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What's post racial discourse got to do with it? Obama and the implications for multiculturalism in college classrooms

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Abstract: With the election and re-election of Barack Obama as the first Black President of the United States came the vexing yet perhaps expected conclusion that issues of race and ethnicity were no longer grave concerns. Somehow Obama's presence suggests the transcendence of race. While a nod to the political progress made in terms of social race relations may be in order, Obama's election does not translate into a "color-blind," "post race" American nation. This essay explores how current and ongoing conversations about a post race nation shape student perceptions of race and how they directly affect the teaching instruction of professors, like myself, who are invested in multicultural and inclusive pedagogy. As an instructor invested in inclusive learning, my former struggle of getting students to understand the importance of acknowledging the validity of cultural differences has resurfaced as students who buy into the rhetoric of a "post race" nation no longer think it necessary to examine closely racially charged inequities. Rather than adhere to the problematic ideology of Obama as the embodiment of a "post race" nation, I propose an exploration of his identity and politics as those that encourage fluidity and cultural plurality without denying rightful acknowledgement of race as a viable political reality.

Keywords: Multicultural teaching, inclusion, race, post race, Barack Obama, black.

Introduction

The value of a multicultural and inclusive education is well established and has been embraced steadily by educators who recognize the ways in which the employment of cultural diversity–through the use of varied texts and student centered class discussion–makes for a more enriching educational experience. "Multiculturalism is now a given … it has arrived" (Asher 2007). As an instructor whose teaching career began in the early 1990s when the fight for inclusive teaching was at its peak, it is rewarding to note progress. However, it seems that the post racial rhetoric that permeates recent scholarship and social media net works due to the election of a black U.S. president has somehow interrupted the progress of a multicultural education. More importantly, the attack on multicultural and inclusive pedagogy is racially based in that students believe we no longer have a need to address issues of race because racism no longer exists. There is no need for an engagement with multicultural anything furthermore a discussion of race within the context of multiculturalism. While the primary focus in this article is on the politics of racial

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[2] While I fully embrace the fact that multicultural teaching does not begin and end with race, this essay is interested in the conversations surrounding race as it pertains to Obama's election and what this outcome means for the future of multiculturalism and inclusive teaching within college classrooms.

identity and post-race attitudes, the assumption that multiculturalism only encapsulates racial identities is not being made (though students seem to embrace this belief). The problematic mainstream understanding that multiculturalism is simply a tool to challenge racism and allow blacks a seat at the table perhaps evolved from earlier conversations where the importance of multiculturalism did begin with discussions of race, notably blackness, due to the absence of productive discussions about black identities within college based classrooms. Multiculturalism is far more complex and inclusive as it aims to validate all cultures. How will the post race consciousness of my students affect their responses to the inclusion of literature, which examines the state of blackness, black identities, and black culture within and beyond the USA? Multicultural teaching is indeed an important tactic through which the value of diversity and inclusivity is imparted and the skill of cultural competency attained (Banks, 1994). How, then, does one manage students' desire to discuss specific sites of cultural representation and ethnicities instead of others? What is it with race and this thing called blackness, in particular, that students want to avoid? This paper explores the effect of post race rhetoric and its negative influences on student perceptions of race (and other marginalized identities), and how it directly affects the teaching instruction of professors, like myself, who are invested in multicultural and inclusive pedagogy. Rather than adhere to the problematic ideology of Obama as the embodiment of a "post race" nation, I propose an exploration of his identity and politics as those that encourage fluidity and cultural plurality. From this perspective, there is still a need to wrestle with the politics of race as a viable site of exploration and inclusion within classroom discourse. As Kwame Ture articulates, "Black visibility is not black power" (quoted in Ball, 2008). Furthermore, "post racial narratives sever contemporary racial reality from historical events that shaped it and suggest that the consequences of systemic racial oppression ended" (Rossing, 2012). This current Obamaesque moment can allow for a useful evaluation of how to formulate more complex discussions about race and its place within multicultural and inclusive educational practices. An overall exploration of post racial attitudes will lead to a conversation about other post identity orientations that circulate popular culture and Obama's recognition of these.

Race, Multiculturalism, and Resistance: A Brief Review of the Literature

As the diversity of our communities increase so does the student population in higher education. It is ever clear that multiculturalism is no longer a buzzword. It is understood that it is the moral obligation of higher education to accommodate diversity and transform itself according to the various cultures that compose it (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg 1995). While race is not the only viable way to adhere to or address issues of diversity it is safe to say that most of our scholarly conversations about inclusive teaching and the need for it began using racial inequities as a starting point: "Multicultural education is a product of the U.S. context and exemplifies the highest democratic ideals. It is committed to developing techniques for achieving educational equality, particularly for students from ethnic groups who historically have been marginalized, dispossessed, oppressed, miseducated, and undereducated in schools. The greatest contributions it can make to building egalitarian society is to function as an instrument for translating equity policy into educational practice" (Gay 2004). Studies also report that not only underrepresented students benefit from a multicultural education but all students, even those who are benefactors of the privilege commiserate with membership in the dominant group (Kitano 1997, Hirtado, Milem, Clayton-Pierdson, & Allen, 1999, Banks 2005). The audience of multicultural

educational experiences has expanded and so have our definitions to be more inclusive, and rightly so. However, it seems that the more inclusive our conversations become and the broader in range our definitions of multiculturalism, the less fashionable it is to raise issues of race. Who or what is responsible for the relapse in our fear of "race?"

W. E. B. DuBois was legendary in deeming the 20th Century as one that would be plagued with questions of the color line, especially in the U.S. Here we are in the 21st century and perhaps at our most multicultural existence as a nation, yet the color line and its positioning within discussions of multiculturalism is still being called into question. The legitimacy of race continues to be at the helm of and directly affects our engagement with conversations about race within and beyond the classroom. The distinctive struggle for recognition, rights, and resources by those from underrepresented groups makes the critical examination of race an important aspect of identity conflicts. Perhaps this has much to do with the fact that race has and continues to be the most powerful and persistent group boundary in American history, "distinguishing to varying degrees, the experiences of those classified as non-White from those classified as White, with often devastating consequences (Cornnell & Haartmann 1998). If all can stand to benefit, where does the resistance come from and what enables such a response? Resistance comes in various forms and is acted out by students and instructors alike.

Students: Resistance to multiculturalism within the curriculum/classroom as it pertains to race could indeed stem from the discomfort that some students experience due to the fact that it causes us to engage with a troubled U.S. history where some groups were discriminated against. Power and privilege of the dominant group is exposed: "This understanding of multiculturalism includes an examination of the experiences of peoples that have been unrecognized in traditional American histories. This can be a fascinating journey for students. However, it also leads to a painful examination of American history as conquest, exposes the legal disenfranchisement of non-European groups, and addresses the structural inequities maintained in current public policies" (Chan & Treacy 1996). Such responses are indicative of the guilt white students would rather not experience and indeed challenges the status quo (Gay 2004). Furthermore, if students do not necessarily believe that learning about "the other" could enhance their own understanding of self, they will resist and instructors should be prepared for this resistance (Chan and Treacy 1996).

Instructors: Although instructors understand the need to teach their courses from a multicultural standpoint, their resistance stems not from an unwillingness to acquiesce to the call for multicultural curriculum or classrooms. They feel ill equipped and unable to accommodate the needed shift to be inclusive in that there is "a general lack of knowledge of the necessary content and pedagogy required. Most often, instructors state that they do not have the knowledge base to cover topics of diversity within their discipline … there is simply not enough time to attempt to transform their courses in this manner" (Khaja & Thorington Springer 2010). There is also the fear of not being able to navigate the emotionally charged conversations that occur during class discussion (Nagda et al., 1999).

The evaluation of student and instructor resistance to multiculturalism has resulted in the production of effective best practices. The implementation and use of texts in syllabi that are written by members of the dominant group that are sensitive to issues of diversity and equity (Thorington Springer 2006). If students, for example, do not trust hearing about racial inequities from instructors who are of a minority background for fear of an overly political agenda, they are perhaps more likely to engage with a text created by some one who shares dominant group status. Pedagogical tools and strategies should be incorporated to ensure a safe space (Sheets

2005), critically explore differences, and hopefully appreciate such differences in an interactive, dynamic, and flexible learning environment (Banks et al., 2001; Sheets 2005). It is important that instructors create assignments that are conducive to recognizing the value of each individual voice by way of journaling and sharing in class (Hooks 1994). There is also value in instructors who are willing to give up some of their power as instructors to afford students self-empowerment as well as ensure that they do not make any underrepresented student the token representative of that group (Hooks 1994).

Implementation of these listed best practices can and have successfully improved classroom dynamics where there was open resistance to multiculturalism in any form. A look at my own syllabi, peer reviews of my teaching, student assessment, and positive student responses to my inclusive pedagogy testify to the success achieved with the above applied strategies; however, in 2008 after the election of President Barack Obama, the threat of another possible "Battle Royal" looms.[1] Recent attempts to broach the issue of race within classroom discussion have been met by a new type of resentment. Students are no longer questioning, "why are you trying to force multiculturalism down our throats?" The new mantra has become, "…but a black man is president. Race is no longer an issue. We are so past this. What more do black people want?" While it is true that Obama's election some how "embodied the hopes of many Americans eager to see an often divided nation finally come together to full-fill its egalitarian ideals and step beyond it stains of inequality, segregation, and slavery," (Swarns 3) warrants concern about students who so vehemently buy into this idea that the presidency being occupied by a black man somehow guarantees an egalitarian state. As Kent Ono writes so aptly: "if in America anyone can become President, because Barack Obama became President, and because he is Black, then racism can no longer be used as an excuse for not succeeding. The underlying message here is: Quit complaining, "be like Barack" (reminiscent of old "Be Like Mike" campaigns featuring basketball phenom, Michael Jordan" (Ono 229). The presence of a black president, then, functions as a backlash to progress in the area of multicultural teaching, and fuels post race narratives that make it difficult to challenge or address systemic racism and random racist acts.

Where is the Post in Post Racial Politics? The Myth of Post Raciality

In a recent course on women writers, my students were eager to talk about the experience of Latino Americans in the US through our critique of Sandra Cisneros' *A House on Mango Street*; they made room for the exploration of the coming of age narrative of a young Nigerian girl, whose father was tyrannical, as we examined Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *Purple Hibiscus*. Yet, when we came to Edwidge Danticat's *Breath Eyes Memory*, there were frowned faces and much seat shifting when the issue of race was broached within an American context. Cisneros afforded an opportunity to discuss student's immediate concerns about migratory laws and the increasing numbers of Mexican Americans in "their" neighborhoods. *Purple Hibiscus* allowed discussions about an affluent African family during a time of civic and political unrest, something they found intriguing yet distant, enough to recuse them of any direct relationship to the challenges faced by Nigerians represented in the novel. *Purple Hibiscus* as the discussion of blackness was limited to this far off foreign place–Nigeria. Danticat's novel initiated discussions about black migratory experiences, the racism meted to Haitian Americans, and the traumas associated with cultural dislocation. Once I queried the resistance to discussing blackness within an American context, the response aligned with post race idealism: we are a post race nation

because the US has elected a black president. My students appear to interpret post race to mean that the presence of a black president suggests that racial stereotypes had been broken and race transcended. No longer would a black person be disadvantaged or discriminated against due to racial status. These sentiments were held mostly by my white students while the few students of color argued for a different type of *raced* nation based on their individual and collective experiences, not one that was post but one that continued to demonstrate racial inequities.

The term post race seems to escalate whenever there is a major shift or achievement where a black person occupies a visible position of power, receives notoriety, or celebrity acclaim. Such success reinforces the myth of the American dream, which maintains that a good work ethic affords any individual access to privilege regardless of one's subject positioning. This myth ignites the color blind state of mind. The color blind hopeful's desire for equal opportunity for all in turn fuels the claim to a post race nation. This hope is understandable considering the contentious nature of discussions on race, the emotions that are conjured and the tension that often evolves when whites and non-whites are seated at the table. However, a color blind outlook does not erase racial inequities; it's turning a "blind eye" to an issue that is inescapable. More importantly, color blind rhetoric stunts conversations about difference and perhaps even creates opportunities for what Bernadette Marie Calafell calls the continuance of the "uncritical centering of whiteness" (242). Post race discourse can lead to a re-centering of whiteness and majority ideals.

While it is indeed true that blacks within the US have made progress in attaining some of the benefits of being US citizens, there are still major racial inequities and cultural dislocations that limit the success of blacks and ultimately their freedom to citizenship rights (Alexander, 2012; Hill, 2009; Rossing 2012). In fact, the claim of a post race nation is yet another way to prevent necessary challenges to white supremacy, thus making it difficult to address ways to rectify the disparities and inequities at work within US communities and institutions. Race and racial politics are at the core of American discourse and sustained through education:

> *… race has been and remains the most intractable problem in the United States. Race defines and shapes the dichotomous social and human relations that have historically specified the juxtaposition of the supremacy, right, privilege, and morality of the 'white' and 'non-white.' In specific terms, race is a marker that describes, informs, and bounds white and nonwhite people within structures of power and domination. If we accept race as a social construction, then we must also accept it as a category by which all groups in the American society are identified. We must also understand that while whites possess race, they are not raced. To be raced in the American society is to be identified as nonwhite. Historically, this especially has been the case for black people.*
>
> (Hill, 2009)

Race as a critical site of inquiry cannot be dismissed as easily as post race believers would have it. Whether we perceive Obama ran for office under the guise of a "black man," "multi-ethnic," or "post racial subject," the fact remains that race was at the core of public and private conversations–making it important for us as educators to reexamine and restore race/racism as a part of the multicultural agenda (Ladson-Billings 1996). Obama was accused of not being black enough by some blacks, and not white enough by some whites. The "color blind" posse perceived him as verifying their cause because he was "race-less." However, the very fact

that race was constantly at the center of discussion reinforces its importance and the fact that we cannot be post race. The persistence of racial inequities is a testimony to the fact that we are a *race/d* nation. Disparities include but are not limited to: the numbers of black men and women incarcerated in comparison to white males and females, respectively (Alexander 2012); unjust treatment of black youth in prosecution of the Jenna 6; the racial profiling of black males, namely Trayvon Martin who was brutally murdered because he "looked suspicious," etc. Perhaps it is highly likely that the very presence of a black president creates a backlash, one where racism peaks rather than decreases; racist propaganda increased during Obama's campaign and after his election. Studies have shown that with the election of a black president racial bias does increase, as there will be less support for policies that are designed to improve racial inequities (Kaiser et. al., 2009). We are taught race through various mediums, the classroom included:

> *Schools are part of how race is maintained through race's pedagogical dimensions. In other words, educators daily teach young people the naturalized status of race, its foreverness. Educators may question racism, but they rarely interrogate the status of race. The color-blind teacher is perhaps most guilty of this crime as s/he enacts race while denying its reality, but s/he is not the only one who takes race for granted.*
>
> *(Leonardo, 2011)*

What must racism look like for us to acknowledge that we are not post race? What signals or signifiers are needed to shut down this faulty rhetoric? Why are students hearing the post-race rhetoric and ignoring the race centered conversations? If we look closely enough, the very media forms and sites that confirmed a post race nation are writhe with blatant representations of racist responses to primarily Obama's blackness and ethnic identity. Figs. 1 and 2 listed below are two among many overtly racist attacks. Both demonstrate the fact that racial politics are inherent in evaluations of Obama as well as confirm that race/racism is alive and well in our individual conscience.

Racially Motivated and Offensive Statements By Tea Partiers
"Obama's Plan: White Slavery" "The American Tax Payers are the Jews for Obama's Ovens" "Barack Hussein Obama: The New Face of Hitler" "Barack Obama Supports Abortion, Sodomy, Socialism and the New World Order" "Obama Was Not Bowing. He Was Sucking Saudi Jewels" http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2009/04/16/10-most-offensive-tea-par_n_187554.html#s20069&title=Most_Offensive_Tea

Figure 1.

Figure 2.

Figure 1 illustrates the current state of racial politics within the US rather than a post racial era. Statements listed here illuminate a current imbalance of power and the fear majority group members have of losing that power. The proponents of the above listed ideals, thus, embrace the idea that Obama's election would mean a reverse of power where whites are disempowered and blacks empowered. We are a nation shaped by a politics of racial divisions as race is constantly at the forefront of existing politics. Race Matters![2] Figure 2 went viral in summer 2012. This bumper sticker goes beyond a simplistic critique of Obama's reign or a political stance that opposes his current campaign for re-election. Its racist overtones are blatant and undeniable. How can this type of rhetoric demonstrate a post race nation? The fact alone that a printing company would publish such racist propaganda is jarring. How can this contradictory language, which counters a post race existence, be accepted? It seems that this claim to a post race nation is being done to erase white guilt and the stigma, which labels whites as racist. Claims for a post race nation is a sophisticated form of racism that allows the benefactors of white privilege an opportunity to escape the discomfort that discussions of race incur. Hence, there is still a need to grapple with the politics of race as a viable site of exploration and inclusion within classroom discourse.

    Arguing that Obama embraced a kind of Kingian (Martin Luther King Jr.) strategy, Hill writes that his (Obama's) political resume "demonstrated his capacity to reach across racial and ethnic lines to see that his political viability was inextricably linked to a broad, complex human mosaic" (Hill, 2009). Radhika Parameswaran takes this argument a little further to discuss Obama as one whose successful presidential candidacy expands and reduces the meanings of Blackness in relations to transnationalism. Parameswaran argues that the "Third World" vision of black America that was marketed to the world during Hurricane Katrina was challenged by Obama's biography as it produced new tropes of black identity that "registered both the viability of the 'American Dream' and a cosmopolitan sensibility" (Parameswaran 2009). I would add to Hill and Parameswaran's approaches, here, what others have surmised: Obama's visibly marked subject location as a black man (due to the one drop rule) serves as a compelling symbol for blacks within the US. Even those who claim color blindness have to agree that Obama's presence

as a black man in such a prominent position is inspiring to young black boys and girls and functions as a collective victory for black communities (see Fig.3 above), namely those who have fought civil rights battles long and hard helping to make his election possible. Fig.3 published in the *New York Times, 2012*, tells the story of a young black boy who asked the president, "Is your hair like mine?" When Obama invited the boy to touch his hair, his resolve was "it is like mine." "It is like mine" translates into "we are alike" and "I can potentially become president." Obama's presence adds a new face to American politics on many levels: his ability to build and encourage coalitions among diverse bodies; encouraging a better understanding of who we are as citizens but paying attention to the outside world in order to become global citizens; and, demonstrating that color blindness is not the answer to racial politics. It becomes important to further complicate where we are as a raced nation and figure out the direction to be taken. How then might we apply Obama's celebration of multicultural experiences along with his own multicultural existence for a more successful classroom experience for students and instructors alike? How might we help students to see that conversations of race still belong in multicultural approaches to teaching? How can students of color benefit from inclusive teaching and not be rendered invisible again, due to post race rhetoric that does not want race as critical dialogue? In the remaining paragraphs of this section, I reference statements made by Obama during specific events–important to some of the issues at the center of a multicultural education–such as addresses to the nation, speeches, etc. I then use these statements to convey how the ideology behind them are and can continue to be effective in our pedagogy and our classrooms.

"Is Your Hair Like Mine?" The Need for Race to Remain Part of the Multicultural Classroom

Pete Souza/The White House
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/05/24/us/politics/indelible-image-of-a-boys-pat-on-obamas-head-hangs-in-white-house.html?smid=fb-share&fb_source=message

On Multiculturalism and Diversity

Well, I say ... tonight, there's not a liberal America and a conservative America; there is the United States of America . . . there is not a black America and white America and Latino America and Asian America; there's the United States of America ... We are one people,   all of us pledging allegiance to the stars and stripes, all of us defending the United States of America.

Obama– Keynote at 2004 National Democratic convention

We worship an awesome God in the blue states and we don't like federal agents poking around in our libraries in the red states. We are one people, all of us pledging allegiance to the 'Stars and Stripes,' all of us defending the United States of America.

Obama– October 19, 2006 on Larry King

It's the answer spoken by young and old, rich and poor, Democrat and Republican, black. White, Latino, Asian, Native American, gay, straight, disabled and not disabled –   Americans who sent a message to the world that we have never been a collection of Red States and Blue States; we are, and always will be, the United States of America

Obama– November 4, 2008: Historic election night victory

Acknowledging multiculturalism and the diversity that exists among us, Obama's ideology begs for the coming together of US citizens under the guise of Americanism, the glue that binds us. Embracing cultural diversity goes beyond morality; it is sensible and "as a nation, we are beginning to learn that we cannot succeed by exclusion, escape, and fraudulent notions of ourselves and each other. Negative externalities are beginning to catch up with us revealing devastating economic interdependency that makes sharing burdens and identifying common interests critical to the survival of our collective way of life" (Trout 6). Multiculturalism and inclusivity is practical for the classroom as well. Obama's call for the acceptance of diversity applies to the classroom. The classroom is the space where students should be granted an opportunity to not only address issues important to their own experiences but those of others even when the majority of them may be from a specific racial group or socio-economic background. It should be a safe space to examine what groups hold in common while simultaneously appreciating the differences that exist. This may be achieved by teaching single academic courses that address the value of multiculturalism but, more importantly, we can prepare our students for the multicultural world by ensuring that multicultural teaching is infused across the curriculum (Gay 2004). Resistant students need to be reminded of the multicultural make up of this nation and the world beyond it. Furthermore, the above quotes which outline the cultural make up of the US can be applied to the classroom setting by helping students to realize that we don't have white students or black students but learners–learners who bring different cultural representations, experiences, and varied identities to the table. They can only truly function as global citizens when they are exposed to the reality of not only the value of our connectedness but acceptance of differences as well, notably race.

V. On Race.

I never bought into the notion that by electing me, somehow we were entering into a post- period.

Obama, NYT, 5/4/12

...race is an issue that I believe this nation cannot afford to ignore right now. We would be making the same mistake that Reverend Wright made in his offending sermons about America–to simplify comments that have been made and the issues that have surfaced over the last few weeks reflect the complexities of race in this country that we've never really worked through – a part of our union that we have yet to perfect. And if we walk away now, if we simply retreat into our respective comers, we will never be able to come together and solve challenges like health care, or education, or the need to find good jobs for every American.

Obama–Barack Obama's Speech on Race

For Obama, race is not the problem of the disadvantaged, but one that must be noted, addressed, and assessed by all. As a nation we have not, as Obama states, successfully worked through racial realities and, therefore, cannot turn a "color blind" eye to conversations of race especially in the name of having a black president. If Obama's "election signaled a post-racial time, we would expect to see blacks increase their foothold in the middle-class, increase their asset ownership and make greater gains in net financial worth relative to whites" (Troutt 2009). This has not happened. It is important to inform students who embrace post race rhetoric that structural racism and racial hierarchies are still in place. What post race ideologies and color blindness do collectively is stifle growth as well as induces a silence that ultimately disempowers people of color, blacks in particular. To establish a classroom where discussions of race are not included is to render invisible students who are non-white. In order to combat revisiting this invisibility it is important to continue discussions of race through the use of: historical texts which frame the history of race in this country and how it continues to affect ongoing racial disparities, even when some racial progress is noted; entertain the everyday realities of racial profiling and other such inequities in the classroom to reference every day realities of blacks and others of color who experience racial profiling and other inequities; create assignments where students are encouraged to engage with a different culture or group other than their own so that they have an opportunity to evaluate things through the eyes of others; and to reintroduce critical thinking as a tool. By this I mean that students who rely on the sound bites of a post race nation can be given assignments that ask them to question who is advocating post race narratives and why. Instead of accepting that rhetoric as gospel, find out what the alternative to post race thinking might be and investigate how this rhetoric impacts individuals from different groups rather than taking anything at face value. Race is still a viable facet of a multicultural education.

On Gender and Sexuality

I believe that discrimination because of somebody's sexual orientation or gender identity runs counter to who we are as a people. It's a violation of the basic tenets on which this nation was founded. I believe that gay couples deserve the same legal rights as every other couple in this country. . . we are going to keep on

fighting until the law no longer treats committed partners who have been together for decades like they are strangers . . . That's why I have long believed that the so called Defense of Marriage Act needs to be repealed . . . it was wrong . . . it was unfair.

Obama 2012: Speech on Gay Marriage

We know that our challenges are eminently solvable. The question is whether together, we can muster the will — in our own lives, in our common institutions, in our politics — to bring about the changes we need. And I'm convinced your generation possesses that will. And I believe that the women of this generation — that all of you will help lead the way.

Obama: 2012 Commencement Address @ Barnard College

Today, women are not just half this country; you're half its workforce. More and more women are out-earning their husbands. You're more than half of our college graduates, and master's graduates, and PhDs. After decades of slow, steady, extraordinary progress, you are now poised to make this the century where women shape not only their own destiny but also the destiny of this nation and of this world.

Obama: 2012 Commencement Address @ Barnard College

Obama's advocacy for female empowerment and gay rights is progressive and encouraging. It demonstrates his recognition of gender disparities and the unfair treatment of gay men and women. In ways that there is conversation about a post race nation, there is also a post that has been attached to feminism. Indeed much progress has been made in terms of women breaking glass ceilings but there are still many more to be shattered. Claims to post feminism, like post race rhetoric, suppresses healthy dialogue on how we might continue to forge ahead to secure equal rights for women. It is indeed a challenge to get younger generations of women to see the gender inequities thus including texts and assignments that address representations of women responsibly and exposing students to the continued struggles women endure is important. Furthermore, Obama's endorsement of Gay marriage is monumental and should be appropriated more in classrooms. My students who are typically undone when they have to examine issues of race would readily agree to do so rather than discuss issues related to sexual orientation. As instructors, we have not done enough to secure safe spaces for students whose sexual orientation deviates from the norm. Conversations about GLBT identities can add to and enrich the multicultural classroom as well as empower students who identify as such. Very few universities offer specializations in Gay and Lesbian Studies. It is usually tacked on to gender and cultural studies. It is imperative that we engage literature, film, and other useful texts that help us to engage students in conversations about sexual orientation. To omit discussions of sexual orientation is to also dismiss the subject location and experiences of gay and lesbian persons, denying them rights to rightful citizenship. Obama's 2013 Inauguration speech rightly captures his sensitivity to and understanding of the ways in which the above identities intersect as well as the road travelled by those disadvantaged by pre and post race/gender/sexuality identities: "We, the people, declare today that the most evident of truths – that all of us are created equal – is the star that guides us still; just as it guided our forebears through Seneca Falls, and Selma, and Stonewall; just as it guided all those men and women, sung and unsung, who left footprints along

this great Mall, to hear a preacher say that we cannot walk alone; to hear a King proclaim that our individual freedom is inextricably bound to the freedom of every soul on Earth..." (*Washington Post,* 2013).

Conclusion

Colorblind advocacy endangers and hinders possible progress in multicultural education. "Race continues to play a most potent role in American culture although we have yet to move beyond the quintessential black/white dichotomy in a manner that accurately and clearly begins to delineate the many shades of race" (James, 2009). Hence, claims to a post race nation due to the presence of a black president are unsustainable. The "change" that Obama mentioned that had "come to America" in his opening speech did not mean a change where race is transcended. If anything, it appears that the nation is more race conscious in the era of Obama. The hope for racial change is understandable and perhaps reasonable; however, it is more industrious to accept that, as Cornell West reminds us, "Race Matters." Thinking more astutely on how we can utilize the moment not to end discussions about race but to probe how we might complicate our understanding of it at this juncture and its role in multicultural and inclusive pedagogy proves most useful. Obama's bi-racial identity and culturally diverse lived experiences can function as useful examples of what diversity looks like and his politics demonstrative of how to capitalize on the diverse tools and ways of being within and outside of our respective communities. His identity, though contested, serves as a narrative we could all mimic if we were to embrace our multifaceted identities. Instructors and students alike can glean the relevance and potential of inclusive learning by following the example set in Obama's encouragement of a multicultural existence–one that does not deny race as a viable and necessary component. In the end such learning environments produce well-rounded students and help them become global citizens.[3]

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A Curricular Reform Viewed Through Bolman and Deal's Organizational Frames

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Abstract: Professions exist to serve the needs of society and, in the case of the dental profession, patients. Academic dental institutions strive to help meet these needs by educating and developing future practitioners, educators, researchers, and citizen leaders who serve the community and shape the changing environment in which they provide care. As patient needs, practice patterns, scientific evidence, and economic conditions evolve, dental education must respond with self-assessment and innovation. Guiding any institution through authentic reform requires a number of strategies. Lee Bolman and Terrance Deal suggest four organizational constructs, or frames, through which to observe and navigate a complex organization: Structural, Human Resource, Political and Symbolic. This qualitative case study examines a major curricular reform initiative in a North American school of dentistry through Bolman and Deal's organizational frames.

Key words: organizational behavior; organizational change; curricular reform; change management; leadership.

Introduction and Purpose

Most in health education have little trouble agreeing upon the importance of ongoing curricular improvement to the education of competent practitioners, capable of meeting the diverse needs of the public, well into the future. Confirmation of this assertion can be found in the comprehensive review of dental education, published by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) in 1995, which called for implementation of "an integrated basic and clinical science curriculum that provides clinically relevant education in the basic sciences and scientifically based education in clinical care" (Field MJ, ed.,1995). The American Dental Education Association (ADEA) Commission on Change and Innovation in Dental Education (CCI) was formed in 2005 and charged with development of programs and initiatives to support such reforms (American Dental Education Association Commission on Change and Innovation in Dental Education, 2009).

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Problem Statement

Even with philosophical agreement, initiating and achieving such change can be challenging. The ADEA CCI counts the following factors among those influencing current and future curriculum within each school, "expectations of the parent institution, standing or emerging research foci, strengths among specialty education programs, approaches to clinical education, and pedagogical philosophies and practices" (Haden, et al., 2006).

Shepherding an institution through major curricular reform requires a variety of strategies. Bolman and Deal offer one such strategic tool for looking at situations and organizations through multiple perspectives, or frames. Their widely used frameworks help visualize an organization through four lenses, or perspectives: the Structural, Human Resource, Political, and Symbolic frames. A systematic appraisal of each of these four constructs may help an organization, or institution, capitalize on its strengths, and anticipate potential barriers to success (Bolman & Deal, 1997).

Research Questions

The focus of this qualitative study is to retrospectively explore, and better understand, the effect of utilizing these frames, formally and informally, to guide this curricular reform initiative at a North American school of dentistry. A theoretical reflection on the following questions is offered.

1.) Were Bolman and Deal's constructs recognizable and applicable to stakeholders involved in this professional education curricular reform?
2.) How did observation of these organizational frames help leaders understand institutional challenges more clearly?
3.) Did operationally employing these lenses improve leader's ability to address challenges more strategically?
4.) Were Bolman and Deal's frames valuable enough to this process to warrant future use in like change initiatives?

Reflecting on the significance of Bolman and Deal's organizational frames in this particular academic context is appropriately served by case-study (Stake, 1995). Case study is used to gain understanding of a particular experience, within a body of knowledge which, in this study, is the literature on organizational constructs and change. Of Stake's three types of case-study, the *instrumental* case study offered authors the most helpful method: to provide insight into an issue or help refine a theory (Stake, 1995).

Background and Theoretical Context

The School of Dentistry described in this manuscript completed a strategic plan in 2007, which was updated in 2012, with input from a broad range of stakeholders. Educational innovation figured prominently among agreed upon initiatives. The faculty developed a vision for curricular reform, which centered on a commitment to "graduating lifelong learners and critical thinkers able to integrate the science and technology of dentistry." Change would include a greater focus on active integrated learning and critical thinking through the use of multidisciplinary courses and small group case-based learning as a signature andragogy (University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry School Initiatives, 2007).

Curricular Change Initiative

Ensuring a learning environment that encouraged students to integrate content and synthesize solutions to unique, professionally relevant problems, and to demonstrate learning at higher levels than in the past, was critical. Thematically, or topically, integrated curricula was created, with courses taught by interdisciplinary teams that cut across traditional academic boundaries. Principles and techniques associated with evidence-based practice were incorporated. These collective concepts appear to be well endorsed throughout health care professions education (Field MJ, ed.,1995; Hendricson, et al., 2007; American Dental Education Association Commission on Change and Innovation in Dental Education, 2009).

To achieve this integration, the school's curriculum was organized around five thematically related strands: 1.) Integrated Pre-Clinical Technique (IPT); 2.) Integrated Medical Sciences (IMS); 3.) Integrated Clinical Sciences (ICS); Clinical Practice (CP); and 5.) Personalized Instructional Programs (PIP). The aspiration being that students would perceive delivery of these curricular strands as intertwined, coordinated parts of a whole. (Figure 1)
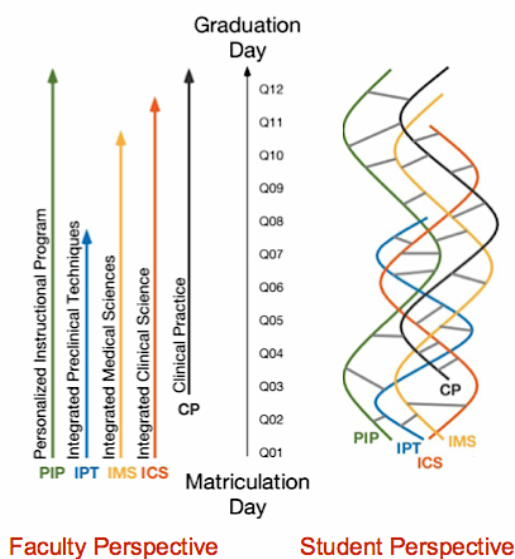
Figure 1. Curricular Strands (Q indicates the twelve quarters of the school's 36 month academic program).

Although unique in its accelerated format, the school's curriculum had historically been fairly traditional. Rather than fully deconstruct and reconstruct the entire curriculum simultaneously, each strand was created and is being refined on its own independent timeline. This revision format was chosen to allow for the highest probability of successful implementation in this institution. To create a unified vision, this model of curricular strands with interconnections was dubbed the *Dental Helix Curriculum*.

Haden and colleagues report that a number of U.S. dental schools have undergone, or are in the process of, significant curricular change (Haden, et al., 2010). Like many of these institutions, this school's planned revisions included: increased student engagement, increased efficiency of content delivery, and reduction of curricular gaps and unplanned repetition. A more robust learning environment, which encouraged greater critical thinking, was sought (Facione and Facione, 2008). Multi-disciplinary presentation of material in a way that more realistically

reflected how information is used in clinical practice was an anticipated strength (Irby, 1994). Smaller working groups in both the classroom and clinic were desired to engage students more effectively and provide patients a more personalized experience. Finally, utilization of a greater variety of assessment methods including: cased-based reports and exams, literature reviews, reflective portfolios, and Objective Structured Clinical Examination (OSCE), among others, was believed important (Behar-Horenstein, n.d.)

Initiating and implementing curricular change in dental education can be challenging for many reasons. Bertolami describes the dilemma between graduating "competent practitioners to meet present clinical needs while also preparing students for a radically different kind of practice in the future", a future which includes changes in disease demographics, scientific and technological advances, and patient demands (Bertolami, 2001). Survey respondents from 53 U.S. and Canadian dental schools indicated that "perceived success (it works), compatibility with faculty preferences, faculty comfort, and capacity/feasibility" were primary drivers for their present curricular format (Haden, et al., 2010). To create energy and momentum around change, these paradigms must be challenged and intentional plans made to overcome apprehension and inertia.

Strategies for driving curriculum revision were critical to realizing successful curricular reform in this professional program. Bolman and Deal's organizational frames were understood and used, both formally and informally by a number of leaders within the institution to recognize organizational complexity and approach plans accordingly (Bolman &Deal, 2003).

Strategy for Driving Change - Bolman and Deal's Organizational Frames

To help leaders and managers understand their organizations through a variety of lenses, or perspectives, Lee Bolman and Terrance Deal suggest four organizational constructs, or frames: *Structural, Human Resource, Political* and *Symbolic*. Each frame includes a set of ideas that help make sense of how individuals and organizations think and work. Individual frames have inherent strengths and weaknesses, advantages and disadvantages, all are founded in both managerial practice and social science research. (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Bolman and Deal note that, in the last fifty years, social scientists have devoted considerable energy to the study of organizations to better understand how they work. They advise that their four frames can be described in terms of "central assumptions and propositions" based in this historical organizational research. (Table 1)

The *structural frame* develops rules, policies, and management hierarchies to coordinate activities. Formal roles or standard operating procedures are designed to align individual, group and organizational effort with institutional goals, available technology, workforce, and environment (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

The *human resource frame* assumes that an organization exists to meet human needs and should be customized to the people who populate it. Interplay between the individual and the organization must be strong and positive to achieve reciprocal satisfaction and success (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

The *political frame* "views organizations as arenas of scarce resources where power and influence are constantly affecting the allocation of resources among individuals or groups" (Bolman & Deal, 1985). Power, negotiation and conflict management are ongoing features of this organizational construct.

Table 1

Overview of Bolman and Deal Four-frame Model

	Frame			
	Structural	**Human Resource**	**Political**	**Symbolic**
Metaphor for organization	Factory or machine	Family	Jungle	Carnival, temple, theatre
Central concepts	Rules, roles, goals, policies, technology, environment	Needs, skills, relationships	Power, conflict, competition, organizational politics	Culture, meaning, metaphor, ritual, ceremony, stories, heroes
Image of leadership	Social architecture	Empowerment	Advocacy	Inspiration
Basic leadership challenge	Attune structure to task, technology, environment	Align organizational and human needs	Develop agenda and power base	Create faith, beauty, meaning

Source: Bolman & Deal, 2003

The *symbolic frame* assumes that organizations are bound more tightly by shared values and culture. "Ritual, ceremonies, stories, heroes, and myths" strengthen this collective identity (Bolman & Deal, 1985). While the structural, human resource, and political frames depend on rationality and linear thought processes, the symbolic frame does not. It assumes that the perception of meanings and values is paramount. An organization's collective history and culture may be most strongly communicated symbolically.

"Each frame is both powerful and coherent. Collectively, they make it possible to reframe, or view the same thing from multiple perspectives" (Bolman & Deal, 2003). These lenses can be used to better understand an organization, in this case an institution of professional education, and influence its work. Change may be more easily navigated by using multiple frames to gain perspective, diagnose challenges and create strategies for moving forward. No single frame is comprehensive enough to apply to every dynamic, although, "Relatively modest changes in how a problem or decision is framed can have a dramatic impact on how people respond" (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Methodology

Qualitative case study was used to view and determine the significance of both informal and formal use of Bolman and Deal's organizational frames in this academic change initiative. The focus of this examination is appropriately served by case-study, in which the researcher's

exploration may include examination of a program, activity, process, individual or multiple individuals. The case is bound by time and activity, and detailed information is collected over a sustained period of time (Stake, 1995). Stake offers three forms of case study: the *intrinsic* case study which focuses on a particular case with no intended interest about other cases or general problem; the *instrumental* case study aimed at gaining general understanding by studying a particular case and; the *collective* case study which includes multiple cases rather than a single case. Of these, the instrumental case study offered the most helpful method for this exploration (Stake, 1995). The authors have attempted to understand this case, or particular experience, within a body of literature on organizational constructs and change.

This methodology was used to explore and describe how Bolman and Deal's organizational frames were utilized to help meet challenges associated with a curricular change; to analyze and interpret the effectiveness of this observation and navigation tool; and to reflect on possible generalization or transferability to other such academic reforms. This case represents the experience, challenges, and aspirations of a single academic institution offering professional dental education. Stake notes that qualitative researchers perceive what is happening in key episodes, represent happenings with their own direct interpretation and stories, and use these narratives to help the reader gain experiential understanding of the case. The focus of this methodology may not on the uniqueness of the case, but on what can be learned from it (Stake, 1995).

Participants

This study is based on a single academic institution, a graduate level professional education program, over a 7 year period of time. During this time, guided by a new strategic plan, the school underwent significant curricular reform. The collective school community consists of an average of 464 students; 460 Faculty (64 full-time; 220 part-time; and 178 volunteer (adjunct)); and 245 Staff.

Data

Data included observation, collection and review of archival documents and records including strategic plans, progress reports, formative surveys, assessments and inputs; program materials, and annual reports.

Data was analyzed and interpreted first individually and then through a collective iterative process to examine initial outcomes and refine theories and assertions.

Findings

Structural Frame

Bolman and Deal define the structural frame as one that focuses on the architecture of organization – management processes, division of labor, coordinating mechanisms, feedback loops, rules and roles, goals and policies – that shape decisions and activities (Bolman and Deal, 2003, Gallos, 2006). Figure 2 is a diagram that demonstrates the overarching structure for the new curriculum, created and discussed at faculty meetings. It includes a summary of the goals or outputs proposed for the reform, including specific learning outcomes and components of the

school's mission. Also outlined are areas of input that were reviewed to ensure appropriate support and resource structures to achieve successful change.
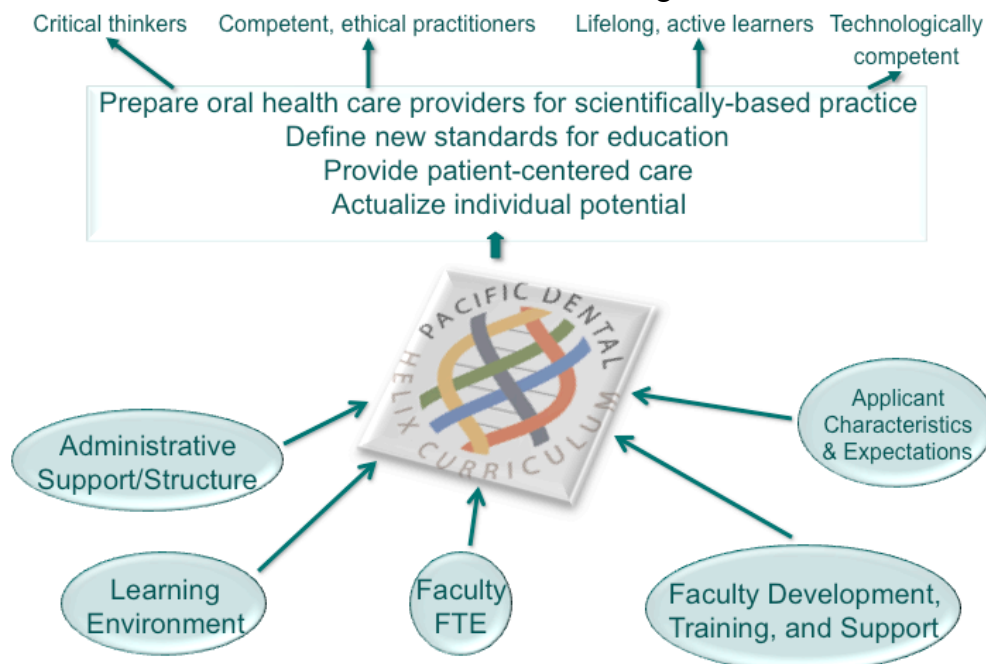

Figure 2. Desired Outcomes and Necessary Inputs of the Dental Helix Curriculum.

Internal stakeholder groups agreed that curricular change should support the school's vision, mission, and values, with specific focus on the following mission-based components: to prepare oral healthcare providers for scientifically based practice, to define new standards for education, and to provide patient centered care, and actualize individual potential (University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry Mission and Values, 2011). It was also agreed that the new Helix curriculum should produce graduate characteristics to include all current school of dentistry competencies, mapped to reflect ADEA Competencies for the New General Dentist (American Dental Education Association, 2008). These aspirations should focus on graduates who are: critical thinkers, competent and ethical practitioners, lifelong active learners, and technologically competent.

A structure of integrated curricular strands of the Dental Helix Curriculum were stressed versus independent departments and discreet courses. The learner was placed at the center of the structure with thematically related content presented in a way that was appropriate for the student's level of development. Faculty from different disciplines collaborated to organize and develop content. Content coordinators were designated to ensure that the specific content represents current science and is sequenced, delivered, and assessed appropriately. Additionally, coordinators, in their new roles, would support creation of strong links between clinical and biomedical content.

Exploration of necessary inputs for successful change included a review of the current administrative support structure. Resulting structural change included reduction of the curriculum committee from 35 to 12 members, reflecting the Helix strands. The committee's charge moved from a largely operational one to a more strategic one, including responsibility for shaping curriculum; tracking data, assessing outcomes; and supporting new paradigms in teaching and learning. (Figure 3)
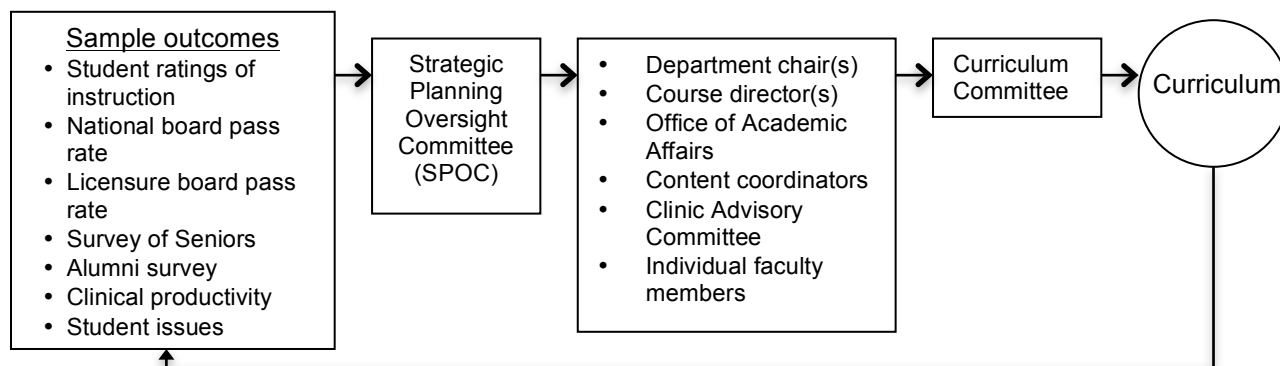
Figure 3. Flow Chart of Course Review Process.

Given that curricular changes focused on an integrated approach, linking content and learning experience from day one to graduation, the student academic performance and promotion review committees were merged into a single, comprehensive committee capable of a more holistic, ongoing review of student's performance. This allowed for earlier recognition of problems, diagnosis, intervention, and remediation.

The school's departmental structure was examined and, through a collaborative process including faculty, chairs, and administrators, departments were merged, reducing the department number from fifteen to eight. This more streamlined structure allowed for increased flexibility, inter-disciplinary collaboration, and integration ease and appears to "accommodate both collective goals and individual differences" as Bolman and Deal allude is possible (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

The school's physical learning environments were examined with an eye to incorporating new delivery and assessment technologies to support updated learning processes. Through a multiyear feasibility study, the faculty, staff, students, administrators, alumni, and friends of the school of dentistry agreed that, to fully implement new curricular initiatives, the school would need to build an entirely new facility. Although Bolman and Deal stress that "Structures must be designed to fit an organizations circumstances (including its goals, technology, workforce, and environment) (Bolman & Deal, 2003), it's important to keep in mind that teaching and learning goals should drive design of technology and learning environments, not the reverse. The school's strategic plan, in fact, initiated this exploration in a direction statement to "Optimize our facility assets and technology investments" (University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry Strategic Plan, 2012).

Faculty roles and resources were evaluated to ensure appropriate full time equivalent (FTE) positions to support more faculty-intensive small group collaborative and case-based learning opportunities in the programmatic strands. A resulting commitment to an increase in faculty FTEs was made with accompanying resources allocated for faculty development. Resources were also reallocated for specialists in Instructional Design and Audiovisual Information Technology to the support deployment of the Helix Curriculum.

A new, inclusive database was created to gather and evaluate student related data previously housed in admissions, academic, affairs, clinical services, and the dean's office. This comprehensive database now provides powerful information, allowing for more timely, evidence based decision-making from application through graduation. It was agreed that the holistic applicant characteristics currently being evaluated for admissions decisions be carefully

examined in order to admit students with the highest probability of success in this new curriculum, with its stronger emphasis on active, integrated learning.

As described above, effort was made to examine goals, specialized roles, and current organizational construct and to structure the process of curricular change to direct energy and resources for the greatest likelihood for success (Bolmen & Gallo, 2011).

Human Resource Frame

Bolman and Deal's human resource frame helps an institution align individual and organizational needs, improves human resource management, and supports positive relational dynamics, including perceptions, attitudes, motivation, participation, training, respect for diversity, and job satisfaction, among others. (Bolman & Deal, 2003, 1985; Gallos, 2006).

The school's 2007 update of vision, mission, and strategic plan was accomplished by broad based agreement, including input from numerous small group and large town hall discussions. Individuals from all stakeholder groups associated with the school were actively involved. (University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry Strategic Plan, 2007). The benefits of such inclusion are emphasized by Bland and colleagues who note that participation in major decisions is critical to creating the consensus and strong commitment necessary to implement and sustain change (Bland, et al., 2000).

Once stakeholders agreed on the educational concepts, consistent communication of planning, implementation progress, and early outcomes proved motivating. Strong, vocal leaders, at all levels of the organization, willing to champion the proposed curricular model and drive early implementation were instrumental change agents. Bland and colleagues report that such "A culture of collegial support and interpersonal bonding is associated with successful change" (Bland, et al.,2000). Continued focus on the school's core values of humanism, innovation, leadership and reflection contributed to a positive climate for change (University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry Strategic Plan, 2012). (Table 2)

The school's strategic plan included a commitment to develop faculty and staff to lead curricular change and nurture critical thinkers and lifelong learners (University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry Strategic Plan, 2012). Targeted faculty development was deemed critical to planning and implementation of meaningful curricular reform, an aspect of human resource management confirmed by Hendricson and colleagues (Hendricson, et al., 2007). Bolman and Deal similarly espouse the benefits of investing in human capital by providing learning and development opportunities (Bolman & Deal, 2003, 1985). Localized staffing reorganization allowed for greater resources to be redirected towards faculty development and support, in alignment with the strategic plan.

Faculty development programs were created with a focus on pedagogical concepts, instructional design, assessment, technology, and leadership. Faculty and chairs were surveyed to determine specific priorities. Faculty were asked specifically what pedagogical areas they perceived greatest interest in improving. (Table 3) To coordinate growth opportunities in a more strategic and comprehensive way, the community voted to combine representation and budget commitment from the Dental Faculty Council, Department Chairs, and the Academic Dean's Office to create a highly synergistic Faculty Development Oversight Committee. The committee was charged to review developments in the art and science of dentistry, as well as dental education and teaching pedagogies, and to create a strategic plan for faculty development.

Table 2

2011-12 Strategic Plan Update Survey – Question 3

The Strategic Plan identifies seven core values that characterize our school and define our distinctive identity. In your opinion, how well does the school live up to these core values?						
#	Answer	Min Value	Max Value	Average Value	Standard Deviation	Responses
1	Humanism	1.00	5.00	3.88	1.00	112
2	Innovation	1.00	5.00	3.50	0.84	112
3	Leadership	1.00	5.00	3.73	0.96	112
4	Reflection	1.00	5.00	3.13	0.93	112
5	Stewardship	1.00	5.00	3.34	0.92	112
6	Collaboration	1.00	5.00	3.12	1.00	112
7	Philanthropy	2.00	5.00	3.66	0.91	112
Respondents: Students: 30 (23%); Faculty: 58 (44%); Staff: 44 (33%); Other: 1 (1%); Total 133						

Table 3.

Faculty Development Survey

Please amplify the types of pedagogy you would be interested in developing.
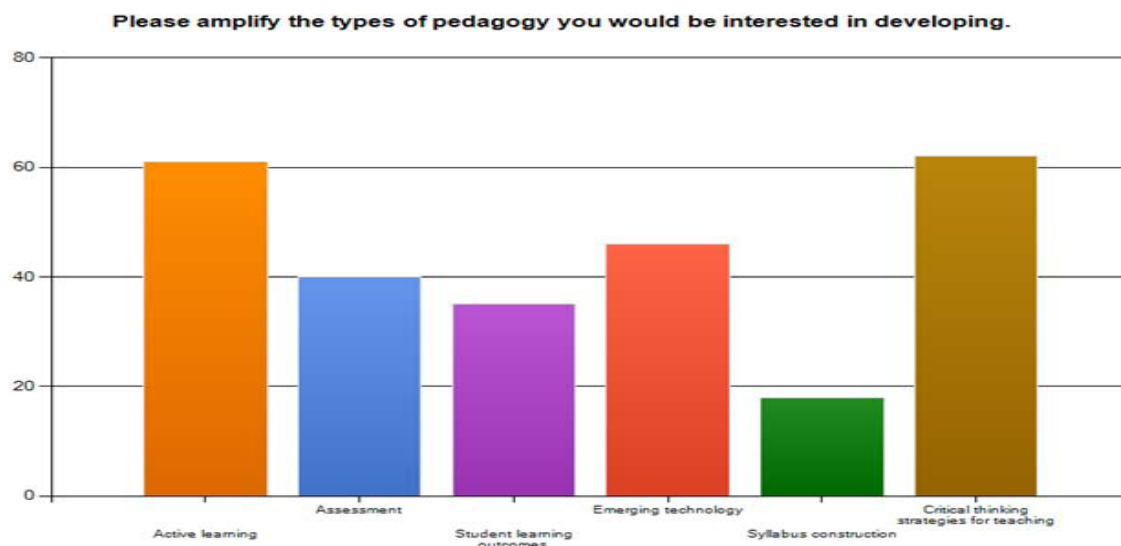
Source: Faculty Development Oversight Committee – Survey of Faculty Preferences Regarding Development – 2011.

Through partnerships with the University's School of Education and Center for Teaching and Learning, increased focus on teaching methods, outcomes assessment, use of technology, and scholarly publication is being achieved. To-date, generous school development opportunities

have supported faculty attainment of 20 Masters degrees in Business Administration; 43 Master's degrees in Education; 10 Doctoral degrees in Education; with 10 doctoral candidates in Education currently in progress.

In addition to intentionally planned faculty development and recognition, unanticipated opportunities for faculty collaboration and growth have occurred. Integrated case based seminars bring faculty from all disciplines together to present material and lead discussion. Participating faculty agreed that, not only does this collaborative teaching reduce silos, it has also increased personal translational knowledge (Hoover and Lyon, 2011). In the spirit of Bolman and Deals' human resource frame, aligning individual faculty development needs and organizational needs was imperative to building the capacity of both.

Political Frame

Boleman and deal's political frame considers the realistic process of making decisions and allocating resources in a context of finite resources, differing perspectives, and divergent interests. (Bolman & Deal, 2003, 2008). This is particularly important in current times with so many Universities experiencing decreased funding support. Given the different personality types and operational styles of any school's stakeholders, consensus around how to achieve curricular improvements, or whether improvement is even necessary, remains an ongoing discussion (MTBI Basics, 2011). Restructuring of traditional curricular formats, courses, and departments brought apprehension to some. Adding to this challenge was the fact that the school's historic traditional curriculum continued, by most accounts, to graduate competent new general dentists. Some adhered to the idea, "if it isn't broken – why fix it".

Faculty buy-in and support of any curricular change is critical to success. To surmount anxieties as processes move forward, farther from the status quo, Bolman and Deal stress the importance of focusing on clear and consistent agreed upon goals (Bolman & Deal, 1997). A process of ongoing curricular improvement was grounded in the school's mission statement and strategic plan (University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry Strategic Plan and Vision and Mission Statement). It might be argued that, in addition to the school's institutional mission and vision, the American Dental Education Association's Competencies for the New General Dentist provided added inspiration and urgency (American Dental Education Association, 2008). Finally, the goals for developing and implementing the new Helix curriculum were in strong concordance with the University's aspirations. (Table 4: University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry Vision and Mission Statement).

With a consistent vision for the new curriculum established, the administration generously shared power and discretion with work groups. The process additionally benefited from a cadre of strong, respected faculty leaders capable of networking, supporting collaboration, and advocating for the Helix Curriculum initiatives.

As the Helix Curriculum became more integrated, the school's curriculum management system required significant revision. Content Experts were identified and charged with responsibility for specific subject matter currency, sequencing, assessment, and documentation. This agreement allowed for a heightened stakeholder focus on content and a reduced focus on course *ownership*. This change supported more fluid integration of content then the historic course or department driven focus allowed. Such integration is encouraged by researcher William Hendricson who suggests we reduce the traditional necessity for dental students to bounce between multiple, siloed courses, conducted independently, without coordination and,

alternatively, consider ways "to limit a student's span of attention to no more than four courses at a time" (Hendricson, 2012).

Table 4

Relationship between university and dental school goals and core values

University strategic goal	Dental School goal	Dental School core value
1. Build the strength, relevance, and reputation of Pacific's academic programs.	• Prepare oral healthcare providers for scientifically-based practice; • Define new standards for education • Discover and disseminate knowledge • Develop and promote policies addressing the needs of society	innovation, leadership, reflection, collaboration
2. Pursue new student markets that capitalize on the strengths of Pacific's academic programs and multiple locations.	• Define new standards for education • Actualize individual potential • Develop and promote policies addressing the needs of society • Discover and disseminate knowledge	innovation, leadership, collaboration
3. Prepare students for tomorrow's careers and lifelong success.	• Prepare oral healthcare providers for scientifically-based practice • Provide patient-centered care • Discover and disseminate knowledge • Actualize individual potential • Develop and promote policies addressing the needs of society	humanism, innovation, leadership, reflection, stewardship, collaboration
4. Develop organizational capacities that support Pacific's mission	• Actualize individual potential • Define new standards for education	humanism, stewardship, philanthropy

Source: University of the Pacific School of Dentistry 2014 Accreditation Self-Study

In addition to sharing resources and empowering the architects of curricular change, the Office of Academic Affairs has consistently recognized and rewarded innovation and achievement. This operational style of setting and broadly sharing an agenda; bringing stakeholders together, developing logical networks and partnerships, supporting activities, and crediting participants with positive outcomes appears in keeping with best leadership and practices in the political frame (Bolman & Deal, 1997).

Symbolic Frame

Bolman and Deal assert that "culture is the glue that holds an organization together and unites people around shared values and beliefs" (Bolman & Deal, 2003). Rituals, ceremonies, stories, symbols, values and vision all contribute to a strong symbolic frame (Gallos, 2006). The dental school aspires to excellence and innovation in education, research, community service and patient care. Seven core values affirm this commitment and help shape the daily interactions of faculty, staff, and students: 1.) Humanism — dignity, integrity and responsibility, 2.) Innovation — willingness to take calculated risk, 3.) Leadership — modeling, inspiring and mobilizing, 4.) Reflection — using facts and outcomes for continuous improvement, 5.) Stewardship — responsible use and management of resources, 6.) Collaboration — partnering for the common good, 7.) Philanthropy — investing time, talent and assets (University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry Core Values, n.d.)

Values clarification exercise preliminary to curricular changes confirmed the importance of these guiding principles and provided a platform from which to direct change. Stakeholders perceive humanism as emblematic of the school's learning environment, affirmed by its prominence in the 2007 strategic plan (University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry Strategic Plan, 2012; Morton, 2008, American Dental Association Commission on Dental Accreditation, 2013). Leadership is also a strongly held value, noted in the Strategic Plan as both a distinguishing feature; and a goal, implicit in the school's curriculum and culture (University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry Strategic Plan, 2012, Dugoni, 2002, Hammer & Nadershahi, 2011). Core values informed and inspired this change initiative.

To emphasize and rally faculty around the curricular revision process, a symbolic logo representing the Dental Helix Curriculum was created by a representative focus group. (Figure 4) The logo brought clarity and reinforcement to the conceptual idea of curriculum organized into five strands with interconnectors. Chairs were asked to encourage use of this symbolism early and often.

Figure 4. Dental Helix Curriculum logo.

Individual commitment and implementation is essential to the success of any initiative (Bolman & Deal, 2003). In both symbolic and actual recognition of such personal investment, Promotion and Tenure guidelines were updated at the University level to include a greater emphasis on the scholarship of teaching and learning. To encourage and recognize creativity and advancement, an annual award for curricular innovation was created, the winner selected by school peers.

The symbolic frame reminds us to celebrate what we hope to achieve, and to create the symbols and ceremonies that inspire and build upon the values and culture of the organization. (Bolman & Deal, 2003).

Conclusions

Bolman and Deal's structural, human resource, political and symbolic constructs were, indeed, evident, and easily recognized in the institution examined, as described. Observation of these lenses, as both a window on the organization and a tool by which to navigate change, helped leaders better understand challenges and opportunities. Intentionally anticipating, considering, and strategically addressing stakeholder needs in each of these frames supported more efficient and authentic change. With the assistance of Bolman and Deal's organizational frames, among a number of change strategies, the school has been able to accomplish the majority of its curricular reform (Table 5).

Table 5

Development and Implementation Timeline for Curriculum Reform at the University of the Pacific Arthur A. Dugoni School of Dentistry

Year	Action
2004	Values clarification exercise
2005-06	Curriculum committee commitment to reform and initial schedule adjustments to support integration planning for an Integrated Clinical Sciences course (ICS II)
2006-07	Strategic planning process
2007-08	Selection and training of content coordinators
2007-10	Further planning and full implementation of the Integrated Clinical Sciences strand (ICS I, II, and III)
2009	Facilities study (Classroom of the Future)
2009-10	Planning for Integrated Medical Sciences (IMS) courses and Personalized Instructional Program (PIP) strand
2011	Implementation of IMS course
2012	Implementation of portions of Clinical Practice strand and pilot launch of the PIP strand
2011-13	Planning for the Integrated Preclinical Technique (IPT) strand
2013	Implementation of the IPT strand
2014	Move to new dental school facility in support of Helix curriculum goals

Source: Nadershahi N.A., et al. 2013

In planning this change initiative, the school carefully considered the challenging dynamics of the academy and developed strategies for purposefully managing these. At stake was the kind of enduring, positive change described by Bland and coauthors who evaluated a number of academic programs that had implemented broad curricular reform. They identified the

following features associated with sustainable long-term success, many of which are also visible in Bolman and Deal's organizational frames (Bland, et al., 2000). (Table 6)
Table 6

Features Associated with Enduring Change, and Curriculum Outcomes

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Institutional Design Features
Mission and goals. The goals of the initiative must match the institution's mission and goals.

History of change. Institutions that have histories of effective change are more likely to implement new innovations.

Cooperative climate. A culture of collegial support and interpersonal bonding is associated with successful change.

Organizational structure. Organizations that are highly hierarchical, compartmentalized, and operating in a bureaucratic structure are less successful at implementing change.

Political structure and policies. Successful change is associated with all sources of political strength (influence, policies, and funding), both internal and external, being shaped to support the desired innovation and existing or new policies being put in place to support the initiative.

Relationships with external environments. An understanding of community culture, expectations, and stability facilitates successful change. It is also important to improve and not jeopardize relations with professional accrediting bodies.

Institutional Process Features
Participation of members. Involvement of institutional members in all major decisions creates consensus and the needed commitment to implement and sustain the innovation.

Communication. Frequent and substantive communication is necessary for disseminating information about the innovation and change process, and creating and implementing desired change.

Leadership. Leaders with a vision of the desired outcomes and processes for reaching those outcomes are essential. Through the use of strategies such as the mobilization of external forces, coalition building, the promotion of action, consistent high-quality communication, and participative decision making, these individuals ensure that the innovation is accepted.

Human resource development. Diverse and repeated training is crucial to arm individuals for success in implementing the innovation.

Evaluation. Ongoing data collection is essential for evolutionary planning and implementation.

Curriculum Process Features
Curriculum features. A major curricular innovation must contain certain characteristics in order to be initiated. It must be viewed as meeting a perceived need, credible, bringing advantages to both students and faculty, having administrative support, having the involvement of influential people,

having a participative governance process, and having a broad level of awareness, participation, and support.

Source: Bland, C et al. 2000

Some participants in this reform worried that successful change in select areas might result in undesired outcomes in others. Stakeholders wanted to feel that their financial and human resources would be used to a positive end. Recognition of Bolman and Deal's organizational frames helped this institution negotiate the challenges inherent in a major curricular reform initiative, and move towards constructive change and positive outcomes. Designing initiatives to support structural, human resource, political and symbolic perspectives was critical.

The authors believe that utilization of Bolman and Deal's reframing perspectives provided a helpful set of lenses through which to recognize the school's institutional strengths and potential barriers to change. With these in mind, strategies were developed to support and move major curricular reform initiatives forward. Actively operationalizing these strategies helped create a number of the processes recognized by the literature as important to successful change. These reframing approaches may prove helpful to other institutions going through like strategic plan implementation and curricular innovation.

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Evaluation and revision of an introduction to experiential rotations course

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Abstract: The objectives of this study were to evaluate the perceived student value of topics taught in Butler University's Introduction to Experiential Rotations (RX500) course, implement course revisions to address any perceived weaknesses, and to reassess the course following implementation of those course revisions. Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE) students from Butler University's 2012 doctorate of pharmacy class were initially surveyed to assess the perceived usefulness and design of RX500. Based on the findings of the initial data, course revisions were developed and implemented for the following semester's RX500 course. In order to assess for potential changes in the perceived value of the course following implementation, a follow-up survey was sent to students completing the revised course in the fall of 2012. Fifty-eight students completed the initial survey in the fall of 2011, and 34 completed the follow-up survey in the fall of 2012. The majority of students in both groups had completed at least four APPE experiences at the time of survey completion. Both of the study groups rated hands-on activities and visual presentations as their most beneficial learning styles within the classroom setting. Based on the initial survey findings, two topics were removed from the course, two topics were revised within the course, and three topics were added to the course. The follow-up survey results indicated an increased perceived usefulness of the two revised topics; however, the three new topics added to the course had mixed results. Faculty can continue to work on delivery of newer topics being added to the APPE preparation course.

Keywords: course revision, health profession curriculum, clinical rotation preparation, student perceptions

Background

Student, faculty, and preceptor perceptions have been used to shape and refine curricular structure within colleges of pharmacy nationwide (Ho, 2009; Reid, 2002; Scott, 2010; Stevenson, 2011). Additionally, the Accreditation Council for Pharmacy Education (ACPE) 2011 guideline 22.2 recommends utilizing student perspectives in evaluation of curriculum, achievement of competencies, and other aspects of the professional program in the form of course evaluations, focus groups, or surveys (ACPE 2011). Traditional coursework within the doctor of pharmacy curriculum includes didactic learning in the classroom setting during the first three years of the professional school, followed by experiential learning throughout the final year of the program. During that experiential learning year, all pharmacy students are required to complete at least 1440 hours of Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experience (APPE). These experiences are designed

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to provide a wide exposure to various patients and disease states, highlighting the impact of pharmacists in many different settings. This final year is often considered a capstone year and an opportunity to put to practice knowledge gained during the previous curricular years. Two noteworthy publications within pharmacy education literature illustrate use of a survey tool called the Perceptions of Preparedness (PREP) survey (Reid, 2002 & Scott, 2010) to assess student perceptions of preparedness prior to these clinical APPE. The overarching goal of the PREP survey was to utilize information gained to improve the pharmacy program curriculum prior to APPE.

The first instance of the PREP survey was published by Reid, et al. (2002) at the University of Florida. Pharmacy faculty created 41 competencies essential for completion prior to the APPE year. These competencies were used to develop the PREP survey. Student perceptions of confidence in each of these competencies were evaluated using a seven-point Likert-scale. To evaluate the results, investigators divided the competencies into five factors: administrative, communication, psychosocial, research, and technical. The study was conducted for four years from 1997 to 2001. Student responses revealed that students were most confident with the communication, psychosocial, and technical competencies, while students reported being least confident with the administrative and research competencies.

Similarly, Scott (2010) and colleagues at North Dakota State University published results of a modified PREP survey (some competencies that were not relevant to the pharmacy program were removed). Students were asked to rate confidence using a five-point Likert-scale, and responses were assessed using the same five factors. The surveys were administered for four years from 2004 to 2008. Students at North Dakota State University were most confident with the communication and psychosocial competencies, while they expressed lower confidence in the administrative, research, and technical competencies.

Not surprisingly, both studies found that graduating students become more confident as they progressed through the pharmacy program and that student confidence in a given area increased following completion of a course that addressed that specific competency (Reid, 2002; Scott, 2010). Additionally, assessments of students from different graduating classes at the same point in the curriculum (e.g. comparing first year pharmacy students from each year of the study) revealed increasing confidence year by year. According to the authors from both studies, this demonstrated the positive impact of curriculum changes made during the four years of the study.

Outside of the PREP surveys, Ho et al. (2009) published positive student perceptions following a curricular overhaul. The Chinese University of Hong Kong School of Pharmacy restructured and revised their curriculum by planning specific learning outcomes for their graduates. The initial curriculum restructure was developed by the curriculum committee with revisions and implementation done by all faculty members. In addition to course specific student focus group feedback, perceptions were gathered via the graduate student survey. Students were asked to evaluate 13 curricular competencies, using a five-point Likert scale. This survey was administered annually within 6 months after graduation. Data was collected over a four-year timespan, starting with the old curriculum and finishing with two years of new curriculum graduates. One hundred eleven graduates (95%) completed the survey and significant improvement was noted in 10 of 13 professional and generic competencies, including critical thinking and interpersonal skills. No statistically significant improvement was noted in computer literacy, problem solving, or self-managed learning. The authors noted overall success in the implementation of their outcomes based curriculum, utilizing student perceptions as their primary method of assessment.

These studies all demonstrate the use of survey-based studies of students' perceived value as an assessment tool when restructuring a pharmacy curriculum. However, the aforementioned studies outlined changes to an entire curriculum and tracked students throughout four years; the goal of this current study was to capture a snapshot of a single course.

The nearest course specific revision comes from Auburn University Harrison School of Pharmacy (AUHSP) (Stevenson, 2011). As a subset of continuous quality improvement within the curriculum, the APPE were reviewed by an experiential subcommittee, built within the larger curricular committee. Prior to assessment of the APPE, materials were collected, including syllabi, orientation materials, and course evaluations. Additionally, a 22 item survey was sent to fourth year pharmacy students completing rotations during the last academic month of their professional program. The survey questions were derived from concepts outlined in the American College of Clinical Pharmacy experiential education White Paper and Position Statement (Haase, 2008a; Haase, 2008b). While the number of students completing the survey is not reported, the authors report that student responses were positive when asked about exposure to multiple patient populations and disease states. Students also positively reported opportunities for collaboration, self-directed learning, and access to drug information resources. Students did identify areas for improvement, including additional electives, clearly defined objectives, and provision of constructive feedback. In conjunction with other materials gathered and faculty focus sessions, specific areas for improvement in AUHSP's APPE were reported. These areas included: further identification of elective opportunities, increased use of the standardized evaluation form, and consistent use of syllabi templates with incorporation of clear objectives. The authors demonstrate effective use of student feedback in restructuring APPE at AUHSP.

Based on a review of current literature, this study appears to be the first research evaluating the impact of student perceptions on a single didactic course within a college of pharmacy. This study was conducted at Butler University, a private university located on the north side of Indianapolis, Indiana (Butler University, 2012). Housed within Butler University's College of Pharmacy and Health Sciences (COPHS), the Doctor of Pharmacy program is comprised of two, liberal-arts based pre-professional phase years and four professional phase years. COPHS students take part in 10, 4-week APPE during the fourth professional year. Clinical sites for APPE include statewide health care facilities, as well as opportunities for travel to national and international sites.

The Introduction to Experiential Rotations (RX500) is a required course within the COPHS pharmacy curriculum (Butler University, 2012). This one-credit hour course is taken during the spring semester of the third professional year, prior to beginning APPE. RX500 is primarily lecture-based and is taught by various university faculty and guest lecturers. Student assessments and grades are determined by attendance, assignments, and two examinations focused on 200 important medications.

The goals of the RX500 course are as follows (RX500, 2011):
1. *To introduce students to, and prepare them for, the concept and practice requirements of the Advanced Pharmacy Practice Experiences (APPE).*
2. *To facilitate scheduling of rotations and ensure completion of necessary forms, certifications and tests that need to be completed prior to starting rotations.*
3. *To make students aware of the guidelines and expectations for [required seminars during the APPE year].*

Traditional topics discussed throughout the semester range from practical skills (e.g. PowerPoint presentation tips) to reviews of clinical information (e.g. geriatrics overview) (see

Appendix 1 for full topic list). Topics covered in this course are those not covered in other areas of the PharmD curriculum. The majority of topics are covered within a one-hour course meeting; however, some topics are covered in only a small portion of the 50-minute class meeting, while others span over the course of two 50-minute class sessions.

At the time of project conception, COPHS faculty and administration were re-assessing the Doctor of Pharmacy curriculum. Although RX500 had been in existence for over ten years, its content and structure had been largely unrevised since its inception. As a result, this course was identified as one that might potentially benefit from revisions. Because the course is largely focused on student preparation for the APPE year, the goal was to understand student needs in terms of APPE preparation and to revise the course accordingly. This study utilized APPE student perceptions of RX500 to change the content and delivery of information within the course.

Objectives

The objectives of this study were:
- To assess the perceived student value of the topics within the RX500 course
- To implement course revisions to address any perceived course weaknesses
- To reassess the course following completion of course revision implementation

Methods

The study was designed to be completed in three phases: an initial survey phase, an implementation phase, and a follow-up survey phase (see Figure 1). These three phases are outlined in detail below. All research and study design was approved by the Butler University Institutional Review Board.

Fall 2011
Initial survey of rotation students
(Class of 2012)

Spring 2012
Implementation of course revisions
(Class 2013)

Fall 2012
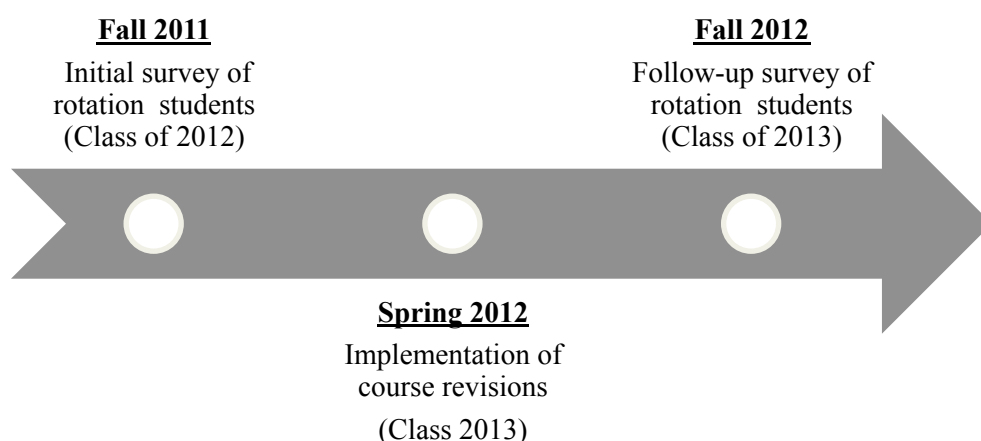Follow-up survey of rotation students
(Class of 2013)

Figure 1. Study timeline.

Initial Survey Methods

All COPHS Doctor of Pharmacy students, most recently completing the RX500 course in the spring of 2011 (the Pharmacy Class of 2012), were invited via email to participate in the

study. Email invitations were sent in September of 2011 and included a link for survey completion via SurveyMonkey™(*Appendix 1*). Students were not given an incentive for participating in the study but were asked to participate in order to assist in future course revision.

The survey first asked students to rate the spring 2011 RX500 topics as "Not Useful," "Useful, Needs Improvement," or "Useful As Is." The second question assessed student opinions on the need for additional topics. Students were allowed to select from a list of potential topics generated from ACPE Pre-APPE Performance Domains and Abilities and from other pharmacy education literature, or they were allowed to provide open-ended responses in a blank space provided (American Council for Pharmacy Education, 2011). Students were then asked to provide information on their learning style, number and type of rotations completed to date, and previous pharmacy work experience. This information was gathered in order to assess any potential differences between the pre-intervention and post-intervention groups.

Implementation Methods

Initial survey results were compiled and analyzed prior to the spring 2012 course. Topics were identified to remove, revise, or add to the course. All decisions were made in conjunction with RX500 faculty course coordinators.

Follow-Up Survey Methods

Students in the Class of 2013 were given a similar SurveyMonkey™ survey in September 2012 to assess potential changes in perceived value of the course. The survey was modified to account for changes to the spring 2012 RX 500 topic list.

Statistical Analysis

Data were initially summarized using SPSS software, version 19.0 (IBM Corp., Somers, New York). Descriptive statistics were utilized to evaluate the results from the 2011 and 2012 surveys individually. For topics revised in 2012, survey results from initial and follow-up surveys were analyzed using Mann-Whitney statistical analysis. A positive change in perception was viewed as a majority of responses indicating progression through the three categories (from Not Useful to Useful, Needs Improvement, from Useful, Needs Improvement to Useful As Is, etc.), and vice versa.

Results

Study Population

A total of 58 out of 116 (50%) students from the class of 2012 completed the initial survey, compared to 34 out of 118 (28.8%) students from the class of 2013 in the follow-up survey period. The majority of students in the initial and follow-up surveys had completed at least 4 APPE experiences at the time of survey completion (100% and 91%, respectively). Additionally, the majority of students (≥60%) in both groups had completed the required community practice and general medicine experiences at the time of survey completion. More students from the initial survey had completed an institutional practice rotation (72.4%) as

compared to students from the follow-up survey (26.5%). The initial survey group and follow-up survey group had similar rates of prior pharmacy work experience (98.3% and 94.1%, respectively) with the majority of students (82.3% in initial group, 84.4% in follow-up group) working in a retail setting. In both of the study groups, hands-on activities (53.4% in initial, 55.9% in follow-up) and visual presentation (37.9% in initial, 38.2% in follow-up) were the learning styles most frequently indicated as most beneficial.

Initial Survey

In order to identify topics to remove for the spring 2012 course, student ratings from survey question number one were assessed (Table 1). The top three topics receiving a rating of Not Useful were: Code Response (23.3%), Professionalism (21.7%), and Practice Scenarios 1 & 2 (20.0%). As a result, the Code Response and Practice Scenarios lectures were removed from the 2012 course. Although some students did not see the value in the Professionalism topic, course coordinators felt that it was a subject necessary for APPE preparation and helped to fulfill the course objective of setting "guidelines and expectations."

In terms of lectures needing revision, student responses of Useful, Needs Improvement from question number one were identified. The top three topics receiving this rating were: PharmD Project Proposal/Abstract/Manuscript (45.0%), Medication Therapy Management (MTM) (43.3%), and Curriculum Vitae (CV) Tune-Up (38.3%). In response to the survey results, all three of these topics were modified; the PharmD Project and Curriculum Vitae topics were revised within the course, while the MTM lecture was moved to a community pharmacy seminar series taken during the students' APPE year. In delivering these revised topics, faculty were encouraged to keep in mind that the majority of pharmacy students felt they learned best with hands-on and visual experiences in the classroom setting.

When looking for new topics to incorporate into the spring 2012 course, student responses to survey question number two were assessed. The top three responses to this question were: evaluating information from patient profile (61.7%), locating/collecting literature & guidelines (56.7%), and understanding insurance & prescription drug coverage (46.7%). As a result, a Rounds and Patient Work-Up topic was added to teach students how to evaluate a patient profile prior to participating in one of many types of rounding experiences. Additionally, a Medicare, Medicaid, and Insurance topic was added to address deficiencies in understanding prescription drug coverage. The topic of identifying literature and guidelines was not added to the course, as this was felt to be better addressed within the Advanced Drug Information course as well as within other activities being incorporated throughout the curriculum. Finally, based on student free response comments to question number two, and Interprofessionalism topic was added to the course to help students understand the role and relationship of other healthcare professional roles within a patient care team.

Follow-Up Survey

The two topics that underwent revisions for the 2012 course both showed improvements in their ratings in the follow-up surveys (Table 1). The overall responses for the usefulness of the CV topic were significantly changed from 2011 to 2012 (p = 0.032). A statistically significant change was also seen when looking at only Useful As Is ratings for this topic (p = 0.022). In fact, the Curriculum Vitae topic received the most positive overall feedback of the entire course with

82.4% of students rating it as Useful As Is. This change was likely due the development of the CV topic into a more interactive, hands-on experience. Students were asked to participate in the lecture by providing examples of relevant experiences to include on a pharmacy student CV. Additionally, students were required to submit a CV to both a peer reviewer and a faculty reviewer in order to gain feedback. The overall ratings for the 2012 PharmD project discussion were not significantly changed from 2011 (p = 0.085); however, there was a statistically significant increase in the number of Useful As Is responses in 2012 (p = 0.024). The PharmD project discussions were, as suggested in student comments from the free response section, dispersed in small 20 to 30 minute discussions throughout the semester. The hope was to guide students through the natural progression of a research project and to allow students time to develop ideas about their own project development.

The three topics that were added to the course based on initial survey results, Rounds and Patient Work-Up, Medicare/Medicaid/Insurance, and Interprofessionalism, had mixed reviews in the follow-up survey. 41.2% of students rated the Medicare, Medicaid, and Insurance lecture as Useful, Needs Improvement. One student in particular commented that this lecture "would have been better received if the students were engaged more." Students were almost evenly split between the three ratings in terms of the Interprofessionalism lecture (35.3 % Not Useful, 32.4% Useful, Needs Improvement, and 32.4% Useful As Is). The Rounds and Patient Work-Up lecture was rated by the majority of students (58.8%) as Useful As Is.

Table 1

Perceived Rotation Preparation Value of Revised and New RX 500 Topics

	Not useful		**Useful, Needs Improvement**		**Useful As-Is**		**P Value**
	Initial Survey	*Follow-Up Survey*	*Initial Survey*	*Follow-Up Survey*	*Initial Survey*	*Follow-Up Survey*	
Curriculum Vitae Review	3.3%	2.9%	38.3%	14.7%	58.3%	82.4%	0.032[a]
PharmD Project Review	8.3%	2.9%	45.0%	26.5%	46.7%	70.6%	0.085[b]
Rounds and Patient Work-Up	N/A	8.8%	N/A	32.4%	N/A	58.8%	N/A
Medicare, Medicaid, and Insurance	N/A	23.5%	N/A	41.2%	N/A	35.3%	N/A
Interprofessionalism	N/A	35.3%	N/A	32.4%	N/A	32.4%	N/A

[a] P value for only Useful As Is responses = 0.022
[b] P value for only Useful As Is responses = 0.024

Discussion

In this study, follow-up surveys indicated improvements in perceived student values of the topics that underwent revision in the 2012 course. This indicates that student perceptions of what is needed for clinical rotation preparation may be able to assist in creating a more effective course and may ultimately better provide students with skills to face the challenges of real-life clinical practice. New topics that were added to the course, however, had mixed reviews. The Medicare, Medicaid, and Insurance topic was rated by the many students as Useful, Needs Improvement. Additionally, although students from the initial survey were interested in learning about interprofessional relationships, the students in the follow-up survey did not find this topic to be useful in the way it was presented. This data indicate that although students are interested in how to interact with colleagues from different health profession disciplines, there may potentially be a more beneficial way to provide insight into this topic. Strategies to accomplish this in the future might include addition of a video demonstrating effective interactions amongst various health professionals, incorporation of an in-class panel of professionals who work in interprofessional settings, or even required shadowing experiences with a member of a working multidisciplinary team.

One strength of this study is the unique study design that assessed student perceptions in order to shape a preparation course for clinical experiences. Students had completed at least 4 rotation experiences prior to completing the survey, indicating a true understanding of the types of skills and information needed for the clinical rotation year. Additionally, this study identified a need for the incorporation of more hands-on experiences within the classroom setting in order to prepare students for the clinical experiences outside the classroom. The incorporation of this approach seemed to yield more favorable results during the follow-up survey period.

Although the need for hands-on experiences within the classroom setting was identified and applied in this pharmacy focused study, it appears that the same teaching approach may provide benefits across a wide variety of health profession school settings. As was the case in this study, other health profession schools have evaluated the benefits of using of hands-on learning prior to student clinical experiences. For example, Ohtake and colleagues (2013) from the University of Buffalo evaluated the impact of a hands-on intensive care unit (ICU) simulation experience on physical therapy (PT) student confidence in caring for an ICU patient and student satisfaction with this learning method. The survey results revealed that PT student confidence increased across all areas, including the technical, behavioral, and cognitive skills required to care for an ICU patient. Additionally, the majority (98%) of PT students agreed or strongly agreed that the simulation was a valuable experience that reinforced classroom content and they preferred the use of simulation experiences in additional courses.

Additionally, there are numerous studies evaluating the use of hands-on learning in nursing classes prior to clinical experiences (Bearnson, 2005; Comer, 2005). Bearnson and Wiker (2005) from Brigham Young University evaluated the use of a computer-operated mannequin called human patient simulators (HPS) in nursing student classes to add hands-on experiences. The mean student survey responses following the use of the HPS experience revealed that students agreed that HPS increased their knowledge and confidence. Comer (2005) from Purdue University North Central also used the concept of HPS to create a cost effective alternative of clinical simulation role-playing exercises for exam topics with typically high failure rates in a critical care course. Following the incorporation of these hands-on simulation experiences, student failure rates on these exams decreased by 50%. Informal student feedback

following the exercises also showed that the majority of students found the hands-on experiences to be a more effective way to learn nursing concepts within the classroom. These examples from other health profession schools demonstrate the importance of hands-on learning prior to working with patients, and they support the key learning methods identified in this RX500 study.

One of the biggest weaknesses of the study is the poor survey response during each phase of the study. The initial survey response rate was 50%, while the follow-up survey yielded only a 28.8% response rate. Both of these rates are below the desired 60% response rate goal for most survey researchers. With the response rates seen, there is potential for selection bias of those individuals who had mostly positive or mostly negative perceptions of the course. Finally, there are likely differences in curriculum between the two classes studied. More structured placement of students into hospital/institutional Introductory Pharmacy Practice Experiences (IPPE) was introduced for the PharmD class of 2013. This additional experience may introduce differences in the baseline knowledge and understanding of what is needed for the APPE year.

When evaluating existing literature across all health professional schools, it becomes apparent that utilizing student feedback to shape a specific didactic course and its content is a somewhat novel idea within health science education. This study successfully achieved that goal by utilizing data from an initial student survey to identify perceived areas for improvement in RX500's ability to prepare pharmacy students for the APPE year. Follow-up surveys indicated improvements in the perceived values of the revised topics, but COPHS faculty can continue to work on delivery of newer topics being added to the course. Incorporation of hands-on teaching and learning is crucial in order to prepare health profession students prior to beginning clinical experiences.

Acknowledgements

Appendix

Appendix 1. Initial Survey

1. In regards to preparation for rotations, please rate the following Intro to Rotations subjects as "Not Useful," "Useful, Needs Improvement," or "Useful As Is."

Topics	Not Useful	Useful, Needs Improvement	Useful As Is
Important 200 Medications			
Syllabus/ Schedule Review			
PharmD Project Review Day 1			
PharmD Project Review Day 2			
Financial Aid Discussion			
Community Seminar			
Professionalism			
PowerPoint Poisoning			
Drug Information Products			
CV Tune-up			

Smoking Cessation Competency			
PharmD Manuscripts/ Abstracts/ Project Proposals			
Rotation Preparation-Lessons Learned			
Geriatrics Overview			
797 Preparation			
Practice Scenarios Day 1			
Practice Scenarios Day 2			
OTC Overview Day 1			
OTC Overview Day 2			
Medication Therapy Management			
Code Response			
Psych Primer			
Lessons Learned - Rotation Preparation			
Rotation Preparation Day 1			
Rotation Preparation Day 2			

*Please explain items that "Need Improvement":*_____

2. Please select at least 2 subjects that would have been useful to your preparation prior to rotations.
   - Fulfilling rotation student expectations and responsibilities
   - Accurately and safely dispensing a medication
   - Evaluating information obtained from a patient's history and physical assessment (general work-up, problem prioritization, etc.)
   - Identifying and collecting all information needed to prevent or resolve a medication-related problem
   - Calculating and evaluating drug pharmacokinetic properties for a specific patient
   - Demonstrating professionalism
   - Using appropriate behaviors and communication during professional interactions with other health care providers
   - Providing counseling to patients and/or caregivers relative to the proper use and effects of medications
   - Locating and collecting literature and guidelines
   - Understanding aspects of medical care in public health settings
   - Understanding insurance and prescription drug coverage
   Please list additional subjects that would have been useful for your rotation preparation:
   _____

3. Which style of learning is most beneficial to you within the classroom setting?
   - Audio presentation
   - Visual presentation
   - Hand-on activity
   - Reading assignment
   - Other (please specify): _____

4. Which of these rotations have you completed to date?
   - Ambulatory Care
   - Community Practice

- General Medicine
- Institutional Practice
- Elective (s) (please specify): _____
5. Did you have pharmacy work experience prior to starting rotations?
    - No
    - Yes (please specify number of years)
6. If you did have pharmacy work experience prior to rotations, in what setting(s) did you work?
    - Hospital
    - Retail (chain)
    - Retail (independent)
    - Other (please specify): _____

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Learner-centered environments: Creating effective strategies based on student attitudes and faculty reflection

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Abstract: Learner-centered environments effectively implement multiple teaching techniques to enhance students' higher education experience and provide them with greater control over their academic learning. This qualitative study involves an exploration of the eight reasons for learner-centered teaching found in Terry Doyle's 2008 book, Helping Students Learn in a Learner Centered Environment. Doyle's principles were investigated through the use of surveys, student focus group interviews, and faculty discussions to discover a deeper understanding of the effects a "learner-centered" teaching environment has on long term learning in comparison to a "teacher-centered" learning environment. These data revealed five primary themes pertaining to student resistance to learner-centered environments. The results assisted in the development of strategies educators can adopt for creating a successful learner-centered classroom.
Keywords: Learner-Centered Teaching, Learner-Centered Environments, Teacher-Centered Environments

Introduction

Learner-Centered Teaching (LCT) has been an effective approach for enhancing the learning experience for students in higher education (Weimer, 2002). A LCT approach means subjecting multiple teaching actions (method, assignment, or assessment) to the test of a single question: "Given the context of my students, course and classroom, will this teaching action optimize my students' opportunity to learn?" (Doyle, n.d). To be specific, the classroom for a learner-centered environment is quite different from traditional classrooms. Students are required to take on new learning roles and responsibilities beyond taking notes, listening to teachers teach, and passing exams. "It is an environment that allows students to take some real control over their educational experience and encourages them to make important choices about what and how they will learn" (Doyle, 2008, p. xv).

Ferris State University author, educational consultant and professor, Terry Doyle, has assisted higher education faculty in becoming learner-centered teachers through interactive application, regardless of their discipline, in order to enhance the student learning environment. Doyle's extensive experience in faculty development and teaching led to publishing his 2008 book, *Helping Students Learn in a Learner Centered Environment,* which sets the foundation for this study. The purpose of this study was to gain the student perspective on both effective and ineffective approaches to learning and develop strategies to enhance learning experiences. Through a focus-group inquiry, students were asked about Doyle's (2008) eight reasons students

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resist Learner-Centered Teaching: 1) Old habits die hard; 2) High schools remain teacher-centered institutions; 3) Learning is not a top reason students give for attending college; 4) Students don't like taking learning risks; 5) LCT doesn't resemble what students think of as school; 6) Students don't want to give more effort and LCT requires it; 7) Students' mindsets about learning make adapting to LCT more difficult; 8) Many students follow the path of least resistance in their learning. Faculty reflections of student perspectives were coded and analyzed to reveal significant themes. By examining the details of the newly discovered themes, faculty members developed a number of useful strategies to foster a learner-centered environment. For the purposes of this study, Doyle's usage of the term *teacher* has been chosen to encompass all representations of the term such as instructor, facilitator, adjunct and affiliate faculty, and professor. Below, each of Doyle's eight reasons is summarized.

- Reason One: Old Habits Die Hard

  Twelve or more years of teacher-centered instruction contribute to the formation of habits regarding the roles and responsibilities of college students. These habits include sitting quietly in class, doing the homework the teacher assigned, taking notes during class sessions, and answering multiple choice questions on exams. After twelve years, school develops a familiar pattern. Additionally, previous student learning experiences have stressed the importance of memorization over actual learning with understanding. Past learning experiences for the students have focused on the facts and details rather than on the larger themes of cause and consequence of events. The shortfall of these approaches involves memorization of facts with minimal transfer of learning to long-term memory. This discovery reveals that it takes time and practice to develop a new set of learning habits in order to be successful. It is expected that students will occasionally retreat into old patterns, as old habits die hard.

- Reason Two: High Schools Remain Teacher-Centered Institutions

  There is substantial research indicating that American high schools are teacher-centered and material oriented, not learner-centered. This means teachers are in control of the content and dissemination of material that is subject-based. It is expected that students will sit quietly, take notes, and memorize material for the test. It is fair to assume that college students will be using the same high school learning habits when they enter college because that is what they are used to.

- Reason Three: Learning is Not a Top Reason Students Give for Attending College

  Laurence Steinberg, in his ten year study of high school students, reported in his 1996 landmark book, *Beyond the Classroom,* the most common reason students gave for doing well in school was not interest in the subject, but getting good grades to ensure entry into college. Understandably, many freshman college students have a shocking experience their first semester when they grow weary from being in the same structured academic systems for the past twelve or more years. College is seen as the last mountain to summit in order to obtain a decent paying job. It is a means to an end.

- Reason Four: Students Don't Like Taking Learning Risks

  Teachers know that learning entails taking risks and confronting the possibility of failure. Students often see the possibility of failure as a negative experience and something painful that should be avoided. This outlook can inhibit learning. Students then refrain from taking risks and making mistakes to avoid feeling helpless and

inadequate, which are the very actions that successful thinkers must do in order to protect themselves from being just average. Despite growing up as risk takers in other aspects of their lives, many students fail to maintain a willingness to take risks in a school environment.

- Reason Five: LCT Doesn't Resemble What Students Know as School

    By age 18, it is projected that students have spent approximately 70% of their lives in school. Students experience school as a place where the teacher does the talking, and the students do the listening, note taking, homework, and take tests that are multiple choice, matching, true and false or essay. The teacher instructs the students on the tasks they are expected to complete and the students do what they are told. The learning choices given to students are usually limited to writing about a topic of choice or choosing a book for which to report. The only area of control students are given over their learning is the degree to which they choose to engage in the learning process, and that control is limited by the consequences that come with choosing not to engage.

    It is understandable how our students would be tentative, cautious and rather uncomfortable in a learner-centered environment having never experienced a learning environment where meaningful control and choices about learning were offered or opportunities to participate in first hand learning existed. It is also understandable that students would get upset about a learning approach where the role of the teacher has changed so much that it appears as if they lack focus or interest in his or her job (Doyle, 2008).

- Reason Six: Students Don't Want to Give More Effort

    Doyle states, "it is the one who does the work, who does the learning" (Doyle, 2008, p. 25). A common complaint faculty hear from students is that learner-centered teaching requires more work. This study's observation by our students is correct. Students in learner-centered environments will be asked to do more firsthand work, more team and group work, more reflection and more communication with peers. All of these learning activities require a certain amount of effort and are not intended to be passive experiences.

- Reason Seven: Students' Mindsets Towards Learning Make Adapting to LCT More Difficult.

    Students with a fixed mindset view intelligence and ability as fundamentally fixed at birth and unchangeable. These students see themselves and others as smart, average, or dumb. Students with fixed mindsets spend a great deal of effort trying to prove their abilities by avoiding failure. This effort to avoid failure actually prevents them from engaging in activities that would ironically make them smarter. This mindset has a profound impact upon students' views of a variety of learning related actions including seeing effort in certain learning activities as being of little or no use. This fixed mindset means tutoring, study buddies, or visits to faculty offices for extra help all appear to be a waste of time to our students. The opposite of a fixed mindset is a Growth Mindset. Students with a growth mindset believe that it is through individual's hard work that true potential is achieved. Students with a growth mindset take learning risks and view failure only as a message that they need to calculate their mistakes and work harder to improve.

There is general agreement that two types of goals may be set by students. One is a learning goal which is described as the desire to increase one's competency, understanding, and appreciation for what is being learned. The other is a performance goal which involves outperforming others as a means to make others subordinate. Learning goals and performance goals are not mutually exclusive; one can value the task itself and the outcome of the task.

- Reason Eight: Many Students Follow the Path of Least Resistance in their Learning
Doyle describes students that take the path of least resistance as "minimalist learners" (2008, p 28). These students often ask questions which include, how many points is this worth? followed by how many points do I need to get an A, B or C grade? These questions reflect a lifetime of learning in environments where gaining a reward or avoiding a punishment was the goal. The goal of minimalist learners is the grade and not the learning. Student motivation for learning has a large impact on the path they choose to take as learners.

Changing to a Learner-Centered Environment

The following steps provide teachers with the rationale surrounding the process of changing to a learner-centered environment. This information provides useful tools to assist students in developing skills and understanding the importance of becoming life-long learners.

1. Changes in Our Understandings of How Humans Learn
Recent neuroscience research has shown that the dendrites of human brain cells only grow when the brain is actively engaged and the neuron-networks formed in the brain only stay connected when they are used repeatedly (Ratey, 2002). Teachers need to continually reinforce to students that the learning tasks required are necessary to optimize the development of the neuron-networks needed to be successful college learners. This is what is required of the students to adapt to the new role of learner. Once this is understood, the student will see that teaching methodologies are part of how the human brain learns and becomes part of long term memory recall. Student participation supports firsthand learning, group learning, practicing, reflecting, teaching of others, and presentations because all of these learning activities require active learner engagement.

2. Preparing Students for Their Careers
The rationale for teaching many of the learning skills, behaviors, attitudes, and critical thinking strategies as part of learner-centered college courses is that college students will need these skills for their careers beyond college. When teachers put students into small groups it is not only to promote a deeper level of learning, but also because learning to talk with or listen to others is one of the single most important skills needed to be successful in any career field. Furthermore, another valuable skill for career success is asking students to make class presentations in order to increase their public speaking abilities. Such learning activities contribute to student career goals, yet this may require continual reminders about value and significance of tasks.

3. Preparing Students to be Life-long Learners
The new reality that students must grasp is that their college educational experience is no longer their terminal educational experience. It becomes the teacher's responsibility in colleges and universities to educate students to be life-long learners,

capable of independent, self-motivated learning as part of their educational experience. When faculty ask students to write copiously, read large amounts of information, learn to manage time, work well with others, accept and give feedback and criticism, express ideas in clear, concise ways that can be easily understood by others, listen attentively, defend a position or idea, or find a proper source, they do so because students will benefit from the development of these life-long skills.

Each time teachers conduct a class activity or give a homework assignment or assessment focusing on a learner-centered environment, student understanding increases regarding the importance of building life-long learning skills. These skills equip students to compete in the global economy of an ever flattening world while maintaining credibility and marketability in the work environment.

4. Preparing Students for today, next semester and tomorrow

Teachers need to help students understand that what they are learning today will be helpful, useful, and necessary to their future learning opportunities. This will then create a powerful reason for them to view all learning more seriously. Emphasizing to students that what is being taught today will be relevant and needed in future courses and in their career will add purpose to their daily experiences.

A. A Learner-Centered Classroom Requires Students to Have New Skills

One of the basic facts that all teachers/professors know about the learning process is: the one who does the work does the learning. At the same time, being able to successfully do the work in a learner-centered environment will require most students to advance their learning skills. Doyle has identified eight areas where college students will likely need faculty assistance in developing their learning skills:

- Learning how to learn independently
- Developing the communication skills needed to collaborate with others
- Taking more control for their learning
- Teaching others
- Making presentations
- Developing life-long learning skills
- Developing their metacognitive skills—knowing what they know, do not know or misunderstand
- Developing the ability to evaluate themselves, peers, and the teacher

Each of these areas takes a more prominent role in a learner-centered classroom; however, most college students have only limited experiences in these areas. For example, the ability of college students to evaluate the quality of their own work is crucial to their career and life success, but few students have ever been asked to do this. Most college students will need to be taught how to conduct meaningful self-assessment of their work; teachers often do not expect students to know how to do something they have never been taught. The ability to speak well and participate in active listening is another skill set that is often overlooked. These are crucial skills for their professional success. Ironically, these are the very activities that students will demonstrate more often than any other on a day-to-day basis at work. It is important to remember that teachers always check to see what the students already know and can do before making learning assignments. If it is found that students are unskilled or under-skilled, then teachers must teach them these learning skills before expecting them to be successful learners in a learner-centered classroom.

Methods

Participants

This IRB approved study included a focus group interview with 7 students enrolled in undergraduate programs at a large urban university in the Rocky Mountain region of the United States. In addition, 7 university faculty members participated in the reflection process and data analysis based on the focus group interview discourse. Both students and faculty represented a diverse spectrum of disciplines. The method of convenience sampling was used to recruit student-participants within various university disciplines (a) who were currently enrolled at the time of the study, (b) agreed to participate in the interview and survey about student-centered learning, and (c) provided open and honest responses to questions and topics presented. Participating faculty members contacted each of the student-participants via person-to-person or email correspondence.

Data Collection Procedure

The student-participants took part in a 60 minute focus group interview with pre-determined questions based on input from a 50 question student survey pertaining to Doyle's *8 reasons students resist learner-centered environments*. One faculty member facilitated the session and used active interviewing throughout the process. The open-ended questions and active interviewing techniques allowed for further discussion into a participant's response in order to gain deeper meaning (Holstein & Gubrium, 2003) Sample questions from the focus group interview are shown in Table 1. The faculty-participants documented student responses and provided reflections of the group experience in a 60 minute faculty discussion following the focus group session.

Table 1

Sample questions from the focus group interview

FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
- How do you learn best?
- Do you like PowerPoint lectures?
- What kinds of exams do you prefer?
- Do you prefer to learn less and get a good grade or learn more and get a lesser grade?
- What is the role of the professor?
- What is the role of the student?
- What are your thoughts about group work?
- What should be the student's role in classroom decision making?
- Can you describe your best and worst class?

Data Analysis

These data were approached from different angles. An initial round of data analysis occurred during the discussion session directly following the focus group interview. In order to increase both credibility and validity, the focus group provided a vehicle for member checking throughout the interview as the facilitator summarized or restated information regarding participant responses. In order to recognize existing patterns on the specific areas specified by Doyle, an inductive analysis of the interview transcripts and documented artifacts (i.e., field notes) was conducted (Johnson & Christensen, 2004). These data were collected by each faculty member present for the focus group interview. Patterns can be identified from complex data and a greater understanding occurs through the development of emerging themes (Thomas, 2006).

A content analysis of the faculty reflections was conducted from the focus group interview. Both inductive and deductive methods were used to determine core consistencies and meanings of concepts as well as draw new theories from old theories (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009). Conclusions from this analysis revealed major themes and/or patterns that were significant to forming strategies to enhance a learner-centered environment.

Results

Through the analysis of the interviews, surveys, and discussions, a better understanding of a learner-centered environment was achieved. These data were divided into two primary themes: (a) reflections of student responses to Doyle's 8 reasons students resist learner-centered environments; and (b) strategies adopted to create more successful learner-centered environments. Within each theme, sub-themes were identified by recording the most poignant and meaningful statements expressed by each participant in the study. Sub-themes were coded using a color scheme and categorized under one of the primary themes. The following chart indicates each theme and their sub-themes. (Refer to Figure 1)

Primary Theme:

Reflections of student responses to Doyle's 8 reasons students resist learner-centered environments

- Student Comprehension
- Information Transference
- Assessment Tools
- Student Expectations
- Teacher Expectations

Primary Theme:

Strategies adopted to create more successful learner-centered environments

- First Day of Class
- Group Work
- Balance

Figure 1. Emerging primary themes and sub-themes from this study.

Reflections of student responses to Doyle's 8 reasons students resist learner-centered environments

Student Comprehension

When students were asked about the best methods for learning in the classroom, they expressed their preference toward visual material, relevance, repetition, teacher enthusiasm, examples, and meaningful lectures. Without a good balance of these desired preferences, students tend to feel disconnected from the subject material.

Student 1: "I definitely learn better visually than memorization…. hands-on."

Student 2: "I feel that both of those [visualization and memorization] go hand-in-hand. I value the texts and lectures and apply that. I've had the most success when my teacher lectures and pulls out what I need."

Student 3: "I learn better in the lecture setting. The more I hear it, the more I write it, the more I learn it. Examples are really good. It celebrates on the whole idea on what they are trying to teach you."

Upon reflection from the observing faculty, it is unanimous that learning practices and comprehension will vary in degree depending on the interests/major of the student. Students that are more experiential in nature tend to gravitate toward career paths that emphasize hands-on application. For instance, Recreation Professions tend to be very experiential in nature; therefore, students will desire a great deal of practical application within the classroom experience (i.e., visual aids, activities, field trip experiences, group projects). Also, it appears that students emphasize the visual aspect of learning more than audio or a combination of both; therefore, visual connection is important between the concept and the desired application. It is also important to convey and discuss the relevance of the learning material to real world experiences and balance lectures with supporting activities.

The views of this focus group towards LCT seem to follow the views represented by students in Doyle's book. In general, the students were comfortable with and had come to expect Teacher-Centered Learning styles that they have experienced from early education through high school and are apprehensive and skeptical of alternative teaching styles. Some faculty expressed great interest when the students discussed the difficulty of college compared to high school; however, when earlier schooling is properly conducted, it should adequately prepare the student for college. Some secondary schools far exceed their duties, expectations, and requirements to prepare its students for college. In college, it is the teacher's responsibility to continue to seek ways to empower and prepare students for careers in specialized fields.

Information Transference

There are a multitude of tools and techniques used to transfer information from the teacher to the student and between students (i.e., textbook, experiential activities, PowerPoints, overheads, whiteboard/chalkboard lectures, electronic voting systems, etc.). The students overwhelmingly expressed their thoughts about the usage of PowerPoints over all other techniques. Overall, PowerPoints are welcomed only if they are organized and used as a supporting tool to the lecture. The most effective are those that are visual, interactive, and contain less written content. Although textbooks are used to study a particular subject, many students felt that they were too expensive and unnecessary if the teacher reviewed the material in class. Therefore, many students expressed that they would not read or purchase textbooks for their classes and instead

desired a "hands-on" approach to the material from the teacher either through writing step-by-step procedures or instructions on a whiteboard/chalkboard, relating relevant stories/examples, or through the use of classroom activities.

Student 2: "You are just a robot writing down the notes. That mind-numbing Powerpoint presentation is common."

Student 5: "When a professor is scrambling around, you don't value their knowledge."

Student 6: "PowerPoints can be used as a back-up to the texts."

Student 4: "The book [textbook] is just somebody's thoughts."

After listening to the responses from the students, faculty members concurred that PowerPoints are useful aids for the learning experience. However, black text on a white background can detract the student from the content due to its mundane nature. Students tend to "tune-out" instead of "tune-in" if PowerPoints are dull and do not relate to what is being conveyed by the teacher. A great deal can be done to improve the PowerPoint experience by adding color, animation, video, photos, charts/diagrams, etc. PowerPoints should reflect what the textbook is describing (if a text is used); however, not all valuable and current information will be in the textbook, so it is necessary to supplement. In fact, there are many ways that teachers can keep the students actively engaged. For example, the teacher can give the students the PowerPoints before a class, leaving blanks within the text of each slide. Students would need to attend class and be attentive in order to fill in the missing information (represented with a blank space). This is just one example that helps to increase attendance and classroom engagement.

Assessment Tools

When asked about the techniques used to assess what the students have learned, varied responses manifested. In particular, a great deal of the discussion surrounded the use of exams as a tool to measure learning. When asked, the students wanted to express that the actual learning was the most important goal; however, in reality, their focus was on getting a good grade more than anything. They were focused on the importance of quiz/test/exam for the end result of the grade rather than the learning experience. The focus group also discussed their high levels of anxiety regarding the teacher's methods of assessment. Many had different preferred styles of testing (i.e., multiple choice questions, true or false, essay); and a handful would often "cram" before exams.

Student 6: "Multiple Choice? They reword it so it's all tricky."

Student 1: "Depends on the job [discipline]. Practical exams are good to an extent. For example: Math exams."

Student 4: "The pressure forces me to learn and that could be beneficial [pop quizzes]."

Student 6: "I cram every weekend. An hour or two. I can't wait until the end [exam day]. I would fail."

Student 4: "It's easier to cram for a True and False or Multiple Choice rather than a short answer. Multiple Choice is a short term memory. Even though I don't like them [essay], I learn more."

Student 4: "I think grades are important to the overall outcome."

Student 3: "During the process, it's not all that fun. It's the sacrifice. But I do enjoy learning. I may not enjoy the process, but I enjoy learning."

The faculty members in this study agreed that there is a lot of value in using exams if the questions are structured well, and simple traditional methods such as these are easier for the teacher to grade. This may explain why teachers use multiple choice and true/false more often

than other assessment testing styles. However, if a teacher intends to develop the critical thinker within, then an essay exam may be the best option. Faculty members also questioned the effectiveness of "cramming" and felt that students cannot digest the information fully by "cramming". Long-term retention is not successfully reached when students "cram" for an exam; therefore, altering assessment methods may be necessary in order to enhance true learning (Doyle, 2008). Again, practical experience and "hands-on" projects may be the best avenue to learning in regards to certain interest areas and majors because students are actively engaged with the content. The question that each teacher might want to contemplate concerning their course material is whether students can learn just as much through the execution of a traditional classroom delivery or by means of practical application? This continues to be a subject for constant debate. However, it may all depend on a student's particular area of study whether practical experiences are more beneficial.

Student Expectations

The role of the student in the classroom was a key theme that varied in attitudes and beliefs among the focus group panel members. Overall, the focus group students expressed that while it is the professor's duty to convey the information, it is the students' role to understand the material and apply it, ultimately to learn the course information. Furthermore, some students felt that it was their own responsibility to seek out additional help from the professor if they needed it. However, it is also interesting to note that some students also expressed that their performance in the class often depended on how much they respected the professor; in other words, they feel compelled to put forth more effort in the class if the professor shows concern for their learning. This view is more reflective of Teacher-Centered Learning, putting the onus back on the teacher for the extent of learning the student accomplishes.

Student 7: "[Our responsibility is] being able to understand the material and applying it."
Student 4: "If you have a teacher that you respect, you feel like you are letting them down."
Student 3: "It is important for the student to be mindful."
Student 1: "I got A's where I haven't done anything in class!"

Faculty responded openly and honestly to this theme stressing that a teacher cannot make a student learn, but she/he can help a student understand the importance of learning. A teacher takes on many roles as a teacher and it is important to determine effective and efficient teaching philosophies that also reflect the mission of the institution for which they are employed.

Teacher Expectations

The students in this study felt that a teacher's role is to provide the necessary information and knowledge to allow the student to adequately complete the course. They desired to have someone to act as a mentor and to whom they could relate to. Often times, this occurs in small classes rather than a large lecture class. Having an "open-mind" and the capacity to successfully demonstrate different learning styles in a professional and respectful manner were key characteristics expressed by this focus group. Most importantly, they desired the teacher to provide a clear path to an often overwhelming "sea" of information. In other words, simplify the material.

Student 6: "It is the student's responsibility to make the relationship."
Student 3: "I feel better in class when I'm respected as a student, and it is a professor that I can go to."

Student 2: "Important that they [professors] weed through the stuff and give you a path to follow."
Student 1: "I can tell if the professor is just doing the day-to-day and those that are teaching with more passion."
Student 3: "It depends on their [professor's] personality and learning style. Some will do well with that and some won't."

Upon reflection, the faculty felt that the students wanted a teacher that showed a passion for what they are teaching; students will often emulate the energy of the teacher. It was important to acknowledge that teachers should want their students to be excited about learning. It is the obligation of the teachers to be enthusiastic about what is being taught. In addition, it is also essential to attempt to make a connection with the student as an individual or at least make a classroom connection; a connection that exudes respect, trust, and honesty.

Faculty also got the impression from the students in the focus group that a professor's primary role is to control the structure of the class so that expectations of student behavior and performance are clearly outlined and that the content of the course material is delivered in a straightforward and traditional manner. Deviations from this "norm" (that is, LCT styles) such as group work, allowing students to have a say in the structure of the course, allowing "free" discussion in the classroom, etc., are viewed as unprofessional shortcomings of the professor as if the professor was "copping out" or not doing his/her job. The challenge, as Doyle pointed out, is in the transition from "Teacher-Centered" to "Learner-Centered" Teaching styles and explaining to students why LCT is important. In other words, a teacher needs to be a chameleon in that he/she must adjust to the needs of each individual classroom. Each group of students will bring a different set of unique energies and dynamic; therefore, it is important that the teacher can adjust accordingly. If a classroom needs more structure and direction (i.e., Freshman students), then use a teaching style that best fits those needs.

Strategies adopted to create more successful learner-centered environments **(See Table 2)**
Table 2

Strategies to create successful learner-centered environments

STRATEGY	CONCEPTS
First Day of Class	• Create a classroom dynamic that helps students to get to know one another • Explain teacher's role and qualifications • Explain course expectations as well as teacher's expectations • Give students some control over the learning experience by negotiating the aspects of syllabus and course outline • Consider incorporating games, group initiatives or other challenging activities
Group Work	• Have a discussion on the benefits of group work with students • Demonstrate how group work is reflective of the future work environment • Have group appoint a group leader • Have group leader appoint tasks based on members' skill levels and strengths • Use peer evaluations as part of the assessment of group projects
Balance	• Vary the presentation styles for new course content • Link new course content to the course objectives and discuss relationship to other classes in the program • Include repetition of course information to increase memory retention • Emphasize information through frequent review • Provide varying types of assessments to determine true learning

Discussion

A discussion and summarization of the thematically categorized findings provide an explanation of their importance, meaning, and significance. Ultimately, three strategic subthemes emerged that set the foundation for planning and implementing a successful learner-centered environment: (a) first day of class; (b) group work; and (c) balance. Proactive measures are proposed and recommendations discussed in order to establish best practices.

First Day of Class

The first day of class can often be an awkward experience for both the student and the teacher; however, there are many effective strategies for creating a learner-centered environment and establishing a sense of comfort. Attempting to make a meaningful connection with students may require the willingness to be vulnerable during introductions. It is important to share personal and academic philosophies, outline qualifications for teaching the course, and explain the importance and relevance of the course. In return, try to ask the students about their motivations for taking the course and provide a platform to openly discuss expectations. Examples of some questions could include: (a) As a teacher, what do you expect from me?; (b) As a student, what should I expect from you?; and (c) As a student, what do you expect to get out of the class? Understandably, many students may be reluctant to share or express their ideas and thoughts on the first day of class and instead, these questions could be revisited after a couple of weeks have passed.

Many students want to know the most significant information that will help them to succeed. In a learner-centered environment, this does not include reading the course syllabus without allowing the opportunity for students to review, discuss, and negotiate this contract. Of course, there are policies and regulations set by the institution that are nonnegotiable; however, many syllabus items can be discussed openly. The most popular items that promote inclusion into a student-learning environment are: (a) assignment timelines; (b) possibilities for field trips/site visitation experiences; (c) inviting guest speakers; (d) consequences for tardiness/absences; (e) project deadlines; and (f) extensions on projects. These items can be discussed and a collective agreement can be achieved between the teacher and the students. This gives the students a voice regarding their academic experiences and sets an agreement that is better tailored to their individual uniqueness.

Implementing an open student-centered environment produces many classroom benefits. It can create an atmosphere of comfort, invite open expression, invite meaningful class discussions, allow for the development of peer learning, and nurture student-teacher and student-student connections. A teacher can initiate group activities, interactive challenges, name games, dyads, and friendly competition to assist with achieving a successful student-centered environment. The process takes time and will often extend beyond the first day, yet it can be accomplished with teacher commitment and student participation.

Group Work

Group work is an essential component of a student's learning experience. The adage, "two heads are better than one" is typically true here, but may not appear so to students on the surface. Students interviewed in our focus group expressed dislike for group work and preferred to work individually. Despite student objections, there are a lot of benefits to small group learning. The

challenge then for the teacher is to communicate these benefits to the students so that they are "on board" with group work. At the beginning of a group project, take some time to lead a discussion of the pros and cons and let the students evaluate how the pros outweigh the cons.

Working within a group is reflective of the working world environment where employees are usually required to collaborate with others and communicate on a daily basis. Businesses are looking for employees who have a strong ability to communicate and contribute to teams (McDougall & Beattie, 1995). Demonstrate the value in group work by relating it to real world situations where group work helped bring success to a project or a business. Students will be more "on board" when they can see the big picture.

When working in groups, students have an opportunity to share concepts and ideas and learn from one another (peer tutoring). This increase in learning opportunities helps a student integrate a larger available amount of information than if they were working alone (Serva & Fuller, 1997). Additionally, groups are able to take on bigger tasks than possible alone; "the sum of the whole vs. the sum of the parts. Each student has their own unique set of strengths, thus, when working together, the group can benefit from the skills and experiences of each individual.

Design your group work to align with the course learning objectives and be consistent within a real world framework in order to help students see the big picture value behind the project. At the beginning of the project, every group member must see the end result of the work as something achievable and important beyond just getting a good grade in the class. Before setting students out on group tasks, equip them with group management skills – conflict resolution, project management, and communication (both tools and skills). Complete small exercises that help students explore these concepts and practice various solutions with no penalty to their grade. Assess the students' individual strengths and weaknesses and suggest that the group appoint a group leader who can then assign tasks according to members' skill levels and strengths. Students will learn more if they divide the workload and deal with nuances of group dynamics on their own. Step in to mediate only when the group cannot resolve issues internally.

One of the biggest objections that students have towards group work is the fear of having a social loafer in their group. Social loafers are group members who do not carry their own weight or participate to the level expected of them as individual members of the group. Social loafing tends to increase with big projects, large group sizes, and lack of peer evaluation (Aggarwal & O'Brien, 2008). It is recommended that large, semester-long projects be broken up into multiple parts which help to make the work requirements and deadlines feel more immediate. Decreasing your group size also helps reduce the possibility of social loafing. Very large groups allow individuals to "hide" while small groups reduce anonymity and increase the pressure for individuals to participate and contribute. Furthermore, allow your students to evaluate each member in the group. It is recommended to do this not only at the end of the project, but also at a mid-point in the project. Through peer-monitoring, an identified social loafer has an opportunity to become a stronger contributor to the group before the conclusion of the project (Felder & Brent, 2001).

Balancing

Teachers and students each have their own individual preferences as to the method they prefer to deliver or receive course information (e.g. PowerPoint lectures, textbook reading assignments, hands-on activities, or group projects). Through our focus group, we discussed various presentation methods with the students and received mixed responses. Some students felt they learned best with a structured PowerPoint lecture where the teacher is following a prescribed

format, while others preferred to be given a choice in how they learn course material (e.g. through hands-on activities, discussions and group activities and peer interactions, videos, or reading the textbook on their own time - outside of the classroom).

We concluded that the best LCT approach an educator can have when presenting new material in order to facilitate learning is to address a variety of presentation methods in their instruction plan. PowerPoint slides with images, hands-on exercises, and group discussions all present different opportunities to utilize various senses and thus create and strengthen neural connections in the brain in different ways. By varying our delivery, we help keep the student engaged with the content and retain the course content for the long term (Doyle, 2011).

Whichever presentation method selected, it is important to relate all new course material and assignments to the course objectives. Furthermore, relate information in the course to other courses in the program that the student has taken or will be taking so students will understand "why" it is important to learn this material. It is important for students to see that the material they are learning in their courses is connected to a set of skills and knowledge that will prepare them for success in their professional career and a lifetime of learning (Doyle, 2008). When students are aware of the value of the material they are learning, they will learn more and retain more.

Repetition helps students retain the course information in long-term memory which will help them recall it at later dates and apply it to new situations and make new connections (Mohs, 2010). The more often information is repeated and used, the more likely this will occur. When presenting new material, repeat it in several ways. Sometimes this is inherent in our presentation of material. For example, when giving a PowerPoint presentation, material is repeated through the use of many senses. Students hear the material verbally presented. They also see the information up on the screen. They write it down in their notebooks, and they read it back to themselves at a later time. Field trips are also a good example of repetition in learning. When students can see the concepts covered in class in action out in the field, it becomes a reality in their minds. A teacher could also require students to conduct outside research for one or more projects during the semester. Explain the importance of getting outside the classroom and interacting with local professionals to derive a deeper understanding of the course material. For example, in the field of Industrial Design, good design does not come from within oneself, but rather it comes from talking to and observing others, building on existing concepts, then developing new ideas, trying, failing, and trying again.

Revisiting and reviewing information after a period of time has passed is also an effective way to help students retain the material in long-term memory (Ratey, 2002). Effective ways to do this also include discussions, summary writing, and journaling. Not only is repetition helpful with memorizing information, but it can also be a means of emphasizing and reinforcing especially important course material. Ways to emphasize information include telling a story, giving a demonstration, going on a field trip, or bringing in a guest speaker to help reinforce that information.

As discussed earlier, relating the classroom activities to the course material and objectives at all times is critical for students see the importance of the material in the long term beyond just getting a good grade on the exam or getting a passing grade in the class. It is not uncommon for students to assume that what they are learning is only valuable if it is being graded. So, *how* we assess our students' work can affect how or how much they learn.

There are many types of assessments we can give our students to judge whether or not they learned the material in a course (i.e., writing assignments, exams with multiple choice/short

answer/essay, projects and presentations, and so forth.) These evaluation types differ in the way students are expected to prove their understanding of the material presented during the semester. Since students are engaged in learning through different ways, providing flexibility in assessment options for our students can allow testing to be more than just an opportunity for the students to regurgitate the information that we fed them all semester; it is an opportunity for them to use their learning strengths or individual talents to demonstrate what they've learned and how that might be applied to new areas beyond the classroom, beyond college, and into their professional careers to make a real difference in the world.

Conclusion

In general, the students were comfortable with and had come to expect Teacher-Centered Learning styles experienced from early education and high school and were apprehensive and skeptical of alternative teaching styles. It then becomes the responsibility of the teacher to continue to seek ways to empower and prepare students for careers in specialized fields. Various tools, techniques, and strategies assist in this learning process. For instance, PowerPoints are welcomed, but only when organized and used as a supporting tool to the lecture. The most effective are those that are visual, interactive, and contain less written content. Students from the focus group discovered that they were fixated on the importance of the quiz/test/exam for the end result of the grade rather than the learning experience. The faculty members in this study agreed that there is value in using exams when the questions are structured well. Furthermore, the focus group students expressed that while it is the professor's duty to convey the information, it is the students' role to understand the material and apply it, and ultimately to learn the course information. Students desired that a teacher provide a clear path to an often overwhelming "sea" of information. In other words, simplify the material for them. Faculty also got the impression from the students in the focus group that a professor's primary role is to control the structure of the class so that expectations of student behavior and performance are clearly outlined and that the content of the course material is delivered in a straightforward and traditional manner.

The challenge, as Doyle pointed out, is in the transition from "Teacher-Centered" to "Learner-Centered" Teaching styles and explaining to students the importance of LCT. Implementing an open student-centered environment produces many classroom benefits. It can create an atmosphere of comfort, invite open expression, invite meaningful class discussions, allow for the development of peer learning, and nurture student-teacher and student-student connections. The student learning experience can also benefit by the essential component of group work. Many times, working within a group is reflective of the working world environment where employees are often required to collaborate with others and communicate on a daily basis. For example, students may practice roles and expectations that one might experience as a committee member in any professional organization. Based on the focus group results, we conclude that the best approach a teacher can have in presenting new material in order to facilitate learning is to address a variety of presentation methods in their instruction plan such as visual presentations, memorization exercises, discussion, lectures, and experiential applications. When understood, students welcome the opportunity to influence their learning and gain greater control over their experiences through interactive classroom discussion and negotiation. It is important to understand that as teachers, we are here to coach and to help instill the love of learning in students so that they may become life-long learners and positively impact our world.

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Professor-Student Rapport Scale: Psychometric properties of the brief version

Rebecca Ryan[1] and Janie H. Wilson[2]

Abstract: The original Professor-Student Rapport Scale contained 34 items and predicted several single-item student outcomes. A high level of internal consistency encouraged the development of a shorter measure in order to address apparent redundancy. Our goals in the current study were to provide psychometric data for the brief version of the scale and to evaluate its ability to predict student outcomes based on more rigorous student-outcome assessments. We found the brief version of the scale demonstrated reliability and validity and significantly predicted rigorous assessments of student outcomes. We suggest that the brief version of the Professor-Student Rapport Scale, with only 6 items, can be used for formative assessment. Instructors can address issues concerning rapport and potentially enhance student outcomes.

Keywords: professor-student rapport, assessment, psychometrics, formative evaluation, professor immediacy

Introduction

The original Professor-Student Rapport Scale (Wilson, Ryan, & Pugh, 2010) contained 34 items and predicted single-item student outcomes, including student motivation, perceptions of learning, self-reported grades, and student attitudes toward instructor and course. The original measure was found to be psychometrically sound (Ryan, Wilson, & Pugh, 2011), though a high Cronbach's alpha (.96) indicated item redundancy. Subsequently, the development of a brief version of the scale allowed for successful prediction of student outcomes (Wilson et al., 2013). However, Wilson and colleagues did not report psychometric data and relied on single-item outcome measures. Therefore, the goals of the present study were to examine the psychometric properties of the Professor-Student Rapport Scale – Brief (PSRS-B) and also examine predictability of student outcomes based on multiple-item measures.

Immediacy, or psychological availability, is believed to contribute to the creation of rapport. The immediacy scale constructed by Gorham and Christophel (1990) contains items assessing both verbal and nonverbal behaviors that a teacher might engage in. Both the nonverbal (Christensen & Mensel, 1998) and verbal (Frymier, 1993; Wilson, 2006; Menzel & Carrell, 1999) aspects of this scale have been found to predict a range of student outcomes (attitude toward course and instructor, student motivation, perceptions of learning). Rapport between instructors and their students has also been shown to positively impact student motivation and learning as well as evaluations of instruction (Wilson, Ryan, & Pugh, 2010). A distinction between the immediacy scale and the professor-student rapport scale is a focus on behaviors versus a focus on student perceptions, respectively.

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The Teacher-Behavior Checklist (Keeley, Smith, & Buskist, 2006) is another measure of student perceptions of teacher behaviors. This 28-item measure assesses two distinct aspects of teacher behavior, namely, competence/communication and caring/supportive. Students are asked to rate their teacher on a scale from 1 (never) to 5 (frequent) on specific behaviors that convey these aspects. For example, a competence/communication item is "Effective Communicator (Speaks clearly/loudly; uses precise English; gives clear, compelling examples)" (Keeley et al., 2006, p. 85). Although the items refer to teacher behaviors, these behaviors would often determine students' overall perceptions of their professor and the class. Such overall perceptions are assessed by the PSRS-B with items such as "My professor makes class enjoyable." Keeley et al. (2010) found the Teacher-Behavior Checklist to effectively distinguish between teachers described as being the worst professor and best professor with whom students had taken a course.

Professor-Student rapport and other similar constructs have been found to correlate with learning and other student outcomes (Frisby & Myers, 2008; Frisby & Marin, 2010; Granitz, Koernig, & Harich, 2009). Frisby and Myers collected data with 281 introductory communication students. They measured rapport with a modified version of an employee-customer rapport scale that included items pertaining to both an enjoyable interaction and a personal connection. They found rapport to significantly and positively correlate with student participation, content affect, class affect, and instructor affect (affective learning), as well as motivation and satisfaction. Frisby and Martin collected data with 233 participants from university communication courses and asked them to complete their measures while considering the instructor of their previous class. The measure of rapport (enjoyable interaction/personal connection) just described was used again and they also assessed classroom connectedness, participation, affective learning, and cognitive learning. They found that only professor-student rapport (not classroom connectedness or classmate rapport) significantly and positively correlated with participation and affective and cognitive learning. Lastly, Granitz et al. conducted a qualitative assessment with 40 business professors who were asked to report on their perceptions of the outcomes of rapport. Emerging themes included the instructors reporting that rapport with students led to such outcomes as enhanced learning, higher levels of motivation, effort, attention, involvement, and participation, etc. These studies support the usefulness of rapport in gauging important student outcomes; particularly, student learning.

Rapport and similar constructs have also been found to predict instructor ratings (Marsh, 1987; Filak & Sheldon, 2003). Marsh found that rapport (among several other constructs such as instructor enthusiasm, clarity, coverage, etc.) predicted student ratings of their professors. Filak et al. assessed the extent to which undergraduate students experienced three factors; namely, autonomy, competence, and relatedness. These three constructs were measured with items that are similar to those included in the PSRS-B. For example, for autonomy the item "I was free to express my opinions in this class" (Filak & Sheldon, 2003, p. 237) is similar to the first item of the PSRS-B which is "My professor encourages questions and comments from students." Also, for relatedness the item "The teacher cared about me and my progress" (Filak & Sheldon, 2003, p. 237) is similar (as a reversed item) to the third item of the PSRS-B which is "My professor's body language says, 'Don't bother me'." Filak & Sheldon found students' feelings of these three constructs predicted both ratings of the instructor and ratings of the course. Their participants were 268 students who were asked to rate an instructor who taught a recent class. All of the students were enrolled in a psychology course and were told that the recent class should be an important one that related to their overall goals.

Clearly rapport and other constructs closely related to rapport are useful for distinguishing between positive and negative aspects of instruction as perceived by students. Given the importance of professor-student rapport, instructors should consider this aspect of the classroom environment. Administering a measure of rapport during the term and then critically evaluating the subsequent data can offer valuable information. That is, formative data allow time for intervention. We recommend that professors consider and assess rapport in their classrooms in order to increase the likelihood of student success and positive student attitudes.

As the goals of the present study are to examine the psychometric properties and predictive ability of the PSRS-B we assessed its reliability in terms of internal consistency to complete a profile of this scale's psychometric properties. Validity was investigated by comparing the PSRA-B to similar and dissimilar scales established in the literature and used to establish the validity of the original Professor-Student Rapport Scale (with 34 items). Similar scales included an Immediacy Scale, the Working Alliance Inventory, and a Social Support Scale; the dissimilar scale was the Verbal Aggressiveness Scale.

As a follow-up analysis, we investigated the PSRS-B's ability to predict student outcomes. Previous research showed the PSRS-B's ability to predict single-item measures (Wilson & Ryan, 2013). In the current study we administered both single-item and lengthier measures to more rigorously assess student outcomes and to better assess various aspects of student learning and student perceptions. We used measures of affective learning, cognitive learning, learner empowerment, learning indicator items, and student communication satisfaction. The addition of measures that were not included in Wilson and Ryan's initial report (i.e., learner empowerment and student communication satisfaction) added new dimensions of student outcomes.

We hypothesized to find the PSRS-B to significantly and positively correlate with the previously mentioned similar scales and to significantly and negatively correlate with the dissimilar scale. For a more extensive review of these comparison scales please refer to Ryan, Wilson, and Pugh (2011). We also hypothesized that the PSRS-B would significantly predict the aforementioned student outcomes.

Method

Participants

Our sample included 130 undergraduates (64 females, 64 males, and 2 students not reporting gender) from a southeastern university. Their ages ranged from 18 to 28 years ($M = 19.51$, $SD = 1.39$). Ethnicities included 84 European Americans, 31 African Americans, 5 Latinos, 3 Asian Americans, 3 international, 3 who reported themselves as "other," and 1 participant who did not report ethnicity. The international designation was intended for students who were enrolled in study abroad type programs. The sample included 24 first-year students, 80 sophomores, 22 juniors, and 4 seniors. All students received either course credit or extra credit for participating. The Internal Review Board approved this study, and all participants received ethical treatment.

Materials

Brief Professor-Student Rapport Scale. The original scale was created based on student-provided items that they believed reflected having rapport with their professors (Wilson et al.,

2010). After analyzing these items with an exploratory principle component analysis, 34 items emerged. These 34 items comprised a single primary factor, and all items reached a minimum loading value of .50, with a Cronbach's alpha of .96. Participants were asked to rate each item on a scale from one to five ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Eight of the items were stated negatively, with the remaining items stated positively (Wilson, Ryan, & Pugh, 2010).

Items for the brief version of the scale were selected by submitting the original version to a principal component analysis with a varimax rotation and removing items on components that did load at a minimum of .50. The accompanying scree plot revealed two components, with only items on component 2 predicting student outcomes well. Component 2 contained 6 items and comprised the Brief Version of the Professor-Student Rapport Scale (PSRS-B; Wilson & Ryan, 2013). The brief version requires students to rate each item on a scale from 1 to 5 ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Two of the items were stated negatively (reverse scored), with the remaining items were stated positively. Higher scores on this measure are indicative of higher levels of professor-student rapport.

Comparison Scales

Immediacy

The immediacy scale (Gorham & Christophel, 1990) was used to investigate convergent validity. Immediacy, defined as psychological availability (Mehrabian, 1969), is considered to be indicative of professor-student rapport. Participants were asked to rate each item on a scale from 0 to 4 ranging from *never* to *very often*. The 23-item scale includes items that pertain to specific behaviors (e.g. "asks students how they felt about an assignment"). Three of the items were stated negatively (reverse scored), with the remaining items stated positively. Higher scores on this measure are indicative of higher levels of immediacy.

Working Alliance Inventory

The WAI (Horvath & Greenberg, 1989) was also used to investigate convergent validity. The construct of the working alliance pertains to knowing that someone is concerned for a person's welfare, is working to help, provides guidance, etc.; thus, it was considered to be adequately similar to the construct of professor-student rapport. Participants were asked to rate each item on a scale from 1 to 7 ranging from *never* to *always*. The original 36-item scale included items pertaining to patients' perceptions of their therapist (e.g., "perceives accurately what my goals are") and their opinion of the quality of the counseling they have received (e.g., "clear on what my responsibilities are in therapy"). Of these original items, 12 that could pertain to a professor-student relationship were selected and used in the current study after re-wording them to apply to professor-student instead of therapist-patient relationships. Three of the items were stated negatively (reverse scored), with the remaining items stated positively. Higher scores on this measure are indicative of higher levels of a perceived working alliance.

Social Support Scale

The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (Zimet, Dahlem, Zimet, & Farley, 1988) further estimated convergent validity. The construct of social support pertains to people's

perceptions of whether or not someone cares about them, is someone they can count on, provides support for them, etc.; thus, social support was considered to be adequately similar to the construct of professor-student rapport. Participants were asked to rate each item on a scale from 1 to 7 ranging from *very strongly disagree* to *very strongly agree*. The original 12-item scale was modified to apply to a professor-student relationship. For example, the item "There is a special person around when I am in need" became "My professor is around when I am in need." Higher scores on this measure are indicative of higher levels of perceive social support.

Verbal Aggressiveness Scale

The verbal-aggressiveness measure (Infante & Wigley, 1986) also assessed convergent validity. The construct of verbal aggressiveness is typified by being belittling, disrespectful, and critical toward others. This construct was considered to be adequately dissimilar to the construct of professor-student rapport and thus expected to be negatively correlated with the scale. Participants were asked to rate each item on a scale from 1 to 5 ranging from *almost never true* to *almost always true*. The original 20-item scale included items about having the tendency to verbally confront and disparage others when they do not share the same opinions or ideas. Eleven of the items were stated positively (reverse scored), with the remaining items stated negatively. Higher scores indicate higher levels of verbal aggressiveness. Though the original version assessed self-perceptions, it was modified to pertain to a professor. For example, the item, "If individuals I am trying to influence really deserve it, I attack their character" became, "If individuals my professor is trying to influence really deserve it, she/he attacks their character." Higher scores on this measure are indicative of higher levels of verbal aggressiveness.

Student Outcomes

Prior assessments of the Professor-Student Rapport Scale utilized single-item measures of motivation, perceived learning, projected grades, and student attitudes toward the instructor and course. In the current study we again employed these items to allow comparison with lengthier measures of the same or similar student outcomes. The single-item measures included ratings of the course as a whole, attitude toward the professor, level of motivation, amount learned, and self-reported grades (see Table 2). The lengthier measures are outlined below.

Cognitive Learning

The cognitive-learning measure (Frisby & Martin, 2010) includes 10 items that participants rate on a scale from 1 to 5 ranging from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree*. Five of the 10 items are reverse scored. This measure was designed to reflect aspects of cognitive learning including: knowledge, understanding, and development of skills. That is, the measure captures student perceptions of their own learning. The measure includes items such as "I have learned a great deal in this class," "I can see clear changes in my understanding of this topic," and "I would be unable to use the information from this class" (reverse scored). Frisby et al. (2010) found this scale to have good internal reliability with an alpha of .88. Higher scores on this measure are indicative of higher levels of perceived cognitive learning.

Learner Empowerment

This measure was developed by Schultz and Shulman (1993) and is intended to assess the multidimensional nature of learner empowerment, including items pertaining to meaningfulness, competence, impact, and choice. The scale includes 30 items that are rated on a 5-point scale from 0 to 4 ranging from *never* to *very often*. Five of the items are stated negatively (reverse scored), with the remaining items stated positively. The scale includes items such as "I work hard for class because I want to, not because I have to," I feel confident that I can adequately perform my duties," "My success in this class is under my control," and "My instructor allows flexibility in the way I perform my tasks." Higher scores on this measure are indicative of higher levels of perceived learner empowerment.

Learning-Indicator Items

Learning-indicator items were developed by Frymier, Shulman, and Houser (1996) by asking 60 of their colleagues to provide examples of activities students engage in that are evidence of learning. Taking these responses and their own experiences into account, they created a 13-item scale where responses are rated on a 5-point scale from 0 to 4 ranging from *never* to *very often*. Sample items include "I explain course content to other students," "I think about course content outside of class," and "I actively participate in class discussion." Frymier et al. found this scale to have good internal reliability, with an alpha of .84. Higher scores on this measure are indicative of the presence of more learning indicators.

Student-Communication Satisfaction

The student-communication satisfaction scale (Goodboy, Martin, & Bolkan, 2009) includes 24 items rated on a 7 point scale, with 1 labeled as *strongly disagree* and 7 labeled as *strongly agree*. Six of the items are stated negatively (reverse scored), with the remaining items stated positively. Sample items include "My teacher makes an effort to satisfy questions I have," "My teacher genuinely listens to me when I talk," and "I dislike talking with my teacher" (reverse scored). Goodboy et al. found this scale to have strong internal reliability with an alpha of .98. Higher scores on this measure are indicative of higher levels of satisfaction with communication.

Attitudes toward Instructor

In the current study we used one of the six sets of items included in the overall affective learning scale used by Christophel (1990). We used the "My attitude about the instructor of this course" set which entails answering this item on four semantic differential terms (good to bad, worthless to valuable, fair to unfair, and positive to negative) ranging from one to seven. Christophel reported an internal consistency of .91 for this specific set of items. Higher scores on this measure are indicative of participants selecting the positive end of each of the spectrums they are presented with.

Procedure

The study was conducted after receiving approval from the Institutional Review Board. Data collection took place during participants' regularly scheduled class time during one class period. Students chose to participate or leave and take advantage of alternative methods for earning extra credit. Those who wished to participate stayed in the class, and after signing an informed consent form, they completed all measures as well as provided demographics. The measures were administered in the same order as described in the materials section.

Results

The scales used in the following analyses contained varying numbers of items; therefore averages (as opposed to totals) represented each student's score. We used SPSS as our statistical software.

Internal Consistency Reliability

The 6-item PSRS-B displayed a good Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha = .83$). This is evidence of acceptable internal consistency that is not so high as to suggest item redundancy (Streiner, 2003).

Convergent Validity

The PSRS-B correlated significantly and in the expected direction with each of the similar/dissimilar comparison scales. Specifically, significant and positive correlations were found with the Immediacy ($r = .60$, $p < .001$), WAI ($r = .68$, $p < .001$), and Social Support ($r = .50$, $p < .001$) measures, and a significant and negative correlation was found with the Verbal Aggressiveness measure ($r = - .40$, $p < .001$). See Table 1 for descriptive and correlational data among these measures. All of the comparison scales also demonstrated good internal consistency, including the 23-item Immediacy ($\alpha = .91$), 12-item WAI ($\alpha = .88$), 9-item Social Support ($\alpha = .93$), and 20-item Verbal Aggressiveness ($\alpha = .86$) measures.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations among PSRS-B and Comparison Scales

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Professor-Student Rapport (PSRS-B)	3.36	.97		.60	.50	.68	-.40
2. Immediacy	2.39	.78			.58	.66	-.36
3. Social Support	3.59	1.31				.67	-.35
4. WAI	4.71	1.14					-.51
5. Verbal Aggressiveness	2.33	.61					

All correlational values are *p* < .01.

Predicting Student Outcomes

Using the PSRS-B as the single predictor, we conducted linear regression for each single-item, student outcome variable. The PSRS-B was found to significantly predict each outcome (all F-tests $p < .001$; see Table 2 for additional regression statistics). The PSRS-B predicted 46% of the variability in attitude toward course ($\beta = .68$), 48% of the variability in attitude toward professor ($\beta = .69$), 43% of the variability in motivation ($\beta = .65$), 23% of the variability in amount learned ($\beta = .48$), and 16% of the variability in grades ($\beta = .39$).

In order to further establish the PSRS-B's ability to predict student outcomes, we administered additional measures to provide more rigorous assessment. These included additional measures of affective learning, cognitive learning, learner empowerment, learning-indicator items, and student-communication satisfaction. All of these student outcome scales demonstrated good internal consistency, including the 4-item measure of affective learning ($\alpha = .89$), 10-item cognitive learning ($\alpha = .89$), 30-item learner empowerment ($\alpha = .93$), 14-item learning indicator, and 24-item student-communication satisfaction ($\alpha = .94$). We conducted linear regression for each of these student outcomes and found the B-PSRS to significantly predict all outcomes (all F-tests $p < .001$; see Table 2 for additional regression statistics). The B-PSRS predicted 59% of the variability in affective learning ($\beta = .77$), 36% of the variability in cognitive learning ($\beta = .60$), 37% of the variability in learner empowerment ($\beta = .61$), 14% of the variability in learning indicator items ($\beta = .38$), and 40% of the variability in student communication satisfaction ($\beta = .63$).

Table 2

Coefficients for Regression Analyses with PSRS-B

Criterion Variables	R^2	Adj. R^2	B	$SE\ b$	β
Single-Item Assessments					
Course as a Whole	.46	.45	.76	.07	.68
Attitude toward Professor	.48	.48	.90	.08	.69
Motivation	.43	.42	.73	.08	.65
Amount Learned	.23	.23	1.13	.18	.48
Self-reported Grades	.16	.15	3.45	.72	.39
Multiple-Item Assessments					
Attitude toward Instructor (Affective Learning)	.59	.58	-1.20	.09	-.77
Cognitive Learning	.36	.36	.48	.06	.60
Learner Empowerment	.37	.36	.39	.05	.61
Learning Indicator Items	.14	.13	.26	.06	.38
Student Communication Satisfaction	.40	.39	.89	.10	.63

Note. $N = 130$.
All β values are $p < .001$.

Discussion

We found the PSRS-B to have adequate internal-consistency reliability and convergent validity. Specifically, the measure correlated significantly and in the expected direction with both similar and dissimilar scales. We also found the PSRS-B to predict a variety of student outcomes including both single-item and lengthier measures of student perceptions and learning.

Frisby and Martin (2010) lend support to our goal of providing a more rigorous assessment of cognitive learning specifically, as they mention the need to measure this construct with more than one or few-item measures as they did in their study.

Frisby and Martin (2010) also assessed the relationship between instructor-student rapport and student outcomes. Specifically, they assessed cognitive learning (with the same measure used in the current study), affective learning (with 3 items pertaining to affect toward instructor, course content, and enrolling in a similar content course), and student participation (e.g. making comments/volunteering during class). Their measure of instructor-student rapport was a measure that also included "classmates" along with "instructor" in each of its 11 items. For example, "I feel like there is a 'bond' between my instructor/classmates and myself" (Frisby et al., 2010, p. 153). Again, they found instructor rapport specifically (not classmate rapport) to predict their measures of cognitive learning, affective learning, and participation in class. Though their findings also lend support for the utility of aspects of rapport to predict student outcomes, there are important differences to point out between the measure of rapport they used and the current PSRS-B.

Frisby and Martin refer to their measure as a "Modified Rapport Measure" as they took a measure of customer-employee rapport and changed each item to say "instructor/classmate" instead of "employee." As described in Wilson et al. (2010), the PSRS was developed by asking college students to provide their definitions/indicators of professor-student rapport, and the resulting measure was statistically derived from those items and subsequently shortened. As such, the PSRS-B provides an assessment of professor-student rapport that values the students' perspective. Also, the measure used by Frisby and Martin also including classmates in each item may have led to a different conceptualization of rapport compared to items that only pertain to the professor.

Due to these findings of both sound psychometric properties and the ability to predict important student outcomes, we recommend teachers use the PSRS-B. We believe it will serve as a useful tool for formative assessment and will guide instructors in how to adjust the way they teach and/or interact with their students. Administering this scale would take little class time due to its brevity. Teachers could administer the scale both early in the semester and at a midpoint in order to track their progress and adjust accordingly. Each item in the scale may be examined individually and if an item is rated poorly the teacher can then attempt to address that specific issue. Taking this small amount of time to assess rapport would provide important information for teachers that could help them both increase student learning and enhance positive attitudes.

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Exploration of undergraduate preservice teachers' experiences learning advocacy: A mixed-methods study

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Abstract: Applying transformational critical advocacy research in college instruction can be a powerful way to engage students in challenging inequity in society and promoting positive changes. Few studies systematically measure the impact of such pedagogy on the development of college students' beliefs about advocacy. In this mixed methods study, we worked with 21 preservice teachers through advocacy letter writing activities and collected data from pre/post surveys and focus group discussions to explore the impact of such pedagogy. The findings indicated that advocacy letter writing was a meaningful activity for preservice teachers, allowing them a professional opportunity to voice their concerns about personally meaningful issues to entities in power. A significant correlation was found between baseline advocacy experiences and baseline advocacy beliefs, suggesting that the teaching of advocacy, when combined with opportunities for meaningful practice, can contribute to shifts in belief about the importance of advocating.

Keywords: transformative education, teacher education, advocacy, mixed methods research

Introduction

Educators recognize the importance of equipping students with a variety of skills that will benefit them in their personal and professional lives. The ability to advocate for self and others represents a useful strategy for fostering personal empowerment and effecting social change. Scholars in a variety of fields have integrated advocacy-type activities in coursework. Some of the more prominent have been in the health profession (Hearne, 2008; Radius, Galer-Unti, & Tappe, 2009) and in teacher education (Athanases & De Oliveira, 2008, Grymes, 2007). In teaching students about advocacy and providing opportunities for them to engage in advocacy within class activities, an underlying assumption is that as students learn about advocacy, their belief in the benefit and worth of advocating will naturally follow. Yet, there have been few studies that systematically measure shifts in beliefs as undergraduate students actively engage in advocacy activities. Our study design was influenced by the overarching questions of how individuals might take up a critical advocacy lens and how undergraduate students might be empowered to advocate in their personal and professional lives. In this study, we described how advocacy activities were integrated in a college course and examined the impact of such activities on the development of undergraduate preservice teachers' advocacy beliefs.

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Review of Literature

Theoretical framework

The philosophy that undergirds our inquiry into the topic of undergraduate students' experiences learning advocacy is informed by critical advocacy research (Shields, 2012). Through this particular lens, we foreground the role of critical epistemologies in addressing "questions of inequity and disparity" for the purpose of advocating for "policies and practices that can lead to economic, ecological, and human justice, and a sustainable global future" (Shields, 2012, p. 3). We define advocacy in line with Shields as "taking a stance on behalf of a person or a position in which one believes" (p 6). Critical advocacy research reflects a commitment to social justice, empowerment, and change, while upholding standards for conducting research that are rigorous, contextual, and meaningful.

This study is situated within a transformative mixed methods paradigm in which the researchers acknowledge the workings of power in all parts of the research process (Mertens, 2003, 2007). This particular design is appropriate for a study of teaching advocacy to undergraduate students in that we seek to "conduct research that is change-oriented and seeks to advance social justice causes by identifying power imbalances and empowering individuals and/or communities" (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011, p. 96). Therefore, research decisions, from research questions to data analysis, reflect a philosophical commitment to empower participants to advocate for themselves and others. This study reflects participatory elements of a transformative design (Mertens, 2003, 2007, 2010, 2012). Also, it represents an important step toward empowering undergraduate students to cultivate the critical consciousness necessary to engage in transformative-emancipatory work in their personal and professional lives. An exploration of the processes by which individuals take up a critical advocacy lens and come to think of themselves as advocates holds implications for educators of undergraduate students in a variety of fields including education, public health, social work, and many more.

Advocacy in teacher education

Both critical advocacy teaching and the transformative mixed methods design mirror conceptualizations of advocacy in teacher education. In a review of standards used by several teacher education programs, Grymes (2007) found that typical standards reflected a broad range of activities that could be considered advocacy such as, policy-related advocacy, advocacy based on developing relationships and trust with families, and advocating for individual children with special needs. She concluded that although commonly used standards already reflect the need for advocacy, teacher education programs must continue to equip teachers with necessary skills to be advocates for themselves, their students, and their school communities. Sleeter (2008) draws similar parallels by including teacher activism and advocacy as one of two broad strands critical in educating teachers for equity and diversity

In order to explore teachers' perceptions of advocacy, Althanases and de Oliveira (2008) conducted focus groups of a representative group of new teachers to find out how and why teachers engaged in classroom advocacy. Advocacy, as defined by participants and researchers, included meeting diverse needs of students, hunting for resources, tutoring, increased parent communication, fieldtrips, and creating a culture club. Teachers identified connections between their acts of advocacy and the training acquired in their teacher education programs. Athanases

and de Oliveira (2008) conclude that an advocate views "all aspects of school as problematic rather than given," "learn[s] to locate expertise inside oneself," and can envision how schools can more effectively meet all students' needs (p. 68). Similarly, Silverman (2010) draws connections between preservice teachers' beliefs about diversity and feelings of efficacy in advocating for change. In her review of the literature, she contends teacher education programs should increase their focus on helping teachers' develop feelings of responsibility and commitment to advocate for diversity. Data found that many survey respondents, though they identified themselves as advocates, felt low personal responsibility to advocate. Additional research is needed to explore the nuances of how the responsibility and desire to advocate are cultivated within undergraduate courses.

Teaching advocacy

The teaching of advocacy in undergraduate classrooms has been used for multiple purposes. As a pedagogical strategy, advocacy-related instruction is thought to increase student engagement and motivation in the classroom (Beacham & Shambaugh, 2007). Beacham and Shambaugh (2007) describe two case studies in which advocacy activities represented a type of PBL (problem-based learning) in both an education graduate level course and an interior design undergraduate level course. They describe that advocacy-related activities fostered increased student engagement through enhancing "relevancy, challenge, and uniqueness" (p. 316) of instruction. Beacham and Shambaugh conclude that advocacy as both a teaching strategy and a learning objective enhanced students' feelings of agency and empowerment.

As service learning becomes increasingly common in undergraduate courses (Brundiers, Wiek, Redman, 2010; Butin, 2006; Cawthorn, Leege, & Congdon, 2011), the teaching of advocacy becomes a critical component in preparing students for community engagement. Preservice teachers have difficulty making connections between personal experiences of social service and larger societal issues, and this can be made explicit as a course component based on advocacy (Wade, 2003). Bridging theories on advocacy and service learning, Berke, Boyd-Soisson, Voorhees, & Reininga (2010) describe the experiences of undergraduate family science students who were matched with community agencies and worked on collaborative advocacy projects throughout the semester. Students experienced positive benefits from engaging in advocacy activities including knowledge of working with agencies and an increased understanding of advocacy as a macro-level process. The existing studies on the teaching of advocacy in undergraduate classrooms emphasize the benefits of advocacy. Further study is needed to better describe variations in effectiveness for different forms of advocacy, variations across content areas, and the role of advocacy experiences in shifting beliefs about the benefits of advocating. Additionally, studies on the teaching of advocacy in undergraduate classrooms would benefit from a more robust theory of the stages of advocacy development for undergraduate students. This study provides both an analysis of the effectiveness of an advocacy lesson and activity in shifting beliefs about advocacy and offers a model of the stages of development of beliefs in advocacy.

Advocacy letter writing

Advocacy letter writing has been employed to express concerns to people in power and suggest changes on behalf of individuals, minority groups, majority groups, and the environment.

Syndicated cartoonists who were the recipients of advocacy letters changed their behaviors and began drawing seat belts on their characters when depicting them in vehicles (Mathews & Dix, 1992). Writing advocacy letters has been suggested as a method for contacting politicians on behalf of legislative health issues (Huntington, 2001), as an effective tool for individuals living with disabilities (White, Thomson, & Nary, 1997), and as a transformative activity for preservice English for Academic Purposes and English as a Second Language teachers (Morgan, 2009).

Within the undergraduate classroom, advocacy letter writing is a tool for engaging students in social discourse. Advocacy letter writing on the topic of oil and politics has been used as an assignment to integrate political science and English composition skills for first year undergraduate students (Huerta & Sperry, 2013). Undergraduate nursing students participated in advocacy letter writing as a way to learn about population groups affected by community health topics (Eide, Hahn, Bayne, Allen, & Swain, 2006). What is unknown about previous undergraduate advocacy assignments is how students' beliefs about advocacy may have been impacted by participating in the assignments. This paper builds upon the existing literature about advocacy letters by describing the experiences and change in advocacy beliefs of a group of undergraduate preservice teachers who were assigned to write advocacy letters to people in power about issues of personal meaning to them.

Course context

Selected courses

Preservice teachers who are undergraduate students dually enrolled in a course on both elementary education in seminar/internship and advanced science methodology participated in the study. These particular courses were selected because one is an experiential learning course following a theme of cultural awareness. The other course includes a lesson on how to differentiate between environmental education and environmental advocacy. Students enrolled in these classes may benefit from learning about advocacy as they are preparing to enter the profession of elementary education in which they may need to advocate for individual students, groups of students, or themselves as teachers.

Advocacy lesson

All students in the courses participated in a lesson on advocacy. The primary instructor of the lesson, a doctoral student with experience teaching undergraduate public health courses, had previously delivered similar lessons to students enrolled in public health courses. Three other instructors from the Teacher Education and Educational Leadership & Cultural Foundations departments joined the lesson discussions to share their own perspectives and experiences.

The interactive lecture began by asking students to share, with a classmate, a memory from a time when they or someone that they cared about did not have something that was needed or was treated unfairly. Students were asked to reflect on how they felt at the time, whether or not any action was taken, whether it was difficult to take action, feelings about the outcome of the situation, and whether they would act differently in a similar situation in the future. Next, the primary instructor shared an example from her own experience then invited students to share their experiences with the entire class if they wanted. Students shared a wide range of experiences and some students' stories revealed details about their lives and personal values that

were previously unknown to their peers and instructors. The class engaged in a discussion on how these experiences were acts of advocacy or revealed a time when advocacy could have potentially changed the outcome.

The lesson then proceeded by including the preservice teachers' input in defining advocacy, determining what an advocate does, and in brainstorming reasons to advocate. Preservice teachers learned about the phases of advocacy (defining and researching an issue, planning advocacy activities, thinking of all possible solutions and outcomes, advocating, evaluating the act of advocacy, then planning for any future actions) and role-played effective and ineffective advocacy. The instructor led a discussion on what might happen if the act of advocacy had unintended consequences or made the situation worse. Preservice teachers discussed how they might act as advocates in their future roles as in-service teachers and brainstormed when presented with the scenario of how they could advocate for elementary school student fieldtrips given district budget restraints.

Next, in small groups, preservice teachers evaluated a case study about community development near a marsh and demonstrated critical thinking in determining how different acts of advocacy might lead to different outcomes and what any unintended consequences of advocacy might be. Preservice teachers listed pros and cons to appealing a decision made by local legislatures, involving an outside advocacy organization, and taking no action. Preservice teachers also listed alternate actions and acts of advocacy they identified on their own. Through discussion of the pros and cons they brainstormed, material taught earlier in the lesson about characteristics of effective and ineffective advocates was emphasized. Throughout the entire lesson, preservice teachers were encouraged to ask questions and to share any of their own experiences with advocacy. The lesson concluded with a group discussion of a news story about a Polish art student who advocated for his own art by hanging it in a museum (Scislowska, 2012). The news story allowed the students to review what they had learned during the lesson and to connect it to the real life experience of a student, someone they may have been able to relate to.

Advocacy letter writing activity

At the end of the advocacy lesson, preservice teachers were given an assignment to write advocacy letters of their own. Example letters and suggested formats were shared. The phases of advocacy discussed during the lecture were reviewed in dissecting example letters. Participants were instructed to each choose an issue of personal meaning to research and compose an advocacy letter requesting a change in the status quo. No restrictions were placed on the advocacy topics; participants were encouraged to reflect on what was important to them in their personal lives noting that the issue could be something that affects a small group of people, a large population, a specific community such as a student's hometown, or one that was relevant for policy makers. Preservice teachers were asked to reflect on what could be done to improve the issues of choice and to determine who had the power to make the changes happen. To increase the likelihood of receiving responses to their letters, participants were encouraged to send their letters to local entities with the power to enact changes on their chosen topics. They were given one week to research their issues, write, and send their letters. Proof of letter submission was required to receive credit for having completed the course assignment.

Methods

Participants

The preservice teachers participating in the study were enrolled as undergraduate students at a medium-sized university in a Southeastern state. All of the students were seniors, (n = 22, average age = 22 years old) pursuing Elementary Education as a major and earning a state Environmental Educator Certification. The participants were all female and self-identified as: 90% Christian, 81% White, 43% raised in a rural environment, and 57% raised in a suburban environment. Average self-reported annual income of the participants' families of origin was measured using income categories from the US Census with 52% reporting income in the upper two-fifths, 29% in the mid fifth, and 19% in the lower four fifths.

Study design

In acknowledging the multifaceted nature of the concept of advocacy, a mixed methods transformative approach could best capture the complexity of the issue (Mertens, 2012) and reflect the purpose of empowering and effecting change in participants' understanding of advocacy. The research design included qualitative research and quantitative research in parallel strands (see Figure 1). Per Creswell and Plano Clark (2011), the start of many mixed methods studies falls between fixed and emergent designs. Our study also fell on this continuum with both fixed and emergent characteristics. As an emergent mixed methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011), the guiding original transformative study design was altered to include a quantitative/qualitative post survey; this was added during the research process. We as researchers felt the data obtained in the pre-intervention survey about advocacy beliefs would be important to collect again after the focus group discussions, in order to specifically address our research question about significant difference in advocacy beliefs. The one eight-item question on the post-intervention survey was taken from the pre-intervention survey instrument. We decided to add another qualitative question at the end of our post-intervention survey as themes of growth in advocacy emerged from the focus groups. We wanted to give participants a chance to provide any final words on their experiences.

The following research questions were constructed to represent a blend of both quantitative and qualitative strands and guided the investigation of students' experiences learning advocacy: 1) Is there a statistically significant change in preservice teachers' beliefs about engaging in advocacy through a lesson on advocacy and a letter writing activity as evidenced by responses on a pre- and post-intervention survey? 2) In what ways do the focus groups' results explain any differences between pre- and post-intervention survey responses? 3) What meanings do preservice teachers make of advocacy and the advocacy letter writing activity?
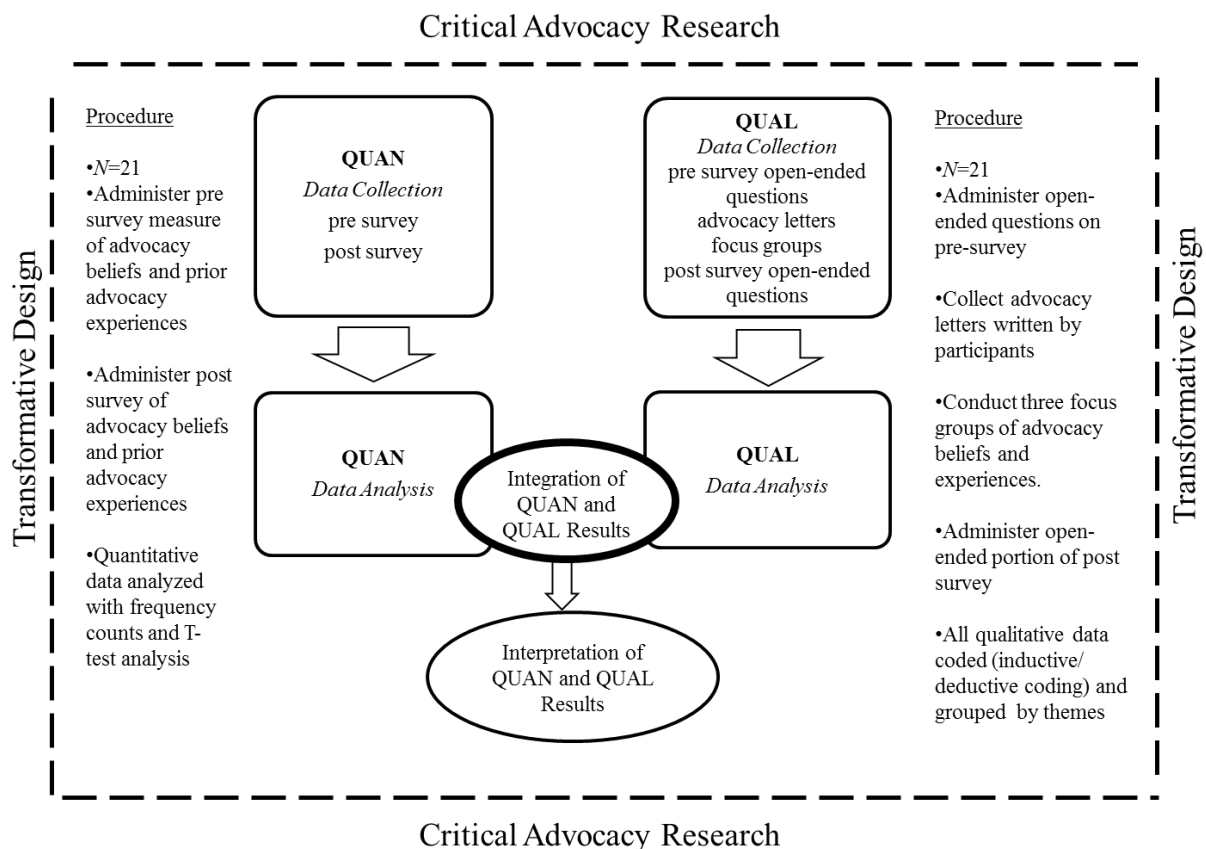
Critical Advocacy Research

Figure 1. Research Design

Data collection

Research participants took a written pre-intervention survey to express their prior participation in advocacy and express their beliefs about advocacy. Next, participants engaged in a lesson on advocacy conducted by the research team, then were asked to write a letter to a local entity advocating for change on a topic of personal meaning to the participant. Three weeks later, participants were asked to join a focus group to have an opportunity to further discuss the ways in which they understood their experiences participating in the lesson and writing the advocacy letter. Finally, all participants took a written post-intervention survey.

Pre- and post-intervention survey

Part One of the participant survey contained questions modeled after those on the Social Issues Advocacy Scale [SIAS] (Nilsson, Marszalek, Linnemeyer, Bahner, & Misialek, 2011). The SIAS, created to assess behaviors and attitudes about advocating on social justice issues, measured activities and beliefs relevant for most any field or discipline (Nilsson et al., 2011). The instrument used a Likert-type scale to measure participation in various advocacy-related activities or agreement with specific beliefs and demonstrated good internal validity (Nilsson et al., 2011). Modifications were made to collect similar data without a Likert-type scale. Following these quantitative questions on baseline advocacy activities and beliefs, two open-

ended qualitative questions allowed the participants to describe prior undergraduate learning experiences and course assignments in which they may have learned about advocacy.

Part Two of the participant survey contained questions modified from those on the Social Justice Advocacy Scale which was designed to measure counselors' social justice advocacy abilities (Dean, 2009). Modifications were made to measure beliefs about aspects of social justice advocacy relevant to preservice teachers. The responses to the 25 Likert-type scale questions in this portion of the survey were tested for internal reliability, and for these items it was high, with a Chronbach's Alpha of .895. The exact cutoff for what is considered high reliability is debated, but it is generally accepted that high reliability in Chronbach's Alpha is anything above .8 (Field, 2013).

Focus groups

All participants in the study submitted their letters to an instructor by hard copy or email. The research team met the day before focus group discussions to read and sort the letters into three groups of mixed topics. The letters were written to a range of addressees, from local officials to large corporations, and were evenly distributed among the three focus groups, purposefully giving each focus group a variety of topics.

The items included in the focus group protocol were guided by the qualitative research question, *What meanings do preservice teachers make of advocacy and the advocacy letter writing activity?* Consistent with the convergent parallel research design, the focus group protocol was written at the onset of the study. During the three focus groups, students first introduced themselves and the topic of their letters. The rest of the focus group was guided by a semi-structured interview protocol.

In analyzing focus group transcripts, initial coding reflected Hatch's (2002) conceptualization of an inductive analysis approach that identifies patterns of meaning in data in order to make statements about the phenomenon under investigation. Interrater reliability was assured by all three researchers listening to audio recordings of all three focus group sessions before coding data, then reaching consensus on coding within each transcript. After initial open coding, each transcript was read multiple times and recoded by each member of the research team to identify additional codes in efforts to triangulate interpretations. Then, all codes were placed into categories which were then thematized, paying close attention to outliers that ran counter to initial interpretations (Hatch, 2002; Strauss & Corbin, 1998)

Results

Changes in advocacy beliefs

Through analysis of quantitative data collected on the pre- and post-intervention surveys during the study, we sought to address our first research question to determine if there was a statistically significant change in preservice teachers' beliefs about engaging in advocacy through a lesson on advocacy and a letter writing activity. Prior to participation in the advocacy lesson and letter writing activity, participants reported 96 total acts of advocacy from among 14 different advocacy activities. Participants, on average, had previously engaged in 4 to 5 different types of advocacy activities with discussing bills and legislative issues of personal importance with family and friends (81%), voting in local elections (62%), and using social media to influence

others regarding issues they cared about (52%) being the most popular activities. Advocacy experience was found to have a positive correlation (p = .011) with average scores on the Likert-type scale questions about advocacy beliefs.

Prior to the advocacy lesson, 76% of students had previously learned about advocacy in another undergraduate course. Several students named a required Educational Leadership and Cultural Foundations course which explored education as a social institution and advocating for racially, culturally, and linguistically diverse groups. One preservice teacher described a course activity that required students to attend an event or setting outside their comfort zones as one which taught her about advocacy. Others mentioned learning about environmental advocacy or Response to Intervention (RTI) to accommodate individual learning needs.

The preservice teachers, on average, agreed with 5 out of the 8 advocacy belief items in Part One of the survey prior to participation in the letter writing activity. Almost one third (29%) agreed with all eight items. The first four items were beliefs related to the effects of societal forces on health, wellbeing, and educational performance as well as the effects of state and federal policy on access to education and social services; the majority of participants (70%) agreed with each statement. The highest agreement was with the belief in societal forces affecting access to education and resources (95% agreed). The last four items were beliefs in the professional responsibility to confront those who discriminate against the elderly, disabled, those of a different culture or ethnicity, or of a different sexual orientation.

We also found a significant correlation between individual advocacy experience and beliefs scores (number of items respondents agreed with on Part One of the pre-intervention survey) and the average individual score on the Likert-type scale questions in Part Two. The overall mean frequency score for beliefs and experiences in advocacy for Part One was 4.57. The overall mean Likert score for Part Two on the pre-intervention survey was 2.6, on a scale of 0 - 11. The range of mean Likert scores for the preservice teachers was from 0.36 - 5.68. Testing for a correlation between beliefs and experiences scores in Part One, and beliefs scores in Part Two, a positive correlation is statistically significant (p = .011) at the .05 alpha level (2-tailed). The strong baseline positive correlation of experience in advocacy with belief in advocacy in this sample is a compelling argument for recommending that participants experience advocacy as part of transformative coursework.

On average, none of the eight items on both surveys showed a decrease in advocacy beliefs pre-post, and the last four items showed an increase in advocacy beliefs. In an analysis of mean differences (using SPSS paired samples t-test) between individual pre- and post-intervention survey responses (n = 19), there was a statistically significant mean difference increase in the average number of individuals' advocacy beliefs ($\bar{x}$ pre = 0.64, $\bar{x}$ post = 0.76, α = .05, df = 19, t_{crit} = -2.62, p = .018).

Participants' explanations of belief changes

Qualitative data collected during the focus groups enabled us to address our second research question in which we sought to determine in what ways the focus groups' results explained any differences between pre- and post-intervention survey responses. In all three focus groups, facilitators began with the same focus group protocol—although we also permitted participants to introduce and address additional topics that came up in the course of conversation. In this way focus groups were semi-structured in order to encourage a more participatory style that in some instances allowed participants to control the flow of the conversation. Due to time constraints

focus groups lasted approximately an hour and participants were encouraged to discuss their feelings and experiences with the letter writing activity and any plans for future advocacy.

Topics ranged from training the police force in the state to recognize and prevent human trafficking to improving maintenance at a breezeway at the participant's apartment complex. One preservice teacher said she used a "sandwich" of a compliment, the meat of the letter, and then ended with a compliment, to request a large cereal manufacturer omit a potentially cancer causing chemical from their cereal, and soon after her comment, another student in her group used the same terminology, "sandwich," to describe the letter she wrote. Clearly, as focus group discussion progressed, there was listening, reflection, and learning taking place. One student said she knew she should have researched before writing to Parking Services, but her letter was from emotion. The act of discussing the process of writing reminded participants of the recommended steps from the advocacy lesson. There was explicit expression of learning through discussion, as a student exclaimed, "Oh, I hadn't thought of that before. . ."

Over 30 individual codes were generated from the focus group transcripts, then grouped thematically into the following 6 categories: 1) Awareness of the benefits of advocacy, 2) Negotiating who benefits from advocacy, 3) Affective dimensions of advocacy, 4) Barriers to advocacy, 5) Negotiating the process of becoming an advocate, and 6) Embracing advocacy. While the pre- and post-intervention surveys were crucial to answering the question of whether or not beliefs about advocacy changed, the focus groups contributed to an understanding of the nuances and idiosyncrasies of changes that occurred in participants' awareness, beliefs, or action around questions of advocacy (see Figure 2).

Awareness of the Benefits of Advocacy. Participants described the extent to which the advocacy activities shifted their beliefs and perspectives about advocacy or increased their awareness of a particular issue. Shifts in awareness occurred in several important areas. Participants expressed that they became more aware of *how* to advocate and *why* advocacy is important. One described, "I think this assignment opened up my eyes to the importance of advocacy. Even if your advocacy does not result in change, you put your voice out there and stood up for what you believe in." Another remarked, "It brought to my attention how showing you care can have an overall effect." Therefore, an awareness of ways to effectively advocate as well as the belief that advocacy is important work in tandem in the process of becoming an effective advocate.

Negotiating the Process of Becoming an Advocate. This category represents a broad theme that encompasses data related to specific advocacy skills learned during the advocacy lesson and how students responded to the process of learning to be advocates. Learning about the process of advocacy reflected one of the most important components of their burgeoning advocacy development. One participant stated, "First time advocating for anything. Interesting to learn the process." Another stated, "It's a very authentic learning experience." Participants also added that the experience gave them added knowledge about different ways to advocate and broadened their perspective of what advocacy is. One stated, "When I thought of an advocate, a lot of times I thought of an extremist." Therefore, many participants viewed letter writing as an effective way to advocate that was potentially lower risk than other forms of advocacy like marching or protesting. While most participants expressed that they enjoyed the lesson and felt it was beneficial information to know, it was not assumed that this implied they would necessarily engage in future advocacy. Therefore, additional themes were identified that further contribute to the advocacy development process.
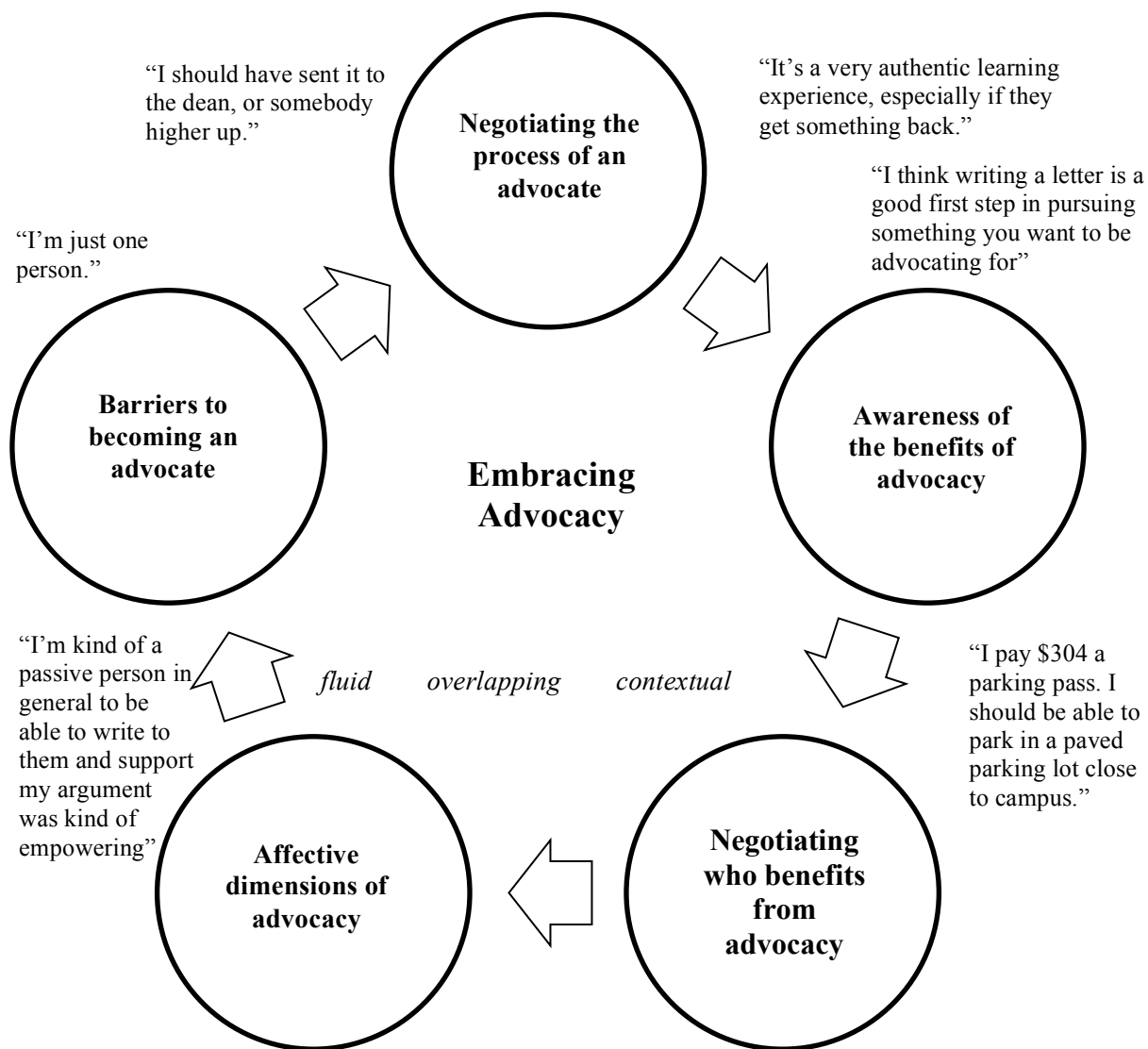
"I should have sent it to the dean, or somebody higher up."

Negotiating the process of an advocate

"It's a very authentic learning experience, especially if they get something back."

"I think writing a letter is a good first step in pursuing something you want to be advocating for"

"I'm just one person."

Barriers to becoming an advocate

Embracing Advocacy

Awareness of the benefits of advocacy

"I'm kind of a passive person in general to be able to write to them and support my argument was kind of empowering"

fluid   overlapping   contextual

"I pay $304 a parking pass. I should be able to park in a paved parking lot close to campus."

Affective dimensions of advocacy

Negotiating who benefits from advocacy

Figure 2. Advocacy Development Model

Negotiating Who Benefits from Advocacy. In keeping with the theoretical framework that privileges participants' involvement in the research process, participants possessed complete control over the topic of their letters. The choice of whether to advocate for self or others represented a salient theme throughout all three focus groups. One participant stated, "The activity was very beneficial and helped me learn the importance of advocating for myself and what's important to me." Many other participants echoed similar sentiments, while others chose to advocate for issues that would impact others more than themselves. While it could be interpreted that negotiating for self shows a more novice understanding of advocacy, upon deeper analysis of focus group responses, we suggest that negotiating the beneficiary of advocacy activity represents a key component in the development of an advocacy identity. In learning to advocate for themselves, some participants developed a greater confidence in advocating for others in future endeavors.

Affective Dimensions of Advocacy. The feelings and emotions associated with engaging in advocacy represented recurrent themes in all focus groups. Participants expressed the personal

satisfaction gained through advocating, feelings of frustration or disappointment at not receiving a response to a letter, and the sentiment that being able to advocate for something personally meaningful gave them a *voice*. Affective dimensions of advocacy were also critically important in fostering feelings of empowerment among participants. One student shared, "I'm kind of a passive person in general…so to be able to write to them and support my argument was kind of empowering." One stated, "It's been a continual frustration. This letter was a great way to get if off my chest and I felt better when I was done writing it, cuz I was able to vent." Another remarked, "When I sent this letter and received feedback it made me feel like I had taken a step towards change and that felt good." As illustrated in this response, responses to letters seemed to play an integral part in participants' feelings about the experience. Those who received responses expressed excitement and feelings of encouragement, while some of those who did not expressed frustration and feelings that letter writing was ineffective. Others who did not receive responses simply expressed a renewed commitment to continue trying. Overall focus group data about the affective dimension of advocacy suggest that students who expressed strong emotions about a particular topic were more empowered to express their concerns and take action for change.

      Barriers to Advocacy. Although barriers to advocacy were mentioned at least once in each focus group, participants' hesitancy in taking up identities as advocates was more pronounced in one focus group discussion in particular. Although negative sentiments about advocacy were primarily espoused by two individuals in the group, others silently concurred with certain statements. One participant stated, "You put all this time and hope into researching for a letter and the other end doesn't even care to say anything back." Another responded, "The majority of the time they're gonna do whatever they wanna do and it has to do with money." Several participants worried that their *one letter* would not be significant enough to effect change. We suggest that in developing an understanding of the process by which participants develop an advocacy identity, negotiating barriers to advocacy represents a real and valid concern.

Meaningfulness of advocacy letters

To address our final research question, "what meanings do preservice teachers make of advocacy and the advocacy letter writing activity," we considered our analysis of the advocacy letters themselves, the quantitative and qualitative analysis previously described, and a qualitative question added to the post-intervention survey. As part of the study intervention, students were asked to compose and send to an entity in power a letter on a personally meaningful topic about which they wanted to advocate. The participants ($N = 22$) who wrote advocacy letters all provided evidence that their letters had been written and sent. Some provided the letter to researchers to mail, while others produced a screen shot or confirmation page of the letter being sent electronically. Letters were analyzed by topic, beneficiary, and whether or not a response was received. In analyzing the beneficiaries of the letters, or the individual(s) for whom the participant intended to advocate, three categories emerged: self advocacy, advocacy for self and others, and advocacy for others. Letters written to advocate for self included letters written to the university parking services ($n = 4$), letters written to campus dining services ($n = 2$), participant's employer ($n = 1$), and the health insurance provider of a participant ($n = 1$). Letters written for the purpose of self-advocacy represented 37% of letters written. Interestingly, an equal percentage of letters were written to advocate for others (37%). In contrast to self-advocacy letters in which 6 of the 8 letters written related to issues specific to participants' university

experience, the letters written to advocate for others were more varied. Topics included letters to the state governor ($n = 2$) about increasing funds to state school systems, a letter to a representative about increasing awareness of human trafficking in the state, a letter to a local school superintendent to reduce class size by hiring an additional teacher, a letter to emergency services to provide an ambulance for rural parts of a local county, a letter to a national corporation about the chemical BHT in cereal marketed to children, a letter to a restaurant about working collaboratively with local high schools to employ teens, and a letter to campus disability services to improve ramps and make campus more wheelchair accessible. The remaining (27%) were written for self and others and represented similar topics to those just described.

Due to the potential influence of rate of response on feelings about advocacy, the letter analysis documented whether or not each participant received a response. Of the 22 letters written, 37% ($n = 8$) of participants showed proof that they received a response to their letter. All but one of the letters that received a response were written to local entities. The rate of response varied, with some participants receiving immediate responses while others received responses after a couple of weeks. All of the responses were polite and encouraging, some articulated future plans to address the requested change, and others suggested alternatives that the letter writer could explore, but none of the letters promised immediate changes. Although the advocacy letters were a significant piece of the data analysis, there were many questions left unanswered. How did participants choose a topic? How did the classroom lesson and discussion contribute to their letter writing experiences? Did participants perceive letter writing as an act of advocacy? How did receiving a response potentially influence participants' feelings about the experience? Therefore, the focus groups represented an important vehicle for both understanding participants' feelings about the process of letter writing to advocate for a cause, as well as continuing the discussion about advocacy and empowerment.

Two-thirds of all participants responded to the optional open-ended question at the end of the post-intervention survey where participants could have the final say on the project. All responded positively and similarly to tell us just how meaningful the experience was:

> "I feel that this assignment was beneficial in educating us about advocacy, and it gave us the opportunity to be an advocate for something we believe in. Because of this project I feel that I am more clear on what advocacy is and different ways you can choose to advocate."

Another student wrote:

> "This has helped inform me of advocacy and I now want to advocate more about things I am concerned and passionate about!"

Participants' understandings of and feelings about advocacy fell along a fluid continuum. Although participants reported prior advocacy experiences at baseline, after taking part in the letter writing experience all embraced advocacy to some extent, even those with the lowest baseline scores. This was revealed in a systematic analysis of a cross section of all data collected for each individual. Through both focus groups and post-intervention survey open ended responses, participants identified themselves as advocates, making future plans to advocate, recognizing the complex dimensions of advocacy, expressing they had learned how to advocate, and showing an understanding of the role of power in advocacy.

Discussion

Interpreting preservice teachers' prior advocacy experiences

Preservice teachers' shared experiences prior to participating in the intervention could account for some but not all of the responses on the pre-intervention survey. Each of the participants had experience as an intern in local public schools for over three semesters prior to completing the survey at baseline. The overwhelming agreement with the statement that society affects access to education and resources was not surprising as teaching was their specialty, and they had firsthand knowledge of inequities in local area public schools.

Due to their common major and required coursework, participants typically take the same core group of classes. Despite having been enrolled in the same classes throughout the past year, participants had vague and inconsistent understandings of advocacy prior to participating in advocacy activities in this study. Activities in prior courses that some participants recognized as advocacy activities were not recalled by others. This finding supports the justification for including specific instruction on advocacy in undergraduate courses coupled with the opportunity to advocate for something.

Results from all phases of this study provide encouragement for continuing to incorporate advocacy lessons and assignments in undergraduate courses. First, results suggest that the process of advocating for something personally meaningful empowered participants and transformed their ideas about advocacy. Therefore, the combination of the advocacy lesson, actual practice advocating for something personally important, and the experience of discussing the process with others contributed to participants' greater understanding of the process and importance of advocacy. Second, beliefs shifted through learning about advocacy and engaging in advocacy experiences. The cross analysis of quantitative and qualitative data shows the transformation that occurred in students' beliefs and understandings of advocacy. These findings corroborate and expand upon other research of students' learning of advocacy (Beacham & Shambaugh, 2007; Berke et al., 2010) by explicitly drawing connections between experiences engaging in advocacy and beliefs about advocacy. Further, the findings illustrate the usefulness of advocacy teaching as a pedagogical intervention to connect theory to practice or illustrate the real-world usefulness of advocacy in professional settings. As some students indicated that writing and sending the advocacy letters was the first time they had ever advocated for something, the opportunity to advocate for something within the context of an undergraduate course allowed them the guidance and experience of their instructors as they interpreted their own actions and reflected on the experience of advocating for the first time. Having had the opportunity to advocate in the context of their own learning experiences, the preservice teachers may feel more confident and prepared to advocate in a professional setting once they are no longer in the student role.

Finally, learning to advocate is a fluid, contextual process in which discussion, reflection, and the co-construction of ideas is important. Integrating data from all results, we have theorized a model for understanding advocacy development or the way in which individuals come to view themselves as advocates. Within this model (Figure 2), individuals develop an awareness of the benefits of advocacy while negotiating various components within the process of becoming an advocate including who benefits (self, other, or both), affective feelings about advocacy, and barriers and obstacles to seeing oneself as an advocate, before finally embracing an identity as an advocate. Although the model is circular, it should not be interpreted as an illustration of

sequential steps that individuals go through on the path to becoming an advocate; instead, embracing a critical advocacy lens involves a fluid, contextual, and interconnected process of negotiation influenced by many components.

Limitations of the study

While the participants found the advocacy lesson and letter writing activity to have personal meaning for them, the sample size was small and relatively homogenous. More research is needed to understand if the same lesson and activity would be an effective way to teach a more diverse group of undergraduate students about advocacy. The timeframe of the study required all activities to be complete within one semester. This short timeline did not allow for providing participants with much guidance on continuing to advocate for their specific topics after their initial letters were sent and any initial replies were received. Also, detailed discussions of power, privilege, social justice, and inequality require more time than we were afforded in the research site. While these components of advocacy represented an integral part of our research lens, due to time restrictions, they were not explicitly presented to participants during the advocacy lesson. Therefore, future research in this area could explore the ways in which discussions of social justice influence the choices of letter topics and the overall development of advocacy in undergraduate students. Between the pre- and post-intervention surveys, the students read and discussed a book on workplace diversity for a separate assignment. Their experiences reading the book may have also contributed to the increased number of students who indicated on the post-intervention survey that they would feel compelled to act if a colleague discriminated against others based on differences in culture or ethnicity.

Recommendations for teaching advocacy

Incorporating lessons and class discussions about advocacy in undergraduate courses is encouraged as a way for students to gain awareness on when and how they may advocate for themselves and others in situations when they do and do not have power over others. Lessons on advocacy may be most effective when they involve both small and large group discussions so that students who are not comfortable sharing personal advocacy experiences with the larger group may still have the opportunity to share with others. Examples of effective and ineffective advocacy from students' intended careers offers suggestions to students on ways they themselves might act as advocates. A case study example may provide students with the opportunity to engage in critical thinking about the potential outcomes and consequences of different acts of advocacy that could all occur in response to the same situation reinforcing advocacy concepts previously learned during a lesson. Letter writing assignments have the potential to teach students about the importance of research and professionalism when contacting entities in power to make changes and allow students the chance to practice advocacy concepts examined during a class lesson. Allowing students to choose the issues for which they advocate naturally encourages students to become personally invested in the outcomes. Visiting the topic of advocacy over multiple course meetings allows students to see how advocacy is applied in multiple contexts and provides the students with guidance as they interpret their own advocacy experiences and develop their own identities as advocates. While this study enrolled students in the field of education, undergraduate students in any discipline may benefit from learning about advocacy as it relates both to their fields of study and to their personal lives.

Instructors who incorporate advocacy lessons and activities in their undergraduate courses may benefit from preparing for a range of emotions and reactions students may experience when assigned to contact entities in power to encourage a change in the status qua. The portion of students in our study who contacted campus service providers for parking, dining, and accessibility services demonstrates that students are continually reflecting on and interpreting their college experiences of which instructors play integral roles. During focus groups, some students expressed disillusionment with local community leaders in power while others expressed discouraging thoughts about the potential change that could come from their seemingly meager acts of advocacy. Historical and current examples of successful advocates can remind students of their own potential as advocates. Still, students demonstrated creativity and thoughtfulness in their words and advocacy actions, leaving us encouraged as they will soon grow in their advocacy identities as teachers.

Conclusion

In their future roles as in-service teachers, preservice teachers will encounter many instances when advocating for a change in the status quo may benefit an individual student, an entire class, a school, or school system, or themselves as teachers. Some of the instances may require immediate action, others may require cycles of research, planning, action, and reflection to achieve the greatest possible impact. Empowering preservice teachers with effective advocacy skills before they become in-service teachers may give them the confidence to advocate in both their professional careers and in their personal lives. Specific advocacy instruction along with an advocacy letter writing assignment is an effective combination for introducing undergraduate students to the topic of advocacy, providing guidance as students advocate, possibly for the first time, and grow into their identities as advocates.

Acknowledgments

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Perceived learning outcomes from participation in one type of registered student organization: Equestrian sport clubs

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Abstract: Learning takes place both inside and outside of the classroom. While there are a few studies that focus on the professional, developmental, and learning outcomes of participation in student organizations, there has been insufficient research on these outcomes in sport clubs. The paper reports on the results of an online, primarily qualitative questionnaire study conducted with members of collegiate student Equestrian sport clubs. Data come from 50 club members participating in such organizations at 15 institutions in the U.S. The respondents completed a survey in which they were asked about their motivation for joining the organization and what they believed they learned as a result of their participation. The respondents reported equestrian and interpersonal reasons for joining, and that participation increased their development in a number of academic and professional areas, especially in terms of work ethic or time management or balance, collaboration or communication or teamwork, and leadership.

Keywords: Student organizations, out-of-class learning, engagement, authentic learning, student development, equestrian

Introduction and Literature Review

Theoretical ideas and empirical research about the importance of involvement in university life for learning, development, and persistence have been in the literature for many years (Astin, 1984; Foubert & Grainger, 2006; Hernandez, Hogan, Hathaway, & Lovell, 1999; Kuh, 1995; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996). The general idea is that greater involvement in out-of-class experiences, broadly defined, can contribute to various positive learning and developmental outcomes. Proposed intervening variables in this relationship include greater time on task, academic resources, exchange of ideas with others, social support, formation of important relationships, commitment to the institution, and changes in identity (Astin, 1996; Tinto, 1993; Winkle-Wagner, 2012). A number of studies (Astin, 1996; Baker, 2008; McCluskey-Titus, 2003; Thompson, Clark, Walker, & Whyatt, 2013) have examined the role of student involvement in organizations or academic relationships on both learning and developmental outcomes. Not surprisingly, though researchers have reported positive results, involvement experiences are not equally effective in all settings or with all students in promoting positive change.

One type of involvement experience is active participation in collegiate student organizations and clubs, which often offer authentic and hands-on learning opportunities. Thus, there has been empirical research on the nature of outcomes from participation in various types

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of student organizations. Learning and development outcomes have included changes in values, student engagement, or achievement. Much of this work, however, has been on students as members in one of only three types of organizations: student government (Kuh and Lund, 1994; Miles, 2011), fraternities and sororities (Kimbrough & Hutcheson, 1998; Long, 2012; Pascarella, Flowers, & Whitt, 2009; Patton, Bridges, & Flowers, 2011; Pike, 2000), and formal intercollegiate athletics (Rishe, 2003). Results of this body of work have been mixed varying by outcome measure and student characteristic. Very generally, however, involvement in student government has a positive relationship with learning or development. Meanwhile, involvement in formal athletics has no, mixed, or negative relationships, and involvement in fraternities and sororities has positive, mixed, or negative relationships, especially in the case of fraternities.

Another type of student organization is a sport club. Some literature exists on the nature or outcomes of participation at the collegiate level in campus recreation programs or in specific sport clubs (Bradley, Phillipi, & Bryant, 1992; Bryant, Banta, & Bradley, 1995; Haines, 2001; Hall, Forrester, & Borsz, 2008; Hall-Yannessa & Forrester, 2004; Huesman, Brown, Lee, Kellogg, & Radcliffe, 2009). These studies have very different purposes, samples, variables, and methods. For example, Haines (2001), using questionnaires with undergraduates, reports that the respondents believed that their involvement in university recreation contributed to many positive outcomes, particularly in terms of fitness, feeling of physical well-being, physical strength, sense of accomplishment, and stress reduction. In a study on leadership development in sport club officers using a multi-method approach, Hall-Yannessa and Forrester (2004) found that the top five self-reported, post-test leadership skills were respecting the rights of others, being sensitive to those different from them, understanding consequences of one's actions, relating well to the opposite gender in a work-type context, and identifying their personal values. Hall, Forrester, and Borsz (2008), in a study of student leaders in sport clubs, identified seven skills that the respondents reported strengthened including, organizing, planning and delegating, balancing academic, personal, and professional roles, motivating/influencing others and being a mentor/role model, problem solving and decision making, communication skills, working with others, and giving and receiving feedback. Finally, McKinny & Mikulec (2012) found that members of a campus sport club viewed their participation as beneficial in terms of providing opportunities to interact with new people, developing relationships with others who shared a common interest, and adding skills to include on their resumes.

The purpose of the present study is to report the reasons for involvement in, and the perceived learning outcomes from participation in, one type of collegiate sport club: equestrian clubs and teams. This study helps to fill gaps in the literature on out-of-class learning and involvement in terms of type of student organization studied, data from students at multiple institutions, and the need for more qualitative data, as well as in the scholarship of teaching and learning (SoTL) literature which focuses on learning outcomes gained from classes or academic programs but much less often on out-of-class co- or extra-curricular experiences. The study seeks to answer the following guiding questions:

1. Why do members choose to participate in a collegiate equestrian sport club?
2. How do members perceive their participation in a collegiate equestrian sport club has influenced their learning beyond equestrian skills?

<div align="center">**Methodology**</div>

Procedure and Respondents

The purposive sample for this study consisted of respondents from the researchers' home institution, universities within the Intercollegiate Horse Show Association (IHSA) region where the home institution competes, and universities and colleges nationwide that offer student equestrian sport clubs and organizations. Lists of the institutions in home institution's region and nation-wide, as well as contact information are publically available (Campus Equestrian, 2012).

Using these lists, the researchers emailed club presidents and advisers and asked that they forward the online survey link to the current members of the clubs and teams, as well as alumni. The email contained an invitation to participate in the study, information about the study and the URL to access the on-line questionnaire. The researchers had obtained Institutional Review Board approval for the study prior to contacting potential participants. When respondents accessed the questionnaire, they were presented with the informed consent statement. They were to select "yes" or "no" that they had read, understood and consented to the statement before proceeding to the questionnaire. All participation was voluntary and anonymous. The researchers sent the survey request at the midpoint of the spring semester and allowed 30 days response time.

A total of 50 respondents completed the survey, 14 from the home institution, 12 from four universities within the home institution's IHSA region, and 24 from ten colleges and universities nationwide. Since it is possible to occupy up to three roles within an organization, club member, team member and executive board members, the respondents identified all of the roles they occupied. See Table 1 for participant demographics.

Measures

The researchers created a self-administered, on-line questionnaire consisting of both closed and open-ended questions. The researchers collected participant demographic and background information including year in school, the roles they have had, such as club member, team member, and/or executive board member, and the number of semesters they have been members of the campus equestrian organization. For the purposes of this study, executive board is defined as those organization members who held elected positions such as president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, and show coordinator.

The respondents answered five open-ended questions that were designed to elicit information about motivation for participating in a colleague equestrian organization. See Appendix 1 for the open-ended questions. Finally, the respondents rated the extent to which they believed their participation in the Equestrian club and/or team had increased their development of several skills or knowledge areas (1 = not at all; 7 = very much). The list of skills or knowledge areas came from both the learning outcomes discussed in related prior literature and from our own anecdotal observations of the students in our campus equestrian club. These skills or knowledge areas included the following: leadership, team work, conflict management, organization, event planning, tolerance for diversity, work ethic, oral communication, written communication, and critical thinking.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

	Home Institution n=14	Regional n=12	National n=24
Year in School			
Alumnus	0 (0.0)	3 (.25)	6 (.25)
Senior	3 (.21)	2 (.17)	4 (.17)
Junior	8 (.58)	3 (.25)	4 (.17)
Sophomore	2 (.14)	0 (0.0)	7 (.29)
Freshman	1 (.07)	4 (.33)	3 (.12)
Role			
Club Member	14 (1.0)	10 (.83)	14 (.58)
Team Member	13 (.93)	11 (.92)	14 (.58)
Executive Board	7 (.50)	6 (.50)	7 (.29)
Average number of semesters of participation	3.4	4.0	4.9

Data Analysis

Given the exploratory nature of the study, and the purposive sample, the goal was to obtain qualitative and some quantitative descriptive data about respondents' reasons for participation in a collegiate equestrian team and perceived learning outcomes as a result. In order to interpret the participants' qualitative responses, the researchers followed the data coding procedures of constant comparative analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967), which allows for a potentially deeper understanding of the experiences of the participants and impact of the project on them, as well as revealing their differences (Patton, 2002). Throughout the analysis, the researchers followed the three-level coding process: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

For the open-ended questions, then, each researcher independently analyzed the responses and coded them for main ideas. The researchers then shared their individual coding results in order to resolve any differences, combine the codes, and determine common themes that emerged from the data. Thus, although there were five separate open-ended questions, there was a significant amount of overlap in the responses, which allowed the researchers to combine

them. By asking more than one question and coding the responses across themes and between groups, the researchers were able to identify the most frequent responses about why students participated and the most common beliefs about perceived impact of participation both academically and professionally.

Quantitative descriptive data included the participants' ratings on the Likert-scale items about learning certain skills, the researchers took the mean rating per item in each group of respondents and compared them to one another in order to provide a quantitative descriptive analysis. Given the small N size of each group, the researchers did not perform statistical tests of significance for any differences.

Results

Reasons for Participation

The respondents reported a number of reasons for choosing to participate in their institution's Equestrian organization. See Appendix 2 for additional example quotes.

Meeting others with a shared interest in horses. One of the reported reasons was simply as a means of meeting others with a shared interest in horses while away at college. This shared interest served as a way to connect with other students whom they may not have met had they not participated in the organization.

> *At home I had a group of friends from my barn and wanted to find a group like that again down at school.*

Opportunity to develop as a rider while at school. The respondents also saw participation as an opportunity to continue to ride and develop as a rider at college. For these respondents, it was important to maintain consistency in their riding and the university equestrian organization provided them with the resources and opportunity to continue to do so, especially for those who did not own a horse or could not bring their own horse to school with them. The phrase, 'catch riding' in the next quote refers to the fact that in IHSA competition, students do not ride their own horses or horses known to them, rather they ride horses provided by the home barn assigned to riders via a random drawing.

> *I chose to be involved because I could not bring my horse to college and it was a way to keep riding. Also, the catch riding of IHSA shows is fun. I love riding all different types of horses and have become a much better rider over the past two years.*

Passion for and love of horses. Another common theme that emerged from the data was that participation in club and team activities was based on a passion for and love of horses. Although many of the respondents reported having previous experience with riding, or having their own horses, the equestrian organization provided them with an opportunity to engage in a related activity in which they were interested, but may not have been able to pursue previously.

> *I chose the team because I love horses and horseback riding and have always wanted to compete but never could before. I thought this would be a really good opportunity for me to learn about horses and gain a lot of riding skills and experience.*

Opportunity to compete as team in an individual sport. A fourth theme was the idea of being part of a team while still competing in an individual sport. While competitive horseback riding is very much an individual sport, focusing on the horse and rider rather than the efforts

and accomplishments of a group working together, many of the respondents viewed participation in their organization as a way of still having a team approach to the sport. For these respondents, the team provided a network of support in their continued development as riders, both in training and in competitions.

> *I am an avid equestrian and had participated on a team in high school. I played a lot of team sports growing up (soccer, baseball, softball, etc.) and was really looking for the support of a team in my riding career. The only thing I hoped to get as a member of this team was a group of friends that I could relate to and who would support me throughout my college career.*

> *Preparation for a future career.* Finally, there was a fifth theme at the national level that did not appear with the same frequency at the home institution and regional levels, which was that participation in the organization was good experience for a future career in the equine industry. Although this theme did not present in the Home or Regional groups, it did emerge as a theme that is distinct of the national group. This may be attributed to the fact that a number of the national level organizations are NCAA teams that compete at a different and more competitive level. For these respondents, the training, competing and networking with other equine professionals were not simply part of being a member of a student organization, but rather valuable resources to help them in their future career goals.

> *Our coach helps to teach us different training exercises and also different training techniques. This knowledge will be extremely helpful in our future as most of us plan on pursuing a career in the equine industry.*

Likert-item Ratings on Skill Development

The second issue examined was the perceived impact of participation in an equestrian organization. The results from the Likert-scale items showed that, on average, respondents believed that participation in the Equestrians contributed to their development of the ten skills and knowledge areas. For development in each of the ten areas, the respondents from each sub-group gave ratings well above the mid-point of 4.0 on the scale (1 = not at all; 7 = very much). Of the areas presented in this portion of the survey, Work Ethic, Oral Communication, and Leadership, with overall mean scores of 5.91, 5.70, and 5.66 within the home, regional and national levels respectively, were rated the highest in terms of development as a result of participation in the equestrian organization. At the national and local levels, Work Ethic ranked the highest of all skills, with mean scores of 6.38 and 5.93 respectively. Leadership skills were rated the highest by the regional group, with a mean score of 5.75. The skill development that was rated the lowest by all three groups was Written Communication, with mean scores of 4.64, 4.42, and 4.79 for the local, regional and national levels. See Figure 1.

Perceived Impact of Participation

Responses to the open-ended questions were also coded to assess perceived impact of participation in the organization on academics and professionalism. See Appendix 3 for additional example quotes.

> *Development of time management skills.* While there were a number of common themes among the sub-groups, there were differences in ranking of importance, defined by the frequency of supporting comments provided in the open-ended responses. Among the various themes that

emerged, one was how participation in an equestrian organization helped the respondents to develop as riders, but also provided a means for developing skills that would serve them after college. For instance, several respondents discussed how being part of the equestrian teams challenged them to manage their time more effectively between coursework on campus and lessons and shows off campus. Furthermore, for the respondents who owned or leased horses, there was the added component of horse care and management that they also had to factor into their busy schedules.

> *During my first semester on the Equestrian team, I balanced 21 credit hours,*
> *along with a part-time job 20-30 hours a week, while participating in all of the*
> *team activities and shows. That forced me to work my butt off to stay on top of all*
> *of my school work along with making enough money to pay my rent.*

Collaboration and development of communication skills. Along with added responsibilities and time management, the respondents also reported that participation in the organization had a significant impact on their ability to work and communicate effectively with
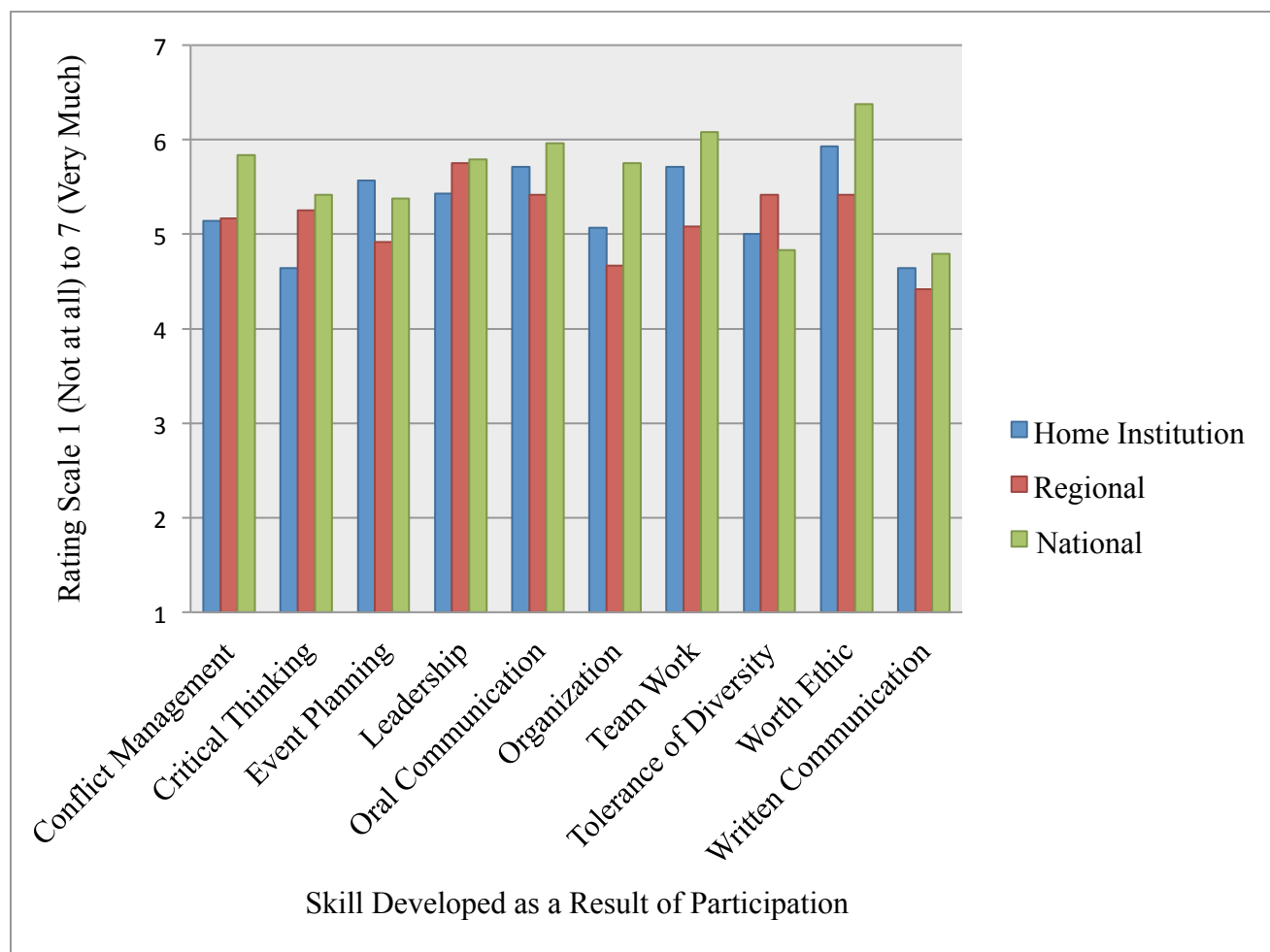

Figure 1. Mean Scores of Perceived Level of Skills Developed by Group

others. The respondents stated that they had to learn how to work with teammates, coaches, faculty and other equine professionals that did not always share their same point of view. They

also discussed the importance of learning to communicate effectively with others and recognized this as an important aspect of their future careers, whether they were equine-related or not.

> Being on the team helps to build up communication skills, leadership skills, and teamwork skills which you will need in your professional career. As an adult and professional, I have learned to be more patient with people as well as being sensitive about how I first bring on a new idea. Just like when you first ride a horse, one must ask softly and then increase the pressure.

> *Establishing a professional network.* The respondents reported that participation in an equestrian organization not only helped to develop certain skills, but also provided resources and a network of other professionals. The respondents viewed this as a valuable component of their participation, and discussed how they hoped to establish professional networks of colleagues and trainers in order to have a strong foundation for their careers once they graduated from college.

> I think being a member of the Equestrian team helps you create networks within the equine industry because you meet a lot of new people you may never have met otherwise. It also allows you to become friends with equestrians close to your age who may have similar thoughts and ideas about the equine industry.

> *Effectively balancing numerous responsibilities.* Finally, the respondents described how their participation in an equestrian organization helped them to balance all of their responsibilities as well as to provide an outlet for stress. For many of the respondents, being on the team or in the club meant always having something to do that involved being with other members, and therefore was not only a support network in terms of riding, but also for academics and participation in various social activities.

> Doing something athletic and fun is helping me stay sane and helping me cope with the stress of the academic environment. Also, the team is more laidback than other college sports, and this allows me to participate more easily and have time for work and study.

Discussion

Overview of Findings

The respondents reported several reasons for involvement in equestrian sport clubs and teams. Perhaps, not surprisingly, they indicated that they chose to participate for both interpersonal reasons and equestrian reasons. They wanted to meet people with similar interests and to be part of a group or team. They also wanted to continue riding and fuel their passion for horses. Respondents in the national group also mentioned participation would be good experience for a future equine career. This national group included some schools with formal academic equestrian programs, university owned or supported facilities and horses, and sometimes, National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) teams in addition to sport clubs.

In terms of rating their development of ten skill/knowledge areas, Work Ethic ranked the highest of all skills for two sub-groups. Students responding to the questionnaire appeared to be quite active and, thus, engaged in the organization, often noting multiple roles and responsibilities, for instance, board member or officer, team and club member, and reporting an average of 3.4, 4.0, and 4.9 semesters of participation, for local, regional, and national groups, respectively.

For the national subgroup, the high rating of work ethic development may also be the result of a number of respondents who participated in NCAA level Equestrian teams for which they would have to follow all NCAA rules and engage in a great deal of practice. Some of these schools also owned their own barns and horses that students helped maintain. Also, given the percentage of alumni responding in the national group, these results could be indicative of a greater level of development as the respondents had left the university and are currently involved in equine-related careers. Work Ethic was rated the highest by our local, home institution club/team members as well. This may be because the home institution's organization is an entirely volunteer club/team with no paid staff, no university facility, and little institutional support. All the work, even organizing and hosting an IHSA show, falls on the club/team members themselves. The lowest mean for skill development for all three subgroups was Written Communication which, while more frequent among the respondents who held positions on their respective executive boards, is not an activity in which a club or team member would participate on a regular basis as part of the organization.

In addition, the respondents' answers to open-ended questions indicate that respondents believe their membership in collegiate equestrian clubs resulted in a number of personal learning outcomes. There were consistencies between respondents' Likert-item ratings and some of the themes from the open-ended responses. Respondents across the groups noted that they developed as a rider or in horse care and management; improved time management and the ability to balance their many roles or obligations; learned more about leadership managing tasks and problem solving; and increased their abilities to communicate and work with others. The regional and national groups also discussed the benefits of participation for life after college, networking, and careers. Across all of the multiple measures, the three main themes of perceived learning/development to emerge were work ethic and time management, collaboration, communication and teamwork, and leadership.

Another important aspect of the equestrian organization is the variety of roles available to members. These roles can include membership in the club, on the competitive teams, on the executive board, or a combination of these. The data indicate that the roles available to students in an equestrian club/team allow for meaningful, authentic experiences as members must work successfully with professionals in off-campus settings. One aspect of a student equestrian organization that is somewhat unique compared to other student sport clubs is that team and executive board members must interact not only with faculty and other university representatives, but also with equine professionals not affiliated with the university, such as trainers, barn owners, and professional judges. This external interaction not only provides another means for organization members to develop skills such as communication and collaboration, but also requires that they learn how to negotiate between groups. For instance, ensuring university policies regarding student sport club respondents are understood and maintained by external groups, such as trainers and horse owners, over which students have no real control.

Furthermore, participation in a collegiate equestrian club/team provides an opportunity for members to compete individually with the support of a team, leading to increased knowledge of teamwork. Although competitive horseback riding is an individual sport, participation in a collegiate team allows for the members to compete while having the support of their teammates and coaches. Because equestrian sports are judged by external judges, members must also learn how to deal effectively with not only formal and public success and failure but also how to receive constructive criticism in their riding from teammates and coaches as well as experts

beyond the local context. This adds yet another dimension of the supportive environment in which members can find themselves as they work to develop as riders and may help them take and use constructive criticism better in other areas of their lives such as in the classroom setting.

The findings presented here overlap somewhat with the limited research on sport clubs, helping to confirm these previous findings within a different sport club setting. Similar to past research, our respondents reported the following benefits or outcomes from their participation: sense of accomplishment, such as the development of riding skills in the present study, stress reduction (Haines, 2001), various leadership skills (Hall-Yannessa & Forrester, 2004), time management or balancing various life roles, communication skills, working with others (Hall, Forrester, & Borsz, 2008), and the opportunity to interact with and develop relationships with those with common interests (McKinny & Mikulec, 2012). In addition, the respondents noted that their participation in the equestrians was characterized by or offered social support, the formation of important interpersonal relationships, the exchange of ideas with others, time management/time on task, and commitment to the institution, as seen in the level of involvement with the clubs and by competing for their schools.

Students' responses pointing to participation outcomes of social support, passion for activities, important relationships, help doing better with demands of school, for example, all seem likely to be part of engagement and institutional connection. These results, then, also support some of the intervening variables between involvement, or related constructs, and persistence as well as other positive academic and developmental outcomes proposed in various theories or models (Astin, 1984, 1996; Kuh, 1995; Terenzini, Pascarella, & Blimling, 1996; Tinto, 1993).

Implications

The study has implications for faculty and academic staff members as well as student affairs professionals working with student organizations. For a number of the respondents in this study, active involvement in an equestrian organization was one step towards realizing career aspirations of working in the equine industry (Thompson, Clark, Walker, & Whyatt, 2013). Therefore, it is possible that similar campus organizations, including extra-curricular ones, need more than a faculty advisor who simply signs forms and answers questions on by-laws and procedures. Rather, such organizations need faculty advisors that are invested in the group's activities, such as horse owners and competitors in our case, and helping to foster an understanding of both the direct and indirect outcomes of participation on the students involved including helping students to use their club involvement to learn about and network in any related career field. Advisers can facilitate student club members' engagement in activities similar to those in their career field, plan appropriate career events, find adults in the career field willing to serve as mentors, assist students in representation of club involvement on their resumes, and so on. Advisers can further assist, within the restrictions of club bylaws, match student members with officer roles and duties related to their majors or career plans, whether directly related to the club activity or not. For example, math or accounting majors might serve as treasurer, public relations or marketing majors as the membership and development officers, and so on. Likewise, faculty who are responsible for career courses, sessions or web pages for majors in their departments should think about strategies to explicitly and frequently connect careers in that major to students' participation and learning from co- and extra-curricular involvement not just from course work.

In addition, student affairs professionals and faculty club advisers should work together, and with faculty across campus, to help students make more connections between extra-curricular and co-curricular activities, and course work and learning outcomes. For example, this could be done by faculty simply taking a survey in class about activities and organizations in which students participate and their perceived learning, and then making an effort, when appropriate, to connect student involvement, for instance, values, skills, and, activities, to course material or assignments. Learning or teaching centers on campus could sponsor, as we have on our campus, 'student-faculty conversations on learning' where faculty and students come together for structured discussions about enhancing student learning. In this case, such a session would focus on the connections and integration of getting the most learning out of involvement in student organizations including extra-curricular ones. By doing these types of things, faculty and student affairs professionals can support student learning and development connected to participation in an organization whether or not they are directly involved as advisors.

Limitations and Future Research

There are two main limitations to the present study. First, the participants represented a purposive sample of current and alumni members of collegiate equestrian organizations that chose to participate. This, combined with a relatively small sample makes generalizability somewhat difficult. Although data-driven, this research can also be viewed as a case study. It should be noted, however, that 50 respondents representing 15 colleges and universities from around the United States participated in the study, and multiple measures were used to triangulate the results. Second, the study is an exploratory, descriptive study of student perceptions; there are no direct measures of learning, such as pre- and post-participation assessment of either equine, academic or professional skills. The survey did, however, allow participants to reflect on and share their perceived learning from club and team participation. Thus, the present study also honors student voices—a key theme in SoTL research.

In order to address these issues, further research is needed. For instance, it would be useful to repeat the study with other collegiate sport clubs in order to compare and contrast the reasons for, and learning outcomes of, participation. Also, future studies should include more questions about students' demographics, such as gender and age, in order to look at any relationships between such variables and learning outcomes. Furthermore, a larger, more diverse sample will be useful in terms of generalizability. Another facet of the data analysis could be an examination of learning outcomes by sub-groups, for example comparing and contrasting the experiences of club, team, and executive board members, as well as those respondents who held more than one role in the organization or spend more hours in club activities. Future studies should include additional indirect measures of outcomes such as interviews and focus groups as well as direct measures of learning and development such as the observation of behavioral indicators of learning at club events and team competitions, and pre-post-tests of certain skills. In addition, including questions or measures that more explicitly address or evoke data confirming any connections among the learning experiences and development from such out-of-class learning with the learning in the classroom would be an important contribution to both the student affairs and scholarship of teaching and learning literatures.

In conclusion, this study makes a contribution to the field of the scholarship of teaching and learning by pushing the boundaries of appropriate subject matter and contexts for studies involving student learning and development. That is, it is critical for SoTL researchers to be

reminded that learning at the collegiate level occurs both inside and outside of the traditional classroom setting. The present study also contributes to the student affairs and development literature by involving a multi-institutional sample, using descriptive data honoring student voices, and investigating an understudied type of organization, a sport club.

Appendices

Appendix 1. *Open-ended questions*

1. Why did you choose to participate in the Equestrians? What did you hope to get from being a member of this group?

2. How do you believe the different roles available (club/team/executive board) to you as a member of the Equestrians have or will impact you as an equestrian, student, and soon-to-be-professional?

3. Describe some of your experiences, activities and interactions in the Club/Team/Executive Board. Discuss the types of values, skills, behaviors, personal and professional development, identity that you believe your participation in this organization has increased or affected. Discuss in terms of you as an equestrian, student, and soon-to-be professional.

4. Look back at your responses to the previous question. Discuss how or why or what particular experiences or interactions led to this learning and development. In other words, how did your experiences with the club/team contribute to your learning?

5. Were there any particular roles you occupied in the club/team that were especially important for what you learned or obtained from being in the club? If so, how? Why?

Appendix 2. *Participant Quotes of Reasons for Choosing to Participate in an Equestrian Organization**

Home Institution (n=14)	Regional (n=12)	National (n=24)
Meet people with a shared interest *At home I had a group of friends from my barn and wanted to find a group like that again down at school.*	Meet people with a shared interest *The team- I was a transfer student looking for new friends with similar interests.*	Continue to ride & develop riding skills at college *I thought this would be a really good opportunity for me to learn about horses and gain a lot of riding skills and experience.*
Continue to ride & develop riding skills at college *I grew as an equestrian and gained valuable knowledge I wouldn't have in a normal lesson setting.*	Continue to ride & develop riding skills at college *I wanted to learn new skills that would benefit me in the saddle as well as in any of life's situations.*	Passion for/Love of horses *I chose to participate because I am a rider. I breathe and live horses. My entire world revolves around horses.*
Passion for/Love of horses *I've been riding since I was seven years old. The Equestrian Team was part of the reason I chose to attend Home Institution.*	Passion for/Love of horses *Ever since I was little I've always loved horses.*	Meet people with a shared interest *I was hoping to get some valuable equestrian friends out of both the club and team, which I did.*
Be part of a team and compete at shows *The team has grown a bond that we have never experienced in the past.*	Be part of a team and compete at shows *It's an individual sport, just you and your horse. However, when I learned about the team I thought it was an interesting concept, being able to compete in a sport which is usually considered solo as a team.*	Be part of a team and compete at shows *I played a lot of team sports growing up and was really looking for the support of a team in my riding career.*
		Good experience for future equine career *Participation in the Equestrian Team provided critical experience for a developing equine professional.*

*For each subgroup, themes are presented in order of frequency. Italicized material is direct quotes from students.

Appendix 3. *Participant Quotes for Perception of Impact of Participation in an Equestrian Organization**

Home Institution (n=14)	Regional (n=12)	National (n=24)
Grow and develop as a rider *It has given me a ton of experience riding horses I'm not familiar with…this helps you as a rider and to become more solid in your abilities.*	Different skills to prepare for life after college *They provide us with a taste of what it might be like after college in which we'll have career objectives on both sides of the fence.*	Work well with different people, develop social and communication skills *I learned what it was like to be the leader of a large group of people with the same goals.*
Time management *I learned to manage my time better between the barn, work and school.*	Working with others collaboratively *It has impacted the way I work with people. You must work together to achieve success and its best to learn from all levels.*	Develop skills for future career, networking *It helps you create networks within the equine industry because you meet a lot of new people that you may not have met otherwise.*
Leadership / Problem-solving Skills *I have learned that sometimes unpopular decisions need to be made in order to appeal to the greater good and club as a whole.*	Responsibility that comes with managing different tasks *It has given me more experience handling paperwork, negotiating with outside contracts, and communicating my ideas.*	Be a better student with more personal responsibility and self-discipline; balance *It is something athletic and fun to help me stay sane and cope with the stress of the academic environment.*
Learning to work and communicate with different people *As a student it has forced me to work with adults and other students.*	Leadership / Problem-solving skills *I think many of the members gravitated towards me and paid attention to how I handled situations. That caused me to try to be more professional in my language and actions.*	Horse care/management *I now see horses as an animal that offers so much more than I thought, whether it be an educational benefit, spiritual or cultural.*

*For each subgroup, themes are presented in order of frequency. Italicized material is direct quotes from students.

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Finding your "Spanish Voice" through popular media: Improving students' confidence and fluency

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Abstract: This article shares an innovative advanced course design that incorporates cultural connections and comparisons, interpersonal communication, and a relaxing classroom environment to facilitate learning and language development. By using authentic texts as the medium for learning, it provides a case example of an upper-division curriculum that focused on cognitive skills, elicited conversational dialogues, exposed and promoted the use of different registers, and tapped students' existing schema around stimulating topics to foster engagement, reflection and enthusiasm. We advance that a curriculum that focuses on the affective domain over discrete academic or grammatical objectives can develop students' sense of linguistic creativity and language ownership, thus improving their confidence and level of competency in the target language.

Keywords: motivation & engagement; learning ownership; creativity and language learning; Spanish language learning; authentic media materials

Introduction

This project sought to address two noted shortcomings in foreign language (FL) instruction: a lack of true cultural studies and a curricular emphasis on written communication in academic genres over conversational proficiency. In 1996, the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages developed the *Standards of Foreign Language Learning*, a framework for FL instruction with five major objectives: *Communication, Cultures, Connections, Comparisons,* and *Communities*. Though these "5 Cs" of FL learning include broad objectives focused on a more integrated approach to language learning and use, there is a decided gap between theory and implementation, with much classroom instruction at the upper-division focusing on canonical texts and academic language proficiency. However, the 5 Cs are not mutually exclusive, and a well-developed curriculum can address them critically and in tandem.

Curricular Critique

Even though most language students cite communication as a primary goal (Antes, 1999; Magnan, Murphy, Shahakyan & Kim, 2012), they also cite effective oral communication in the target language as their greatest challenge. Though the *Standards* state, "while grammar and vocabulary are essential tools for communication, it is the acquisition of the

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ability to communicate in meaningful and appropriate ways with users of other languages that is the ultimate goal of today's foreign language classroom" (p. 2), students complain of not being able to link classroom learning with real world communicative exchanges (Pomerantz, 2002). Students further note that the emphasis on academic language – the formal or scholarly register of Spanish used and expected in the collegiate environment – fails to recognize registers and communication norms that are appropriate and necessary for interpersonal communication (DeFeo, 2010; Godley, Carpenter & Werner, 2007; Pomerantz, 2002; for a discussion problematizing the use of elite registers, see also Leeman, 2005; Kubota & Saito-Abbot, 2003; Villa, 2002). Language, being interactive and dialogic, requires knowledge of "grammar and vocabulary" – to use the ACTFL *Standards* terms – but to communicate effectively also requires that speakers have a broader sociolinguistic or extralinguistic knowledge base.

Brumfit (1984) observed that this knowledge is not developed in the FL classroom because it regards fluency and accuracy as oppositional (for a discussion about the interpretations of FL fluency see Schmidt, 1992). He juxtaposes these objectives:

> [T]he demand to produce work for display to the teacher in order that evaluation and feedback could be supplied conflicted directly with the demand to perform adequately in the kind of natural circumstances for which teaching was presumably a preparation. Language display for evaluation tended to lead to a concern for accuracy, monitoring, [and] reference rules… In contrast, language use requires fluency, expression rules, a reliance on implicit knowledge and automatic performance. (p. 51)

Though he challenged the bifurcation of instruction nearly three decades ago, an appropriate and implementable solution still eludes many FL educators.

Since the 1970s, attempts to reform the FL curriculum to refocus attention on communication rather than grammar have been unsuccessful for the most part (Burke, 2007). Many teachers continue to focus primarily on grammar and translation, using writing as the means for evaluation and English as the medium of instruction when designing curriculum and teaching lessons; as a result students develop inadequate levels of communicative competence, which requires not only grammatical competence, but also pragmatic competence (Savignon, 1983; Savignon, 1991). Leo van Lier (as cited by Gutiérrez, 1997) noted that "[t]he question of correctness masks the fact that language use is a living process that we need to appreciate and learn to understand better, not merely judge by a list of rules printed in a grammar book" (p. 35). Thus, although communicative approaches to language learning (approaches that look at language in context and attend primarily to task achievement and social interaction) have been preferred since the latter half of the 20th century; language teachers are, at best, still negotiating a balance between a structuralist approach, focusing on mastery of language structures, and a communicative approach in which learners intuit those structures through their repeated exposure to and use of them (Bell, 2005).

The role of language as the medium for real-world interactions also conjures another curricular challenge: authenticity. Although there is an ongoing debate about pertinent issues including definition, adaptation, and simplification (see MacDonald & Gilmore, 2007; Badger & Dasli, 2006; Guariento & Morley, 2001; Chavez, 1998), there seems to be a consensus on the importance of using authentic materials and tasks in the FL classroom to bridge the gap between metalinguistic knowledge and students' ability to

participate in the real world (Guariento & Morley, 2001). However, as with the structuralist versus communicative debate, knowing the theory does not change the praxis. Although textbook editors have sought to select and adapt authentic materials, the results have been, in general, unsatisfactory (Guariento & Morley, 2001). As they are marketed to a wide variety of classrooms and purposes, textbooks are forced to become mainstream or sterile representations of language and, without a discrete target audience, are often over-generalized. The standardization of instructional materials, along with an emphasis on correctness and academic language use, diverge from the spirit of the 5 Cs and detract from their holistic and culturally competent intent.

Noting these challenges, several authors have problematized the lack of cultural understanding developing from the Spanish FL curriculum (see O'Neill, 2000), and the literature reveals that these shortcomings could be addressed through a revision of the existing curricular approach. Compitello (2008) argues that cultural studies can help students develop critical thinking skills and reflect on sociocultural issues in their undergraduate experience, and recommends that this be achieved by extending the curriculum beyond literature and text. Ellissondo (2000) posits, "there is an urgent need to move from traditional undergraduate curricula to more engaging programs thereby capturing the challenging (post) modern articulations between language, culture, and social narratives" (p. 133). These ideas are echoed in the recommendations offered by the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages (Geisler, 2007).

Heeding this call requires not only a shift in texts, but also a change in the language used to examine them. As students transition from intermediate-level FL classes to upper-division courses, the language structure shifts from the target of instruction to a tool for creative and complex expression (Lee, 2002).[3] Though the upper-division curriculum requires application of language competencies, the type of language used in these exchanges may not lead to communicative competency in real contexts. Cummins' (1984) distinction of Cognitive Academic Language Proficiency (CALP) from Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) notes that the classroom, being highly abstract and decontextualized, promotes a register of Spanish reserved for academic discourse but not readily transferrable to other authentic contexts.[4] Students who wish to apply language outside of the classroom will need to develop BICS as well as the cultural fluency – knowledge of language's role as a "'system of representation' for perception and thinking" (Bennett, 1997, p. 16) – to participate in social exchanges.

The curricular challenges in meeting communicative language objectives are further hindered by challenges in the learning environment itself. Caine, Caine, McClintic & Klimek (2009) advance the concept of relaxed alertness as the ideal psychological state for learning, defined by challenge and stimulation within a comfortable and safe environment. The abundant scholarship about language anxiety suggests that this is not the norm in the FL classroom. The negative impact of stress on learning is observable in any discipline but, unfortunately, "the adult language learning environment often causes considerable stress and anxiety" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 75), and several studies have noted that high levels of anxiety usually have a negative effect on the language

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[3] The need to infuse more critical cultural study into the lower-division curriculum is a worthy and necessary conversation, but it is outside of the scope of this project, which focused on upper-division curricula.
[4] We are making reference to the register R3 (formal, literary, scholarly). From a linguistic perspective, registers are classified into R1 (colloquial, casual), R2 (standard, polite), and R3 (formal, literary, scholarly).

acquisition process (see Wum, 2010; Marcos-Llinás & Garau, 2009; Ewald, 2007; Gregersen, 2003; Horowitz, Horowitz & Cope, 1986). The emphasis on correctness over the message in communication detracts not only from complex ideas and discussions, but also increases a sense of threat.

An Alternate and Responsive Course Design

Communicative approaches to language instruction are better theorized than implemented, thus we drew from educational theory to develop a pedagogical methodology.[5] Recognizing that developing fluency in a FL requires attention both to the nuances of language use that allow for more communicative competence and also to the social and affective realms, the instructor used authentic texts to construct the curriculum for an advanced class. Her objective (and challenge) was to foster students' sense of engagement through creativity and ownership of their learning process, encouraging them to develop idiolects that reveal their personas, hence enhancing their motivation and confidence, and ultimately improving their communicative competence and ability to interact with others.

The curriculum design was adapted from the task-based approach advanced by Nunan (1992) and Estaire & Zanón (1994). Their approach draws from Bruner's (1985) instructional theory in which the learning tasks are "scaffolded," whereby students complete a series of increasingly complex tasks, each incorporating and building on skills and competencies developed in the previous activities.[6] The activities demanded by this curriculum were communicative in nature, "focused on meaning rather than form" (Nunan, 1992, p. 10). In this model, the aforementioned decontextualized structure, memorization, and individualized work are substituted with the prioritizing of context, communication, and group work (Cerezal, 1997). Interaction is a pivotal element, with an emphasis on learning through social exchange (Ellis, 2003).

The resulting curricular approach used authentic texts as a medium for creating an environment of relaxed alertness, developing BICS, and exposing students to culture. Guariento and Morley (2001) suggest that authentic texts can also augment students' interest and motivation, and therein its goal was not to study certain linguistic components isolated from experience, but to attain dexterity and proficiency within a communicative context. By de-emphasizing direct language learning goals and focusing rather on comprehension of texts and the learning environment, it was suspected that language development and students' ability to apply Spanish in their daily lives would emerge naturally and as a denouement. Figure 1 provides an overview of the structural framework for the course.

Course outcomes were for students to explore and relate to representative contemporary texts, to consider them within their own experiences, and compare that to the cultural and sociohistorical context in which they were composed. Students were also expected to demonstrate analytical skills in Spanish through engagement with cultural

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[5] The 2007 MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages indicated that some colleges and universities have begun to restructure their programs to include a more broad understanding of language study (Geisler, et al., 2007), but many institutions still continue to perpetuate a more linguistic-based model.

[6] Saville-Troike (2006) notes that in the FL classroom, this can be achieved when students are exposed to language at a level higher than their own level of production, and as they work with classmates to negotiate and construct meaning at a higher level than they could produce independently.

artifacts, and to apply appropriate disciplinary approaches (e.g. historical, cultural, artistic) and terminology in investigative analyses executed in the target language. Though emphasis on language development was an aim in the previous iterations of the course, the expectation was that students would develop their language proficiency not as a discrete outcome, but rather as a byproduct of engaged exposure in a relaxed environment. Thus language proficiency or discrete grammatical competencies were not preeminent as learning outcomes for this class. The course outcomes are further detailed in Table 1.
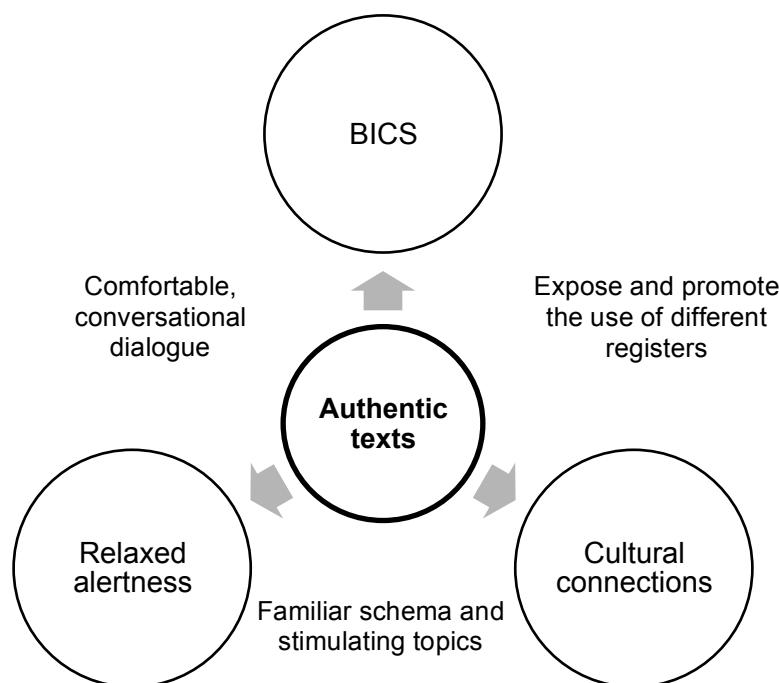

Figure 1. Framework for course design
Authentic texts were the medium for engaging students in comparisons and connections to culture, for exposing and promoting the use of BICS, and for creating an optimal learning environment of relaxed alertness.

Guariento and Morley (2001) argue that "unless a learner is somehow 'engaged' by the task, unless they are genuinely interested in its topic and its purpose, and understands its relevance," (p. 350) authenticity of materials and of tasks may count for very little. The course, *Love in the Times of Cholera: Personal Relationships in the Hispanic World*, focused on themes of relationships, love, and emotions. Table 2 provides an overview of course themes and units. Because these topics are central to the human experience, reflecting on them requires a consideration of our own identities and social mores, and students came to the class with developed schema within which they could make intertextual connections to self, other texts, and the world (Keene & Zimmerman, 1997). The cultural and sociohistorical contexts of social issues, humor, tensions, images, and ideology are implicit in authentic texts, and as students reflected on them, they engaged in cultural exploration. Appendix 1 provides an example of a unit plan for the course.

Table 1

Overview of student learning outcomes

Area	Outcomes
Reading	The student is able to identify main ideas and information from texts featuring description and narration.
Listening	The student is able to sustain understanding over longer stretches of connected discourse on a number of familiar topics.
Writing	The student is able to describe, narrate and offer arguments in paragraphs. The student can write clear, detailed text on a wide range of subjects related to his/her interests including essays or reports (using supporting evidence) and letters (highlighting the personal significance of events and experiences).
Speaking	The student is able to navigate communicative tasks: to debate and to express opinion, agreement and disagreement over different topics in familiar contexts, accounting for and sustaining his/her views. The student can present clear, detailed descriptions on a wide range of subjects related to his/her field of interest. Student can explain a viewpoint on a topical issue giving the advantages and disadvantages of various options.
Cultural knowledge and cultural awareness	The student is able to identify representative contemporary artists (writers, filmmakers, song-write singers, comic creators, etc.) and relate them to the cultural context in which they were composed.
Cross-cultural understanding	The student is able to identify, address, and navigate within multiple linguistic and cultural registers, to distinguish among multiple Spanish-speaking communities, and to implement appropriate personal behavior according to various social contexts and cues.
Independent and cooperative learning	The student is able to operate individually and collaboratively within the target language.

Note: The course outcomes contained no specific mention of grammar or vocabulary, but rather on students' ability to apply Spanish in a variety of contexts. Students were asked to reflect on their progress towards these outcomes, and their responses provided additional data for the analysis.

To create an environment of relaxed alertness, the instructor sought to minimize threat by using texts that would attract and interest students. The variety of texts was chosen to engage different learning styles, and the class structure included a range of activities designed to foster interpersonal communication and collaboration through one-on-one, small group, and large group activities. The emphasis on communication and de-emphasis on grammatical correctness was intended to reduce feelings of language anxiety.

Table 2

Overview of Course Themes

Love in the Times of Cholera: Personal Relationships in the Hispanic World	
Unit	Theme
1	Perception of gender (in)differences
2	Romantic love
3	Deterioration (falling in and out of love)
4	Unrequited love & difficulties of love relationships
5	Damaging love
6	Sexuality

Note. The course used personal relationships as a major theme, and used authentic texts to explore aspects therein.

To emphasize BICS, the instructor used non-academic but culturally relevant texts that would expose students to language used in a multiplicity of social contexts. These texts not only exposed students to a variety of registers, but also to the cultural context in which they were created. The texts used in class included comics, songs, articles, short stories, movies, short films, advertisements, and radio and newspaper interviews, and required students' analysis and evaluation of them. The texts exposed students to different registers and dialects, and as students interacted with and reacted to these texts, they needed to identify, address, and navigate within multiple linguistic and cultural contexts. With exposure to BICS, students were expected to interpret and employ it themselves as they engaged in discussion about the text. As students worked with authentic texts produced in and by the target culture, they were meant not only to attain language exposure, but also to identify and compare their values. Effectively, the class intended to integrate intercultural understanding by evaluating pre-conceived notions regarding socio-cultural traditions and norms different from one's own.

The course culminated in a final creative project in which the students authored their own print magazines, requiring them to synthesize and employ a variety of language skills and draw from course themes of gender, love, or relationships. Figure 2 provides an image and description of magazine content. For all of the assignments, students were encouraged to use imagination, visual rhetoric, creativity, and humor, so that they could project their personalities while engaging in complex critical thinking appropriate to academia.

Setting and Method

This project was conducted in the fall of 2010 with an upper-division special topics Spanish class at the University of Alaska Anchorage, which is geographically isolated and located in a mid-sized city with a small population of Spanish-speakers. This project sought to operationalize the MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages' recommended approach (Geisler et al., 2007) in a program where this had not been attempted, in a desire to incorporate content and cross-cultural reflection. The ratio of

adjunct to tenured- or tenure-track faculty is 2.6 in the Spanish Department, with the majority of lower-division courses delivered by adjunct instructors.

Figure 2. Photograph of Students' Magazines
The final magazine project incorporated work that students had created throughout the semester and included a main article, brief autobiographies, personal ads, editorials, a comic, a short love story, a horoscope section, advice column letters and responses, a poem, a consciousness-raising advertisement, cooking recipes, and an interview with a Spanish-speaking person about personal relationships in his or her culture.

The class was taught in a face-to-face setting, with enrollment capped at fifteen to ensure a small class size that would allow for extensive student participation. Fourteen students (11 females and 3 males) ultimately enrolled. Though all students in the class were Spanish majors or minors, their prior experience with the language varied. The class contained one native speaker, one heritage speaker, and 12 FL learners, including one who had spent six months studying abroad. All students had at least intermediate proficiency as indicated by the ACTFL proficiency guidelines, and had completed at least six semesters of prerequisite coursework which prepared them with the foundational oral and written communication skills needed to engage in this learning environment.

The instructor was a native speaker from Spain[7], and the course structure was designed to be very different from the lectures and prepared lessons that characterized the students' prior learning experiences in the department. In a typical class session, the instructor presented a topic and discussed it, introducing students to new vocabulary that they would need to use in discussion. In this phase, students were encouraged to share their reactions and impressions from their own experiences and points of view. The instructor then presented a text – such as a comic, song, or film clip – and solicited students' knowledge about its author, or historical context. She provided information to fill in the gaps in students' knowledge of the text, and led students in discussion.

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[7] The first author, Dr. Maseda Garcia, was the instructor and course designer; Dr. DeFeo in the facilitated analysis of data collected.

Following class discussion, students used the themes and topics to engage in their own creative projects, using language in a variety of meaningful ways.

As students' prior experiences in the department did not include genuine communicative teaching methodologies, our interest was in students' perception of their own learning experience. As the method was supported by literature and successful implementations at other institutions, we expected that it would facilitate learning. Thus our analysis focused instead on how students characterized their learning and how they compared it to the more traditional learning environment with which they had experience. Our analysis includes observations of students' behaviors in class interactions, instructor interviews with small groups of students, reviews of their work, and their feedback, as solicited via institutional teaching evaluations, surveys, reflective questionnaires, and personal communications. These instruments are included in Appendices 2 and 3.

Findings

Instructor observations and student feedback identified positive impacts from the curricular design and learning environment. Notable effects included gains in motivation and engagement, confidence and self-efficacy, and language and fluency development.

Motivation and Engagement

Students often complained in their interviews that their previous experiences in upper-division Spanish classes did not afford many opportunities for interaction or engaged participation, and they indicated that they were rarely prompted to utilize cross-cultural comparisons. They were mainly lectured in linguistic and literary aspects, asked to translate, and were offered picturesque cultural representations. In comparison, students repeatedly commented on the interactive and dialogic nature of the class, and thus we considered how the course design impacted student behavior in the course. Their activities and interactions suggested high levels of motivation and engagement as reflected by attendance and participation, their level of interest in the learning process, their creativity and self-expression, and their demonstrated commitment to learning.[8]

Students in the class were not only physically present (12 of the 14 students had perfect attendance and the other two students missed only one class each), but they were also mentally present, as evidenced by their active participation. Class discussions were lively and dialogic; in independent group work, students were consistently engaged and on-task, and the instructor rarely had to refocus their conversations to course topics. Rather, on several occasions, the instructor felt that she had to interrupt or redirect a lively discussion in the interest of maintaining the schedule as delineated in the syllabus. Though participation was active throughout the semester, as the students interacted more and more, camaraderie and openness became increasingly apparent. When students presented their final projects, their classmates asked questions, interjected, and responded emphatically.

Students also demonstrated a commitment to learning in the ways that they extended their learning to independent in out-of-class activities. One student commented

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[8] We understand creativity as the production of artifacts or utterances that show ideation, autonomy, and exploratory behavior that leads to creations that reveal students' independent, individual personas.

that, "the class pushed you to a movement of constant learning." For example, in the unit about domestic violence, the class reviewed two three-minute clips from the film, *Te doy mis ojos*, (Icíar Bollaín, 2003), selected to both elicit dialogue and to employ the skills of inference in textual interpretation. Six of the fourteen students spoke about the movie in detail in their final interviews, attesting that they had independently sought out the film and watched it in its entirety outside of class. Their commitment to learning was also noticeable in their application of the language to personal tasks. Since the class concluded, one student has sent the instructor stories that he wrote in Spanish, and he indicated that the class has inspired him to pursue this interest. Additionally, students indicated that the class inspired them to pursue their studies in other dialogic settings: two students decided to study abroad in Spain, and two other enrolled in a private language schools in the community.

Student comments on the institutional course evaluation and in-class surveys are also indicative of their engagement. On a 10-point Likert instrument administered as part of the institutional evaluation, students' rated their own interest level as 9.0 for activities completed in class and 8.7 for activities completed at home. They rated the class as a 9.6 for stimulating student interest and a 10.0 for encouraging student involvement by requiring original or creative thinking. Their handwritten comments further illuminate their interest with the learning process; students commented that "all activities we did were interesting," the class "was very interesting and entertaining," "very dynamic," that they "loved the diverse themes," and that they were grateful for "the freedom of being creative."

Students' engagement in the course was also apparent in the creativity they expressed in their written work and oral presentations; their interest and self-expression were evident in the topics they chose to explore. Students' articles included such topics as the courting etiquette of Latin dance, Yoga for couples, Biblical representations of love, love for social or environmental issues as expressed through activism, psychological abuse in the form of *gaslighting*, domestic gender roles, and essentials for healthy relationships. In these articles, the students made personal connections to course themes and expressed their own opinions as they made intertextual connections between course materials and their own lived experiences. This type of creative expression and critical analysis not only fostered the *Connections* and *Comparisons* components of the 5 Cs, but also contributed to their enjoyment of the learning process. The multiple data sources indicated that the emphasis on dialogue and familiar themes studied within a new cultural and linguistic context created a learning environment that fostered engagement.

Motivation is a key element of language learning, and skills to motivate learners are crucial for language teachers (Finch, 2006; Dörnyei, 2001). Hernández (2010) suggests that authentic target language cultural artifacts are a valuable way to motivate students as they provide them with meaningful opportunities to use target language in a wide range of communicative contexts, and this was affirmed in our experience. The themes of love and interpersonal relationships were not only interesting, but the students' ability to relate them to their own schema and make intertextual connections contributed to their motivation and engagement. Their new application of language made it adaptable and transferrable to their own purposes, which gave them the agency and ability to apply the Spanish language beyond this specific class.

Confidence and Self-Efficacy

Students indicated that the format of the class and their engagement in dialogic and self-directed tasks also helped them develop confidence. The instructor observed a change in students' behavior as they engaged with the class. At the beginning of the semester, students were frequently shy and reticent to offer suggestions or opinions, limiting their oral contributions to simple sentences that they seemed to rehearse in their heads before raising their hands. As they moved through the course, this behavior changed dramatically. Working from a platform of familiar schema, students made personal connections to the texts, thus some of the class discussions produced emotional responses and heated comments. The emotion in the dialogue was also reflective of the environment of relaxed alertness, and as some of the discussions elicited debates between students, their use of Spanish to advance complex or personal opinions and perspectives reflected their developing confidence.

Student written feedback confirmed in-class observations. One student commented, "I have learned that I need to be brave and try to speak," another said, "I was nervous of speaking, but now I have more trust in my abilities." Student feedback indicated that this confidence extended also to their written expression. A student said,

> I was able to write stories more effectively and I was able to express my ideas in the stories that I write. It takes a little edge off of me as a student due to the fact that I was always taught to write in a certain way in my other Spanish classes.

In this comment, the student both expressed confidence in language use and also asserted ownership of the language, suggesting a development of style and voice in his/her written expression.

Although many people have anxiety talking in class or giving oral presentations even in their first language, students in the course freely asserted their opinions and ideas even when they were being video-recorded. The frequency and quality of these communicative exchanges provided evidence for good community and trust in the class, which we attribute to the course design. The use of authentic texts facilitated an environment of relaxed alertness, and within this environment, the students were able to develop confidence in using Spanish and expressing their own opinions.

Language and Fluency Development

Though the course design purposely deemphasized grammatical mastery, our expectation was that students would actualize gains in language proficiency, and observed performance suggests that this was an outcome of the curricular approach. Though language fluency development is difficult to operationalize and measure (Schachter, 1990), in addition to aforementioned observations and student feedback, we were also able to note growth in the students' written work.

Both oral and written language skill development over the course of the semester was noteworthy. Students' mastery of grammatical tenses was observable not only in prepared or rehearsed formal presentations, but also in impromptu conversations and class discussions. Though students had received prior grammatical instruction that prepared them for the academic writing tasks associated with the class, they were not

habituated to dialogue, interaction, or self-expression. The beginning of the semester was characterized by hesitant classroom conversation with limited participation and generous instructor prompting. Their sentence structure was limited to simple verb tenses (mainly present, preterite, and future), short sentences, and basic vocabulary; they regularly defaulted to English when their command of Spanish vocabulary was too limited to express their complex ideas. They comfortably used words that were taught as part of the standardized curriculum of their previous instruction, but their repertoire lacked words necessary for self-expression, evidencing a deficit of language ownership (the exceptions to these observations were the one native speaker, and the heritage speaker in a lesser degree).

Over the course of the semester, the instructor's prominent role in eliciting participation diminished; students were able to use language to interact, asking and responding to questions using a variety of appropriate verb tenses and grammatical structures. In these presentations and conversations, students made some grammatical errors and their conversations contained some natural disfluencies, but they did not jeopardize comprehension. Students used their familiarity with language structure and employed circumlocution to express their points, never defaulting to English.

Students' written proficiency in Spanish also improved over the course of the semester as their writing pieces became increasingly more complex and extensive. They started out by writing shorter pieces that demanded less complicated grammar structures, such as personal ads and horoscopes, which required present and future tenses, and they moved towards more complex pieces, such as film reviews and editorials, which required advanced verb tenses including past and past-perfect subjunctives, more complex syntax, and extended vocabulary. The variety of literary pieces that students wrote demanded a great level of versatility from students, and the end-of-semester magazine project displayed great originality, variety, and the ability to integrate their personal interests and experiences to the main topics of the course.

Student feedback also reflected perceived language proficiency and development. In the standardized course evaluation instrument (not appendicized per copyright), students rated the course's effectiveness in developing oral and written communication skills as 4.8 in a 5-point scale. A student commented that the class helped her "to improve my skills in Spanish," another said that the course helped him "improve how to express myself verbally." Reflecting on her progress, a student commented, "I feel that I can speak much better now than I could at the beginning of the semester," and another: "I was able to learn better how to address creating the structure of a sentence which in turned helped me better to use more accurate verbal tenses." Though language fluency development was neither a course outcome nor target of assessment, the students independently identified it as an outcome of their experience in class.

In their final presentations, students demonstrated oral proficiency by using tenses and vocabulary related to the topics of their own interest. They showed mastery and appropriate use of verb tenses (including appropriate distinction between preterite/imperfect, subjunctive, and conditional), commands, and jargon. Because students chose the topic of their final presentations, the language and verb tenses varied widely, but all students used language suited to their topics. For example, one student talked about self-defense against sexual predators, thus more frequently employing the command form. The fact that students were selecting grammatical structures or specific

vocabulary appropriate for their topic of discussion demonstrates their understanding and ability to apply these grammatical features in real communication.

Though at the end of the semester they still struggled with some tense constructions (such as the third conditional), per instructor and self-assessment, their overall written and oral proficiency in Spanish improved. Students also perceived an improvement in their language fluency, as reported on their self-assessments, and in this realm we identified other salient byproducts of the course design. The psychosocial impacts of the course design appeared to foster increased motivation, engagement, confidence, and self-efficacy, and we believe that these aspects of the course contributed to the observed fluency development.

Discussion

We attribute the observed results – heightened motivation for language learning, and increased confidence, and even language fluency development – to the course design itself. These positive student learning outcomes present an opportunity to discuss the appropriateness and effectiveness of this approach in addressing some of the aforementioned curricular shortcomings. Though the course provides a preliminary single case example of the application of this course design, the merits and successes of the implementation warrant consideration of its broader utility in other educational settings and contexts. It is our intention to further analyze the implications of the study with more thorough collection of data and explanation of methods in a subsequent study.

Cultural Exploration

The use of authentic texts exposed students to a variety of sociocultural discourses, addressing some topics and issues that were new and others that were quite familiar. As the students engaged in discussion around the texts and these topics, they engaged in the process of *Connections* and *Comparisons*, which facilitated a more holistic exploration of the diversity of customs and opinions. Throughout our years of teaching Spanish, students have often asked us about customs or habits of Spanish-speaking people, but straightforward questions and quick responses do not fully transmit any cultural or social traits in depth, and lessen the complexities involved. Working with real-life materials made students more conscious of the nuances of the cultures featured in the texts. One student commented, "I was able to see the differences regarding sociocultural practices, traditions, and norms of those other than my own culture of origin." As she compared her experiences to those depicted in the texts, she engaged in a more factual process of *Connections* and *Comparisons*. However, she also took notice of significant differences between her own experiences and the countries she studied, noting, "some issues in other countries are more serious than in my native country." Another student aptly indicated "I was able to view different traditions and customs and compare them with my own and note their differences and similarities[;] this gave me a much greater appreciation for the foreign cultures studied." More authentic and contextualized representation of culture situated within familiar schema not only allowed personal reflections but also enhanced critical thinking. Awareness of both similarities and significant differences in cultural realities or expectations was a notable result of using texts in this manner.

Meaningful and Relevant Conversation

Our interest in authenticity was not limited to the use of materials in the classroom, but also the students' use of language. As students claimed Spanish as their own and used it as the medium through which they explored their own experiences and expressed their personas, the authenticity of language was augmented. As Herrera and Conejo (2004) note, "language is a tool that the speaker uses to interpret the world, to take a stance within it and therein construct his/her own identity" (p. 3, translation ours). As the students used Spanish to express and explore constituent components of their own identities and values, they found their own Spanish voices. The class design facilitated the sense of ownership and the use of Spanish for authentic communicative tasks. A student commented,

> The most important for me, in particular, is that this class has given me a unique opportunity to talk to other people. On top of all the grammar I have learned, I liked a lot that we could finally practice this language with other students. [It] is easier to learn all the grammar and write it in a piece of paper… but it is harder to practice it if we did not have the chance before.

Another student added, "in this class, I was able to practice it in real life examples due to the role plays and other assignments to improve my communication."

BICS

The use of authentic texts also exposed the students to BICS and to Spanish in a variety of discourses and genres. As they watched films, read comics, and read short stories, the students were exposed to interpersonal aspects of communication. In turn, as the students engaged in dialogue and discussion with one another, they employed some of these communicative skills and registers. This approach was intended to promote cooperative social interaction that would produce new, elaborate, and advanced psychological processes that promote effective learning (see Finch 2006), and we were pleased with the students' responses. Students demonstrated a good capacity for collaborating and working in groups, and therein further employed interpersonal communication skills. One student contrasted the Spanish used in the class with academic tasks that are removed from real life; noting that the class helped him/her "improve how to express myself verbally and to write documents frequently used in real life," and another student contrasted the delivery format with other classes s/he had previously, noting that the class provided "an opportunity to explore the language in practice (for the first time)." In this way, the course not only helped the students reach their own goals of better communication and applicability, but also advanced their exploration and learning within the 5 Cs.

Implications and Recommendations

The successes actualized in the class provide an illustrative case study of communicative approaches to language instruction in practice, and support the use of authentic texts in the classroom. Not only are these texts engaging, but they provide exposure to and

facilitate the development of BICS, and they are a medium for cultural learning as students make connections and comparisons, which also bring about high levels of motivation and engagement, confidence, and language fluency. However, developing a curriculum that explores contemporary issues wholly through the use of authentic and popular texts is a time-consuming task, and in order for teachers to access and effectively integrate these materials, they must have significant cultural competence. Teachers will need to be prepared to negotiate and navigate some difficult discussions as students explore themes and concepts including race, class, politics, and sexuality, and instructors may not have the preparation for facilitating these types of conversations. Moreover, this type of organic and responsive curriculum development requires that the teacher have a significant amount of academic freedom; this is generally expected at the postsecondary level, but not always true for secondary educators.

The engaging class discussions, even and perhaps especially when covering difficult topics, suggest that attention to relaxed alertness in the learning environment cannot be overstated. Investing time and making the classroom more inclusive and comfortable for students with a mind to developing community is not a mere social platitude, but rather a teaching strategy that puts students in the optimal position to learn most effectively (Vitto, 2003). Though we fundamentally challenge promoting grammatical "perfection" in language learning, our study suggests that deemphasizing correctness may actually lead to improved accuracy and fluency. As students experiment with and use the language more freely in a method that more closely resembles the deductive process of language acquisition over explicitly taught language learning (Gee, 2001), they engage higher-order cognitive skills and thusly construct their own knowledge.

Though we found the magazine assignment to be an excellent opportunity for students to express their ideas and to experiment with writing in different genres, one shortcoming of this activity was the lack of authentic audience. Daniels & Zemelman (2004) emphasize the importance of audience in writing, and problematize the idea of writing something exclusively for the teacher to read. Though the students' writing tasks mimicked authentic activities, when the intended reader is the teacher, it becomes an inauthentic exercise. Because this activity was successfully piloted on paper, we recommend that it be taken to the next level – that students develop web pages or blogs that will generate some comments and feedback from Spanish-speakers from other parts of the country or world. Such activities have been lauded as mechanisms for supporting authentic experiential and evidence-based learning (Herrera & Conejo, 2009). If students are to be effective communicators in Spanish, this will mean that they move beyond oral and written activities situated solely in the classroom to interact with people outside of the classroom through technology.

Conclusion

Although there are abundant theories, research, and practical initiatives promoting communicative approaches, student engagement, and authenticity in the development of FL curricula, that dialogue still remains within the domain of binaries: fluency versus acquisition, high culture versus popular culture, authentic versus inauthentic, and teacher versus student. Our academic system requires that students demonstrate, mainly through

written exams, that they have achieved demonstrable and measurable course objectives that generally focus on mastery of discrete language skills. Attempting to use a method that deals more with the communicative side prompts teachers to focus on its supposed deficiencies: the neglect of its opposite in the binary system. This project was conceptualized as a curriculum development exercise – not better or worse, but different and complementary – that offered itself as a response for our specific setting. Some of this responsiveness is to the design or structure of the lower-division classes in our program; though they seek to combine the structuralist approach with a pseudo-communicative method, the reality is that they prepare our students to gain linguistic accuracy (specifically in written communication), but fail to provide a genuine communicative environment.

This applied project indicates that the course design around authentic texts, which included attention to BICS, to cultural connections and to relaxed alertness, can be successful in helping students develop more confidence in expressing themselves, as well as more freedom to use the language for their own purposes. We saw increases in motivation, confidence, language use and fluency, but more than the development and application of linguistic skills, students also profited from other experiences historically missing in the Spanish FL curriculum – culture, interactive communication, and interpersonal communication skills. Developing curriculum like this takes a tremendous amount of time, but we posit that it is worth the investment. Not only was it a good learning experience for students, but it was a pleasant experience for the instructor – she enjoyed the students' engaged dialogues, interest in the materials, and expressive work, and found herself renewed with energy and motivation for ongoing curricular developments.

Acknowledgements

Appendices

Appendix 1. Sample unit overview

LESSON 5: Damaging love (domestic violence)
Lección 5: Amores perros. "Quien te quiere te hará llorar"

Emphasized structures: commands, subjunctive verb tense

Texts/materials selected for theme alignment and appropriate levels of complexity:
- Phrases and idiomatic expressions, for example, *Quien te quiere de hará llorar* (He who loves you will make you suffer) and *Hay amores que matan* (There are loves that kill).
- A public service announcement (poster) that had been made for *el Día de San Valentín* (2009) by a Spanish feminist organization.
- Song by Bebe: "Malo" from *Pafuera Telarañas* (EMI Music, 2004).
- Film clip: Iciar Bollaín's (2003) *Te doy mis ojos* (Spain: Alta PC & Producciones la Iguala.)

Objectives *Objetivos*	Assignments *Actividades*	Final tasks *Tareas finales*
Use Spanish to discuss sensitive topics, such as domestic violence. *Ser capaces de discutir temas peliagudos como el de la violencia de género.*	1. Comprehension of typical phrases that allude to painful aspects of relationships (according to some cultures). Discussion and cultural comparisons. 2. Analysis of image and slogan from a poster – discuss the rhetorical use of color (black, white, purple and pink) and the image (a menacing hand on a woman's shoulder, the woman's bruised face, and tape on her mouth.) 3. Discussion about social attitudes and legal responses to domestic violence in their countries.	Design a public service ad against gender violence. Create a poster that includes both an image and slogan and make a list of key messages including: (at least) 1. Commands telling someone to do (or not to do) certain things. 2. Commands for someone to NOT do things that will hurt others.
Devise a public service ad against domestic violence (image and text). *Organizar una campaña de concienciación sobre el tema.*		This ad will appear in your magazine.
Use commands in communication. *Utilizar el modo imperativo para transmitir nuestro mensaje.*	1. Observation of non-verbal communication in video & description of attitudes. 2. Listening comprehension (fill the gap with missing information). 3. Lexicon - survey about words that students associate with domestic violence. 4. Notice accent and dialect. 5. Summary of the story & analysis.	Compile two cooking recipes for those who never cooked. Use formal and familiar commands.
Understand Spanish used in lyrics and text, and use Spanish for oral and written expression. *Comprensión oral y escrita.*	1. Discussion and prediction about film theme by looking at movie cover and title. 2. Interpretation of two scenes (without sound), and speculate what will happen next 3. Watch film with sound, reconsider predictions and predict again. 4. Using sentences from movie scenes, fill the gaps with commands. 5. Watch scenes (comprehension) and correct. 6. Group discussion and role-play - students discuss what they would do if there were a particular character, and they create an alternate dialogue.	These recipes will appear in your magazine.
Acquire new vocabulary. *Nuevo vocabulario.*		Upon return of your assignments, use feedback from the instructor and from your colleagues to make modifications for publication in your magazine.
Cooperative learning. *Aprendizaje cooperativo.*		

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Appendix 2. Unit feedback form
Students completed a progress report anonymously after each unit. The survey was administered in Spanish, but has been translated and condensed for publication.

Rate your learning experience

- In these lessons, I learned:
- Of all of the *activities* we completed in this unit, what I liked most was:
    - Because:
- The *activity* that I liked least was:
    - Because:
- My level of interest with in-class *activities* (1-10) (1 being none):
- My level of interest with the out-of-class *activities* (1-10):
- The most positive thing about the *unit* was…
- The worst part about the *unit* was…
- Of all of the *texts* (comics, videos, songs, etc.), what I liked best was:
- Because:

Appendix 3. Final course evaluation

Students completed a final course feedback form at the end of the semester. The survey was administered in Spanish, but has been translated and the space condensed for publication.
1. What is your general opinion about the class?

2. What have you learned?

3. What part has been the most challenging (understanding or expressing yourself),

   and why?

4. What section has been more challenging, and why?

5. What was the part you liked the most, and why?

6. What would you change?

7. Other comments and/or suggestions.

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College textbook reading assignments and class time activity

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Abstract: A convenient cluster sample of 105 undergraduate students at a regional university in the midsouth completed a survey regarding their use of college textbooks, what strategies might increase the likelihood of their reading textbook assignments, and their preference for how class time was used. Descriptive analysis was conducted on the results and chi-square was run on 25 selected comparisons, with a Bonferroni correction of the resulting alphas. About half the students reported that they do read the assigned textbook readings. Freshmen were significantly more likely to report that outside reading should not be required of students prior to coming to class, and less likely to report having used or known about e-textbooks. Strategies reported to most likely prompt reading the textbook included in-class quizzes over text material, assigning graded study-guides to complete while reading; testing over material found in the textbook but not covered in class; and assigning shorter reading assignments. Preferences for use of class time varied by experience in college, but the majority of students preferred group discussion and application of material to real life rather than just lecture over the textbook content.

Keywords: Higher Education; College Teaching; Textbook Use; Instructional Strategies

Introduction

Regardless of the fact that professors often assign textbook readings to students as part of their course requirements, reports have clearly articulated that many students (perhaps most of them), do not actually complete the course readings as instructed (Lei, Barlett, Gorney, & Herschbach, 2010; Pecorari, Shaw, Irvine, Malstrom, & Mezek, 2012; Sikorski et al., 2002). This lack of student engagement in reading for the courses not only includes assigned readings for traditional class meetings, but also in terms of preparing for course examinations (Aagaard & Skidmore, 2004; Clump, Bauer, & Bradley, 2004; Sikorski et al., 2002). The implications of these findings would seem to suggest that most of what students glean from course study comes directly from the learning experiences conducted within the classroom, with the in-class presentation of material serving as the primary means by which students gain understanding of important course concepts. This model of engagement with courses changes the course pedagogical arrangement, as students who might otherwise benefit from discussion and application of course concepts must instead be introduced to concepts and terminology during class. In other words, students' lack of engagement in independent reading of class assignments compels professors to make a different set of lecture plans when thinking about what to do with students during class.

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As lack of student reading prior to class time necessarily limits the depth to which professors can engage learners with important course concepts, studies of methods by which to compel students to read the course text and reading materials have been conducted. Suggested strategies that have emerged from such investigations have included quizzes over course materials (Johnson & Kiviniemi, 2009; Ruscio, 2001; Ryan, 2006), worksheets with which students study (Aagaard & Skidmore, 2009; Ryan, 2006), chunking the reading tasks into smaller segments, and using the textbook during class instructional activities rather than only asking students to read the materials outside of class (Aagaard & Skidmore, 2009). The efficacy of each of these strategies will need to be properly explored should instructors in the academy wish to promote independent student engagement in course readings outside of class.

Although we seem to understand the basic nature of college students and the use (or lack thereof) of course texts and other readings outside of the classroom, related questions left somewhat unaddressed deal not only with what professors might do to compel student reading outside of class, but also with what *students* might prefer professors do with the time they share together learning within the classroom context. That is to say, some great attention has been given to the exploration of student use of reading materials, but has there been sufficient support to understand what professors do with instruction to promote learning from the perspective of students? After all, education should be a dynamic process that involves engagement not only from the perspective of the educators, but also from the students, as is the case with methods such as inquiry learning (Oliver, 2007). The question that remains, however, is not only one of what methods of instruction might be effective when instituted by instructors, but also one of what kind of research has been conducted to ascertain students' preferences with instructional time during class activities at the college level?

As stated above, students have expressed a desire for professors to use a variety of in-class activities to promote their independent reading of course materials, including testing over the textbook readings, shortening the reading assignments, providing advanced organizers to guide note-taking while they read (and offering credit for them), and using the textbooks in class (Aagaard & Skidmore, 2009). It would seem, as suggested by Aagaard and Skidmore, (2009), and others (Berry, Cook, Hill, & Stevens, 2011; Johnson & Kiviniemi, 2009; Oliver, 2007), that undergraduate students are quite dependent on their professors in terms of promoting the independent use of course readings outside of class, -- if the professors require it, give credit for doing it, give specific guidance and direction as to what is relevant and essential, and provide scaffolds to teach students how to do it, then students will probably read on their own outside of class.

This sentiment of dependence on the professor as a model is echoed in the work of M. P. Ryan (2001) whose study of conceptual models of lecture learning and note taking practices revealed that, in most of the models offered, students' metaphors for the role of the instructor during lecture ultimately impacted the ways in which they engage in learning behaviors in class, such as the ways in which and purposes for which they engage in note taking behaviors. An implication from this work would be that, if professors should want more appropriate learning behaviors to be demonstrated by students during class, then they (the professors) should model such behaviors during instruction in ways that promote particular note taking practices appropriate for the subject matter being taught (Ryan, 2001). As indicated by Ryan (2001) "efforts to improve lecture learning may only begin to produce substantial and pervasive benefits for college learners when they focus as much on conceptual change as they do on behavioral change" (p. 307).

With regard to the use of lecture-based instruction, one factor that should be taken into account when considering students' preferences for professors' teaching strategies in class is the degree to which students endorse particular lecture-based styles (Kane, 1990; Mji & Kalashe, 1998; Struyven, Dochy, & Janssens, 2012). For example, when asking students to comment on their preferences concerning the degree to which professors used structured assignments during lecture (such as following lectures with worksheets to complete after each lesson) as opposed to less structured lecture formats, students indicated strongly that they preferred more structure ~~to~~ rather than less during lecture; however, the continual use of only one strategy repeatedly was also reported to be a disadvantage as students perceived a relative loss of autonomy in the classroom (Kane, 1990**)**. In other words, although the students reported that implementing within-class assignments was beneficial, what students really wanted was for the professor to alternate modes of delivery based upon the material being presented (Kane, 1990).

Other than traditional lecture-based formats of instruction, another method found in the literature about student preference and student learning outcomes includes problem-based or inquiry learning (Oliver, 2007; Struyven, Dochy, & Janssens, 2012). In the case of inquiry learning, Oliver (2007) revealed that, when the course materials were structured around solving authentic problems within the discipline rather than merely lecturing over course concepts and content, more students reported enjoying the method of delivery and over 90% perceived positive outcomes as a result of this approach. However, students still expressed problems with the inquiry learning approach, including the relevance of the problems offered, its organization (with particular focus on the directions and instructions), and the difficulty of some of the problems (to which the author attributed the lack of clarity in directions) (Oliver, 2007).

Zhang's (2008) work focused upon not only the preferred teaching styles of students, but also the relationship between students' teaching style preferences and their achievement in academic tasks. Although this study utilized boys in secondary school in Hong Kong, it was revealed that the participants' preferences for teachers that promoted creative thinking, collaboration among students and the use of higher-order reasoning in class over monotone, traditional teacher-centered approaches was reflective of those practices favored by university level students as well. Further, this study indicated that, in most areas asked about, students' preferred teacher practices related positively to their academic achievement while traditional and least-favored practices had an adverse relationship with student achievement (Zhang, 2008).

As can be seen, there appears to be a whole host of ways in which classes can be structured to support learning for undergraduate students most in need for guided support from their college professors. However, in addition to considering the learning outcomes or instructor preferences alone, it is critically important that researchers seek to understand the degree to which students' preference for learning contexts plays a role in their ability to achieve academically in the courses being offered (Struyven, Dochy, & Janssens, 2012; Zhang, 2008). Rather than worry about the amount of content we cover in classes we teach, perhaps professors should consider the notion that teaching less content in ways students endorse might be more advantageous to their students' overall understanding of the course material (Locher, 2004). Perhaps professors should take more time to consider the multitude of ways that the content might be approached in class, offering students variety so that they may be better engaged in the various course topics (Kane, 1990).

These concerns over student engagement with textbooks and classroom activities led to the research questions for this study: What types of professor behaviors encourage students to

engage with their textbooks? What are students' preferences for learning content in the classroom?

Method

Participants

This study employed a convenient cluster sample of 105 students from eight summer classes at a regional university in the mid-south (see Table 1).

Table 1

Frequency of Students Surveyed in Each Course

Course	n	%
Soils (Agriculture)	13	12.9
Geology	9	8.6
Philosophy	8	7.6
English	18	17.1
History	13	12.4
Foundations (Education)	10	9.5
Biology	16	15.2

Approximately 36% of the students were in natural science courses and 64% were in humanities or education courses.

Sixty-one percent of respondents were female and nearly 100% were Caucasian. They reported 29 different majors, with the highest concentrations being education (17%), biology-related (13%), and agriculture-related (10%). The 101 students who reported majors could be classified into two basic categories of science/technology/math (n=43) and humanities/social science/business/education (n=58). The distribution across year in college is shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Sample Distribution Across Year in College

Year	n	%
Freshman	26	25
Sophomore	19	18
Junior	26	25
Senior	33	31
Graduate	1	1

Students were asked to self-report their GPA range. A large majority (63%) claimed a B average, while 30% reported a C average. The remaining 7% were split between A and D average grade point averages.

Instrumentation

Participants were administered a 25-item researcher-designed survey (see Appendix A) that included 11 items regarding use of course textbooks, 11 items about preferences for use of class time, and four demographic items. All items were multiple-choice.

Textbook items asked whether students read their textbooks when assigned to do so, as well as whether particular strategies by the professor would get students to read their textbooks or not. Each class time use preference item was forced choice between two options (for instance, between professor lecture and group activities).

Procedure

Researchers requested permission from course instructors to administer the survey to their students in the last 15 minutes of a regularly scheduled class period.

Analysis

Frequency analyses were performed on every item for descriptive purposes and cross-tabulations were created of every item with each of three of the demographic variables. The cross-tabs were visually inspected and chi-square analyses were run on 25 selected comparisons, with a Bonferroni correction of the resulting alphas. As a result, chi-square tests with p-values of less than or equal to 0.002 were considered significant. As a follow-up analysis, cross-tabulations were created of every item with the two broad categories of student majors. Only one of the items showed a frequency difference of more than 10% between the responses of the majors and a chi-square analysis was run on that item.

Results

Textbook Use

A majority of students (52%) reported that they do read the assigned textbook readings, but 48% replied that whether or not they read the assignment depended on other factors. Freshmen were significantly more likely to report that reading the textbook before class should not be required, while seniors were more likely to say that whether they <u>should</u> have to read the text depended on other things (see Table 3).

Table 3

Chi-square Analysis of Year in College by "Should be Required to Read Text?"

Item Response	Freshman n (row %)	Sophomore n (row %)	Junior n (row %)	Senior/Grad n (row %)
Yes	5(16)	11(34)	8(25)	8(25)
No	13(62)	1(5)	5(24)	2(9)
It Depends	8(15)	7(13)	13(25)	24(46)

Note: Chi-square = 28.98; df=6; p < 0.0001

Freshmen were significantly less likely to report having used or known about e-textbooks (see Table 4).

Table 4

Chi-square Analysis of Year in College by "Ever Used an e-Text?"

Item Response	Freshman n (row %)	Sophomore n (row %)	Junior n (row %)	Senior/Grad n (row %)
Yes	1(4)	8(32)	9(36)	7(28)
No	11(21)	6(11)	14(26)	22(42)
It Depends	14(56)	5(20)	3(12)	3(12)

Note: Chi-square = 26.02; df=6; p < 0.0002

Strategies reported to most likely prompt reading the textbook included in-class quizzes over text material, assigning graded study-guides to complete while reading; testing over material found in the textbook but not covered in class; and assigning shorter reading assignments (see Table 5).

Table 5

Response to Suggested Strategies to Get Students to Read Textbooks

Strategy	Not Read n (row %)	Might Read n (row %)	Most Likely Read n (row %)
In-class quiz	0(0)	28(27)	76(73)
Online open-book quiz	20(19)	35(34)	49(47)
Study guide for credit	4(4)	20(19)	81(77)
Discuss in class	14(14)	39(38)	50(48)
Test material not discussed	5(5)	14(14)	84(81)
Shorter reading assignments	1(1)	23(22)	79(77)
Explain instructional features of textbook	35(34)	39(37)	30(29)

The lowest rated strategy was having the use of the textbook's instructional features (glossary, chapter summaries, etc.) explained to students.

Females were significantly more likely than males to read the textbook if there were going to be in-class quizzes, as reported in Table 6.

Table 6

Chi-square Analysis of Male and Female Responses to "Read Text if there is an In-Class Quiz?"

	Male	Female
Item Response	n (row %)	n (row %)
Might Read	19(68)	9(32)
Would Read	22(29)	54(71)

Note: Chi-square = 12.97; df=1; p < 0.0003

Preference for Use of Class Time

Students reported preferring the use of PowerPoint lectures to notes on the chalkboard and generally preferred the use of group discussion and application of material to real-life rather than just lecture over textbook content. They were in favor of group presentations in contrast to individual presentations, but there was more division over in-class group activities, with quite a number choosing the other alternatives when they were presented (see Tables 7 and 8).

Table 7

Preferences for Use of Class Time (Lecture-Related)

I would prefer the professor:	n	%
Lectured only over material that was in the textbook.	19	18
Lectured over the textbook, but also some material that was NOT in the textbook.	84	81
Both choices marked	1	1
Have PowerPoint slides to present basic notes for the lecture.	74	71
Use the chalkboard to present basic notes for the lecture.	25	24
Both choices marked	5	5
Lectured only over material that will be tested.	45	43
Lectured over tested material, but also over some material that is interesting but not going to be tested.	59	57
Lectured only over the textbook material.	7	7
Covered the content; gave examples of how the material applied to real life.	96	92
Both choices marked	1	1
Just lectured over the textbook material in some way.	27	26
Encouraged group discussion of the material.	75	72
Both choices marked	2	2
Just lectured over the textbook material in some way.	43	41
Had students do group activities related to the material.	60	58
Both choices marked	1	1
Lectured over content in class.	73	69
Put the lectures podcasts online; did other things related to content during class.	28	27
Both choices marked	4	4

Table 8

Preferences for Use of Class Time (Not Lecture-Related)

I would prefer the professor:	n	%
Encouraged group discussion of the textbook material.	46	45
Had students do in-class group activities related to the textbook material.	54	53
Both choices marked	2	2
Had students do in-class group activities related to the textbook material.	76	72
Had students do individual presentations of projects related to the text material.	28	27
Both choices marked	1	1
Had students do individual presentations of projects related to the text material.	36	35
Had students do group presentations of projects related to the textbook material.	66	64
Both choices marked	1	1
Gave in-class closed-book quizzes over textbook content.	36	35
Gave online open-book quizzes over textbook content prior to the class period.	68	65

Although 64% of respondents overall preferred group presentations, there was a significant relationship of this preference with year in college. Sophomores and seniors were more likely than expected to opt for individual work, while freshmen and juniors were more likely to prefer group presentations (see Table 9).

Table 9

Chi-square Analysis of Preference for Group vs. Individual Presentations by Year in College

	Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior/Grad
Item Response	n (row %)	n (row %)	n (row %)	n (row %)
Individual	6(17)	11(31)	3(8)	16(44)
Group	20(30)	8(12)	22(33)	22(24)

Note: Chi-square = 14.92; df=3; p < 0.0019

For the follow-up analysis by category of major, the only item where student responses showed much difference dealt with whether they believed they should be required to read the textbook prior to coming to class. As shown in Table 10, students who were not in science, technology, or math majors were more likely to answer "It depends" to this question. Because this analysis was a follow-up of the main research questions, it was not subjected to the Bonferroni adjustment of alpha and thus was statistically significant at p < 0.05.

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to ascertain how students at this institution use textbooks assigned for their respective classes, as well as the reactions and preferences that they have regarding instructor-directed presentation methods and other activities. Results of this investigation indicate substantial variation in how text materials are used and preferences for what takes place

Table 10

Chi-square Analysis of Category of College Major by "Should be Required to Read Text?"

	Science/Technology/Math	Humanities/Education/ Business/Social Science
Item Response	n (row %)	n (row %)
Yes	*16(53)*	*14(47)*
No	*11(58)*	*8(42)*
It Depends	*16(31)*	*36(69)*

Note: Chi-square = 6.21; df=2; p < 0.045

during class time. Whether students read text materials seems dependent upon other factors, and not just simply whether the materials are assigned by the instructor (e.g., Table 5). Typically, students indicated that they would read the text materials if there were some associated 'for credit' activity, if the text was used during class time, and if the size of reading assignments was "shorter." Interestingly, first-year (i.e., freshmen) students felt that reading assigned text materials before class time should not be required, with seniors acknowledging that reading the text materials depends upon "other" factors. We speculate that these perspectives and attitudes are the result of their prior academic experiences. College freshmen likely utilize the same techniques during their post-secondary experiences. For example, due to economic reasons, text materials may only be available to students for review during a given class period during their secondary school experience. Concrete presentation and the opportunity for the development of effective independent learning strategies necessary for life-long learning are not likely promoted or practiced. College seniors, however, have likely 'learned the ropes' with respect to the general requirements and expectations of post-secondary experiences, and are able to adjust and adapt their behaviors accordingly.

It would seem that students prefer a "structured with variation" model when it comes to the use of class time. Participants preferred a lecture format, but with related and authentic non-text material / content included. In addition, the preference was expressed for in-class group discussion of the text and other materials as well as for prepared organizers (i.e., PowerPoint slides). Not surprisingly, online open-book quizzes were preferred to in-class closed-book quizzes, yet respondents indicated that they would read the textbook more frequently if quizzes were given in-class in contrast to online. Freshmen and juniors would prefer a group presentation format if this were a component of a course. This might be due to a preference for "safety-in-numbers" (i.e., preservation of self-esteem) in open-forum evaluative situations. Interestingly, and somewhat surprisingly, sophomores and seniors preferred to work independently. Perhaps they have been frustrated with prior group projects / presentation experiences where one's evaluation is at least partially determined by the cooperative participation of others (i.e., "once bitten, twice shy"). Senior students may be focused upon finishing course work necessary for attainment of the degree, and therefore are reluctant to expend the socio-emotional time and effort necessary to engage in effective group activities.

The responses of the students participating in this study give indications to instructors regarding how to encourage student reading of the textbook prior to its discussion during a class period. If the top-rated strategies were combined it would mean that students would be given a short reading assignment with a study guide to complete (for credit) during their reading. Then,

after an in-class quiz over the reading assignment, the instructor would have students use the textbook in some way during the class period. When it came time for the unit test, students also would be responsible for material that was in the textbook but not discussed in class.

Limitations of Study

Although the results offer much for any post-secondary educator to consider, limitations to this particular study emerge with respect to sampling techniques, time of acquisition of data, and weaknesses in understanding differences across students in particular fields. Cluster sampling techniques were used to collect data primarily out of necessity. Perhaps if the study is replicated, researchers could randomly select students within disciplines.

Secondly, the survey was administered to students during a four-week summer term. The number of participants would have been higher if the survey had been administered during a typical sixteen-week academic term. An increase in student participation rates might offer results that are different from the findings of this study. It is also possible that there is something different about students who take classes in the summer terms, so these results may not apply equally to students who never participate in summer school.

Additionally, the distribution of student majors in this study's sample was not sufficient for any meaningful comparisons of students' preferences of textbook reading and class activity across different programs of study. Future researchers in this area may want to intentionally administer surveys to students in particular fields of study to allow for analysis of differences across student majors. A more nuanced analysis like this might reveal differences in preferences between major programs, particularly if the results show consistencies in majors across multiple colleges/universities.

Finally, it should be noted that the instrument used for this study was researcher-created. In future replication of this work, researchers would be advised to not only establish the validity of the items in the current instrument (see appendix), but also to include additional items that relate to other proximal and / or personal / dispositional factors that may also influence students' use of textbooks and their preferences for various classroom strategies.

Appendix

Appendix A

Textbook and Use of Class Time Survey
(With overall survey results included as percentages and significance notes where appropriate.)

1. Do you think you should be required to read material in the textbook before coming to class?

Yes	No	It depends
30%	20%	50%

***Signif. Chi-square for year in school (p=0.0001): Freshmen more likely to say no; sophomores more likely to say yes; seniors more likely to think it depends.

2. Do you actually read the textbook material when it is assigned?

Yes	No	It depends
52%	6%	48%

3. What could the professor do to get you to read the textbook assignments? (Mark the most appropriate column for each strategy.)

Professor's strategy	I would still not read the textbook.	I might read the textbook.	I would most likely read the textbook.
a. Give me an in-class quiz over material from the textbook assignment. ***sig. chi-square for gender*** p=.0003	0%	27% M: 46% F: 14%	73% M: 54% F: 86%
b. Give me an online open-book quiz over the textbook assignment.	19%	34%	47%
c. Have a study guide for me to fill out while reading the assignment, then give me credit for turning it in.	4%	19%	77%
d. Actually discuss the content of the textbook assignment in class.	14%	38%	48%
e. Test me over material that was in the textbook but _not_ discussed in class.	5%	14%	81%
f. Make shorter reading assignments.	1%	22%	77%
g. Use the textbook in class in some way.	5%	43%	52%
h. Teach me how to use the textbook's instructional features (glossary, summaries, etc.).	34%	37%	29%

4. Have you ever used an e-textbook for one of your classes?

Yes	No	What is an e-textbook?
24%	51%	24%

***Signif. Chi-square for year in school (p=0.0001): Freshmen less likely to say yes and more likely to say "what is it?"; sophomores more likely to say yes; seniors less likely to say "what is it?"

5. I would prefer the professor lectured:

18%   A. only over material that was in the textbook.
81%   B. over the textbook, but also some material that was NOT in the textbook.
 1%   (both)

6. I would prefer the professor used:

71%   A. Powerpoint slides to present basic notes for the lecture.
24%   B. the chalkboard to present basic notes for the lecture.
 5%   (both)

7. I would prefer the professor lectured:

43%   A. only over material that will be tested.
57%   B. over tested material, but also over some material that is interesting but not going to be tested.

8. I would prefer the professor:
7%   A. lectured only over the textbook material.
92%   B. covered the content, but also gave examples of how the material applied to real life.
1%   (both)

9. I would prefer the professor:
26%   A. just lectured over the textbook material in some way.
72%   B. encouraged group discussion of the material.
2%   (both)

10. I would prefer the professor:
41%   A. just lectured over the textbook material in some way.
58%   B. had students do group activities related to the material.
1%   (both)

11. I would prefer the professor:
45%   A. encouraged group discussion of the textbook material.
53%   B. had students do in-class group activities related to the textbook material.
2%   (both)

12. I would prefer the professor:
72%   A. had students do in-class group activities related to the textbook material.
27%   B. had students do individual presentations of projects related to the textbook material.
1%   (both)

13. I would prefer the professor:
35%   A. had students do individual presentations of projects related to the textbook material.
64%   B. had students do group presentations of projects related to the textbook material.
1%   (both)

***Signif. Chi-square for year in school (0.0019): Sophomores and seniors more likely to prefer individual presentations; juniors more likely to prefer group presentations.

14. I would prefer the professor:
69%   A. lectured over content in class.
27%   B. put the lectures in audio files online to be listened to prior to class, then did other interesting things related to the content during class.
4%   (both)

15. I would prefer the professor gave:
35%   A. in-class closed-book quizzes over textbook content.
65%   B. online open-book quizzes over textbook content prior to the class period.

17. What is your gender?
39%   A. Male
61%   B. Female

18. What year of college are you in?
25%   A. Freshman
18%   B. Sophomore
25%   C. Junior
31%   D. Senior
 1%   (graduate student)

20. What is your overall GPA?
 0%   A. 0-0.99
 3%   B. 1.0-1.99
30%   C. 2.0-2.99
60%   D. 3.0-3.99
 4%   E. 4.0

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JoSoTL

JOURNAL OF THE SCHOLARSHIP OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Mission

Founded in 2001, the Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (JoSoTL) is a forum for the dissemination of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning in higher education for the community of teacher-scholars. Our peer reviewed Journal promotes SoTL investigations that are theory-based and supported by evidence. JoSoTL's objective is to publish articles that promote effective practices in teaching and learning and add to the knowledge base.

The themes of the Journal reflect the breadth of interest in the pedagogy forum. The themes of articles include:

1.   Data-driven studies: formal research projects with appropriate statistical analysis, formal hypotheses and their testing, etc. These studies are either with a quantitative or qualitative emphasis and authors should indicate the appropriate domain. Acceptable articles establish a research rigor that leads to significant new understanding in pedagogy.

2.   Reflective essays: integrative evaluations of other work, essays that challenge current practice and encourage experimentation, novel conclusions or perspectives derived from prior work

3.   Reviews: Literature reviews illuminating new relationships and understanding, meta-analysis, analytical and integrated reviews, etc.

4.   Case studies: These studies illustrate SOTL and its applications, usually generalizable to a wide and multidisciplinary audience.

5.   Comments and communications: Primarily, these are comments based on previously published JoSOTL articles, but can also include book reviews, critiques and evaluations of other published results in new contexts or dimensions

Style Sheet for the
Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

John Dewey[1] **and Marie Curie**[2]

Abstract: This paper provides the style sheet for the Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning. Manuscripts submitted for publication should adhere to these guidelines.

Keywords: radiation, metacognition, identity theory, constructivism, educational philosophy.

General Guidelines for the Manuscript

Submissions should be double-spaced. The final manuscript should be prepared in 12-point, Times New Roman, and single-spaced. All margins should be 1 inch. Justify lines; that is, use the word-processing feature that adjusts spacing between words to make all lines the same length (flush with the margins). Do not divide words at the end of a line, and do not use the hyphenation function to break words at the ends of lines. The title (in 16 point bold) and author's name (in 12 pt. bold) should be at the top of the first page. The author's name should be followed by a footnote reference that provides the author's institutional affiliation and address. Please use the footnote function of your word processing program; there are a variety of instructions available online for each program. The abstract should be indented 0.5" left and right from the margins, and should be in italics.

Indent the first line of every paragraph and the first line of every footnote; all first line indentations should be 0.5". Use only one space after the period of a sentence (word processors automatically adjust for the additional character spacing between sentences). The keywords should be formatted identically to the abstract with one line space between the abstract and the keywords. Authors should use keywords that are helpful in the description of their articles. Common words found in the journal name or their title article are not helpful keywords.

Pages should be unnumbered since they will be entered by the JoSoTL editorial staff. We will also insert a header on the first page of the article, as above.

References should be incorporated in the text as author's name and date of publication (Coffin, 1993), with a reference section at the end of the manuscript (see below for the desired format for the references). Titles of articles should be included in the references in sentence case. Unless instructed otherwise in this Style Sheet, please use APA style formatting. Footnotes should incorporate material that is relevant, but not in the main text.

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Unique work

This journal does not accept previously published work. We also do not accept work that is being considered for publication by another journal. If your manuscript is accepted, you will be required to sign a form stating that your manuscript has not been previously published.

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Major section headings should be centered and bold-faced (i.e., Section and Sub-Section Headings as seen above). Major section headings should have one-line space before and after. The first paragraph(s) of the article do not require a major heading.

Sub-Sections

Sub-section headings should also be flush-left and bold-faced. Sub-section headings should have a one-line space before and after. Sub-sub-sections should appear at the beginning of a paragraph (i.e., with an 0.5" indent, followed immediately by the text of the sub-sub-section), with the heading also in italics.

Sub-subsections. Sub-Subsections of your manuscript should be formatted like this.

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Tables and figures should be inserted in the text where the author believes they best fit. They may be moved around a little to better correspond to the space requirements of the Journal. If necessary, tables and figures may occupy an entire page to ensure readability and may be in either portrait or landscape orientation. Insofar as possible, tables should fit onto a single page. All tables and figures should be germane to the paper. Tables should be labeled as follows with the title at the beginning, with data entries single-spaced and numbered. Column labels should be half-line spacing above data. Please use the table functionality in your word-processing program rather than adding an image of a table from MS Excel, SPSS, etc. This allows for more flexibility in laying out the final print version.

Table 1

The title of the table

Unit	Length, inches
Point	1/12
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Figures should have their captions follow the image. Captions should be single-spaced. The Editorial staff may adjust layout to allow optimal use of space.
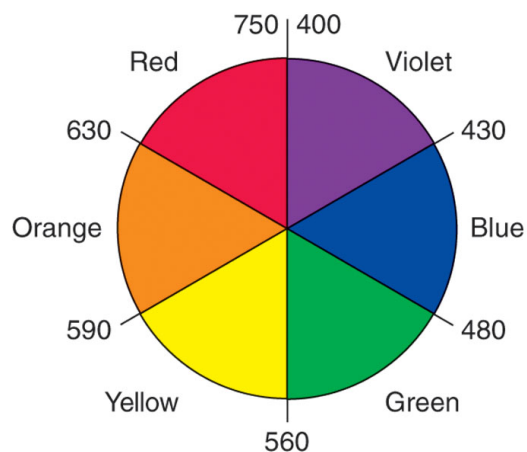
Figure 1. Color wheel with wavelengths indicated in millimicrons. Opposite colors are complementary.

Acknowledgements

Acknowledgements should identify grants or other financial support for this research by agency (source) and number (if appropriate). You may also acknowledge colleagues that have played a significant role in this research.

Appendix

Please insert any appendices after the acknowledgments. If your submission has only one appendix, this section should be labeled '*Appendix.*' More than one appendix will change the section label to '*Appendices.*' Each appendix should have a title; if you are including items from your class or research, please alter them to include a title. Appendices should be alpha-order (Appendix A, Appendix B, etc.) These labels and titles should be at the top of the page, left justified, italicized.

Appendix 1. The Title of the Appendix.

The content of your appendix will appear here.

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