

Community-Based Learning: A Descriptive Study on its Impact on Liberal Arts College Students

by

Andrés Felipe Córdoba Arroyo

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Abstract

Colleges and universities have long been recognized as a major source of socially and politically active members of society. Currently, the climate surrounding topics of social justice and equity have heightened the importance of implementing community-based learning tools in postsecondary institutions to bridge the gap between knowledge and practice as well as between an academic institution and its surrounding community. Community-based learning was studied in this project as it relates to the impact on college student leaders. More specifically, using the Community-Based Learning Impact Scale, student leaders at Goucher College were asked to rank the impact of engagement in community-based learning on their professional development, psychological well-being, civic engagement, and academic learning. Using a convenience sample of 13 students, this study found an overwhelming positive effect across all areas aforementioned.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The current political and social climate in the United States and the world have propelled social justice issues to the forefront of classroom discussions across institutions of higher education. It is because of this heightened awareness that these same institutions have turned their attention to offering and implementing experiential, community-based opportunities as part of their learning theory and curricula. Social and economic factors that have influenced the increase of community-based components within the curricula of most colleges include the economic recession of 2008, rising income inequality, unemployment, social injustice driven by a divided political environment, and changing demographics (Roberts, 2018).

The increasing involvement by students across the United States in community-based learning experiences signals a greater focus in civic engagement and a renewed perception of higher education institutions as sources of social cohesion and solidarity (Dorn, 2011; Egerton, 2002; Roberts, 2018). The experiential learning theory, therefore, provides colleges with the foundation and understanding required to engage their students in the community.

By combining the findings of three of the most influential researchers of their respective fields, that of John Dewey's learning theories, Kurt Lewin's research on development, and Jean Piaget's expertise in cognitive development, this theory elevates experiential learning to the forefront of tools that colleges can use to set up community-based programming (Kolb, 2015). The experiential learning theory defines learning as a combination of these three fields and states that the process of learning is "one whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience" (Kolb, 2015, p. 41). By placing students in a new setting or giving them a real-world

problem to solve or think through, students go from just grasping knowledge alone to also learning the critical thinking skills to transform this knowledge for a new application. This then has resulted in the civic engagement that is most needed by democracies across the world (Mooney & Edwards, 2001; Shuler, 2010).

Research Question

The following study attempts to answer the following research question: What is the perspective of higher education students on the effect or impact of community engagement programs?

Operational Definitions

Community engagement includes two types of activities: service learning and community-based learning. Although similar, both of these have distinct definitions and applications in the higher education setting. Service learning, also known as direct service, is defined as a form of experiential learning “in which some type of assistance is provided to a local organization or group of people” (Garoutte, 2018, p. 149). On the other hand, community-based learning is a tool that “supplements classroom instruction with service in the community and critical reflection, emphasizing personal and civic responsibility and reciprocal partnerships” (Gottlieb & Robinson, 2002, p. 16).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Research on the learning process combines expertise from various fields, including education, psychology, and sociology. This multidisciplinary approach to understanding how learning works has yielded results that, in many ways, guide educational institutions in their goal of preparing students to be life-long learners.

Different theories of learning have been developed and most are implemented in cohesion with one another as part of the extensive curricula of colleges and universities in the United States. One of these specific theories of learning is the experiential learning theory. This theory is the foundation for tools like the community-based components of a course and the internships in the different fields that students engage in as undergraduate and graduate scholars.

Specifically, the impact of such community-based learning programs at small, liberal arts institutions is an area of research that has yielded mixed results. This highlights the need for further research to clarify the degree by which experiential learning programs impact students in this specific setting of higher education.

This literature review examines the current state of research on experiential learning with a focus on community-based experiences in higher education. Section one of this review focuses on the history of community-based learning. Section two evaluates the previous outcomes of student engagement in community-based learning in college. Section three analyzes the characteristics of high-quality, community-based learning programs and experiences.

History of Community-Based Learning in Higher Education

Throughout the history of education, civic engagement has increased as colleges and universities are put in the spotlight to produce socially-aware and active members of society.

While there have been several times in history where a heightened expectation for student engagement in the community has driven schools to promote more of this type of learning, there has always been a constant expectation of postsecondary institutions to produce and to engage in university-community partnerships that dates back over several centuries to the founding of Harvard University (Jacoby, 2009).

The work of John Dewey, specifically, has influenced the implementation of community-based learning in the United States. His work identified the public school as necessary and vital for the creation of a more democratic society. The idea that a public institution like schools could be the place in which students learned to be engaged in their surrounding neighborhoods and bridge together formal and informal learning was revolutionary. According to Longo (2007), Dewey once stated:

Everywhere we see signs of the growing recognition that the community owes to each one of its members the fullest opportunity for development. Everywhere we see the growing recognition that the community life is defective and distorted excepting as it does thus care for all its constituent parts. This is no longer viewed as a matter of charity, but as a matter of justice—nay, even of something higher and better than justice—a necessary phase of developing and growing life. (p. 23)

With a statement like this, Dewey made it clear that education encompassed the entirety of a student's experience and that life and education were not separate entities, and rather, one whole. If a society has the goal of preparing its young adults to succeed later in life and to become active agents of change, then learning could not be obtained from books alone, but rather through lived experiences within their communities (Longo, 2007).

More recently, the initial findings of Dewey were crucial for the development of programs like the Peace Corps, AmeriCorps, Campus Compact, and the Corporation of National and Community Service from the 1960s through the 1980s. These same national programs positioned the field of service learning at the forefront of the goals that colleges wanted their students to achieve in regard to influencing social justice and awareness through the presence and involvement of students in their communities.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, it was found that service-learning components were present in about 21% of general education programs (Ratcliff, Johnson, La Nasa, & Gaff, 2001). Almost every field of study, especially those with high stakes like medicine and engineering, now requires students to be exposed to experiential situations that drive learning and make students much more aware of their surroundings and their position within society (Sternberg & Zhang, 2000).

Even with its extensive history, the field of community-based learning still has much work to be done to ensure that all students have a sense of urgency to get involved in their community and to make sure that those institutions that have neglected to include this component in their curricula feel persuaded to provide such a tool for their students. The outcomes of students that engage in experiential learning during their time at an educational institution are positive but much more research than is currently available is required.

Outcomes of Engagement in Community-Based Learning in College

With the rising cost of postsecondary education, less and less students feel that seeking an undergraduate education, no matter how complete the undergraduate experience that a college offers may be, is not financially feasible. Institutional accountability for enrollment and graduation rates has made colleges more aware of which practices enhance the chances of

student success, with results impacting all aspects of student life through budget allocations. This makes the research of the student outcomes of those who engage in community-based learning more necessary to understand how it is that these experiences shape the experience and, ultimately, the life of the student while enrolled at a college and beyond. Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, and Gonyea (2008) found that overall, students who were engaged in educationally purposeful activities had positive outcomes as measured by their grades during the first year and their persistence between the first and second year of college.

Community-based learning has been designated as a practice of “high impact” for several reasons. Steinberg, Hatcher, and Bringle (2011) identified three different areas in which students develop by engaging in experiential learning, specifically service- and community-based learning. The three areas are knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Together, these areas of student identity are highly shaped by academic and extra-curricular activities that students are exposed to in college. Within the realm of knowledge, students develop an understanding of specific ways by which they can contribute to society through the combination of skills learned in school and their application to address community issues. Skills developed include communication and listening skills, which are essential for professional work beyond college. Dispositions developed by students that engage in community-based work include a value of community engagement, self-efficacy, and as social agents of knowledge (Steinberg et al., 2011).

Because learning environments are constantly changing in response to political, social, and economic factors, research is needed to find the effect that experiential learning has had in the long term. Burch et al. (2014) have found that over the period of 40 years, there has been a positive correlation between student outcomes and learning. These results also highlight the need to guide students through these experiences in order to make their emotional and personal

investments more worthwhile and enriching. Wallace (2000) found that the time commitment of students to service learning is one of the main areas of concern for this pedagogical tool. This is of great concern for the longevity and increased implementation of experiential learning across the country. Communities and democracies have issues that cannot be solved with short term involvement and, therefore, colleges must not only be willing to engage in experiential learning, but also commit for the long term. Overall, civic engagement has become one of the more pursued high-impact practices in higher education (Brownell & Swaner, 2009).

Characteristics of High-Quality, Community-Based Learning Programs and Experiences

Civic engagement in higher education encompasses a diversity of goals, strategies and activities. By definition, community-based learning must include a designated component for reflection. Programs that offer a time for reflection as either a required component for participation in the program or class itself allow for the personal development of the student and for stronger ties to the institution and the community to be established. This turns out to be essential in the retention rate of students and, ultimately, the financial viability of postsecondary institutions (Kuh et al., 2008).

Liberal arts colleges offer distinctly unique experiences to its students. By emphasizing the role of a carefully drafted curriculum, high expectations, a committed faculty, and the residential experience, liberal arts schools set themselves apart from the field and, in turn, attract students who are motivated, self-directed, and intentional about their learning (Ferren & Anderson, 2016). Although other types of educational environments offer service-learning or community-based experiences, liberal arts colleges are often small enough to allow for extensive relationships with community partners.

Conclusion

The act of volunteering has long been a part of the American history, and higher education has taken advantage of this component to establish itself as a source of social change. Community-based learning continues to be a part of the college experience in the United States and internationally, and its influence on student development has intrigued many researchers in the education field. By combining the already established benefits of community-based learning for not only the students, but also for the communities that they work in, higher education institutions can continue to serve as the foundation for the cultural and social movements that clearly influence the democracy that they are a part of.

In the current political and social climate of the United States, a country where higher education is much more unique than the rest of the world in terms of experience, every area of learning has come under a revitalization process in order to continue to sustain its relevance among the public. With this dilemma in mind, community-based learning has become a tool of activism and social change just as much as it has become a tool to keep students engaged and interested in the pursuit of higher education.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The purpose of this study was to determine the perceived impact of engagement in community-based learning experiences on students at a small, liberal arts college like Goucher College. Impact was measured by the answers that the students gave on the Community-Based Learning Impact Scale (CBLIS) (Carlisle, Gourd, Rajkhan, & Nitta, 2017). Feedback was obtained using a digital survey through GoogleForms (see Appendix).

Design

This study was based on a descriptive design using a convenience sample. The survey was digitally designed using GoogleForms and sent out to students via email to answer within a two-week period. The questions from the survey were obtained from the CBLIS. The survey was made up of demographical questions and questions aimed at determining the outcomes of involvement in community-based learning programming in relation to professional development, psychological well-being, civic engagement, and academic learning. The survey was made up of 17 questions.

Participants

The participants in the study were a convenience sample of 13 undergraduate college students at a private, liberal-arts college in Towson, Maryland. These students were hired as Student Leaders for Civic Action (SLCAs) and were given the responsibility to run a signature program established by the Office of Community Based Learning with a community organization. Twelve programs were conducted during the duration of an academic year that included emphasis that ranged from environmental justice initiatives to middle school student mentoring.

Instrument

The survey administered for this study was adapted from the CBLIS (Carlisle et al., 2017). This instrument was developed at the University of Washington, Bothell to measure the impact of community-based learning on student learning. The original survey included 33 questions, from which the 17 questions for this study were chosen.

Procedure

The 17 questions for this survey were chosen from the CBLIS in order to obtain a greater sense of impact on student learning. These questions were pooled because of their relevance in regard to the goals of the Office of Community-Based Learning and its emphasis on reflection as a part of civic engagement. The students received an email with the survey and had two weeks to answer the questions at the very end of the Spring semester, but before classes adjourned prior to final exams. The answers to the survey were then analyzed to provide descriptive results of experiential engagement on student learning.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The purpose of this study was to examine the perspectives of college students who are engaged in community-based learning experiences and the impact of their involvement and experiences at a small, liberal arts college. The tool used to achieve the purpose of this study was a survey of 17 questions that were chosen from the 33 questions that make up the Community-Based Learning Impact Scale (CBLIS) survey (see Appendix). The 17 questions included demographic questions and statements that solicited students to rank their sentiments using a Likert scale. This survey was sent out to 13 participants, and 11 of the participants responded.

The demographics of the sample of students who responded to the survey were measured in terms of sex, race, educational level, general commitments outside of class in terms of hours spent on those commitments, and lastly, the number of hours per week spent on programming that was specifically related to community-based learning. Out of the 11 student responders, 10 self-identified as female and one as male (see Figure 1). As shown in Figure 2, in terms of race, seven students identified as non-Hispanic White, three as Black or African American, and one as Native American or Alaskan Native. Three of these same students self-identified as being bi-racial or multi-racial in addition to selecting one of the prior racial categories. In terms of educational level, seven responses were from juniors or third-year students, two were from seniors or fourth-year students, one was a freshman or first-year student, and one was sophomore or second-year student.

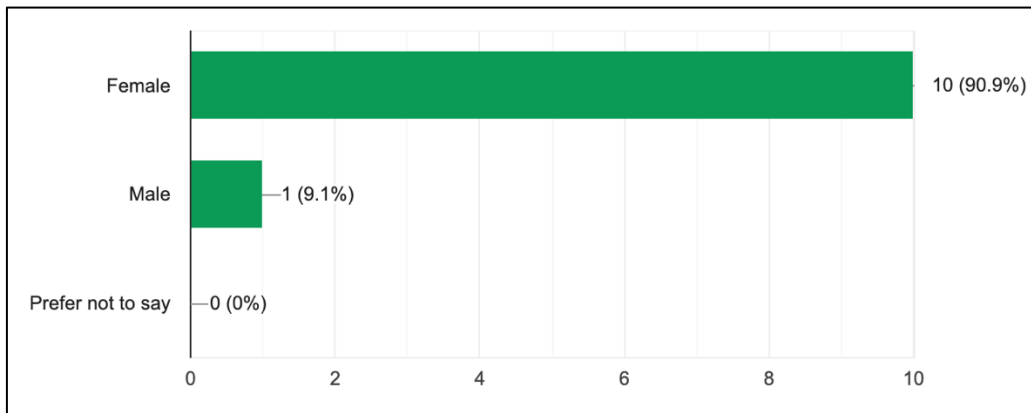


Figure 1. Bar graph depicting the sex demographic among student responders to the survey.

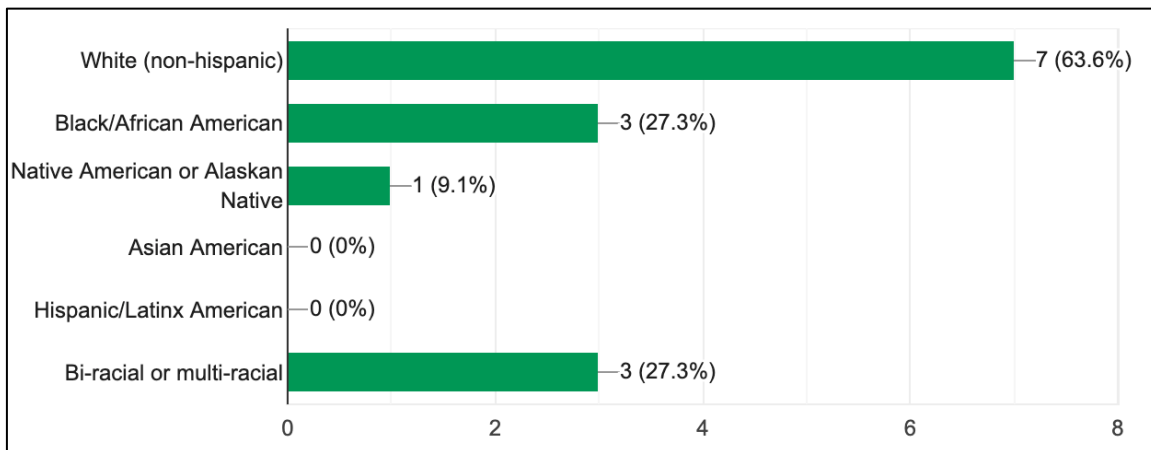


Figure 2. Bar graph depicting the racial identification of students who responded to the survey.

The demographic questions also found that six students described spending 11 to 20 hours per week on extra-curricular commitments, three students answered that their extra-curricular commitments required 1 to 10 hours per week, and two answered that these extra-curricular commitments were taking 31 to 40 hours per week. More specifically, the students also reported their time commitment to community-based learning programming, of which seven reported spending 1 to 10 hours per week and four responded to spending 11 to 15 hours per week.

In order to understand the role that community-based learning has on student growth in the areas of civic engagement and academic learning, several statements were included in the survey, which required student to respond using a Likert scale with responses including strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. On the statement “I am more connected to MY community,” 36.4% responded that they strongly agreed, while another 36.4% of students answered that they agreed (see Table 1). The other 27.3% of students were neutral in regard to the statement (see Table 1).

Students showed a significant agreement when asked to respond to statements relating to academic learning as a result of engagement in the community. In response to “I am open to new ideas,” and “I try a solution, assess its effects, and revise my approach to the problem,” 63.6% of students strongly agreed to each statement respectively, while no student disagreed or remained neutral (see Table 1).

Table 1

Summary of survey items relating to the impact of involvement in community-based learning programs on civic engagement and academic learning.

	Strongly agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly disagree	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
N=11										
I am more connected to MY community.	4	36.4	4	36.4	3	27.3	0	0	0	0
I am more connected to communities OTHER THAN my own.	3	27.3	6	54.5	2	18.2	0	0	0	0
I am able to meet SOME of the needs of the community.	3	27.3	7	63.6	1	9.1	0	0	0	0
I have developed a better understanding of cultures other than my own.	3	27.3	7	63.6	1	9.1	0	0	0	0
I am open to new ideas.	7	63.6	4	36.4	0	0	0	0	0	0
I try a solution, assess its effects, and revise my approach to solving the problem.	7	63.6	4	36.4	0	0	0	0	0	0

The impact of student involvement in the community was also measured in terms of likelihood of impact on the psychological well-being on the student, and the survey found

positive feelings from students in this regard. Because this section of the study dealt with likelihood, the Likert scale used the following options: not likely, somewhat likely, and very likely. Table 2 summarizes these results and shows that 63.6% of students answered “very likely” as a response to the following two statements: “I better understand myself,” and “My satisfaction with life as a whole has increased.” An even greater percentage (72.7%) thought it was very likely that their sense of purpose in life had increased.

Table 2

Summary of the survey responses to statements relating to psychological well-being in relation to involvement in community-based learning programming by college students.

	Very likely		Somewhat likely		Not likely	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
I better understand myself.	7	63.6	4	36.4	0	0
My satisfaction with life as a whole has increased.	7	63.6	4	36.4	0	0
My sense of purpose in life has increased.	8	72.7	2	18.2	1	9.1

Another factor of significance studied was the employment prospects for those students involved in experiential learning through the community-based learning lens. When asked to define if their career opportunities had expanded, 72.7% answered “Yes, definitely,” while the other 27.3% answered “somewhat” to the statement (see Figure 3).

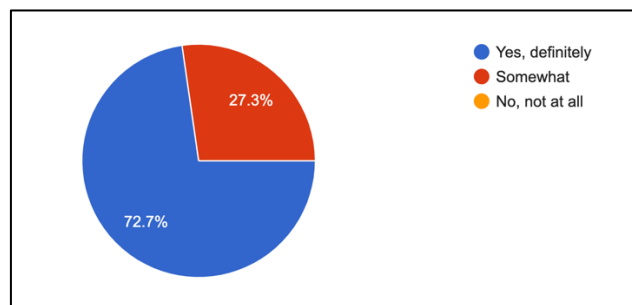


Figure 3. Pie chart of the survey answers to the following statement: “My career opportunities have expanded.”

The results of this descriptive study and the implications for theory, research, and practice will be discussed in Chapter V.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to describe the impact of community-based learning experiences on college students who attend a small, liberal arts institution of postsecondary education. This study used a survey method to understand the extent and to what level students acknowledged that their involvement with programs that sustained a partnership between their college and a community partner impacted their experience in terms of academic learning, psychological well-being, professional development, and civic engagement. The implications of this research for the field of education are discussed here.

This study found distinct patterns of positive influence of community-based extracurricular involvement on students across a wide range of personal and academic areas. To better understand the demographics of those students invested in community-based learning, the survey included questions relating to race, sex, educational level, and commitment to extracurricular activities in general and to community-based learning. Overwhelmingly, the results of this part of the survey identified that most of the students involved in the community are female students, White students, and students in their third or fourth year of college. This can be explained by two possible factors: a) using Goucher College, a predominately-White institution (PWI), as the setting for this study could have influenced the overall number of people of color participating in this type of programming and the percentage of White students reported in this study is representative of the overall distribution of racial identities across the student population, or b) the historical precedent of White women in roles of volunteerism and community service dating back to the World War I and its form of expression in the current day with White women having a significant percentage of executive and administrative roles in non-

profit organizations. The high percentage of students in their third or fourth year of undergraduate studies may be due to the time required for development of certain leadership skills needed to successfully and meaningfully engage in the community including vulnerability and reflection, both of which require a strong sense of understanding in terms of self and one's place in the surrounding community and the world.

Of equal importance, this study also sought to define the areas in which students benefited the most from being involved in community programming. By far, one of the most important findings of this study was the fact that all students reported a positive or a very positive influence of community-based learning on their academic learning, civic engagement, professional development, and psychological well-being. It is because of results and findings like these that community-based learning is considered a high impact practice.

Implications of Results

The United States is a pluralistic society that portrays higher education as a personal goal no matter where the person is from. However, this goal is not easily achievable due to financial and academic barriers that make accessibility to higher education harder for some. The access to higher educational institutions is also not equitable across geographical areas of the United States. Thus, the implementation of ethical and sustainable partnerships between colleges and community organizations can serve as a way to foster a pipeline that is crucial in advancing accessibility efforts. For example, the Read-A-Story/Write-A-Story partnership between Goucher College and Barclay Elementary-Middle School in Baltimore City, which is one of the signature programs led by one of the students surveyed in this study, serves as a way in which an institution of higher education can establish meaningful relationships with young students in the surrounding area, while also tackling the problem of reading and writing below grade level for

those young students. This example is just one way in which these partnerships can develop in ways that are beneficial to both the college as an institution preparing students to enter the work force and community organizations in need of a particular skill set. Partnerships like these would help cement the identity of the college as an active member of the community and an entity that serves to break down those academic barriers that prevent students from being able to be successful in college and later on in their lives.

The landscape of higher education is changing with colleges closing or merging with other institutions at an unprecedented rate. With this change in landscape, the competition to attract students is requiring that colleges reconsider fundamental components of the college experience like curriculum requirements and extracurricular opportunities to prepare students to be successful in finding employment after graduation. This specific component of creating career-ready students is where another important application of the research completed in this study is found. As described in the results section, students who were part of this study overwhelmingly agreed that their career opportunities had expanded. This finding has implications in terms of the possible route that colleges can take to prioritize career readiness. By emphasizing community-based learning programs as a curriculum tool, students can be given the opportunities to create a vision for themselves that combines their passion and also allows them to develop the necessary skills to put such passion into a fruitful employment opportunity.

Theoretical Consequences

The basis of much of the community-based learning practice established in colleges and universities across the nation stems from information directly related to an idea known as the experiential learning theory. As previously mentioned in the review of the literature, this theory highlights the way in which student learning can be influenced by experience. The practice of

this theory can vary immensely across educational settings in accordance to the physical and cognitive developmental stage of the student population. Most commonly, in elementary through high school, students may attend field trips to off-campus sites that can help students learn about the application of concepts learned in the classroom. In college, study abroad capitalizes on this theory to make students grow in ways more than academically by placing students in countries other than their own. It is this very same type of challenge, viewed through a different, more local lens, that drives student growth and development for those engaged in community-based learning programs.

As a tool to reinforce learning, community-based learning allows for the transformation of knowledge as a tool to solidify learning. Therefore, in relation to learning specifically, the difference in application and the diverse ways in which community-based learning can be put into practice in the higher education setting gives students the opportunity to learn to apply their knowledge in novel ways. The students are also developing the ability to grasp experiences and to transform experiences in ways that they can benefit the most from, as evidenced in the results of this study. This study describes the positive effects of community-based programming and further solidifies the theory behind this practice as one with the potential of creating long, lasting positive effects on the students themselves as learners and the communities that they partner with.

Threats to Validity

This study may be improved upon by having a larger, more diverse and inclusive sample size in order to improve the study's generalizability. A greater sample size may also alleviate the concern that only those students in leadership positions were surveyed. The perspective of the subjects surveyed may have been skewed by the leadership roles that they hold within the

existing programs and adding more general student perspective may help to identify greater areas of impact. Internal validity may also be threatened by subject honesty in responding to the survey.

Connections to Existing Literature

Literature on the impact of community-based learning in higher education is limited; however, several articles have been published in recent years that show similar, positive results to the ones described in this study. For example, the Carlisle et al. (2017) study, which served as the guide for the study, reported very similar trends in terms of the demographics of students who partake in community-based learning programming at the University of Washington, Bothell. The study's results showed that about 62% of the 194 survey respondents were female and the majority (61%) identified as White (Non-Hispanic). In terms of the other measurements, the Carlisle et al (2017) study also showed an overall positive response by students in terms of civic engagement, academic learning, and psychological well-being. The one factor that differs from this study is in relation to the professional development. The Carlisle et al. study showed the majority of the students "somewhat" agreeing to the statement "My career opportunities expanded," which students in this study have supported overwhelmingly by answering "yes, definitely" when asked and presented with the same statement. The difference in these results can serve as a starting point for researchers to try to understand the impact of community-based learning in the long term when students have entered the work force.

The same concept was studied by a researcher at the Lebanese International University in Beqaa Valley, Lebanon. The researchers assessed the effects of social learning on undergraduate students in the School of Education. These students were to become future teachers after completion of the degree requirements. The method used in the study by Shouman (2019) was an

electronic questionnaire similar to the one used in this action research project, but it was given prior to and posterior to the intervention. The intervention, in this case, was the inclusion of a service-learning component to their Teaching for Reading course. The results of the survey showed that there were positive impacts of service learning across a range of areas, including: personal, social, and learning outcomes as well as an increase in self-efficacy. These findings are very significant for institutions of higher education as they are trying to create highly skilled professionals with a deep understanding of “self” and the skills necessary for long term success.

Overall, the results in the present study are comparable to other research found across the limited literature on community-based learning, which signal that its impact is positive across educational settings in the United States and around the world. It is clearer, as well, that a greater implementation of this type of experiential learning across institutions of higher education can be beneficial to create more civically engaged individuals in society.

Implications for Future Research

The findings of this study are very clear in signaling that the implementation of community-based learning programs lead to very positive results in college students. However, there is a need for further research in this field in order to understand both qualitatively and quantitatively the type of effect that involvement in this type of academic learning can have on students. An important area of research in this field would be trying to understand the discrepancies in terms of race of those students who engage in community-based learning. This study found that most of the students who responded to the survey were Non-Hispanic Whites, and the least represented racial group was African American. In order to determine the impact that this practice has across racial groups, it will be necessary to determine the source of this difference in participation rates.

Of equal importance, future research needs to be aimed at understanding and characterizing how exactly involvement in community-based learning leads to gainful employment by those that engage in the practice during their college years. A longitudinal study may be necessary in order to understand the impact of this practice in the long term. A study of this nature would help to characterize and quantify the impact of this practice for students and for society in terms of economic and employment data.

The group of students who were part of this survey can be defined as highly engaged members of the community, and this may have skewed results toward more positive answers. Therefore, future research may want to look into diversifying the studied population to include students who may not hold leadership positions in the community and engage in community-based learning for other reasons. The results of such a study may give light to ways that can be used to increase student engagement in curricular and extracurricular activities that emphasize learning in the community. For students who are considered to be at-risk in the higher education setting, community-based learning can be used as a tool to research ways in which feelings of competency and belonging can drive student learning and growth.

Conclusion

The impact of engaging in the community cannot be underestimated. More and more, colleges and universities are faced with increasing enrollment of students who are socially conscious and desire to engage in the community in meaningful, ethical ways. This is why the practice of community-based learning can be used to serve this purpose of establishing and developing partnerships between institutions of higher education and organizations that serve the community in a range of different ways.

This study has identified specific ways in which students benefit from engaging in the community, and it also highlights the ways in which such programming can be tailored to target participation by different demographic groups in order to increase access of this high-impact practice across the board to ensure that that the benefits can be experienced by as many students are possible. It is also clear that because the impact of this practice is so significant in the students, colleges and universities must think of novel ways to implement this type of learning in their curricula in order to foster a deeper sense of belonging by the students to the campus and the school entity itself.

Community-based learning can, in some way, help the fact that college enrollments are decreasing across the country because of factors like affordability and employment outcomes that favor some fields of study over others. This practice can help students gain the necessary skills that are most sought-after by employers who seek people who have not only developed their interpersonal skills as well as their academic knowledge.

In an era where technology is taking over the way people communicate and relate to one another, community-based learning focuses on the people itself and the communities to which they belong in order to develop meaningful, real connections that have the potential for positive impacts for both the student and for society.

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Appendix

Community-Based Learning Research Survey

Please answer the questions below for demographic purposes.

* Required

1. Email address *

2. Gender *

Check all that apply.

- Female
- Male
- Prefer not to say
- Other: _____

3. Race *

Check all that apply.

- White (non-hispanic)
- Black/African American
- Native American or Alaskan Native
- Asian American
- Hispanic/Latinx American
- Bi-racial or multi-racial
- Other: _____

4. Educational Level *

Mark only one oval.

- First Year
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Graduate
- Other: _____

5. Commitment outside of class *

Mark only one oval.

- I don't have commitments
- 1-10 hours per week
- 11-20 hours per week
- 31-40 hours per week
- 41+ hours per week

6. Numbers of hours worked on CBL *

Mark only one oval.

- 0 hours per week
- 1-10 hours per week
- 11-15 hours per week
- 16-20 hours per week
- 21 or more hours per week

Community Based Learning Impact Scale

Please select the most accurate option.

7. I am more connected to MY community.

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

8. I am more connected to communities OTHER THAN my own.

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

9. I am able to meet SOME of the needs of the community.

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

10. I have developed a better understanding of cultures other than my own.

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

11. I am open to new ideas.

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

12. I try a solution, assess its effects, and revise my approach to solving problems.

Mark only one oval.

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

13. My career opportunities have expanded.

Mark only one oval.

- Yes, definitely
- Somewhat
- No, not at all

Untitled Section

14. I better understand myself.

Mark only one oval.

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not likely

15. My satisfaction with life as a whole has increased.

Mark only one oval.

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not likely

16. My sense of purpose in life has increased.

Mark only one oval.

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not likely

Send me a copy of my responses.

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