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Jennifer Brannock Cox
Salisbury University

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Beyond Objectivity: Examining the Effects of Incorporating Civic Engagement into Higher Education Journalism Courses

Jennifer Brannock Cox

Salisbury University

ABSTRACT

This paper examines a case study comparing students in civic engagement-enhanced journalism classes with those in which civic engagement was not emphasized in a medium-sized Mid-Atlantic university. Students completed surveys at the conclusion of the spring 2017 semester assessing their attitudes toward professional journalism roles. Students in courses containing civic engagement work prized contextual roles and were more open to non-traditional forms of community engagement journalism than their counterparts, who focused more on interpretive/disseminator roles.

Keywords: contextualist, interpretive, disseminator, journalist roles

Journalism educators teach students the concept of objectivity early in their college career. Objectivity is central to their field; it is a professional norm that “guides journalists to separate facts from values and to report only the facts” (Schudson, 2001, p. 2). Beginning students must comply by reporting information from sources, and keeping their opinion out of the story.

The concept of journalistic objectivity dates back to the 19th century when newspapers sought to untangle themselves from partisan politics and work independent of influence (Mindich, 1998). Recently, practitioners and analysts are calling upon journalists to revise their definitions of objectivity, arguing in favor of seeking truth and deeper analysis over blind neutralization. Media experts Bill Kovach and Tom Rosenstiel (2007) went so far as to say, “The concept of objectivity has been so mangled it now is usually used to describe the very problem it was conceived to correct” (p. 6). To achieve greater truth, journalists are encouraged to seek and add context to their stories using reporting methods that go beyond official source reports.

This professional shift away from overly simplistic interpretations of objectiv-

ity demands attention from journalism teachers in higher education. One way to encourage students to grow beyond basic objectivity may be the incorporation of civic engagement into courses. By encouraging students to engage with citizens in their reporting process rather than simply working independently, students may be compelled to revisit traditional journalism roles and embrace those that more firmly ensconce reporters in the communities on which they report.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Researchers have identified core values of journalism that help examine practitioners’ attitudes regarding their professional roles. In an early study, Johnstone, Slawski, and Bowman (1972) categorized journalists into two groups: neutrals, who favored independence from community ties, and participants, who preferred an investigative approach to reporting. Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, and Wilhoit (2007) expanded on the previous study, adding new categories: disseminator, adversarial, interpretative, and populist mobilizer. Disseminator replaced the neutrals

category, and interpretive replaced the participant category. The adversarial role reflects an antagonistic approach, challenging business and government sources. Populist mobilizers encourage journalists to help citizens get involved and express themselves.

More recently, researchers sought to examine how journalists regard their role as responsible stewards of societal needs. McIntyre, Dahmen, and Abdenour (2016) added a contextualist role to account for spikes in stories that better assist audiences in understanding complex and sometimes contentious issues that go beyond simple accounts of news events (Fink & Schudson, 2013). Fink and Schudson (2013) argued contextualist journalism encourages practitioners to take a more active role in ensuring society's well-being by ensuring citizens have the information they need to make informed decisions. McIntyre, Dahmen, and Abdenour (2016) also amended Weaver, Beam, Brownlee, Voakes, and Wilhoit's (2007) previous categories, combining disseminator and interpretive into one category and shifting four of the existing measures into a new category called advocate/entertainer, which reflected a focus on wider audiences, entertainment, pointing to possible solutions, and setting the political agenda.

Additionally, McIntyre, Dahmen, and Abdenour (2016) studied journalists' attitudes toward three emerging news forms that embody the contextualist function: solutions journalism, constructive journalism, and restorative narrative. Solutions journalism is "rigorous and fact-driven news stories of credible solutions to social problems." Constructive journalism is "news stories that are produced in a way that intends to engage and empower audiences and ultimately improve society." Restorative narrative is "news stories that focus on recovery, restoration and resilience in the aftermath, or in the midst of, difficult times."

Civic Engagement and Journalism

In the academic sense, civic engagement is defined as "the ways in which citizens participate in the life of a community in order to improve conditions for others or to help shape the community's future" (Adler & Goggin, 2005, p. 236). The traditional reporting process runs counter to this, with journalists generating ideas for stories by observing issues and reporting them. However, the interactivity of the Internet forced news organizations to adapt to a relationship in which reporters and citizens are engaged in a constant flow of communication (Singer et al., 2011). Hearken is one start-up company of journalists working with news organizations throughout the world to encourage civic engagement in the news process. Their model flips the traditional method of journalists generating their own stories and provides strategies for soliciting story ideas from community members and taking them along on the reporting process (Jolly, 2016). Other newsrooms have developed strategies for involving community members in their processes, from hosting town gatherings and soliciting online feedback to allowing citizens to contribute and publish content themselves (Outing, 2005).

Stories that are transforming news consumers from recipients of a product to participants in its creation align with civic engagement goals and appear to benefit news organizations in many ways. Hearken CEO Jennifer Brandel reported content generated on Chicago's public radio station, WBEZ, using her organization's model comprised only 2% of the network's total stories but accounted for about 50% of the top stories in 2017 (personal communication, December 15, 2017). Other studies have also revealed positive outcomes when incorporating citizens into the reporting process. One study analyzing social media interactions between a journalist and his online followers showed how he used community members to gather and verify information, build trust, and distribute news (García De Torres, 2017). Another study

showed content geared to localized audiences and focused on community-building were effective in fostering relationships between the organization and citizens, enhancing trust, and strengthening both the publication and the community (Harte, Williams, & Turner, 2017).

In spite of these steps toward civic engagement in the newsroom, many journalists have hesitated in relinquishing their gatekeeping control. Author Michael Schudson (2013) called journalists “reluctant stewards of democracy” (p. 159). He said ethical boundaries that dissuade reporters from getting too involved with their sources and being promotional can prompt journalists to act more as information liaisons, distributing news to the public and allowing them to make their own democratic decisions. In the study conducted by McIntyre, Dahmen, and Abdenour (2016), journalists valued contextualist roles, but many still appeared to be reluctant to fully embrace civic engagement opportunities. The contextualist and populist mobilizer roles represent the two most closely aligned with civic engagement goals, and neither was as highly valued as the more traditional interpretive/disseminator role. Less than one-third of respondents strongly agreed with the mobilizer roles encouraging ordinary people to get involved.

Research Questions

College students studying journalism represent the next generation of reporters. Their attitudes toward the evolving incorporation of civic engagement into journalistic processes can offer insight into what American newsrooms will look like in the near future.

The purpose of this exploratory study was to compare attitudes toward professional roles among journalism students in courses enhanced with civic engagement activities and instruction with those in introductory courses that did not include those elements.

RQ1: How do the role functions valued and prioritized by journalism students in courses where civic engagement instruction is included compare with those in courses without the incorporation of civic engagement?

RQ2: How do attitudes toward contextual reporting (constructive journalism, solutions journalism, and restorative journalism) in courses where civic engagement instruction is included compare with those in courses without the incorporation of civic engagement?

METHODOLOGY

Students in five journalism classes at a medium-sized, Mid-Atlantic public university completed online surveys during the last week of the spring 2017 semester. Two of the upper-level courses were enhanced with civic engagement activities aimed at getting students into the local community to solicit story ideas, engage in community projects while reporting, and recognize/report community issues. Some of these efforts included participating in Habitat for Humanity builds, volunteering with local nonprofit organizations, identifying and reporting trends and issues related to the local community, and going on ride-alongs with local officials to better understand their work routines and hear their stories. Three of the introductory/ intermediate courses did not include civic engagement enhancements taking them into the community and involved writing and reporting assignments based on prompts or campus events.

The survey administered was adapted from McIntyre, Dahmen, and Abdenour's (2016) study. The first set of questions consisted of 20 statements used to describe the six journalistic roles: adversarial, advocate/entertainer, contextualist, intellectual, interpretive/disseminator, and populist mobilizer. Students evaluated the extent to which they agreed that each of the statements is a core function of journalism using a five-point Likert scale. Next, respondents selected which five of the statements they

valued most. Students were given McIntyre, Dahmen, and Abdenour's (2016) definitions of contextualist reporting styles: solutions journalism, constructive journalism, and restorative narrative. Based on those definitions, respondents used a 6-point matrix table to gauge their attitudes toward each journalism type.

RESULTS

A total of 44 students completed the surveys, a response rate of 73.33%. There were 19 respondents from the civically engaged classes (43.18%) and 25 students in non-civically engaged classes (56.82%). The respondents' genders split evenly, with 50.00% identifying as male, and 47.73% identifying as female. The majority of students ranged in age from 18-24 (95.45%). Most were college seniors (47.73%) or juniors (38.64%).

Comparing Journalists' Role Functions

Overall, respondents highly valued the contextualist functions, with 63.64% strongly agreeing that "act in a socially responsible way" and 56.82% strongly agreeing that "contribute to society's well-being" are core functions of journalism. The mean score for the six contextualist function statements ($M = 4.36$, $SD = .78$) was significantly higher compared with all other roles, $t(84) = 3.14$, $p < .01$. Respondents also valued the interpretive/disseminator role, giving those statements a mean score of 4.18.

Students in both types of courses valued the same five statements above all others (as shown in Table 1). However, the statements prioritized most frequently by students in courses enhanced with civic engagement varied from those in non-enhanced classes. Students in civic engagement courses made "act in a socially re-

Table 1. Percentage of respondents who prioritized each role as a core function of journalism.

Professional role	Civically engaged classes (n = 19)	Non-civically engaged classes (n = 25)
Get information to the public quickly	57.89%	76.00%
Act in a socially responsible way	84.21%**	44.00%**
Contribute to society's well being	68.42%*	32.00%*
Accurately portray the world	36.84%	40.00%
Alert the public of potential threats	42.11%	36.00%
Avoid stories with unverified content	42.11%	28.00%
Investigate government claims	26.32%	28.00%
Develop intellectual/cultural interests	21.05%	24.00%
Provide analysis of complex problems	26.32%	16.00%
Point to possible solutions	15.79%	32.00%
Provide entertainment	15.79%	20.00%
Alert the public of potential opportunities	5.26%	24.00%
Motivate ordinary people to get involved	21.05%	8.00%
Let ordinary people express views	5.26%	16.00%
Serve as an adversary of business	0.00%	16.00%
Concentrate on the widest audience	15.79%	4.00%
Discuss international policy	0.00%	12.00%
Discuss national policy	0.00%	12.00%
Serve as an adversary of government	5.26%	4.00%
Set the political agenda	10.53%	0.00%

**Differences are significant at the $p < .01$ level.

*Differences are significant at the $p < .05$ level.

sponsible way” their top priority (84.21%), differing significantly with students in non-civic engagement classes (44.00%), $\chi^2 (1, n = 44) = 7.36, p < .01$. While both groups made “contribute to society’s well-being” their second-ranked priority, significantly more students in civic engaged courses (68.42%) prioritized the statement than those in non-civic engagement classes (32.00%), $\chi^2 (1, n = 44) = 5.74, p < .05$. Both of these statements civic engagement students prioritized most are considered contextualist functions.

Students in non-civically engaged classes made the interpreter/disseminator statement “get information to the public quickly” their top priority (76.00%), whereas students in civic engagement classes ranked it third among their priorities (57.89%). Students in civic engagement courses also marked “avoid stories with unverified content” as a priority (42.11%, tied for fourth), whereas those in non-civic engaged courses did not include it in their top five priorities (28.00%). Conversely, those in non-civic engaged courses marked “point to possible solutions” as a priority (32.00%,

tied for fifth), and those in civically engaged classes did not (15.79%).

Overall, students in the non-civically engaged courses valued statements describing each of the roles higher than those in civically engaged classes, although none of the differences were statistically significant (as shown in Table 2). All of the mean scores for role statements were higher among non-civically engaged courses, except for “avoid stories with unverified content.”

More pronounced differences in disagreement levels occurred between the two groups. Students in classes enhanced with civic engagement either disagreed or strongly disagreed at a higher rate than non-engaged students on the six least-prioritized role statements. Those statements included serving as an adversary of business (21.05% versus 8.00%), concentrating on widest audience (36.84% versus 16.00%), discussing international policy (10.53% versus 8.00%), discussing national policy (10.53% versus 8.00%), serving as an adversary of government (26.32% versus 24.00%), and setting the political agenda (42.11% versus 24.00%).

Table 2. Summed mean scores for the six role functions in civically engaged versus non-civically engaged courses.

Role function	Civic engagement mean	Standard deviation	Non-civic engagement mean	Standard deviation
Contextualist	4.25	.85	4.44	.71
Interpretive/Disseminator	4.11	.93	4.23	.87
Intellectual	3.75	.84	4.23	.81
Populist Mobilizer	3.76	.94	4.14	.94
Advocate/Entertainer	3.26	1.03	3.62	.99
Adversarial	3.14	1.04	3.36	.98

Table 3. Summed mean scores for the three contextualist journalism styles in civically engaged versus non-civically engaged courses.

Contextualist journalism type	Civic engagement mean	Standard deviation	Non-civic engagement mean	Standard deviation
Solutions journalism	4.20	.74	4.03	.82
Constructive journalism	4.24	.82	4.05	.88
Restorative narrative	4.30	.74	4.23	.89

Comparing Contextualist Reporting Types

Respondents viewed definitions for three types of contextualist reporting. Overall, students appeared to value each. However, students in civic engagement-enhanced courses valued them more than their counterparts in classes without civic engagement (as shown in Table 3).

Differences between the two groups were also notable regarding their attitudes toward bias in these contextual reporting styles. Students in civic engagement classes viewed the journalism types to be less biased than those in non-engaged classes (as shown in Table 4).

DISCUSSION

The students in this study embraced the idea of contextualist roles as core functions of reporters' jobs. In McIntyre, Dahmen, and Abdenour's (2016) study, journalists highly valued both the contextualist function and the interpretive/disseminator function. Both respondents in that study and this one valued the nine statements corresponding with those roles over all others. Although students in courses with and without civic engagement favored both of those roles, those in classes with engagement activities placed a higher priority on contextualist statements.

Jacoby (2009) wrote civic engagement is defined as "acting upon a heightened sense of responsibility to one's communities" including "developing civic sensitivity, participation in building civil society, and benefiting the common good" (p. 9). These goals are consistent with those of contextual reporting "that report beyond the

immediacy of news in an effort to contribute to society's well-being" (McIntyre, Dahmen, and Abdenour, 2016, p. 2). Students in classes enhanced with civic engagement showed a significantly stronger commitment to these ideals, prioritizing the two contextualist statements above any others. Contextual reporting suggests a deviation from the journalistic concept of objectivity. This change is most notable within the statements "act in a socially responsible way" and "contribute to society's well-being," because both suggest the reporter play an active role in the community rather than function as a passive observer. The incorporation of civic engagement into their curriculum may help students embrace new community-building strategies for reporting. Notably, fewer than half of respondents in the classes without civic engagement prioritized these roles, whereas more than two-thirds of those in engaged classes marked them in their top five most important roles.

Conversely, the interpretive/disseminator function suggests a more traditional journalism approach, focusing on the dissemination of speedy information. While it is an important part of the reporting process, it does little to reimagine journalistic practices that urge community connection. Therefore, it makes sense students in introductory/intermediate classes without civic engagement activities placed greater emphasis on the more traditional statement "get information to the public quickly," as it advises one-way communication often associated with objectivity.

In spite of these notable differences, students in courses without civic engagement generated higher mean scores for almost all statements regarding journalism

Table 4. Summed mean scores measuring bias for the three contextualist journalism styles in civically engaged versus non-civically engaged courses.

Contextualist journalism type	Civic engagement mean	Standard deviation	Non-civic engagement mean	Standard deviation
Solutions journalism	3.68	1.15	3.32	1.20
Constructive journalism	3.74	1.23	3.08	1.02
Restorative narrative	3.95	1.15	3.48	1.17

functions than their engaged counterparts. A possible explanation for this may be found within the definition of civic engagement, as a goal of its incorporation is to facilitate higher levels of critical thinking (Cress, Burack, Giles, Elkins, & Stevens, 2010). Students in civically engaged courses may have grown more analytical in their thinking about journalistic roles as a result of their enhanced experience, leading to more cautious, neutral responses on the Likert scale portions of the survey.

One area where few differences manifested was among the populist mobilizer statements. The statements describing that function—"motivate ordinary people" and "let ordinary people express views"—fit in best with the goals of civic engagement. However, neither group prioritized the function. The lack of interest suggests student journalists, like their professional counterparts, may still feel tethered to the traditional gatekeeper mentality, emphasizing the one-way flow of communication. Given the success of civic engagement efforts in journalism and the many calls from media analysts to embrace citizen involvement in the news process, it may be incumbent on journalism educators to include more of these efforts in their classes. Students who incorporate community members into their process could take these tactics into newsrooms and act as catalysts for changes to the industry. Future efforts to incorporate civic engagement into journalism classes could benefit from Hearken-style projects prompting students to seek community feedback before and during their reporting.

Given the size of the university and its journalism program, the results of this study are limited in their generalizability. However, the small sample size was somewhat unavoidable, as universities with larger journalism programs often have too many students or lack the resources to implement a civic engagement curriculum.

These civic engagement efforts were new for this curriculum, and this study provides professors with valuable insights on

areas of engagement that need more emphasis in classrooms. Future study could reflect more sophisticated programming related to these efforts. Further research could compare these findings with those in previous works examining professional journalists. More in-depth study of student journalists in programs across the country could also provide an enhanced picture of journalists' attitudes and the effects of civic engagement on them.

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AUTHOR NOTE

Jennifer Brannock Cox, Communication Arts Department, Salisbury University.

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Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Jennifer Brannock Cox.

Communication Arts Department,
Salisbury University, 1101 Camden
Ave., Salisbury, MD 21801. E-mail:
jbcoc@salisbury.edu

Helping Persons Experiencing Homelessness Complete Advance Directives: A Model for Service Learning within a Community-Academic Partnership

Woods Nash

University of Texas Health Science Center – Houston

Sandra J. Mixer and Polly M. McArthur

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Annette Mendola, Kylie Jackson and Caroline Darlington

University of Tennessee Medical Center

Bruce Spangler

Volunteer Ministry Center

Merrell Pressley

East Tennessee Children's Hospital

Erin Conley

Vanderbilt University Medical Center

ABSTRACT

Despite their interest in completing advance directives (ADs), persons experiencing homelessness (PEH) appear to have fewer surrogate decision-makers and limited opportunities for advance care planning (ACP). Nursing students and faculty, a hospital bioethicist, and social service agency staff formed a community-academic partnership that helps PEH complete advance directives. This unique service-learning opportunity offers a model for assisting vulnerable populations with advance care planning. Model effectiveness and limitations are described from each partner's perspective in their own words.

Keywords: cultural competence, interprofessional, homeless persons, advance care planning

Illness and injury can interfere with the ability to communicate, understand information, and reason, making ill or injured people vulnerable to losing the capacity to make health care decisions. For persons experiencing homelessness (PEH), this vulnerability is compounded by at least three other factors: disproportionately high rates of illness, injury, and mortality (Cheung & Hwang, 2004; Gelberg & Linn, 1989); less-frequent documentation of health care wishes; and fewer surrogate decision-makers.

The obstacles PEH face in accessing health care (Gelberg, Andersen, & Leake, 2000) limit their opportunities to engage in advance care planning (ACP). The effects of limited advance care planning can be mitigated when one has a surrogate decision-maker ready to make medical decisions on one's behalf. However, because homelessness tends to involve diminished social capital—a loosening of social ties that facilitate beneficial outcomes (Putnam, 1995)—PEH often do not have surrogate decision-

makers. PEH show a strong interest in discussing end-of-life (EOL) care and engaging in advance care planning (Song, Ratner, & Bartels, 2005), perhaps because they tend to believe that the quality of their EOL care will be poor (Song et al., 2007).

The purpose of this article is to describe an advance care planning project serving PEH in one U.S. city. The project began when key members of a public hospital and a social service agency identified the need for advance care planning among local PEH, and formed a community-academic partnership that also includes state university faculty and students. One partnership outcome is that the social service agency regularly hosts advance directive (AD) workshops in which PEH meet one-on-one with baccalaureate nursing students who have been trained to help them comprehend and complete advance directives. Participants then are given several options for copying their advance directives and storing them safely.

The following sections, authored by community-academic partnership members including four nursing students, describe the project's origins, explain each of their roles in its design and implementation, and offer perspectives on its effectiveness and limitations.

AUTHENTIC ENGAGEMENT: VOICES OF THE COMMUNITY- ACADEMIC PARTNERS

Homelessness is the experience of people who do not have a home, whether temporarily, intermittently, or chronically. Because this phenomenon has many determinants and consequences, it is often necessary for different groups to work together to promote and protect the well-being of PEH (Jarrell et al., 2014). In this community, staff at the largest trauma hospital saw a need to partner with a social service agency trusted by PEH. As the hospital's ethicist and the social service agency's director discussed possible interventions, it was clear their work might benefit from collaboration

with the local state university. Below is a description of the resulting collaboration, in the voice of each partner.

From the Hospital Ethicist: Recognizing the Need for Advance Directives for Persons Experiencing Homelessness

As both an urban safety net and teaching hospital, staff at the University of Tennessee Medical Center in Knoxville (UTMCK) recognized the frequent need to make care-related decisions for PEH who lacked the capacity to do so for themselves. The hospital's proximity to the University and Volunteer Ministry Center (VMC) facilitated a cooperative effort to address that need.

Those of us who provide Ethics Consultation at UTMCK noted that requests to locate surrogate decision-makers for incapacitated PEH were often unsuccessful. In those situations, we Ethics Committee members experienced two main worries: that the patients' wishes might not be respected because they were unknown, and that the patients might have a loved one who would want to know that they were severely sick, injured, or had died. UTMCK Staff members also have been aware of the need to increase and improve advance care planning in general.

While it is helpful to consider patients' health preferences and goals in advance, problems with the common, checklist-style advance care planning forms are well documented (Sudore & Fried, 2010). Because such forms mainly focus on opting in or out of aggressive, life-sustaining procedures in hypothetical situations of seriously compromised health and quality of life, they can be misleading, and often do not apply to the situation a person will face as a patient. In researching this project, the authors discovered the SELPH Advance Directive, a form developed to address some of the unique needs and concerns related to advance care planning for PEH (Song et al., 2010). The form also marks an impressive step forward in ACP form development in general. The SELPH AD in-

cludes not only check boxes (e.g., “I would want all life sustaining treatments if I were permanently unconscious”), but also well-crafted, open-ended prompts (e.g., “These are the things I am most proud of in my life,” “People who care for me could do the following to respect my dignity at the end of my life”). Responding to these prompts seems to help people think through and make more authentic checkbox choices. These responses also might guide the interpretation of such choices should a patient’s condition not match specified situations (e.g., “dying,” “permanently unconscious”).

Because many PEH distrust health care providers (Best & Young, 2009; van den Berk-Clark & McGuire, 2014) and advance care planning, project leaders were careful to err on the side of promoting trust and meeting PEH needs rather than gathering data from PEH for research purposes. Specifically, the authors neither retained any identifying information from participants nor sought permission to access their medical records. Admittedly, assigning a higher priority to building relationships with PEH over recruiting them as subjects in a research study bars some means of tracking the project’s effectiveness. For example, the authors cannot determine how often and accurately the advance directives are being used. However, because many participants chose to include their ADs in their hospital medical records, it is likely that some of the ADs have since been retrieved and used. Regardless, anecdotal evidence suggests the advance directive project has had a positive influence on the hospital’s approach to EOL care.

From the Social Service Agency Director: Advance Directives as a Path to Greater Social Capital

During many years overseeing services for PEH, this author (the social service agency director) noted that long-term medical needs, including advance care planning, often are overlooked. Emergency or acute care has priority in a crisis. Essentially, for many PEH the future is sacrificed to

the present, diminishing or exhausting their social capital. In addition, the longer homelessness lasts, the more likely an individual will speak of experiencing a “social death.” Dismissed by the broader culture’s negative attitudes toward homelessness, PEH can feel rejected and worthless. One man receiving services at the Volunteer Ministry Center (VMC) stated that he felt as though he were a member of the “walking dead” and “buried” by his homeless status.

Representatives from UTMCK and The University of Tennessee, Knoxville’s College of Nursing and Philosophy Department contacted us at Volunteer Ministry Center to explore ways to help PEH complete advance directives. In response, the VMC shared this opportunity with its clients and agreed to host an advance directive workshop. Following the first workshop’s success, the VMC has hosted many AD workshops and expanded its partnership with the college of nursing.

The simple process of completing an advance directive can have short- and long-term positive effects. For some PEH, simply completing an AD is empowering and can carry over to other domains and enhance self-esteem. The chance to document their medical wishes should they be unable to speak for themselves elicits a greater sense of agency. For most PEH, life is riddled with intrusive directives from other people (e.g., what to eat, when to sleep or wake up, where to be or not to be). Empowering experiences may help PEH come to believe that housing is not a vague hope, but a concrete possibility; employment is within reach; and long-term health needs or legal challenges can be addressed. As these aspirations grow, and as efforts are rewarded with successes or informative failures, self-confidence can increase. Such confidence can act like an internal capital that individuals continue to build upon, enabling further social integration, which relates positively to self-esteem and coping (Wahl, Bergland, & Løyland, 2010). In short, the opportunity to complete an advance di-

rective can be one of numerous steps along a path of rebuilding social capital.

From the Nursing Professors: Integrating Service Learning and the Advance Directive Project

While professional nurses are expected to provide advance care planning assistance, nursing students may not receive formal training to do so. Educational interventions—such as completing one's own advance directive and discussing it with a designated health care agent—have increased students' confidence in recommending and helping with AD completion (Hall & Grant, 2014). Nursing students' helping PEH with advance care planning is an opportunity to help voice the wishes of people who are often marginalized. The activity also serves as practical career preparation for aspiring health care professionals (Nash, Mixer, McArthur, & Mendola, 2015).

A critical element of the advance directive project was incorporating service learning into a partnership that yields mutual benefits by meeting clients' needs and students' learning objectives. The service-learning component of this project has many benefits. First, students are prepared to work with PEH and in the context of a community agency, the Volunteer Ministry Center. Next, all partners shared their expertise and developed students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes. Finally, having completed their service learning, students engaged in intentional reflection, moving from concrete experiences to abstract concepts that can guide their future nursing actions (Mueller & Norton, 2012; Stanley, 2013).

At the University of Tennessee, College of Nursing, students learn culturally competent advance care planning in two courses: Transcultural Nursing in the fall, and Community/Public Health Nursing in the spring. In the Transcultural Nursing course, students study diverse cultures and people's values, beliefs, and practices with the goal of providing culturally congruent

care—care that is deemed meaningful and beneficial by the person (Leininger, 2006). The faculty incorporate the Flipped Cultural Simulation© approach (McArthur, Mixer, & Fancher, 2016) in which a team of students researches the nursing literature, engages in advance care planning training, and gets to know PEH as they assist them in completing an advance directive. The advance care planning training is an interprofessional effort focused on AD content and use, EOL care aspects, and the cultural needs of PEH. The training has many components: viewing a customized, recorded lecture and a role-playing video; listening to an audio lecture by a palliative care nurse; orientation and tour at the VMC; completing the SELPH Advance Directive; and role-playing in pairs.

Community-academic partners support students and PEH throughout the AD workshop, which typically occurs one week after the students' training. At the conclusion of each workshop, students distribute advance directive copies according to PEH participants' wishes. Participants can keep a copy, send one to friends or family, scan it into the PEH information database (accessible to caseworkers), and/or place one in their medical record at the university hospital.

Following the workshop, nursing students offer spoken and written reflections of their experiences. Next, students develop an evidence-based simulation scenario incorporating advance care planning and their understanding of this population's needs. Using simulation, students act out a nurse-patient scenario to teach classmates how to partner with PEH to complete advance directives. Then, as students lead debriefing about the scenario, they invite their peers to examine their assumptions and biases.

During the next semester, students from the fall Transcultural Nursing course take a service-learning course in community/public health nursing. Students who did not participate in the fall advance directive workshop spend six weeks at the Volunteer

Ministry Center providing health-promotion activities for PEH while applying the culture care skills learned in the fall. This new group also receives advance directive training and conducts an AD workshop. Honors students from the previous semester help the spring group with the role-playing portion of the training and share insights from the AD workshop they led in the fall. Since its inception, this service-learning project has helped approximately 100 PEH complete advance directives.

From Four Nursing Students: Service Learning as Professional Preparation

Our participation in the project began with a training session preparing us for the workshop. First, we learned about advance directives from experts in various fields, then faculty taught about the realities of life-sustaining measures. Due to lack of experience, most of us did not understand the gravity of “life-sustaining measures.” Textbook facts on CPR, tube feeding, and mechanical ventilation do not sufficiently convey the potential harms that can accompany these measures. Using her hospice nurse experience, one faculty member discussed how these measures could result in patient discomfort and loved ones’ emotional distress.

We also learned not to exert undue influence on others’ decisions. Another faculty member taught us the importance of helping individuals identify their desires and encouraging them to make their own decisions while guiding them through the document. Hearing stories of end-of-life patients without advance directives—

emphasizing the difficult ethical situations that arose for their caregivers and loved ones—conveyed how crucial ADs are for everyone.

The role-play portion of training conveyed the importance of eliminating stereotypes and establishing rapport with PEH. We watched two faculty members perform a role-play—in which one completed an AD as a PEH while the other assisted in the role of a nurse—before practicing a similar interaction ourselves. The instructors’ role-play allowed us to recognize a variety of issues we had never encountered and what types of reactions to expect during the workshop. The role-play allowed us to practice explaining the advance directive and wording-sensitive questions about end-of-life preferences in layman’s terms. Because most of us had no experience with such conversations, this rehearsal increased our comfort level going forward.

After the training session, we were given an orientation of the Volunteer Ministry Center while the VMC director gave us an insider’s perspective on PEH. He shared his experiences with the homeless community, allowing us to examine personal biases, reconstruct preconceptions, and create a more accurate picture of this population. Being introduced to the agency was vital, as we had varying levels of experience with PEH. Before encountering them in the AD workshop, we had already begun to develop empathy and respect for PEH as well as an appreciation for their worldview. We were comfortable returning to the agency for the AD workshop because we were already familiar with its layout and purpose.

Table 1. Service Learning Project Participants

Participants	2012-2017 Totals
Persons Experiencing Homelessness	100
Nursing Students	67
Faculty	7
Agency Staff	4

The most valuable part of the learning experience for us was meeting face-to-face with PEH at the workshop to help them complete advance directives. We witnessed the reality of the clients' vulnerable situations, which helped us connect theoretical knowledge to the circumstances of PEH. One man repeatedly remarked that he had never felt respected in medical settings because of his socioeconomic status, leading him to avoid health care altogether. He said that no one had ever cared enough to ask what had brought him to this stage of life. By listening to him tell his story, we showed him that health care professionals could give him validation and advocate for his wishes. In turn, he helped alter our perceptions of PEH, reminding us how strongly they need to be heard and encouraged.

Many of the PEH we met acknowledged that, prior to the AD workshop, they had never heard of an advance directive, reinforcing the importance of the educational and advocacy work nursing students can provide. The PEH at the workshop often were unaware of their ability and right to make health care decisions. For example, a man separated from his wife was apprehensive about what she, as his default surrogate, would choose if he were unable to make his own end-of-life decisions. This man was in a relationship with another woman he trusted. The advance directive allowed him to designate his girlfriend as his surrogate decision-maker—an option he had not known existed, nor frankly had we

known prior to this experience. He was grateful for this newfound control and sense of security regarding his end-of-life care.

Overall, the workshop interactions helped us learn how to talk with people different from ourselves while showing respect and delivering meaningful care, relevant skills that can be employed in any clinical setting. By discussing sensitive topics, we found that communicating respect for people takes time and empathy. Such interactions should not be seen as simply completing another task. Instead, these actions are about understanding and attending to the holistic needs of every person, regardless of their circumstances or background.

DISCUSSION: A MODEL FOR INTEGRATING SERVICE LEARNING, ADVANCE CARE PLANNING, AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

Service-learning projects involving nursing students, community partners, and vulnerable populations are not a new phenomenon. A review of English-language articles identified at least 28 such projects (Gillis & Mac Lellan, 2010) serving PEH in various ways (e.g., Garner, 2015; Stanley, 2013). However, to our knowledge and after an extensive literature search by authors and our librarian, this project was the first to engage nursing students in advance care planning with PEH. Therefore, we offer it as a model for advance care planning that could be adopted in other locations and

Table 2. Learning Outcomes Reported by Nursing Student Authors

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better understanding of advance directives, end-of-life care, and cultural needs of persons experiencing homelessness • Value of peer teaching to assist persons experiencing homelessness with advance directives • Value of partnerships, interdisciplinary collaboration and social service agencies • Reflection to examine personal biases/assumptions and communication style • Forced out of comfort zone to navigate conversations about death/end-of-life • Culturally competent care of persons representing vulnerable populations |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

Table 3. Service Learning Project Innovation

- First service-learning project to engage nursing students to assist persons experiencing homelessness with completing advance directives
- Persons experiencing homelessness receive regular advance directive workshops using the SELPH Advance Directive, specifically designed for PEH
- Students receive faculty support, thorough preparation, critical reflection, and empowerment to assist others with AD completion and EOL decisions in future professional practice
- Academic and community partners receive mutual sharing of skills and expertise
- Innovative use of simulation, flipped classroom, and peer teaching

with a variety of learners and vulnerable populations.

Published descriptions of nursing students' service learning with vulnerable populations commonly highlight several successful features of such work. This project entails the majority of those important attributes. For students, these include consistent faculty support, adequate orientation and preparation, and numerous opportunities for critical reflection (Stanley, 2013; Knecht & Fischer, 2015). This project also is effective because it involves clear communication and coordination with all partners, respecting their schedules and commitments (Coulter et al., 2016; Gillis & Mac Lellan, 2010). Above all, this project's success depends on the full commitment of each partner and the value each gains through participation, as illustrated by the sections above, which were written by those partners. By mutually sharing expertise, partners attain benefits they could not have realized on their own. In fact, without their collective commitment, this project would not have been possible, for no partner independently possessed all the skills and resources to meet the identified need.

Still, there is much room for improvement. For students, orientation or debriefing could include more details about the personal and systemic factors contributing to homelessness. We also could address more explicitly social justice concepts and ways students and nurses can advocate for marginalized groups. This work could involve training Volunteer Ministry Center staff to help PEH complete advance direc-

tives, making the agency and its clients less dependent on the workshops. Additionally, we could solicit feedback from participants, using their insights to improve the project.

Despite these areas for growth, the authors recommend this model, noting its flexibility in accommodating different partners. On the learners' side, a similar advance care planning service-learning experience could engage students in social work, law, medicine, chaplaincy, philosophy, bioethics, public health, or health care administration. A similar project also could include students from two or more disciplines, helping prepare them for the teamwork their careers will require. Additional populations served could include persons in adult day care, dialysis centers, assisted living facilities, outpatient cancer treatment, senior citizen housing, and nursing homes.

CONCLUSION

This community-academic partnership has two important outcomes. First, the Volunteer Ministry Center regularly hosts advance directive workshops for persons experiencing homelessness. Second, those workshops provide a unique service-learning opportunity for nursing students. The first service-learning project to integrate advance care planning, nursing students, and PEH vulnerable population, this endeavor is recommended as a model for training aspiring nurses and other professionals to assist various populations with advance care planning.

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AUTHOR NOTE

Woods Nash, McGovern Center for Humanities and Ethics, University of Texas Health Science Center – Houston; Sandra J. Mixer and Polly M. McArthur, College of Nursing, University of Tennessee, Knoxville; Annette Mendola, Kylie Jackson and Caroline Darlington, University of Tennessee Medical Center; Bruce Spangler, Volunteer Ministry Center; Merrell Pressley, East Tennessee Children's Hospital; Erin Conley, Vanderbilt University Medical Center.

Merrell Pressley is now at Children's Healthcare of Atlanta.

Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Sandra J. Mixer.

College of Nursing, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, 1200 Volunteer Blvd., Knoxville, TN 37996. E-mail: smixer@utk.edu