Running Head: The Effects of Service-Learning on Multicultural Awareness

The Effects of Service-Learning on Multicultural Awareness

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Abstract

Using qualitative analysis, this study examines the effects of service-learning on multicultural awareness for students enrolled in an undergraduate community-based learning course: Spanish in the Community. Student interviews revealed six themes: cultural empathy, broadened cultural knowledge, cultural appreciation, perspective gains, effect on stereotypes, and limitations to the class. Service learning courses, such as this one, can reinforce stereotypes without proper implementation of a service-learning program and well integrated reflections. Overtime students became more comfortable in their volunteer environment which led to an increase in tolerance of other cultures. This research suggests that students increased their multicultural awareness through first-hand, real life experiences in the community.

Introduction

Many universities are offering service-learning opportunities in their curriculum. These programs, if implemented properly, can cost a great deal of time. Which begs the questions of how effective are these programs and what are the students learning. This paper focuses on defining service-learning and multiculturalism. This study examines the effect of service-learning on multicultural awareness. The focus of this study asks: (1) What effect does participating in service-learning have on cultural stereotypes? (2) What effect does participating in service-learning have on one's tolerance of other cultures? (3) What effect does participating in service-learning have on one's multicultural awareness?

Literature Review

What is Service- Learning?

"Explain and I'll forget, show me and I'll remember, involve me and I'll understand" (Confucius). This quote sets a foundation to describe service-learning and its implications. According to Kendall, (1990, as cited by Eyler and Giles, 1999) there are 147 definitions in various pieces of literature. Of these definitions, there has not been constancy in the interpretations. Some schools identify service learning as a one -time opportunity working with

the community for the students' orientation; others identify it as a full-year program where the service in the community ties to the curriculum of a course. Kearney (2004) defines service learning as "a pedagogical method in which students provide service to individuals and/or groups, and by doing the service and reflecting on it they from it" (p.1). He further suggests that service-learning can take the form of clinical training, internships, field study, etc. Southern Regional Education (1969) gives a more widely accepted definition, "accomplishment of tasks that meet genuine human needs in combination with conscious educational growth; a marriage of service and learning" (as cited in Oster- Aaland et al., 2004).

Sigmon (1996, as cited by Eyler and Giles, 1999) further explains these various definitions through a diagram, which emphasized the diverse interpretations of service- learning. If learning goals are primary and service outcomes are secondary, the interpretation is service-LEARNING. On the contrary, when service is the primary outcome and learning goals are secondary, it is interpreted as SERVICE-learning. However, when there is no connection between learning goals or service goals, the interpretation is service learning. Lastly, when service and learning goals have the same importance and are completely integrated then it is interpreted as SERVICE-LEARNING.

Implementation

Proper implementation of a service-learning program within an institution is a crucial and deliberate task. Werner (1997) states that, with properly implemented service-learning program the students become more invested. They take more responsibility to gain a greater depth of knowledge. Students tend to go beyond the assignments to best prepare themselves for the community project.

Howard (1993, as cited in Osborne, Weadick, and Penticuff, 1997, p. 131) lists ten key principles to incorporate to implement service- learning.

> (1) academic credit is for learning, not service, (2) the unit does not compromise academic rigor, (3) the faculty member has set learning goals for students, (4) the faculty member has established criteria for the selection of community service placements, (5) the faculty member has provided educationally sound mechanism to harvest the community learning, (6) the unit provides supports for students to learn how to harvest the community learning, (7) the unit minimizes the distinction between students' community learning role and their classroom learning role, (8) the faculty member has rethought the faculty instruction role, (9) the faculty member is prepared for uncertainty and variation student learning outcomes, and (10) the unit maximizes the community responsibility orientation of the course.

Bringle and Hatcher (1996) argue that service- learning is not the same as practicum, field experiences or internships because it has the focus of developing students' professional lives. Contrary to Kearney's interpretation, service-learning should have students "focus on the importance of service within the community and lessons of civic responsibilities" (Bringle and Hatcher, J., 1996, p. 2). They have mapped out a comprehensive plan on how institutions should implement a service-learning curriculum. The Comprehensive Action Plan for Service-Learning (CAPSL) indentified the steps of implementation and what groups of people should be the focus. The four groups are institution, faculty, students, and community. They emphasized that these four groups must be part of the implementation, however, other groups may be involved. The process of implementing a new service-learning program into an institution can be daunting so the CAPSL model introduced a sequence of tasks to help organize the process. Each group is given a sequence of tasks to complete for a successful and sustainable implementation of service-learning. These tasks include: planning, awareness, prototype, resources, expansion, recognition, monitoring, evaluation, research, and institutionalization. Thus, it is the interaction of all four groups engaging

and developing from each task that will instill a successful and sustainable institution based service-learning program.

A major component to the service-learning curriculum is reflection. Eyler (2001) states "reflection is the hyphen in service learning" (p.35). Proper implementation allows for students to reflect and make sense of their experiences. Based on a study of sixty-six college students, writing reflections added more value to the students' experiences (Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede, 1996). In this study, four principles were identified that supported the effectiveness of reflections: (1) reflection must be written throughout the course, (2) it must connect with both the course content and community experience, (3) it should give the opportunity for students to challenge their ideas, thoughts, assumptions, etc. and (4) reflection should be integrated into the course, the reflection activity should be based on the types of contexts, there is not one type of reflection that fits all contexts. Reflection activities can take place before the service-learning to help students identify their assumptions and beliefs. These reflections can be read and reflected upon at the end of the course. In addition, reflection should be written while engaging in the service-learning project. The focus should always revolve around building the foundation and preparing students for their encounters. In the end, the goals of reflection are to assist students create connections between what was learned and experienced, to process their interactions and reactions to situations, and to develop critical thinking skills base on hands-on, real life experiences (Eyler, 2001).

What is Multiculturalism?

Multiculturalism is a state of being where person desires to develop and build their knowledge and skills to feel comfortable to commutate effectively with people from different cultures in any situation (Pusch, 1979). Researchers identified three visions of multiculturalism: conservative, mainstream, and critical (Bensimon, 1994; McLaren, 1995; and Rhoads, 1995 as

cited in Rhodes, 1998). These visions have led institutions to various interpretations on how to create a multicultural campus. Base on the conservative vision, described by Rhodes (1998), the institution holds western views and ideas to a higher regard but will add courses to the curriculum on diverse cultures. Students are exposed and informed but do not reach a level of higher thinking.

Many institutions incorporate the second vision, mainstream multiculturalism. Classes combined with educational experiences will likely expose students to diverse cultures and create a tolerance for diversity. However, this mere tolerance does not "foster the kind of social transformation that enables diverse cultures intentionally to influence the academy as well as the larger society" (Rhodes, 1998, p. 41).

Lastly, critical multiculturalism creates a curriculum to instill experiences where students can transform their ideas when exposed to diverse cultures, not just accommodate their thoughts and ideas. Researchers state that educational goals should create an environment where students are challenged to question and become more knowledgeable of what influences their society, politics, and economics. Through the vision of critical multiculturalism, this goal is achievable (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1992; and Hooks, 1994 as cited in Rhodes, 1998). This vision will develop students to think more critically and about their diverse surroundings and identify connections and influences.

"Balkanization"

"Balkanization" is an issue occurring on diverse campuses. Salz and Trubowitz (1997) have argued that this is a phenomenon where campuses have diverse populations, but great isolation of diverse backgrounds is present. Universities pride themselves on statistics showing a culturally diverse campus, which they assume leads to a pluralistic society. In fact, a pluralistic society is not automatically created by having students from different backgrounds co-exist in

classrooms. In reality, students interact with each other in the classroom for the purpose of the class, but isolate themselves outside the classroom. The areas of college where meaningful relationships build, such as lunch rooms, intramural sports, and student organizations, are the areas where students tend to interact with people from their similar backgrounds (Schofield, 1995 as cited in Slaz and Trubowitz, 1997). This isolation has led to increased cultural tensions and mistrust and to decreased social tolerance (People for the American Way, 1991 as cited by Salz and Trubowitz, 1997).

This phenomenon of "balkanization" has been present on a commuter campus in Queens College in New York. To combat this college-wide phenomenon and to help facilitate a positive and meaningful interactions the college applied Allport's multidimensional model (1954, as cited in Slaz and Trubowitz, 1997). This model described how one should create an environment to reach positive social outcomes. The four factors included (1) multiple opportunities where meaningful interactions can take place, (2) the interactions must be created with equal status, (3) there must be institution and support and (4) the interactions must instill the need in which students are working together for a common goal.

Using this model, Queens College created a service-learning course called the Big Buddy Program. This program allowed students of different backgrounds to work together for a common goal. It naturally allowed students to work close and personally with one another at the same level. The college found that this program was influential on increasing positive feelings in college students from diverse backgrounds.

Reinforcing Stereotypes

Multicultural Service Learning (MSL) is designed using the service-learning philosophy in order to help students learn about race, culture and class (Dunlap, 1998 as cited in Sperling, 2007).

The goal of MSL courses is to provide opportunities for positive interactions between two or more groups of people. The purpose of those interactions is to essentially eliminate stereotypes of "the other" (Green, 2001 at cited in Sperling). Using reflection and discussion, students will hopefully gain a more accurate perception of people from a different race, culture or class.

MSL courses tend to be utilized by white middle to upper class students. The groups of people that the students often work with in their service learning projects are poor Latino and/or Black participants. The diversity among the two groups in the project is created with the hope of eventually minimizing the social distance among them (Green, 2001 as cited in Sperling 2007). A common MSL project is tutoring minority students at disadvantaged schools. Tutoring students appears as a logical choice because of the need that those students have and the convenient location that is often in an urban setting. This project is especially problematic because it has the potential to increase the power difference between the MSL students who are predominately white and the people they are serving who are predominately Latino or Black (Sperling, 2007).

The intention of MSL is to provide a real-life context for students to break down deep-rooted stereotypes and foster quality relationships with people of a different race, culture, or class. The benefit of MSL is supposed to be a two way track: MSL students gain multiculturalism while the recipients gain a service in something they need. Past research conducted on MSL has not utilized appropriate methods to convey their results. This decreases the credibility of reported results. Eyler (2000) argued

> "Although many have made earnest attempts to measure change on latent psychological constructs, their overreliance on transparent self-report questionnaires has made it difficult to determine if participant scores reflect changes in core values and deeply rooted assumptions or merely an ability to learn the 'correct' response over the course of time" (as cited in Sperling, 2007, p. 312).

Students may still be guilty of having stereotypes but are now able to understand the socially

acceptable response to questions about race. The choice of methods is inconsistent among

researches, making results less valid and less generalizable.

Sperling (2007) has argued that

"what should be of most interest is whether MSL can be counted on to be an effective
means of scaffolding White college students toward the highest levels of critical
consciousness and antiracism and what role, if any, Black and Latino children should
have in that process" (p. 313).

An important topic not addressed regarding MSL is whether or not the parents of the underserved

children approve of an unknown college student tutoring their children. The goal of the service

brings more uncertainty to the outcome of MSL. Parents might not feel comfortable having their

children being tutored by students whose primary goal is to gain multiculturalism rather than help

their children learn (Sperling 2007). Practitioners must keep these concerns in mind when

scheduling volunteer sites for service projects. Academics at the underserved schools must also

take into consideration the parents of the children and the goals of the college students when

accepting a service provided by a MSL course.

In order to eliminate stereotypes, students must encounter real experiences and foster

quality relationships with people of a different race, culture, or class. "A handful of scholars have

warned that practitioners may be recreating the same power dynamics at the placement site that

exist in larger society when they place White participants in positions of authority over

racial/ethnic minorities" (Sperling, 2007, p. 315). It is also important that those interactions

contradict the stereotypes of that particular group. If the relationship created is simply a

continuation of the stereotypes present in society, the experience will only reinforce stereotypes

rather than break them down. Sperling argued that when MSL projects occur at underperforming

schools, the MSL students are sent the message that the low academic performance is imbedded in

the community, the children, and their families. Thus, stereotypes of Black and Latinos are reinforced. MSL students should instead take action to eliminate racial stereotypes. Projects should include important components focusing on student's effort to reduce racism, sexism, and classism in society (Sperling, 2007). MSL has the potential to create multiculturalism because students are placed in an environment that is different than their typical experiences. However, multicultural awareness is not guaranteed by these kinds of multicultural courses. Participants need to be prepared to

> "(a) analyze their own racist beliefs and behaviors, especially when it is easy and ego-enhancing for them to see community 'problems' as resulting from person or cultural deficiencies; (b) to work toward helping community members adopt stereotypic White middle-class values and behaviors; and then (c) to celebrate their role in 'solving' social injustice" (Sperling, p. 317).

It is critical for students in MSL course to challenge racism in order for a MSL course to be effective.

Reducing Ethnocentrism

Sumner (1906) defines ethnocentrism as a "view of things in which one's own group is the center of everything, and all other are scaled and rated with reference to it (as cited in Borden, 2007, p. 173). A goal of service-learning is to reduce ethnocentrism by creating social experiences with other groups of people. "Positive correlations were found between ethnocentrism and the frequency of contact with people from different cultures and countries, indicating that increased interaction with culturally diverse persons relates to higher levels of ethnocentrism" (Borden, p. 174). When ethnocentrism is reduced, people are able to not make judgments of others based on their perception of their own group. This allows for a genuine tolerance and understanding of other groups. A goal of a multicultural course would likely be to decrease ethnocentrism so

students are not viewing another culture in their perspective, but appreciating a different culture

base on its own meanings and values.

In order for service-learning to reduce ethnocentrism, the students need to become

thoroughly immersed in a community. By going beyond simple exposure to a different culture,

students will more likely develop empathy for and awareness of another culture (Borden, 2007).

Borden has argued that it is important for students to genuinely explore another culture and

develop interest in other ideas and behaviors. However, service-learning may reinforce stereotypes

if the interaction occurs superficially.

Borden (2007) found that when a group of students participated in an intercultural

communication course and worked with a group culturally different from themselves, their level of

ethnocentrism decreased over the course of the semester. The reduction in ethnocentrism may be

credited to working with the same group of people, engaging in service learning, and serving for

several months.

Reflection is a critical component to service learning because it allows students to actively

learn from their own experiences. Border researched ethnocentrism by analyzing student

reflections. Borden's (2007) "research confirms the value of establishing relationships with those

from different cultures in reducing ethnocentrism, thereby leading to the development of

intercultural competence" (p. 180). Borden's findings also point to the importance of studying

service learning longitudinally because ethnocentrism reduction is most likely to happen when

consistent contact occurs over an extended period of time.

Course Description: Spanish 232, Spanish in the Community

Spanish in the Community, offered at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, is

conducted in a total of four discussion sections. Two teaching assistants teach two discussions

each. The professor who created the course provides additional instruction if the students seek her

help through office hours. The courses main goals are to improve Spanish communication by

familiarizing students with necessary information and providing real life opportunities to

communicate in Spanish. Communication is the core component of this class, emphasizing the

importance of both speaking and listening. Learning objectives include improving students'

language, cultural knowledge, and in a larger sense, understanding immigration in the United

States and what language and culture mean in relation to immigration.

Most students enrolled in the course have never been in a Latino culture. Some students

have studied abroad which is much different environment than a Latino culture within the U.S. and

one's own community. Experiencing Latino culture in the U.S. develops a different understanding

than one would develop abroad.

Spanish in the Community is a Community-Based Learning course. This provides

opportunities for students to volunteer 2 hours per week at a location that serves Spanish-speaking

people in the community. Some of the community-based partnerships include: an elementary

school, a high school, a refugee center, healthcare clinics, boy scouts/girl scouts, catechism classes,

and a childcare resource center. Students choose which partner they would most want to volunteer

with. Past research conducted by the course professor found that students chose community

partners that best fit with their major, future career aspirations, and interests. Students' volunteer

experiences vary depending on what community partner in which they work. Individually,

volunteer experience varies day to day depending on the need of the organization.

Participants include students who are extremely interested in the course and community-

based learning and students who need a Spanish course but may not be extremely interested in the

volunteer aspect. Students with a disinterest in community service who are only seeking Spanish

credit-hours are discouraged to enroll. According to the professor, community-based learning is incorporated in all aspects of the course; there are 30 hours of instruction and 28 hours of community service in a semester. Instruction includes linguistic information and skills useful to their corresponding community partner. For example, students working in an elementary school may need more information on giving basic commands so they can effectively teach children. The class instruction will also provide cultural information such as teaching cultural accepted behaviors and traditions. This information transfers to their community partner experience so they understand cultural differences enough to be sensitive and respectful to the people in which they work.

The class instruction is also a time where students can bring back reflections, questions, and experiences they had in the community and share with the other students in the class. This allows students to work through experiences, possibly to work through potentially reinforced stereotypes. Students are given what they need to be effective in the community, expected to bring back what they have learned, and then helped to work through ideas so they are forming the most useful, appropriate, and correct understanding of a different culture. Class assignments include examinations (25%), class participation (10%), Community-Based Learning participation (15%), reflection (30%), and participation with a radio program (20%).

Method

Spanish in the Community was selected for this research project because it utilized service-learning in its curriculum and was applicable this research project on multicultural awareness. Seventy undergraduate students are enrolled in Spanish 232: Spanish in the Community. After visiting two sections taught by both teaching assistants, students were asked to volunteer for a brief interview regarding their experience with the class and in the community-based learning

experience. Six students volunteered to interview (5 females and 1 male). The ages ranged from 19-23 and students' majors included: Spanish Education, English with a Spanish minor, Spanish, Spanish Education, Advertising with a Spanish Minor, Marketing with a Spanish minor. Their community-based learning project varied: 3 volunteered at a refugee center, 2 volunteered at elementary schools, and 1 volunteered at the Child Care Resource Center.

The professor interviewed first to understand a broad overview of the course and its objectives. Student interviews were conducted with the 6 students who volunteered. Grounded theory was used to analyze their responses, locate reoccurring themes, and examine relationships among themes and data. Data from the interviews were transcribed into Word documents. After reading over the transcriptions, common reoccurring themes were identified and coded in an Excel spreadsheet. Sixteen broad codes were used initially: background, future application, cultural empathy, understated stereotype, direct stereotype, perspective of permanent worker, comfort over time, class connection to community work, client attitude, broadened cultural knowledge, appreciation for own culture, loss of appreciation for own culture, Spanish abilities, appreciation for diversity, and personal growth. After further analysis the codes were condensed into six overarching themes, encompassing the information from the related codes. The main themes identified were: cultural empathy, broadened cultural knowledge, cultural appreciation, perspective gains, effect on stereotypes, and limitations to the class.

Results

Qualitative analysis was used to examine themes that emerged from the student interviews. Six over-arching themes were developed: cultural empathy, broadened cultural knowledge, cultural appreciation, perspective gains, effect on stereotypes, and limitations to the class.

Cultural Empathy

All students identified acquiring cultural empathy through their service-learning experiences. This over-arching theme was identified through statements of personal growth and direct comments of cultural empathy. Students stated that it challenged their weaknesses, their perspectives reviewed with a new light, their attitudes were transformed, and their knowledge of other individuals' challenges grew.

Bob shared that his opinion of his project transformed, as he understood the humanistic aspect of his work. Bob, working at the Child Care Resource Center, was assigned to translate a training manual of how to open a day care. He stated that this was not his favorite task, and he saw it as a mundane. However, as he continued to engage in his project he stated:

> " So, it is kinda like a change of attitude that is definitely positive… Like everybody is going to need help in some way. So, kinda broadening your perceptions on the communities."

Linda was able to see first hand the challenges that are associated with being an immigrant when working at the refugee center she stated:

> "I knew it was really difficult for these refugees and that they had to jump through a ton of hoops. But, I don't think I realized to what extent it was. Even things like making doctor's appointments… Just some of the lack of cooperation they feel from working with the state or the country as a whole, to have those little things going on. I'm also hearing these larger issues they are facing when I'm listening to the news, to know they have all of that going through their head every single day and with a lot of them trying to learn a new language on top of that, I'm just completely in awe."

This statement shows the growth of empathy Linda has for the culture of an immigrant. The experience increased Linda's knowledge of the government system and how it affects the immigrants. She also was able to acknowledge the fact that the immigrants not only face the challenges of the government system but the challenges of learning a new language.

Another student, Kate, encountered two challenges that she was not expecting, (1) the need for necessities and (2) language as a barrier. Kate stated:

"And I was like what are these things (blankets and clothes) for and they said people need these things… I guess I didn't realize that language could be such a barrier (referring to a situation when one client was not being treated fairly by their landlord); I mean I did understand that. I mean in my mind I wouldn't rip somebody off because they didn't understand English, other people would and they do."

This experience opened her eyes to see what the issues and challenges the immigrant culture can face because of the negative influences of society.

Lastly, Megan was able to empathize with the paperwork process of immigrating to the United States. In addition, Megan identified how the marginalization of some immigrants due to the language barrier and lack of societal culture rules. Megan explained:

"I am realizing how much paperwork people go through in immigration. All the documents you have to sign and translate and the adversities and how slow the government is… I am seeing more of the legal side of it… To see how the immigrants can be marginalized, I guess because they are not speaking a lot of English or because sometimes not knowing all the different cultural rules of America."

Cultural Empathy is a theme that each student possessed. They were able to identify the various aspects of cultural challenges and struggles that immigrants face.

Broadened Cultural Knowledge

To identify if students increased their cultural knowledge we analyzed their background, their comfort levels through the duration of their program, general increases in their cultural knowledge, and their future applications. Of the six students interviewed, two students never had many experiences in diverse cultures; three students have travelled abroad through study abroad programs or as a missionary trip. One student identified that she has been surrounded by different

cultures but never encountered poverty. Students expressed in some way the gains in cultural knowledge acquired through their service-learning experiences.

For example, Bob was creating a survey to elicit information the organization needed to request for more funding and was translating a day care manual. Through these projects, he had to place himself in the mindset of his clients to ensure he was creating questions that would elicit the responses needed and translate to ensure the phrases made sense to his population. Bob said:

> "I think just having to keep in mind, when creating this survey and translating this day
> care manual, just think of how someone could read it. Putting myself in, if I were this
> person, what information will I need the most? So how can I present the information to
> them? So, just putting myself into that mindset."

Students have identified that by having direct encounters instead of just reading or discussing a situation helped create a different perspective. Grace said:

> "I think it definitely has (broadened cultural knowledge) we are there working with the
> kids so you have better relationships with them. Which you like, understand them better.
> Like, instead of looking at a situation and trying to understand it by looking at it, you
> look at the situation with them. It's a different point of view I guess."

The students identified that their experience in the community has future applications in their lives. Two of the students will be able to apply this experience in their future endeavor of study abroad. The experience has increased their Spanish abilities and increased their knowledge of different cultures. Patty said: "So it's been really helpful because next semester I'm going to Spain." Two students indicated that this experience either encouraged them or reinforced their desire to volunteer in a diverse setting in the future. For example, Megan said:

> "Next semester I would like to continue it by like volunteering in the Latino and Latina
> Boys and Girls Club and help in that way so I can talk more and get more vested."

Students have also indicated that this experience has influenced their post- graduation aspirations. Megan also stated:

> " When I graduate I kinda want to teach, aide in adult education class. Because, one day I helped this 60 something person teach English, they were so sweet and so patient and it was really rewarding."

Cultural Appreciation

Students' experiences in the community were transferred to an appreciation (or non-appreciation) of one's own culture. These levels of appreciation led to an overall appreciation for diversity as a whole. By interacting with people first hand, students began to notice how fortunate they are and how accepting their own culture can be. Linda reflected on how simple things like making a doctors appointment can be done very quickly for her, however it is timelier and more complicated for a person who does not speak English to get information translated and coordinate with hospitals about appointments. This understanding showed that Linda was able to empathize with the clients she worked with and reflect back on her own experiences in relation to the difficulties that her clients have. She demonstrated critical thinking by creating this form of comparison and analysis.

In addition to appreciating everyday cultural activities, Megan noted how accepting our country can be of others:

> "…we read articles in the class and see how other countries treat immigrants and they want their immigrants to be treated so well in American but when you look at that country's system it is worse than ours…It was a great positive impact on me…It made me appreciate what I have."

Class readings and discussion complimented Bob's experience in the community, providing external information that aided in the comparison of his own country with that of an immigrant's. This comparison allowed the student to appreciate how accepting America is to immigrants. Specifically in comparison to other countries Megan reflected on the security felt in America:

> "A lot of countries are war torn and there are kids out there that they know nothing but war, they have no electricity and a lot of violence. We don't have to worry if our government is going to be there tomorrow. I just appreciate what we have here."

This example showed that Megan has the ability to comprehend the differences between countries and develop an appreciation for the environment and government system in the U.S.

Contrary to the increase in appreciation of one's own culture that some students experienced, Kate demonstrated a decrease in appreciation when considering knowledge of labor raids and the lack of acceptance among U.S. citizens:

> "It is awful because they are ripping families apart, the children are left behind, and whatever happens is never positive...there are a huge percentage of people who don't care and they are never going to make an effort to make people feel more welcome into this country."

Kate's experience with the class and developing a broader cultural knowledge has created a negative association with the United States.

An appreciation for diversity as a whole developed when students were able to use their experiences to form an appreciation or an alternative perspective to their own culture. Grace said:

> "I think they have a great opportunity to go to school with mixed cultures…like with Spanish speaking kids and English speaking kids and they all play together on the playground with so many differences."

Grace described how she wished she would have had those diverse experiences when she was in school. Megan described how the community can benefit from diversity:

"The international community is a positive thing because it kind of forces the

Champaign-Urbana community to broaden their horizons and prepare their students for

that larger work world by being bilingual. So being bilingual at a young age is positive."

This shows that experience volunteering in a diverse environment helped to foster a belief that

diversity is an impactful and an important component to communities and real-world experiences.

Perspective Gains

Perspective gains, as a theme, involves a students' ability to recognize other people's

personal characteristics and attitudes. Students specifically noticed the attitudes of the clients and

permanent workers at their volunteer site. When students recognized those positive attitudes they

were motivated to emulate them. They also developed information applicable to their future. Often

their recognition of the permanent workers responsibilities involved appreciation and admiration of

how much time and energy those workers put into their careers. Grace said of her experience

working with elementary education students:

"I am majoring in Secondary Spanish Education and for a while I was regretting not

doing Elementary Spanish Education but when I had been tutoring the students I work

with in reading I know that is not what I want to do because it is so frustrating. It's so

frustrating when they make up words, like the word will start with 'a' and they will just

start guessing, like they won't read it, and they tell me stories when looking at pictures

instead of reading it."

Grace has taken on a perspective of an elementary teacher. Not only has this experience reinforced

her career decision for the future, it has also made her realize how much work and patience it takes

to be an elementary teacher at a bilingual school.

Linda, who volunteered at the refugee center, discussed her perception of the permanent

workers:

"I didn't think they would affect me so much but I just can't believe that they give their

time to this all, they don't have the kind of training that would you have to have to be

able to do this legal process. It's pretty much just them wanting to help then learning

what it takes, then they just help other people do it all the time. They are so willing, I think this one lady working with Vietnamese people spent like seven hours at the doctors office with this one woman to help translate…after the surgery she just stayed with her to comfort her because the woman was distraught. They have such an appreciation for the cultural differences which is amazing."

Linda was surprised by how impacted she was by the permanent workers. She took on the perspective of the worker and realized how much they help the people in need and how selflessly they do it. Bob, who volunteered at the Child Care Resource Center, had a similar experience:

"I was surprised to see how much work they (permanent workers) really need to do. Like not the quantity but how necessary it is in the community and how much people appreciate it. It definitely showed me how important community service is."

By understanding the strong need of the community; Bob was able to justify the importance of community service. He will likely take this experience as motivation to continue community service in the future.

Not only did students understand the perspective of the workers' attitude, they also observed the characteristics of the clients they served. Patty said:

"I just kind of learned to take a step back again and view something so different than I had ever seen before and learned to kind of accept differences and they were very accepting of me coming to help them and it just worked out really well because of the acceptance level and the respect I have gotten from the teachers and also the students."

Patty took the positive, accepting attitudes she observed and emulated them in her own characteristics.

Effects on Stereotypes

All students were asked if they thought their participation in the community reinforced stereotypes of the people they worked with. The responses were mixed with two students saying it did, one saying it contradicted a stereotype, and three saying it did not. Stereotypes are an important issue in service-learning because service-learning has the potential to expose students to

only one segment of a population.   In this class for example, students are working primarily with Spanish-speaking people who are Hispanic, poor, in need of help, speak little or no English, struggle with school, and have personal or family problems. That segment of the Spanish-speaking population can be considered a stereotype. Therefore students are only developing opinions and experiences with one small segment of the entire Spanish-speaking population. This single-sided experience has the potential to reinforce stereotypes of Spanish-speaking people, most often Hispanics.

Due to the interview process it is suspected that some students chose to say socially acceptable responses, claiming that no stereotypes were reinforced. The socially acceptable responses are assumed because essentially the majority of people that the students worked with are real-life examples of Hispanic stereotypes. When directly asked if the community work reinforced stereotypes Patty said "…not for me I mean". Later in a discussion about what she learned from the course Patty explained:

> "It's kind of made me appreciate a lot of things I had growing up that a lot of these kids
> will never know and just how some if the kids who are struggling and I never had to that
> struggle. And trying to learn two different languages…the students are trying to work
> and trying to understand and they are having family issues at the same time that I
> wouldn't even understand"

This description of the children that Patty worked with could be considered a stereotype of Hispanics and is only one segment of the Hispanic population. This is evidence of stereotype reinforcement. Because Patty claimed to not see stereotypes reinforced in her volunteer work then later described the children she works with in such a manner similar to a stereotype, it is assumed she answered the interview question in a socially acceptable manner. Although Patty may not hold

stereotypic associations with Hispanic people, being in an environment with only one segment of a population has the potential to reinforce stereotypes.

Not all stereotypes that could be reinforced are necessarily negative. Linda said, when asked about reinforced stereotypes:

"A lot of their family values and their strong ties to their family. Like the example of the grandson coming with his grandfather and spending the entire day and went with us to the office…the people who come in automatically start talking about their families…I think that says something about their cultural appreciation for their family, that close nit group."

Although this stereotype is not a negative one, it is still categorizing a segment of the Hispanic population into one description.

Megan dealt with a situation where a Spanish-speaking person was unfairly charged by their landlord. The landlord was able to this because the Spanish-speaking person had poor English and was unaware of the unfair charges. Megan noticed a stereotype of white lower class being reinforced in this situation:

"The owner of the trailer park was prejudice…and people that are racist can sometimes come from the lower class and can hold onto racisms as a sense of identity. They are like 'I'm white and I am superior', in spite of their own economic disparity that they experience, it makes the racism feel more like superiority…a sense of self-value. It kind of reinforced that stereotype by seeing this lady where I work and seeing that she was racist and falling under the stereotype."

Although some students saw stereotypes reinforced, Kate said: "I feel that everything I learned shoots against stereotypes because even though I didn't have any (stereotypes), it (service-learning) builds against anything anyone would ever say." Again, this response is questionable

due to the possibility that Kate was responding with a socially acceptable answer rather than the truth.

Limitations to the Class

Student interviews indicated that certain factors may hinder the students' potential to acquire a well-rounded, meaningful experience. Based on statements from the students, it is concluded that most of the in-class time and some student's lower Spanish abilities decreased the effectiveness of the service-learning experience.

Some students expressed that certain instances in the classroom assisted the students with their community experience. For example, Bob stated:

> "Probably, just going back to the classroom part and hearing what other people have done
> and what other people are doing. So, I am able to see what interactions they have come
> into contact with and their reactions."

However, the majority of the students found that the in-class time was not relevant to their community experience. Kate indicated:

> "My problem is that I don't think the class time reflects the community… You are
> learning stuff that you are not ever going to apply to what you are learning in the
> community."

Grace also responded by stating:

> "We have to like, follow the book and it's just random stuff. We concentrate on stuff like
> learning our numbers and like last week we looked at a census of Champaign, and
> different counties and I don't know what we were suppose to get out of it. Just very
> random."

Research states that the reflection is the foundation of service learning. In the interview students expanded on the types of reflections they were assigned to complete for class. The statements were not positive, as they did not find that these assignments tied back to their community experiences. Kate described the reflections:

> "We have six reflections. They are not based on the community. Like one is based on viewing a U-tube video, regarding about the issues on the U.S. education system. I agree with a lot of those things but is it really dealing with the community?"

Grace explained, "We have to do reflections but in class we barely talk about it."

The other factor that hinders the effectiveness of this experience is the lack of students' Spanish abilities. If students' Spanish abilities are weak, it may be more difficult for them to interact in their service experience compared to students with stronger Spanish abilities. Megan expressed that she wished she had more verbal encounters but because of her Spanish abilities, she was not given opportunities that would lead to such encounters. Megan said:

> "I don't think that my boss gave me many responsibilities, but my Spanish isn't amazing. I would say that because of my Spanish abilities I was limited in what I can do, like filing, answering phones. I didn't get a whole lot of interactions with the people."

<div align="center">Discussion</div>

Cultural Empathy

"A goal of education is to challenge students to become knowledgeable of the social, political, and economic forces that have shaped their lives and the lives of others" (Freire, 1970; Giroux, 1992; Hooks, 1994 as cited in Rhodes, 1998 p. 41). This Spanish course has achieved this goal in most contexts. Students found themselves questioning the system in which their "clients" struggled. In some instances, because the students had real life encounters, they began to question the beliefs about documented verse undocumented individuals. If the course were classroom based with case studies readings, the internal struggle and questioning would not have been created. The fact that the students were engaging with true individuals and saw that the government polices they heard on the news were affecting real people, placed a sense of urgency to learn and to have a better understanding of the issues that would not have been otherwise created or developed in a stand alone classroom setting.

Broaden Cultural Knowledge

The immersion that the students experienced allowed students to increase their knowledge of other cultures. Base on the study in Queens College, the exposure of working with a diverse group of people allowed the students to see the difference yet the likeness among each other's cultures. This realization helped the students of Queens College decrease cross-cultural tension. The increase of cultural understanding can presumably have an effect on future reactions individuals may have in various situations, for example traveling abroad, being a minority in a group setting, etc. The students of this class now have a broader understanding of their social environment and who lives in their community. Students started to transform, at the beginning of the semester, they were uncomfortable and did not know how to act or even react in their volunteer setting. These experiences have given students the tools to open their eyes to other cultures and not only accept them but allow another culture to transform their own beliefs. These experiences have aligned with Rhodes (1998) vision of critical multiculturalism, where the student begins to transform instead of just understanding.

Cultural Appreciation

Students' work in the community provided experiences that shaped their appreciation of their own culture. This new level appreciation, whether it has increased or decreased, was a result of a broadened cultural knowledge. Having a better understanding of all cultures allowed students to create a more reflective view of their own culture. The combination of broadening cultural knowledge and developing a different level of appreciation for one's own culture led to an overall appreciation for diversity. In connection with Borden's (2007) research, students did show a decrease in ethnocentrism by not simply viewing a culture by their own perspective but by appreciating a culture based on its own meaning and values. Although difficult to administer in a

home-based undergraduate course, as suggested that the Spanish in the Community class provide a more thorough immersion into Spanish culture because, as recommended by Borden, this will most likely develop an optimum level of empathy, awareness, and a genuine appreciation of another culture.

Perspective Gains

Students were able to take on a perspective of the permanent workers and the clients because they were actively participating in the community. Those perspectives helped students to recognize the positive attitudes of the workers and clients. Students would be less likely to develop such a thorough understanding of the permanent workers' hard effort if the students only learned from an in-class environment. Students would also not experience the positive attitudes that the clients displayed and not witness the appreciation that the clients showed. Students experienced critical multiculturalism because their learning process went beyond accommodating their ideas to a new culture (Rhodes, 1998). The students internalized the attitudes they witnessed, recognized perspectives of the people they worked with, and eventually transformed their own behaviors and thoughts as a result. It is the community-based service experience that allowed students to develop this new way of thinking.

By the results of the perspective gain students are motivated. The positive attitudes impacted the students by motivating them to display similar behavioral and mental characteristics. Also, the hard work demonstrated by the permanent workers and the grateful attitude displayed by the clients will likely cause the students to aspire to be strong community leaders. These service-learning experiences foster a positive future for the students as civic volunteers.

Effects of Stereotypes

The students' responses about stereotypes were mixed; therefore it is difficult to make strong conclusions about whether or not service-learning in the Spanish in the Community class did reinforce stereotypes. After analyzing the responses it appears that the experience in the community does have the potential to reinforce stereotypes for some students. It is important that the students develop meaningful relationships and spend quality time with the people in which they work.

In congruence with Sperling's (2007) work, the students in this course may be involved in an unequal power dynamic because they are mostly white middle-class students providing aid to mostly Hispanic lower-class. The students may not be developing the quality relationships and critical thinking skills to understand that not all Hispanic people can be placed into a single category. Sperling emphasized the need to have quality relationships with people who contradict stereotypes of that particular group. He also discussed the importance of reflecting on issues of racism, students' own beliefs about it, and the ability to take action in trying to solve social injustices. It is suggested that this course develop a better reflection component to help students work through those conflicting ideas about stereotypes and racism. Combining past research with our results, it is recommended that this course can make great strides in counteracting stereotypes by incorporating components recommended by Sperling and creating a comfortable environment to discuss stereotype issues.

Limitations to the Class

Werner (1998) stated that service-learning would encourage students to take more responsibility to gain a greater depth of knowledge. This study supports Werner's work, but the students' ability to expand their knowledge base was stunted by the structure of the classroom. The students seemed eager and interested to learn and absorb more, but they found minimal

connection to what they were learning in the classroom to what they were doing in the community. According to Howard's (1993) ten principles to incorporate when implementing service-learning "the unit provides supports for students to learn how to harvest the community learning" and the unit minimizes the distinction between students' community learning roles and their classroom learning role" (as cited in With Service in Mind, 1998, p.131). Based on this research, these principles were not thoroughly applied in the Spanish in the Community course. The classroom and the community experiences are not well integrated and a division is apparent.

Lastly, the professor has incorporated reflection, what Eyler (2001) calls the hyphen in service-learning. However, it does not seem to follow the four principles, which Eyler has identified. According to the students' statements, the assigned reflections do not follow the principle saying that there must be a connection between the class content and community experience. Nor does it seem to follow the principle in which reflection must challenge the students' ideas, thoughts, assumptions, etc. This research suggests a reevaluation of the classroom component of the course. The curriculum should be adjusted in order to support the learning outcomes of the community and to emphasize reflection of community work experiences.

Limitations

Various factors placed limitations on this study. Timing brought two factors. One factor, the study started mid semester, therefore we were unable to conduct pre-service-learning interviews. These interviews could have assisted in developing a better sense of growth and change. In addition, due to the breath of the study, there were only six interviewees; therefore confounding factors may be present in the study. The students interviewed were volunteers, which caused selectivity, this begs the question: are these students more likely to engage and have effectiveness from the program compared to the students who did not volunteer. In addition to

selectivity, course selection was also a limitation. The University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign does not have an extensive array of true service-learning course that was conducive for this study. Lastly, the study was unable to observe the students, which raised the concern that the students were responding to the questions in a socially acceptable manner. If the study allowed more time to observe the students, the results and conclusions would be more reliable.

Conclusion

As a result of this research, three arguments were apparent. Stereotypes were reinforced as a result of improper implementation of the in-class portion of the course. It was found that as time passed, students' level of comfort increased which led to an increased tolerance of other cultures. Lastly, engagement in the community through service-learning caused the students to increase their multicultural awareness. Intentional curriculum planning is an imperative component to an effective and sustainable service-learning course. Therefore it is suggested that the Spanish in the Community course implement an intentional curriculum. For example, reflection activities should be created with the purpose of gradually increasing the students' awareness of their transformation. In order for peak development, an environment should be created where students can reflect on their experiences in the community and challenge their ideas, beliefs, and assumptions. Specifically, it is recommended that the Spanish in the Community course incorporate reflections with a close connection to their community work. Also, in-class coursework and volunteer experience should be fully integrated. By implementing these suggestions, students will be more likely to reach their optimum level of development and increase their level of multicultural awareness.

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