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THE JOURNAL OF SERVICE-LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION IS AN ONLINE, INTERNATIONAL, PEER-REVIEWED JOURNAL FOR THE DISSEMINATION OF ORIGINAL RESEARCH REGARDING EFFECTIVE INSTITUTIONAL-COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS. OUR PRIMARY EMPHASIS IS TO PROVIDE AN OUTLET FOR SHARING THE METHODOLOGIES AND PEDAGOGICAL APPROACHES THAT LEAD TO EFFECTIVE COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED OUTCOMES. THE JOURNAL OF SERVICE-LEARNING IN HIGHER EDUCATION IS A SUBSCRIPTION-FREE JOURNAL WITH A REVIEW BOARD MADE UP OF VARIOUS ACADEMIC DISCIPLINES OF THE MEMBER INSTITUTIONS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA SYSTEM AS WELL AS OTHER NATIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY ACCREDITED COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES AND AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

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Addressing Minority Student Achievement through Service Learning in a Culturally Relevant Context

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Introduction

Adolescents born at the intersection of race and poverty are more likely to be impacted by a confluence of negative risk factors that result in several adverse outcomes over the course of their lives including: low school achievement (Kao & Thompson, 2003), unemployment and low wages (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn 2000), increased exposure and susceptibility to violence and trauma (Dahlberg, 1998), and poor health (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2000). Many of these young people who grow up in poor urban areas across the United States struggle with understanding, accepting, and making the necessary adjustments to cross the cultural boundaries that are required to excel academically and socially in schools. Some of these young people resent school personnel's expectations that they must comply with behavioral norms that differ from their cultural traditions and resist these norms being the standard for achievement, rewards, and punishment in public schooling (Ogbu, 1983a). Increasingly, urban poor children and adolescents are disengaging from the standards-driven curriculum that is nationally sanctioned and promoted in public schools across the United States. Lack of cultural relevancy is cited as a primary reason for declining school connectedness and low school engagement for students of color (Blum, Libbey, Bishop, & Bishop, 2004). Middle school is when most adolescents are more attuned to peer pressure and social status. This is

ABSTRACT

Research on recreational media use among youth indicates young people of color who spend more time with media may also be at higher risk for school disengagement and low personal contentment compared to their white peers. This puts these students in a position to be even more influenced by the themes and messages that abound in pop culture, particularly music and social media. ME: MIM is a multisensory, interdisciplinary, integrated approach to teaching and learning that uses music multimedia to engage students in individual and group activities and lessons that reinforces competencies aligned with positive youth development. Song lyrics, sound recordings and music videos are used as "text" to facilitate deconstruction and discussion of the themes and messages in music and the context. Students also discuss the influence of these themes and messages on their attitudes, beliefs, and choices as it relates to their cultural group identity and individual behavior both in and out of school. ME: MIMM has been facilitated through the Challenging Horizons Program (CHP), an evidence-based, after-school and summer service-learning program for academically and behaviorally challenged students. This study examined key stakeholders' (i.e., parents/guardians, program staff members, and school administrators) perceptions of feasibility and acceptability of ME: MIM.

also the time when they are exposed to the idea that education credentials are required for gainful employment and social mobility. Typically, in middle school, adolescents are expected to make the connection between school achievement and the job market, specifically how they are likely to fair with or without school credentials. This is also the time in a young person's life that they are taught and rewarded for working hard to earn good grades and complete high school or go on to college with the idea that these credentials are a near certain way to secure gainful employment and avoid financial scarcity (Fordham, 1988). For some, these instrumental beliefs and the attending behaviors required to reap the rewards of the American Promise are beyond their reach, but also a turning point to change their life trajectory.

Literature Review

For years, some urban black youth who attend schools in underfunded, under-resourced school districts, find the social and status mobility theory to be unsubstantiated and tantamount to folk lore (Ogbu, 1983b). Others believe that reaping the rewards of "the system" requires divesting from their kindred network that is solidified through shared perceptions about race and class, and who share life experiences with others similarly situated socio-economically. This kindred network is codified through language, social norms, cultural traditions and a sense of shared struggle (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986). Instead of fully investing their time and energy in school or formal education, urban black youth growing up in poverty are increasingly turning to recreational media, especially music and social media (Rideout, Foehr, & Roberts, 2010). There are many reasons for this trend, raising concerns that youth of color who are already at higher risk for a variety of adverse outcomes compared to their white counterparts is a special population that is highly vulnerable. Examples of adverse outcomes include academic, behavioral (Gregory, Skiba, & Noguera, 2010), social (Rankin, & Quane, 2002), emotional (Weist, Freedman, Paskewitz, Proescher, & Flaherty, 1995), and vocational (Fordham, 1988). Research on recreational media use among 8-18 year olds indicates young people of color who spend more time with media may also be at higher risk for school disengagement and low personal contentment compared to their white peers (Rideout et al., 2010) putting them in a position to be even more influenced by the themes and messages that abound in pop culture, particularly music and social media.

The role of culture has been featured prominently in educational research, instruction and teacher education, school policies, and interventions targeting U.S. minorities since the early 1960s (Ogbu, 1995a). It began with the designation of poor people as culturally deprived, then culturally depraved (Erickson, 1987). These designations were based on the presumed Eurocentric cultural paradigm for which normative behavior and public schooling was established. More recently, the focus has been on replacing the Eurocentric, hegemonic, and patriarchal slant found in school textbooks across America with a more balanced reflection of history and the cultural contributions of people other than of European descent. Some educators and researchers believe the absence of a multicultural perspective that emphasizes resilience and protective factors is why increasing numbers of urban black youth are not interested in the curriculum offered in public schools (Harris, 2006). Minorities who have

not traditionally performed well in school think that more inclusion of their cultures and language expression would improve their academic achievement, reduce school adjustment problems (Ogbu, 1995) and would go a long way in increasing their interest in school. But key questions about the infusion of culture remain at the heart of the school reform debate. For example, is it important to understand the cultural backgrounds of the students and families served in school and if so, why? Further, whose culture is or should be taught and reinforced in schools and classrooms? How does one's cultural frame of reference inform or influence receptivity to cultural differences in schools? How should we account for cultural differences and conflicting cultural frames of references between school personnel and the students, families and communities they serve?

These are just a few pertinent questions about the role of culture and public schooling as it relates to school achievement and adjustment. For purposes of this manuscript, the authors refer to a definition of culture proposed by a renowned scholar in minority education: Culture is a framework through which members of a population or subpopulation see the world around them, interpret events in that world, react to their perceived reality, and began to behave according to acceptable standards (Ogbu, 1995b). Given school is mandated for as many as 11 years in some districts across the United States, it seems reasonable to conclude that classrooms and school buildings are where cultural differences are likely to collide. In most schools, there is a power differential between students and adults, and school is a place where students are expected to be subordinate. There is likely to be resistance from students whose instinctive cultural expressions differ from those espoused in school. These students may not be willing or able to cross the cultural boundaries required of them to be accepted and successful in school without accommodating for this difference.

Promotion of mainstream culture, social norms and the preservation of certain cultural traditions seems central to the way things operate in traditional public schools. Since many of urban youth of color growing up in poverty have a greater affinity for recreational media compared to their white peers (Rideout et al., 2010), they may be at greater risk of being exposed to the prevailing themes and messages in popular culture, especially popular music and social media (Author, 2015). High rates of school dropout, coupled with increasing rates of school disengagement and greater exposure to the prevailing themes in popular youth music and media, warrant further study of this special population of at-risk youth. Based on the literature reviewed for this manuscript, there are strong correlates and potential reasons why young people of color are not interested or engaged by what is offered in many public schools today. Chief among them may be the lack of culturally-relevant curriculum with an emphasis on their inherent strengths and resilience.

A curriculum that focuses on deficits versus one that highlights protective factors will likely not be of interest to a population of young people who may be feeling the effects of being marginalized in society (Miller & MacIntosh, 1999). The lack of culturally-informed approaches to teaching, learning, and discipline in schools is also a reason why young people of color have disengaged from traditional schooling (Christle, Jolivet, & Nelson, 2005). Additionally, there is the perception that schools and traditional schooling requires students of color to abandon their shared cultural identity,

meaning to distance themselves from members of their broader social network. Many of these networks are comprised of older people, some of whom had an inferior education or resisted crossing the cultural boundaries required for school success (Ogbu, 1987).

The media and online revolution have converged to capture the attention of today's youth. Technology-enabled media facilitates real time access to everything from entertainment, information, and news (Peppler & Kafai, 2007) to accessing social and recreational media content. Recreational media is ubiquitously available via smart phones, tablet computers or other hand-held devices. Consequently, many young people spend nearly 11 hours a day engaged in multiple forms of media, either for informational or recreational purposes (Rideout et al., 2010). Interestingly, youth of color whose parents have less education spend the most time with recreational media. In a study released in 2011 through the Kaiser Family Foundation, African-American youth were exposed to more than four additional hours of media per day compared to their White peers (see Figure 1).

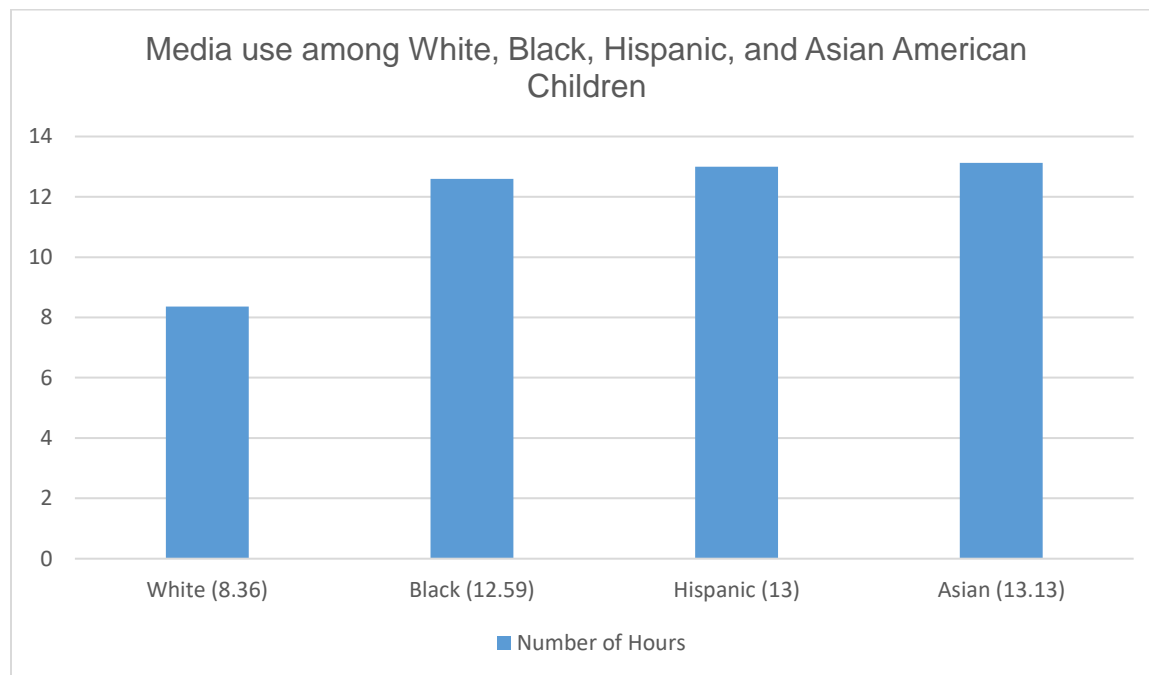


Figure 1. Media use among White, Black, Hispanic, and Asian American children. *In Rideout, Lauricella, & Wartella (2011).*

The adolescent years are an important time because they offer parents, school personnel, and others a time-limited window to provide pro-social and pro-health information that could significantly change a young person's life trajectory. Teaching and learning that engages the social and emotional attributes of a developing adolescent's brain and that integrates music may be a culturally responsive and timely approach to capture the attention of young people at-risk for school failure. Many policy

makers and practitioners who are concerned about the current trends have been calling for a more culturally relevant, culturally responsive approach to curriculum and instruction that places greater emphasis on resilience as a protective. Such a combination could potentially yield important information that may improve school connectedness, school climate and culture, and increase education achievement.

Context

Popular Youth Music Multimedia (PYMM) provides culturally-relevant content, context, and text to facilitate teaching and learning about adolescent risk-taking and decision making (Author, 2015). Adolescence is an ideal time to introduce and reinforce the rewards making informed decisions, as well as the consequences of making poor choices. PYMM provides culturally-relevant scripts that allow young people the opportunity to deconstruct what they see, hear and feel. The middle school years are the ideal time to create safe spaces for young people to process with a caring adult the themes and messages in popular music and to discuss their values, opinions and their options. Such an approach enables young people to make informed decisions that are aligned with their goals and emerging self-identity.

The Challenging Horizons Program (CHP) is an evidence-based, after-school and summer service-learning program for academically and behaviorally challenged students at two middle schools in South Carolina. The program primarily serves students who live in low income households and/or students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. A significant portion of the student population served by the CHP has been diagnosed with a behavioral or learning disorder. Examples of behavioral or learning disorders include attention deficit disorder (ADD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). All of the students served by the CHP have been identified as being at risk for negative academic and/or social outcomes. The age range of the population served by the CHP is 11-14, and in 2014 CHP students were comprised of the following demographics: 65 African American; 10 White; 6 bi-racial, and 1 Latino.

This study is an examination of an approach to teaching and learning called *MusicEnergy: The Message in the Music™ (ME-MIM)* that uses Popular Youth Culture (PYC) and Popular Youth Music Multimedia (PYMM) to help young people acquire the academic, behavioral, emotional, moral and social competences aligned with the goals of school engagement and achievement. ME-MIM addresses the following state-adopted standards in South Carolina: (a) Health Education Standard 2: “The student will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology and other factors on health behaviors;” (b) Media Arts Standard 3: “the student will access, analyze, interpret, and create media texts;” and (c) Media Arts Standard 4: “the student will make connections between music, other art disciplines, other content areas, and the world.” (South Carolina Department of Education, 2010, p. 61).

ME: MIM is a multisensory, interdisciplinary, integrated approach to teaching and learning that uses music multimedia to engage students in individual and group activities and lessons that reinforces competencies aligned with positive youth development. ME:MIM also addresses health and media literacy by focusing on behavior, mental health and safety. Song lyrics, sound recordings and music videos are

used as “text” to facilitate deconstruction and discussion of the themes and messages in music and the context. Students are also asked to discuss the influence of these themes and messages on their attitudes, beliefs, and choices as it relates to their cultural group identity and individual behavior in school and out of school. This integrated approach targets five *key competencies* and six *skills* required for students to thrive in school and be successful beyond school. The following five competencies, aligned with positive youth development (Catalano, Berglund, Ryan, Lonczak, & Hawkins, 2004), are addressed through the ME:MIM approach: academic, behavioral, emotional, moral, and social. The six skills aligned with the Partnership for 21st century Skills include: (a) collaboration; (b) close reading for comprehension; (c) communication (oral, written and listening); (d) critical analysis (i.e., critical viewing and critical listening); (e) information-seeking via research; and (f) note taking/reflection.

Theme-Focused Instruction. ME-MIM addresses 10 themes: five *health-related themes* and five *ancillary themes* that together make up the Ten Prevailing Themes in Popular Youth Music Media (Author & Smith, 2016). The health-related themes include: 1) alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD); 2) casual and suggestive sex (CSS); 3) dark deviant behavior (DDB); 4) interpersonal conflict/bullying (ICB); and 5) violence, aggressive behavior & trauma (VABT). The socio-behavioral themes include: 1) consumerism/materialism; 2) criminal activity; 3) explicit language; 4) narcissism; and 5) a general category called “social problems”. This category refers to macro issues in society such as racism, classism and sexism. Participants collaboratively define and provide examples of each for discussions and instruction. Participants also collectively discuss the context in which these themes exist in entertainment and in real life.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical base for this study originated from three sources: the Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1996); the Cultivation Theory (Gerber, Gross, & Melody, 1973); and the Caste Theory of Education, also known as the theory of oppositional culture introduced by John Ogbu, a noted scholar in the fields of minority education, culture and identity. The Social Cognitive Theory emphasizes that learning occurs in a social context and much of what is learned is gained through observation. This theory has been applied extensively by researchers who seek to understand social behavior in schools. The Cultivation Theory suggests that persistent long term exposure to media content (e.g., television) has small but measurable effects on the perceptual beliefs of audience member. The Caste Theory of Education, also known as the theory of oppositional culture, refers to nonconformity within educational systems. Central to this theory is the acknowledgement of mainstream versus subcultures and the recognition that sometimes subcultures refuse to conform to mainstream norms and values. An example would be the refusal of youth of color to accept and internalize mainstream norms and values that have been adopted, upheld and reinforced in U.S. public schools. Other theories that enabled a discussion of the results included Critical Race Theory (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Parker & Lynn, 2002), Black Identity Theory (Helms, 1990; Jackson, 2002; Thompson & Carter, 1997), and Symbolic Interactionism Theory; (LeCompte, Preissle & Tesch, 1993).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to complete step one of the six-step Deployment Focused Model of Development and Testing (DF Model) by documenting key stakeholders' assessment (i.e., acceptability and feasibility) of using Popular Youth Culture (PYC) and Popular Youth Music Multimedia (PYMM) as content and context to engage a group of black urban youth who were screened to be a higher-risk for negative school outcomes. This study examined whether this approach would be acceptable and feasible toward building academic, behavioral, emotional, moral and social competencies linked to positive youth development (Catalano et al., 2004). In addition, researchers wanted to explore and document whether this approach to teaching and learning could be useful in improving school connectedness, as well as literacy skills (i.e., reading comprehension, health and media literacy). Toward this end, data were collected from parents/guardians, school administrators and staff of an afterschool/summer enrichment program. Standards in the following five subject areas are addressed in ME-MIM: (1) Computer and Information Technology (C/IT), (2) English Language Arts (ELA), (3) Health Education (Hlth Ed), (4) Visual and Performing Arts/Media Arts (VPA/MA), and (5) Social Studies (Soc St).

Research Questions

Three research questions guided this study:

Q1: Will parents, program staff and school administrators find music media literacy to be an acceptable and feasible approach to build academic, behavioral, emotional, moral and social competence in youth?

Q2: Will parents, program staff and school administrators find music media literacy to be an acceptable and feasible approach to increase school connectedness in youth?

Q3: Will parents, program staff and school administrators find music media literacy to be an acceptable and feasible approach to engage youth in risk-taking and decision-making linked health and media literacy?

In addition to these three research questions, further research has been conducted to address the following two research questions: (4) Will students who participate in the study find music media literacy an acceptable, feasible and satisfactory approach to enrichment programming linked to school success? (5) Will teachers find the proposed approach to teaching and learning to be an acceptable and feasible? Results for questions 1 to 3 are reported in this manuscript. For results to the additional research questions 4 and 5, see Author and Smith (2016).

Method

The study complied with the definition of action research as proposed by Bradbury and Reason (2003). In addition, the study focused on completing Step I of Weisz' (2004) Deployment-Focused Model of Intervention Development and Testing

[DF-Model]. The Action Research Cycle (ARC), as proposed by Coughlan and Coghlan (2002) also guided this study. The ARC consists of three main steps: (a) to understand the context and purpose of the study; (b) employ six 'mini-steps' to gather feedback, analyze data, plan, implement and conduct evaluation; and (c) a perform a meta-step to monitor implementation. The DF-Model (Weisz, 2004) consists of six steps: (1) assessment and planning; (2) staff training; (3) supervised implementation; (4) monitoring implementation; (5) two-way feedback with program revisions; and (6) ongoing data collection. A major part of step one of the DF-model is to ascertain provider acceptability and perceived feasibility of the intervention in a "real world" setting. Completing Step 1 in both the ARC and the DF Model (as adapted by Molina, Smith and Pelham (2005)) was the focus of the present study. Data gathered were to further develop and refine the intervention starting with assessing its feasibility and acceptability among practitioners in natural settings.

Qualitative action research (Coghlan & Coghlan, 2002; Bradbury & Reason, 2003; Weisz, 2004) was appropriate for the DF Model because data were gathered and interpreted within an embedded context in contrast to positivist science, wherein findings are validated by the consistency achieved via prediction, control, logic and measurement (Baum, McDoughall, & Smith, 2006). Unlike positivist scientists' presumed detached and neutral relationship to the research, an action researcher is immersed in the setting as an active actor/agent. The primary researcher in this study was intentional about collecting and analyzing data from stakeholders as a critical and analytical Participant/Researcher [P/R].

Within action research, participants are seen as valued stakeholders who hold important information. The P/R seeks a deeper understanding of the phenomenon. In action, research, the P/R is a facilitator and works with stakeholders to peel back the layers of a phenomenon in an attempt to discover or confirm core issues under investigation. Action research enables the P/R to gather information shared by stakeholders and return this information to stakeholders for the purpose of confirming if the interpretation of the information is correct. If the interpretation is not correct, the stakeholders have the opportunity to refine, modify, or clarify. This process continues until a comprehensive picture emerges. In this regard, participants are co-creators of the knowledge gathered within the study (Stringer, 2004).

PYMM may be a culturally and ecologically-valid means to engage students in social learning that reinforces key competencies linked to literacy, and possibly behavioral and mental health. Aligning the classroom with real world environments likely results in a more engaging, culturally-responsive, inclusive learning space for all. Applied and interactive teaching and learning may be particularly appealing to youth from diverse socio-cultural and racial backgrounds as this may align with their preferred learning style and may give them more motivation to learn in a context that is immediately relevant to their lives. This approach also aligns with state-adopted standards in five subject areas, thus likely appeals to school personnel and parents.

Participants

From June 2014 to October 2014, an action research study was conducted with parents, guardians, teachers, school administrators, program staffers and students

participating in the Challenging Horizons Program (CHP) in Columbia, South Carolina. Participants in the present study were parents/guardians, program staff members, and school administrators. A total of seven (N = 7) parent/guardians and program staff members participated in a focus group, and four (N = 4) program staff members completed acceptability and satisfaction surveys. Additionally, two school administrators participated in the in-depth interviews. Any reference to program staff in the present study refers to CHP counselors, all of whom had a least one year of experience working with the Program. The site director of the CHP at the time had more than seven years of experience working with the CHP. The two male school administrators who participated in the study had an average of 20 years of experience as educators or administrators between them. One administrator was African American and the other was Caucasian. The black administrator worked at an alternative high school that serves mostly African American middle through high school students and families. The white administrator was the eighth grade Assistant Principal for Curriculum at the site where the study was conducted.

Focus Groups and Interviews

Qualitative data from the parent/guardian/program focus group and one-on-one interviews with school administrators, are presented in this manuscript. Quantitative data from a survey completed by program staff are also presented in this manuscript. These data were collected as part of a larger study that included quantitative collected from a survey and qualitative data from two additional 60-minute focus groups. These data were of students' experience participating in a 5-week summer enrichment program. (For further results, including data from 8 school teachers and 11 black middle school graduates, 10 of whom were black males who were screened to be at high risk for adverse academic, social, and emotional outcomes and received a five-week version of ME: MIM, see Author & Smith, 2016).

Adaptability and satisfaction surveys

The following six criteria were identified as a basis for the survey and coincided with the research questions: (1) acceptability—assessed to be agreeable or satisfactory; (2) conditionally acceptability—assessed to be agreeable or satisfactory with conditions; (3) feasibility—capable of being achieved or possible; (4) ambivalence – the coexistence and simultaneous existence of opposing attributes or feelings; (5) acceptability and feasibility—assessed to be both satisfactory and possible; and (6) not acceptability/not feasibility—assessed to be neither satisfactory NOR possible.

In addition to the qualitative data presented, the study included an acceptability/satisfaction survey to assess specific program components of ME:MIM, and quantitative data obtained from these surveys are presented in this manuscript. All focus groups and in-depth interviews were audio recorded and professionally transcribed. This facilitated the excavation of emergent themes and relevant constructs (Denzin & Lincoln 2008). A preliminary codebook was developed through an open coding process. Open coding of the transcripts led to the conceptual organization of the data based on emergent themes.

Codebook categories, sub-categories, dimensions and definitions were updated after each transcript was analyzed and before proceeding to the next. Authors of this manuscript acknowledge the potential for bias toward the data, but incorporated the P/R's identity as an African American male during analysis. Doing so authenticates the P/R's own voice during interpretation of the participant's perspectives (Denzin et al, 2008; Patton, 2002). Every effort was made to faithfully record and interpret data from the participants' perspectives. In so doing, the P/R refrained from judging participant's data against his own value system or any other.

Results

In addition to the focus groups with key stakeholders, four of the Challenging Horizon's program staff members completed acceptability and satisfaction surveys indicating their level of agreement with the training for and overall intended outcomes of the ME-MIMM program. CHP program staff responded favorably as seen in Tables 1 and 2. On the survey, CHP program staff were also asked whether ME-MIM was inappropriate for the classroom setting, and all of the participants strongly disagreed.

Table 1
ME-MIMM Responses from CHP Program Training Survey (N = 4)

	Strongly Agreed
Staff who indicated ME-MIM training topics were:	
▪ Relevant, interesting and timely.	2 (50%)
▪ Culturally familiar.	3 (75%)
▪ Culturally relevant.	3 (75%)
Staff who indicated ME-MIM training was:	
▪ Consistent with expectations.	1 (25%)
▪ Useful in working with the CHP population.	1 (25%)
Staff who indicated ME-MIM training helped to:	
▪ Be a more engaging facilitator.	2 (50%)
▪ Facilitate students' learning through the use of PYMM.	2 (50%)
▪ Increase students' literacy about music's influence.	2 (50%)
▪ Facilitate clarification of students' attitudes, beliefs and choices that may be linked to PYMM through dialogue.	3 (75%)
▪ Increase students' understanding of potential health risks linked to PYMM.	3 (75%)
▪ Facilitate clarification of students' values linked to PYMM.	3 (75%)
▪ Student's identify and share their thoughts and feelings.	4 (100%)

Table 2

ME-MIMM Survey Responses from CHP Program Staff (N = 4)

Staff who agree ME-MIM:	Strongly Agreed
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is a way to build key competence in students. 	4 (100%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Could be offered during the school day to build key competencies in students. 	4 (100%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Is appropriate for classroom instruction and out-of-school enrichment activities (i.e., after school and/or summer enrichment). 	4 (100%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prompts me to think more critically about the messages and themes in PYMM and my own ABCs. 	3 (75%)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Prompts me to think more critically about the messages and themes in PYMM and potential links to youth problem behaviors. 	3 (75%)

The CHP Program Staff were also invited to attend a focus group alongside parents/guardians to discuss the intended outcomes of the ME-MIMM program. Results obtained from parents/guardians and CHP program staff were coded and grouped according to the following two measures: Acceptability and Conditionally

Acceptable/feasible: Parents/guardians and program staff

When parents and guardians were asked whether they believe it is important to integrate culturally relevant, youth-friendly music media as a way to engage students in learning, they elaborated:

“Yes, because you are discussing it [the themes and messages in the music] with them. That’s going to show them that you’re listening to the music and helping them to interpret what it means with that song that they enjoy. Then they’ll have those skills too.”

Parents and guardians specifically discussed what they believe is needed to enable them to feel better prepared to integrate media literacy concepts into parenting or after-school programming:

“I think having an approved catalog of music and new music each semester keeps it fresh; that keeps it coming in as you get newer kids coming in. Their music is going to be newer than 4 years ago when those kids just left the program. So, every kid that comes in can pick their own songs.”

Acceptable/feasible: School administrators

School administrators were asked whether they believe popular music that appeals to you could be used for instructional purposes to engage students and if so, do they believe such an approach could be used to address standards in addition to the

curriculum currently in place. One administrators addressed the use of these methods by commenting:

“I think it’s OK to introduce them to some of our music as well as being open to listening to some of their music and sitting down with them, especially in an English class or a Social Studies class and identify what is being said.”

When asked whether music multimedia would be helpful in addressing particular Common Core standards, a school administrator commented that he believes using music multimedia would be helpful [Note. Select state-adopted, national standards in Computer/Information Technology, ELA, Visual and Performing Arts, Health Education and Social Studies were projected on a screen during the focus group] and elaborated:

“I think Health Education is one. I think it could be a big thing in Health Education just from a lot of the things I saw on your list - Visual and Performing Arts, Social Studies and depending on how it’s used, if the right way, it could encompass both English and the Computer/Information Technology. But, I think the easiest, the low-hanging fruit so to speak would probably be Health, Visual Arts and Social Studies. If done properly, I think you could tie in ELA and Computer and Information Technology.”

Another administrator discussed whether stakeholders (e.g., parents, students, other school administrators, counselors, community members and Program staff) would approve of using popular youth music multimedia for classroom instruction, if the instructional materials are approved prior to implementing in the classroom, stating:

“Well first you’re setting the hook and getting the students interested. And then you design around that. From what I understand you are saying you design the lessons around the music they brought in that they have an interest in. They are engaged in, I mean, we can put some of the best literature in the world in front of them but that doesn’t mean they’re going to read it.”; “If it’s going to engage them, it’s a good thing. We can put all different sorts of stuff in front of them, but that doesn’t mean we’re going to engage them. This is something that’s going to engage them.”

Conditional acceptability: Parents/guardians and program staff

When asked whether the parents/guardians had any concerns about whether such an approach would be effective as part of after-school enrichment programming, responses noted were:

“If you’re going to use their [students’] music, you have to have someone who respects their [students’] music.”

I’m uncomfortable having someone implementing this program without training, because someone without training could be in front of the classroom and insert

their own biases and give their judgment and I don't need somebody to cause conflict with what I'm teaching my child."

Another parent elaborated on her expectation if a teacher or staff person chose to using popular digital music multimedia for parenting or enrichment programming:

"The teacher or staff would have to have a diverse background."

The two school administrators spoke candidly in the one-on-one interviews about the implementation of the ME-MIM in their schools. These data were grouped and coded as "conditionally acceptable." Responses from the school administrators are detailed below.

Conditional acceptability: School administrators

School administrators were asked what they thought the main challenge would be in using popular youth digital music multimedia as instructional material in the classroom.

They elaborated:

"I think choosing the right people to develop is going to be a huge thing.... Where if you select the right people that are interested to begin with, like I said, they have knowledge of young folks; are knowledgeable of the musicians and stuff like that. So I think the selection of who you're with [is important]. I think also the kids that you select to begin with, to work with so that you can be successful and grow that success in a success breeds success kind of thing then you can kind of figure out."

The school administrators were also asked why they thought more teachers do not use popular youth culture and popular youth music entertainment media in classroom instruction, and they responded with the following:

"You may have a 22-year-old African American that went to Dartmouth and Yale that can't relate to these folks at all that are in the CHP and you have a 47-year-old White male that grew up in Orangeburg, South Carolina who has more personal connection with these folks than that. So, I think if you're talking about that kind of background, I think it's someone that can empathize and relate and kind of see where the kids are coming from but I think if you – I almost think that if the person is young, that they might be a better selling point for the kids, especially 12 and 13 year-old kids. If they're young and if they – I have a very minimal background of a lot of these performers, so I think a young person that's more knowledgeable about these folks would better than me."

According to one school administrator, something very specific is needed to enable teachers to feel better prepared to integrate the concept of media literacy into lesson plans and that is:

“Our district is huge and the data, being able to trace what – now if it were for a special class that were offered or some special elective possibly, we have several intervention classes that we have in place right now if that were framed in that purpose that might be a during school time thing. But I think the more – the more data that we would provide especially with like an after-school program or an enrichment program or something like that the better we would have – cause a lot of our programs kind of started that way, but as an intervention program – at risk kids then it might be able to transition to a school day kind of program.”

Discussion

While race and class are sensitive topics for most educators, it is important for those who work with students of color, especially students of African descent, to acknowledge that race does matter to many of those living at the crossroads of race and poverty in the United States. This acknowledgment may go a long way to establish a credible relationship with youth who are stigmatized and marginalized based on their socio-economic background. Some black youth growing up in poverty may not be willing or able to engage in formal or informal learning that does not account for the role that race, culture and ideology play in public schooling.

Based on a review of the literature, there is no empirically-supported positive youth development (PYD) model that meets the following four important criteria: (1) involves more than one social domain (e.g., family, peer, school, community, culture); (2) demonstrates measurable improvements in promoting five key competencies and state adopted common core standards; (3) combines multi-sensory instruction techniques (i.e., critical listening, close reading, and critical viewing); and (4) uses popular digital youth multimedia to deliver culturally-relevant pedagogy. Findings from this study fill a gap in the literature about evidence-based intervention development and deployment that focuses specifically on building competencies aligned with positive youth development (PYD). Knowledge gained from this theory-driven approach to intervention development and deployment will be used to guide more action research as this study documents many of the nuances of a learner-centered, culturally responsive approach to improve the teaching and learning experience during middle and high school for youth of color living in poverty.

Facilitating academic and social success in schools is largely dependent upon access to a culturally-relevant curriculum and having educators who are prepared to address the themes and messages in music in a respectful manner. If facilitating academic and social success in school is the goal, a key factor impacting successful adoption of the proposed approach is facilitator readiness via teacher education or professional development with a focus on training. The facilitator, whether it be a teacher or program staff, must be properly trained. This training would be significantly enhanced if guided by evaluation data. This training should also be in accordance with manualized procedures and protocol, including specified outcomes and fidelity measures to ensure the approach is implemented as intended. Stakeholders in this study were pleased to know that the proposed approach addresses state-adopted standards of learning, however, indicated that there would need to be more explicit

emphasis on teaching pedagogy to give facilitators the opportunity to become comfortable and proficient using PYMM for instruction or engagement purposes.

Clearer articulation of the values that are promoted in ME-MIM was cited as a condition for its acceptability among key stakeholders in this study. We know from the literature that adolescents must develop a personal value system that bodes with their emerging self-identity, especially their sexual identity (Potter, Schliskey, Stevenson & Drawdy, 2001), however, this value system is not developed in a vacuum. Caring adults must play a role, hence parents and staff involvement in the selection and approval of the PYMM for instructional purposes is critical. One example cited was the creation of a database of songs that have been tagged according to the themes and messages in the song. This recommendation aligns with data obtained from teachers (see Author and Smith, 2016) and is strongly encouraged in future studies of ME:MIM.

Popular youth music presents contrasting values, many of which conflict with those upheld in public schools. While PYMM will surely engage students, its use presents certain challenges when used to promote academic, behavioral, emotional, moral and social competencies toward the goal of enriching existing curriculum or instruction. As noted in the literature review, Weissberg & Sivo (1989) urged that competence be viewed and measured in research studies as a stand-alone developmental outcome. Competence can be specified and measured independently serving as its own outcome.

Parents/Guardians expressed a desire to be involved in the selection of music that would be used for enrichment, curriculum or instructional purposes. Securing their buy-in as key stakeholders can serve as the foundation upon which additional training and implementation considerations can be assessed. In addition, parents want to be assured that facilitators are respectful of cultural differences, hence they want to know that anyone involved in using PYMM for enrichment, curriculum or instructional purposes receives training in cultural sensitivity, particularly as it relates to values and morality. Values are often associated with morality and an infusion of morality in ME:MIM is aligned with what Piaget and Cook (1952) described as working toward moral maturity, which is both a *respect for rules* and a sense of *social justice*.

The most appropriate time of day to implement such an approach is a key feasibility concern. After-school and summer enrichment programs tend to be more feasible and acceptable to key stakeholders. Programs that help kids connect with a traditional school model can provide additional support to students whose schools and districts either lack the resources or desire to make necessary curriculum changes. An advantage of after-school and summer enrichment programs is that this programming can reach students who have not received earlier interventions. These are all reasons that support after school or summer programming in a service-learning context.

Additional perspectives

Equally important in this discussion is the inclusion of data that indicate a lack of acceptability by key stakeholders. An adolescents' maturity level is a key consideration when using PYMM, given the salacious and objectionable content of commercially popular music. Similar concerns were noted by program staff who indicated that the proposed approach is developmentally inappropriate for 6th grade students.

Empirically validated measures of student achievement, school connectedness, and literacy will enable key stakeholders the opportunity to continue assessing the potential of competency-based education that is engaging to today's youth. Based on findings in this study, efforts to engage students that integrate popular youth culture while emphasizing competency may be a bridge for culturally responsive teaching and learning that may could increase school connectedness, and engagement. According to key stakeholder's comments, such an approach could also provide context for dialogue about health, safety and school climate, particularly with regard to acquiring and internalizing key attitudes and belief required for school success.

Based on findings from this study, parents/guardians, youth serving professionals, and school administrators agree that students behave, think, and feel based on their respective cultural frames of reference or the "cultural world" in which they exist. The "cultural worlds" of these stakeholders may differ for a variety of reasons including age, socioeconomic background, racialized ideology or political persuasion, to name a few. Some young people struggle with the transition from the home and community supports to school, and it may prove instructive to acknowledge the role of culture and cultural difference, as well as the biases that often accompany these cultural frame of reference.

Popular youth culture and popular youth music multimedia, in particular, are examples where attitudes, beliefs, behaviors and language communication are codified and may constitute the content of many urban young people's cultural frame of reference. This is likely given the data indicating minority youth whose parents have less formal education are consuming more entertainment media compared to their white peers (Rideout et al., 2010). Given that PYMM is individually consumed and frequently shared via social media, it is entirely likely that the attitudes, behaviors, and language expressions therein may become and reflect the cultural frame of reference of those who consume it, especially heavy consumers.

Ensuring that the cultural frame of reference of a subordinate group is not stigmatized by the dominant group is controversial, but perhaps should be a goal in a culturally responsive approach to addressing minority student achievement through service-learning. This does not mean that dialogue about divergent points of view cannot exist. For example, school personnel and other adults who support youth in formal and informal learning settings must be culturally sensitive and highly attuned to the appearance of judging the attitudes, behaviors, and language expressions reflected in PYMM. The perception by youth that their music is negative would likely result in the proposed use of it being rejected by parents, as well as young people. When an individual's cultural frame of reference differs or is viewed as oppositional, it tends to result in cultural discontinuity, especially if this is the case with school personnel and the student or his or her family. Regrettably, such discontinuity contributes to the teaching and learning experience and may impact student achievement, school adjustment, and even contribute to the low self-esteem and trajectory of poor health by those who may drop out of school due to lack of being engaged or connected.

School administrators, parents/guardians and program staff recognize the need for new approaches to teaching and learning that include more emphasis on culture, with relevancy and responsiveness as key objectives. Music has the potential to capture the attention and emotion of people of all ages, regardless of their differences. ME:MIM

or similar pedagogical approaches to teaching and learning offer real possibilities to effectively engage students given that it incorporates autonomy, relatedness and the ability to demonstrate competence, in addition to be culturally-relevant, culturally-responsive and culturally-familiar. Buy-in from key stakeholders is a necessary prerequisite for adoption of these new approaches.

Next steps and future research

This study provides initial evidence for the acceptability and feasibility of the proposed approach to teaching and learning for enrichment and instructional purposes. Clearly, more 'data' or 'evidence' is needed. A logical next step is to address some of the conditions noted by these three stakeholder groups and to delve deeper into the dimensions of culture as a construct integral to this intervention.

A goal in a future research scenario is to determine the effectiveness of the intervention that can be assessed by measurable changes in the five competencies. It could also be helpful to ascertain whether each module, and the activities or lesson plans for each module, results in any change or if it is the cumulative effect of being exposed to more than one module that matters. Determining the effectiveness of smaller components of the intervention will yield important information that will be useful in future research scenarios. Next steps for *ME-MIM* will follow the general guidelines outlined in Kern, Evans and Lewis (2011): *Phase I – initial intervention development*. The purpose of Phase I was to modify and refine *ME-MIM* based on preliminary studies so that this intervention reflects an appreciation of PYC, cultural norms in PYMM and skillful facilitation of Socratic dialogue to engage youth (and families) in discussion that my highlight cultural differences between school and out of school norms as it relates to language, ideology, values and communication. *Phase II – preparation for intervention*. In this phase, the following key question will be addressed: 1) 'what is needed to be fully prepared to implement *ME-MIM*?' In *Phase III – implementation, feedback and revision*, *ME-MIM* will be further refined to specifically evaluate the training needed for implementation with integrity. The specific question to be addressed in this phase is 'can practitioners implement *ME-MIM* with integrity?' In *Phase IV –intervention refinement*, the identification of outcome measures to assess desired change will be finalized. During this phase, a review of the literature regarding proximal and distal measures for assessing behavioral change associated with the ten themes will be assessed. During *Phase V – further refinement with a divergent sample* a trial using an intervention package with a larger and more diverse sample will be undertaken. This will enable further refinement of the intervention with detailed attention on each activity within each module. The specific research question during *Phase VI* is, *What intervention revisions are necessary to accommodate different populations and settings?*

Perhaps, an important next step toward addressing the minority achievement gap is for young people and the adults who support them in school and community settings to acknowledge the pervasive role of popular culture in the lives of adolescents, especially the implications this may have in schooling and education. Perhaps, it is also time to face the fact that cultural differences and America's dark past may be preventing key stakeholders from crossing the cultural boundaries required to improve educational

achievement, reduce school adjustment difficulties, and improve the health trajectories of those at higher risk for adverse outcomes that may be linked maladaptive health behavior. The earlier these matters are addressed the better, but perhaps, the transition from middle to high school is an appropriate time to have these discussions given that so much is at stake.

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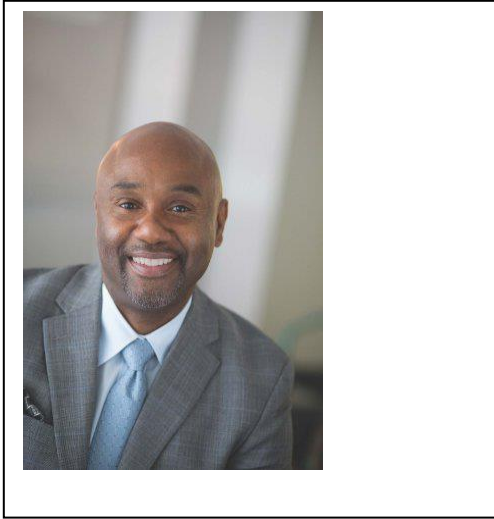
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Psychology of Poverty: Attitude Change Via Service-Learning

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Introduction

Research has detailed the deleterious psychological and physiological effects of living in poverty, including elevated risk for anxiety and depression (Santiago, Wadsworth, & Stump, 2009), low birth weight (Parker, Schoendorf, & Kiely, 1994) and obesity (McLaren, 2007), making poverty not only an economic problem, but also a major public health issue. At the same time, research has demonstrated that efforts to combat poverty are inextricably linked to empathy for the impoverished and support for social programs to fight poverty (Cozzarelli, Wilkinson, & Tagler, 2001). Service-learning may provide psychology educators with a mechanism for not only sharing the scholarship of poverty with students, but challenging their own beliefs and stereotypes. The goal of the current research was to test the effectiveness of service-learning as a tool of attitude change.

Poverty and Social Attitudes

In 2014, more than 47 million Americans lived in poverty, based on the official formula used by the US Census Bureau to define the poverty line (Short, 2015). Highest rates of poverty were found among children (21.5%), African-Americans (26.4%), non-citizen residents (24.3%), and the disabled (28.5%). If measured using the Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM), a measure designed to address weaknesses in the official poverty measure developed by Mollie Orshansky in the 1960s (Iceland, 2013), the poverty rate increases from 14.8% to 15.3%, more than 48.4 million Americans.

In addition to a lack of resources, people who live in poverty face enormous psychological and physiological challenges (Haushofer & Fehr, 2014). Children raised in poverty have an elevated risk of socioemotional difficulties and poor academic performance (McLoyd, 1998). For example, Evans and English (2002) found that children raised in poverty showed higher levels of physiological stress, had more difficulty delaying gratification, and scored lower on measures of physiological stress than their middle-income peers.

ABSTRACT

The goal of the current study was to test the effectiveness of service-learning on attitudes toward poverty. Students enrolled in a senior level capstone course at a liberal arts college completed a standard measure of poverty attitudes at the beginning and the end of the semester, during which, they completed thirty hours of community service at agencies serving the urban poor. The participants showed significant increases in sympathetic attitudes on three of six dimensions of attitudes toward poverty. These findings suggest that the combination of traditional academic study and personal exposure to poverty and the poor may produce changes in attitudes toward poverty.

People who live in poverty face such a higher risk of mental and physical health disorders that Sapolsky (2004) called poverty “the biggest risk factor there is in all of behavioral medicine (p. 366).” Schulz et al. (2012) found that neighborhood poverty was a strong predictor of allostatic load, even after accounting for variation in household poverty and demographics. Moreover, the neighborhood poverty/health link was mediated by neighborhood environmental stress (e.g., gang activity, pollution) rather than health-related behaviors. Indeed, poverty poses such a great risk to health that the American Academy of Pediatrics now advises physicians to employ screening tools to identify children at high-risk of poverty-related disorders (AAP Council on Community Pediatrics, 2016).

Those who do not live in poverty are largely blind to the issue, due, in part, to the economic and social segregation of the classes. In fact, Lott (2002) argued that the dominant responses to poverty, cognitive and behavioral distancing, reinforce classism in contemporary American society. While a 2014 Wall Street Journal/NBC News poll found that Americans were as likely to attribute poverty to a lack of effort among the poor as they were to circumstances beyond their control (O’Connor, 2014), research has demonstrated that a people from a higher social class are viewed more positively than those from a lower social class (Lott, 2012) and those attitudes are strongly related to attributions for the causes of poverty (Cozzarelli, et al., 2001) and support for anti-poverty programs (Tighe, 2012).

Service-Learning

If building support for anti-poverty programs depends on changing social attitudes, social scientists should consider ways to change these attitudes. Service-learning may be one such route to social change. Pedagogical research has revealed that service-learning has benefits for students beyond traditional academic learning (Conway, Amel, & Gerwein, 2009; Celio, Durlak, & Dymnicki, 2011; Yorio & Ye, 2012). In a meta-analysis of 78 studies, Conway, et al. (2009) found that service-learning improved personal, social, and citizenship outcomes, in addition to academic and learning outcomes. For example, Bernacki & Jaeger (2008) found that, compared to students enrolled in non-service-learning courses, students enrolled in service-learning courses felt that they understood social problems better, had a greater efficacy to make the world a better place, and had a greater ability to be compassionate. In addition, students enrolled in a developmental psychology course earned higher exam scores and displayed greater empathy if they completed a service-learning project rather than writing a paper or completing an interview project (Lundy, 2008).

Attitudes toward out-group members have also been influenced by service-learning experiences. For example, Burns, Stoery, & Certo (1999) found that high school students who worked alongside developmentally disabled students on a community service project showed more tolerant attitudes toward the developmentally disabled than those who did not. Students who completed a service-learning project at a prison reported a greater understanding of their own power and privilege as well as increased awareness of their own stereotypes of inmates and prisons (Meyer, et al., 2016).

The goal of the current study was to investigate the effects of service-learning on attitudes toward poverty. Students enrolled in a senior level psychology course completed 30 hours of community service with the underprivileged while studying poverty in a traditional university classroom environment. I expected that students would have more positive attitudes toward poverty at the end of the semester than at the beginning of the semester. Another concern that I will address is student attitude towards the class itself. Such information is of interest to instructors who may be interested in replicating this course but also contextualizes the attitude change data.

The Classroom Setting

In the spring of 2016, I offered *Psychology of Poverty* as a liberal studies senior capstone course. Completion of a senior capstone course is a requirement for graduation, but students are free to choose from options across the university. Students who enrolled in the course were notified of the service-learning requirements at the time of registration so those who were uninterested in or unable to complete 30 hours of community service could register for a different course.

I worked with local agencies serving the underprivileged to provide students with choices that varied in the services provided, which included a local office of the US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants (USCRI), one of two after school programs serving children from low-income families, a food bank, and a reintegration program for recently released criminal offenders. This allowed for a variety in the populations served, student preferences, and accessibility to the campus/travel time. Most of the students volunteered at more than one location with each location having 5-6 students. Students working in the after school programs helped underprivileged children with their homework and played games. Students working at the food bank organized and sorted donations from the community for distribution to local food pantries and soup kitchens. Student working at with the USCRI visited recently placed families to assess their progress and identify areas of assistance. Each site visit lasted at 1-2 hours and involved a debriefing with an official at the USCRI. Students working in the rehabilitation program facilitated a re-entry program to help recently released offenders learn skills such as how to calculate a budget, make economic decisions, and complete a job application.

The primary text for the course was *Poverty In America: A Handbook* (Iceland, 2013). I supplemented the text with academic reports on poverty and empirical articles on the psychology of poverty published in peer-reviewed journals. The articles were chosen to stimulate discussion about a variety of poverty-related topics, including attitudes toward poverty (Lott, 2002; Loughnan, Haslam, Sutton, & Spencer, 2014), health (Shulz, et al., 2009), human development (Bradley & Corwyn, 2002), education (Burney & Beilke, 2008), cognition (Hackman, Farah, & Meaney, 2010), and decision-making (Haushofer & Fehr, 2014). Classroom contact hours were reduced by 10 hours to offset the 30-hour service-learning requirement. Students wrote weekly journal entries reflecting on the course material and their service activities. At the end of the semester, students wrote a research paper connecting the element of poverty addressed by their community service to the scholarly articles they read and discussed in class.

Method

Participants

Eighteen students (67% female) enrolled in a senior capstone course at a Catholic liberal arts university in the Northeast U.S. completed the service-learning project and assessment questions as part of the course requirements. Poverty attitude data from one participant was excluded due to a failure to complete the pre-test questions. One student did not complete the end of the semester course evaluations. Additional demographic data were not collected to protect the anonymity of the students.

Materials and Procedure

During the first week (pre-test) and the last week (post-test) of the semester, all participants completed the Undergraduate Perceptions of Poverty Tracking Survey (UPPTS; Blair, Brown, Schoepflin, & Taylor, 2014), a measure of undergraduate attitudes towards poverty. The measures were completed online at a time and place of the student's choosing. The thirty-nine item measure is composed of six sub-scales assessing attitudes about welfare programs (WA; e.g., "Welfare makes people lazy"), the degree to which the poor are perceived to be different from the non-poor (PD; e.g., "Poor people act differently"), willingness to do more for the poor (DM; e.g., "Society has a responsibility to help the poor"), beliefs that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed (EQ; e.g., "The poor have the same opportunities for success as everyone else"), beliefs in basic rights to food, clothing, and shelter (FR; e.g., "Everyone regardless of circumstances should have a place to live"), and beliefs that the poor had limited access to important resources (LR; e.g., "Lack of child care is a major challenge for the poor"). The responses were scored on a 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 5 (*agree strongly*) scale, with higher scores denoting greater agreement. I averaged the items to create two composite scores (pre-test and post-test) for each of the subscales: WA (pre: $\alpha = .54$, post: $\alpha = .71$), PD (pre: $\alpha = .77$, post: $\alpha = .82$), DM (pre: $\alpha = .74$, post: $\alpha = .79$), EQ (pre: $\alpha = .86$, post: $\alpha = .71$), FR (pre: $\alpha = .79$, post: $\alpha = .82$), and LR (pre: $\alpha = .88$, post: $\alpha = .85$).

In addition, during the final week of the semester, students completed a standard in-class course evaluation completed by every class in the university. Students were asked to evaluate the effectiveness of specific course elements, including the effectiveness of the instructor, as well as their overall interest in the course on a 1 to 5 Likert-type scale. Students were also provided open-ended questions to provide more detailed feedback.

Results

I expected that participants would show more positive attitudes about poverty at the end of the semester. To test this hypothesis, I submitted each pair of pre-test/post-test composites to a paired-samples *t*-test (see Table 1). There were no significant

changes in perceptions of differences between the poor and the non-poor, $t < 1$, $p > .73$, and beliefs about basic rights, $t < 1$, $p > .45$. However, at the end of the semester, participants had more positive attitudes towards social welfare programs, $t(16) = -5.48$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.33$, expressed greater support for taking action to help the poor, $t(16) = -2.45$, $p < .03$, $d = 0.59$, and more strongly believed that the poor had limited access to important resources, $t(16) = -2.73$, $p < .02$, $d = .66$. An unexpected increase in the belief that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed also emerged, $t(16) = -5.14$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.24$.

Table 1. *Descriptive Statistics and t-test Results for UPPTS*

Outcome	Pre-test		Post-test		$t(16)$	p	95% CI		Cohen's d
	M	SD	M	SD			LL	UL	
WA	3.19	0.49	3.59	0.47	-5.48	<.001	-0.55	-0.25	1.33
PD	4.14	0.54	4.09	0.61	0.34	.736	-0.23	0.32	0.08
DM	4.21	0.49	4.52	0.45	-2.45	.026	-0.57	-0.04	0.59
EQ	3.47	0.84	4.06	0.67	-5.14	<.001	-0.84	-0.35	1.24
FR	4.81	0.32	4.90	0.33	-0.77	.452	-0.33	0.15	0.19
LR	4.24	0.80	4.81	0.35	-2.73	.015	-1.02	-0.13	0.66

Note. CI = confidence interval; LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit; WA = attitudes about welfare programs; PD = perceptions that the poor is different from the non-poor; DM = willingness to do more for the poor; EQ = belief that everyone has an equal opportunity to succeed; FR = belief in basic rights; LR = belief that poor have limited access to resources.

At the end of the semester, students generally had positive feelings about the course. When asked to rate their “level of interest” in the course on a 1 (*not at all interested*) to 5 (*very interested*) scale, students express strong interest, $M = 4.59$ ($SD = 0.71$). The effectiveness of the “field trips/site visits,” measured on a 1 (*ineffective*) to 5 (*effective*) scale received a perfect rating, $M = 5$. Students also endorsed the effectiveness of the “textbook” and the “supplementary materials/handouts,” $M = 4.25$ ($SD = 1.06$) and $M = 4.76$ ($SD = 0.56$), respectively. Students also rated the “overall quality of the course” and their “overall learning experience” as excellent, $M = 5$ and $M = 4.92$ ($SD = 0.28$), respectively.

Discussion

Eighteen students enrolled in a senior capstone course completed a measure of poverty attitudes at the beginning and the end of a hybrid course that included both traditional lecture and discussion and a service-learning component. The results provided mixed support for the hypothesis that the combination of direct exposure to and academic study of poverty would result in more positive attitudes toward poverty. At the end of the semester, the students had more positive attitudes toward social welfare programs, expressed a greater willingness to take or support action to help those living

in poverty, and more strongly believed that those living in poverty had limited access to important resources. However, there were no changes in perceptions of differences between the poor and non-poor and beliefs about the right to the basic necessities of life, and there was an unexpected increase in the belief that all people have an equal opportunity to succeed in life. Data from the course evaluations indicates that the students generally found the service-learning component effective and believed the overall learning experience was effective. These findings supplement the extant research on the benefits of service-learning and provide educators with a valuable instructional tool to apply the science of psychology to an important social issue.

Despite thirty hours of direct contact with poverty and low-income individuals, there were no changes in perceptions of differences between the poor and non-poor. This suggests that the in-group/out-group boundary was unaffected by service-learning. There are two elements of the service-learning that may have limited the opportunity for intergroup learning. Research on the contact hypothesis has demonstrated that intergroup contact has a stronger effect on intergroup attitudes when the both groups are of equal status and the contact involves intergroup cooperation (Pettigrew, Tropp, Wagner, & Christ, 2011). First, none of the service-learning projects involved direct contact with individuals of similar social status. The students worked with elementary school-aged children, recently released criminal offenders, and impoverished refugees who spoke little English. In addition, none of the projects involved intergroup cooperation. The students were serving, rather than working alongside, the low-income people. A service-learning project involving cooperation may have led to more positive attitudes. For example, Burns, et al. (1999) found more positive attitudes toward the developmentally disabled among high school students who worked alongside their developmentally disabled peers on a group service project than a control group that served developmentally disabled students.

Similarly, there was no change in the beliefs about basic rights. The pre-test mean for this subscale was near the high point of the scale. With such strong pre-existing support for the right to the basic necessities of life, there was no room for improvement at the end of the semester.

The increase in the belief that all people have an equal opportunity to succeed in life was also unexpected. The pre-test mean for this variable was above the midpoint of the scale, suggesting general agreement before the course began. It is possible that exposure to the organizations and individuals dedicated to fighting poverty confirmed—rather than challenged—their pre-existing belief that the opportunity to succeed is equal for everyone.

It is also worth noting that, on the whole, responses to open-ended questions on the course evaluations indicated positive attitudes about the service-learning component. When asked what they liked “best about the course”, ten students mentioned this requirement. For example, “It gave me an appreciation of how my work can influence others” and “Forces you to go out of your comfort zone and serve”. Only two students indicated that the service was what they liked “least about the course” and only three students suggested reducing the number of required service hours.

Limitations and Future Directions

Given that all of the students participated in both the lecture/discussion lessons and the service-learning component, it is not possible to ascertain the degree to which the changes in attitudes are due to the community service. It is possible that similar changes would have been observed in a lecture-only section of the course.

The sampling method is another methodological limitation. While all students must take a capstone course in their final year, they can choose from a variety of courses across the university. If students were reluctant to enroll due to a lack of interest in the topic and/or an aversion to service-learning, the pro-social motivation of the sample may be significantly greater than that of the undergraduate population. People who display greater pro-social motivation tend to be higher in agreeableness (Graziano, Habashi, Sheese, & Tobin, 2007), a personality trait negatively associated with social dominance orientation and prejudice (Sibley & Duckitt, 2008).

Notably missing from the attitude measures were a measure of attitudes toward the poor and a measure of the attributions for poverty. Individuals who have more favorable attitudes toward the poor are more likely to attribute poverty to structural causes rather than individual failings (Cozzarelli, et al., 2001) and are more likely to support efforts to fight poverty (Tighe, 2012). While the service-learning appeared to increase support for efforts to fight poverty, it remains unclear if such personal exposure to poverty and the poor would similarly change beliefs about the causes of poverty and attitudes toward the poor.

Additionally, the sample size was too small to do individual analyses according to the populations being served. While all were under-privileged, it is likely that experiences varied by agency as well as the type of people being served. Future directions for this research may investigate how working with immigrants, or children, or adults might affect student outcomes.

Conclusion

Psychological research has consistently showed that the benefits of service-learning extend far beyond traditional academic learning outcomes (Conway, et. al, 2009; Celio, et. al, 2011; Yorio & Ye, 2012). These results of the current study demonstrate that combining service-learning with traditional classroom lecture can be used to promote more positive attitudes about a pressing social issue – poverty. Future research should explore how different types of service-learning contact can influence different dimensions of attitudes and the degree to which service-learning can be used to confront other pressing social issues, such as immigration and criminal justice reform.

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Engaging Students through Service-Learning in a Professional Nursing Course

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Introduction

Faculty are faced with numerous challenges in engaging the learner to successful graduation and practice. With the national call to educate more nurses at the baccalaureate level by 2020 in meeting the complex health care needs of society, faculty must find a way to bridge the gap to practice (Institute of Medicine of the National Academies, 2010). Service-learning is a learner-centered way to recruit, educate, and graduate future nurses. Service-learning takes the classroom to the community in practicing competencies. Community service-learning partnerships strengthen the connection between education and real-life world experience and offers opportunities for recruitment in diverse populations (Finley & McNair, 2013; Hatcher & Bringle, 2012). Partnering with community agencies help facilitate active learning. Active or experimental learning requires the students to be engaged in their learning process by thinking about what and why they are doing the learning (Bonwell & Eison, 1991). Service-learning offers faculty active learning strategies which can be implemented outside the classroom to assist students to apply what they are learning (Kuh, 2008).

Active Learning through Service-Learning

As faculty search for strategies to engage students in the learning process, active learning strategies have proven an effective way to optimize student learning. The American Association of Colleges of Nursing (ACCN, 2009) outlines service-learning activities as example of active learning strategies in preparing the baccalaureate nurse. Active learning involves students learning in many ways such as discussions, critiquing, problem-solving, peer-tutoring, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation. Service-learning incorporates these active learning strategies

ABSTRACT

Service-learning has been documented in the literature as an effective way to learn professional skills. The aim of the study is to promote active learning and compare students' satisfaction in service-learning activities and computer-based learning activities in a professional nursing course. In learning professional nursing concepts, 54% (n=43, N=79) of the students participated in service-learning activities with local high school students in an Allied Health class while 45.56% (n=36, N=79) of the students chose computer-based learning activities.

Through student surveys and reflection journals, the findings revealed service-learning activities and computer-based learning activities as effective strategies in learning professional nursing concepts. Comparing student responses on the surveys and reflective journals, students who participated in service-learning activities had higher percentage of ratings of agreement with service-learning helping them to increase self-

both inside and outside the classroom while assisting the student to create their own learning environment (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). Students who have ownership for their learning are the ones that actually learn (Kuh, Kinzie, Schuh, & Whitt, 2011; Kuh, 2008; Bonwell & Eison, 1991).

Service-learning has been defined as an organized learning activity which meets both academic and community objectives and (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999). In service-learning opportunities, students learn by “doing” activities or using a hands-on approach in the community. Research has shown that the many elements of service-learning can promote the student’s decision to engage in active learning processes (Simonet, 2008). A meta-analysis of 62 service-learning studies by Celio, Durlak, and Dymnicki (2011) revealed significant evidence documenting the value of service-learning activities on students’ attitudes, civic and community involvement, social and leadership skills, and positive academic performance. Service-learning activities have been touted as one of the “keys” to academic retention and success by offering a way to make learning come alive in real-life application experiences.

Service-Learning Partnerships

To meet the call in educating a diverse and highly educated workforce, nurse educators must reach out to partners who are representative of the population as a whole in preparing nurses for meeting the challenging health care needs of the community. Partnerships in the community means reciprocity where each partner shares and contributes to the process (Hoebeker, McCullough, Cagle, & Clair, 2009). Service-learning opportunities offer meaningful experiences for skill learning which combine both education and community service goals (Groh, Stallwood, & Daniels, 2011). In the service-learning partnership, the students and community partners both serve in the dual roles as teachers and learners. Each partner benefits from the service-learning activities.

As faculty develop partnerships in the community, both parties are able to jointly plan activities for action and reflect on the experience. Service-learning offers an effective way to enhance learning by having student nurses teach information they are learning to others (Bentley & Ellison, 2005). Active partnerships focus on the how, why, and whom to engage in the processes and purpose of the learning activities in the community (Seifer & Conners, 2007).

For this project, nursing students were given to opportunity to select service-learning or computer-based learning activities for four professional nursing concepts during the coursework. The students who chose service-learning were partnered with high school students in learning professional nursing concepts. The community partners chosen were local high schools who had Allied Health programs. High school students in the Allied Health program attend classes which help prepare them for a healthcare career. These sites are fertile ground for recruiting a diverse healthcare workforce. The high school students are yearning to hear from someone close to their age who can provide valuable insight into college life and possible careers. Allied Health teachers are also looking for ways to excite and engage their students in learning healthcare career concepts. The local high school students in the Allied Health programs selected mirror the community and provide a background for future healthcare workers. High

school students search for affirmation and encouragement and nursing students are the ideal group for reaching future nurses.

Student Reflection

Students who participate in service-learning have an opportunity to reflect on the activity and how the learning meets their professional and personal goals (Kuh, 2008; Jacoby, 2014). Reflection requires the learner to participate in higher-order thinking (Ash, Clayton, & Atkinson, 2005). Journaling the service-learning activities are a way to self-assess one's attitudes, beliefs, and values about the learning process. Through reflection, students look at their experience through different lens answering specific designed questions to assist them in connecting the dots between service-learning activities and meeting classroom objectives (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999).

Methods

This research study examined the nursing students' satisfaction with service-learning activities as compared to computer-based learning activities in a professional nursing course. The goals of this research study were: (1) to engage first semester nursing students in service-learning activities through partnering with local high schools students to learn professional nursing concepts and (2) measure students' perception of satisfaction in learning professional nursing concepts through selected learning activities.

Participants

The population consisted of 79 junior nursing students who were enrolled in first semester professional nursing concepts course in a baccalaureate nursing program. Three cohorts of students participated in the study by volunteering in specified learning activities: service-learning or computer-based. The service-learning activities group consisted of 54.43% (n=43, N=79) of the students working with local high school students in an Allied Health class as community partners. There were 45.56% (n=36, N=79) of the students who chose the computer-based learning activities.

The pool of students participating in service-learning activities was largely female and Caucasian with an average age of 21.34 years. The pool of students who chose computer-based learning activities was also largely female and Caucasian with an average age of 21.64 years. Permission to conduct the study was obtained from the University's Institutional Research Board for the protection of human subjects. This study was conducted at a public college of nursing in the southeastern part of the United States.

Two local high schools with Allied Health Programs were chosen as the community partners with one high school located in a rural setting and the other high school in the inner city. Allied Health instructors were given an opportunity to select nursing concepts for class presentations by the nursing students from a list provided by the nursing faculty. Allied Health instructors from each high school participated in the planning and evaluation of the service-learning project.

Measures

The research project was a mixed method study. Quantitative data were collected using a nursing student survey while qualitative data were collected through reflection journals. The nursing student survey was a seven-item questionnaire which used a five point Likert scale (agreed to disagree) to measure student satisfaction in the selected learning activities. The nursing student survey was developed using a review of service-learning literature and project goals (Bender, 2008; Hatcher & Bringle, 2012). The student survey was also designed to elicit responses regarding demographic data of age, gender, and ethnic group. The same student survey was used for those selecting either service-learning activities or computer based learning activities with only the name for the specific learning activity changed for the appropriate group. Survey questions related to whether the service-learning activities or computer based activities helped to apply academic content to real-world, meet the course objectives, increase self-confidence, make class more interesting, make a positive contribution to the community, and if the student would recommend these activities to others and liked the activities. The survey showed internal consistency or reliability with a statistical value of 0.69 (Cronbach's α).

The reflection journal assignment focused on observation, analysis, and synthesis of self-awareness, self-improvement, and empowerment (Hatcher & Bringle, 2012). The exercise provided valuable self-assessment into one's attitudes, beliefs, and values. Writing in a journal was part of the reflection process in both learning activities groups. The journal writing assignment consisted of five questions developed by the researcher to guide the nursing student in the reflection process. After each learning activity, students were asked to describe in a written format: (1) the learning activity, (2) the experience in terms of role and response of the high school students, (3) concepts learned, (4) personal opinions/feelings about the learning activity, and (5) suggestions for improvement of self or others.

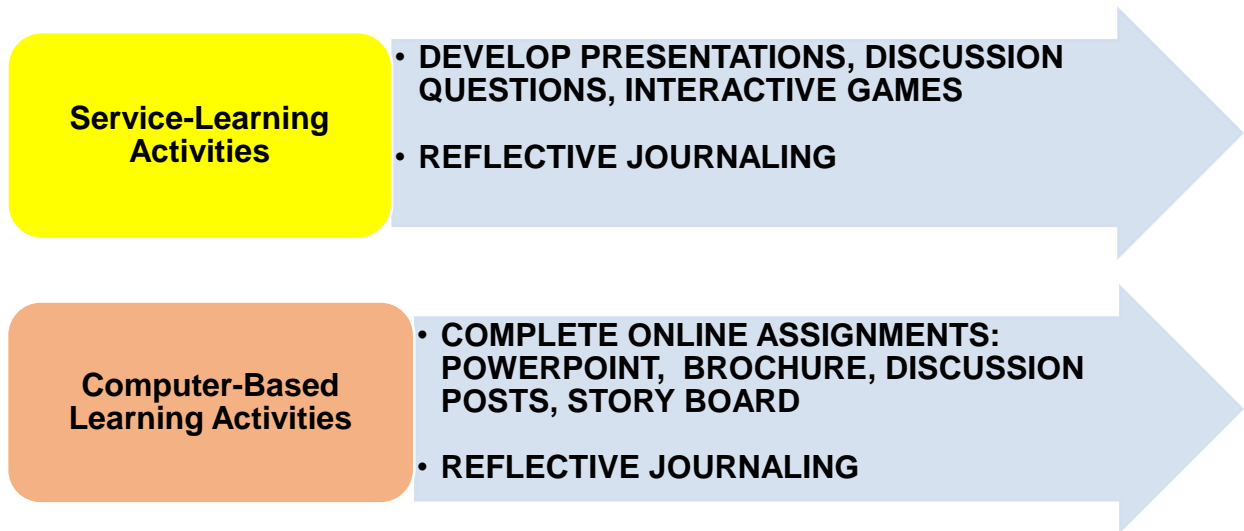
Procedures

In a first semester professional nursing course, students were offered the opportunity to choose either service-learning activities or computer-based learning activities as part of the normal course requirements. Students were required to stay in the same learning activities for the entire semester. Once the students chose the type of learning activities, guidelines for the activities and contact information were distributed to the students. The faculty member was available in class, by phone, or email to answer any questions. Site visits to the high school were made by the faculty member at the beginning of the service-learning activities to assist in initiating the partnership.

Nursing students participated in the study by selecting either service-learning activities or computer-based learning activities. Learning activities focused on professional nursing concepts as outlined in the course syllabus. Concepts ranged from nursing history, professional self-care, nursing theory, patient teaching, evidence-based practice, informatics, healthcare delivery system, legal, and ethical issues. Nursing students did not receive a course grade for the activities as these learning activities were part of class assignments for engaging in the learning process.

Figure 1 depicts the activities for the two groups: service-learning and computer based learning. At the end of the course, nursing students were asked to complete the student survey for the respective learning activities: service-learning or computer-based. The surveys were collected and grouped according to specific learning activities and all statistical analyses were performed using SPSS Statistics 22 IBM package. Descriptive statistics were used to characterize the demographic data and examine the survey items.

Figure 1 Learning Activities for Service-Learning and Computer Based



Service-Learning Activities

The nursing students who chose to complete service-learning activities were given an opportunity to select a community partner from an approved list. The faculty member worked with the local high school Allied Health instructor in selecting service-learning activity dates and professional nursing concepts for presentations by the nursing students. Nursing students who chose service-learning activities worked in groups to prepare and deliver presentations on the professional nursing concepts. The students were encouraged to develop active learning strategies. Nursing students developed PowerPoints, pre and post-tests, case-studies, games, and prizes to share with the high-school students during the presentations. Some of the games included Hang-man, Jeopardy, Who Wants to be a Millionaire, puzzles, and word search. Other active learning strategies included group work, discussion, question and answer sessions. Guidelines with contact information were distributed to the nursing students. The nursing faculty was available to answer questions about developing and presenting the activities to the high school students.

Computer-Based Learning Activities

Nursing students who chose computer-based learning activities focused on online assignments. These learning activities consisted of the same professional nursing content as the other nursing student group with specific assigned learning activities by the faculty member. Computer based activities consisted of developing a storyboard, PowerPoint, teaching brochure, and participating in online discussion board related to the professional nursing concepts. Once the nursing students completed the computer-based learning activities, the students posted the assignments to the online learning site for other students in the course to view. The faculty member in the nursing course was available through the online learning site, email, and phone for students' questions.

Reflection Journals

All students in both learning groups were asked to reflect after each activity by describing the topic, role, and response of the learning activity presentation in a written journal. Other parts of the reflection journal were description of concepts learned, personal opinions/feelings about the learning activity, and any suggestions for improvement from self or others. The faculty member discussed with the nursing students the importance of journaling as a way to think about what one does and learns. Guidelines for journal reflection writing were given to students. The journal could be handwritten or typed and submitted to the nursing faculty for viewing only for research purposes. Names nor grades were associated with the journal writings.

Discussion

A total of 61 nursing student surveys were analyzed and the percentage of students' agreement responses for both learning groups on the surveys can be found in Table 1. More nursing students (63.93%, n=39, N=61) chose service-learning than computer-based learning activities (36.06%, n=22, N=61) and completed the learning activities survey along with reflection journal. An independent samples *t*-test was conducted to examine whether there was a significant difference between nursing students' satisfaction with their selected learning activities in seven categories: applying academic content to the real world, liking learning activities, meeting course objectives, recommending learning activities to others, increasing self-confidence, making class interesting, and positive contribution to the community.

The students' comments in the reflection journals were analyzed and organized by the researcher into the same categories as listed in the student survey. Another faculty member reviewed and categorized comments for interrater reliability.

Table 1
Student Learning Activities Survey

SURVEY QUESTIONS (N=22)	STUDENT RESPONSES					
	Services-Learning (N=38)			Computer-Based		
	MEAN	SD	%Agreement	MEAN	SD	Agreement
1. These learning activities helped me to apply academic content to the real-world.	1.24	.54	82.05%	1.22	.42	77.27%
2. I liked the learning activities.	1.21	.47	82.05%	1.35	.57	72.72%
3. These learning activities helped me to meet the course objectives.	1.21	.41	79.84%	1.13	.34	86.36%
4. I would recommend these learning activities to other students.	1.18	.46	84.61%	1.13	.34	86.36%
5. These learning activities helped me to increase my self-confidence.	1.21	.70	87.17%	1.96	.77	31.81%
6. These learning activities made this class more interesting.	1.13	.34	87.17%	1.43	.59	59.09%
7. I feel that these learning activities made a positive contribution to the community.	1.21	.58	84.62%	2.52	.95	18.18%

Likert scale: 5=Agree(A), 4=Somewhat Agree(SWA), 3=Neutral(N), 2=Somewhat Disagree(SWD), 1=Disagree(D)

Applying Academic Content to the Real-World

An independent-samples *t* test comparing the mean scores of the service-learning group and the computer-based learning group revealed a statistically non-significant difference between the means of the two groups for helping to apply academic content to the real-world ($t = .15, df = 59, p > .05$). The mean of the service-learning group ($M = 1.24, SD = .54$) was not significantly different than the mean of the computer-based learning group ($M = 1.22, SD = .42$). The reflection journals revealed positive comments for both learning activities helping to apply academic content to the real-world. Students who chose service-learning stated:

- *“It gives us a chance to apply ourselves and what we know.” “Enjoyed being able to apply what I learned in class and being able to teach it to others.”*

- *"I have enjoyed applying the knowledge. It really helped me understand the material even more."*
- *"Teaching information helped me learn it better." "The best way to learn material is to teach it."*
- *"It helped me learn to deal with people from different backgrounds."*
- *"It gave me a chance to educate others and it opened my eyes to what it feels like to teach nursing topics."*
- The computer-based learning group made comments related to application to real world as:
 - *"Learned many things." "Learned the importance." "Made me think."*
 - *"After completing the teaching brochure, I called my dad and lectured him over everything I learned."*
 - *"Online discussion made me realize that there are MANY issues that we will face as nurses." "The discussion board case study was useful because it put me in a real clinical situation in which I may one day find myself. I can reflect back on this scenario and know the right thing to do."*
 - *"The brochure helped me organize." "Enjoyed the challenge and it helped me broaden my view of new teaching strategies."*
 - *"The nursing theorist activity helped me see how hard others have worked before me."*
 - *"The teaching brochure removed me from my comfort zone. I had to figure out formatting and how to get your point across using language at a fifth grade level."*

Liking the Learning Activities

There was no statistically significant difference found ($t = -1.01$, $df = 59$, $p > .05$) between the groups for liking the learning activities. The mean of the service-learning group ($m = 1.21$, $sd = .47$) was not significantly different than the mean of the computer-based learning group ($m = 1.35$, $sd = .57$). Both groups showed positive comments regarding the learning activities. The service-learning group stated:

- *"SO MUCH FUN!" "I enjoyed it." "Loved it." "Great experience."*
- *"Very productive teaching opportunity." "BEST project I have ever had the privilege of being a part of in a class."*
- *"I wish we could have done this more, I think it is a great idea to keep doing."*

The computer-based learning students commented that they liked the activities as:

- *"I liked the discussion board online. It helped get me thinking on topics."*
- *"Enjoyed the teaching brochure activity." "This was fun because I was able to use my creativity."*
- *"I enjoyed the learning activity because I find critical thinking to be a very important thing, especially in nursing."*
- *"Activities were interesting and caught my attention."*
- *"Enjoyed researching material. Able to use my creativity and search for pictures."*
- *"Storyboard was a bit of fun." "Enjoyed learning."*

Meeting Course Objectives

There was no statistically significant difference found between the means of the two groups for the activities helping to meet the course objectives ($t = .78$, $df = 59$, $p > .05$). The mean of the service-learning group ($m = 1.21$, $sd = .41$) was not significantly different than the mean of the computer-based learning group ($m = 1.13$, $sd = .34$). The reflection journals from both groups showed no specific comments as related to the learning activities and meeting course objectives.

Recommending Learning Activities to Others

No significant difference was found between the groups for recommending the learning activities to others ($t = .49$, $df = 59$, $p > .05$). The mean of the service-learning group ($m = 1.21$, $sd = .47$) was not significantly different than the mean of the computer-based learning group ($m = 1.13$, $sd = .34$). The reflection journals for the service-learning group recommended:

- *“I would not mind incorporating this into our curriculum. It gives us some off campus learning as well.”*
- *“I hope we are given this opportunity again throughout the coming semester!”*

The students in the computer-based learning group did not have any comments recommending these learning activities to others. However, there were two comments from this group of students recommending face-to-face interactions for learning. Feedback from the Allied Health instructors revealed positive comments regarding satisfaction with the service-learning project. Most of the instructors agreed that the service-learning activities were appropriate for the agency classroom objectives and provided real-world content for the high school students. They stated that they would recommend these activities to other agencies and were willing to accept service-learning students in the future.

Increasing Self-confidence

The t -test revealed a statistically significant difference between those students who chose service-learning activities ($t = 3.88$, $df = 59$, $p < .001$) in relation to increasing self-confidence. Students who chose service-learning activities ($M = 1.21$, $SD = .70$) reported significantly higher levels of self-confidence than did students who chose computer-based learning activities ($M = 1.96$, $SD = .77$). The reflection journals from the service-learning group revealed statements such as:

- *“This experience gave me more confidence in public speaking and working with groups of people.”*
- *“Being a nervous speaker, I wasn’t as nervous because the students were so involved with the questions I was asking.” “Increased my self-confidence.”*
- There were no comments related to increasing self-confidence from the computer-based learning group.

Making Class Interesting

There was a significant difference between nursing students’ satisfaction with their selected learning activities and making class interesting. The t -test revealed a statistically significant difference between those students who chose service-learning

activities in making class interesting ($t = 2.25$, $df = 31.13$, $p < .05$). Students who chose service-learning activities ($M = 1.31$, $SD = .34$) reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction with making class interesting than did students who chose computer-based learning activities ($M = 1.43$, $SD = .59$).

Reflection journal statements from the service-learning group included:

- *“Look forward to coming back next time.” “I am excited to see what next week has in store for me and my peers.”*
- *“I wish we could have done this more, I think it is a great idea to keep doing.”*
- The computer-based learning group had comments in the reflection journaling which focused on being in the classroom rather than doing online activities:
- *“I’d rather do interactive teaching and see expressions on faces when I speak.”*
- *“It is more enjoyable to work with people rather than with paper.”*
- *“I would have preferred to have learning the critical thinking information within a classroom setting.”*

Positive Contribution to the Community

The t test also revealed a statistically significant difference between those students who chose service-learning activities in providing positive contribution to the community ($t = 5.99$, $df = 32.03$, $p < .001$). Students who chose service-learning activities ($M = 1.21$, $SD = .58$) reported significantly higher levels of satisfaction with positive contribution to the community than did students who chose computer-based learning activities ($M = 2.52$, $SD = .95$).

The reflection journals from the service-learning group revealed statements supporting positive contribution to community:

- *“Overall, this was an effective learning situation for both the high school students and myself.”*
- *“Felt the students really learned a lot from the presented information.”*
- *“I felt like I learned more and like I was helping someone else learn something important by teaching at the high school.”*
- *“Opened my eyes to teaching in the community and how to impact the health of individuals.”*
- *“It gives us and the community the ability to teach what we know and learn from it.”*

There were no comments related to providing positive contribution to the community from the computer-based learning group.

Conclusion

Service-learning is a worthwhile active learning pedagogy in engaging students in learning professional nursing skills. The findings of this research study support the numerous studies examined by Warren (2012) which found service-learning has significant positive effects on student learning outcomes. Nursing students engaging in service-learning activities or computer-based learning activities saw either as effective strategies in learning professional nursing concepts. In comparing student responses on the surveys and reflective journals, students who participated in service-learning activities had higher percentage of satisfaction ratings with service-learning helping to

increase self-confidence, making class interesting, and promoting positive contributions to the community.

Students described service-learning activities as offering opportunities to increase their presentation skills, work with a team, and increase self-confidence while peer-tutoring high school students. The nursing students who chose service-learning activities revealed a sense of excitement and fun in teaching other students about professional nursing. Some of the biggest surprises for the nursing students who participated in service-learning was the recruiting opportunities and a chance to encourage high school students who are studying health profession concepts. Nursing students were impressed that the allied health students knew some information related to the professional nursing topics and were able to engage in discussions and answer questions. Nursing students suggested that service-learning be included in other nursing courses throughout the curriculum. Service-learning activities were seen by nursing students as a valuable way to connect learning to real practice. Community partnerships were formed and strengthened with local high schools through the service-learning activities. Both the nursing students and community partners rated the service-learning as positive and looked forward to continuing the activities during the semester and following semesters. At the end of the semester, the Allied Health students and instructor from the local high schools were invited for a tour and simulated nursing experience at the college of nursing. Nursing students also celebrated success at the conclusion of the service-learning activities by bringing food and sharing appreciation with the Allied Health partners.

Limitations of the study include the convenient sample used and findings cannot be applied to all nursing students. Some of the challenges of the research study were balancing the content and competencies for mutual learning with the nursing students and high school students. The timing and planning of activities were difficult at times with various scheduled classes and demands on time at the college and high-schools. It took early planning and commitment on part of the all partners involved. Another challenge is knowing when to change the service-learning activities to prevent redundancy and promote learning and satisfaction among the students and faculty.

Implications for future study include replicating the study to increase validity of the survey, enlarging the sample size to include graduate and undergraduate nursing students, and include simulation learning activities as a measure. Conducting further research with interdisciplinary students could enrich the learning experience and provide greater dividends for meeting learning outcomes.

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From Pennies to Praxis: A Service Learning Model for Pre Service Teacher Candidates

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*Everybody can be great because anybody can serve.
Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr*

Service learning is a practice that blends community service with instruction. It provides opportunities for students to actively examine real world issues/problems within the context of the community – the world’s classroom. Instruction, service and reflection are the guideposts of a service learning experience. Therefore these distinctions differentiate service learning from simple volunteerism or single community service projects. If the constructivist view of learning rests on the premise that learning is the active construction of knowledge, then service learning would be the approach that embodies the essence of constructivism.

Service Learning as Pedagogy

McCarthy (2003) identified three critical attributes of the service learning: experience, reflection, and knowledge. As McCarthy (2003) notes these components suggest a ‘mutual dependence and interconnection’ (page 1).

ABSTRACT

This article captures a service learning initiative that blends an existing national program designed to teach economic principles to K-12 students with elementary education teacher candidates enrolled in a social studies methods course. The initiative gives candidates the hands-on experience of teaching national and state objectives in the area of economics, supplies the volunteer base the organization needs to sustain its local program, and gives local elementary schools an additional resource in the area of economics. Candidates’ reactions, the arrangement and the lessons learned are shared. Findings suggest that teacher candidates develop positive dispositions toward service learning, develop beginning pedagogical practices of efficacy, and reinforce their decision to teach.

Table 1. Service Learning Framework

Attribute	Service Learning Connection
Experience	Gained from involvement and may include positive/negative activities
Knowledge	Created by students during involvement and is shaped by prior experiences or lack thereof
Reflection	Contextualized way of examining experience and requires interaction with environment

As a result of embedding a service learning experience within a beginning clinical nursing course, Sedlak et. al (2003) discovered that beginning nursing students developed and used critical thinking skills: 'The (students') experience fostered self-confidence, self-esteem, and self-reflection' (p. 102). The students provided needed service to the community, broadened their field specific knowledge base as well as gained personal reward for the work in their communities.

Because service learning carries a potentially double positive outcome (benefit to community served and benefit to learner engaged in the service) the impact on the community served must be considered along with the impact on the learner. As such, Rosner-Salzar (2003) emphasized the importance of service learning experiences intended for multicultural settings. The author suggests that future service providers need intense opportunities to work with diverse populations to truly authenticate their learning, improve their multicultural awareness and possibly affect social change. These types of experiences not only increase the likelihood that these future service providers would approach their professions empowered to affect change and possibly better understand the populations they will work with. As a pedagogical strategy, service learning in the college classroom has a considerable amount of potential

Transformative Teacher Education Pedagogy

In teacher education, Wineberg (2003) observes that the opportunity for service learning to foster opportunities for civic engagement and responsibility should not go ignored by departments and schools of education. During pre-student teaching experiences, teacher candidates can gain an invaluable experience through opportunities to 'get to know their communities and where their students come from' (pg. 3). One of the desired outcomes of embedding service-learning experiences in teacher education is the notion of giving candidates this opportunity having a trickle-down effect on their own repertoire of pedagogical strategies. Therefore, this process would potentially build the capacity of civic responsibility in their future classrooms.

In a descriptive account of research conducted on an organized service learning project embedded in a course for early childhood preservice teachers, Chen (2004) discovered an evolution of perception regarding the experience. Initially the preservice

teachers in Chen's study held negative impressions of the requirement. The students were doubtful and unconvinced about the projects' role and potential to impact their learning. However by the completion of the service projects in the course Chen's data show that the preservice teachers identified an increased self-awareness and overall feeling of empowerment from the opportunity. Additionally the students saw the potential of service learning experiences in their own teaching in the future.

In a very similar yet different account, Shastri (2003) documented the results of a study of undergraduate teacher candidates who were required to complete service learning projects in an educational psychology course. The experience required the future teachers to maintain experience journals, write reflections and complete free writing responses. Through analysis of the documents the author determined that overall the experience reinforced the candidates' desire to teach.

This paper describes the findings of a study conducted of an organized service learning project embedded in a elementary social studies methods course for undergraduate teacher candidates. The study was designed to address the following evaluative questions: (1) How do preservice teacher candidates respond initially to a prearranged service learning project? (2) How do preservice teacher candidates perceive their involvement in a prearranged service learning project at the conclusion of their participation? And (3) How do preservice teacher candidates perceive the significance of service learning projects at the conclusion of their own service learning experience

Project Design

The objective of this collaboration was three-fold: (1) to create a service learning project for elementary education teacher candidates that would give them hands-on opportunities to teach social studies related curricula to elementary students, (2) to increase and sustain the local volunteer base for a non-profit organization, and (3) provide a classroom resource for local public schools.

The non-profit's vision is 'to ensure that every child has a fundamental understanding of the free enterprise system' ([Junior Achievement](#), 2005). The program seeks to educate school age children on the principles of economics and business and its daily influence on their lives. Representatives from the national organization's local branch (JA) approached the teacher education program at the university about the possibility of a partnership. The social studies methods professor worked with the local coordinator to design a service-learning project that was mutually beneficial for each party (organization, public schools, and teacher education program). The professor's primary concern as it related to this potential partnership centered on how this initiative would serve to enrich and reinforce the objectives of the social studies methods course.

It was decided that students enrolled in the Social Studies for the Elementary Classroom Course during their junior year of methods coursework would have an organized service learning project embedded in their course. Among their other course requirements, students would become consultants for the organization. In their role as

consultant, candidates would be responsible for delivering the JA curriculum to their assigned grade level. Each grade level has 5 lessons that cover the economics principles that are developmentally appropriate for that age group and are aligned with national and state standards for social studies and economics. Service to the organization, service to the schools, opportunity to examine elementary social studies content, and opportunity to experience curriculum planning were all attributes of this initiative.

While the curriculum came with lesson plans, manipulatives, media, and other materials; candidates are expected to modify their lessons to the degree necessary to make the curriculum fit the learner. The idea was not to have teacher candidates learn how to regurgitate a stock lesson plan, it was however to have them begin the process of actual curriculum planning, gaining first-hand knowledge of the multiple ways classroom teachers must explore the questions related to planning for a group of students each day across disciplines. Additionally, the project gave candidates the opportunity to gain experience with how to use pre-assessments, observations, informal assessments and student reaction to shape their instruction.

Participants

4 cohorts of students completed the service learning project with a total of 48 candidates.

Each candidate did the following as it related to the project:

- met with their assigned teacher to set a visitation schedule, review social studies curricula, give an overview of the curricula,
- conducted a pre-teaching visit to observe the classroom teacher's management style, administer a pre-assessment and get to know students,
- reviewed state social studies curricula for their grade level, the organization's curriculum in its entirety, and identified supplemental information as needed,
- created a reflection journal, planned and taught their first lesson,
- completed an initial reflection exercise to assess the success of the first lesson and reassessed their teaching methods based upon reflection,
- taught subsequent lessons, continued reflection cycle, modified lessons to accommodate student diversity and interests,
- videotaped and observed one lesson and then complete a reflection,
- administer post assessment, and

- completed a final reflection exercise that captured summative reactions to the project.

During this project, candidates met each week during the semester for their on-campus class to address general theory, issues, and activities related to teaching social studies in the elementary classroom. One full class meeting was devoted to a training session given by the organization which was hosted on location at the partnership elementary school, the site where the collaborative was housed during the spring semester. While a portion of each classroom meeting was devoted to debriefing on the service-learning project and its progress, the other facets of the course were priority. The service learning project was not the sole focus of the course. As a result, the service or sacrifice piece of this project is very distinct because candidates are responsible for planning, delivering and otherwise completing the project on their own time.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection for this study was ongoing and involved four cohorts of teacher candidates enrolled in the social studies methods course. Products of learning from the project participants provided the data needed to evaluate the experience. The documents used for analysis included: initial reflection papers, pre/post assessments, video reflections, journals, and final reflection papers. More than 200 documents were analyzed to determine the candidates’ perceptions of service, its impact and significance. Data analysis involved reading, analyzing and synthesizing data across sources to identify patterns and eventually themes. The broad questions used to guide the study yielded sub-categories of data after initial reading of sources (Table 3). The initial reviews determined the breadth of responses across these categories.

Table 3. Categories of Data

Service Learning Awareness
Initial Perception of Project
Concluding Perception of Project
Relevancy between SL and future career

Subsequent readings of the documents were conducted using the benchmarking categories in Table 3 as the coding list. This process allowed the researcher to identify data from the candidates’ responses that formed trends or patterns that were thematically connected.

Findings

Prior Participation

I have never worked with a service learning project before, nor had I taught a whole class lesson before
(Candidate A, Cohort 1)

I was not sure what a service learning project was, or what I would be doing, but knew that since it would have to be done for class I might as well try and make the best of it. I had never heard or experienced anything like this so I was wondering what it would be like.
(Candidate B, Cohort 1)

Overwhelmingly the candidates enrolled in this course during data collection had not participated in service learning projects before. Each semester the average hovered at around 80 percent in terms of not having previous experience with service learning. Of those that had acknowledged participation, the experiences they identified were largely connected to civic or religious organizations in their communities as secondary students. None of the candidates reported having been involved with service learning at the university level.

Initial Reaction to Service Learning

This was going to be a new experience for me. As I skimmed through the book, I felt as though I was going to be learning a lot along with the students. (Cohort 2 Candidate)

I was being forced to participate in something that I really had no idea about, and something I had no choice in being a part of. I did not know what to expect. (Cohort 3 Candidate)

When I found out that we had a pre-arranged service learning project, I must admit that I was not really excited to jump right in. I figured it would be a lot of work, added onto the heavy workload that already comes with this class. To be honest I did not want to do this project or program at all.
(Cohort 3 Candidate)

After having learned of the service expectation, candidates from each cohort cited nervousness, excitement, and apprehension as their top responses at the outset. Their thoughts of apprehension and nervousness seemed to stem from their concern

over their ability to pull this off as well as the magnitude of the service learning expectation. Their excitement was connected to the reality that they were going to assume the primary responsibility of teaching a unit and not simply assist a teacher or work with a small group of children as they had in previous early field experiences.

First Teaching Visit

This was my first time actually ‘teaching.’ I wasn’t sure if I could do it but I still kept a positive attitude. After my first teaching experience, I felt more confident. I know that with each lesson I teach, I will grow more and more.
(Cohort 2 Candidate)

Candidates were asked to note their expectations after their first day of service with the program. The goal here was to determine if their initial reactions to having to perform this service shifted after actually completing one day of the work. Across cohorts the data show that candidates’ initial thoughts of nervousness or apprehension shifted to feelings of confidence and enjoyment. After completing the first teaching session with their students, candidates realized that the experience was doable as well as a valuable opportunity to learn more about the full responsibility of teaching a room full of children.

Table 4. Initial Reflection Responses

	<i>Initial Reaction to SL</i>	<i>Prior Participation</i>	<i>Perception after first teaching visit</i>
Cohort 1	Excited, nervous, potential learning experience	No (83%)	Excitement, Confidence established
Cohort 2	Excited, Nervous	No (71%)	Enjoyment, Confidence established
Cohort 3	Apprehensive, Reluctant, Overwhelmed, Nervous	No (80 %)	Valuable opportunity, confidence established, excitement
Cohort 4	Nervous, Excited	No (90%)	Excitement, Improved comfort level

Remaining Visits

On my third and fourth visits, I had become very comfortable with the students and I think they had become a lot more comfortable with me as well. I had several students always wanting to erase the board for me or to be my personal assistant for the day. I felt that I was connecting with them on some level, which was great. (Cohort 1 Candidate)

The candidates had a total of 5 teaching visits to make to the school to complete their experience. They were asked to summarize their reactions or perception of the experience across the remaining visits. Cohorts 1 and 3 consistently noted enjoyment and increased comfort levels (with students and curriculum) as their main notion throughout their remaining visits. While Cohorts 2 and 4 leaned toward those as well there also seemed to be an acknowledgement of how important those visits were for getting to know their students on a developmental level. For many of the candidates across cohorts, their field experience prior to this was with one grade level or area of elementary education; upper (3-5) or lower (K-2). With this experience, candidates were typically assigned to the area opposite of their prior experiences or field placements.

Service Learning and Their Career

I now realize the importance of continuously being attentive to my students needs. Many of my students were shy and hesitant to answer questions and participate. I realized how important it is to help students become comfortable enough to engage in activities and answer questions. (Cohort 2 Candidate)

I think there is no better way of learning than to experience the real thing. I think JA helps future teachers to see strengths and weaknesses. I am confident that this experience has laid groundwork for the future. (Cohort 1 Candidate)

In their final reflection papers, participants explicitly addressed how this service experience applied to their career choice - teaching. Cohorts 1 and 4 appeared to see the career value embedded in the opportunities they had to assess the various academic and social needs students have. Cohort 2 acknowledged planning and preparation as the linkages to their chosen profession. After completing a 5 lesson unit on economics, these candidates saw the necessity of planning well, preparing materials, and thinking through management of the learning environment. These elements of planning seemed to be most significant to Cohort 2. Cohort 3 cited a

combination of both learner needs and planning as the cornerstone of this experience as it relates to their field.

Concluding Perception of Service Learning

Service learning projects are extremely important. I feel taking time out of my schedule to assist in my community is a must on an ongoing basis. Whether completing another service learning project or general community service the whole issue is letting people around you know you care and support them in their endeavors. (Cohort 2 Candidate)

It is good to know that what you are doing now may be helping someone have a better life. (Cohort 1 Candidate)

Cohorts were asked to provide their exiting, summarized thoughts regarding service learning as an experience and a teaching tool. With one of the goals of this project including the desire for candidates to consider using service learning in their own classrooms in the future, it was necessary to ascertain what their ending reactions were to this experience as a tool for promoting active citizenship.

All cohorts cited this experience as a 'good experience'. Good experience appeared to refer to the aspect of service. They felt as though dedicating or giving up the time to do something for others was rewarding. This angle is supported by the trend of the data to refer to the experience of 'real world of teaching' separately, which points to the candidates seeing the service piece alone as beneficial.

Discussion

The implications from this study suggest that candidates who complete an organized service learning project: (1) develop positive dispositions toward service learning and see the role of service learning in their future classrooms, (2) develop beginning pedagogical practices of effective teachers, and (3) reinforce their decision to teach.

This service learning experience was prearranged and linked to a course that was graded. In that regard it was a requirement and with that distinction the reaction to a course requirement, no matter its goal, can be mixed at best. While the participants initially expressed frustration, confusion, and resistance to the 'extra assignment' across cohorts, a unanimous concluding result across the data sources and cohorts was the report of value, growth and reward from having completed the experience. The participants' self-observations included personal, professional, and career related significance in the organized service learning experience in the course. Additionally the candidates frequently cited general and specific instances in which they hoped to incorporate service learning oriented activities within their own classrooms. While some

of those candidates expressed concerns over the feasibility to accomplish something of that nature along with other curricular demands, they still expressed a great desire to attempt the integration of service learning.

Analyses of the sources also yielded tremendous amounts of data to support the conclusion that these participants benefited from the opportunity to begin attempting the theories and principles of effective teaching. The participants' responses regarding class-wide procedures, questioning, diverse learning styles, ill-prepared lesson plans, and so forth were rich and voluminous throughout the study. After their initial teaching visit and reflection, the data evidenced the candidates' ability to begin modifying initial generic conceptions of curriculum planning, diversifying materials and methods, and making material culturally relevant for their learners. The participants usually cited the 'reality of teaching' being far different than they expected once they gave pre-assessments, prepared lesson one and taught it. Tasks as simple as preparing for a 45 minute lesson took most of the participants a couple of hours, which was far more time intensive and deliberate than they expected. All of these assertions were woven throughout the participants' various reflections.

Rowls and Swick (2000) conducted an analysis of teacher education syllabi that incorporated service learning and determined several factors that contributed to strengthening the design of courses using this approach. The authors found that one of most critical attributes of meaningful service learning is the reflection process aligned with the experience. The reflection process in this study gave candidates structured, staggered, and deliberate opportunities to consider their experiences as well as room to capture additional personal insights that were significant to them that were not necessarily respective to one of the outlined questions given in advance to guide their thinking.

Perhaps the most positive outcome of this study was a significant pattern which indicated that the participants' decision to teach was reinforced. Participants in this course were of junior classification and in the second semester of methods and foundational coursework. The junior year is typically demanding for elementary teacher candidates in ways they are unfamiliar with in comparison to their first two years of arts and sciences coursework. Students typically arrive back to the department very adept at the reading texts and taking tests mode of instruction. The project/performance based, application driven methods that are typical for teacher education instruction are initially foreign from the experiences they have had during the first two years of college. While they tend to eventually enjoy the switch in teaching style, it does not occur without its share of struggle as they are pulled out of their read-and-take-test mode. What a number of candidates begin to question during their junior year coursework and field based experience is whether teaching is truly the profession they want to pursue. The participants in this study that completed all of the pre/post assessments, lesson planning, teaching, reflection activities and assignments associated with this course had their decision to teach reinforced. Even with the participants' consistent acknowledgement of the prior underestimation of how much work it takes to actually

teach one lesson; they all noted the benefit, reward, and general sense of accomplishment once it was over. The participants' highlighted specific examples of successes with individual or groups of students in their project that made all of the work 'worth it' in their words. The hard work, the time sacrifice, the occasional flop of a lesson did not deter the participants from their decision, in fact it appeared to make the decision more concrete. Malone et. al (2002) examined the impact of a highly-structured, well-integrated service learning tutoring program for undergraduate teacher education majors. The authors found that the participants 'grew in their understanding of and appreciation for the complexity of teaching' and reevaluated their conception of what education means.

In this study the 'real world of teaching' was cited as a critical benefit of this experience as well as across cohorts. Candidates felt as though they were really getting a chance to pull all of the pieces of their various foundations/methods work together for the first time. Along this vein, the data are clear that candidates believe this experience to build the confidence that is needed by showing candidates their strengths and challenges in the teaching process.

Table 5. Final Reflection Responses

	<i>Remaining SL visits</i>	<i>Application of SL to future career</i>	<i>Perceived value of SL upon completion</i>
Cohort 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enjoyed - Increased comfort level - Learned a lot/good experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunity to determine student needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Introduces/prepares candidates for real world - Good preparation for teaching - Important
Cohort 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Became easier - Gained confidence - Got to know students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Importance of planning clarified - Adequate preparation important - Classroom management significant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Very important -Good experience for teachers -Increases teacher confidence - Shows candidates strengths and challenges they possess
Cohort 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enjoyed - Learned a lot -Increased comfort level 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adequate preparation important - Opportunity to determine students' needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good experience & preparation for teaching - Prepares candidates for real world
Cohort 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Enjoyable - Positive - Challenging - Comfort Increased 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Opportunity to see students' needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Good experience - More prepared for teaching - More confident

Conclusion

Initiating a required service learning component in any course requires the professor to be prepared to field concerns, questions, and possibly protests from students. The findings in this study point to the benefits of implementing a service learning component within a course for teacher candidates. The reluctance or resistance can stem from a variety of factors ranging from inexperience with service to a desire to protect one's busy schedule. However even with those factors, it would appear that initial apprehension and inexperience can shift to comfort and high interest over the course of their participation in the service experience.

It may be ascertained that the project's structure (which includes scaffolding by the professor and a community representative) as well as multiple opportunities for reflection throughout the commitment, possibly contribute to the candidates' perceptions

of value at the end of the experience. The findings of this study are clear; when candidates are given opportunities to dedicate themselves to service through organized teaching opportunities the outcomes can be positive.

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Changing Attitudes toward Older Adults through Bachelor of Social Work Service-Learning Projects

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Introduction

According to the U.S. Bureau of the Census (2010), those who are 65 and older represent 13% of the total U.S. population and are the fastest growing population segment in the nation. Consequently, it is projected that by the year 2030, 22% of the total American population will be 65 or older. As these numbers are predicted to increase, so will the number of social workers who are needed to work with older Americans. However, an ongoing significant disparity exists regarding the number of older adults as compared to the number of social workers who have interest in and are prepared to work with seniors (Berkman, Gardner, Zodikoff, & Harroytan, 2005). It is reported that fewer than three percent of MSW graduates will work with seniors (Scharlach, Damron-Rodriguez, Robinson, & Feldman, 2000), and only 12% of social work students are taking social work aging courses (Council on Social Work Education, 2006).

Several research studies have explored how to increase the number of social workers in the field of gerontology, and one study found that positive attitudes toward older adults have been shown to predict future careers in working with this population (Gellis, Sherman, & Lawrence, 2003). Additionally, previous quality interactions and experiences with older populations through professional or volunteer experiences have been reported as factors that led to future career work in this area (Cummings, Galambos, & DeCoster, 2003; Kane, 2004b). Cummings, Alder, and DeCoster (2005)

ABSTRACT

This evidence-based pedagogical approach encompasses service-learning projects via the lens of social exchange theory in working with older adults. The study's purpose was to examine if bachelor of social work students' attitudes changed positively after the completion of service learning projects that involved educational presentations for older adult audiences. Pre- and post-tests were administered to 90 students which indicated a statistically significant positive increase in measured attitudes. The process for the presentation projects is detailed and outlined as well as instructional advice and lessons learned regarding pedagogical intervention.

noted that ageist attitudes may decrease when interactive service learning is provided between older adults and social work students, especially when presented in an undergraduate curriculum. This has led to the purpose of this study, which was to assess whether bachelor of social work students' attitudes changed after the completion of service-learning projects with older adults. Furthermore, as service-learning promotes potential in personal development and altruistic behavior (Chou, 1998; Waterman, 1997), and role taking leads to new perspectives and understanding of social environments when interactions occur (Mead, 1934), the social exchange theory was employed. Through pre-and post-testing, using the Aging Semantic Differential Scale (Rosencranz & McNevin, 1969), we predicted that undergraduate social work students' attitudes would positively increase toward older adults after the group service-learning projects were completed.

Background and Significance

Various reasons for the gap in the gerontological workforce have been noted, and one in particular was that negative attitudes toward older persons can lead to disinterest in working with older populations (French, Mosher-Ashley, 2000; Kane, 2004a; Olson, 2007; Tan, Hawkins, & Ryan, 2001). Socio-cultural effects can shape attitudes toward the aged as societies become preoccupied with being vibrant, indispensable, immortal, and sexy (Berman & White, 2013; Prieler & Choi, 2014; Starr & Ferguson, 2012). Accordingly, attitudes toward older adults can also be negatively affected by one's personal anxiety regarding growing old (Harris & Dollinger, 2001). For example, social work students who hold moderate views concerning their own aging indicate little desire to work with older populations (Anderson & Wiscott, 2003). As negative attitudes are a factor in addressing the social work gap in working with older persons, a theoretical implication for generating interest in this field was used that would maximize benefits to the students (e.g. reciprocity) while reducing costs (e.g. changing their perspectives).

Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory is based upon the tenets of economic principles encompassing costs and benefits as related to an individual's desire to maximize rewards while reducing costs in social relationships (Blau, 1964; Homans, 1961; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). As applied to gerontology, a social exchange framework implies that each person brings something to the table, which may not necessarily be material, but would probably not be considered otherwise (Bengtson, Burgess, & Parrott, 1997). This theory has been used to promote intergenerational programs for older persons who have been negated the opportunity to participate in some degree of reciprocity as they become less independent in their lives (Hooyman & Kiyak, 2005) or in studies of

negative and positive social exchange impacts whereas older persons have become the recipient of benefits by family members or caretakers (August, Rook, & Newsom, 2007; Fiori, Windsor, Pearson, & Crisp, 2012; Lowenstein, Katz, & Gur-Yaish, 2007). Most recently, structured reverse mentoring programs have begun to make an appearance in the corporate world for workforce training and volunteer programs for younger persons reaching out to seniors (Ambrose, 2015). Conversely, Mead (1934) wrote that individuals are influenced by their interactions with social groups and conceptualized that engaging in new meaningful social support roles could have a positive effect upon human growth. The concept of role taking was summarized by Sprinthall and Thies-Sprinthall (1983) as a real world helping action that goes before intellectual consciousness, and when this piece was absent, the person would likely not initiate actions required to change. Such new role taking through real life experiences could also influence career development while promoting the perspectives of others as well as influence interpersonal and intrapersonal domains (Payne, 2012; Reiman, 1999). Similarly, Mooney and Edwards (2001) provided a generalized typology of international community-based placements for social work programs and posited that the opportunity for reciprocity was typically high for service-learning.

Service-Learning

Service-learning is situated within the traditional pedagogy of John Dewey's (1933, 1963) theories of experiential learning; he proposed that knowledge could best be retained when directly applied to real life experiences. This form of pedagogy has been defined as connecting traditional higher education with structured student learning experiences in community venues or through various civic engagements (Horowitz, Wong, & Dechello, 2010; Waterman, 1997). Three essential components for service learning were named as "preparation for the service through study and discussion; involvement in the service project; and reflection on the service and educational piece, both during and after participation" (Lewis, 2002, p. 656). In working with older persons, experience and interaction are important factors in developing interest, and this has been a consistent finding in the literature as one of the strongest predictors for future work in this area (Wang & Chonody, 2013).

Furthermore, Wang and Chonody (2013) reiterated that ageist attitudes created barriers in recruiting social workers in the field of gerontology and provided a systematic literature review of 19 studies which measured the attitudes of social workers' attitudes toward older adults. However, their review of the literature did not uncover positivistic studies involving pre-and post-tests standardized measurements of undergraduate social work students' attitudes toward older persons when participating in service-learning projects. Utilizing the Aging Semantic Differential Scale (Rosencranz & McNevin, 1969) as the pre- and post-test, the hypothesis employed in this study was that the students' attitudes would positively increase after the completion of such

projects. The hypothesis was viewed through the lens of social exchange theory, meaning that the students would maximize their benefits (e.g. reciprocity) while reducing costs (e.g. changing perspectives).

Method

Procedure

The service-learning project with older populations was a course requirement in the capstone Senior Seminar course for all undergraduate social work students in their last semester of studies and was weighted as 40% of their course grade. The classes were composed of two cohorts each semester located on two campuses, one urban and one more rural, at a regional midwestern public state university. As taking part in the study was voluntary, the students were informed that their involvement, or lack thereof, in the study would not have any effect upon their grade for the project. The data were collected for three consecutive years; students who elected to be involved in the study were asked to sign a consent form and complete the pre-test prior to the project and the post-test of the Aging Semantic Differential Scale after the completion of the project (Rsenclanz & McNevin, 1996).

Preparation through study and discussion

In the first weeks of the semester, the instructors randomly assigned the students to small groups of three to four individuals. In conjunction with a relevant literature review, the groups were required to meet outside of class and discuss which topics could be presented in a service-learning educational presentation to older adults. Over the course of the semester and with oversight by their instructors, the students formulated 30 to 45 minute educational presentations that were provided to an older adult audience in public (e.g. library with public newspaper announcement) or private venues (e.g. adult day center).

Choosing a presentation site was dependent upon such factors as personal connections through relatives and work, practicum placements, and geographic locales that were centralized to the group members' campuses, homes, and work. Furthermore, the presentation topics were conducive to the location of the service-learning site. For example, the public library locations had themes for a more independent and mobile audience, while presentations for persons in convalescent centers were directed toward needs associated with more advanced stages of care. See Table 1 for a listing of various settings and presentational topics. To prepare, a minimum of one student per group served as a preliminary contact to go out into the community venues to gain information and knowledge regarding the potential audience participants and setting prior to the formalization of the presentation. When possible, this would involve the student(s) interacting with the older adults through personal

invitation to attend the forthcoming event and passing out printed flyers that announced the topic, date, time, and presenters' names for the scheduled presentation.

Table 1: Listing of various settings and presentational topics	
Presentation Venues	Presentation Topics
Convalescent Centers	Physical Fitness for Less Mobile Adults, Maintaining Mental Health
Public Libraries	Parenting the Second Time Around, Re-Entering the Workforce
Senior Citizen Centers	Nutrition for Older Adults, Pet Therapy
Senior Housing Projects	Taking Prescribed Medications Effectively, Positive Mental Health Factors
Senior Nutrition Sites	Living Wills and Advanced Directives
Local Churches	Dementia and Alzheimer's 101, Volunteering to Make a Difference

Involvement in the service learning project

On presentation day, the students were encouraged by their instructor to allow at least thirty minutes prior to and after the presentation to socially interact with their audience. This created initial meaningful engagement with the audience that assisted in reducing stress and anxiety for the presenters, many of whom had never before experienced a professional presentation outside of the classroom. In a similar vein, an often curious audience was provided the opportunity to learn more about the students while discovering that they were helping them with their coursework and grades by their

participation. Along with this interface, the audience was invited to score their review of the presentation on a disseminated assessment that asked them to rank the relevance of the topic, the delivery of the presentation, and how useful they found the information.

The course instructors attended each community presentation, and each group was graded via a formal oral presentation rubric that was provided to the students in advance to assist them in development of the presentation. To purposely address student motivation through cooperative learning and engaged pedagogy (Kim, Kim, & Svinicki, 2012), each member's success was dependent upon the group's success, and each student was required to take a part in the oral presentation. A group score was given with an assigned weight for each of the following: organization, content, adaptation, language, and delivery. To assist with reducing the possibility that one or two members would inherit the majority of the work, each group member confidentially scored their peers' participation in the process. Factors assessed were reliability, contributions, knowledgeability, and overall impression of each members' performance. The group score and the individual's peer score were then averaged by the instructor for the final individual scores for the project.

Reflection on the service

Students were provided the opportunity to reflect upon their involvement in the educational projects during every stage of the service learning. Particularly, after the service-learning occurred and the post tests were administered, the instructors set aside class time for student reflections regarding their experiences. Discussion points involved what the students found as the rewards and challenges of their participation in the service learning to the personal meaning that this held to each individual, and whether or not they felt as if this assignment should continue to be a part of the course.

Measures

Attitudes toward aging adults. The Aging Semantic Differential Scale (ASD) was used to measure participants' attitudes toward older adults in this study (Rosencranz & McNevin, 1969). Even though there is an updated version of the ASD scale redefined by Polizzi (2003), this study used the original version of the ASD (Rosencranz & McNevin, 1969) as Polizzi's scale was not able to prove its validity (Gonzales, Tan, & Morrow-Howell, 2010). The ASD is the most widely used instrument to measure peoples' perceptions and attitudes toward older adults (Matarese, Lommi, Pedone, Alvaro, & De Marinis, 2013). The Likert scale consists of a total of 32 bipolar adjective questionnaires in a 7-point scale from 1 as the most positive to 7 as the most negative. The range of ASD score is from 32 to 224, and lower scores indicate more positive attitudes, whereas higher scores represent negative attitudes. The neutral point for this scale is 128, which represents a neutral attitude. In terms of internal consistency for the ASD scale, the Cronbach' alpha was to be sufficient at 0.89 for this study.

Results

Table 2 presents descriptive information on the participants ($N=90$). The majority of participants were female (93%, $n=84$) and ranged in age from 21 to 72 with a mean age of 33 years old ($M=33$, $SD=12$). The racial/ ethnic background of this study participants were: Caucasian ($n=45$, 50%), Native American ($n=22$, 24%), African American ($n=13$, 14%), Biracial ($n=7$, 8%), Hispanic/Latino ($n=2$, 2%), and Asian ($n=1$, 1%).

Forty-two participants (47%) reported that they had previously lived with their grandparents. Furthermore, 52 of the participants (58%) also had previous classes that addressed working with older adults, and 58 participants (64%) had previous assignments that addressed working with this population. In terms of work experience with older adults, 43 participants (48%) reported that they had experience in working with older adults and 16 participants (18%) were doing their practicums with this population. Twenty-two participants (24%) reported that they intended to specialize in social work practice with older adults after graduation.

Table 2 : Demographic information for participant (N=90)

Characteristics	Number (%)
Gender	
Male	6 (6.7%)
Female	84 (93.3%)
Racial Background	
African American	13 (14.4%)
Asian or Pacific Islander	1 (1.1%)
Caucasian	45 (50.0%)
Hispanic/ Latino	2 (2.2%)
Native American	22 (24.4%)
Biracial	7 (7.8%)
Have you ever lived with your grandparents?	
Yes	42 (46.7%)
No	48 (53.3%)
Have you had previous classes that address working with older adults?	
Yes	52 (57.8%)
No	38 (42.2%)
Have you had previous assignments that addressed working with older adults?	
Yes	58 (64.4%)
No	32 (35.6%)
Do you have work experience in working with older adults?	
Yes	43 (47.8%)
No	47 (52.2%)

Are you doing your practicum with older adults?

Yes 16 (17.8%)

No 74 (82.2%)

Do you intend to specialize in social work practice with older adults?

Yes 22 (75.6%)

No 68 (24.4%)

According to the study data, paired sample *t*-test indicated that there was a significant mean difference between pre and post test results, $t(89) = 4.51; p < .001, d = 0.47$. The sample means are displayed in Table 3, which shows the mean scores after completion of the service learning projects ($M = 103.48, SD = 22.38$) were significantly lower than the mean scores before completion of the project ($M = 113.27, SD = 19.61$).

Table 3 : Mean difference between pretest and posttest on the ASD

Outcome	Pretest		Posttest		95% Confidence Interval of Mean Difference		<i>df</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>d</i>
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Lower	Upper				
	113.27	19.61	103.48	22.83	5.48	14.09	89	4.51	<.001	0.47

Discussion and Implications

The results of this study supported the hypothesis that a service-learning assignment incorporated into an undergraduate social work course could positively influence the attitudes of the student participants toward older persons. To expound, by taking on the role of educator, the students were able to create, prepare, and invest in educational projects that were meaningful and relevant to an older client population. Through their interaction with their audience, the roles became meaningful as these

exchanges allowed them to acknowledge the effects that their efforts had upon the service population.

The implication of including a service-learning project with older persons as part of a regular social work core course can impact gerontological social work education by increasing positive attitudes of students toward this population. This course assignment may be particularly influential on an undergraduate level when many students are still in the exploratory phase of the many facets of the profession. In addition, the benefit of creating a service-learning elective solely for the purpose of working with older adults would allow students the opportunity to explore a more in-depth, quality interactive, and reflective experience of the service-learning with older populations.

From a pedagogical perspective, Reiman (1999) stressed the need for educators to create a guided reflection framework for adult learners in role taking with attention given to combining knowledge and skills with caring and feelings through written discourse (e.g. students' journaling or portfolios). Moreover, Wang and Chonody's (2013) systematic review of the literature uncovered only one qualitative study regarding attitudes toward the aged. To include the students' perceptions of the rewards and challenges and the personal meaning that this project may have invoked for them is beyond the scope of the research design for this study. In this vein, we recognize that more insight is needed regarding qualitative and mixed method designs to capture the totality of service-learning and attitude influence toward older persons for social work students. Directions for future research would include a mixed methods design, which along with pre- and post-tests, would involve student focus groups designed to uncover major themes (Patton, 2002) of student service learning experiences. Additionally, advice and lessons learned offered by the course instructors include the following: First, be prepared to offer continued guidance and oversight as the instructor must be committed to the service-learning process and the quality delivery of the educational project. Second, as is a common dynamic with group projects, conflict between members can arise, which may result in an impasse that will need to be resolved earlier than later by the instructor. And finally, merging the knowledge, skills, and values of social work outside of the classroom into service-learning projects can be fun for students as well as instructors. Learning through new experiences can change attitudes; it can occur in a variety of community settings and does not have to be confined to practicum or internship.

Strengths and Limitations of the Study

The demographic data further support our hypothesis in that nearly half of the respondents had previously lived with their grandparents and had worked with the aged prior to participating in the service-learning project, yet there was still a significant mean difference in the positive attitudes between the pre- and post-test ($t(89) = 4.51; p < .001, d=0.47$). Other significant strengths for this study included the diverse racial composition of the respondents, with half of the participants represented by Caucasians

and half of the participants represented by other racial identities. Of particular note is that nearly 25% of the respondents self-identified as Native American, a population that seldom has its own categorical representation due to low numbers of participants.

In spite of the strengths, there is a need for further improvement of the study. For example, the sample size of students was relatively small and may not be accurately generalizable to other regional social work program populations. Another limitation of the study was that the participants' responses were self-reported which could lead to the potential influence of socially desirable responses and various interpretations of the word item definitions (Amodio & Devine, 2006; Puhl & Brownell, 2006). Furthermore, the pre- and post-testing for each graduating cohort occurred in the same semester. Taking the same test repeatedly within a limited time could create a testing practice effect which may possibly improve our students' scores due to the familiarity with the measurements from the pre-test rather than our service-learning project (Bartels, Wegrzyn, Wiedl, Ackermann, & Ehrenreich, 2010).

Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of evidence-based learning initiatives in gerontological social work education. As this population increases, more support is needed in social gerontological research, pedagogical development, best practices, and workforce recruitment and development. Moreover, this study has set a good example of how educational interactions with undergraduate social work students and older adults via service-learning projects, particularly involving role taking, could increase students' positive attitudes toward older adults and create an interest in working with this population. Although in its infancy, this study holds hope in making a contribution toward workforce recruitment with older adults.

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