

Participants

Participants in the project were students enrolled in the two sections of Introduction to Sociology I taught in the Fall semester, 1994. The course is aimed at undergraduate first- and second-year students, and it is part of the college's General Education (G.E.) program. Students who take it fulfill one of their G.E. requirements - American Institutions.

Students ostensibly self-selected for my service-learning section of the course and for my traditionally-taught section of Introduction to Sociology. In reality, many first-year students are preregistered for the course before they arrive on campus. If they don't like the course to which they've been assigned, they can use the drop/add procedure to withdraw or change sections during the first week of classes. I did attempt to publicize the service-learning section of the course; however, most students (81%) said they were not aware of the service-learning requirement when they enrolled. They were made aware of it during the drop/add period and given the opportunity to withdraw, but most did not.⁴

Sixty students enrolled in the service-learning section, and 63 students enrolled in the traditional section. Fifty-nine students completed the former, and 63 students completed the latter. Seventy-five percent of the participants in the study were first-year students, 63% were female, and 86% identified themselves as Caucasian. Thirty-nine of the service-learning students completed both the pre- and post-test questionnaires, and 49 of the non-service-learning students completed both questionnaires. Forty-two of the service-learning students and 53 of the non-service-learning students completed the course evaluation. Performance scores were computed for every student who completed the course. I found few differences between students who completed the questionnaires and those who did not. In fact, the differences between those who responded and those who didn't would tend to understate, rather than exaggerate, the effect of service-learning on learning outcomes.⁵

Procedures

Students in the service-learning course were required to perform 20 hours of service with agencies in Cortland, N.Y., such as the Cortland College Childcare Center, Catholic Charities (which operates programs for teenagers at risk of becoming parents, pregnant teenagers, teenage parents, drug and alcohol abusers, and the emotionally disturbed), the Hunger and Homeless Coalition (a campus-based organization), and Loaves and

Fishes (a community group which provides free lunches and dinners for the homeless). Students were involved in activities like working as teachers' aides in day care classrooms, accompanying caseworkers on visits to the homes of low-income teenaged mothers, preparing and serving meals in a soup kitchen, and organizing activities to draw attention to the plight of the hungry and the homeless in the United States and the world. Students in the non-service-learning course were given periodic assignments to read articles in the *New York Times* weekday newspaper which illustrated course concepts. In addition, I asked students to identify articles which they believed illustrated concepts we were discussing in class. For example, the discussion of culture prompted one student to analyze a picture entitled, "Cultures Collide on Madison Avenue," and our discussion of gender roles brought attention to an article on, "The Macho World of Peru: 8 Women Muscle In."

The service-learning experience and the *New York Times* assignments were incorporated in the classroom in several ways. First, I structured in-class discussions around the two types of experiences. Second, I offered extra-credit incentives to students who wished to discuss their service-learning or *New York Times* reading by participating on panels in class and making presentations on aspects of their service-learning or on issues in the *Times*.⁶ Third, I incorporated the service-learning experience and the *Times* reading into their exams. On two of the four multiple-choice exams, each student answered an essay question requiring them to apply course concepts to either their service experience or their *Times* reading.

In order to minimize the effects of extraneous variables, students in the two courses were treated as similarly as possible. Students were evaluated using the same exams⁷ and other criteria (attendance, completion of homework assignments, and extra credit). Trying to keep these courses as comparable as possible, while managing the workload of teaching more than 120 students, necessitated that I drop some of the more time-honored techniques for integrating service with course work, such as keeping journals and writing analysis papers. Consequently, the service component was not as tightly integrated with the course as is desirable.

During the first week of class meetings (the drop-add period), I told students of the course requirements and described the experiment in which they would be participants. Service-learning students heard presentations by representatives of the agencies with which they could volunteer. A graduate student assistant placed students in the