

A Pilot Study of a Criminal Justice Service-Learning Course: The Value of a Multicultural Approach

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This article provides a description and evaluation of a service-learning juvenile justice course designed to broaden university students' attitudes toward diversity issues. Diversity service learning integrates academic learning with community service by providing students with opportunities to learn about social disparities associated with diverse communities. University students participated in service learning with at-risk or justice-involved youth from a predominantly low-income, minority community. The goals of the service-learning course were to broaden university students' multicultural attitudes and to enhance knowledge and skills. Using qualitative analysis, our goal attainment evaluation indicated success in the following areas: the majority of university students experienced a reduction of stereotypes, found learning about differences valuable, developed attitudes for addressing delinquency that were sensitive to the youths' experiences, learned to communicate and interact cross-culturally, and bonded with the service recipients. In some cases, however, the program appeared to reinforce students' stereotypes of the inner city.

Cultural-based service learning, also known as multicultural or diversity service learning, is a pedagogical approach that integrates academic learning with community service by providing students with opportunities to learn about social disparities associated with diverse communities (Boyle-Baise, 2005; Waldstein & Reiher, 2001). It also serves as a vehicle through which students examine their personal cultural orientations, gain a better understanding of diversity, and critically analyze their perceptions of the social injustices that may affect the community (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007). The purpose of this pilot study is to describe a criminal justice course that includes both service learning and diversity components. Diversity courses are commonly offered in criminal justice undergraduate programs, yet there is a paucity of research on the impact of criminal justice diversity courses on students' attitudes and behaviors. Information on how well students are prepared for negotiating a multicultural workplace is unavailable, in spite of the range of multicultural competencies necessary for undergraduate students preparing for careers in criminal justice. This pedagogy is particularly relevant to the discipline of criminal justice (Calathes, 1994), in view of the fact that over half of all U.S. jail inmates (Minton, 2011) and state and federal prisoners (West, Sobel, & Greenman, 2010) are either Black or Hispanic and disproportionately economically disadvantaged (Reiman & Leighton, 2009).

Investigations on cultural-based service-learning courses have noted both improvements and reductions in students' diversity and social justice attitudes that result from their service experiences with recipients at placement sites located in culturally-diverse communities. Studies of criminal justice student attitudes are limited to a discussion on stereotypes and indicate that service-learning participation contributes

to a reduction in stereotypes among service recipients (Hirschinger-Blank & Markowitz, 2006; Holsinger & Ayers, 2004; Holsinger & Crowther, 2005; Pompa, 2002; Starks, Harrison, & Denhardt, 2011; Vigorita, 2002). A few indicated that as a consequence of the program, college students learned to view the justice-involved participants as status peers in that setting (Hirschinger-Blank & Markowitz, 2006; Pompa, 2004).

Research in the fields of education and psychology points to improvements in students' diversity attitudes that result from service experiences with community recipients (Brody & Wright, 2004; Hess, Lanig, & Vaughan, 2007). Scholars suggest that service learning provides students with an opportunity for informal interracial contact with recipients, and these interactions allow them to rethink assumptions and reformulate attitudes about diverse recipients (Brody & Wright, 2004; Quaye & Harper, 2007). Eyler, Giles, and Braxton (1997) conducted a pre-post survey with 1500 students at 20 colleges and universities and discovered service learning influences students' attitudes, values, and skills.

Others propose that students retain their stereotypical attitudes and beliefs after engaging in interracial interactions with recipients that reinforce prejudicial attitudes or fail to negate their cognitive biases (Bell, Horn, & Roxas, 2007; Dunlap, Scoggin, Green, & Davi, 2007). Boyle-Baise and Langford (2004) observed that students enrolled in a social justice seminar acquired limited information about their own privilege or oppression from the beginning to the end of service. Baldwin et al. (2007) similarly found that some students improved while others maintained their attitudes about the children they tutored. Failure to find effects of cultural diversity curricula on students' diversity attitudes may reflect a limitation in course content. Service-learning courses

that do not include race, class, or culture content will not challenge students to think about how race and class influence their interactions with recipients; therefore, service experiences may reinforce the “power dynamic” between White students and diverse recipients (Moely, McFarland, Miron, Mercer, & Ilustre, 2002, p. 24).

Program Development: Juvenile Justice Service-Learning Course at Widener University

During the past decade there has been a dramatic shift in demographic characteristics (e.g., racial/ethnic) of students in elementary, secondary, and post-secondary schools (Phunstog, 1998). Institutions of higher education have incorporated cultural-responsive pedagogies to address the learning needs of this diverse student body (American Psychological Association, 2003; National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, 2008). Widener University’s strategic goals reflect this trend: one goal is to “develop a university community whose diversity enriches the lives of all members and where our students are prepared for living in a pluralistic and ever-changing world” (Widener University, 2011, p. 1). The faculty is encouraged to provide opportunities that expose students to a wide variety of experiences that foster cultural competence, including service learning. The learning outcome of the service-learning course described in this paper is one of cultural competency and is consistent with Widener University’s strategy goal and commitment to community engagement.

Widener’s commitment to civic engagement contributed to the development and evaluation of the course described here. In 2004 the University developed an Academic Service-Learning Faculty Development program to train faculty interested in teaching service-learning courses. The instructor (and author of this paper) initially developed this course during participation as an Academic Service-Learning fellow. Additional support was obtained from Project Pericles, a non-profit organization that partners with universities, including Widener, to foster educational programs focused on civic engagement.

Service-Learning Program Description

The service-learning component was integrated into the upper-level course Juvenile Delinquency and Juvenile Justice, a three-credit course that provides an overview of the literature on juvenile delinquency theory and the juvenile justice system. The class requires students to participate in 15 hours of service learning beyond in-class time or complete a comprehensive written case study.

Service-Learning Sites

Most recipients of the service learning resided in an urban school district that consistently ranks low on standardized assessment performance indicators (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2002). In 2008, the Chester-Upland school district ranked 104th out of 105 districts using classroom quality indicators (e.g., standardized tests; Sweeney, 2008). The graduation rate is 50% (Pennsylvania Department of Education, 2011).

At Chester High school, aside from sports, there are few extracurricular activities; there is no drama club and no school newspaper. There have been eight high school principals over a four-year period. Chester has become the prototype of what ails urban America. The population of Chester is predominantly African American/Black (77%), with 19% White and 5% Latino or Hispanic. The average household income is \$25,700 (United States Census, 2000a) which is one-half of the county average (United States Census, 2000b). Chester accounts for 67% of all homicides and 35% all violent crime in Delaware County but only consists of 8% of the county’s population (United States Department of Justice, 2007).

During the spring of 2008, university students participated in service learning at one of four sites. First, university students tutored high school youth at Chester High School who were enrolled in an after school program known as youth court. The basis of youth court is that high school youth volunteers serve in the roles of jurors, bailiffs, and attorneys for their offending peers. Volunteer high school youth have the opportunity to learn about citizenship skills, about the functions of the criminal justice system, and about youth in trouble. Offending youth have the opportunity to gain an understanding of the impact of their behavior on the victim and to make amends. The message of the court is that we are here to help the offender to succeed in making better future choices. Participation in youth court is an ideal learning experience for volunteer high school youth and undergraduate students. Meetings between university and high school students focused on completing homework assignments, studying for tests, and talking informally about a variety of topics including family life, peer pressure, careers, prison, university life, and the Chester community. University students also observed youth court hearings and participated in training sessions led by law school students.

At the second site, university students tutored youth at one of the Chester elementary or middle schools. Students were assigned to a particular classroom and served as an assistant to the teacher. In some cases students worked one-on-one with youth; in others they worked in groups.

The third site was the county detention center where students served as positive role models for detained youth. The male students and detained youth played sports while the female students and youth spent time on the unit playing games. (Access to gym facilities by the female youth was scheduled during times outside of the students' scheduled visits.) Other activities included informal discussions on day-to-day life in detention, effective decision-making, issues related to school and college, and employment and family relationships.

The last site was a program for youth on probation. The university student was paired up with a probation officer and assisted with home and school visits.

Program and Training

One purpose of the program was for the students and youth to bond in mutually instructive and supportive relationships. The formation of this relationship is a fundamental component of our program because it forms the basis for empathy, mutual sharing and learning. This relationship would allow both student and youth to act as teacher and student. Because many youth in this community lack supportive relationships with positive role models, the students serve in this role. Simultaneously, the youth educate the students on issues related to at-risk behaviors, delinquency, and inner-city schools and neighborhoods. With the information provided by the youth, the students would have the opportunity to practice integrating academic learning with guided hands-on experience and structured reflection.

Three training sessions for the university students were held early in the semester. The first session was conducted during a 75-minute class room period by a veteran teacher of 30 years in the Chester school system. The second was conducted by detention center staff during a 90-minute tour of the center. Both sessions focused on understanding the backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of at-risk and detained youth including such issues as growing up in resource-poor neighborhoods (e.g., impact on educational and academic delays, availability of drugs, social norms), peer pressure, and psychological issues including abandonment, depression and anger. The third 30-minute session was conducted by students who previously participated in the service-learning program the prior year. They shared their field experiences, challenges, and benefits of the program. Students were matched with a placement site by time availability and interest by the end of the second week of class.

Course Material

Academic topics covered in the classroom included adolescent development, theories of delinquency, current juvenile justice system policies, characteristics

of effective prevention and intervention programs, juvenile corrections, and the relevance of diversity to understanding and working with at-risk and justice-involved youth. Additional course readings focused on differences among cultures (e.g., communication) and the concept of white privilege (McIntosh, 2008). Experiential activities, talking circles, and video clips were used to stimulate reflection and discussion pertaining to diversity.

Methodology

Sample

Thirty-six university students (17 males, 19 females) participated in the service-learning experience (see Table 1 for sample characteristics). Of the service-learning students, all were full-time students. Predominantly representing the social sciences, their majors (including double majors) were Criminal Justice ($n = 30$), Political Science ($n = 6$), Psychology ($n = 3$), Sociology ($n = 1$) and Anthropology ($n = 1$). The majority were White ($n = 31$) with three African American and two multiracial students. The students ranged in ages from 18 to 23 with a mean of 20. They were evenly divided between sophomores ($n = 15$) and juniors ($n = 16$); two were freshman and three were seniors. Fifty-three percent of the students had a college grade point average of 3.0 or above. More than half ($n = 21$) had jobs with most ($n = 18$) working between 10 to 30 hours per week. Eight students reportedly had taken a service-learning course in past semesters, and an additional four were taking a second service-learning course in the current semester. Of the service learners, over half ($n = 21$) participated at one of the public elementary or middle school sites, seven at the detention site, seven at the Chester High School Youth Court, and one at the probation site.

The university students differed from the youth in race, class, and/or culture. In contrast, university students were predominantly White, came from middle-class backgrounds, and usually were the first-generation to attend a four-year college.

Concepts and Program Goals

For this goal attainment analysis we utilized a conceptual framework that consists of three broad areas: multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills. These components are commonly used in multicultural training (e.g., Campinha-Bacote, 1991; Howard-Hamilton, 2000; Howard-Hamilton, Richardson, & Shuford, 1998). We employ an adapted version of a multicultural framework used by Pope and Reynolds (1997, see Appendix) as the basis for this paper. They include the following goals organized under awareness, knowledge, and skills.

Table 1
Sample Characteristics

Characteristic	Category	<i>n</i>
Gender	Male	17
	Female	19
Major	Criminal Justice	30
	Political Science	6
	Psychology	3
	Sociology	1
	Anthropology	1
Race	White	31
	African American	3
	Biracial	02
Year in School	Freshman	2
	Sophomore	15
	Junior	16
	Senior	3
Service-Learning Site	Public elementary or middle school	21
	Detention center	7
	Chester High School Youth Court	7
	Probation	1
Mean Age		20

Multicultural awareness focuses on attitudes and includes: (1) a willingness to self-examine, and when necessary, challenge and change, one's own assumptions and biases; (2) a belief that differences are valuable and that learning about others who are culturally different is necessary; (3) the relevancy of learning about diversity in a juvenile delinquency course; and (4) and whether or not the students' perspectives on causes of delinquency changed over the course of the semester.

Goals for multicultural knowledge include: (1) identification of differences in cultural norms; (2) knowledge about the ways that cultural differences affect verbal and nonverbal communication; (3) knowledge of oppression in the form of institutional barriers which limit access to, and success in, higher education; and (4) an understanding of White privilege.

Multicultural skills allow for effective and meaningful interaction. They include (1) the ability to communicate across differences and interact cross-culturally, and (2) the capability to empathize and connect with individuals who are different from themselves.

Research Design, Procedures and Qualitative Measures

The University Institutional Review Board approved all study procedures. Starting with day one of the course and forward, the professor worked to establish norms of open discussion, welcoming

divergent opinions. This perspective and the importance of respecting different perspectives were stated in the syllabus. The students' desks were purposefully organized in a U shape to foster discussion. The classroom norms likely minimized the risk of students falsely reporting overly undesirable or desirable attitudes in their written work.

We chose the case study research design to permit an in-depth analysis of the service-learning program (the "case") within the context of real life (Yin, 2004). We adopted Pope and Reynold's (1997) conceptual paradigm of cultural competence prior to starting this study. The Appendix includes a description of our final conceptual framework.

Our framework includes only those goals identified by Pope and Reynolds (1997) relevant to our course material as noted in the Appendix. We extended the a priori theoretical model to include additional multicultural competencies relevant to our specific class. We chose these categories post data collection.

We assessed the goals using three sources of data including student journals, a quiz, and final exam using a content analysis. Subsequently, we used the data analytic technique of pattern matching the students' responses against the pattern initially specified (Yin, 2004). For example, for the first goal under the concept of awareness, we speculated that students would demonstrate a willingness to self-examine and, when necessary, challenge their own biases. For this goal a match was made for students who demonstrated this willingness. For several goals requiring more than a

yes-no response (e.g., causes of delinquency) we used the constant comparative method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to identify and post code themes present in the data. Two coders content analyzed the qualitative data according to the categories and subcategories of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills, and they reconciled coding inconsistencies.

One benefit of the case study is the use of multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2004). Three sources of data were collected to evaluate the impact of the diversity and service-learning experience for University students. For the first data source students were required to write one journal entry for each day of service. Sample journal entries required students to describe their expectations of their service-learning experience, to describe the culture of the youth, to identify similarities and differences between the youth's culture and their own culture, and to describe how their views of working with delinquent or at-risk youth changed over the course of the semester.

The second source included the following quiz questions on diversity: (1) What if any is the value or benefit of diversity within a community? (2) What if any is a drawback of diversity within a community? (3) What is the relevance of diversity to a course on juvenile delinquency?

The third source included the following final exam questions: (1) "Describe three examples of what you learned in the field that are consistent with or contradict what you learned in the classroom"; (2) "Describe your pre-diversity course attitudes regarding how we as a society addressed delinquency"; (3) "Describe your attitudes now"; and (5) "Do you feel it is important for juvenile justice professionals to understand different cultures in order to best help delinquency?" The exam questions were distributed to the students one week prior to the exam in order to mitigate the impact of test anxiety and to give the students additional time to develop well thought-out responses.

Results

In this section we assess whether inclusion of a diversity pedagogical component combined with service-learning led to goal attainment. The content analysis of the student's written work is presented in accordance with the concepts measuring awareness, knowledge and skills. These major themes are presented below.

Multicultural Awareness

The first goal for multicultural awareness includes the willingness to self-examine, and when necessary, challenge and change one's own assumptions and biases. The process of breaking down stereotypes involves

cognitive dissonance or a challenge to one's fundamental assumptions. Consistent with service-learning research (Eyler & Giles, 1999), we found that personal attachments between students and youth provided an opportunity for such dissonance to emerge. Students were asked to reflect on assumptions they had about the youth prior to the first meeting and whether these assumptions were confirmed and/or disconfirmed. Most students ($n = 29$) demonstrated a change in their preconceived stereotypical images of Chester youth. At the start of the semester the university students thought the youth would "act tough" and "out of control." The students' assumptions were shaped by the media and the community's reputation for violence, drug dealing, and gangs. One student wrote, "People make the kids out like criminals . . . just because of the area they grew up in. I learned that I should not judge a group of people just because of a stereotype about them" (student 7).

The university students unanimously expressed surprise by the "how smart the [High School] students are," "with potential," and "bright minds," all of whom "had dreams of becoming everything from nurses to authors." Similar comments were echoed by the students who worked with detained youth. One wrote,

The first assumption I had about the kids were they were all worthless and deserved to be locked up for good. . . . If you would take the fence away you would think you were playing [basketball] with great kids. . . . I saw nothing but respect from the kids to the staff." (student 47)

In almost all cases, the students and youth connected; a few youth even met with university students outside of the service-learning activities at campus sports events.

The capacity to move beyond stereotypes and to view the individual just like any other "*kid*" is considered a form of transformational learning that may serve as a platform for further growth (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 142). This type of learning was demonstrated by the majority of students ($n = 23$) in response to journal questions focusing on their own adolescence and the youth's behaviors. One wrote, "I feel that I was very similar to the youth. . . . We both acted on impulse, . . . my act didn't turn out as bad as some of their situations, . . . it very easily could of. Some of us are luckier than others" (student 26).

We also asked the students to reflect on assumptions the youth may have had about them. Sixteen of the students assumed the youth would view them as "rich, White, [and] smart" which would make bonding with the youth difficult. In some cases the students' assumptions reflected reality. One student wrote,

[The youth] said that he had thought [I went to college] because that is where all the rich, White

kids go to school. . . . No one he knew went to college. . . . He laughed at me when I said that as long as he worked hard he could go to college. (student 15).

The second goal focuses on a belief that differences are valuable and learning about others who are culturally different is necessary. All students pointed to the importance of learning about diversity in this course. They acknowledged that they did not come from diverse communities and that spending time with predominantly African Americans fostered their understanding of the importance of diversity. When asked about diversity, a common theme (33%, $n = 12$) focused on learning to respect the “youth’s individual personalities” and valuing “how unique they [the youth] are.” They also expressed that learning about differences would help them better prepare for a criminal justice career; they would more effectively communicate with the youth and, gain a deeper understanding of reasons underlying delinquency. This point was shown in the number of students ($n = 32$) who agreed that it is important for juvenile justice professionals to understand different cultures to best help delinquents. One student asserted:

When people do not have an understanding of different cultures, discrimination may result. . . . A majority of attorneys and judges in the United States are White men. Without an understanding of different cultures these White men may judge defendants based on their own White-privileged standards. (student 9)

When asked, all students agreed that diversity benefits a community by reducing misunderstandings and stereotypes, increasing effective communication, interaction, open-mindedness or mutual respect.

The majority of students ($n = 28$) identified drawbacks to having a diverse community including misunderstandings and discrimination. They perceived the presence of only a few minorities in a majority community as ripe for conflict. Six students acknowledged the challenges associated with a diverse community, but that the process of working through the obstacles could in the long run reduce discrimination.

For the last component of awareness, over half of the students ($n = 19$) said their attitudes toward the causes of delinquency changed over the course of the semester. Students who offered their pre-service perspectives attributed delinquency or misbehaviors to “bad kids” who “intentionally chose to be delinquent.” Over time this perspective gave way to causes that focused on broader factors beyond the individual youth, including institutional barriers (e.g., resource-poor schools, few community-based activities, poor police-

community relations; $n = 28$), followed by mothers who seemingly do not care; broken homes; lack of parental supervisor, guidance, discipline or/and attention ($n = 22$); peer pressure ($n = 10$); and the absence of a fully developed brain, which is characteristic of adolescents ($n = 2$).

Students were asked to describe their attitudes regarding how society addressed delinquency before taking this class and then to describe their attitudes at the end of the semester. Sixteen students initially responded that society addressed delinquency by locking up youth. After the course, they advocated for rehabilitation and community-based programs. Five initially perceived the system as too lenient. Of this group, four advocated for rehabilitation and one reported supporting a more punitive approach. An additional three students reported that they had not thought about the question prior to the course and by the end of the semester pointed to the need for more rehabilitation. Two initially blamed the youth for delinquency and by the end pointed to environmental factors as important.

When asked at the end of the semester to identify ways to prevent delinquency, most students advocated for after-school and community-based programs ($n = 24$), an improved school system, positive role models/mentors ($n = 15$), balanced and restorative justice-based programs ($n = 12$), Operation Cease-fire programs ($n = 9$; Kennedy, Braga, & Piehl, 2011), and family counseling or rehabilitation ($n = 6$). Three students described punitive measures (e.g., detention and waiver) as necessary, and of this group two also reported the need for rehabilitation programming.

Multicultural Knowledge

The first goal includes students’ ability to identify norms and values learned during the service-learning experience that are different from their own. All of the students provided examples regarding the lives of the youth. These include having a parent in jail, parents with non-traditional jobs (e.g., pole dancer), public schools that resemble a prison environment, playing drug deals with monopoly money in school, the use of Ebonics, a community surrounded by drugs and violence, youth who feel desensitized to violence, eight year olds with childcare responsibilities, the absence of family support and parental supervision, and teachers who tolerate cursing and talking back.

One-third of the students ($n = 12$) described the importance of respect in the lives of the youth, as described by Elijah Anderson’s (1999) Code of the Street paradigm reviewed in class. Anderson (1999) proposes that the Code of the Street prevalent in the African American inner city is an adaptation to a lack of faith in the institutions which provide personal

security and safety. The Code of the Street is the value system that justifies and legitimizes interpersonal violence as a means of grievance resolution in the inner city (Anderson, 1999). A core element of the code is the mandate for violence in retaliation for a perceived slight or expression of disrespect. One student explained:

Before this course I believed delinquency was mainly caused by poor decisions and bad attitudes by the youth. . . . Now my views have changed. . . . The youth are more willing to fight because they have to protect themselves and they need to earn a sense of respect. (student 35)

The second goal regarding multicultural knowledge focuses on institutional barriers. Most students ($n = 32$) pointed to systemic factors that limit access to, and success in, higher education of oppressed groups including overcrowded classrooms, a shortage of books and school supplies, used standardized test booklets with missing pages, burned out teachers, lack of running bathroom water with no soap and clogged toilets, and no recess. One student wrote: "For most of these children school is uninteresting. . . . [W]ho works well in this environment, and who enjoys a daily routine that is plagued with so much derogation?" (student 11). Other institutional barriers identified include a paucity of community activities and an underfunded educational or juvenile justice system. Almost all the students ($n = 31$) described the youth as lagging behind academically.

Consistent with findings on institutional barriers, one-third ($n = 12$) responded that Social Disorganization Theory best explains delinquency. The students described Chester as a victim of "deindustrialization with few jobs," "a lack of collective efficacy," "police neglect," and "burned out buildings."

In spite of the challenges faced by the teachers and program staff, over a third of the students ($n = 13$) described the teachers or program personnel as "caring" and "committed." One student described a teacher who "brings in calculators, rulers, pencils, and other school supplies because she said if she doesn't . . . who will?" (student 11).

Consistent with previous findings (Hirschinger-Blank & Markowitz, 2006; Hirschinger-Blank, Simons, & Kenyon, 2009), university students noticed that the youth were significantly behind academically compared to themselves, and their own school provided more opportunities for academic learning and afterschool activities than the Chester schools. One student described:

I remember just looking into the eyes of a few students . . . my heart broke as many were filled

with an inevitable sadness. They seemed tired and worn out at the age of eight or nine. . . . It was through this service-learning experience that I came to the realization of how grateful I should be for where I live, the opportunities that I was given to do well in school. (student 3)

This opportunity for comparison deepened the students' understanding of the consequences of poverty. Still, the University students were impressed by the youth's strengths. Over half ($n = 19$) described the youth as "intelligent," "respectful" with a desire, and for some an "eagerness," to learn. Half the students reported having "fun" working with the youth, and half described the experience as "rewarding." Almost all students ($n = 29$) reported that they helped the youth or the teachers.

The third aspect of multicultural knowledge focuses on the ways that culture affects communication styles. Common themes focused on differences in the use of eye contact and verbal expressiveness ($n = 16$). Consistent with course readings, students described African American youth and teachers who seemed much more comfortable than White students with high levels of emotional expressiveness (e.g., loudness).

For the fourth component of multicultural knowledge, one-third of the students ($n = 12$) demonstrated an understanding of the concept of White privilege. One student (#9) explained: "A majority of the [youth], teachers, and administrators that I saw were African American. Despite this, almost all of the pictures in the hallway, and in the second grade classroom, displayed White people" (student 9). Two of these students showed a deeper appreciation for White privilege by sharing an awareness of their own unearned White privilege. The student continued, "I, having White privilege, was able to enter this minority school, and take it for granted that I would see pictures of people who look just like me" (student 9). Two students were resistant to seeing White privilege. One student wrote:

I don't agree with [White privilege]. I feel that at this point in time everyone has equal opportunities. Maybe even reversed compared to how it used to be, because affirmative action makes it harder for Whites to get into college and easier for minorities. (student 5)

The majority of students did not mention White privilege in their written work.

Multicultural Skills

Multicultural skills allow for effective and meaningful interaction. Most students ($n = 30$)

described their ability to effectively communicate or interact with youth across cultural differences. One student wrote:

I had to learn how to communicate and relate to [the youth] which was difficult because they were so different [from me]. By the end of the semester, I had a much easier time communicating with them. . . . In the beginning I did not know what to say to the kids to get them to talk to me. However, over time, I grew aware of their interests and was able to effectively break the ice. (student 13)

Most students ($n = 32$) described their ability to empathize and bond with youth: the youth “opened up to me,” “responded to my advice,” “wished I was their permanent teacher,” “confided in me,” and “trusted me to help them.”

Discussion

The service-learning course described here provided the opportunity for students to develop relationships with individuals different from themselves. The formation of bonds between the students and youth is consistent with previous research on service-learning experiences in criminal justice (Hirschinger-Blank & Markowitz, 2006; Pompa, 2002; Vigorita, 2002). Through working with the youth first-hand the students acquired personal evidence that contradicted stereotypes. As with past research (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hirschinger-Blank & Markowitz, 2006; Root, Callahan, & Sepanski, 2002), most students expressed a willingness to examine their preconceived notions, acknowledged their biases, and changed their perspectives. Their initial assumptions that youth would be difficult to work with and unmotivated (Schultz, Neyhart, & Reck, 1996) gave way to perceptions of smart children who wanted to learn in school or good kids who made mistakes.

Over time the students developed the perception of equality between themselves and the youth (Boyle-Baise & Kilbane, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hirschinger-Blank & Markowitz, 2006; Holsinger & Ayers, 2004; Holsinger & Crowther, 2005; Pompa, 2002; Rockquemore & Schaffer, 2000; Starks et al., 2011; Vigorita, 2002). This may be due to service-learning activities that promoted non-traditional power relationships between students and youth (Bell et al., 2007). At the youth court site, for example, the students worked side-by-side with the youth in training sessions led by law school students. Also, during one youth court session, the students observed a mock hearing during which potential funders and the press had been invited to observe the program. At detention, the students described the youth as much better basketball

players than the college students; the students also enjoyed learning new card games (e.g., Spades) from the detained youth. Providing students with the opportunity to see the nonacademic dimensions of the youth increases the potential for viewing the youth as whole people rather than just younger students (Bell et al., 2007) or delinquents. Many students viewed the youth as a source of knowledge from which to learn.

Students overwhelmingly reported that learning about differences is valuable and would help them prepare for a career in criminal justice; they would more effectively communicate with the delinquents and gain a deeper understanding of reasons underlying delinquency. These attitudes mirror the students’ service-learning experiences where they learned to communicate and interact with the youth. This finding has been documented among service learners across a variety of disciplines (Gallini & Moely, 2003; Lersch, 1997; Moely, McFarland, & Miron, 2002b; White, Festa, & Allocca, 1999).

The majority of students developed attitudes about how society addresses delinquency that were sympathetic to the youth’s condition; the perspective that the youth alone are to blame for their delinquency or misbehavior changed to contextual factors beyond the individual alone. All but one of the students recommended that we as a society offer treatment or rehabilitation programs rather than punishment alone. Three studies of justice-involved youth reported that most or all students became less punitive and came to believe that a focus on rehabilitation and prevention programs was necessary (Hirschinger-Blank & Markowitz, 2006; Swanson, King, & Wolbert, 1997; Vigorita, 2002). Notably, the public supports rehabilitation (The Sentencing Project, 2012). According to a U.S. national opinion survey, 21% of adults pointed to rehabilitation as the primary sentencing goal and half identified it as the most important factor when sentencing juveniles (Flanagan & Longmire, 1996).

At the same time, the students’ descriptions of Chester appeared to reinforce stereotypes of the inner city. Students did not appear to understand that persistent poverty affects one’s ability to parent (Coles, 1999). The students learned about the parents from the children and had no contact with the parents themselves. Further, students blamed the parents and described them as uncaring, irresponsible, and neglectful. Students did not have an understanding of how factors such as lack of transportation, work schedules, and other challenges of single parenthood impact the lives of the mothers (Coles, 1999).

A minority of students grasped the concept of White privilege. In our in-class discussion many students expressed resistance to acknowledging the concept of unearned privilege among White America.

Some students verbalized that today all people, irrespective of race, have equal access to success. Such resistance may limit the students' interpretations of their observations (Bohmer & Briggs, 1991) in the field.

Overall, the university students' learning experiences and skill development over the course of the semester will serve them in their search for employment. A national survey of 302 employers of college graduates conducted by the Association of American College and Universities (AACU, 2010) found that most employers are seeking the same skills irrespective of industry or organization (e.g., see John Jay College of Criminal Justice, n.d.). The Widener students demonstrated several of these skills including the ability to communicate effectively, to collaborate with others in diverse settings, to apply their college learning in real life settings, and in community engagement (AACU, 2010).

Research highlights many of the important culture-related and interpersonal skills necessary for employment in the field of criminal justice. An understanding of cultural differences is necessary for police officers (McNamara & Burns, 2009) given their constant interaction with the public. Shearer and King (2004) summarize characteristics of effective probation officers. These include officers who are interpersonally skilled, demonstrate clarity in communication, have an awareness of cultural differences, value and respect differences, and possess multicultural competence. The service-learning students reportedly learned such skills over the semester. The relevance of findings regarding the benefits of teaching a multicultural service-learning course also has been shown to aid undergraduate students in education (Baldwin et al., 2007; Bell et al., 2009), nursing (Hunt & Swiggum, 2007; Lashley, 2007), and psychology (Simons, Hirschinger-Blank, & Williams, 2011; Simons, Williams, & Blank, 2010).

Directions for Future Pedagogy and Research

Our future work will address several of the study limitations. First, based on the findings we will revise our methods for teaching students about the socioeconomic and cultural contexts of low-income minority communities. As with our students, acknowledging the uniqueness of an individual and value of diversity is inadequate for facilitating a social conscience (Baldwin et al., 2007). Barlow and Barlow (1995) highlight the challenges for students of criminal justice. They argue that students come into criminal justice courses with firmly held assumptions from ongoing exposure to the media's message that equates criminals largely with young Black males. If our course material had required students to analyze how the public school [and criminal justice system] reinforces

attitudes and maintains group inequities, the students may have been more likely to increase their awareness of power, privilege and racism (Neville, Worthington, & Spanierman, 2001; Schofield, 1986). We plan to develop a strategy for anticipating students' resistance to learning about race and class issues. We also will select appropriate pedagogical materials to foster students' learning about race, class, and crime and to prevent the increase of stereotypes of the inner city. Discussions will focus on theories of oppression and on power dynamics necessary for understanding racial/ethnic conflict. We also will study the concept of power as conceptualized by Giroux (1994), which we view as central to multicultural pedagogy. This approach will aim to enable students to recognize inequalities and promote marginalized voices (within the class), and to empower students, giving them the tools "to understand and to act against their own and others' oppressions" (Barton, Corteen, Davies, & Hobson, 2010, p. 29). We also will integrate assignments that permit students to discover the wealth of diversity among the university students themselves (see Nielsen & Stambaugh, 1998 for a recommended approach).

Written assignments and reflections should be monitored periodically (Coles, 1999) to better understand the students' experiences at the service-learning sites and prevent the risk of reinforcing stereotypes. A few students who worked with the Chester Youth Court, for example, described the youth court participants as smart and motivated, especially when compared to the rest of the high school students who seemed not to care. The university students lack informed knowledge to make such judgments about the rest of the Chester High School youth.

Future data collection will include an assessment of the impact of the service learning on at-risk and justice-involved youth as well as post-course interviews with the current university students to provide an enriched analysis of longer-term shifts in student attitudes.

We also plan to improve the measures of our goals. In our next study we will provide students with refined questions that permit assessment before and after the service-learning experience. Also, there may be testing effects and self-report biases associated with the results. In future research we plan to use quantitative evaluations tested for reliability and validity to confirm that change has occurred, and we plan to incorporate comparison groups to disentangle the service-learning component from the diversity component and to determine if other factors (e.g., previous service experiences, gender, and race/ethnicity) contributed to attitudinal change.

In addition, the university student population is demographically homogenous, which limits the generalizability of results. Future research should

replicate this study with larger samples to draw more definitive conclusions.

Despite the limitations of this study, our results point to the value of a multicultural approach. Many of the students had not visited the Chester community prior to the semester. Almost all, however, had revised their negative stereotypes and developed meaningful connections with the Chester youth. Exposure to the juvenile justice system and a poverty stricken community provided a new lens into the complexity of the youth's daily lives, thus fostering a newfound respect for the challenges faced by the youth. Experiencing the institutional barriers first-hand fostered a more complex understanding of delinquency. The students found value in learning about diversity as both students and criminal justice pre-professionals. In today's reality, courses that incorporate a multicultural approach are necessary for preparing our future criminal justice leaders to develop policy, prevention, and intervention programs that meet the needs of a diverse population.

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Appendix
Conceptual Framework

Concept	Goals	Measures and Data Source	Theme
Awareness	A willingness to self-examine, and when necessary, challenge and change, one's own assumptions and biases *	Describe at least two assumptions you had about the youth prior to your first meeting. Were these assumptions confirmed or disconfirmed? (journal) Describe how the youth are similar and/or different from you when you were an adolescent. (journal) What assumption do you think the youth made about you? (journal)	Most ($n = 29$) identified assumptions and reported a change in their preconceived notions. Theme focused on negative images: youth would "act tough," "give us a hard time" would be "rude," "out of control," "uncooperative," "deserved to be locked up." Students ($n = 23$) identified similarities focusing on "impulsive," "risk-taking," "not thinking of consequences." Students ($n = 16$) said the youth viewed the students as "rich," "White," "smart."
	A belief that differences are valuable and that learning about others who are culturally different is necessary *	What are the benefits of diversity? Drawbacks of diversity? (journal)	All students said they valued diversity. Twelve focused on the "uniqueness" or "individual personality" of each youth.
	The relevancy of learning about diversity in a juvenile delinquency course **	Do you think it is important for juvenile justice professionals to understand different cultures? (quiz)	All students responded yes. Themes focus on their realization that groups have different experiences/backgrounds ($n = 32$), and/or different communication patterns ($n = 12$), and/or understanding differences will reduce bias/discrimination ($n = n = 13$), and/or will contribute to more effective responses/treatment ($n = 15$).
	Whether or not the students' perspectives on causes of delinquency changed over the course of the semester **	Describe how your views of the causes of delinquency have changed (or haven't changed) since the beginning of the semester. (journal)	Pre-service perspectives attributed delinquency or misbehaviors to "bad kids." Post-service causes focuses on institutional barriers ($n = 28$), mothers who seemingly don't care, broken homes, lack of parental supervisor, guidance, discipline or/and attention ($n = 22$), peer pressure ($n = 10$) and the absence of a fully developed brain characteristic of adolescents ($n = 2$).
	Whether or not the students' perspectives on how society addresses delinquency changed over the course of the semester **	Describe your pre-diversity course attitudes regarding how we as a society addressed delinquency. Describe your attitudes now. (quiz)	Students ($n = 27$) responded with changed attitudes. Themes focused on becoming more rehabilitation or punitive- oriented.
	Whether or not the students' perspectives on	Describe how your views regarding how we can prevent	Most students advocated for after-school and community-based programs

	how to prevent delinquency changed over the course of the semester **	delinquency have changed or haven't changed since the beginning of the semester. (journal)	(<i>n</i> = 24), an improved school system, positive role models/mentors (<i>n</i> = 15), balanced and restorative justice-based programs (<i>n</i> = 12), Operation Cease-fire programs (<i>n</i> = 9), and family counseling or rehabilitation (<i>n</i> = 6). Three students described punitive measures (e.g., detention and waiver); of this group two also reported the need for rehabilitation programming.
Multicultural Knowledge	Identifying differences in cultural norms ***	Describe how the youths' culture is similar and/or different from your own when you were an adolescent. (journal)	All students identified one or more differences. Descriptions of the youths' lives focus on the importance of respect (<i>n</i> = 12) teachers who tolerate cursing, talking back (<i>n</i> = 12), community violence (<i>n</i> = 8), lack of homework (<i>n</i> = 7), the use of Ebonics (<i>n</i> = 5), knowledge of drugs (i.e., playing drug deals with monopoly money in school or family uses drugs; <i>n</i> = 5), the absence of family support, parental supervision including an eight year old with childcare responsibilities (<i>n</i> = 5), evidence of exposure to drugs (i.e., playing drug deals with monopoly money in school or family uses drugs; <i>n</i> = 4), children viewed by teachers as future criminals (<i>n</i> = 3), didn't know anyone/hadn't heard of college (<i>n</i> = 3), having a parent in jail (<i>n</i> = 1), parents with non-traditional jobs (e.g., pole dancer) (<i>n</i> = 1) public schools that resemble a prison.
	Knowledge about the ways that cultural differences affect verbal and nonverbal communication *	Describe three examples of what you learned in the field that are consistent with or contradict what you learned in the classroom. (journal) Do you think it is important for juvenile justice professionals to understand different cultures? (quiz)	Common themes (<i>n</i> = 16) focused on differences in the use of eye contact and verbal expressiveness.

	Knowledge of oppression in the form of institutional barriers which limit access to and success in higher education *	Describe three examples of what you learned in the field that are consistent with or contradict what you learned in the classroom. (quiz) Describe your first impressions of the youth and school/program that you will be working with this semester. Describe the culture of the school/program. (journal) Based on your field placement, which sociological theory or theories makes the most sense to you? Why?	Most ($n = 32$) pointed to systemic factors that limit access to and success in higher education of oppressed groups (e.g., overcrowded classrooms, a shortage of books and school supplies, burnt out teachers), a paucity of community activities ($n = 12$) and an under-funded school/ or juvenile justice systems ($n = 8$) Almost all ($n = 31$) described the youth as lagging behind academically. One-third ($n = 12$) identified Social Disorganization Theory to best explains delinquency.
	An understanding of White privilege **	Do you think it is important for juvenile justice professionals to understand different cultures? (quiz) or Give an example from our service-learning experience that illustrates your understanding of diversity (quiz).	Twelve students demonstrated an understanding of the concept of White privilege. Two students were resistant to seeing White privilege.
Multicultural Skills	The ability to communicate and interact across differences ****	Describe how service-learning contributed /did not contribute to your personal development?	Most students ($n = 30$) described their ability to effectively communicate ($n = 17$) and/or interact with youth across cultural differences ($n = 16$).
	The capability to empathize and connect with individuals who are different from themselves *	Describe how service-learning contributed /did not contribute to your personal?	Almost all ($n = 32$) described their ability to empathize and bond with youth.

Note. * Category taken from Pope and Reynolds' (1997) cultural competency framework (p. 271).

** Category developed for this study in particular.

*** Category revised from Pope and Reynolds (1997, p. 271): knowledge of diverse cultures and oppressed groups (i.e., history, traditions, values, customs, resources, issues).

**** Category revised from Pope and Reynolds (1997, p. 271): ability to assess the impact of cultural differences on communication and effectively communicate across those differences.