Lessons Learned from Experiential Learning: What Do Students Learn from a Practicum/Internship?

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A multi-method approach was used in a pilot assessment of student learning outcomes for 38 students enrolled in an undergraduate psychology practicum/internship program. The results from a pretest-posttest survey revealed that students improved their multicultural skills from the beginning to the end of the program. The results also indicate that experiential learning enhances student personal, civic, and professional development. The consistency of responses from students, field supervisors, and faculty suggest that the practicum/internship program is beneficial for all involved and serves as a method for strengthening university-community partnerships.

Over the past decade, institutions of higher education (IHE) have incorporated experiential learning courses in liberal arts curricula as a way to help students learn the course concepts, understand the conditions that lead to racial and economic disparities in the community, and develop into socially responsible citizens. Experiential learning assists students achieve intellectual goals through a broad range of academic endeavors, from volunteer activities and service-learning courses to practica and internships (Association for Experiential Education, 2011; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler 2009). Two of the most common forms of experiential learning are the practicum and internship (Eyler, 2009). Practica and internships are supervised discipline- and career-related work experiences that involve active learning (i.e., learn by doing), critical reflection, and professional development (Gavigan, 2010; O'Neil, 2010). Students are required to apply "real-world" experiences to the academic content and to use this knowledge to make informed decisions about their career paths. The purpose of this paper is to summarize lessons learned from a pilot assessment of a practicum/internship program in an undergraduate psychology curriculum at a metropolitan, teaching university.

Investigations on experiential learning have noted improvements in personal (i.e., discipline-related knowledge) and interpersonal (i.e., communication skills), civic (i.e., cultural competence & social responsibility), and professional (i.e., career interests) development among undergraduate students (Aldas, Crispo, Johnson, & Price, 2010; Sweitzer & King, 2009). Astin and Sax (1998) conducted a longitudinal survey study with 3,450 freshman enrolled at 42 institutions with federally funded community service programs and found that service participation improves students' sense of civic responsibility. They also detected differences in the type and duration of service. Greater alignment between discipline-based goals and the type of service is related to students' increased field

or discipline knowledge; interpersonal, leadership and intercultural skills; and preparation for future work or graduate school. The duration of service and the placement site also enhance student development and learning. The amount of time devoted to providing service in a community-based program was related to students' greater understanding of problems and commitment to continual service in the community (Astin & Sax, 1998). Aldas et al. (2010) summarized data from the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) and feedback from faculty at Wagner College, and they found that practica and internships contribute to discipline-related knowledge and skills.

Students reported that their practicum and internship experiences enhanced their understanding of content knowledge, ability to contribute to the welfare of the community, and capacity to achieve their career goals. Wagner College student ratings were significantly higher compared to students at similar peer institutions and those students at comprehensive institutions (Aldas et al., 2010). In addition, Stichman and Farkas (2005) conducted a nation-wide study on internships in undergraduate criminal justice programs and found that the major strength of an internship is students' ability to integrate theory and practice. Gavigan (2010) similarly detected that the major benefit from a summer internship is the transformation of student knowledge. Taken together, these findings suggest that experiential learning is transformative. Students are situated in a field context which forces them to apply their discipline-related knowledge to practice and formulate new attitudes, knowledge, and skills that lead to potential changes in their civic values, consistent with service-learning research on personal, civic and professional development (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Educators propose that undergraduate psychology programs should offer service-learning, practicum, and internship courses so that students can apply psychological principles to community problems

(Heckert, 2009; Raupp & Cohen, 1992), and they should include personal, civic and professional development outcomes as assessment benchmarks in the curriculum (Brewer, 2006; Dunn, McCarthy, Baker, Halonen, & Hill, 2007). Few studies have systematically studied the influence of practica or internships on this student group. In fact, most research in this area is descriptive and either describes the practicum components (Motiff & Roehling, 1994; Prerost, 1981; VandeCreek & Fleischer, 1984; VandeCreek & Thompson, 1977) or explains how fieldwork assists students achieve learning goals (Hutz, Gomes, & McCarthy, 2006; Stone & McLaren, 1999; Von Dras & Miller, 2002). Weis (2004) conducted a pre- and post-test survey with 12 students about their learning experiences in a practicum course and the contributions from their fieldwork on children's reading abilities. Students increased their understanding of behavior modification techniques, psychosocial interventions, and appreciation for the psychological content by the end of the term. Teachers also favorably appraised students' work and the children improved their reading levels. Reddy and Hill (2002) conducted focus groups with 32 student interns and discovered that students acquire communication skills, time management, confidence, and responsibility through participation in an internship. Student knowledge acquisition, attitude formation, and skill development are complex processes; however, experiential learning may be a useful method for nurturing student development, but only if reflection is an integral part of the course (Kolb, 1984; Eyler & Giles, 1999). The reflection component allows students to make connections between the academic content and the field context. The current study builds on previous research and describes the "added value" of a practicum/internship program. Three research questions are addressed in this study:

1. Do student interns improve their personal and civic development as indicated by increases in their civic, racial, and empathetic attitudes, and multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills from the beginning to the end of the semester?
2. What knowledge and skills do students acquire through participation in a practicum or internship?
3. How consistent are the findings from students, field supervisors, and faculty? Do these findings help us understand the impact of experiential learning on student development?

Practicum/Internship Program

The goals of the psychology practicum/internship program are to foster students' personal and interpersonal, civic (i.e., multicultural awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and skills), and professional development (i.e., career interests). The practicum introduces students to fieldwork in social service agencies or other appropriate settings, while the internship provides advanced training related to fieldwork and allows them to gain extensive real-world experience (American Psychological Association Commission on Accreditation, 2005). Placements include, but are not limited to, community mental health centers, drug and alcohol counseling centers, rehabilitation and community centers, intervention and educational programs, and other agencies in which students are able to utilize helping skills and put their knowledge of psychology into practice.

The practicum/internship program is a sequential model comprised of a professional development seminar and a practicum and/or internship. The professional development seminar is designed as a pre or co-requisite for the practicum course. Students learn about the logistics of setting up a practicum and an internship. In-class time (50 minutes, one-time per week, 15 weeks) begins with an exploration of students' academic or career aspirations. Then students are introduced to practical information that is relevant to acquiring a practicum or an internship position. Guest lecturers deepen students understanding of the importance of the career process (e.g., cover letters, resumes).

Students also are introduced to the types of available placements. Guest speakers representing different agencies talk with students about their organizations, the requirements for a practicum or internship, and the process for obtaining a position. Students learn about professional and ethical behaviors that are pertinent to the sites in which they work and demonstrate knowledge in these areas through case studies, role-playing, and mock interview and reflection assignments. Students participate in a mock interview that is video-taped and subsequently they reflect on their own performance. The mock interview reflection requires students to describe the areas of their performance in which they thought they did well and those areas of their performance that they thought they could approve upon, explain why they did and did not like these particular areas, and discuss how they plan to improve upon these areas for their "actual" interviews. Students are also required to complete a goal sheet that requires them to describe what they want to learn from a practicum and explain how a practicum will assist them in achieving their career goals. This information is used to pair students with placement sites. Students obtain the necessary paperwork (e.g., child abuse and criminal history clearances, malpractice insurance) and by the end of the course are matched with their actual placement site.

After successful completion of the professional development seminar, students enroll in either a three-

or six-credit practicum. A three-credit practicum requires students to complete 100 hours, and a six-credit practicum requires completion of 200 hours of fieldwork. Students work under the supervision of the placement field supervisor and meet regularly with a faculty member who serves as a practicum advisor (i.e., a faculty member who has experience in their area of interest). The practicum advisor guides students on the academic components of the course that include documentation of field hours, a daily journal in which they describe and reflect on what they learned at the placement, and a research paper. The research paper requires students to integrate psychological theory with scholarly research relevant to their placement and practical aspects of the practicum (e.g., case reflection, ethical standards). Students complete pre and post-assessment surveys, and at the end of the semester they complete placement evaluations, and participate in a reflection discussion..

Students have the option of taking either a nine- or 12-credit internship after they complete a practicum. The nine-credit internship requires students to complete 300 hours and the 12-credit internship requires them to complete 400 hours of fieldwork. Students enrolled in an internship are required to complete an extensive research paper and the academic components of a practicum (as described above). The breadth of field experiences offered to students has been designed to help them acquire a broad range of practical knowledge and skills and to foster their personal and professional goals so they can become productive professionals and make an impact in their particular field of psychological study.

Method

Participants

Student participants. College students from a private teaching university in a northern metropolitan area completed a pretest and a posttest survey. Data were gathered from 38 students at the beginning and at the end of the 2008-2009 academic year. Most students identified themselves as White (73%) and female (88%), while the remaining group of students identified themselves as Black (8%) or Multiracial (15%) and male (22%). Few students chose not to disclose their race (4%). The mean age was 22.20 years (SD = 1.10). Students were juniors (19%) and seniors (81%) who worked with child (53%), adolescent (5%), adult (28%), older adult (5%) or non-clinical populations (11%) in education (36%), counseling (36%), physical therapy (14%), industrial and organizational (9%), and nursing care settings (6%).

Field supervisors. Field supervisors representing community-based organizations completed an assessment for each student they supervised and provided evaluation feedback during an interview. Data were gathered on 31 field supervisors who were eligible to participate in the interview (response rate = 100%). Two field supervisors representing the public school district and the child development center had more than one student at their site. Most field supervisors were White (82%) and female (78%). The remaining supervisors were Black (12%) and male (22%). Their education levels ranged from paraprofessional to professional; 90% completed at least a four-year degree.

Faculty practicum/internship advisors. Faculty members who served as practicum/internship advisors completed a survey about their levels of satisfaction as advisors and with the practicum/internship program. Data were gathered on six out of the eight practicum/internship advisors who were eligible to participate in the survey (response rate = 75%). The majority of practicum/internship advisors were White (88%) and male (50%). Sixty-two percent were tenured faculty specializing in development (38%), experimental (38%), or applied (24%) areas of psychology.

Measures

A demographic questionnaire, developed by the researchers, was used to gather information on gender, race, age, GPA, area of study, and year in school.

The Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ), developed by Moely, Mercer, Ilustre, Miron, and McFarland (2002), assessed civic attitudes and skills. The CASQ, an 84-item self-report questionnaire, yields scores on six scales: (1) Civic Action (respondents evaluate their intentions to become involved in the future in some community service); (2) Interpersonal and Problem-Solving Skills (respondents evaluate their ability to listen, work cooperatively, communicate, make friends, take the role of the other, think logically and analytically, and solve problems); (3) Political Awareness (respondents evaluate their awareness of local and national events and political issues); (4) Leadership Skills (respondents evaluate their ability to lead); (5) Social Justice Attitudes (respondents rate their agreement with items expressing attitudes concerning the causes of poverty and misfortune and how social problems can be solved); and (6) Diversity Attitudes (respondents describe their attitudes toward diversity and their interest in relating to culturally different people. Internal consistencies for each scale reported by Moely et al. (2002) ranged from .69 to .88, and test-retest reliabilities for each scale ranged from .56 to .81. This scale has a strong level of reliability (α = .93) among the current student group.

The Faculty Practicum/Internship Advisor Survey, designed by the researchers, was used to inquire about faculty views of the practicum/internship program. Faculty rated their level of satisfaction with their role as an advisor (e.g., "How satisfied are you with your role as a practicum/internship advisor?") and the program (e.g., "How satisfied are you with the practicum/internship program?") on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*unsatisfied*) to 5 (*extremely satisfied*). These two questions have a strong level of reliability (α = .99). Faculty also answered three open-ended items: (1) "Describe the challenges you encountered as an advisor"; (2) "What could be done to assist you in this role as an advisor?"; and (3) "What suggestions do you have to improve the program?"

The Multicultural Counseling Inventory-for Educators (MCI), developed by Sodowsky, Taffe, Gutkin, and Wise (1994), measured cultural competence on four scales: (1) Awareness (respondents assess the degree of their cultural awareness), (2) Knowledge (respondents assess the degree of their cultural knowledge), (3) Skills (respondents assess the degree of their cultural skills), and (4) Relationship (respondents assess their interactional process and relationships with others who differ from them). Cronbach's coefficient alpha for each scale ranged from .68 to .80. This scale has a strong level of reliability (α = .81) among the current student group.

The Pro-Black Scale and Anti-Black Scale, developed by Katz and Hass (1988), measured positive and negative components of people's contemporary racial attitudes. The Pro-/Anti-Black scale, a 20-item self-report measure, yields scores on two subscales: (1) Anti-Black Scale (respondents indicate higher prejudicial attitudes towards Blacks), and (2) Pro-Black Scale (respondents indicate less prejudicial attitudes toward Blacks). Items are added together to produce two separate subscale scores. Intercorrelations ranged from .16 to .52 (Katz & Hass, 1988). This scale has a moderate level of reliability (α = .41) among the current student group.

The Psychosocial Costs of Racism to Whites Scale (PCRW), developed by Spanierman and Heppner (2004), measured the racial attitudes on three scales: (1) White Empathetic Reactions Toward Racism (respondents assess the degree of their anger, sadness and other emotions in response to racism), (2) White Guilt (respondents evaluate the degree of shame and guilt regarding being White), and (3) Fear of Others (respondents assess the degree of apprehension toward others who are racially different). Cronbach's coefficient alpha for each scale ranged from .63 to .78. The White Empathetic Reactions Toward Racism and White Guilt subscales were used in this study and have moderate level of reliability (α = .63) among the current student group.

The Student Practicum/Internship Questionnaire, developed by the researchers, measured students' satisfaction with the placement site. Students rated their level of satisfaction with the placement site (e.g., this experience was directly related to my field of interest) on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (*not applicable*) to 5 (*agree strongly*). Students also answered open-ended questions that inquired about their professional knowledge and skills. The five open-ended items were: (1) "describe your responsibilities," (2) "describe the type of supervision you were provided as an intern," (3) "describe what you learned at your placement site," (4) "describe what you like the most and the least about your practicum," and (5) "explain if you would or would not recommend this placement site to another student." This scale has a moderate level of reliability (α = .84).

The Scale of Ethnocultural Empathy (SEE), developed by Wang et al. (2003), measured empathetic attitudes on four scales: (1) Empathetic Feeling and Expression (respondents evaluate their attitudes and feelings toward discriminatory experiences), (2) Empathetic Perspective Taking (respondents assess the degree to which they can understand the experiences of individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds), (3) Acceptance of Cultural Differences (respondents assess their degree of acceptance of individuals from different racial and ethnic groups), and (4) Empathetic Awareness (respondents evaluate their awareness and knowledge of individuals from different racial and ethnic groups). Cronbach's coefficient alpha for each scale ranged from .71 to .91. The Empathetic Feeling and Expression and Empathetic Awareness subscales were used in this study and have strong level of reliability (α = .84) among the current student group.

The Social Science Division Field Evaluation of Student Internship Checklist measured field supervisors' satisfaction with the student intern. Field supervisors assessed each intern's performance on knowledge, skills, and attitudes on a checklist with six categories ranging from 1 (*not applicable*) to 6 (*superior*). Field supervisors also responded to five open-ended items: (1) "Describe the tasks the intern has been assigned"; (2) "What knowledge and skills has the intern acquired as a result of the work experience in your organization?"; (3) "Has the intern made any outstanding contribution to the work of your organization?"; (4) "If you had the opportunity would you hire this intern for a position?"; and (5) "Which grade would you assign for the intern's performance?" This scale has a moderate level of reliability (α = .82).

The Field Supervisor of Student Intern Interview, designed by the researchers, was used to inquire about field supervisors' views of the student intern and the program. The four open-ended items included: (1) "Describe the knowledge or skills that the intern has

acquired during the practicum"; (2) "How would you evaluate this intern's performance?"; (3) "What areas should the intern work on to improve his/her knowledge, skills, and performance?"; and (4) "Describe your level of satisfaction with the program and the ways in which the program can be improved to assist you and your agency."

Procedure

A multi-method approach was used in this pilot assessment of student learning outcomes for 38 interns from the beginning to the end of the practicum/internship (P/I) program. This approach includes quantitative and qualitative data collection from different sources (i.e., students, faculty, and field supervisors) as shown in Table 1. The results were merged together to understand the transformation of

student development, and the qualitative data also were used to refine and extend the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2005).

All of the student interns met with the practicum/internship coordinator and were administered informed consent form and a pretest survey that included the Anti/Pro-Black, CASQ, MCI, PCRW, and SEE questionnaires before they began their fieldwork. Students completed the survey, placed it in a coded envelope, and gave it directly to the coordinator. Surveys took about 20 minutes to complete. Students met with the coordinator again at the end of the term. Students were given the field evaluation of student internship checklist, the student practicum/internship questionnaire, and the posttest survey. Students completed the posttest survey and the questionnaire after they completed their required field hours (100 or 200) and returned them to the coordinator,

Table 1
Student Views of the Practicum/Internship Program

Questions	Not Applicable %	Disagree Strongly %	Disagree Somewhat %	Agree Somewhat %	Agree Strongly %
1. This experience was directly related to my field of interest.	0	3	8	31	58
2. I was able to assume additional responsibility as my experience increased.	6	6	11	25	52
3. The work environment encouraged me to provide feedback and input.	0	8	11	36	45
4. I was treated as a professional by my supervisor.	0	0	17	25	58
5. The work I did was challenging and rewarding.	0	8	8	37	47
6. There was enough work to keep me busy.	0	14	8	31	47
7. I was explained information about the agency, clients, and services.	0	0	6	19	75
8. I feel that I am better prepared to enter the workforce and/or attend graduate school after this experience.	0	0	14	28	58
9. I engaged in helping behaviors at my placement.	6	0	0	33	61
10. I demonstrated cultural competence at my placement.	6	0	0	33	61
11. I was given a degree of autonomy.	6	6	11	19	58
12. I feel that I would get a good reference from this agency.	3	3	3	22	69

Field supervisors completed the field evaluation reviewed this information with the student, and sent it to the coordinator. The field supervisor survey return rate was 95%. Feedback from faculty practicum/internship advisors was gathered using an online survey. Practicum/Internship advisors had 30 days to complete the survey which took approximately five minutes to complete.

Results

Quantitative Data

A paired t-test was conducted on the Anti/Pro-Black, CASQ, MCI, PCRW, and SEE scores to measure differences in student attitudes and skills. Students increased their multicultural skills ($t = 6.23$, $p < .001$) from the beginning ($\chi = 18.30$) to the end ($\chi = 22.45$) of the term.

A one-way analysis of variance with Tukey post-hoc comparisons was conducted on Anti/Pro-Black, CASQ, MCI, PCRW, and SEE scores for students assigned to education, counseling, and physical therapy placement sites. Students assigned to physical therapy placement sites ($\chi = 29.91$, $\chi = 45.66$) had greater White Empathetic Reactions Toward Racism scores ($F[24] = 4.07$, $p < .05$) and Empathetic Feeling and Expression scores ($F[23] = 4.25$, $p < .05$) than those students assigned to education placement sites ($\chi = 23.60$; $\chi = 44.75$).

An independent t-test was calculated to measure differences in Anti/Pro-Black, CASQ, MCI, PCRW, and SEE scores between students who completed 100 hours (41%) and those students who completed 200 hours (59%) of fieldwork. Students who completed 100 hours ($\chi = .92$) had lower anti-Black racial attitudes ($t = 2.41$, $p < .05$) than those students who completed 200 hours ($\chi = -6.25$) of fieldwork. Students who completed 100 hours ($\chi = 30.36$) had higher White Empathetic Reactions Toward Racism scores ($t = 2.17$, $p < .05$) compared to those students who completed 200 hours ($\chi = 26.33$) of fieldwork.

Descriptive data was calculated on student ($n = 38$), field supervisor ($n = 31$) and faculty advisor ($n = 6$) views of the program. Eighty-three percent of students rated their placement site as excellent or very good as shown in Table 2. Most (79%) field supervisors also rated students' work as outstanding on post-surveys as shown in Appendix A. Feedback from faculty advisors similarly indicate that most were extremely (87%) or very (13%) satisfied with the program during the spring of 2009.

Qualitative Data

Data gathered from field supervisors, students, and practicum advisors were analyzed using a case study approach to evaluate the practicum/internship program (Creswell, 1998). Open coding consisted of categorizing and naming the data according to the theoretical concepts of experiential education (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Sweitzer & King, 2009). Personal development refers to responses that reflect discipline knowledge, while professional development refers to responses that reflect career interests, and civic development refers to responses that reflect an understanding of racial disparities or social injustices in the community (Sweitzer & King, 2009). Data from 31 interviews underwent an item-level analysis. Eight categories emerged from the data as shown in Appendix A.

Axial coding consisted of systematically analyzing faculty, student, and supervisor responses to open-ended questions using topical codes based on personal, professional, and civic development. Coders counted the number of responses for each category and divided them by the number of responses to obtain the percentage for each category as shown in Appendix B. Topical codes were further compared to categories that emerged from interview data using the constant comparative method. Responses were grouped into three major themes that describe the impact of the program on student development, the contributions that students make at the placement site, and suggestions for program improvement

The first theme that emerged from the data focuses on the impact of the placement sites on the student development. All field supervisors felt that student interns acquired a deeper understanding of the psychological content in terms of psychological disorders, therapeutic techniques, and treatment modalities. Almost all (95%) of the field supervisors evaluated students as having strong interpersonal and communication skills. They appraised students as diligent, reliable, and responsible. Most (84%) field supervisors felt that students related well to the clients and were sensitive to their cultural and developmental needs.

The second theme describes student contributions at the placement site. All students conducted interviews, facilitated groups or implemented activities, and completed paperwork required for treatment or services. Almost all (94%) field supervisors felt that the students' fieldwork assisted the organization to fulfill its needs.

The final theme captured the added value of the practicum/internship program. Thirty-eight percent of students acquired a position at the placement site after they completed their internship. All field supervisors requested to have another student intern for the following semester. Twenty-six percent of field supervisors made recommendations so that students could improve their skills, and few (14%) supervisors and faculty made suggestions to improve the program.

Table 2
Field Supervisor Views of Student Interns

Questions	Unsatisfactory %	Poor %	Adequate %	Good %	Superior %	Do Not Know %
Knowledge						
1. Specific to job assignment	0	0	3	55	42	0
2. Understanding of organization's policies	0	0	3	47	44	6
3. Judgment in performing tasks	0	0	6	30	64	0
4. Overall ability to learn	0	0	3	23	71	3
5. Overall willingness to learn	0	0	0	25	75	0
Skills						
1. Written communication	0	0	3	22	36	39
2. Ability to communicate verbally	0	0	6	22	69	3
3a. Ability to work with colleagues	0	0	6	19	75	0
3b. Ability to work with clients	0	0	0	28	69	3
4. Organization and use of time	0	3	3	36	50	8
5a. Technical skills – rapport	0	0	3	39	55	3
5b. Technical skills – counseling	0	0	0	29	34	37
5c. Technical skills – information giving and getting	0	3	6	23	62	6
Attitudes						
1. Desire for more knowledge and skill	0	3	3	19	75	0
2. Ability to take supervision	0	0	8	8	84	0
3. Relations with co-workers	0	0	0	17	80	3
4. Dependability	0	0	14	8	78	0
5. Deportment	0	0	7	14	65	14

Field supervisors requested to have the same student for a full year instead of one semester.

Discussion

The current study adds to the experiential learning research. This is one of the first studies to use a multi-method approach to demonstrate that participation in practicum/internship program influences student personal, civic, and professional development and that their fieldwork makes a difference in the community. The use of quantitative and qualitative assessments with student interns, field supervisors, and faculty advisors assured the reliability of findings beyond that possible if only one method or data source had been considered.

The first objective was to measure differences in student learning. Students improved their multicultural skills from the beginning to the end of the program. This finding is consistent with previous research that suggests students acquire cultural competence through participation in experiential learning (Gushue, 2004; Simons et al., 2011).

Students who completed 100 hours of fieldwork were less prejudiced and had greater levels of anger and sadness in their empathetic responses to racism compared to those students who completed 200 hours of fieldwork. These findings are consistent with previous research on pro-minority attitudes and empathetic responses (Gushue, 2004; Spanierman & Heppner, 2004; Wang et al., 2003). The quality of intercultural interactions between White students and culturally-diverse recipients either challenge students to reformulate their attitudes, or they reinforce their beliefs (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007; Dunlap, Scoggin, Green, & Davi, 2007). It is possible that students who spent less time at a placement site engaged in interracial interactions with recipients that contradicted their assumptions and challenged them to rethink their attitudes. The quality of interracial interactions between students and recipients rather than

the amount of time of fieldwork is a key component for fostering cultural competence.

Moreover, placement sites may encourage students to think about how race and class influence their interactions with recipients (Dunlap et al., 2007; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Students who completed their fieldwork at a physical therapy placement site had higher empathetic reaction scores compared to those students who completed their fieldwork at an education placement site. Exposure to culturally diverse clients diagnosed with an array of physical and psychological disorders at physical therapy clinic may have provided students with an opportunity to take an empathetic perspective of oppression and develop an understanding of their own thoughts and feelings about diversity.

The second objective was to describe the knowledge and skills that students acquire through participation in a practicum/internship program. All students felt they gained a deeper understanding of the psychological content, and most were able to connect their fieldwork to psychological theories and principles. Almost all students thought that fieldwork enhanced their cultural competence and career interests. Most students learned the terminology that was relevant to their field of interest (i.e., field speak), the requirements and responsibilities for professional roles, and time management skills. Students appraised their fieldwork as challenging and felt better prepared to enter the workforce and/or attend graduate school, consistent with previous research on experiential learning (Cedercreutz & Cates, 2010).

Consistent with student reports, most field supervisors appraised students as acquiring a deeper understanding of the psychological content and practicing cultural competence in their fieldwork. Almost all field supervisors appraised students as good or superior in their ability to work well or develop a rapport with others and to use sound judgment. Almost all field supervisors thought that students were reliable and dependable and would hire them if given the opportunity. Few supervisors made recommendations for program improvement, but they did request to have the same student for an entire year rather than one semester.

A final objective was to detect similarities and differences in responses about the value of the practicum/internship program from field supervisors, students, and faculty advisors. The consistency of field supervisor and student comments suggests that the program contributes to student personal, civic and professional development. Students developed a deeper understanding of the psychological content and acquired interpersonal and multicultural skills. Students also gained professional knowledge about workplace behaviors and were better prepared for future work or graduate school, which is consistent with previous

studies (Aldas et al., 2010; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Both supervisors and students felt that fieldwork assisted the organization. For example, students conducted interviews or assessments, implemented therapeutic activities, and completed paperwork in mental health and drug and alcohol programs that were underfunded and understaffed. In addition, students who provided behavior modification services for children diagnosed with autism were specifically recruited by an agency that had to reduce in-home services due to the economy. Most students felt that their interactions with clients and observing them achieve personal goals were the best aspect of the program.

Faculty and student suggestions to improve the practicum/internship program focused on logistical issues of the program such as time, money, and paperwork. For instance, faculty challenges as a P/I advisor included student attendance at practicum meetings. In contrast, field supervisor concerns were about students' professional development. Field supervisors suggested that students acquire as much experience as possible so they can learn to trust their clinical judgment and further develop their professional identity.

The consistency of quantitative and qualitative data from students, field supervisors, and faculty suggest that the practicum/internship program is beneficial for all involved, congruent with experiential learning research (Cedercreutz & Cates, 2010; Stichman & Farkas, 2005). The practicum/internship program may be a promising experiential learning pedagogy that teaches students to be cultural-competent thinkers. It may also be an effective method for strengthening university-community partnerships by building and sustaining relationships with local agencies and beyond to organizations in the broader university community.

There are a few limitations associated with this study that prevent us from generalizing results beyond our student sample of White females. The undergraduate student population is also demographically homogenous. Most participants came from middle-class backgrounds and were the first-generation to attend a four-year college. Participants worked in physical therapy clinics, mental health and drug and alcohol centers, child care, and public schools, and these field experiences are unique and unlikely to be replicated in research elsewhere. The use of surveys, checklists, and open-ended questions does not prevent participant bias in written materials. There is the potential for self-selection, testing, and social desirability effects to be associated with participant responses that were collected with multiple methods at different points in time. Finally, the lack of randomization methods precludes us from disentangling the effects from the academic content and the field context on participants' knowledge and skills.

Additional research is necessary to understand the impact of experiential learning on student development beyond our sample of White females enrolled at a teaching university. A cross-sectional study with large groups of diverse undergraduate males and females enrolled at public and private institutions would serve as a method to advance this area of research. Also, assessment of program components such the academic requirements and the type of fieldwork would identify the influence of these components on student development. This type of research would disentangle the effects from the curriculum content and the field context and allow researchers to generalize the impact from experiential learning on student development, which may be particularly useful for higher education institutions whose missions are predicated on civic engagement.

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