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The Impact of Community Service in the Classroom Setting: A Research Study

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Abstract

Community service has been linked to different psychological benefits. The field of positive psychology is growing and the purpose of the present study was to expand this research by examining other psychological benefits to those who participate in community service. We examined this relationship when community service is a requirement for the class. We compared Community Service Learning (CSL) participants with non-CSL participants of the same course. Participants completed questionnaires that assessed flourishing, self-esteem, serenity, gratitude, and their views about community service at the beginning (before completing community service) and at the end the semester. Contrary to our hypothesis, there was no major difference between CSL and non-CSL participants at the end of the semester. Although effects were not significant, means were in the predicted direction for some comparisons (flourishing and views on community service). Psychological benefits did not increase for CSL participants possibly because the community service was limited in time. Findings are discussed in relation to self-determination theory.

The Impact of Community Service in the Classroom Setting: A Research Study

Community service is embedded into the beliefs and actions of many people. Gandhi, famous for leading India's revolution for independence, once said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others" (Robbins, 2014, p. 1). This quote suggests that serving others includes some type of benefit on the part of the helper. There are many different ways a person can grow--through classroom learning, personal experiences, and opportunities to explore new places and ideas. Through these different experiences, people can expand their knowledge and these experiences can impact a variety of psychological processes. A common way people grow in knowledge outside of the classroom is through community service. Community service has not only been shown to improve one's own self-esteem and produce other personal psychological benefits (Berger & Milen, 2002; Billig, 2000; Weinstein & Ryan, 2010), but it can also improve one's classroom education when it is integrated into classroom learning (Astin, Vogelgesang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000; Conrad & Hedin, 1982).

Community service improves students' civil engagement and motivation to learn more. For example, students who participated in community service were more likely to vote and become involved in issues that surrounded them and their community (Hart, Donnelly, Youniss, & Atkins, 2007). By helping others in need through community service, a person can grow both personally and intellectually, resulting in a better world for those who are helping and for those who are being helped. Although engaging in community service has been linked to psychological benefits, the field of positive psychology is expanding. The purpose of the present study was to expand our knowledge regarding the psychological benefits for those engaging in community service in a classroom setting and explore possible differences in learning.

Psychological and Educational Benefits

of Becoming Involved in Community Service

Individuals may participate in community service to look good in front of other people or to fulfill a requirement. But there are a lot people who participate in community service because it makes them happy and is a stress relief for them. Many have reported feeling as though they were contributing back to society (Berger & Milen, 2002). Additionally, people will engage in community service when they feel guilty for doing something they were not supposed to. People believed that doing a good act, like community service, would make up for their guilt, thus giving them a sense of calmness and help them feel better about themselves (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010).

There are many different reasons why people choose to participate in community service. Some feel compelled to give back because others do it, others want to put it on a resume or they feel like they have to give back to the community that has helped them. A common reason why people participate in community service is because they feel good doing it, and research supports this. Self-esteem is one of the benefits a person can get when participating in community service (Billig, 2000). People obtain more confidence in themselves and what they can accomplish. People find that with higher self-esteem, they feel more successful and ready to take on anything they put their mind to. Students who participated in community service reported being more active within their community and wanted to become more involved in the issues their neighborhoods were facing (Gilster, 2010). Youniss, McLellan and Su (1999) found that students who engaged in community service became less active in deviant behavior. They also found that students also changed their behaviors to help those around them and it resulted in a better community.

Other findings suggest that students who participated in community service during their transition from high school to college had a higher sense of self-esteem, were more confident going to college, felt more reassured about their identity and who they were, and were motivated to challenge themselves further in college (Marks & Jones 2004). This progression does not end when people enter college. Seniors about to graduate college also benefited from community service believing they were more engaged with peers and strangers about issues they felt passionate about. They believed that their engagement with community service contributed to their confidence in talking to others and being more open to those around them (Marks & Jones 2004).

When completing community service, people feel good about themselves and that they are making a difference in the lives of those who they are helping. But few realize that in participating in community service, people are actually helping themselves. For example, incarcerated individuals who participated in community service for a long period of time experienced a positive change in their behavior and reduced their likelihood of being incarcerated again (Andersen, 2014). Similarly, young adults struggling with substance abuse and mental health issues who participated in community service felt more positive emotions and wanted to take steps to deal with their addictions and improve their mental health (Henderson, Chaim, & Brownlie, 2017). In participating in community service, people were able to improve their attitudes and mental state, thus giving them more opportunities to improve their lives overall.

In addition to improving overall well-being, there are have been a variety of different studies exploring how integrating community service into the classroom can be beneficial for the students and how much they learn (Conrad & Hedin 1982; Simon & Cleary, 2006). For example,

teachers and administrators in one community were interested in seeing how community service would impact classroom learning and whether it would improve grades, behavior, or both (Simon & Cleary, 2006). Students received first-hand exposure to community service within their own community and the results showed improvements in their grades and classroom behavior. Researchers found that students were more engaged in the classroom and they wanted to share what they learned from their community service experience (Simon & Cleary, 2006). Other findings suggest that students who participated in community service were more attentive to their classmates and had more respect for each other. These students had improved grades and reported that they were happier (Conrad & Hedin, 1982). Additionally, high school students involved in community service reported better problem solving skills and used those skills not only in the classroom, but also in their community service (Conrad & Hedin, 1982). College students who participated in community service as part of coursework also reported having higher GPAs and standardized test scores compared to those who did not participate in community service. These college students also reported an increased interest in doing community service after seeing the success they had while completing the service (Astin et al., 2000). Students who participate in community service become more engaged in the classroom and are willing to share their experiences, resulting in better grades and happier students (Biling, 2000).

Students engaging in community service can also learn real-world skills. College seniors who participated in community service stated that they felt more prepared for the working world because they could stand up and fight for what they believed in. When these college students began work in a helping setting, like a hospital, those who were receiving help were able to get better care from the workers who had community service experience and became more

comfortable with those working with them. The more comfortable the patients became, the better

people were able to take care of them (Astin et al., 2000). Many people see community service as

an activity to help those in need. However, there are a great number of psychological benefits for

the helper, thus allowing them to feel good and complete community service to the best of their

ability.

<div align="center">**Community Service and Well-Being: Theoretical Approaches**</div>

There are several theoretical approaches that can help explain the psychological and

physical benefits to those who engage in volunteering and community service. Self-

determination theory suggests when volunteering for the pure joy of it, people get more out of it

compared to when people are told to do it or do it out of shame or guilt. This may be explained

by differences of autonomous motivation, which is doing an action based on one's beliefs

compared to controlled motivation, which is done when an action is done through the pressure of

others (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). The more community service is done through autonomous

motivation, the more psychological benefits the person received (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010).

Community service in an academic setting, however, suggests that students are not

autonomously motivated to engage in these activities, but rather do it as part of coursework or

other obligation. For example, one study highlighted the impact community service had on high

school students when forced to do it for a class. Students indicated they enjoyed doing

community service less when they were externally controlled (being graded or observed while

completing it). When students were able to participate in community service they wanted to and

without a possible grade attached to it, they enjoyed it more (Dienhart et al., 2016).

Yet, there are countless studies that cite evidence of psychological well-being for both

students and non-students engaging in community service (Billig, 2000; Leming, 2001; Poulin,

2013). Role identity theory suggests people volunteer both because they want to and because

they feel a societal pressure to do so. Researchers explain that when a person begins an activity

and enjoys it, it becomes more integrated into who they are and how they define themselves

(Grube & Piliavan, 2000). Role identity theory may explain the positive benefits students receive

when completing required community service. In volunteering, it takes time away from other

aspects of life. Increasing people's obligations without pay and little recognition can be

frustrating. However, people also get the label of being helpful and it may become part of their

identity. By being helpful, people obtain psychological benefits despite the difficulties they may

face (Grube & Piliavan, 2000; Piliavin, Grube, & Callero, 2002; Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). Thus

individuals (including students) who engage in non-voluntary community service over an

extended period of time may incorporate this "helping" behavior into their identity, and thus

receive the psychological benefits associated with helping. For example, individuals who

participated in community service voluntarily or as a requirement received similar benefits in

how it affected their everyday lives with higher levels of self-esteem and a greater sense of

accomplishment (Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007).Participants became more confident in what

they were doing and more proud of the changes they were able to contribute to. No matter why

individuals completed community service, the majority reported that they had better relationships

with others due to the community service they engaged in (Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007).

The Present Study

The present study sought to assess how community service, incorporated into a

classroom, could increase students' well-being. While there is ample evidence supporting the

notion that community service benefits the helper, the field of positive psychology has expanded,

and there are more avenues yet to be explored (Fredrickson, 2013). In addition to examining

changes in self-esteem, which has been explored in past research (Billig, 2000; Leming, 2001; Poulin, 2013), we chose to examine others areas of positive psychology that may be related to community service: flourishing (Diener et al., 2010), gratitude (Ho, Wan, Ng, Mui, Stewart, Lam, & Chan, 2016), and serenity (Vellone, Piras, Talucci & Cohen, 2008). People flourish when they are able to achieve success while maintaining happiness. The happiness can stem from their achievements, their peers, or from activities they enjoy doing. With good communication and enjoyment in life, marriage and business, people can flourish (Fredrickson & Losada, 2005). Research suggests that community engagement can improve human flourishing. For example, researchers examined how community engagement while in college could predict adult well-being (Bowman, Brandenberger, Lapsley, Hill & Quaranto, 2010). This longitudinal study examined individuals at the beginning and end of their college journey and again thirteen years post college. Researchers found that participating in community engagement had more positive adult well-being and higher life satisfaction. In addition, participants had higher levels of flourishing the more they participated in community service, predicting more success later on in their adult life (Bowman et al., 2010).

Another aspect of positive psychology that may be related to community service is gratitude, which can be described as being appreciative of who and what one has. For example, findings suggest that families who spent time cooking and eating together were happier and more appreciative towards their family. This gratitude seemed to increase with time (Ho et al., 2016). Gratitude has also been closely related to helping others (Astin et al., 2000 & Berger & Milen, 2002). When people are feeling gratitude, people feel more inclined to help people even if it will be costly towards them. This is because they are feeling positive and appreciative towards their life; they want to help others achieve what they are feeling (McCullough, Kimeldorf, & Cohen,

2008). Thus, individuals who participate in community service may experience greater gratitude when they participate in community service.

Finally, a psychological benefit that community service can improve, but not many people think of, is serenity. Serenity can be defined as achieving peace and acceptance through life's difficult and challenging situations. Roberts and Cunningham (1990) defined serenity as "a human experience that involved a positive mood, state, feeling, thought, state of being, or level of consciousness" (p. 578). Serenity can be found in many cases where people help those in need. For example, caretakers of Alzheimer patients reported that once they accepted what was going to happen and accepted wanting to spend the rest of their time with their loved ones in times of joy, that was when they achieved serenity (Vellone, Piras, Talucci & Cohen, 2007). Thus caretakers for people with Alzheimer's disease were able to achieve peace in a stressful situation. When people were able to face their fear and overcome the obstacles in front of them, they are able to achieve a higher sense of serenity. By facing their fears individuals report a higher quality of life and feel more prepared to face life's future challenges (Kreitzer et al., 2009). With higher aspects of serenity, people are able to gain confidence to accomplish what they want in life and are less afraid to chase their dreams. This new outlook on life has provided people with serenity and strength they never thought they would be able to achieve before. Individuals who participate in community service may experience similar serenity experiences. By volunteering their time in the community, individuals become more aware of the community around them and are more accepting towards what is happening in the community. When feeling serene, people are more accepting of themselves and those around them. The more people are able to accept themselves, the more they can help the community.

In addition to examining the effect of community service on well-being, we also examined participants' views on community service learning and explored differences in course knowledge as well. In one study, researchers found people who completed community service throughout their college experience had higher life satisfaction and higher success compared to those who did not complete community service (Bowman et al., 2010). Students involved in community service have reported greater success and happiness, feeling more prepared in the future (Astin et al., 2000; Conrad & Hedin, 1982; & Marks & Jones 2004). To examine psychological well-being and views on community service we compared courses with sections that had community service incorporated into the curriculum to the same courses that had sections that did not incorporate community service. We predicted that Community Service Learning (CSL) participants would not differ from non-CSL participants at the beginning of the school year, but that they would have greater psychological benefits (high levels of self-esteem, flourishing scores, serenity scores, and feelings of gratitude) at the end of the school year compared non-CSL participants. Participants were also asked open-ended questions that asked for their opinion on community service and whether they thought it was relevant to their class or needed at all. We hypothesized that participants in a CSL class would have more positive views towards community service compared to those not in a CSL class. To explore how CSL impacted content learned in the classroom, we focused on courses that had a CSL and non-CSL section taught by the same professor. Only one set of courses met this criteria. We explored differences in participants' responses to course-content questions in this course.

Method

Participants

The participants were recruited from Assumption College from three different courses: *English Composition* (ENG130), *Psychology of Development: Infancy and Childhood* (PSY 290) and *Concepts in Biology* (BIO160). The participants included students from all four grade levels. These courses were selected because each of these courses had sections with and without a Community Service Learning (CSL) component. As an incentive, six of the seven sections offered extra credit to the participants who participated in the study throughout the semester. The only section that did not was the CSL section of BIO 160.

During the recruitment stage, 142 students expressed interest in participating. Participants completed surveys at the beginning and at the end of the semester. A total of 110 students participated at the beginning of the semester and 87 participated at the end of the semester. A total of 48 CSL participants and 61 non-CSL participants completed the beginning of the semester survey (one participant did not include their given identification number thus we could not discern which course they were in). At the end of the semester, 37 CSL participants and 50 non-CSL participants completed the survey. However, only 74 participants completed both surveys (all 142 interested participants were emailed both at the beginning and at the end of the semester, thus 13 participants only participated at the end of the semester). Out of the 74 participants who completed both surveys, 30 participants were CSL participants and 44 participants were non-CSL participants.

The average age of the participants who filled out the beginning of the semester survey was 18.58 years old ($SD = 0.90$) while the average age for those who completed the end of semester survey was 18.69 years old ($SD = 0.97$). The majority of participants were White

(80%), 5% were Asian, 4% were African American, 8.5% were Hispanic/Latino and 2.5%

identified as other (which included selecting multiple ethnicities). At the beginning of the

semester 21% of participants were male and 79% were female. At the end of the semester, 19.5%

of participants who completed the survey were male and 80.5% were female.

Measures

   Community Service Learning Component. For the CSL classes, each class

participated in a different type of community service. For *English Composition*, the CSL

participants went as a class to the Interfaith Hospitality Network, which is a local nonprofit

organization that works with families to provide them housing. The director of the organization

visited their class and gave them a big picture of what the organization can provide and how

people can help. As a class, they visited and interviewed with residents; the experience was tied

throughout the course and their assignments. For *Concepts in Biology*, the class went together to

a reservation in Worcester to help clean up the waterways and forest around it. This class worked

with Catholic Relief Services to help improve Worcester and participants reflected on their

experience in class. For *Psychology of Development: Infancy and Childhood*, participants

worked with local preschools and daycare centers volunteering their time and doing whatever the

staff needed. Participants' volunteering experiences was intertwined with their class materials

and it reinforced what they were learning. CSL participants reported when they were doing the

CSL component of the class and passed in the required assignments to the course. The two

Psychology of Development: Infancy and Childhood sections were taught by the same professor

(one with a CSL component, and one without the CSL component), but the English sections and

Biology sections were taught by different professors.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale. The Rosenberg Self-esteem Scale consisted of 10 statements about participants' overall evaluation of themselves (Rosenberg, 1965). An example of a statement is "I am able to do things as well as most other people." It was scored on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Some items on the scale are reverse coded to control for acquiescence. After reverse-coding the appropriate items, a sum self-esteem composite was created for each participant. Scores ranged from 10 to 50, with a higher score indicating greater self-esteem. The Rosenberg Self-Esteem scale exhibited high reliability at the beginning (α= 0.90) and the end of the semester (α= 0.88).

Flourishing Scale. The Flourishing Scale assesses how much participants contribute to their happiness and the happiness of others (Diener et al., 2010). The scale consisted of eight statements that ask about how a person feels about their life and how others treat them. An example of a statement is "I am engaged and interested in my daily activities." Participants had to rate on a scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree) how much they agreed with each statement. A sum of the eight items was taken to create a Flourishing composite score. Scores could range from 8 to 40, and higher scores on the flourishing composite indicate a higher level of flourishing.   Reliability analyses confirmed that the Flourishing scale showed high reliability at the beginning (α= 0.81) and at the end of the semester (α= 0.88).

The Gratitude Scale. The Gratitude Scale measured how much gratitude a person had in their life (McCullough, Emmons, & Tsang, 2002). This questionnaire consisted of six statements in which participants rated their feelings on a 7-point scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). An example statement is "As I get older, I find myself more able to appreciate the people, events, and situations that have been part of my life history." The Gratitude Scale also had items that had to be reverse coded. An example of that kind of statement is "When I

look at the world, I don't see much to be grateful for." For the beginning of the semester

questionnaire, the Gratitude Scale received a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.79. For the end of the

semester, the questionnaire received a Cronbach's Alpha score of 0.74, resulting in the

questionnaires showing high reliability. The six items were summed together, and scores could

range from 6 to 42. The higher the score a participant received, the more gratitude they felt in

their life.

       The Brief Serenity Scale. The Brief Serenity Scale assesses participants' ideas of

serenity in their everyday life and how they handle situations in terms of acceptance and peace

(Kreitzer et al., 2009). The Brief Serenity Scale was separated into three subscales: Inner Haven

(9 statements), Trust (5 statements) and Acceptance (8 statements). These statements were all

rated on a scale from 1 (Never) to 6 (Always). Inner Haven focuses on a person's ability to reach

an inner source of comfort when dealing with difficult situations. An example of an Inner Haven

statement is "I am aware of an inner source of comfort, strength, and security." The Inner Haven

items had a high reliability at the beginning ($\alpha=0.86$) and the end ($\alpha=0.89$) of the semester. Trust

examines how much a person believes in the bigger plan in life and that good things will happen

because they are supposed to happen. An example of a Trust statement is "I trust that life events

happen to fit a plan which is larger and gentler than I can know." The Trust subscale was reliable

at the beginning ($\alpha= 0.79$) and the end ($\alpha= 0.75$) of the semester. Finally Acceptance assesses

how a person accepts outcomes they could not control while being aware of themselves and

others. Acceptance focuses on forgiveness and inner harmony no matter what happens in life. An

example of an Acceptance statement is "In problem situations, I do what I am able to do and then

accept whatever happens even if I dislike it." The Acceptance subscale received a high reliability

at the beginning ($\alpha=0.77$) and the end ($\alpha=0.82$) of the semester. The average of each subscale

was calculated. The higher the average, the higher the level of serenity on that particular

subscale.

Attitudes Regarding Community Service

In order to see how participants specifically felt about community service in the

classroom, we developed our own set of statements regarding participants' views. This

questionnaire consisted of six statements in which participants rated how much they agreed with

the statement on 7 point scale: 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree). An example of a

statement in this questionnaire is, "Community service as part of a course helps students gain

hands on experiences about what they are learning." The Community Service items were found

to be highly reliable both at the beginning (α=0.82) and the end of the semester (α=0.83). In

scoring these items, a sum composite was created. Scores ranged from 6 to 42 and the higher the

score the participant received, the more positive they felt towards community service and how it

impacts classroom learning. There were also open-ended questions asking participants about

their community service experience and how it impacted their experience in the classroom (for

those who participated in community service; see Appendix A for a list of the community service

items).

Course Knowledge

This study included specific questions for participants who were in the two sections of

Psychology of Development: Infancy and Childhood. The questions were based off of course

material and were asked on both surveys (Appendix B). The multiple choice questions were

provided by the instructor, and looked at the development of children growing up, which

participants may have witnessed during their time at community service or from what they

learned during class and/or readings. There were three multiple-choice questions at the beginning

of the semester, and five multiple-choice questions at the end of the semester. To assess course

knowledge in this course, an average number of correct responses was taken at the beginning and

at the end of the semester. An open-ended item asked participants how they would interact with

peers in school if they were eight years old. This item was asked both at the beginning and the

end of the semester. Since CSL participants in the *Psychology of Development: Infancy and*

Childhood course volunteered in a school, knowledge about peer-relations might vary for these

participants compared to non-CSL participants.

Procedure

Professors teaching courses that had CSL and non-CSL sections were approached to see

if we could recruit in their courses. In the fall of 2017, there were three courses that met this

description, and professors in all three courses (2 sections each course creating 6 classes) agreed

to be a part of the project. An investigator went to the classes and recruited participants to

participate in a study about community service. The researchers went to these classes after the

add/drop period was over and before participants began their community service projects. Those

who were interested in participating received a link to a SurveyMonkey questionnaire.

Participants were individually emailed with a link to the survey and given an identification

number they were to include on the survey so that we could link the beginning and end of the

semester questionnaires. The same set of procedures was followed at the end of the semester

survey. On average, participants took approximately ten minutes to complete each survey.

<div align="center">Results</div>

Data Analyses

A 2 (CSL: CSL vs. non-CSL) x 2 (Time: beginning vs. end of the semester) ANOVA

with repeated measures on the latter variable was computed on each of the dependent measures,

which were seven in total and are listed below (CSL analyses). Additional similar analyses were computed comparing participants who completed any type of service (which included CSL participants and non-CSL participants who completed some other type of service during the same semester) to participants who did not complete any type of service that semester (Service analyses). Finally additional analyses compared participants who completed some type volunteering service that was not required (i.e., not required for a class, athletic team, etc.) to those who did not complete *any* service (Not-Required analyses). For the "not-required analyses", participants in the non-required volunteering service group included CSL and non-CSL participants who reported participating in service that was not required. This analysis resulted in a smaller sample size because CSL participants who did not participate in non-required volunteering service were removed from the analyses. Since all three analyses yielded similar results, only the CSL analyses are reported here. In the one case that there was a slight difference in the analyses (Flourishing), that difference is noted below.

Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale

There was no significant main effect of time ($F(1,75)=0.25$, $p=0.88$, $\eta_p^2=0.00$). Self-esteem scores remained the same at Time 1 ($M=37.06$, $SE=.78$) and Time 2 ($M=36.98$, $SE=0.79$). There was also no main effect of CSL ($F(1,75)=0.15$, $p=0.70$, $\eta_p^2=0.002$). CSL participants had slightly higher self-esteem scores ($M=37.31$, $SE=1.15$) compared to those who did not participate in community service ($M=36.73$, $SE=0.94$), but this difference was not significant. Contrary to prediction, there was no significant interaction between time and CSL ($F(1,75)=1.15$, $p=0.29$, $\eta_p^2=0.02$). There was little difference in self-esteem scores for non-CSL participants and CSL participants, between Time 1 and Time 2 (see Table 1).

Flourishing Scale

There was no significant main effect of time ($F(1,76)=0.002$, $p=0.96$, $\eta_p^2=0.00$). Flourishing scores did not differ from Time 1 ($M=34.09$, $SE=0.42$) to Time 2 ($M=34.11$, $SE=0.49$). There was also no main effect of CSL ($F(1,76)=1.90$, $p=0.17$, $\eta_p^2=0.02$). Flourishing scores were slightly higher for CSL participants ($M=34.67$, $SE=0.64$) compared to non-CSL participants ($M=33.52$, $SE=0.53$), but not enough to record a major difference between the two. Contrary to prediction, there was not a significant interaction between time and CSL, although the means were in the predicted direction ($F(1,76)=1.53$, $p=0.22$, $\eta_p^2=0.02$). Flourishing scores for CSL participants was slightly higher than non-CSL participants at Time 1, but at Time 2, this difference was much larger. This was because flourishing scores decreased slightly for non-CSL participants between Time 1 and Time 2, but there was a slight increase for CSL participants between Time 1 and Time 2 (see Table 2).

There were some slight differences between the CSL analyses and the "not-required" analyses for flourishing scores. There was a trend for an interaction between Not-Required Service and Time, ($F(1,64)=3.74$, $p=0.06$, $\eta_p^2=0.06$). Those who reported freely participating in non-required community service had higher flourishing scores by the end of the semester compared to the beginning of the semester. Those who did not participate in any community service had a lower average at the end of the semester compared to the beginning of the semester (see Table 3). The two groups did not differ in flourishing at the beginning of the semester, but there was a trend at the end of the semester for the non-required group who completed community service to have higher rates of flourishing compared to the group that did not do any community service ($F(1,64)=3.02$, $p=0.09$, $\eta_p^2=0.05$).

Gratitude Scale

There was no significant main effect of time ($F(1,69)$=1.16, p=0.29, η_p^2=0.02). Gratitude scores were similar at Time 1 (M=35.63, SE=0.58) and Time 2 (M=35.11, SE=0.60). There was also no significant main effect for CSL ($F(1,69)$=0.62, p=0.44, η_p^2=0.01). Non-CSL participants had similar gratitude scores (M=35.79, SE=0.70) to CSL participants (M=34.95, SE=0.82). Contrary to prediction, there was no significant interaction effect ($F(1,69)$=1.77, p=0.19, η_p^2=0.03). The non-CSL participants had higher gratitude scores at both the beginning and the end of the semester and, though not significant, this difference seemed larger at Time 2 (See Table 4).

Serenity Scale

Inner Haven Subscale. There was no significant main effect of time ($F(1,68)$=2.06, p=0.16, η_p^2=0.03). Inner Haven scores were slightly lower at Time 1 (M= 4.00, SE=0.08) compared to Time 2 (M=4.11, SE=0.09), but this difference was not significant. There was no main effect of CSL ($F(1,68)$=0.38, p=0.54, η_p^2=0.01). CSL participants (M=4.00, SE=0.12) did not differ from non-CSL participants (M=4.10, SE=0.10) in their Inner Haven scores. There was no significant interaction effect between time and CSL ($F(1,68)$=0.47, p=0.50, η_p^2=0.01). Both groups did not differ in Inner Haven scores at Time 1 or Time 2 (See Table 5).

Trust Subscale. There was a significant main effect of time ($F(1,68)$=4.89, p=0.03, η_p^2=0.07). Participants had more Trust at the end of the semester (M=4.41, SE=0.10) compared to the beginning of the semester (M=4.23, SE=0.11). There was no significant main effect of CSL ($F(1,68)$=1.85, p=0.18, η_p^2=0.03). Non-CSL participants had slightly higher Trust scores (M=4.45, SE=0.13) than CSL participants (M=4.19, SE=0.15), though this difference was not significant. Contrary to prediction, there was no significant interaction effect between time and

CSL (F (1,68)=0.13, p=0.72, η_p^2=0.002). Both groups' Trust scores increased at the end of the

semester compared to the beginning of the semester (see Table 6).

Acceptance Subscale. There was a trend for a main effect of time (F(1,67)=3.11,

p=0.08, η_p^2=0.04). Participants had lower acceptance scores at Time 1 (M=4.20, SE=0.07)

compared to Time 2 (M=4.31, SE=0.08). There was no significant main effect of CSL

(F(1,67)=0.05, p=0.83, η_p^2=0.001). Both non-CSL participants (M=4.24, SE=0.09) and CSL

participants (M=4.27, SE=0.11) had similar acceptance scores. Contrary to the prediction, there

was no significant interaction effect (F(1,67)=1.76, p=0.19, η_p^2=0.03). Both CSL and non-CSL

participants were slightly higher at the end of the semester, and although this change was higher

for non-CSL participants, this difference was not significant (see Table 7).

Community Service Questionnaire

There was no significant main effect of time (F(1,66)=0.04, p=0.85, η_p^2=0.001).

Community service attitudes did not differ between Time 1 (M=35.29, SE=0.64) and Time 2

(M=35.18, SE=0.61). There was a main effect of CSL (F(1,66)=4.50, p=0.04, η_p^2=0.06). Those

who participated in CSL had more positive attitudes regarding community service (M=36.43,

SE=0.84) than those who did not participate in CSL (M=34.03, SE=0.75). Contrary to the

prediction, there was no significant interaction effect between time and CSL (F(1,66)=0.20,

p=0.66, η_p^2=0.003). Non-CSL participants' community service views decreased throughout the

semester whereas the CSL participants' community service views improved, though not

significantly (See Table 8). In addition to the community service questionnaire, there were open-

ended questions that asked participants about their experience with community service and what

their feelings were before and after completing the community service. Overall, the open-ended

responses suggested that participants enjoyed participating in community service when it was not

required for their class and grade. They found that when it was a part of their class grade, it became more of a stressor.

Course Knowledge

Since the *Psychology of Development: Infancy and Childhood* course was the only course that was taught with the same instructor and the course content was exactly the same in both the CSL and non-CSL sections, we assessed content learned in both of these sections. There was little to no difference in the average correct response between Time 1 and Time 2. There was no significant main effect of time (F (1,21)=0.75, p=0.40, η_p^2=0.03). Although the average correct at Time 1 (*M*=0.54, *SE*= 0.05) was slightly lower than at Time 2 (*M*=0.61, *SE*=0.05), this difference was not significant. There was no main effect of CSL (F (1,21)=0.39, p=0.54, η_p^2=0.02). Those who participated in CSL had higher means (*M*= 36.43, *SE*= 0.84) compared to those who did not complete CSL (*M*=34.04, *SE*= 0.75), though this difference was not significant. Contrary to prediction, there was no significant interaction between time and CSL (F (1,21)=0.12, p=0.73, η_p^2=0.01). At Time 1, CSL and non-CSL participants had similar averages in the number of items they got correct, but at Time 2, CSL participants had a higher average in the number of items they got correct compared to non-CSL participants. Although the means are in the predicted direction, this difference was not significant (see Table 9). In the open ended question that asked participants how they would interact with peers as an eight year old in school, many participants said that they would reach out to other students to be friends and that they believed they would have a larger group of friends. Other participants said they would have one to two friends who they were close to. Those were the two most common themes found amongst this particular group. Participants were more likely to respond to this question at Time

1 than at Time 2, and their responses were more elaborate at Time 1 than at Time 2. There were not enough responses at Time 2 to make a comparison between CSL and non-CSL participants.

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

Psychological Benefits

The present findings suggest that there was little difference between the CSL and non-CSL participants in psychological well-being overall. Those who completed community service for their class had slightly higher flourishing scores at the end of the semester compared to those who did not complete community service, but the difference was not significant. CSL participants may have felt they were succeeding more and accomplishing what they wanted to accomplish more so than non-CSL participants, but perhaps the sample size was not large enough to capture this difference. Community service can make people feel as though they are accomplishing their tasks and feel more successful compared to those who do not complete community service. These participants may have felt empowered by their community service and the work that they were doing was improving both their lives and the lives of those they are helping (Gilster, 2012). The higher flourishing scores for CSL participants is consistent with findings that suggests that participants who were involved in community service were more engaged in civil projects, had more political activism and believed that community service enhanced what they were learning (Simons & Cleary, 2006). Community service helps people find what they want to do and find them a path of success. When people can seek what they want to do through community service, they feel higher levels of achievement and it can translate over into people's adult lives and success in other endeavors in their lives (Bowman, et al., 2010). Through community service, flourishing is promoted and allows for growth and success.

Findings in the present study for many of the other psychological well-being measures did not support the hypotheses. Non-CSL participants' scores were either similar to CSL participants' scores at the end of the semester or in some cases they were actually higher than CSL participants' scores. This lack of support for psychological well-being associated with participating in community service is inconsistent with previous findings. A major psychological benefit associated with community service is self-esteem and studies have shown those who participate in community service have higher levels of self-esteem and less behavioral issues in comparison to those who do not participate in community service (Billig, 2000). Other studies showed that students who engaged in community service had higher levels of developed morals and that the community service promoted identity growth (Leming, 2001; Youniss, McLellan, Su, Yates, 1999). In our findings, there was little to no difference between CSL participants and non-CSL participants. CSL participants had a greater increase in some well-being measures from the beginning to the end of the semester compared non-CSL participants, but not enough to show that community service had an impact on the participants. Additionally, helping others in need has been associated with a sense of peace and calmness despite the hard and difficult situations they may face (Kreitzer et al., 2009). However, CSL participants in our study did not differ from non-CSL participants at the end of the semester.

It was interesting to note that the CSL group had a lower gratitude scores at the end of the semester than at the beginning of the semester. Helping has been linked to higher levels of gratitude and appreciation for what one has. When people are able to see the ways they can help others, they see more of the positives and joys they have in their life. The more gratitude a person feels, the greater possibility they will help others in order to maintain those positive

feelings (Bartlett & DeSteno, 2006). In the future it would be interesting to ask more questions about gratitude to further explore this difference.

One reason for the lack of significant findings is that those who were in CSL sections may have felt the stress of trying to complete the community service by the end of the semester. As a result, participants did not receive psychological benefits due to this stress. Additionally, CSL participants were required to complete the community service. According to self-determination theory, when people are autonomously motivated to complete a task, they receive more benefits from what they are doing (Wehmeyer, 2004). With CSL, the community service is a requirement of the class and when not done, it can be detrimental to a student's grade. Therefore, participants are not autonomously motivated to complete the community service because they feel the pressure to do a good job in order to impress their professor and get a good grade in that course. With that, having the community service be a requirement can possibly take away the psychological benefits a person can have compared to if they were do it without any pressure. When people feel pressure to do community service out of guilt or a requirement, it can take away from the experience for them and cause for them to have a negative view on community service, which is the opposite its purpose (Weinstein & Ryan, 2010). This can also explain why participants who voluntarily completed community service (that was not required) had higher levels of flourishing compared to participants who did not participate in community service at all (and there was a trend for *this* difference to be significant). The difference in flourishing scores for this group was much larger than the difference comparing CSL and non-CSL participants. The more people pursue community service autonomously, the more psychological benefits they may receive.

Even though community service was required for the CSL courses, based on role identity theory, we still predicted that they would have higher levels of psychological benefits compared to participants in the non-CSL sections. Role identity theory suggests that when a person does a task, either willingly or because they feel guilty or required to, it becomes integrated into who they are and as an aspect of their identity. We thought that helping would be integrated into the CSL participants' identity even though it was required. However, in the present study, helping may not have been incorporated into participants' identity. They were only participating in the community service for one semester and for a limited amount of time within the semester. If participants were able to do it for a longer period of time, they could have incorporated it more into their identity and their daily life. When helping becomes part of people's identity, they find success in their life and are more comfortable in taking on new experiences (Finkelstein & Brannick, 2007). With more time to become comfortable with community service and build a relationship with those they were helping, the more likely participants will incorporate that helping into their identity, making community service part of who they are.

Another explanation for the non-significant findings may be because participants had to complete the questionnaire at the end of the semester without having enough time to reflect on their experiences. Because of this, people were not able to obtain the levels of psychological benefits that we predicted, but if we were able to assess participants in the future (as Bowman et al., 2010 did), we may have seen higher levels of the psychological benefits.   Additionally, participants wanted to get the extra credit for completing the questionnaire for their class, so they rushed through the questionnaire at the end of the semester to just get it done without really thinking about their answers. There were also less people who completed the end of semester survey compared to the beginning of the semester, indicating that they had more time in the

beginning of the semester to complete the survey compared to the end of the semester. Open-ended responses also could have been shorter because they did not meet the expectations they wanted for this community service experience and they were less engaged with it.

Course Knowledge

Although the main purpose of the present study was to examine the psychological benefits of participating in community service, we were also interested in exploring how community service impacted course knowledge. To assess this, specific questions were asked for the participants in the *Psychology of Development: Infancy and Childhood* sections that were directly related to their coursework. This was the only course where CSL and non-CSL sections were taught by the same professor. There were little differences in the average number of correct responses from participants in each section at both the beginning and the end of the semester. Participants in both sections also responded similarly to an open-ended question regarding how they would interact with peers if they were a child. However, although it was not significant, CSL students did receive higher averages than non-CSL students at the end of the semester. This is consistent with past research showing a link between participation in community service and increased course knowledge. Conrad and Hedin (1982) found that when community service was integrated in the classroom setting and was directly related to what the participants were learning, participants enjoyed community service more. Participants were able to see that what they were learning was applicable to their community service experience, working in an after school program with young children.

In addition to the enjoyment that community service can provide for participants, there are also educational values offered with it. Students who participated in community service outside of the classroom have felt more engaged in class and confident in their abilities to

complete course work (Conrad & Hedin, 1982; Simon & Cleary, 2006). One study in particular focused on a political science class in a college that had some of the participants complete community service and the other participants not. Based on the participants' self reports, the participants who completed community service felt more fulfilled and prepared to talk in class. By increasing their participation in class discussion, they felt more prepared for assessments, thus resulting in higher scores in comparison to those who did not complete CSL (Markus, Howard, & King, 1993). The results of this study show the improvement that community service can have on classroom learning and success. In the open-ended responses some participants in our study found the community service beneficial to their education, but many reported it caused more stress on them, leaving a negative impact on their classroom learning.

Community Service Views

In addition to examining psychological benefits of community service and exploring educational benefits, we also examined participants' views on community service and community service learning. Based on the ANOVA analysis we found that participants who completed community service had overall more positive attitudes on community service. CSL students may have chosen their section because they wanted to participate in the community service aspect because of their enjoyment in completing community service. For the open-ended responses, a common theme amongst the answers was that people enjoyed participating in community service, but felt stressed when it was incorporated into the classroom setting. Many participants who participated in the study participated in other types of community service before or even during the semester, ranging from soup kitchens to the Best Buddies organization. At the end of the semester, the scores of the two groups only had minor differences in their overall opinion on community service. Overall, the open-ended responses sugggested that participants

enjoyed participating in community service when it was not required for their class and grade.

They found that when it was a part of their class grade, it became more of a stressor. However,

participants felt that when they completed community service, they were more engaged with the

issues the community around them was facing. In seeing the changes, they felt determined to

make a difference, which is consistent with past community service research (Hart et al., 2007).

In the open-ended responses, participants also reported some of the psychological benefits.

Participants reported feeling happier when completing community service because they were

able to see the difference they were making. They reported that aspects of the community service

related to what they were learning in class, but overall it was stressful to have the CSL

component integrated in their class. Students reported that they enjoyed participating in

community service and perceived its benefits, but felt stressed when it became part of their grade

and as a whole people saw it as more of an obstacle rather than an advantage. CSL courses allow

students to see what they are learning in class in the community around them. The purpose of

CSL is to enhance the class material and have participants look at the bigger picture of what they

are learning. Taken as a whole, these open-ended responses seem to suggest that when

community service is done independently from the class, participants feel the benefits that

community service can provide more. When taking the requirement away from the community

service, the more impact it can have on people.

It is important to note that the majority of participants' open-ended responses were more

elaborate at the beginning than at the end of the semester, particularly in what they expected to

get out of the community service and how they felt about community service. When participants

answered these same questions at the end of the semester, their answers were shorter and had

less details. Participants may have been more stressed at the end of the semester with other

assignments, personal commitments, and general stressors of college.

Limitations

There are several limitations that are worth noting in the present study. First, there was

only one set of courses that had CSL and non-CSL sections taught by the same professor,

Psychology of Development: Infancy and Childhood. The CSL and non-CSL sections of

Concepts of Biology and *English Composition* were taught by different professors and therefore

had different expectations for their class and may not have covered the same material. In future

research it would be desirable to have courses that are taught by the same professor.

Second, those who participated in CSL in the different courses also completed different

types of community service. All these community service opportunities left an impact on the

participants, but the different opportunities also provided different reactions and experiences for

the participants. In the future, it would be beneficial to see if the CSL group could do the same or

similar type of community service in order to get a better idea about how the same type of

community service impacts participants.

A third limitation was that the sample was homogeneous. Participants were recruited

from a small Catholic New England college. This implies that the participants could have similar

beliefs and values because they all go to the same school and are taking similar classes within the

common core. It would be different if this was given to the general public because there would

be answers from people with different viewpoints and educational backgrounds. An area where

they were similar was that over 80% of our sample was Caucasian. There were very few

minorities. In the future, selecting a more ethnically diverse pool of participants would be

beneficial to examine how ethnicity might play a role in the findings.

Another limitation to the study was also a logistic benefit: having participants complete the surveys online during their own time at the comfort of where they wanted to be. Without the need to sign up for a specific time to fill out the survey in a specific room, participants were able to fill out the surveys whenever they wanted and took the stress off of trying to schedule a time that worked for them. This allowed for more people to participate in the study because they felt more in control of when they filled out the survey and where they were able to complete it. However, it also was a limitation because when conducting a study in an assigned room, there is a greater control over participants' environment and greater ability to limit the amount of external factors they would experience when filling out the survey.

The findings from the present study suggest that when community service is integrated into the classroom, participants may receive little to no psychological benefits compared to participants who do not complete community service for a class. However, based on open response questions, people enjoyed doing community service outside of the classroom and reported feeling more fulfilled when they completed it outside of the classroom. Additionally, although many of the findings were not significant, some were in the predicted direction (e.g., flourishing). For future research, it would be interesting to expand on the association between flourishing and community service. Also it would be important to explore why people choose to be a part of a community service learning class or section compared to a section that does not require community service. Community service is something that almost everyone experiences in one way or another. Whether it is volunteering at a food kitchen, tutoring kids or working on building a house, people have done acts that make a difference in other people's lives. The psychological benefits of community service are endless and are beneficial to everyone no matter

why they are doing it. Our research explored new paths in understanding the benefits of

community service, and hopefully has paved the way for future research in this area.

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Table 1:

Self-Esteem Scores as a Function of Time and Community Service Learning

		Community Service	
		No	Yes
	Time 1		
	M	36.50	37.61
Time	*SE*	0.99	1.20
	Time 2		
	M	36.96	37.00
	SE	1.00	1.22

Table 2:

Flourishing Scores as a Function of Time and Community Service Learning

		Community Service	
		No	**Yes**
	Time 1		
	M	33.74	34.44
Time	*SE*	0.63	0.64
	Time 2		
	M	33.30	34.91
	SE	0.53	0.76

Table 3:

Flourishing Scores as a Function of Time and Non-Required Service

		Non-Required Community Service	
		No	**Yes**
	Time 1		
	M	**33.68**	**34.12**
Time	*SE*	**0.72**	**0.56**
	Time 2		
	M	**32.60**	**34.54**
	SE	**0.88**	**0.67**

Table 4:

Gratitude Scores as a Function of Time and Community Service Learning

		Community Service	
		No	Yes
	Time 1		
	M	35.73	35.53
Time	*SE*	0.75	0.88
	Time 2		
	M	35.85	34.37
	SE	0.78	0.91

Table 5:

Inner Haven Serenity Scores as a Function of Time and Community Service

Learning

		Community Service	
		No	Yes
Time	**Time 1**		
	M	4.02	3.97
	SE	0.11	0.13
	Time 2		
	M	4.18	4.03
	SE	0.12	0.14

Table 6:

Trust Serenity Scores as a Function of Time and Community Service Learning

		Community Service	
		No	Yes
	Time 1		
	M	4.14	4.25
Time	*SE*	0.09	0.11
	Time 2		
	M	4.33	4.28
	SE	0.09	0.12

Table 7:

Acceptance Serenity Scores as a Function of Time and Community Service

Learning

		Community Service	
		No	Yes
	Time 1		
	M	4.14	4.25
Time	*SE*	0.09	0.11
	Time 2		
	M	4.33	4.28
	SE	0.10	0.12

Table 8:

Community Service Views as a Function of Time and Community Service

Learning

		Community Service	
		No	Yes
	Time 1		
	M	34.21	36.37
Time	*SE*	0.85	0.96
	Time 2		
	M	33.87	36.50
	SE	0.81	0.91

Table 9:

Psychology of Development Accuracy Scores as a Function of Time and

Community Service Learning

		Community Service	
		No	Yes
	Time 1		
	M	0.54	0.55
Time	*SE*	0.07	0.06
	Time 2		
	M	0.58	0.64
	SE	0.64	0.07

Appendix A: Community Service Items

Rate questions 1-6 on the following scale

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Strongly Disagree						Strongly Disagree

1. Community service in general is interesting.
2. Community service benefits those in the community.
3. Community service participation should be required for graduation.
4. Community instills ethics in the volunteer.
5. Community service as part of a course helps students gain hands on experiences about what they are learning.
6. Community service as part of a course helps increase student learning.
7. Have you done community service before? Yes or no? If yes, please list each activity you were involved with, when were you involved with the activity, and for how long were you involved.
8. How many times have you taken a CSL (Community Service Learning) course (including any that you are taking this semester)?
    a. If yes, please describe when you took the CSL course and what type of activity you participated in.
9. What to do expect to get out of this class?
10. Do you think community service will or would help your learning in this class? Why or why not? Please explain.
11. Did community service impact why you chose this section of this course?
12. What do you expect to get out of this course?
13. Do you think this course will help you bring out your strengths?
14. Are you currently enrolled in Psychology of Infancy and Development (PSY290)?
    a. Yes (if yes, continue to number 15)

b.   No (if no, you are finished)

Appendix B: Psychology of Development: Infancy and Childhood questions

Time 1:

1. Imagine you are 8 years old and in elementary school. You are exposed to different kinds of kids with varying levels of social skills. Describe a typical day at school focusing on social relations (both your friendships and peer relations).

2. Angry, punitive parenting

    a. generally does not affect children who are poor emotion regulators.

    b. will foster a heightened sense of empathy and sympathy in children.

    c. **disrupts the development of empathy at an early age.**

    d. can be linked to an increase in altruistic behavior through adolescence.

3.   Emily is chosen as Student of the Day. Annie is angry that she was not selected, and she spreads a mean rumor about Emily. This is an example of _____ aggression.

    a. physical

    b. instrumental

    c. passive

    d. relational

4. Nine-month-old Daisy retrieves her pacifier, which her mother has hidden under a cover. Baby Daisy has begun to master
    a. deferred imitation.
    b. **object permanence.**
    c. make-believe play.
    d. reflexive schemes.

Time 2:

1. Imagine you are 8 years old and in elementary school. You are exposed to different kinds of kids with varying levels of social skills. Describe a typical day at school focusing on social relations (both your friendships and peer relations).

2. When shown a LEGO structure made to look like a crayon, 3-year-old Astrid said that the object "really and truly" was a crayon. Astrid is having trouble with:

    a. Class inclusion

    b. Hierarchical classification

    c. **The appearance-reality distinction**

    d. Conservation

3. One day during a rainstorm, 4-year-old Isaiah comments to his mother, "The sky is very sad today. We have to do something fun to make it happy again!" Isaiah's belief that it rains because the sky is sad is an example of:
   a. Dual representation
   b. Egocentrism
   c. Animistic thinking
   d. Centration

4. If you asked 4-year-old Keisha to describe herself, which of the following is she most likely to say:
   a. I am friendly
   b. I am smart
   c. I am helpful
   d. **I do not like bugs**

5. _____ is vital for successful peer relationships and overall mental health
   a. Individualism
   b. **Emotional competence**
   c. Collectivism
   d. Mental representation

6. When her friend, Reagan, loses her favorite toy, 4 –year-old Nahla puts her arm around Reagan and offers to give Reagan a cookie from her lunch. Nahla's emotional response to Reagan's loss exhibits:
   a. Personal distress
   b. Effortful control
   c. Emotional self-regulation
   d. **Altruistic behavior**