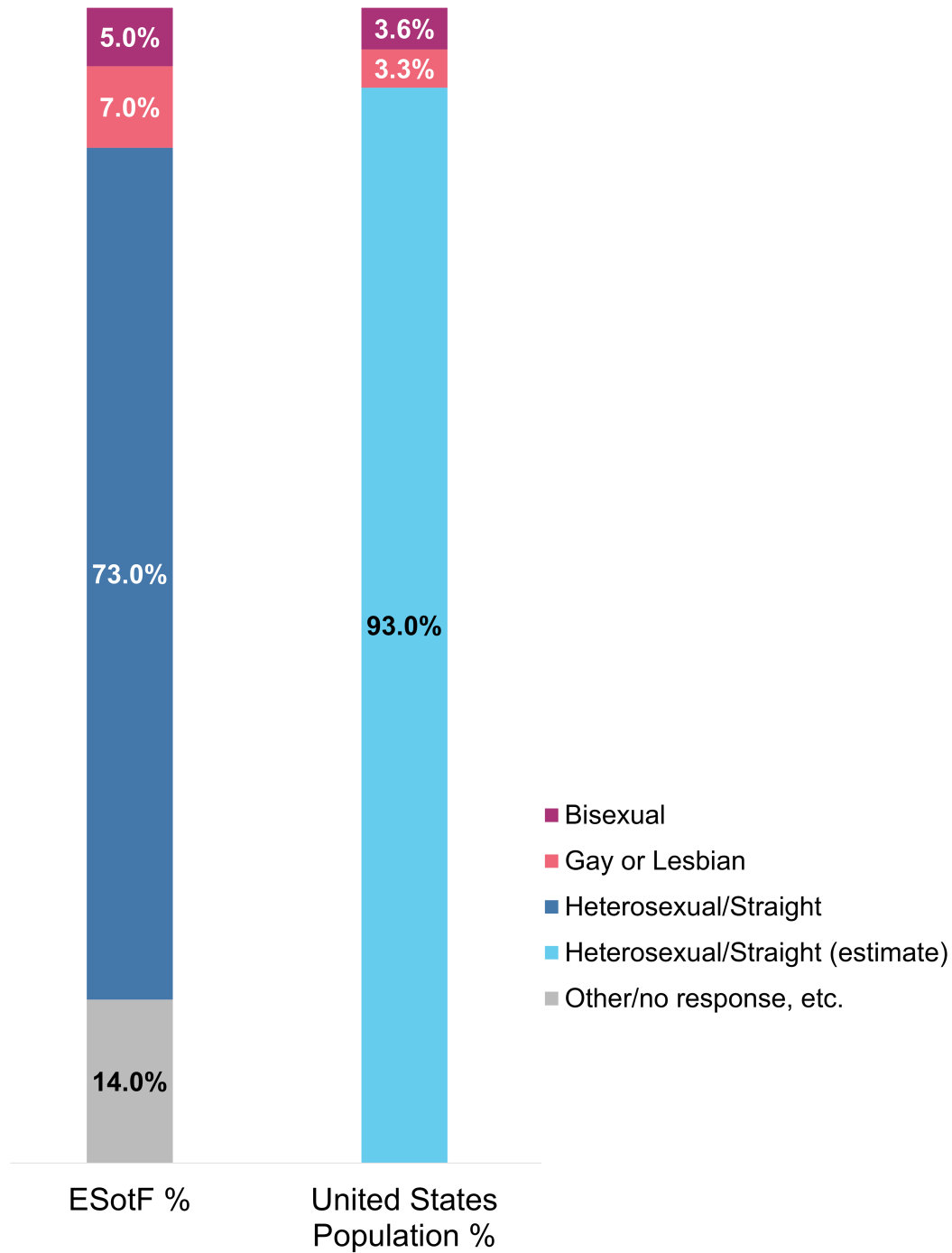


Fig. 12: Percentage of participants’ sexual orientation (Q3.5). Note that the category “Heterosexual/Straight (estimate)” is calculated from numbers provided in the Williams Institute of Law Brief (GATES, 2011) and should, therefore, be taken as provisional. Additionally, our survey included other responses which have been grouped together under “Other/no response, etc.”

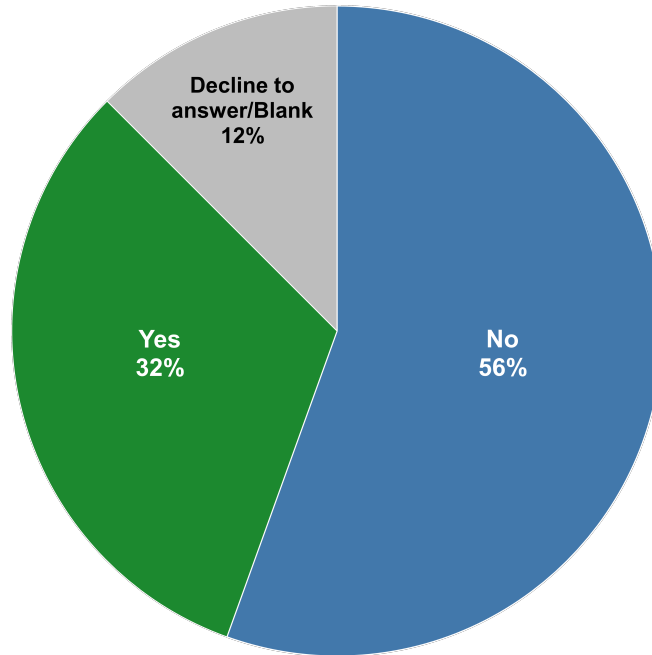


Fig. 13: Respondents according to religious practice and identity (Q3.6) (n=200).

some form of disability ([CENTER FOR DISEASE CONTROL AND PREVENTION, 2023](#)). On the other hand, the United States Census Bureau ([UNITED STATES CENSUS BUREAU, 2021a](#)) put this figure much lower, at 41.1 million (or 12.7%) of the non-institutionalised adult population in 2021. In either case, our survey respondents underrepresent individuals with disability.

3.2.7 Dependents (Q3.8 and Q3.9)

The last questions involved identifying two other factors which may have influenced an individual's experience in Egyptology, such as their time to degree and their general feeling of belonging in academia. The first question was the number of dependents for whom a participant is responsible (Q3.8) (Figure 15). More than half of the participants did not have any dependents (n=115), while nearly a third of participants had one or more dependents (n=60).

The final question of this section asked participants if they had been a member of the United States Armed Forces (Q3.9). 97.5% (n=195) respondents answered "No," with the remaining 5 respondents distributed between

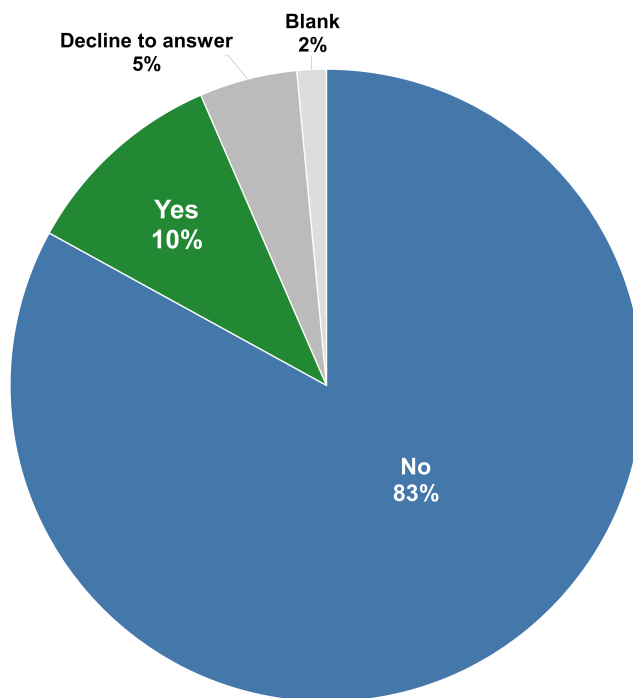


Fig. 14: Percentage of respondents who have a condition that impacts their ability to study or work and that requires accommodation (Q3.7) (n=200).

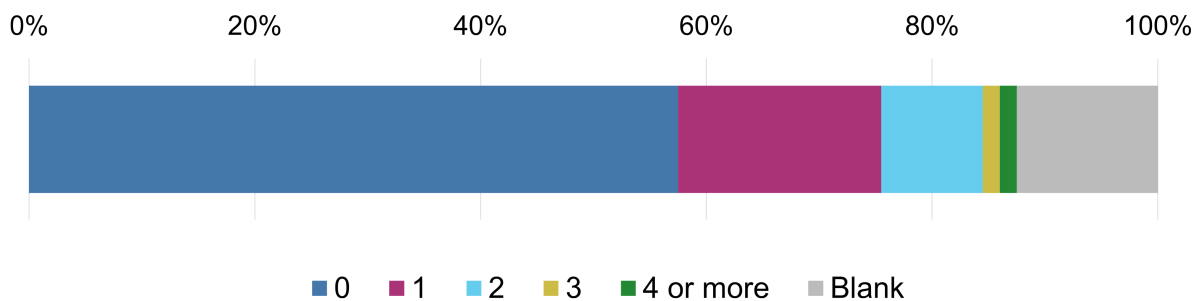


Fig. 15: Distribution of participants by the number of dependents they have (Q3.8) (n=200).

“Yes,” blank, and decline to answer. It appears that there is an underrepresentation of military service members in our survey sample when compared to the broader United States population, where 7.5% of adults are veterans (VESPA, 2020).

4 Discussion

4.1 Trends across Sections Q2 and Q3

Several factors may have had a disproportionate impact on the trends in our data across demographic questions. First, our survey results mirror trends in the demographics of higher education more broadly, especially when comparing variables such as gender, race/ethnicity, and age (NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS, 2023), suggesting that the demographic challenges American Egyptology faces are part of broader issues in higher education. Most notably, our results demonstrate the degree to which American Egyptology lacks racial and ethnic diversity in comparison to the United States population. The percentage of White alone respondents in our survey (73%) is almost the same as among full-time faculty in higher education more broadly (74%; NATIONAL CENTER FOR EDUCATION STATISTICS, 2023).

Second, demographic results may also be influenced by our approach to survey distribution including distribution among current graduate students, the use of snowball sampling, and social media outreach. This is reflected in the age distribution of respondents (e.g., more than half of respondents are Millennials). The disproportionate number of respondents under 45 may explain other trends in our data such as the higher percentage of LGBTQ respondents (JONES, 2023), lack of religious affiliation (COX, 2022), and disability rates (TAYLOR, 2018) since all of these demographic categories follow similar trends among younger generations in the United States.

Given the younger age distribution of our respondents, the results of our survey are both the present of Egyptology and potentially its future should appropriate action to invest in and retain underrepresented groups not be taken. Some may argue that because our results are similar to broader trends in higher education in the United States, solutions to diversify our field are beyond the scope of individual faculty and instead sit in the hands of higher administrators and university-wide Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion initiatives. There is good reason, however, to see the direct impact individual faculty can have on student success. Previous research has found a direct relationship between faculty racial/ethnic diversity and graduation rates of students from underrepresented racial and ethnic populations (LLAMAS et al., 2021; STOUT et al., 2018), which suggests that when faculty members do not reflect their student communities, there is a corresponding effect on student academic success. As American Egyptology reckons with providing academic and professional opportunities to students and early career scholars, faculty should be particularly aware of their role in retaining and promoting the success of a more diverse student body.

4.2 Issues and limitations of the Data

As this preliminary report is intended to open a conversation with the Egyptological community regarding its membership, the ESotF team would be remiss not to acknowledge potential limitations in our data. The points below represent our attempt to assemble what we see as, in some instances, unavoidable issues with our survey. Further gaps or problems, however, may have been overlooked, and in the spirit of open dialogue, we welcome additional observations from readers. We also recognise that this project represents only an initial step towards a more thorough evaluation of American Egyptology. The survey and interview components were never intended to be a final assessment but an inspiration to others to contribute and perform their own investigations. With

regular data-gathering, compilation of trends over time, and evaluation of the effectiveness of new initiatives and projects, analysis of the state of the field of Egyptology can move forward effectively.

Even with the ESotF team including a diverse blend of voices, some perspectives—most glaringly Arab-Americans, Asian-Americans, Egyptian nationals in United States Egyptology, and male-identifying individuals—are missing from this collaboration. The team is looking forward to future publications and projects where scholars from all backgrounds can bring their perspectives and disciplinary specialties to contextualise and interpret ESotF data in a collaborative way as well as place it within the wider context of the history of Egyptology and higher education in the United States. For example, Dr. Fatma Ismail has recently launched *The Egyptian Egyptology State of the Field Project*, which is “dedicated to exploring the current state of the field of Egyptology as practiced by Egyptians, showcasing its achievements, addressing its challenges, and identifying ways to enhance the field” (ISMAIL, 2023). A primary goal of our survey is to encourage others to gather such demographic, occupational, and educational data from perspectives not represented in the ESotF datasets.

4.2.1 Lack of baseline and rates of participation

One of the challenges confronting our analysis of this data is a lack of baseline against which to compare. There is, consequently, no way to know if the data are representative of the field at large or only a cross-section. We recognize that it is also impossible to ascertain the percentage of qualified individuals who participated in our survey, as the total number of living Egyptologists who are American citizens, or who were trained and/or are working in the United States is not known.

The self-selection of participants in the survey is also an issue, one which can hopefully be resolved in the future through data collection by professional organizations and institutions. We would stress, however, that by self-selecting, those who needed to be heard – perhaps individuals who have felt most impacted by systemic issues within Egyptology in the United States – were being offered an independent forum in which to do so. Addressing the data provided by respondents to our survey and acknowledging the accounts related to us through the interview process is a positive first step towards simply acknowledging that there are deep-seated problems in Egyptology in the United States.

4.2.2 Access and advertising

The digital nature of the project also contributes to issues of access and reach. The project exists fully online with all work completed via video chat, email, and collaborative online file systems. The survey was distributed online, and the audio interviews were conducted via digital applications or mobile phones. Participation in the survey, therefore, required respondents to have access to the Internet and an Internet-capable device, while the in-person interviews had to be conducted on a phone or online.

Advertising for participation was also disseminated primarily online through the efforts of individual team members, interpersonal contacts, “cold emails,” and listservs. It is possible that some individuals who would have participated did not receive word about the project. In a few cases, word-of-mouth may have helped encourage participants to take the survey, in particular for those who were no longer working in Egyptology. Later attempts at advertising in-person at conferences proved not to have been as successful, either owing to the late date of these announcements or the context in which they were taking place.

4.2.3 Anonymity and Sensitive Information

Egyptology and Egyptology-adjacent fields are relatively small; the survey respondents and the resulting data pool reflect the exclusivity of these fields. The ESotF team carefully designed the online survey to be anonymous. We are, however, aware that the intimate nature of Egyptology and Egyptology-adjacent fields poses a greater risk for some survey respondents to be identified than others. As explained, the online, anonymous survey began with our informed consent document. Respondents could not complete any questions without first consenting to share their data. Those who did not consent were unable to complete the survey. No personal identification information was recorded beyond what was asked in the questions. Respondents had the choice to self-describe (write-in), decline to answer, or skip questions entirely. Nevertheless, we acknowledge the possibility that data from these questions could be used relationally to identify individuals, especially when participants offered detailed “write-in” answers, which were lower in number than the pre-provided answer options. The “write-in” answers were, therefore, withheld from this report to protect respondents’ privacy.

The ESotF team recognises that survey and interview participants may have revealed traumatic and emotionally vulnerable information. The survey and interview were both “opt-in,” and the participants permitted their data to be used, but the ESotF team has and will continue to make choices to report data in certain ways so as not to accidentally identify individuals and to ensure their safety. With regards to the in-person interviews, the team is processing the interview data to ensure anonymity. Any identifying information is being replaced with codes, meaning that, for example, university specific details, places, and/or personal names are being replaced with vague descriptors. A detailed outline of this methodology will be provided in future publications. Such processes of anonymisation have been followed for this report and will continue to be our standard for any data or analyses released at a later date.

4.2.4 Descriptive data

Our data are imperfect. Notably, our dataset is descriptive, in that it enables the identification of trends that may be indicative of larger issues but does not provide solutions or explanations as to why these trends exist. Our data do not exist within a vacuum but are subject to large-scale societal effects and impacts as well as local institutional and field-specific realities. Disentangling these causes to better arrive at effective solutions will prove difficult, but the effort must be invested. No dataset is free from these sorts of challenges, yet it is important to be reminded that the data presented are simply offering insight into the way things are, not an explanation as to why things are this way.

4.2.5 Comparative datasets

In contrast to section Q2, which focused on collecting information about respondents’ identity within the Egyptological community and participation in academic and professional Egyptology, section Q3 focused on general demographic data. This dataset operates entirely independent of Egyptology as a field and was thus compared to data collected from the broader United States population. In certain cases, the comparison was relatively easy. For instance, the United States Census makes their data on race and ethnicity readily accessible online, though we had to reconcile our data, which listed ethnicity and race together and allowed for write-in self-identification, with the more restrictive Census categories.

For other questions, such as those concerning sexual orientation or ability, we had to identify datasets that represented the United States population in order to make a comparison. The first limitation in these data is that apart from the United States Census, where each inhabitant of the United States had the opportunity to participate

in the 2020 survey, the other percentages were extrapolated from representative sample groups who were polled in the United States. The second issue was rigor. As much as possible, we sought out established research groups when selecting our comparative datasets, ones which included detailed methodological data online (e.g., [PEW RESEARCH CENTER](#), 2023), or were peer-reviewed (e.g., [GATES](#), 2011). We recognise that as new data emerge, improved comparisons may be drawn, and it is our intention to revisit this issue in future work.

5 Conclusion

The Egyptology State of the Field project coalesced at a time in the United States when civil unrest due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and pervasive social inequalities prompted more honest and open conversations about access to and the purposes of higher education in the United States. Egyptologists must continue to reflect on the problematic roots of their field and address the systemic issues, biases, and inequalities that are perpetuated. The data presented in this report offer quantitative proof that Egyptology is not representative of the demographic distribution of United States populations in several identity categories, including race/ethnicity and gender. The fact that these results parallel trends in other academic fields should encourage Egyptologists, especially those with the status and privilege to facilitate change such as senior academic administrators and tenured faculty, to use these data to push for reforms at the higher levels of museum and university systems.

While the ESotF report does not make suggestions or provide solutions to problems such as the downward trend in humanities and social sciences higher education or graduate student job opportunities, the team is optimistic that our project can provide a foundation for future projects and initiatives to do so. Our survey results contribute to the process of updating and reinvigorating Egyptology in the United States by offering an overall impression of the current state of Egyptology in the United States. This data gathering is long overdue and has real-world consequences for the people currently in the field and those hoping to join in the future. It is impossible, however, to evaluate and monitor trends over time from one dataset. Future assessments will need to be conducted at regular intervals to evaluate the effectiveness of any adaptations and innovations and adjust to changing conditions in higher education. The results from the independent, collaborative, and essentially unfunded Egyptology State of the Field project provide a foundation and a model for the route forward.

6 Acknowledgements










First and foremost, the authors would like to acknowledge that this project is being conducted in the spirit of teamwork and collaboration. As such, we would like to thank all team members for contributing their knowledge and expertise. Gathering the ESotF survey results and subsequent qualitative interview data would not have been possible without the hundreds of survey respondents who volunteered their time, data, personal experiences, and perspectives to this project. Transparency begins with open, frank, and (sometimes) difficult conversations. We want to acknowledge all of those who were brave enough to share openly with our team. Thank you.



We must also recognise the only financial support this project has received, which consists of a 2021 University of Missouri Faculty Supplemental Support of Research/Creative Works Interrupted by COVID-19 Grant (supported by the CARES Act) that allowed our interview transcriptions to be processed digitally. No team member has been financially compensated for their work. We have received non-monetary institutional support from the University of Missouri—St. Louis, Missouri S&T, and Johnson County Community College in the form of access to Qualtrics for data collecting, Zoom for meetings, and IRB review. We would finally like to thank the two reviewers for their insightful comments, which improved on the quality and scope of this article. All errors, however, remain our own.










7 Author Contributions

The following people contributed work to this publication: AA performed conceptualisation, grant writing, drafting the IRB protocol, survey design, data analysis, research, writing, and editing. EC performed conceptualisation, survey design, data cleaning, data analysis, data visualisation, research, writing, editing, and formatting. SD performed conceptualization, research, writing, editing, project administration, and supervision. JJ performed conceptualization, survey design, research, writing, and editing. CM-W performed conceptualisation and survey design. SO performed conceptualisation and survey design. KS performed conceptualisation, survey design, and submitted the IRB protocol. JS performed conceptualisation and survey design. JTH performed conceptualisation and survey design. JTr performed conceptualisation, survey design, research, writing, and editing.

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