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# Can Philanthropy be Taught?

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# Can Philanthropy be Taught?

## **Comments**

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## **Can Philanthropy be Taught?**

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## **Abstract**

In recent years, colleges and universities have begun investing significant resources into an innovative pedagogy known as experiential philanthropy. The pedagogy is considered to be a form of service-learning. It is defined as a learning approach that provides students with opportunities to study social problems and nonprofit organizations and then make decisions about investing funds in them. Experiential philanthropy is intended to integrate academic learning with community engagement by teaching students not only about the practice of philanthropy but also how to evaluate philanthropic responses to social issues. Despite this intent, there has been scant evidence demonstrating that this type of pedagogic instruction has quantifiable impacts on students' learning or their personal development. Therefore, this study explores learning and development outcomes associated with experiential philanthropy, and examines the efficacy of experiential philanthropy as a pedagogic strategy within higher education. Essentially, we seek to answer the question: Can philanthropy be taught?

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## **Can Philanthropy be Taught?**

In recent years, colleges and universities across the country have begun investing significant resources into an innovative new pedagogy known as *experiential philanthropy* (also often referred to as *student philanthropy*). The pedagogy, which is considered to be a form of service-learning, has been defined as a “teaching and learning approach that integrates charitable giving with academic study, in order to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (Olberding, 2009, p. 465). Experiential philanthropy is intended to teach students not only about philanthropy, but also about how to evaluate philanthropic responses to local social issues. Unlike traditional service-learning, though, where “students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs” (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996), experiential philanthropy may or may not involve an organized service component. In fact, the primary goal of experiential philanthropy is not to create greater service opportunities, but to provide students with the opportunity to assume the role of a philanthropic funding agent on behalf of their local community (Ahmed & Olberding, 2007/2008).

By some estimates, there are currently more than 100 experiential philanthropy initiatives at colleges and universities across the United States (US) (Stuart, 2012); and, for the past decade, both the Once Upon a Time Foundation and the Learning by Giving Foundation—two of the nation’s largest funders of experiential philanthropy—have contributed millions of dollars to support various forms of philanthropy-based education at US institutions of higher learning (The Philanthropy Lab, 2015; Learning by Giving Foundation, n.d).

Despite the rise of experiential philanthropy as an innovative pedagogy in American higher education, there has been scant empirical evidence demonstrating that this form of instruction has quantifiable impacts on students’ academic learning or their personal

development. Previous research has primarily provided descriptive accounts of the different types of experiential philanthropy initiatives that exist (Campbell, 2014; Millisor & Olberding, 2009), students' perceptions of the effectiveness of these initiatives over the short- and long-term (Ahmed & Olberding, 2007/2008; Olberding, 2012), and students' views regarding the favorableness of these initiatives—especially in relation to increasing their level of participation in civic activities (Irvin, 2005; Ratliff & McCormick, 2011). Beyond these descriptive accounts, little is known about the specific learning and development outcomes that are achieved. Moreover, it is uncertain whether all students benefit equally from this particular pedagogic approach to classroom instruction.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to examine the academic learning and personal development outcomes associated with the use of experiential philanthropy in the college classroom—and, to ultimately assess the efficacy of experiential philanthropy as a pedagogic strategy within higher education. Specifically, this study uses survey data from college students' pre- and post-course self-evaluations of their experiential philanthropy involvement at one university to address the following three research questions:

1. To what extent does experiential philanthropy enhance students' academic learning and personal development?
2. Do students' perceptions of their academic learning and personal development after participating in an experiential philanthropy course differ across disciplinary boundaries?
3. Which types of students are most likely to benefit most from participating in an experiential philanthropy course?

The remainder of this article proceeds as follows: first, we provide insights into why colleges and universities have, in recent years, begun offering students more than the traditional

educational experience; we then introduce the concept of experiential philanthropy as an innovative community-based service-learning pedagogy used to not only integrate students into the local community, but to also teach philanthropic values; next, we present an overview of the data that we rely on to address the research questions in this study; the results then follow; the article concludes with a discussion of the efficacy of experiential philanthropy as a pedagogic strategy within higher education.

### **Review of Relevant Literature**

Concerns about the social roles and responsibilities of higher education institutions have increasingly been on the rise (for a review see, Bryer, 2014). Indeed, complex societal challenges such as poverty, social inequality, environmental degradation, economic injustice, and human rights abuses have placed enormous expectations on colleges and universities to produce graduates who will not only have learned about these challenges, but will also be able to help in solving many of them. As such, a number of colleges and universities have begun investing significant resources not only into educating and preparing students for professional careers, but also into educating and preparing students to become civically engaged citizens—citizens who will ultimately be motivated to get involved in their local communities.

In recognition of these investments, the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching has recently begun granting US colleges and universities a “community engagement classification.” This classification recognizes the efforts of higher education institutions with regard to teaching and producing research that makes a difference in the community. Since the development of this classification, the number of colleges and universities granted a community engagement designation has grown substantially. In 2006, for instance, only 74 campuses were

granted such a designation. However, by 2015 the number had increased to 361 (Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching, 2015).

### **Community-Based Education and Service-Learning**

Given this emphasis on building more than students' academic and professional skills, community-based education has emerged as an instructional approach that attempts to integrate academic learning with community engagement (Bryer, 2014). Motivated by a belief that all communities have intrinsic educational assets and resources that educators can use to enhance the learning experience, community-based education affords students the opportunity to acquire a broader set of knowledge and skills than more traditional educational pedagogies. Service-learning is perhaps one of the most frequently utilized community-based pedagogies. As an instructional approach, service-learning "combines community service with explicit academic learning objectives, preparation for community work, and deliberate reflection" (Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, & Kerrigan, 2001, p. v). Service-learning is grounded in the concept of active learning (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996), and is believed to enrich students' learning experience while also teaching students to work toward the common good.

Research has consistently shown that service-learning activities can be an effective method for teaching course content and can aid in achieving an array of student learning outcomes (Cohen & Kinsey, 1994; Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Rockquemore & Schaffer, 2000; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000; Reinke, 2003; Dicke, Dowden & Torres, 2004; Simons & Cleary, 2006). Beyond enhancing learning outcomes, though, research has also shown that by participating in service-learning activities students often increase their level of commitment to civic values (Conrad & Hedin, 1991; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Youniss & Yates, 1997). Indeed, recent meta-analyses on the effectiveness of service-learning has shown that

service-learning activities not only develop students' cognitive abilities, but also build students' understanding of social issues and enhance their personal insights (Celio, 2011; Warren, 2012; Yorio & Ye, 2011).

### **Experiential Philanthropy as a Form of Service-learning**

Service-learning can include a variety of teaching strategies; and, one of the most recent strategies is experiential philanthropy, which integrates academic learning with explicit hands-on philanthropic experience. Experiential philanthropy is designed to introduce students to the practice of philanthropy as well as encourage them to remain philanthropic throughout their lives (Benenson, Moldow, & Hahn, 2014). Thus, according to grantmakers, from a practical perspective, experiential philanthropy has numerous benefits (Keidan, Jung, & Pharoah, 2014)—such as providing students with grantmaking skills, allowing them to address social needs, raising the overall visibility of the concept and field of philanthropy, and enhancing students' philanthropic motivations.

Similar to findings regarding service-learning in general, research—relying primarily on descriptive analysis—has shown that the use of experiential philanthropy in the classroom can have positive results. Ahmed and Olberding (2007/2008), for instance, analyzed data from nearly 1,000 university students who participated in an experiential philanthropy course, and found that the majority believed that the course made them more aware of social problems and nonprofit organizations, increased their sense of responsibility to help others in need, and enhanced their intentions to give money and time to charity. Additionally, Olberding (2009) found that students participating in an experiential philanthropy course reported enhanced understanding of their course material.

The positive effects of experiential philanthropy have also been supported by recent quasi-experimental research. McDonald and Olberding (2012) in their quasi-experimental study of university students compared pre- and post-course evaluations from students who participated in an experiential philanthropy course with those who did not. Their findings indicated that, at the end of the semester, students who participated in a course with an experiential philanthropy component were more aware of social problems and nonprofit organizations. These students also had stronger future intentions to participate in community service activities. These findings were also supported by qualitative data from their study.

**Long-term effects and impact on nonprofits.** In examining whether the beneficial effects associated with experiential philanthropy extend beyond the immediate class experience, there have been a few studies providing evidence of long-term effects (e.g., Ahmed & Olberding, 2007/2008; Olberding, 2012; Olberding & Hacker, 2016). For instance, Ahmed and Olberding (2007/2008) found that in three- to five-year follow-up surveys of students enrolled in a class with an experiential philanthropy component, nearly eighty-six percent of respondents indicated that they believed the class helped them to realize that they could make a difference in society and that they had a greater sense of personal responsibility in their community.

In addition to these long-term positive effects on students, nonprofit organizations as community partners of these initiatives have also expressed positive sentiment about experiential philanthropy. Olberding and Hacker (2016), for instance, surveyed nonprofits that were granted experiential philanthropy funds and found that these organizations indicated an overall positive impact on their organizational capacity, specifically with regard to their volunteer management practices and fundraising capacity.

## **Who Benefits Most from Service-Learning and Experiential Philanthropy?**

Although the limited research exploring the topic of experiential philanthropy suggests an overall positive impact, there is some evidence to indicate that different students may benefit differently from this type of pedagogy. Ahmed and Olberding (2007/2008), for instance, examined the experiences of students who participated in an experiential philanthropy course across majors and found that those majoring in the arts, business, and public administration were all more likely to indicate that the experiential philanthropy component of the course had no effect on their awareness of social problems and nonprofit organizations. These students were also more likely to indicate that the course had no effect on their belief in the value of experiential philanthropy or on their future intentions to become philanthropically involved in their communities.

These results are similar to studies that have found disciplinary differences related to students' participation in other types of service-learning activities. For instance, some studies have shown that public administration students (in particular) tend to be less likely than students in other disciplinary fields to gain value from service-learning (Dicke, Dowden, & Torres, 2004; Reinke, 2003). This has led Irvin (2005) to suggest that the field of public administration might attract a population of students who have, at their very core, already embraced the idea of civic engagement. As a result, he suggests that participating in service-learning activities may not actually increase public administration students' already high level of interest in different types of community-based learning initiatives.

In addition to these disciplinary differences, though, there is also evidence to indicate that service-learning activities do not always benefit every *type* of student equally (Morgan & Streb, 2001). White students, for instance, have been shown to benefit less from service-learning

activities than non-white students (Kahne & Sporte, 2008; Ropers-Huilman, Carwile, & Lima, 2005), and female students have been shown to score consistently higher on scales measuring their attitudes toward community service than male students (Shiarella, McCarthy, & Tucker, 2000). Moreover, although research has shown that participating in service-learning activities during the undergraduate years substantially enhances a number of student-centered outcomes—such as academic ability, life skills development, and a sense of civic responsibility (Astin & Sax 1998)—few studies have examined whether undergraduate students benefit more (or less) from engaging in service-learning activities than graduate students.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The purpose of this study, then, is to explore the academic learning and personal development outcomes associated with the use of experiential philanthropy in the college classroom. Moreover, this study seeks to assess the efficacy of experiential philanthropy as a community-based pedagogy within higher education. As a conceptual foundation for exploring these issues, we draw on the concept of active learning. Active learning recognizes that people learn best from experience. As a result, teaching strategies that rely on active learning tend to focus on engaging learners directly in the phenomenon under study—in this case, the practice of philanthropy. The core elements of active learning include student activity and engagement in the learning process (Prince, 2004). Several studies have shown that an active learning approach to classroom instruction can lead to better student outcomes—particularly when the activity that the students are engaged in involves service-related activities (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Mooney & Edwards, 2001).

In this study, we use data from the Mayerson Student Philanthropy Project (MSSP) at Northern Kentucky University (NKU) to examine the extent to which academic learning and

personal development outcomes are enhanced through students' participation in an active learning approach to the study of philanthropy. We also explore whether, and to what extent, these learning and development outcomes vary by academic discipline and student characteristics.

### **Data, Methods, and Variables**

The MSPP is one of the oldest and most developed university-based experiential philanthropy programs in the country (Millisor & Olberding, 2009; Olberding, 2012). Since 1999 nearly 3,000 NKU students have completed an experiential philanthropy course, and over 170 experiential philanthropy courses (spanning numerous disciplinary fields) have been offered. Additionally, more than 300 local nonprofit organizations have received funding. In total, as of year-end 2015, nearly \$1 million in experiential funds has been awarded to nonprofit organizations in the northern Kentucky region through the MSPP.

The data for this study were obtained from pre- and post-course surveys of NKU undergraduate and graduate students who completed an MSPP course from 2009 to 2013 ( $n=973$ ). MSPP staff members administered the surveys. The surveys were developed based on research indicating the areas where service-learning activities tend to benefit students most (Cohen & Kinsey, 1994; Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Rockquemore & Schaffer, 2000; Vogelgesand & Astin, 2000; Reinke, 2003; Dicke, Dowden & Torres, 2004; Simons & Cleary, 2006). These areas include: 1.) civic responsibility, 2.) learning and educational attainment, and 3.) life skills development. We also included an additional set of questions relating to the overall level of awareness that students had about local nonprofit organizations and social problems.

The pre-course surveys were administered during the first week of regularly scheduled classes and consisted of a total of twenty-three questions. Fifteen of the questions concerned students' interest in the course material, their desire to get involved in the community, and their awareness of local nonprofit organizations and social issues. The remaining items on the pre-course survey were demographic questions. The post-course surveys were administered during the last week of regularly scheduled classes and consisted of fifty questions. The post-course surveys reassessed students' responses to the fifteen pre-course questions, and also included twenty-four additional questions directly relating to students' *perceptions* of the effects of experiential philanthropy on their academic learning and personal development.

In an effort to minimize faculty bias and coercion, faculty members were not allowed to be present during the survey administration or completion process (during either the pre- or the post-course survey). All students in the study were enrolled in courses that utilized a direct-giving approach to experiential philanthropy—that is, the students (collectively, as a class) directly distributed funds (generally \$2,000) to local nonprofit organizations.<sup>1</sup> The data from the pre- and post-course surveys were entered into Excel by MSPP interns and later checked for accuracy by MSPP staff.

### **Analytic Procedures and Dependent Variables**

In order to address our first research question, we examined change scores for the fifteen like items on the pre- and post-course surveys concerning students' interest in the course material, their desire to get involved in the community, and their awareness of local nonprofit organizations and social issues (each question item is presented in Table 1). Change scores were calculated as students' post-course surveys (T1) minus baseline (T0) (i.e., pre-course surveys). We used *t*-tests to determine significant mean differences in change scores.

[Insert Table 1 about here]

In order to address our second and third research questions, we used factor analysis to explore the factor structure underlying the twenty-four items on the post-course survey relating to students' perception of the effect of the Mayerson class experience on their academic learning and personal development. The items in the factor analysis were analyzed using principal components analysis with Varimax (orthogonal) rotation. This analysis yielded four distinct factors explaining a total of 64.53% of the variance for this entire set of variables. We created composite variables that were an average of all item responses for each factor. These four factors were used as dependent variables in our analysis.

Table 2 displays the items included in each factor, as well as the factor loadings and uniqueness values ( $n=730$ ). Our first dependent variable was labeled "*sense of purpose*," and this factor explained 45.87% of the variance ( $\alpha=.91$ ). Our second dependent variable was labeled "*educational attainment*," and the variance explained by this factor was 8.57% ( $\alpha=.89$ ). Our third dependent variable was labeled "*civic responsibility*," and the variance explained by this factor was 5.47% ( $\alpha=.88$ ). Our fourth dependent variable was labeled "*philanthropic awareness*," and this factor explained 4.41% of the variance ( $\alpha=.60$ ). Given the nature of these four dependent variables (i.e., scaled) we treated each outcome as continuous, and analyzed the data using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression.

[Insert Table 2 about here]

## **Independent Variables**

Our independent variables capture differences across students. First, we included each student's major disciplinary field of study. On the post-course surveys, students were asked to provide their discipline abbreviation; and, in total, seventeen disciplines were identified. We categorized these disciplines into six broad categories describing the underlying emphasis of the fields: 1.) "helping professions," which included disciplines such as education, social work, and public administration; 2.) "media and business professions," which included disciplines such as journalism, communication, marketing, and organizational leadership; 3.) "natural sciences and engineering," which included disciplines such as environmental science, chemistry, computer science, and engineering; 4.) "humanities and social sciences," which included disciplines such as history, English, music, Spanish, sociology, and criminal justice; 5.) "general" majors which included students who were undeclared as well as those majoring in Integrative Studies; and, 6.) "other" majors, which included non-degree seeking students and those not providing a response to the question. We used "helping profession" majors as our reference category since previous studies have shown that these students tend to gain less from service-learning activities than students in other academic fields of study (Dicke, Dowden, & Torres, 2004; Irvin, 2005; Reinke, 2003).

In addition to each student's discipline, based on prior research (e.g., Ahmed & Olberding, 2007/2008; Astin & Sax 1998; Dicke, et al., 2004; Irvin, 2005; Kahne & Spote, 2008; Morgan & Streb, 2001; Reinke, 2003; Ropers-Huilman, et al., 2005; Shiarella, et al., 2000) we included several demographic covariates in order to determine which *types* of students benefited most from taking an experiential philanthropy course. First, we included students' race, which we measured using a dichotomous indicator of white (coded as "1") or non-white (coded

as “0”). Gender was also measured as a dichotomous variable, which indicated whether the student was male (coded as “1”) or female (coded as “0”). We included the age of each student, which was measured as a categorical response variable and treated as continuous for the purposes of this analysis. To assess students’ academic standing, we included a categorical variable indicating the self-reported year in school students were classified in at the time they took the experimental philanthropy course (i.e., freshmen, sophomore, junior, senior, or graduate/non-degree seeking student).

### **Findings**

Differences in mean values for each of the variables used in the change score analysis are provided in Figure 1. The results show that for most items, the mean at T1 (the post-course survey) was higher than the mean at T0 (the pre-course survey). However, not all of these differences are statistically significant. Results show, for instance, that at T1 students were significantly more likely to: 1.) be aware of the needs and problems of people living in Northern Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati; 2.) have an interest in student philanthropy or service learning; 3.) express intentions to donate money to charity in the future; 4.) be aware of nonprofit organizations in Northern Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati; 5.) express intentions to volunteer in the future; and 6.) express a personal responsibility to the community in which they live. Interestingly at T1, though, students were significantly less likely to express a desire to stay in college or complete their degree. The substantive significance of this difference, however, is low.

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations for each of the variables used in the analysis of the twenty-four items (reduced to the four component factors) relating to students’ perception of the impact of experiential philanthropy (included on the post-course survey) are provided in Table 3. In terms of students’ perceptions of academic learning and personal

development outcomes after participating in an experiential philanthropy course, Table 3 shows that students were, on average, most positive about the educational value that they gained ( $\bar{x}=4.07$ ). Students also indicated that, on average, participating in an experiential philanthropy course increased their sense of purpose in life ( $\bar{x}=3.98$ ), as well as their level of philanthropic awareness ( $\bar{x}=3.94$ ). Students reported that they were, on average, least positive that participating in an experiential philanthropy course increased their sense of civic responsibility ( $\bar{x}=3.83$ ). Regarding characteristics of the students, Table 3 shows that seventeen percent of students were helping profession majors. The majority was white (89%) and slightly older than 18 to 25 years of age. Females (60%) and those who self-classified themselves as college seniors (33%) also comprised the majority of the sample.

[Insert Table 3 about here]

Table 4 presents the results showing how students' perceptions of their academic learning and personal development after participating in an experiential philanthropy course differed by discipline of study as well as background characteristics. In the first column of Table 4, the results show that when using helping profession majors as a reference category, students majoring in the natural sciences and engineering, general areas of study, and "other" disciplines were all significantly less likely to perceive that they had gained a greater sense of purpose in life after participation ( $\beta=-.28, p=.01$ ;  $\beta=-.17, p=.07$ ; and,  $\beta=-.28, p=.03$ , respectively). Additionally, the results in this column show that white students, males, and sophomores were also significantly less positive regarding experiential philanthropy's ability to increase their sense of purpose in life ( $\beta=-.13, p=.08$ ;  $\beta=-.27, p<.001$ ; and,  $\beta=-.13, p=.10$ , respectively).

In examining disciplinary variation with regard to student perceptions of the influence of experiential philanthropy on the other three areas of impact (i.e., educational attainment, civic responsibility, and philanthropic awareness), no other significant differences were found; however, the findings did reveal that certain *types* of students were significantly less likely to perceive that they gained much value from experiential philanthropy than others. Specifically, in the second column of Table 4, the results show that white students, males, and sophomores were all significantly less positive about the perceived educational value of experiential philanthropy ( $\beta=-.17, p=.02$ ;  $\beta=-.19, p<.001$ ; and  $\beta=-.24, p=.01$ , respectively).

Moreover, in the third column of Table 4, the results show that older students (although only marginally significant), males, and sophomores were all significantly less positive regarding the perceived ability of experiential philanthropy to increase their sense of civic responsibility ( $\beta=-.06, p=.10$ ;  $\beta=-.26, p<.01$ ; and,  $\beta=-.21, p=.02$ , respectively). In the fourth column of Table 4, the results again show that white students, males, lower classmen (specifically, freshmen and sophomores) were all significantly less likely to believe that participation in an experiential philanthropy course increased their level of philanthropic awareness ( $\beta=-.13, p=.05$ ;  $\beta=-.27, p<.001$ ;  $\beta=-.14, p=.05$ ; and,  $\beta=-.16, p=.04$ , respectively).<sup>2</sup>

[Insert Table 4 about here]

## Discussion

In recent years, colleges and universities have focused greater attention on educating students for lives of responsible citizenship, not merely for career success (Bryer, 2014).

Professional organizations are also increasingly calling upon educators to develop and

implement curriculum that cultivates students' character in addition to building their professional skills. Thus, experiential philanthropy—a teaching and learning approach that provides students with the opportunity to study social problems and nonprofit organizations, and then make decisions about investing funds in them (Ahmed & Olberding, 2007/2008)—has emerged as a way to not only develop students' educational ability, but to also meet challenging social problems while at the same time allowing students the opportunity to practice philanthropy. Despite the rise of experiential philanthropy in American higher education, there has been scant empirical evidence regarding the efficacy of this pedagogy. Therefore, this study is intended to add to the limited literature in this area. Specifically, in this study we explore how, both, academic major and student characteristics influenced learning and development outcomes associated with the use of experiential philanthropy in the college classroom.

In response to our research question: *To what extent does experiential philanthropy enhance students' academic learning and personal development?* Our findings indicate that, overall, students who participated in an experiential philanthropy course reported primarily positive effects on both their academic learning and individual development. Specifically, change score analysis showed that after taking an experiential philanthropy class, students were significantly more likely to express greater interest in their course material (than indicated in their pre-course survey), more likely to indicate an increased desire to get involved in the community, and more likely to believe that they had greater awareness of local nonprofit organizations and social issues.

Interestingly, though, students were significantly less likely to indicate that they wanted to stay in school and complete their degree after participating in an experiential philanthropy class. This finding, although substantively small, could indicate one of two things. On the one

hand, this could indicate that courses with an experiential philanthropy component may be more demanding (in terms of student expectations) than courses without such a component. Indeed, in addition to their regularly scheduled course material, experiential philanthropy courses often require students to learn about local social issues and the nonprofit organizations in the community working to ameliorate those issues. This additional requirement of experiential philanthropy may leave some students feeling overwhelmed and believing that the class places an extra level of difficulty on their class experience. On the other hand, this could also indicate that it is less the difficulty of the course that makes students not want to stay in school, but more the motivation to make a difference that the course teaches. In other words, the experience the students have in the class could make them want to be in the work world more quickly so that they can address the issues they learn about in the class.

Both of these possibilities are likely to be particularly true for different types of students—especially for those who are in the beginning stages of their academic careers, are majoring in more technical fields, or are unsure of what discipline they want to pursue while in college. Indeed, in response to our research question: *Which types of students are most likely to benefit most from participating in an experiential philanthropy course?*, we found that underclassmen (primarily sophomores, but at times also freshmen) were less likely than seniors to perceive that they gained value from participating in an experiential philanthropy class. There are two possible explanations for this finding.

On the one hand, this could mean that students who are just entering college may not yet have developed an appreciation for utilizing philanthropic approaches to address social issues within their community. Given this possibility, it may be a more effective use of instructional time and philanthropic resources to encourage students to take experiential philanthropy classes

at later stages in their academic career. In Europe, for instance, most teaching about philanthropy primarily takes place at the postgraduate level, in the form of individual elective courses and in the context of executive education (Keidan, Jung, & Pharoah, 2014). It may be at this level where students are better able to appreciate (and, understand) the uses of philanthropy.

On the other hand, however, this could also mean that undergraduate students simply have less knowledge about the concept and purpose(s) of philanthropy in general. Thus, a pre-course seminar on philanthropy might be useful. In this way the act of ‘giving away money’ is less likely to overshadow the intent of course instruction. This may be particularly true in this study where many lower-level courses that students were enrolled in were not major-fulfilling. That is, many of these courses fulfilled general education requirements. As such, students who may not yet be taking courses within their major may need supplemental instruction before attempting to engage them in higher-level of learning through the use of experiential philanthropy.

In response to our research question: *Do students’ perceptions of their academic learning and personal development after participating in an experiential philanthropy course differ across disciplinary boundaries?*, we found that students majoring in the natural sciences and engineering as well as those who were general studies majors (i.e., undeclared or majoring in Integrative Studies) were all significantly less likely than helping profession majors to perceive that they had gained a greater sense of purpose in life after their participation in an experiential philanthropy class. This finding is contrary to the results of previous research showing that for students majoring in helping profession fields, service-learning activities tend to have limited influence (Reinker, 2003; Dicke, Dowden, & Torres, 2004; Ahmed & Olberding 2008). In fact, we found that in terms of increasing students’ sense of purpose in life, helping profession majors

were actually more likely to perceive value from experiential philanthropy than students majoring in most other disciplines.

Our findings also show that males were consistently less positive regarding the perceived impact of experiential philanthropy than female students. This result is not too surprising, though, given that research shows that women consistently score higher on scales measuring their attitudes toward community service than men (Shiarella, McCarthy, & Tucker, 2000). Finally, it is interesting to note that white students in our study were significantly less likely to perceive value from experiential philanthropy than non-white students. This finding is in line with previous research showing that white students benefit less from service-learning activities in general (Kahne & Spote, 2008; Ropers-Huilman, Carwile, & Lima, 2005). This result though, should be interpreted with caution given there was little variation in our sample with regard to the racial/ethnic composition of students. Such little variation may be unique to the student population at NKU, and may not be consistent with the degree of racial/ethnic diversity on college and university campuses more broadly.

### **Practical Implications, Directions for Future Research, and Limitations**

Ultimately, the fundamental question to be asked of any educational program or initiative is: *how are students affected?* Despite, both, the noted benefits of the use of active learning in the classroom (Prince, 2004) and the recent ubiquity of community-based pedagogies as an active learning approach to classroom instruction, before deciding to strengthen or expand experiential philanthropy initiatives, it is first important to understand how students might be affected; and, in examining this issue there are some lessons that instructors, administrators, and funders of experiential philanthropy can learn from “real-world” philanthropy.

Indeed, in the philanthropic world, more broadly, the idea of strategic philanthropy has gained popularity as a growing number of foundations have sought ways to not only provide grant support to nonprofit and charitable organizations, but to also assess social problems while developing strategies to address these problems and track the results of their efforts (Sandfort, 2008; Quinn, Tompkins-Stange, & Meyerson, 2013). In fact, many foundation executives now believe that strategically focused philanthropy can result in more targeted and aligned philanthropic endeavors, which they claim will ultimately result in a greater likelihood of effective philanthropic impact (Brest, 2010).

Although there can certainly be, both, practical and educational value from the use of experiential philanthropy in the college classroom (for example, experiential philanthropy can allow students an opportunity to express creativity and leadership in applying academic theories and course concepts to real-life situations (Ahmed & Olberding, 2007/2008; Olberding, 2009; Olberding, 2012)) instead of funders merely providing classes with philanthropic dollars to engage in this innovative new pedagogy, emphasis should be placed on utilizing experiential philanthropy as a way to *strategically* allow students to see how they can make a meaningful difference to, both, society and a nonprofit organization's work (there may be other ways as well—such as through advocacy, fundraising, or volunteer projects)—while at the same time taking into account the various ways that different types of students might benefit from these efforts. In this way, funders will be more likely to invest in the initiatives (i.e, classes) that have the largest return on investment. Moreover, instructors and administrators will be better able to assess how philanthropy-based education can be used to advance academic goals.

### **Future Research**

The findings from this study present a number of potential areas for future research. First, the vast majority of research in the area of experiential philanthropy has come from the United States. However, given the pervasiveness of social problems, both domestically and abroad, this pedagogy could be used to gain greater understanding of how philanthropy-based education can be used to address social problems across the globe. According to a recent report on philanthropy education in Europe, experiential philanthropy would be welcomed as an innovative approach to teaching about philanthropy and philanthropic responses to social issues in the country, but there is skepticism about the fundability of the pedagogy (Keidan, Jung, & Pharoah, 2014). As such, in addition to comparative studies on experiential philanthropy, studies examining the various strategies used to start, maintain, and support these programs in different locales could also offer valuable insights.

Second, a primary challenge associated with experiential philanthropy is raising the requisite funds to support the initiative(s). While studying, both, philanthropy and philanthropic approaches to solving social problems can be useful, there has been little research exploring the relationship between philanthropy education and fundraising education. Yet, in many ways, fundraising is the inverse of philanthropy. Indeed, if philanthropy is considered to be the ‘giving’ away of resources (whether time, money, or otherwise), then fundraising can be considered the ‘getting.’ In this sense, both practices (i.e., giving and getting) are pedagogically linked, and there should be some assessment of the education relating to both of these practices simultaneously. (For an overview of funding sources and financial support for experiential philanthropy initiatives, see Campbell, 2014).

Third, it would be useful to examine the syllabi of courses that utilize an experiential philanthropy framework. Although the present study revealed significant differences in the

academic learning and personal development outcomes associated with experiential philanthropy by academic major and student characteristics, it is possible that some of these differences could be attributable to what is actually being taught in the classroom. Without knowing whether differences exist in the content of course instruction, though, this cannot be conclusively determined. Similarly, students' experiences with their instructors as well as group members (if group work is required) could also influence the effectiveness of experiential philanthropy courses.

Finally, there exist several different models of experiential philanthropy (see Olberding, 2009 for an overview), yet in this study we only focused on the direct giving model. However, different models of experiential philanthropy may impact students' academic learning and personal development differently. Future research should, therefore, explore whether and to what extent there are benefits associated with the use of different models of experiential philanthropy, and should also examine which models have the most positive outcome(s).

### **Limitations**

It is important to note that this study focused on student perceptions of the effectiveness of their own experiential philanthropy experience. Thus, the generalizability of these findings may be limited. It is also important to note that the participants in this study were not randomly sampled and there was no control group of comparable students who did not participate in an experiential philanthropy course. Despite these limitations, the findings from this study should still be considered useful as they provide insights into how university administrators and course instructors can begin thinking about the design of future experiential philanthropy initiatives and how to increase the effectiveness of these initiatives for both students and communities.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Olberding (2009) for detailed information on these different models of experiential philanthropy.

<sup>2</sup> We also estimated OLS regression models using each of the fifteen change scores as dependent variables. Findings from this analysis revealed that students who self-classified as freshmen and juniors were significantly more likely than self-classified seniors to, at T1, be aware of the needs and problems of people living in Northern Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati ( $\beta=.38, p=.00$ ; and,  $\beta=.23, p<.03$ , respectively). Sophomores were significantly less likely than seniors to, at T1, indicate that they intended to donate money to charity in the future ( $\beta=-.18, p=.04$ ). Older students were significantly less likely than younger students to, at T1, believe that they had greater awareness of nonprofit organizations in Northern Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati ( $\beta=-.14, p=.01$ ). Graduate students were significantly less likely than seniors to, at T1, intend to volunteer in the future ( $\beta=-.28, p=.02$ ). Natural science students were significantly more likely than helping profession majors to, at T1, express interest in the course that they were taking ( $\beta=.53, p=.00$ ). Finally, students in business and media fields of study as well as those in humanities and social sciences disciplines were significantly less likely than helping profession majors to, at T1, indicate that they would personally walk, run or bicycle for a charitable cause ( $\beta=-.25, p=.04$ ; and,  $\beta=-.25, p=.05$ , respectively).

**Table 1. Pre- and post-course survey questions assessing changes in students' academic learning and personal development after experiential philanthropy.**

Survey Question
1. I am aware of the needs and problems of people living in Northern Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati ( <i>probaw</i> )
2. I am interested in student philanthropy or service learning ( <i>stphil</i> )
3. I plan to work with someone or some group to solve problems in my community ( <i>work</i> )
4. I believe that I can make a difference in the world ( <i>diff</i> )
5. I intend to donate money to charity in the future ( <i>donate</i> )
6. I am aware of nonprofit organizations in Northern Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati ( <i>npaw</i> )
7. I want to stay in college or complete my degree ( <i>stay</i> )
8. I have a responsibility to help others in need ( <i>help</i> )
9. I intend to volunteer in the future ( <i>volun</i> )
10. I plan to help raise money for a charitable cause ( <i>raise</i> )
11. I am interested in this course ( <i>intcou</i> )
12. I am interested in belonging to and participating actively in a group or association ( <i>belong</i> )
13. I have a personal responsibility to the community in which I live ( <i>respco</i> )
14. I plan to seek a career in a nonprofit organization ( <i>npcar</i> )
15. I will personally walk, run or bicycle for a charitable cause ( <i>walk</i> )

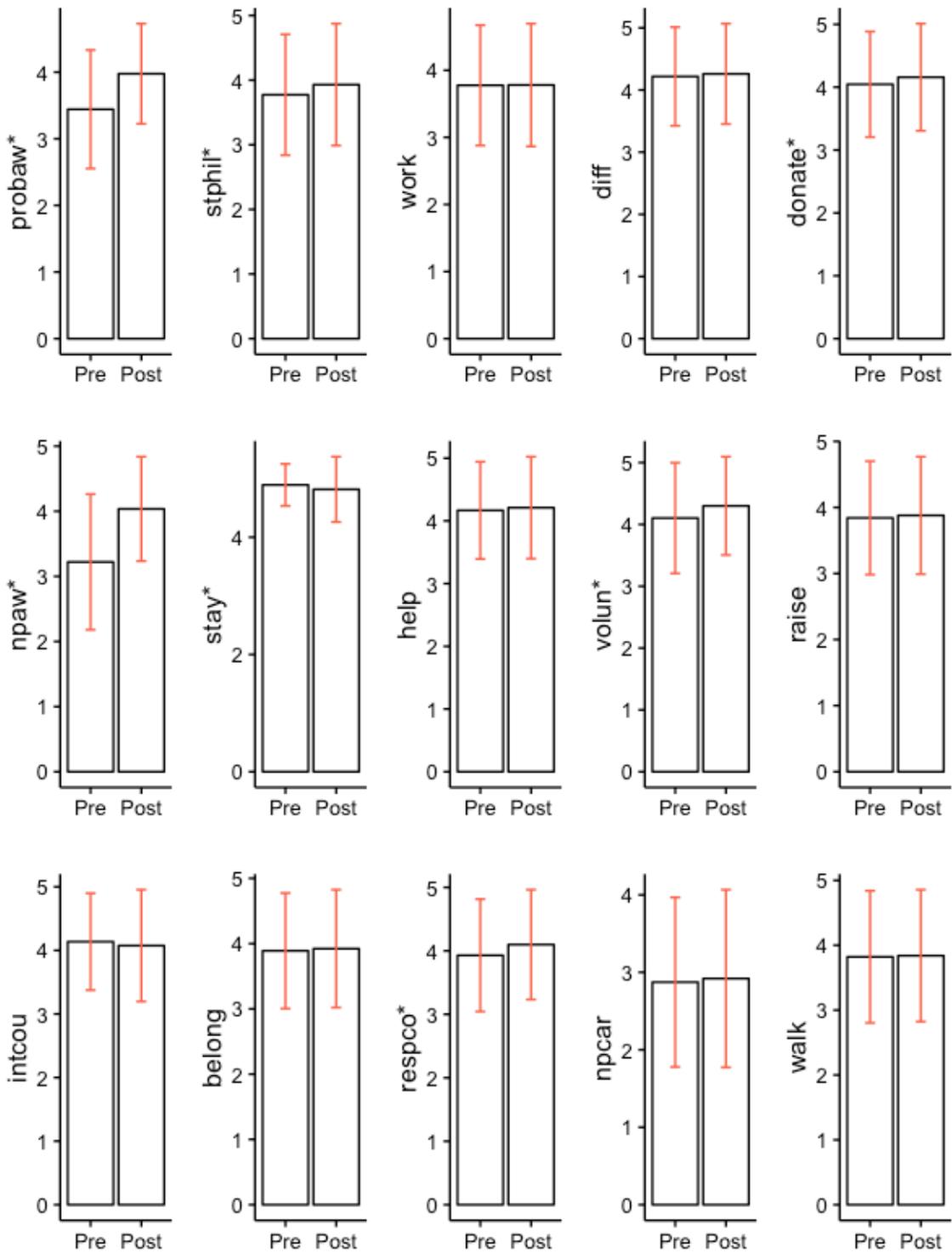
Note: Abbreviations in parentheses provide full question wording for change score analysis in Figure 1.

**Table 2. Factor loadings and uniqueness values based on principle components analysis with Varimax (orthogonal) rotation for twenty-four items from MSPP post-course survey (n=730).**

	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Uniqueness
1. Your awareness of the needs and problems addressed in this class.				.59	.40
2. Your awareness of nonprofit organizations in Northern Kentucky and Greater Cincinnati.				.63	.44
3. Your interest in this course.		.63			.38
4. Your interest in taking another course with student philanthropy or service-learning.		.40			.43
5. Your learning of the material in this course.		.81			.24
6. Your application of information and ideas from this course.		.76			.33
7. Your academic skills or knowledge.		.78			.32
8. The development of your functional life skills, like communications, assertiveness and decision making.		.65			.41
9. Your desire to stay in college and complete a degree.		.61			.35
10. Your belief that you have a responsibility to help others in need.	.80				.25
11. Your sense of personal responsibility to the community in which you live.	.76				.28
12. Your interest in community service.	.66				.26
13. Your intention to work on behalf of social justice.	.50				.46
14. Your belief that you can make a difference in the world.	.74				.34
15. Your sense of purpose or direction in life.	.57				.44
16. Your consideration of a career in the nonprofit sector.				.48	.52
17. Your interest in belonging to and participating actively in a group or association.	.49				.38
18. Your plans to work with someone or some group to solve problems in your community.	.58				.31
19. Your intention to volunteer.			.57		.29
20. Your intention to donate money to a charitable organization.			.59		.34
21. Your plans to personally walk, run or bicycle for a charitable cause.			.58		.45
22. Your plans to help raise money for a charitable cause.			.68		.28
23. The actual amount of funds that you currently donate to charitable organizations.			.78		.33
24. The actual amount of time that you currently volunteer.			.77		.34

Note: Factor 1 = Sense of purpose. Factor 2 = Educational attainment. Factor 3 = Civic responsibility. Factor 4 = Philanthropic awareness.

**Figure 1: Mean differences between pre- and post-course survey questions assessing changes in students' academic learning and personal development after experiential philanthropy.**



\* = Significant mean difference between pre- and post-course values ( $p < .05$ ).

**Table 3. Descriptive statistics and correlations for MSPP post-course survey analysis concerning students' perception of the impact of experiential philanthropy.**

	$\bar{x}$	Range	<i>n</i>	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.
<b>Dependent Variable(s)</b>																					
1. Purpose	3.98	1-5	743	1																	
2. Educational Attainment	4.07	1-5	740	.69	1																
3. Civic Responsibility	3.83	1-5	744	.76	.59	1															
4. Philanthropic Awareness	3.94	1-5	746	.65	.57	.54	1														
<b>Independent Variable(s)<sup>1</sup></b>																					
Academic Major																					
5. <i>Media and business</i>	.22	0-1	972	.02	.06	.02	.02	1													
6. <i>Humanities and social science</i>	.16	0-1	972	.05	.00	.01	.08	-.28	1												
7. <i>Natural sciences and engineering</i>	.06	0-1	972	-.11	-.07	-.06	-.04	-.16	-.13	1											
8. <i>Helping professions</i>	.17	0-1	972	.11	.05	.07	.08	-.26	-.21	-.12	1										
9. <i>General</i>	.13	0-1	972	-.07	-.02	-.04	-.10	-.24	-.19	-.11	-.18	1									
10. <i>Other</i>	.27	0-1	973	-.05	-.05	-.03	-.06	-.28	-.22	-.13	-.21	-.19	1								
11. White	.89	0-1	871	-.08	-.09	-.02	-.08	-.02	.01	.03	.01	-.05	.02	1							
12. Age <sup>2</sup>	2.32	1-5	873	.06	.00	-.05	.07	-.03	-.04	-.07	.22	-.10	.00	-.09	1						
13. Gender (male = 1)	.40	0-1	875	-.25	-.19	-.22	-.27	-.01	-.03	.16	-.10	.02	.02	.03	-.04	1					
Academic Standing																					
14. <i>Freshman</i>	.15	0-1	875	-.07	-.06	.02	-.13	-.19	-.03	-.05	-.05	.39	-.03	.04	-.20	.06	1				
15. <i>Sophomore</i>	.11	0-1	875	-.09	-.14	-.12	-.10	-.05	.05	.04	-.06	.08	-.04	-.04	-.10	.12	-.16	1			
16. <i>Junior</i>	.20	0-1	875	.00	.08	-.01	-.01	.15	-.00	.06	-.20	-.01	-.01	-.00	-.08	-.03	-.23	-.18	1		
17. <i>Senior</i>	.33	0-1	875	.02	.02	.02	.04	.24	.10	.09	-.19	-.23	-.04	.04	-.11	.03	-.28	-.22	-.32	1	
18. <i>Graduate/non-degree</i>	.21	0-1	875	.11	.06	.06	.15	-.20	-.12	-.14	.49	-.15	.11	-.05	.44	-.15	-.25	-.20	-.28	-.35	1

<sup>1</sup> Mean values expressed as percentages for all variables, except age.

<sup>2</sup> Age measured on the following scale: 1=Less than 18; 2=18 to 25 years of age; 3=26 to 35 years of age; 4=36 to 45 years of age; 5=more than 45 years old.

**Table 4. Ordinary Least Squares (OLS) regression assessing Influence of major discipline and background characteristics on students' *perception* of academic learning and personal development after experiential philanthropy.**

	Sense of Purpose Coeff. (SE)	Educational Attainment Coeff. (SE)	Civic Responsibility Coeff. (SE)	Philanthropic Awareness Coeff. (SE)
Academic Major <sup>1</sup>				
<i>Media and Business</i>	-0.11 (.08)	-.01 (.08)	-.06 (.09)	-.01 (.08)
<i>Humanities and Social Sciences</i>	-.04 (.08)	-.04 (.09)	-.05 (.09)	.08 (.08)
<i>Natural sciences and engineering</i>	-.28** (.11)	-.14 (.11)	-.14 (.12)	.01 (.10)
<i>General</i>	-.17* (.09)	-.04 (.09)	-.15 (.10)	-.08 (.09)
<i>Other</i>	-.17** (.08)	-.12 (.08)	-.11 (.09)	-.09 (.07)
White	-.13* (.07)	-.17** (.08)	-.06 (.08)	-.13** (.07)
Age <sup>2</sup>	.00 (.04)	-.04 (.03)	-.06* (.04)	-.01 (.03)
Gender (1=male)	-.27** (.05)	-.19** (.05)	-.26** (.05)	-.27** (.04)
Academic Standing <sup>3</sup>				
<i>Freshman</i>	-.09 (.08)	-.09 (.08)	.03 (.09)	-.14** (.08)
<i>Sophomore</i>	-.13* (.08)	-.24** (.08)	-.21** (.09)	-.16** (.08)
<i>Junior</i>	-.02 (.07)	.07 (.07)	-.05 (.07)	-.05 (.06)
<i>Grad/non-degree</i>	.01 (.08)	.04 (.08)	.02 (.08)	.09 (.07)
<i>n</i>	648	646	649	651

\*  $p < .1$ , \*\*  $p < .05$

<sup>1</sup> Helping profession disciplines = reference category.

<sup>2</sup> Age measured on the following scale: 1=Less than 18; 2=18 to 25 years of age; 3=26 to 35 years of age; 4=36 to 45 years of age; 5=more than 45 years old.

<sup>3</sup> Seniors = reference category.

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