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Service Learning and Urban Schools: A Method for Developing Attitudes Reflective of Social Responsibility

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**SERVICE LEARNING AND URBAN SCHOOLS:
A METHOD FOR DEVELOPING ATTITUDES REFLECTIVE
OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY**

By

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ABSTRACT

SERVICE LEARNING AND URBAN SCHOOLS: A METHOD FOR DEVELOPING ATTITUDES REFLECTIVE OF SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

By

Julianne Price

This study looks at the development of attitudes that reflect social responsibility in a service learning project in two urban elementary schools. The researcher analyzed the content of the written journals of 13 university student participants. Five themes were identified: the importance of participation, social structural understanding, making a difference, empathetic understanding, and continuing community service.

There was a significant relationship between the importance of participation and making a difference, $r = .72$. Students who felt it was important to participate also felt that they were making a difference. There was a moderate relationship between empathetic understanding and social structural understanding, $r = .45$, and a moderate relationship between the importance of participation and continuing community service, $r = .40$.

Service learning projects are designed to address the needs of communities while educating university student participants about the social issues that influence those communities. The development of social responsibility will have a long-term impact on urban communities, as socially responsible individuals tend to continue community service, and community service can effectively address some issues of urban communities.

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DEDICATION

To my mother, Verna, for her love, guidance, and encouragement through the years
and to my son, Gregory Antoine, who is a source of joy and inspiration

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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

Programs designed to provide strong linkages between the theoretical principles of the classroom and the practical application that hands-on involvement can provide are categorized as service learning. The working definition of service learning used for this study is taken from Stanton (1987, p. 4), who states: "Service learning is an approach to experiential learning, an expression of values — service to others, community development, reciprocal learning — which determines the purpose, nature and process of social and educational exchange between learners and the people they serve, and between experiential education programs and the community organizations with which they work."

This definition encompasses the unique nature of service learning projects, in that each project is tailored according to the needs of the community, the needs of the participants who come into the community to serve, and the resources available. There is not a singular formula for the design of a service learning project. Each project is designed according to the specifications of the community's need and the resources available within and outside of the community. It is this linkage between classroom and community, between theory and practice, and between action and reflection that provides the foundation for service learning.

The involvement of university students in community-based programs is not a new phenomenon. Community service programs are designed to meet a community need, rather than being focused toward the academic enrichment of the service providers. Community service programs that have evolved into service learning are strengthened not only by providing a service to the community, but by developing attitudes within the university service learning participant that reflect social responsibility.

The study of the development of attitudes reflective of social responsibility can provide a basis for understanding the long-term effects of service learning on the university service learning participant. The service learning model as a collaborative intervention has been shown to have an impact on student attitudes (Ouellette, 1992). The ways in which these attitudes are formed provide the research question as to the effectiveness of service learning projects in developing student attitudes that reflect social responsibility.

Attitudes for the purposes of this study will be defined as evaluative judgments or reactions to an object, person, or issue, expressed positively or negatively, and having a potential effect on future conduct (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). Attitudes are made up of beliefs, based on information gathered about people, objects or issues. The more information is provided, the stronger the beliefs; and the more elaborate the belief system, the more enduring the attitude will be. Therefore, when seeking to form attitudes, it is important to provide enough information for beliefs to be well developed, thereby strengthening the attitudes.

There are several components to the definition of social responsibility. First, social responsibility is described as "an orientation toward others as the basis of citizenship" (Giles & Eyer, 194, p.5). This orientation to others is a process that occurs over time, and it involves more than one volunteer experience. It is best described as a philosophy of giving, much like philanthropy. Socially responsible individuals believe that they have a responsibility to provide volunteer service to others in need as an expression of their commitment to good citizenship in a democratic society.

Second, social responsibility goes beyond the need to contribute service and time, reflecting an understanding of the underlying causes of the social issues involved in the service project. Students not only recognize that the population they serve is in poverty, but they also understand the causes and effects of poverty. Third, social responsibility is a sustained interest in community involvement after the project is completed. Fourth, social responsibility includes the belief that individuals can make a difference. Socially

responsible individuals believe that they can make an impact on the personal lives of the population that they serve and that their efforts make a difference.

This fourth point can also be expanded to include social activism, because service learning projects have been used to change the social and physical structures of some communities. Service learning university participants exhibit a greater understanding of the social structural issues that impact the communities they serve. The students understand community needs and issues from a "why" perspective and not just a "what" perspective. For example, most students would be able to discern the existence of poverty, but few could adequately discuss why it exists. Participation in service learning programs could provide the linkage between the definition of community needs and their causes and solutions. Once students understand not only what the needs are, but also the causes of those needs, they can progress intelligently toward developing solutions.

Statement of the Problem

Research on the humanitarian outcomes derived from service learning participation has been scarce. The university student is often engaged in a community service project or a service learning project for course credit or as a prerequisite to employment. Outcomes such as "time spent" or "tasks completed" are easily measured. Students complete the service and receive the credit; or students enhance their resumes for employment by documenting their participation in the community service project. The service learning design creates outcomes that are not directly related to the attainment of a degree or of employment, and are not as easily documented. Ideally, a university degree program will lead not only to intellectual development and employment for students, but also to the development of socially responsible citizens who will sustain the democratic society (Stanton, 1987). The study of social responsibility and its relationship to service learning could provide a framework for the development of citizenship (Giles & Eyer, 1994; Kendall, 1990; Stanton, 1987).

This study will take an episodic look at the development of social responsibility within one service learning project. It will address the relationship between service learning participation and social responsibility to determine if the use of a service learning design has an effect on the development of attitudes that reflect social responsibility. In utilizing a service learning design, it is assumed that students will become more knowledgeable about the needs of the urban community.

For the purposes of this study, the university students who participated in the service learning project will be referred to as "university service learning participants." The term "student" is used generically to refer to a student in any educational context.

Need For The Study

In addressing the needs of urban schools and communities, the university is being challenged to find viable solutions and practical answers to social problems that are beyond the rhetoric of theory (Stanton, 1987). Service learning is an experience-based educational strategy that combines theory-based coursework with practice-based community service to address the expressed needs of communities.

The development of university-sponsored service learning programs is one method that can be used to make education relevant to the resolution of social problems by impacting the attitudes of the university service learning participant. Although service learning can be used to address many social issues, the focus of this research will be the issue of reducing violence in urban elementary schools (School Violence Spreads, 1994) and the impact of the project design on the development of attitudes reflecting social responsibility in the university service learning participants.

A service learning curriculum can equip students, educators, and communities with a program designed not only to resolve social issues, but to foster a sense of social responsibility in the participants. This attribute of social responsibility may have long-term social and political implications for social policy. Research has indicated that students who

engage in service learning projects are less likely to hold to stereotypes about social service/welfare clients (Giles & Eyster, 1994). Service learning programs provide students, educators, and communities with a hands-on, interactive, reality-based and community-based method of problem solving through an academically enhanced community service model.

The service learning curriculum is adaptable to most community service projects (Kendall, 1990; Stanton, 1987). This researcher utilized a program that had already been established cooperatively between two elementary schools, the community, and the university. The researcher's primary interest was in the outcomes afforded the university service learning participant and the effect of the participant's experience in developing attitudes reflecting social responsibility. Superimposing the service learning method on an existing program called for the addition of academic content to the university's community service project, with the goal of impacting university service learning participants' attitudes toward the children, school, and community they were to serve.

The university, in collaboration with an urban school district, had developed a community service project that would utilize university students to assist with conflict mediation programs in elementary schools. The university students would provide expertise and staffing for the mediation program and receive course credit via an independent study option through the Communication Department. The purpose of the original community service project was to assist in the administration of the conflict mediation program, while the service learning project was developed to measure outcomes specific to university service learning participants. The goal of the service learning project was to familiarize the university service learning participants with the needs of the community while they assisted with the conflict mediation program.

It was hypothesized that the university students would gain an understanding of the causes and effects of poverty in children's lives and become acquainted with the cultural diversity in urban school settings. The researcher hypothesized that the university service

learning participants' belief systems would be impacted and that their attitudes would be affected as they gained insight into the effects of poverty. The goal was to engage the university students in critical thinking and problem solving regarding the project while developing in them a sense of social responsibility. One method of assessing social responsibility was a content analysis of written project journals to determine student attitude formation across the continuum of a service learning project.

Chapter II

RELATED RESEARCH

To present a clear picture of the design of the service learning project, this chapter will provide background on the key components of this study. First, there is a review of the historical background of service learning. Second, the process of integrating community need into the service learning project will be discussed, including a comprehensive description of the school conflict mediation program that served as the community service project for the university service learning participants in this study. Third, the literature on social responsibility as an outcome of service learning participation is reviewed. Fourth, the development of attitudes and their measurement is discussed.

Service Learning

In discussing program efforts that intentionally pair community service with academics, the literature presents at least 147 descriptions of the combination of service and learning (Kendall, 1990). This approach that combines service and academics has a history spanning two decades (Kendall, 1990). The contemporary service learning movement, however, has a design that differs from the earlier community service models (Kendall, 1990; Stanton, 1987). Although community service has historically been linked to the social improvement of the population served, community service has not been considered in the assessment of educational outcomes—critical thinking, reflection, problem solving, or attitude change—in the university service learning participant.

Service learning has come into focus nationally with the signing into law of the National Community Service Trust Act, which created the Corporation for National and Community Service in 1993. The mission of the corporation is to engage Americans of all

ages in community-based service. This service agenda is designed to address the nation's educational, public safety, human, and environmental needs—to achieve direct and demonstrable results.

The Michigan Department of Education applied for a \$725,795 grant to support these projects statewide. A national agenda such as this provides support for educators who are pushing for curriculum changes in school systems throughout the United States.

To understand the development of this particular service learning project, it is important to understand the history of the concept of service learning in general. The development of service learning is linked to the educational learning strategy known as experiential education . There are four curriculum designs that qualify as experiential education, according to Weil and McGill (1989). Weil and McGill portray these designs metaphorically as four different types of villages. They make the point that it is only through the exploration of all the villages that one can understand one's village of preference. Although the authors do not detail their rationale for the use of the term "village," the villages they describe conjure up the image of communities that are unique and defined by the participants. Just as villages in the physical world are linked by common human needs, so the conceptual villages of experiential education are linked by a common intent—practice-based learning.

In the design of experiential learning programs, there is agreement on certain objectives that are distinctive to experiential learning in higher education and continuing education programs. Weil and McGill (1989) define these objectives as:

- A better understanding of what theory learned from reading or lectures might mean in actual practice.
- Reflection on prior experience in relation to new ideas and information.
- An active consideration of the implications of research in the context of a real-life situation.

- The assimilation and application of intellectual understanding to actual problems.
- The consideration of a particular constellation of professional assumptions from the perspective of a specific social or occupational group.
- The integration of a variety of disciplinary or meaning perspectives in relation to a real-life problem.
- Reframing modes of perception and response to particular situations.
- Reflection upon and appraisal of personal and occupational goals from alternative vantage points.
- A more self-aware approach to professional practice.
- A deeper understanding of one's own feelings in certain situations, and of the limitations of one's own understanding and practice.
- A recognition of how institutional, social, and cultural factors may cause individuals to act in ways that contradict personal and professional intentions.
- An awareness of how personal values and meanings influence perceptions and choices of action.
- Actual experience of industry and commerce and social change groups, for example, and personal experience of how they operate.
- Opportunities to experience different kinds of values and assumptions in action, in relation to particular activities and enterprises.

The key element of experiential learning and service learning is that these approaches enable the learner to bridge the gap between the philosophical and theoretical classroom and the dynamic and practical world outside. It forces students, not only to expand their thought processes, but to become physically involved in the learning process, utilizing a majority of the senses to increase learning.

Service learning has two distinct approaches (Stanton, 1987). The first approach suggests that service learning is simply another version of experiential education, much like

field study. The second approach views service learning as a philosophical approach to education that encompasses all areas of experiential education.

The curriculum of service learning starts in the community, and the needs of the community become the subject matter around which the service learning curriculum is structured. The student has power over the learning process in this educational model, as the student chooses the types of service learning programs in which he/she wants to engage. The educator John Dewey (1902) believed that if education is to be effective, it must place the locus of control for learning within the student by making learning relevant to the needs of the student. Learning theorists agree that learning is increased when students have a need to know and are motivated (McKeachie, 1994). Service learning, by its design, provides both control and relevance for the student.

The classroom teacher becomes the conduit through which the academic subject is expressed, and the community provides the practical application. The classroom teacher is also responsible for the creation of the learning environment and the design of a service learning curriculum that will fit the needs of the service learning students and the community. McPherson and Nebgen (1991) stated that well-designed service learning programs create a natural link between schooling and issues and questions relevant to students and the community.

Service learning can be characterized as life-centered learning and not school-centered learning. Traditionally, schools are the physical places of learning, and most formal learning takes place within the structure of the classroom. The service learning curriculum advocates that, because learning is a process, it can and does occur in a multitude of environments (Dewey, 1900). The service learning instructor is a facilitator who integrates life experiences into the curriculum, thereby making education relevant to daily living.

Effective service learning programs as defined by Kendall (1990) have shown that participants:

- Develop a habit of critical reflection on their experiences, enabling them to learn more throughout life.
- Are more curious to learn.
- Are able to perform better service.
- Strengthen their ethic of social and civic responsibility.
- Feel committed to addressing the underlying problems behind social issues.
- Understand problems in a more complex way and can imagine alternative solutions.
- Demonstrate more sensitivity as to how decisions are made and how institutional decisions affect people's lives.
- Respect others' cultures more.
- Are better able to learn about cultural differences.
- Learn how to work collaboratively with other people on real problems.
- Realize that their lives can make a difference.

These benefits have been shown to exist in all types of service learning programs and to span age, race, and gender.

In designing effective service learning programs it is important to integrate the practical tasks with the area of academic emphasis, so that the participants receive the benefits of the theory-to-practice continuum. The following are examples of practical tasks with the theoretical framework or course of study listed in parentheses. Integrated tasks for students who provide community service at a homeless shelter could include: maintain a journal (writing); advocate by giving speeches (communication); study the history of poverty (history, economics, social studies); produce a play (art); or design a new shelter (architecture, math). There are as many possibilities as the instructor and students can generate.

The service learning curriculum is primarily concerned with the practical application of the theoretical in a real-life situation. The projects are reality-based, and students are actively engaged in an interaction with the social issues rather than passively reading about them. The service learning curriculum also requires that the students process the experience verbally in small group reflection sessions and by keeping a journal. The projects are designed around the needs and interests of the students and the needs of the communities they will serve. For example, a group of students in an industrial arts class built a special wheelchair for a disabled 18-month-old child. Their project provided a real-life solution to a real-life problem. It became more than a group of sample problems at the end of a chapter in a textbook. Many students question the relevance of formal education in their daily lives, and service learning can provide a viable and definitive response to such questions.

There exists a need for further research on methods for involving universities in the problems that exist in urban schools. The implementation of a service learning curriculum at the university level is one way of addressing this need. Projects are designed to create a reciprocal learning environment that not only benefits the community receiving the services, but actively educates the university service learning participant regarding social issues.

Community Need: School Conflict Mediation

In the design of service learning projects there must be the integration of a community need. The community need provides the focus for the service learning project. For this study the community need was the development and staffing of a school conflict mediation program. The development of the school mediation program was a response to the need to reduce violence in two urban elementary schools by teaching elementary students the appropriate way to manage conflict.

The incidence of violence in urban schools has caused them to be characterized as war zones and has made the educational process increasingly difficult to implement

successfully. Urban schools, typically schools located in the central city, serve a diverse population of African-American, Latino, American Indian, and other minorities, as well as Caucasian students.

A characteristic of a majority of urban schools is a deficient tax base due to the linkage of school funding to property taxes, which are much lower in the central city than their suburban counterparts, due to lower property values. Thus the total funds available to be spent for educating a child in an urban school district are less than those available within a suburban school district (Kozol, 1991). The urban school does not have the necessary financial resources to provide services beyond the basic essentials for meeting the minimum standards of academic achievement.

Educators in these schools are often plagued with a multitude of social problems with these students, as well as being responsible for educating them. The urban school is at an economic disadvantage and unable to provide educational enrichment activities that would address social issues, such as the management of conflict at school. The development of service learning projects that address these community needs could provide a resource for urban educators.

Urban schools, even with limited resources, still have a need to address the anti-social behavior of children at school, as these behaviors interfere with the learning process by affecting the school pedagogical and physical climate. Instances of violent behavior by school age children at school have been correlated with the number of violent behaviors that are acted out in front of these children at home and in the community (Widom, 1989). The frequency of these occurrences can have a desensitizing effect on the child or reinforce a violent response repertoire for dealing with conflict. The children model the behavior of the community and bring those response patterns to school.

One response to the issue of violence at school is the establishment of conflict mediation programs in urban schools throughout the country. All conflict mediation programs are not developed as service learning programs. The advantage of utilizing the

service learning method to staff the program is the linkage that is formed with the university and the minimal cost of staffing the program. A secondary benefit to the community would be to increase the university participants' awareness of the needs of the urban communities.

Research has shown that the implementation of conflict mediation programs within schools has been successful in curbing school violence (Brinkman, 1991; Burrell, 1990; Jones, 1991). The conflict mediation model brings together teachers, parents, and interested adults to provide the guidance, instruction, and support needed to encourage these children in the use of nonviolent behavioral options to resolve their interpersonal conflicts. The success of these programs, however, hinges on understanding not only the overt signs of conflict that often lead to violence, but also the ways that children individually respond within the context of their cultural and socioeconomic environment.

Donohue and Kolt (1992) define conflict as a situation in which interdependent people express (manifest or latent) differences in satisfying their individual needs and interests, and they experience interference from each other in accomplishing these goals. Conflict mediation is a process whereby an impartial third party (peer mediator), with the consent of the disputing parties (disputants), intervenes in a conflict and assists the disputants in negotiating a resolution or settlement based on mutual agreement (Burrell & Vogel, 1990; Davis, 1985). In the school setting, especially in the elementary school model, peer mediators are students trained to interrupt the conflict before it escalates into verbal or physical abuse. The model is adapted to utilize two students as mediators, because two students are better able to handle the conflict situation, and it also equalizes the relational context in that the number of mediators and disputants is often the same. The peer mediators maintain an impartial stance and assist the disputants in reframing the conflict and generating a solution that the disputants can both accept.

The crux of the success of the conflict model rests on the disputants' initial agreement to try to solve the problem with the help of the mediators, rather than with

assistance from the adult school personnel. The following rules are outlined by the mediators, and the disputants must agree to adhere to each of them:

1. Try to solve the problem.
2. Take turns talking.
3. No interrupting or name calling.
4. Be honest.

Conflict mediation programs are effective in K-12 school settings, and in the literature there is agreement that the basics of conflict mediation should be taught at the elementary school level (Brinkman, 1991). There is disagreement on the grade level best suited for specific conflict resolution strategies, according to Brinkman (1991).

The conflict mediation model provides a method for children to resolve their conflicts by communicating and clarifying their goals and objectives and negotiating their desired outcomes. This is accomplished by utilizing integrative communication designed to promote relational objectives. This model also fosters communicative competence and promotes the preservation of relationships. Cochrane and Myers (1980) believe that children must learn verbal, nonphysical solutions to problems. The conflict mediation model provides those skills to help urban children realize that all interpersonal disagreements do not need to be resolved by physical force. The conflict mediation model achieves this goal through its focus on verbal expression and active listening. It is hoped that the replication of these learned responses can be generalized and adapted when the child is confronted with other conflict situations outside of school.

Brinkman (1991, p. 29) concluded that "Once students are freed from the need to be defensive, once they know they are not being judged and become confident that they are being listened to carefully, they discover their innate ability to let go of their anger and to begin to think constructively."

Conflict mediation programs have been established in predominantly urban and suburban school districts throughout the country. Brinkman (1991) also noted that

multicultural urban schools have shown a reduction in violence, despite critical questions about the reality of success in intense settings such as these. The establishment of school mediation programs has impacted the use of traditional methods of school discipline. This research has shown evidence of a beneficial shift away from externally controlling students who are engaging in conflict toward teaching them to control themselves. This type of programming has additionally been shown to impact positively on esteem levels, grade point averages, and on fostering leadership development. The long-range effects of this type of training are beneficial not only to the school environment, but also to society. Brinkman (1991) and Burrell (1990) have stated that children need to gain greater control over their lives at school, and that these programs provide them with a method for problem solving and conflict resolution that can be utilized in the larger societal context.

The conflict mediation program provided a community service project for the university students for the purposes of this research. The project was designed to meet the needs of the children attending the schools by creating a safer environment in which to learn and socialize, and to teach them how to handle interpersonal conflict more effectively. The results of the conflict mediation intervention were not measured; the researcher focused on the attitudes of the university service learning participant who served as a facilitator for the conflict mediation project. The researcher was interested in the impact of the service learning experience on the university student participants rather than in the overall effectiveness of the conflict mediation project.

Social Responsibility

In reviewing participant outcomes in service learning, the literature reports that the method promotes social responsibility (Giles and Eyer, 1994; Kendall, 1990; Stanton, 1987). The service learning design moves the student participant along a continuum of problem solving that extends beyond the cognitive activity of the classroom to hands-on applications in the problem setting.

The assessment of the outcomes of the service learning curriculum indicates that it is useful in creating social responsibility in the university students who participate in the service learning program (Giles & Eyster, 1994). Universities have been challenged for years by the need to design curricula that will address the educational needs of the social practitioner and the theoretician. Service learning engages the learner in societal interactions and issues by providing a vehicle for issue-based problem solving. By educating the service learner about the issues that impact the people and institutions in the community through the use of reflective discussion, the service learning process facilitates collaborative problem solving that leads to the formulation of solutions that may challenge the societal structure of the community while fostering social responsibility. The use of service learning as a method for creating social change needs further research, however.

By giving university students the opportunity to engage in community-relevant issues, the university is moving beyond the theoretical and is becoming actively engaged in the process of community change and community development. The university becomes a laboratory school similar to the Dewey prototype by bridging the gap between the classroom and the community. If the needs of urban communities and schools are to be addressed, it is necessary to move away from the global stereotyping of urban residents as unsalvageable and perpetually disenfranchised. The development of attitudes that reflect social responsibility within the university service learner can be one way to create and change perceptions.

Attitudes and Attitude Measurement

Attitudes are learned and not innate, are relatively enduring, and affect behavior (Petty & Cacioppo, 1981). Attitudes have been assessed by both direct and indirect methods (O'Keefe, 1990). Direct methods are those methods in which the subjects are aware that their attitudes are being studied, as in the use of survey instruments. Indirect methods involve the gathering of data in a way that does not make the attitude measure

obvious to the subject, i.e., through observation, or as in this study, through the use of archival documents or journals. Direct methods are most commonly used and are considered to be the most reliable. Indirect methods can be employed, however, in situations in which the researcher feels that the subjects will distort their self reports.

The purpose of this study is to determine whether participation in the service learning curriculum assisted in the formation of attitudes that reflected social responsibility.

The following research questions were posed:

1. Do the student journals contain themes that reflect social responsibility?
2. What are the themes of the student journals?
3. What are the most frequently reported themes?
4. What are the relationships between the themes?

The content of the written journals of the students was analyzed to determine whether the journals contained themes that were reflective of social responsibility. Given the service learning curriculum design, it is proposed that the student journals would reflect themes that indicate social responsibility.

Chapter III

METHODS

Subjects

The sample consisted of thirteen university students who had signed up for the community service independent study option. Three of these students were assigned as coordinators and had administrative responsibilities along with program participation. There were nine females and four males in the study. The subjects were junior level and above, from various academic majors.

Program Design:

The nine-week independent study met for two hours twice each week in a conference room in the Service Learning Center, and the students were assigned to work at the schools an average of three hours per week. The course format was lecture, group reflection and discussion, and group activities relative to the conflict mediation project. The group activities included experiential learning activities, such as field trips, and role playing conflict situations and the resolution process. There was time set aside to prepare for organized events developed by each school for the elementary school conflict mediators.

The university students were required to maintain a written journal annotating their thoughts and feelings regarding the project. The journals were collected at the end of the project. Once per week during class, students participated in reflection sessions. These sessions were designed to get collective feedback through discussion about the events of the previous week. Students who had encountered problems during the week could talk about them with the group and receive feedback that would assist in the resolution of the issues and provide a supportive environment for the venting of frustration. The university

students were expected to attend class sessions in addition to supervising and training conflict mediators at the elementary schools.

The first week of the course was spent on university student orientation to the program and a review of the course syllabus. The purpose of these sessions was to reinforce the importance of the students' commitment to the goals of the project, and to inform them of the various types of service learning projects being conducted with university students in communities around the United States. The instructor emphasized that it was the responsibility of each student to decide why he/she was taking the course. The students were not asked to comment aloud about this, but just to think about it. A documentary video entitled Today's Heroes was shown. The video highlighted various service learning projects and featured students who discussed how their involvement in service learning programs had changed their perspective on community issues.

As an introduction to community needs, the instructor gave an overview of the history of poverty and its impact on children in communities similar to those where the students would be working. The instructor reviewed two divergent perspectives on the causes of poverty—the culture of poverty and the structural perspective. The culture of poverty implies that those in poverty are in that state due to innate character flaws, whereas the structural view maintains that there are societal influences that establish and perpetuate poverty (Patterson, 1986).

During the second week, class sessions consisted of an experiential learning activity designed to sensitize students to the transportation needs of people in poverty, who may not have the use of an automobile. In urban areas, public transportation is often utilized by persons at or below the poverty line, since the costs of car ownership and insurance may be prohibitive. The students were given the assignment of planning a field trip to one of the school sites utilizing the city bus system. They were to select one student as the coordinator; this person was responsible for obtaining bus schedules and providing

information about the routes. All students were required to attend the field trip and to ride the bus. After the field trip, a discussion of the experience was conducted.

The third week introduced the students to the developmental issues of school-aged children, with an emphasis on children in urban areas who live in households that exist at or below the poverty line. A guest lecturer from the 4-H Youth Program was invited to discuss the topic Childhood Stressors.

The fourth week was set aside for learning the method for conducting conflict mediation sessions. Committees for the planning and staffing of the elementary school-sponsored events were also established. Weeks five through nine were spent on in-service activities that were designed to prepare the university students for their assignments at the schools.

A major project for the semester was a fund raiser designed to provide financial and social support for the mediation program at one of the schools. The university students solicited donors and provided activities for the children the night of the event. Parents, friends, and students were invited to attend. The university students were responsible for all promotional activities and for follow-up after the event. This event enabled the university students to socialize with the community while providing staffing for the fund raiser.

Data Collection:

Data were collected from the journals of the university service learning participants. The service learning participants were required to maintain a journal of their significant thoughts regarding the program and to submit their journal entries to the instructor on a weekly basis. Each journal entry was to be dated, but students were not required to keep a daily log. Students were aware that the instructor would read their comments, but they were encouraged to be candid in their thoughts regarding the program. The journals were collected at the end of the nine-week program, and a content analysis was conducted.

Data Analysis:

Based on the research of Giles and Eyler (1994), five themes that reflected social responsibility were used for the content analysis. Two independent coders were used to analyze the data. One coder was blind to the intent of the research. The coders were given the following instructions and guidelines :

CODER INSTRUCTIONS:

Read the journal and underline each theme with the appropriate color, using colored highlighter pens. Each theme should be distinctive, with no overlapping of themes. The unit of analysis is the sentence. There may be more than one sentence per theme.

Theme 1: (pink)

Statements that reflect empathetic understanding. Statements are based on personal knowledge of a situation or person. These statements are based on feeling or affective issues.

Examples: • I remember what it was like to be ten years old.
• It must be difficult not to have a car and to have to use the bus.

Theme 2: (blue)

Statements that reflect that one can make a difference. Statements that directly state the theme or indirect statements that indicate that the participant perceives the program to have created a change.

Examples: • I realize how important we are to these kids.
• I think that the kids have learned a lot from the program.

Theme 3: (green)

Statements that reflect the importance of participation. Statements that directly or indirectly attach positive value to participating in this particular program or in service-oriented programs in general.

Examples: • It is important to give back to the community.
• I'm glad that I signed up for the program.

Theme 4: (yellow)

Statements that reflect an understanding of the social/structural issues and their relationship to the expressed human needs, problems, and inequities.

Examples: • It is hard for these kids to pay for things because their parents are unemployed.

- These kids eat a lot of sweets, and this could be the reason for their hyperactivity.

Theme 5: (orange)

Statements that reflect a desire to continue community service after the program ends.

- Examples:
- I plan to do this next semester.
 - I plan to do community service after I graduate.

CODING SYSTEM:

Score + if statements reflect the theme.
Score 0 if the theme is not present.

Coders were instructed to read the journals and identify the themes. The unit of analysis was the sentence. Each time a theme was identified, it received a +1 rating. The total number of sentences for each theme was calculated.

Chapter IV

RESULTS

Reliability was calculated by using Cohen's Kappa. Inter-rater reliability was .78. This result was sufficient to allow further analysis of the data.

Table 1 shows the sample means and standard deviations for the identified themes. The most frequently occurring theme was the importance of participation (M = 8.61). This theme was identified by statements that directly or indirectly attached positive value to program participation. This theme was reported approximately nine times per student.

The second theme was social structural understanding (M = 5.69). This theme was identified by statements that reflected an understanding of the social/structural issues and their relationship to the expressed human needs, problems, and inequities. This theme was reported approximately six times per student.

The third theme was making a difference (M = 1.53). This theme was identified by statements that directly or indirectly indicated that the program created change for the participants. This theme was reported approximately two times per student.

The fourth theme was empathetic understanding (M = 1.46). This theme was identified by statements that were based on personal knowledge of a situation, person, event, etc. This theme was reported approximately one time per student.

The fifth theme was continuing community service (M = .15). This theme was indicated by statements that indicated a desire to continue community service after the program was completed. This theme was reported by only two participants in the sample.

Table 2 shows the correlation coefficients for the data. Statistical analysis revealed significant relationships between the importance of participation and making a difference, $r = .73$, $p < .003$, such that the more important one thought it was to participate in the

program, the more one thought that one could make a difference in the community. Given the sample size (N=13), this result is a major finding. These data suggest that there is a strong relationship between the importance of participation and making a difference. Further statistical analysis revealed a moderate relationship between empathetic understanding and social/structural understanding, $r = .45$, $p < .06$, and a moderate relationship between the importance of participation and continuing community service, $r = .40$, $p < .08$. Hence, the more empathic understanding one expressed about participation in the project, the greater the social/structural understanding one expressed. Moreover, the more important one considered participation to be, the more likely one was to wish to continue community service.

Table 1.

Frequencies of Social Responsibility Themes

Themes	M	SD
Subjects ($n = 13$)		
Importance of Participation	8.61	4.84
Social/Structural Understanding	5.69	2.98
Making a Difference	1.53	2.29
Empathetic Understanding	1.46	1.61
Continuing Community Service	0.15	0.37

Table 2.

Correlation Coefficients

	Continue	Difference	Empathy	Participation	Structure
Continue	1.0000 (13) P=.	.2826 (13) P=.175	.2857 (13) p=.172	.4021 (13) p=.087	-.1030 (13) p=.369
Difference	.2826 (13) P=.175	1.0000 (13) p=.	.2648 (13) P=.191	.7253 (13) p=.003	-.0346 (13) p=.455
Empathy	.2857 (13) P=.172	.2648 (13) p=.191	1.000 (13) p=.	.4089 (13) P=.083	.4476 (13) p=.408
Participation	.4021 (13) P=.087	.7253 (13) p=.003	.4089 (13) p=.083	1.0000 (13) p=.	.0719 (13) P=.408
Structure	-.1030 (13) P=.369	-.0346 (13) p=.455	.4476 (13) p=.063	.0719 (13) p=.408	1.0000 (13) p=.

Chapter V

DISCUSSION

This study examined whether or not the students engaged in this service learning project would develop attitudes indicative of social responsibility, as reflected in their journal entries.

The assessment of attitudes by content analysis provides an indirect measure, in that the subjects provided anecdotal information that reflected their attitudes about the service learning project. It was apparent, however, that the journal accounts did reflect the subjects' personal attitudes and were not, in most cases, just a report of program details. Active participation in the program contributed a behavioral component to attitude formation, in that most of the attitudes reflected were expressed in response to an activity or event that occurred during the program, or to an encounter with an individual who was a part of the program. The attitude measure was not based on hypothetical questions posed on a survey; it was directly linked to a behavior or event that occurred in the service learning project. The attitude measures were based on the university service learning participants' practical experience with the curriculum of the project; the measures utilized first-hand accounts of the experience through self-reports in the subjects' journals. The university service learning participants were not prompted by the design of a survey to give a particular response, but their responses were their personal reflections on the curriculum, posed in their own words—not those of the researcher.

In a study conducted by Giles and Eyler (1994), a survey was administered which included open-ended questions that elicited narrative responses. The narrative responses, however, were precipitated by guided questions. For this thesis, the researcher designed the study so as to determine whether or not the service learning university participants

would reflect attitudes of social responsibility in their self-reports without being prompted by leading questions. The results of this study indicate that, in fact, these students did report attitudes that were indicative of social responsibility.

The most frequently reported theme was the importance of participation. This theme was identified by statements that indicated the importance of participation by directly or indirectly attaching positive value to this particular service learning program, or to service programs in general.

The following journal entries were judged to attach positive value to participation in service learning:

The film was good, but the class got better.

I think the field trip was a good idea.

This is my third and last term with (class name), and overall, I felt, by far the best term for the program.

I participate for the children, although by making the children feel good, I receive my own rewards and feel accomplishments of my own.

Today was a great learning experience—one which none of us will ever forget.

All in all, I feel that we had a very productive term.

I feel that this program helped many children and aided in their defense against themselves and others.

Class was fun today.

Wow! The organization and structure of today's trip to (school name) was incredible.

It shows a lot can be accomplished with teamwork.

This program, given to youths at such a young age is a definite positive.

I also felt that everyone in the class took everything seriously. Everyone made a conscious effort to give something to the students.

I definitely believe I have benefited, and the youths have benefited, from this course.

The next theme was a social structural understanding of the issues that affected the community in which the university students were working. The students reported both

collective understanding of these issues and also reported instances that were specific to the individual.

In discussing the experiential activity that required the university student participants to use public transportation to get to one of the program sites, several students reported:

Most of the class consists of middle class college students who don't have any idea what it is like not having a car to get around. It showed everyone how much of an inconvenience it is to have to take a bus.

It gave students a chance to get a feel for the area around the school. This is important, as it reinforced what type of students we were going to be working with.

It was interesting, though, when it was brought to my attention to think about what it would be like to have to rely on other means of transportation, such as the bus system. I guess I do take some things for granted, and I think, out of all this, I did learn a valuable lesson.

We all gained some lessons that afternoon: learning the bus times, learning the bus routes, dressing for the fall mid-day weather, mapping out our destinations, and preparing for non-planned conflicts. We realized the critical importance of all these lessons and began to feel fortunate for the cars and education we had of our own.

The field trip we took as a class at first seemed very meaningless and wasteful, but when I sat back and looked at what we did, I could see the purpose. If the buses ran smoothly I think everyone would have had a better time, but we were frustrated when everything didn't go as planned, and I think this was one of the reasons for doing this. Many of these kids' families probably use the bus system, and I can see how they might be frustrated when they can't get where they want on time. We also got to see what kinds of neighborhoods these kids grow up in, and they really are pretty run-down neighborhoods.

In reporting on the lecture, Childhood Stressors, university students reported:

I had no idea that there were so many problems with kids and that they have stresses in life that are often difficult to handle.

I guess I never knew just how much one's childhood experiences can affect the way that they grow up.

Many children are experiencing violence and peer pressure at very young ages.

Other reports included general statements relative to social structural understanding:

I know a lot of these children come from working class and disadvantaged homes, however this does not mean that they don't have hopes and dreams. They are no less a child as any other child because of their home environment. We need to inspire them and give them hope and make them understand that they are important and that with hard work dreams do come true.

These comments were in response to planning the fund-raiser and considering how the economic status of the families could affect the participation of the children:

I think having the games free was a great idea, because the kids have little money.

We have discussed the financial difficulty of some of the children and did not think it was fair to charge the children.

I had been to the playground earlier that day, and a lot of the kids said that their parents wouldn't give them money to go. It made me very sad.

The curriculum design for service learning provides the academic and theoretical basis for understanding the issues relative to the community service project. In this case the key issues were 1) poverty and its impact on children and 2) violence and its resolution in the school setting. Therefore, the community service was augmented with issue-based lectures and experientially-based activities that provided information relative to the issues of poverty and children and violence and its resolution. The lectures and the experiential activities provided the knowledge base from which students could begin to reflect and draw conclusions regarding the individual and social implications of these issues. Without the service learning design, some students would not have a process for understanding the issues that were the foundation for the development of the service learning project.

The next theme reported was making a difference. This theme is identified by statements that directly or indirectly state that the program created a change in the participants. This theme refers to the changes that the program created in all program participants. The program participants could be the university student participants or the community participants.

The key to this definition is the evidence of a discernible difference that can be linked to participation in the program. The following are examples from the journals of the university student participants related to this theme:

It made me realize that there really is a lot of potential to really make a difference in these children's lives and received a personal reward from helping them

It gave me a sense of accomplishment whenever I made a student understand something.

We showed them how to solve the problem.

I think the kids made it work. I really enjoyed the interaction with the kids and seeing them learn something that they can use throughout their lives.

This program also helps develop self-esteem and self-confidence in the youths.

Some were quite experienced in conflict resolution, while others obviously have a lot to learn.

This a very important program for the kids, and they can learn a lot from it.

We also helped the (school name) students realize how important the role of mediator is and what an honor it is to be a (mediator team name) member.

I was glad to see the parents and their children bonding and felt good about offering something so positive for them.

I think everyone this term did a really good job working together and helped both schools' mediation programs improve.

The university students tended to comment most frequently on the way in which their participation in the program had brought change into the lives of the community participants. They tended to report the change or impacts of the program as a positive occurrence. However, Giles and Eyer (1994) report that there is no evidence that suggests that community service equals positive change. There is a need for further research on the attitudes of the community participants to determine whether service learning projects are making a positive impact on them.

The next theme reported was empathetic understanding. This theme is identified by the student's personal knowledge of a situation or person. These statements were based on

feeling or affective issues. Examples in the journals that related to the lecture, Childhood

Stressors, were:

She brought us back to the 4th grade and made it easier for us to feel and think like a kid.

Doing this exercise allowed me to relate better and to understand more why kids do the things they do.

This was a very useful and effective way to help us get in touch with what it was like at that age.

She did this activity to remind us of how we acted as children in the elementary school and to remind us of what was special to us and what we thought was important at that time in our lives. It put us in the shoes of the children that we were going to be working with.

It only made me realize how lucky I have been. I may have had some hard times like everyone, but I am fortunate to have come from a happy middle class home.

Other examples of empathetic understanding were in reference to the use of the city bus to get to one of the project sites:

As for myself, I have had to rely on many forms of public transportation in my life, including subways, trains, and buses, but not everyone in the class has had that experience, so it was a good idea.

I can understand now just how terrible it would be not to have a car.

This wasn't really a new experience for me, because I've grown up in Detroit all my life, but I think a few people in the class were unfamiliar with these types of areas.

The final theme, continuing community service, was identified by direct statements that reflected a desire to continue community service after the program ended. The examples of this theme were:

It made me think that even when I'm done with this class and out in the working world, I'd still like to do some volunteer work somewhere because it's so rewarding

I am definitely interested in volunteer work at (school name) next term.

The examples given show that the journal writings of the university service learning participants reflected the themes that indicate social responsibility. The journals indicated that students reported themes reflective of social responsibility without the use of survey

questions. This result offers support for the premise that service learning programs assist in the development of attitudes that reflect social responsibility.

In the study conducted by Giles and Eyster (1994), students were asked if they planned to return to their service site the following semester, to state the number of hours that they anticipated volunteering, and if they had specific plans to continue community service. Fifty-five of fifty-six students stated that they planned to continue volunteer service after the program ended. It is possible that the students were responding positively to this question in order to present themselves favorably.

The content analysis of the journals provided responses that were not solicited by the researcher, but were the result of personal reflection on the part of the students. It is possible that other participants would have indicated their willingness to continue community service given the appropriate prompt. However, this researcher contends that the use of the journal helps eliminate bias in the assessment of whether or not service learning develops attitudes that reflect social responsibility.

The second phase of this study was to determine if there were any relationships between the reflected themes. The results indicate that there was a strong correlation between the importance of participation and making a difference. This correlation indicates that university student participants who felt that it was important to participate also felt strongly that they were making a difference.

There are a number of theoretical explanations for these findings. Dissonance theory holds that if attitudes and behaviors are inconsistent that the individual will seek to reduce the dissonance by altering the importance of the elements. In this case, the participants must feel that they are making a difference due to their participation and that participation must be important, or they would not be doing this. The service learning project was a choice for the students, so their participation would seem illogical if they did not evaluate it favorably. Considering the amount of time and effort that participation required, the participants had to justify that expenditure by increasing the value of the

experience. However, with dissonance explanations, once the dissonance is reduced, and the subject is no longer confronted by the attitude element, the attitudes tend to revert to their previous levels.

A second explanation is self-perception theory. Self perception theory holds that individuals who do not have strong attitudes toward an element will infer their attitudes from their behaviors. The participants would view the service learning experience as valuable because they were involved in it. This would be the beginning of a behavioral foundation for the development of attitudes and would continue after the program ended. The initial behavior of signing up for the program and their subsequent participation in the content would comprise a behavioral repertoire upon which students could conclude that they found program participation to be important.

A third explanation deals with indirect and direct methods for determining the magnitude of an attitude. This explanation would indicate that students who had direct behavioral experience would have stronger and more lasting attitudes. The fact that participants received hands-on experience in dealing with the community issue, as well as follow-up in the classroom, heightened their involvement in and understanding of the issues involved. Their attitudes would be strengthened by the practical experience gained by being directly involved with the project. The hands-on approach of service learning provides an anchor for the development of enduring attitudes reflective of social responsibility.

The strong correlation between the students' perceptions of the importance of participation and making a difference indicates an important linkage between these two aspects of service learning programs. If students are allowed to experience situations where their personal efforts bring change, then they are more likely to feel that the community participants are capable of change and that it is important to be actively involved.

The university student participants felt that their efforts increased the likelihood that the elementary students could resolve their conflicts and create a peaceful environment in their school setting. An extension of this perception would be the development of a mediation center in the community for the resolution of conflicts between neighborhood residents. At a time when political apathy is prevalent, service learning programs may provide a model for engaging students in the democratic process. The results of this study provide support for the conclusions of Giles and Eyer (1994) that service learning participants reported that they could make a difference in their community. The ability to be an active participant in the process of change is the crux of the democratic process and suggests an area for further research on the impact of service learning programs.

There was a moderate relationship between empathetic understanding and social structural understanding, with significance levels close enough to be important. This finding would indicate that as the university service learning participants gathered more information regarding the social/structural issues that communities were faced with, they became more empathetic, and the more empathy they had, the more likely they were to understand the social structural issues. Empathy involves a personal encounter that the student can relate to, rather than something that he or she has heard about and sympathizes with. Students may be sympathetic to a cause, but empathy comes only through experience. The service learning method provided the experiences that led to empathy. An example was the field trip utilizing the bus. The participants who had never used the bus could begin to empathize with bus riders, once they had experienced it themselves. They could have been sympathetic before the experience, but true empathy occurs as a function of experience.

There was also a moderate relationship between the importance of participation and continuing community service. Those students who felt that it was important to participate were more likely to express a desire to continue in community service projects. The crux of social responsibility is a life-long commitment to community service. However, even

though the students expressed the behavioral intention to continue community service, data were not gathered to determine if they actually did continue community service.

The use of the service learning method has shown that students will develop attitudes that reflect social responsibility. The development of attitudes that reflect social responsibility is important for the ongoing development of urban communities, as they are often overlooked in the allocation of funding, due to a lack of understanding or empathy for the populations that inhabit those areas. The service learning method is one way to impact future policy while providing university students with experientially-based knowledge of the issues that communities and their inhabitants face. A democratic society provides equal access for all people to the benefits of the society. It is only through creating a better knowledge base, not built around stereotypes, but around facts and experience, that we can hope to bring change to urban centers.

This study took a myopic look at one community issue, poverty and violence in the schools, and showed that with the proper methods the university student would become more socially astute and empathetic and would desire to continue to be involved in these types of projects. It is by this means that the university will become more relevant to the needs of all of society.

Limitations of the Study

This study could have benefited from a larger sample. More data might have been gathered if a modified questionnaire had been used to assess the pre- and post-service learning levels of social responsibility. The narratives of first-time service learning participants should be analyzed and reported separately. Perhaps the results indicating a development of social responsibility would not be as significant for first-time participants as for participants who had had previous service learning experiences. If the narratives of first-time participants were analyzed separately, this could provide information as to the long-term or cumulative effects of service learning. Also, the collection of data should

occur at intervals so that the researcher would have a date for each narrative and a continuum on which to base any attitude change that occurred over time. Some students may well have written all their journal entries at the end of the project, just to fulfill the requirement, rather than using the writing as a reflective exercise throughout the entire experience. The best approach would be to design a longitudinal study that follows up on the participants one year following the experience to determine if they are engaged in service learning activities or community service projects. There should be a pre-service questionnaire to determine the amount of community service experience that students have had prior to participation in the service learning projects.

Implications For Further Research

To test for the presence of dissonance, the design of the study could include a pre/post inventory of social responsibility. For example, if students indicated initially that they felt that it was important to participate, but did not feel that they were making a difference, then their participation could cause dissonance. If those students then stated that they thought they had made a difference at the end of the program, it could mean that they had reduced their level of dissonance in order to justify their participation. It would be necessary to conduct a follow-up interview or survey with the program participants at some future point to see if they were still involved in service learning programs or community service and to what they attributed their involvement. The students whose attitudes were a result of dissonance should no longer be involved in community service, because the stated attitude change was based on the resolution of the dissonance.

To test for the effects of self-perception, a similar design could be used, with a pre/post inventory for service learning participants and for a control group. The students in the control group would be engaged in community service that did not include the academic content or the journals for reflection. If the attitudes are a result of the degree of involvement in the program, it would follow that the students involved in the service

learning program would have the stronger and the more enduring attitudes. This group would also be a part of a follow-up study to see if they were involved in community projects and to what they attributed their involvement.

To test for the effect of direct methods on the magnitude of attitudes and the building of a behavioral foundation for attitudes, the design of the study could include three comparison groups. The three groups would consist of students who study about the social issue, students who are involved in community service that addresses the social issue, and students who are engaged in service learning. Theoretically, the students in the service learning group should have the stronger attitudes, due to the academic and the enhanced behavioral component of the program design. These students would need to be surveyed at a specified point in time to determine their attitudes and their level of continued community involvement.

Further research needs to be conducted on how service learning impacts students who have never been involved in community service projects. Is service learning participation affected by the socioeconomic background of the university participant? Also, what is the socioeconomic level of students who are frequently engaged in service learning projects? In this study most of the students had automobiles to travel to the program site. Would the result have been different for students who had to use public transportation? What types of academic majors are most frequently represented in service learning projects? Are social science majors more likely to participate in the project rather than students in the "hard" sciences? These are just a few of the possibilities for future research as the emerging field of service learning evolves.

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