When I think of positive social change, I think of any efforts made to steer a given society in a direction advantageous to their past; a growth of a population not in numbers or volume but in gainful attributes that positively contribute to the society as a whole. This can be achieved through many different modalities such as research, motivational speeches, and even mistakes made by others.

This week I reviewed a Scholars of Change video focused on an EdD student at Walden’s drive to create an animated sitcom portraying children with special needs, played by children with special needs, in efforts to establish a personal connection with children and normalization amongst the age groups (Isaace, 2014). This contributed to my image of positive social change as the students animated sitcom aims to reduce common stigmatisms associated with special needs children in learning environments in efforts to provide a richer learning environment for special needs children.

Walden’s vision for social change is another prime example. In 2015 Walden’s vision to impact social change encompassed four goals: strengthening the impact of the Walden curricula, leveraging Walden research capacities/expertise/networks/curricula to serve external organizations and communities, raising social change consciousness, and the continued improvement of supporting ongoing social change initiatives (Walden, 2015). Its now five years later, in 2020, and I have been apart of Walden since 2017; I feel I am a living example of this contribution by Walden as my education received since beginning three years ago has provided me with the knowledge and capacity to appreciate and begin to consider the potential for various social changes within the field of medicine. I have grown particularly interested in idea of mitigating common negative connotations associated with IT’s integration into the field of medicine and the potential impact on social change it may reveal.

Social change contributes to the changing of behavior and lifestyles amongst challenges people face daily. Considering the videos of social change, each scholar provided a message. Still, most importantly, each student identified a need, whether it was a personal connection or a foreseen issue repeatedly seen. According to Walden(2015), social change contributes to real change and impacts a global scale. Furthermore, Walden promotes scholars' growth by administering a curriculum designed to foster the application of knowledge to positive social change.

Kezar mentions how social networks lead to change. Through communication systems, knowledge transfer, alteration of scheme, or mindset, shaping attitudes, problem-solving, and accountability(Kezar,2014). Learning and incorporating social networks to reach audiences reminds me of Isaac's scholar of change video from week one. Isaac(2014) created three animated characters to inspire children with special needs while also encouraging others to change their outlook towards kids who have learning disabilities. The scholar's attempt to affect social change involved implementing visuals, audio, and cartoon characters to represent an entertainment based on differences people see in children while learning. Social cognition models examine how mental processes and mental models shape people's ability to engage in a particular change initiative(Kezar,2014). This attempt to show the world kids with learning disabilities is unique, not outcasters because they view the world with a different perspective than others.

Existing relationships are more influential than relationships created as part of a change initiative(Kezar,2014). The videos and resources on social change help shape my experience on various levels. The videos brought insight that social change starts with me and those close around me. Each scholar mentioned how their interest tied around a personal issue, and over time I have been told to pick a topic I am passionate about and not that is easier. Having to do so, my study just as there's will have a profound impact on society.

Reference:

Kezar, A. (2014). Higher Education Change and Social Networks: A Review of Research. *The Journal of Higher Education*, *85*(1), 91–125. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2014.11777320

Walden University. (2015). Social change. Retrieved from <https://www.waldenu.edu/about/social-change>

The Scholars for Change video chosen was video number one. In the video, Walden student Benjamin Isaac explains how he is using his education to promote positive social change by educating others about children with special needs. While working on an educational cartoon, Benjamin had an “epiphany” while creating the three cartoon characters, and decided to depict these cartoon characters with special needs. Through these characters, his focus was to “show children with special needs in a very normal light”, so he matched the disabilities given to the characters to be voiced by children with the same.

Using personal cognitive aspects, I used inductive reading to understand insights and themes in the video. One of the insights I had was that this project was personally connected to his life through his daughter having cerebral palsy. Because of this, one of my codes is “Personal Connection”.  Another code I used was “Normalizing Special Needs” because of the overall theme of social change through education. Social stigmas that those with special needs are “inadequate, subpar, and unintelligent” was an aspect of what Benjamin was wanting to change.

Written in my notes, I reflected this:  *It made me think about the lack of representation of those with disabilities in our culture, especially for children. Just like there needs to be a realistic representation of people of color in movies and tv shows, there should be a realistic representation of people with disabilities. It also made me think of Sesame Street and how they have always tried to include and represent people of color, and how they now have a character with autism.*

References

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