

The problem of the tragedy of the commons is an extremely complex problem which requires a complex solution. The warm data lab that we did was class is a good way to encourage us to think about these complex problems with complexity and share ideas. It demonstrated how every system is inherently connected to multiple other systems, and that it is almost impossible to discuss one without bringing up at least a few others. Although the system I choose for my project, the ethnic studies program in Tucson, Arizona does not include a commons, as education and knowledge are limitless, complex thinking can still be used to try to understand how to manage the problems that did and continue to arise around the issue.

Education, in my opinion, is a huge factor which can positively contribute to an individual's well-being in a changing world. If you are educated, it is harder to be exploited and easier to find resources, whether that be a job or simply a place to go where you can get free food. "Knowledge is power" after all. However, despite the benefits of education, the way in which you receive it can vary greatly and may have adverse effects on well-being in general. Educational experience depends on many many factors such as your classmates, your teachers, your physical classroom environment, your social and emotional classroom environment, your socio-economic background, your family, and your pre-existing ideas and biases about the classroom, wherever they may come from (media, community, family, previous experience, etc). In Tucson, the ethnic studies program began as a way to make the school community more inclusive and conducive to the learning of their large latinx/chicanx population. Being in a classroom which taught them about their own history and culture motivated many of the students who first participated in the program to actually enjoy school for the first time in their lives. It brought graduation rates up and created a tight-knit community of students and teachers who truly loved what they were learning about. However, although the classes were open to everyone and the classrooms themselves made a point to be very inclusive, because of the nature of the classes (teaching about one specific culture/race), a few powerful white legislators in the community had a problem with the program and began trying everything in their power to get rid of it. They treated ethnic studies kind of like a commons, as though it were a limited resource that needed to be regulated so that it could be made more equally accessible to all. However, they also did not value ethnic studies as a resource (as resources are usually very valued in a tragedy of the commons situation), but rather saw it as disposable or unnecessary. Additionally, these people had no experience in the actual ethnic studies classroom/system and were trying to manage it from outside/above. They even refused offers from teachers, students, and lower down administrators to come and visit the classroom claiming that it would be pointless because the teachers would have to know that they were coming and could therefore change the curriculum and engineer it in a way which would appear great when in reality it was "dangerous". This is where Elinor Ostrom's Principles of Managing a Commons come in handy, many of her rules, "Ensure that those affected by the rules can participate in modifying the rules. Make sure the rule-making rights of community members are respected by outside authorities. Provide accessible, low-cost means for dispute resolution" are completely ignored by these legislators. They shut down the program, ignoring the protests of the students, teachers, and school

community. The protests were extensive and it took a lot of time and energy for the people to show they they cared, simply to be ignored in the end anyway. Some students and teachers walked over 100 miles to Arizona's capital to protest a meeting there, some were arrested, many sat/stood in peaceful protest for hours on end. If the legislators were going to treat the education of ethnic studies like a commons, they should've respected Ostrom's rules. They should've expanded the "boundaries" of the classroom system to include the groups (white people) who they felt were being excluded and deserved a chance to learn. First and foremost, they should've tried to push past their racial and racist biases and tried to put themselves in the system to understand what was actually going on.

This system is something that I feel strongly about and I believe that what happened a few years back with the system being shut down was incredibly unjust. However, I know from a systems-thinking standpoint that I should consider all points of view, especially in an issue with so much conflict. The warm data lab showed me the kind of thinking that I should do about the legislators, to find out what their experiences with education and ethnic studies are, and to find out the factors which may have motivated them to shut down the program or to develop their racist attitudes in the first place. If I can understand where they are coming from, perhaps it would be easier to find out the best way to show them the other side.