

Developing Civic-Minded Teacher Leaders Through Service-Learning School Partnerships

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Abstract

This quantitative study examined the change in Master in Teaching students' attitudes toward civic action and service self-efficacy after participating in academic service-learning with K-2 youth at school-university partnership sites. Study participants completed the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ) and the Community Service Self-Efficacy Scale before and after participation in academic service-learning with the school-age youth. The researchers employed split plot ANOVA to analyze possible relationships among participants' ratings of their civic attitudes, service self-efficacy, and various demographic characteristics of the respondents. Results showed that multiple civic attitude factors and service self-efficacy tend to increase and/or move in a positive direction. Findings support existing literature suggesting that participation in academic service-learning has positive cognitive and affective effects on teacher candidates.

The complex and multifaceted problems and demands of modern society make the need for developing 21st century leaders a paramount endeavor (Avolio & Luthans, 2006; Kegan, 1994; Lipman-Blumen, 1996). Many colleges and universities, as well as business and nonprofit organizations, work to develop leadership skills and capabilities in their students and employees. The Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U) launched a decade-long initiative with a taskforce comprised of educational, business, community, and policy leaders to develop and endorse a slate of top learning outcomes for today's college student that they believed necessary for American students to achieve to be competitive in today's global society (AAC&U, 2007). Among the learning objectives cited by AAC&U are several important leadership characteristics, including critical thinking, teamwork, and problem solving; civic knowledge and engagement; intercultural knowledge and competence; and ethical reasoning and action (AAC&U, 2007).

These same attributes are also frequently discussed as key to both teacher and administrator leadership (Acker-Hocevar, Cruz-Janzen, & Wilson, 2012; Marshall & Oliva, 2010). Developing school leaders who have the capacity and skill to enact positive changes in schools and communities requires colleges and universities to purposefully design programs and coursework aligned with those AAC&U learning objectives cited above. According to Marshall and Oliva (2010), "capacity building for social justice leaders requires a blending of theory, research, reflections on practice, tools for teaching and other interventions, strategies for engaging passion and emotion, and finally, realistic engagement with the challenges of real-world policy and practice" (p. 12). To build capacity, many teacher and administrator preparation programs have placed increased emphasis on reflection as well as engagement in "real-world" community problems. Academic service-learning is one strategy

frequently used to develop civic engagement and mindfulness and provide experiences in problem solving and teamwork to strengthen self-efficacy. In other words, to develop the belief that school leaders can be successful agents of change, preparation programs must provide opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills, practice those skills in community contexts, and reflect on their practices (Acker-Hocevar, Cruz-Janzen, & Wilson, 2012).

Teacher leadership has been described as “action that transforms teaching and learning in a school [and] advances social sustainability and quality of life for a community” (York-Barr & Duke, 2004, p. 260). While there is great debate in the field about who teacher leaders are, one detail that is consistent is that teacher leaders—whether classroom teachers, instructional coaches, or mentors—are often identified as extraordinary teachers who have had an impact on their schools and communities. They are teachers who lead within and beyond the classroom, and they are able to convey convictions about a better world and translate those ideas into sustainable systems of action (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). This paper explores academic service-learning as a vehicle for developing two important dimensions of leadership in teacher candidates—civic engagement/mindedness and service self-efficacy.

Relevant Literature

Civic Engagement and Self-Efficacy

It is important to note that civic engagement and service-learning are not the same thing—not all civic engagement is service-learning, and all service-learning does not necessarily involve civic dimensions. According to Bringle and Steinberg (2010), “a person who has the capacity and desire to work with others to achieve the common good” is civic-minded (p. 429). An intentional outcome of most service-learning is that participants’ orientation toward civic engagement will grow as a result of participation (Steinberg et al., 2011). Research shows that engaging in academic service-learning is related to increases in personal commitment to service and civic engagement (Eyler, 1999; Moeley et al., 2002). One measure of civic engagement is demonstrated by an individual’s civic attitudes as developed by Moeley et al. (2002) on the following six scales: Civic Action, Interpersonal and Problem Solving Skills, Political Awareness, Leadership Skills, Social Justice Attitudes, and Diversity Attitudes. Civic engagement can be assessed using the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ).

Equally important to civic-mindedness and attitudes in teacher leaders is self-efficacy, which is “a belief in one’s capabilities to organize and execute the courses of action required to manage prospective situations” (Bandura, 1995, p. 2). Self-efficacy is a well-researched construct that “has been determined to be an important causal variable for understanding and improving performance” (McCormick, Tanguma, & Lopez-Forment, 2002, p. 35) in a variety of achievement-oriented settings like service-learning. In other words, to be a strong leader, teacher leaders need to have an understanding of the macro and micro challenges faced in schools and communities, and the belief in their ability to make a difference and be a change agent. Furthermore, Bandura’s (1978) theory of reciprocal determinism indicates that “behavior, internal personal factors, and environmental influences all operate as interlocking determinants of each other” (p. 346), and these factors affect one another in a bi-directional fashion. Essentially, efficacy influences expectations and behavior, as does the environment. In turn, as the environment changes, so should expectations and behaviors. Therefore, in terms of service-learning, this relates to the Reeb et al. (2010) theory of Community Service Self-Efficacy, which suggests that “a student with high self-efficacy for community service would be more likely than a student with low self-efficacy to pursue service-learning opportunities” (p. 460).

Academic Service-Learning and Teacher Education

Academic service-learning is a form of experiential learning in which students learn and develop through active participation in a real-life community project. According to Bringle and Hatcher (1995):

Service-learning is a credit-bearing, educational, experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility. (p. 112)

Grounded in Deweyan notions of democracy, civic engagement, and ethics, academic service-learning connects individuals to society through experience (Dewey, 1938). The interaction of knowledge, skills, experience, and reflection are the keys to sustained learning that are integral for the development of cognitive, affective, and moral behavior (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Giles & Eyler, 1994). Aligned with Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning (1956), learning experiences such as these that address genuine community needs provide students with more sophisticated higher-order, critical thinking skills. For teacher education programs, this is particularly important because these are the same skills needed to foster teacher leaders in schools. The literature on service-learning with pre-service teacher candidates suggests positive outcomes in two primary areas: 1) academic learning and teaching efficacy, and 2) diversity and greater understanding of students and communities.

Among teacher education candidates, service-learning increases academic learning when pre-service teachers have ownership and voice in planning and conducting service-learning, engage in frequent and varied reflection activities, and participate in direct service rather than indirect service (Hart & King, 2007; Miller & Yen, 2003). Other studies report increased academic learning when the service-learning experience required teacher candidates to apply course content (Cartwright, 2012; Galvan & Parker, 2011; Iverson & James, 2010).

In addition to increased academic learning, there is clear evidence that service-learning has a positive influence on teacher candidates' sense of teaching efficacy/self-efficacy. Studies have shown a stronger sense of teaching efficacy when teacher candidates are responsible for implementing service learning during their teaching internship and receive adequate training in service-learning pedagogy (Root, 2011; Root, Callahan, & Sepanski, 2002; Stewart, Allen, & Bai, 2010). Finally, studies show that with greater levels of teaching efficacy, teachers are more willing to put additional time in their teaching, and they are more willing to implement new pedagogy (Anderson & Root, 2010).

Research studies consistently show increased understanding of K-12 students and communities when specific conditions or features of the service-learning experience are present. Root, Callahan, and Sepanski (2002) found increased levels of understanding when the service-learning provided opportunities to work directly with people of diverse cultures, involved challenging tasks, and was perceived as relevant to teaching. Features of the service learning site itself has been noted in the literature as a key factor in pre-service teachers' increased understanding of K-12 students and their communities. Pre-service teachers' direct interaction with community agency clients and the service learning site's expression of civic responsibility and appreciation for diversity have been identified as critical factors in increasing understanding among teacher candidates (Hutchinson, 2011; Potthoff et al., 2000).

Other studies have found action reflection, genuine learning opportunities, and service-learning sites that are separate from the school/classroom to be essential factors (Carter Andrews, 2009; Coffey, 2010; Gallego, 2001). Consistent opportunities for reflection must focus on individual action linked to reflective thinking to deepen understandings. In addition, the service-learning experience must present authentic learning opportunities that are clearly linked to the teacher education curriculum. Finally, Gross and Maloney (2012) found that collaborative cultural experiences, where both parties are empowered, were important.

Throughout the teacher education literature, the positive impact of service-learning on teacher candidates is clear in these areas of academic learning, teaching efficacy, and understanding of students/diversity. This paper explores the impact of academic service-learning on teacher candidates' civic engagement/mindedness and service self-efficacy.

Methodology

This quantitative study examined Master in Teaching students' attitudes toward civic action and service self-efficacy before and after participating in an academic service-learning project. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. Is there a relationship between teacher candidates' civic attitudes and participation in academic service-learning?
2. Is there a relationship between teacher candidates' community service self-efficacy and participation in academic service-learning?

Teacher candidates enrolled in a master's level teacher education program at a mid-sized private institute of higher education in an urban setting in the Pacific Northwest were asked to respond to survey items assessing their civic attitudes/skills and confidence in their ability to make significant contributions to the community through service. Study participants ($n=31$) completed the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ) (Moely et al., 2002) and the Community Service Self-Efficacy Scale (CSSES) (Reeb et al., 1998). These tools were administered before and after participation in academic service-learning with school-age youth at university-school partnership sites. An additional survey collecting demographic data related to participants' academic service-learning experience was also completed. The researchers employed repeated measures ANOVA on all CASQ and CSSES factors to analyze change among the participants' ratings of their civic attitudes and service self-efficacy between the beginning and end of the spring term service-learning experience.

Participants

Study participants were Master in Teaching candidates enrolled in a one-year intensive graduate level teacher certification program. At the time of the study, participants were in the final academic term of the master's degree program. Table 1 provides an overview of participant demographic information.

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Study Participants (N = 31)

Master in Teaching Teacher Candidates	
Gender	
Male	7 (22.6%)
Female	24 (77.4%)
Ethnicity	
White	27 (87.1%)
Asian	2 (6.45%)
Multicultural	2 (6.45%)
Age	
Median	27
Mean	29.1

Study participants were enrolled in a service-learning course entitled, *Reflective Teaching for Social Justice*. The course served as the master's capstone, and students completed approximately 30–40 hours of service-learning with school-age youth at partnership school sites. The service-learning experiences took place over a 4-week period of time, and teacher candidates spent between 4–5 hours a day, 2 days per week at the partnership site. During that concentrated period of time, teacher candidates worked in collaboration with culturally diverse school-age youth to identify social issues and/or community needs and develop a service-learning project to address at least one identified issue and/or need. The service-learning component of the master's capstone course was intentionally designed to ensure equal partnership among the teacher candidates (study participants), school-age youth, and community/school partners. The intent of this design was to minimize any distinctions between those providing service and those being served (Wade, 2000). Direct service projects represented 80% of all service-learning projects developed, and advocacy projects represented 20% of all projects. There were no indirect service projects. Table 2 provides a summary of service-learning project topics.

Table 2
Service-Learning Project Topics: Community Needs Identified by Youth at School Partnership Sites

Project Topic	Grade Levels of Youth Partners
Youth Homelessness	6–8
Education Funding Inequities	9–12
Kinder to College	9–12
Autism Awareness	6–8
Anti-bullying/Kindness	4–6
Clean Neighborhood	4
Waste Reduction/ Composting	K–5
Green Team Recycling	6–8
Clean Water/Storm Drain Waste Reduction	4–5
Early Math Skills through Math Games	7–8
Family Literacy/ Reading Buddies	4–5

Many of the Master in Teaching students indicated that they had participated in service activities in the 12 months prior to the start of the study. Data indicates that 61% of the teacher candidates had participated in service activities of some kind in the 12 months prior to the start of the service-learning experience in this study. Few students, however, reported prior academic service-learning experience. Only 6% of study participants had experienced academic service-learning as part of their post-secondary education.

Data Collection and Procedures

The CASQ and CSSES instruments were administered simultaneously at the beginning and end of the academic term. Administration of both instruments took place on the university campus in classes offered by the College of Education for graduate students in the Master in Teaching Program. The pre-test administration took place during the first week of the term, and the post-test administration took place during the final week of the term. The CASQ “contains 45 items on which students self-evaluate their skills and personal attitudes regarding civic and social issues” (Moely et al., 2002, p. 17) including Civic Action, Interpersonal and Problem-Solving Skills, Political Awareness, Leadership Skills, Social Justice Attitudes, and Diversity Attitudes. CASQ items are self-evaluated on a scale of 1–5 (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree). The CSSES tool contains 10 items on which students also self-evaluate their skills on a scale of 1–10 (Quite Uncertain – Certain) relating to various aspects of community service participation (See Table 3).

Table 3

Community Service Self-Efficacy Scale (CSSES) Items

1. If I choose to participate in community service in the future, I will be able to make a meaningful contribution.
 2. In the future, I will be able to find community service opportunities that are relevant to my interests and abilities.
 3. I am confident that, through community service, I can help in promoting social justice.
 4. I am confident that, through community service, I can make a difference in my community.
 5. I am confident that I can help individuals in need by participating in community service activities.
 6. I am confident that, in future community service activities, I will be able to interact with relevant professionals in ways that are meaningful and effective.
 7. I am confident that, through community service, I can help in promoting equal opportunity for citizens.
 8. Through community service, I can apply my knowledge in ways that solve “real-life” problems.
 9. By participating in community service, I can help people to help themselves.
 10. I am confident that I will participate in community service activities in the future.
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CASQ items are self-evaluated on a scale of 1–5 (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree).

Results

Results of the present study include several key findings. Among all study participants, multiple civic attitudes factors and multiple service self-efficacy scales tended to increase and/or move in a positive direction. Results for the factors measured on each tool are detailed below.

Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire (CASQ)

The CASQ measures the following factors on six scales: Civic Action, Interpersonal and Problem-Solving Skills, Political Awareness, Leadership Skills, Social Justice Attitudes, and Diversity Attitudes. CASQ items are self-evaluated on a scale of 1-5 (Strongly Disagree – Strongly Agree).

The mean of study participants' self-report score on the Civic Action post-measure was statistically higher than the same mean on the pre-measure scale [$F(1, 66) = 7.47, p = .008$]. There were no significant differences on the following CASQ scales: Interpersonal and Problem-Solving Skills, Political Awareness, Leadership Skills, Social Justice Attitudes, and Diversity Attitudes. However, Interpersonal and Problem-Solving Skills, Leadership Skills and Social Justice Attitudes show positive change from Time 1 (pre-test) to Time 2 (post-test). Repeated Measures ANOVA descriptive statistics are noted in Table 4.

Table 4
CASQ Dimension Pre-test and Post-test

CASQ Dimension	Pre-Test		Post-Test	
	M	SD	M	SD
Civic Action	4.07	.684	4.43	.539
Interpersonal Problem Solving	4.51	.408	4.59	.478
Political Awareness	3.87	.669	3.83	.654
Leadership Skills	3.67	.324	3.70	.343
Social Justice Attitudes	4.48	.462	4.53	.486
Diversity Attitudes	4.03	.716	3.90	.412

Community Service Self-Efficacy Scale

The Community Service Self-Efficacy Scale assesses 10 dimensions of an "individual's confidence in his or her own ability to make clinically significant contributions to the community through service," (Reeb et al., 1998, p. 48). CSSES items are self-evaluated on a scale of 1-10 (Quite Uncertain – Certain). Study participants reported a significantly better ability to help individuals in need [$F(1, 70) = 7.001, p = .010$], better ability to apply knowledge in ways that solve "real-life" problems [$F(1, 70) = 11.043, p = .001$], greater ability to promote equal opportunity for citizens through service [$F(1, 70) = 11.470, p = .001$], greater ability to help people help themselves through service [$F(1, 70) = 10.561, p = .002$], and greater confidence that one would participate in community service in the future [$F(1, 71) = 6.024, p = .017$]. Each of the remaining Community Service Self-Efficacy (CSSE) scales show positive change from Time 1 (pre-test) to Time 2 (post-test). Repeated Measures ANOVA descriptive statistics for the Community Service Self-Efficacy Scale are noted in Table 5.

Table 5
Self-efficacy Dimension Pre-test and Post-test

Self-Efficacy Dimension	Pre-test		Post-test	
	M	SD	M	SD
Meaningful Contribution	7.41	1.92	8.25	2.15
Relevant Interests	8.07	1.439	8.51	1.826
Social Justice	7.70	1.77	8.37	2.04
Make Difference in Community	8.07	1.85	8.51	1.92
Help Individuals in Need	7.43	2.30	8.28	1.88
Interact With Relevant Professionals	6.86	2.32	8.00	2.35
Promote Equal Opportunity	6.61	2.33	7.96	2.04
Apply Knowledge, Solve Problems	6.93	2.17	8.35	1.90
Help People Help Themselves	6.86	2.54	8.32	2.00
Participate in Future	7.76	2.79	8.37	2.38

The CSSES tool contains 10 items on which students also self-evaluate their skills on a scale of 1-10 (Quite Uncertain – Certain).

A summary of statistically significant results is provided in Table 6. A summary of results showing positive change is provided in Table 7.

Table 6
Self-Reported Outcomes with Statistical Significance

	F	(p)
Civic Action	(1, 66) = 7.47	.008
Help Individuals in Need	(1, 70) = 7.001	.010
Apply Knowledge, Solve Problems	(1, 70) = 11.043	.001
Promote Equal Opportunity	(1, 70) = 11.470	.001
Help People Help Themselves	(1, 70) = 10.561	.002
Participate in Future	(1, 71) = 6.024	.017

Table 7
Factors with Positive Change

Interpersonal and Problem-Solving Skills
Leadership Skills
Social Justice Attitudes
Meaningful Contribution
Relevant Interests
Social Justice
Make a Difference in Community
Interact With Relevant Professionals

Discussion

These results suggest that participation in academic service-learning has positive cognitive and affective effects on teacher education candidates. Results also suggest a possible relationship between civic attitudes of teacher candidates as a result of participation in academic service-learning as well as a relationship between teacher candidates' community service self-efficacy as a result of participation in academic service-learning. These positive outcomes are especially noteworthy given the context of the study, a one-year-intensive Master in Teaching Program with an academic load 1.5–2 times greater than the average graduate course load.

Civic Action

Teacher candidates reported an increased commitment to civic action, including plans to participate in a community action program, help others who are in difficulty, and participate in a community service organization after participating in academic service-learning. The candidates also reported increased confidence in their ability to make significant contributions to the community through service. They indicated increased confidence in their ability to help individuals in need, apply knowledge in ways that solve “real-life” problems, and promote equal opportunity for citizens through service. Furthermore, the study participants' mean self-report score on the civic action subscale post-measure was statistically higher than the same mean on the pre-measure.

Findings related to an increased commitment to civic action support existing literature on the positive impact of academic service-learning on the civic attitudes of pre-service teacher candidates. Schamber and Mahoney (2008) explored political awareness and social justice perspectives through academic service-learning. The authors examined the impact of short-term, community-based experiences and teacher education students' application of their experiences to general education curricula. Schamber and Mahoney (2008) concluded that civic/political engagement depends on the academic needs and plans that the teacher education student is creating. This suggests a possible relationship between civic attitudes and participation in academic service-learning. The academic service-learning experience that the teacher candidates participated in was directly linked to the academic course content of their *Reflective Teaching for Social Justice* course. In addition, students were required to identify and address a community need in collaboration with K–12 students and community members. The university teacher education students were required to develop a well-defined service-learning action plan, including a thorough description of the community, “community-expressed” needs, and plan for equal collaboration/partnership between the teacher candidates, K–12 students, and community. Finally, teacher candidates were required to implement the service-learning project in collaboration with the K–12 youth at the school partnership site. This may explain the positive change in the post-measure results of the CASQ civic action dimension and the post-measure results on the “plans for future community service” on the Community Service Self-Efficacy Scale. By nature, the CSSE Scale suggests personal agency and action. The *Reflective Teaching for Social Justice* course included a service-learning experience. Therefore, the study participants had an opportunity to engage in social action to address some of the social issues they identified in collaboration with K–12 youth partners.

Diversity Attitudes

Existing literature suggests that one of the positive impacts of service-learning is increasing understanding and acceptance of diversity. Wade (2000) found positive outcomes when distinctions among “servers” and “those served” were unclear. These lines of distinction were “blurred” when collaborative goal setting and actions were encouraged. Baldwin, Buchanan, and Rudisill (2007) discuss the importance of service-learning with K–12 students whose cultures are vastly different than the pre-service teachers’ cultures as a necessary condition for increased understanding and acceptance of diversity. These authors also noted the importance of pre-service teacher participation in structured reflection activities, the study of social justice, and critical examination/re-examination of their assumptions and attitudes regarding diversity (Baldwin, Buchanan, & Rudisill, 2007; Wade, 2000). Other studies suggest the importance of training and reflection sessions that “systematically deal with race and social class” and directly address “societal institutions that maintain group inequities” (Moely et al., 2002, p. 24).

In the present study, the Diversity Attitudes dimension of the CASQ showed no significant change. The lack of positive movement from pre-test to post-test among study participants might be explained by the type of service-learning projects teacher candidates enacted in communities. Failure to find positive service-learning effects related to diversity has been linked to service-learning experiences that do not engage participants in the critical examination of race, social class, and institutionalized inequities consistently throughout the service-learning experience (Moely et al., 2002). Many of the topic areas did not necessarily require students to explicitly address institutionalized inequities to be successful. For example, addressing waste reduction or composting, clean water issues, or early math skills and family literacy did not require students to critically examine or tackle issues of race or social class as a central feature of the project. In the *Reflective Teaching for Social Justice* capstone course, discussions regarding diversity were present to some degree; however, the course that most explicitly addressed institutional inequality was a course taken three terms prior. Therefore, lack of positive change in the diversity domains may be explained as a limitation of the service-learning program because faculty relied heavily on teacher candidates’ retention and use of knowledge acquired in previous courses that included readings, discussions, and course activities related to institutionalized inequities. In addition, the projects that were negotiated with the community did not always address systematic and institutional inequality.

Self-Efficacy

Teacher candidates in the present study showed increased confidence in their ability to make significant contributions to the community through service. These findings are consistent with the literature suggesting academic service-learning has a positive influence on teacher education students’ sense of self-efficacy. Focusing on pre-service teachers or “teachers in training” specifically, various research studies have examined citizenship (Bermadowski, Perry, & Greco, 2013), critical thinking (Dogan, 2013), and social responsibility (Prasertsang, Nuangchlaerm & Pumipuntu, 2013) as measurements of self-efficacy. In addition, numerous studies have shown a stronger sense of overall teaching efficacy when teacher candidates are responsible for implementing service-learning during their teaching internship and receive adequate training in service-learning pedagogy (Root, 2011; Root, Callahan, & Sepanski, 2002; Stewart, Allen, & Bai, 2010).

The service experience in the present study required teacher education students to develop and implement a service-learning project with K–12 students from diverse racial and socioeconomic backgrounds. Working as equal partners, the university teacher education students (study participants) collaborated with school-age youth to identify a social issue important to the youth and wider community. Once the issue was identified, teacher education students and K–12 students researched the issue, developed an action plan, and implemented the service-learning project. Although the teacher education students and K–12 youth worked in collaboration, each group had distinct roles. The teacher education students studied service-learning as a teaching method, so they had the additional role of guiding the development of the service-learning project to ensure each of the elements of high-quality service-learning were present. The primary role of the K–12 youth was to identify important community needs and/or social issues and think creatively about possible ways to address those needs through a service-learning project. The teacher education students and K–12 youth were equal partners in the conceptualization, development and completion of the service project. However, the youth had the vital role of ensuring the issue/need identified was one that was important to the youth themselves and their community.

The positive change on each of the self-efficacy dimensions may be attributed to this particular service-learning design. In most university service-learning experiences, students develop a service-learning experience independent from “those who receive the service.” The present study could be viewed as having two layers of service. Service was provided to: 1) the youth who co-develop and partnered with the university teacher education students to deliver the service project, and 2) the community agency or clients who benefitted from the various social action projects developed. Throughout the service-learning experience, teacher education students demonstrated flexibility, creative thinking, and problem-solving skills to find solutions to meet the project’s goals and overcome challenges. However, opportunities to develop these leadership skills were not experienced independent of “those being served.” The K–12 youth, many from historically marginalized communities, were equal partners in the service-learning project. So it is likely that the university students in the study perceived themselves as having a significantly greater impact on “the community” because the impact was on two communities in fact—the K–12 youth partners and their classrooms/schools and the community agency and clients that were served by both the K–12 youth and university students.

Reeb et al. (1998) remind us that self-efficacy for community service is influenced by the successes and/or failures a student might experience over the course of the academic term in which the service-learning experience takes place. The authors also note that a student’s self-efficacy level at the start of the service-learning academic term might mediate the student’s perception of successes and failures experienced. Considering this theoretical background, the unique design of the service-learning experience, once again, may account for the positive effect on self-efficacy. The service-learning experience was embedded in a course specifically focused on the use of service-learning as a K–12 instructional strategy and teaching for social justice. Therefore, university students received significant training in the pedagogy of service-learning, and explicit instruction on how to implement service-learning as an effective instructional tool to empower and motivate K–12 students. It is possible that university students in the study felt well-prepared and supported by the faculty teaching the course, and this may have resulted in high levels of confidence in their ability to achieve a successful outcome with both the K–12 youth partners and the community agencies. In addition, this particular teacher

education program focuses on developing teachers who are committed to working for social change. Many students choose the university and teacher education program for its commitment to developing leaders to work toward a more just and humane world, and upon entry into the master's program, most students expect to acquire skills that will help them work effectively for social justice. It is possible that these factors mediated their perception of any failures experienced during the service provision, which may have influenced their continued efforts until a successful outcome was achieved. These factors may also account for the relatively high scores on the pretest for students' social justice attitudes resulting in a small change in students' mean ratings on this scale. The service-learning course's emphasis on elements of high-quality service-learning and explicit instruction on pedagogical skills to implement service-learning curriculum for K-12 students is consistent with teacher education literature suggesting the importance of adequate training in service-learning pedagogy for positive service-learning effects related to overall self-efficacy of teacher candidates (Root, 2011; Root, Callahan, & Sepanski, 2002; Stewart, Allen, & Bai, 2010).

An increase in self-efficacy is especially important for teacher education students because high levels of efficacy can mediate negative experiences or perceived failures (Reeb et al., 1998) and influence a teacher's commitment to improving their teaching. In *Growing to Greatness 2010*, published by the National Youth Leadership Council, Anderson and Root discuss research related to the sense of "teaching efficacy" pre-service teachers develop through their own personal service-learning experiences. "Studies show that the greater their level of efficacy, the more time and effort teachers are willing to put into their teaching, the greater their openness to new ideas, and the stronger their willingness to implement new pedagogy" (2010, p. 26). The commitment to improving one's teaching as a result of increased self-efficacy is important because unequal access to quality education is a critical issue that contributes to the social inequities that persist in society.

Limitations of the Study

This study involved a small sample (n=31) from a teacher education program focused on developing teachers to work for social justice in schools and the larger society. Further, the institution's mission expresses a commitment to developing leaders across the disciplines to work toward a more just and humane world. As a result, students in the study were likely predisposed toward civic-mindedness. Although not every student chooses the Master in Teaching Program for the social justice mission, many view the mission of the program as instrumental in their program selection. Therefore, it is likely participants were predisposed to a type of education that values service-learning. In addition, study participants represent a unique university student demographic—students that choose to attend a small, private Jesuit university.

As noted in other research, questionnaire data provides an overview of service-learning outcomes, but qualitative measures from focus groups and reflective journals would be important for determining the strength and duration of service-learning effects (Moely, 2002). All study participants were preparing for teaching careers, so observations of the participants in the field during their first years in the classroom would provide valuable data related to long-term effects. Finally, the sample was drawn from one university, and the participants were predominately female, with a low percentage of racial/ethnic diversity. A more desirable sample would have a greater gender-balance, include participants from more ethnically diverse backgrounds, and possibly include participants from a number of universities.

Conclusion

This study has demonstrated that learning through service experiences, like those gained through academic service-learning, may result in an increased commitment to civic action and engagement and a commitment to helping others. This study has also demonstrated that learning through service may also give participants the confidence that they can engage positively in diverse communities and help others effectively. In addition, developing civic engagement and service self-efficacy in teacher candidates may contribute to the development of higher-order leadership skills that are more socially responsible for today's complex society. Therefore, the integration of academic service-learning in teacher education programs is important for developing higher-order thinking and two key leadership attributes/dimensions in future teachers: 1) civic engagement/mindedness and orientation (Altman, 1996; Battistoni, 1997; Bringle & Steinberg, 2010), and 2) belief that one can be successful in his or her change efforts, i.e., self-efficacy (Hannah et al., 2008; McCormick, Tanguma, & Lopez-Forment, 2002).

Finally, research in the area of teacher leadership reminds us that extraordinary teachers who impact schools and communities have political clarity regarding their commitment to justice, and they possess the skills to translate ideas into sustainable systems of action (York-Barr & Duke, 2004). Academic service-learning aligns with literature on the development of teacher leaders, as service-learning experiences often challenge pre-service teachers to think more critically about decision-making processes to be more and more socially responsible (Bringle & Steinberg, 2010; Moely et al., 2008; Steinberg et al., 2011). Coupling this with research that demonstrates that academic service-learning can positively impact cognitive capabilities suggests that academic service-learning can also result in socially responsible decision making (Batchelder & Root, 1994; Koch-Patterson, 2012; Osborne et al., 1998). Existing literature linked to the findings of this study—(a) commitment to civic engagement and helping others, and (b) greater confidence to engage civically—suggests that academic service-learning supports the development of leadership skills among aspiring educators.

Recommendations for Future Research

The need for better leadership in organizations and institutions is clear. This research suggests that academic service-learning as a pedagogical method does bear some impact on Master in Teaching students' civic engagement intentions and commitments. However, more research is needed in these areas.

Future investigations should examine the duration of the service-learning effects related to higher-order leadership skills. Employing qualitative measures, such as interviews, may be valuable to document the long-term effect on teacher education candidates and other university students who participated in service-learning during their college years. Does service-learning support the development of leaders that are more socially responsible? Are educators and other individuals who participated in service-learning as part of their post-secondary training more socially responsible? Another area for future research on service-learning outcomes is the examination of service-learning course aspects that have the greatest impact on teacher education students' civic attitudes and service self-efficacy.

Expanding the research beyond one university and the Pacific Northwest region may provide further understanding of the effect that academic service-learning can have on teacher candidates' civic attitudes and self-efficacy, and by extension, their leadership skills and capabilities. In addition, a

longitudinal study that follows participants 3–5 years beyond their academic program would provide insight into community engagement and leadership roles in the community. Data that represents civic action and leadership roles after teacher education students' transition to being in-service teachers in communities is important to capture.

Finally, an examination of how graduates of teacher preparation programs with academic service-learning components implement service-learning pedagogy in their own K–12 teaching is important to understanding the impact on youth. Classroom teachers have the opportunity to employ service learning pedagogy as a way of empowering and developing youth leaders who may develop the desire and capacity to work for a better world, starting with their own communities. While many teacher education programs implement service-learning experiences and teach service-learning pedagogy in the hopes of increasing teacher candidate civic mindedness, self-efficacy, and leadership skills, without a doubt, the greatest outcome would be the development and self-efficacy of youth community leaders. Fostering civic action and efficacy in K–12 students is perhaps the greatest gift any program or can teacher can offer communities.

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