Students' Characteristics and Motives for Enrolment in a Community-Based Research Service Learning Project: A Qualitative Investigation

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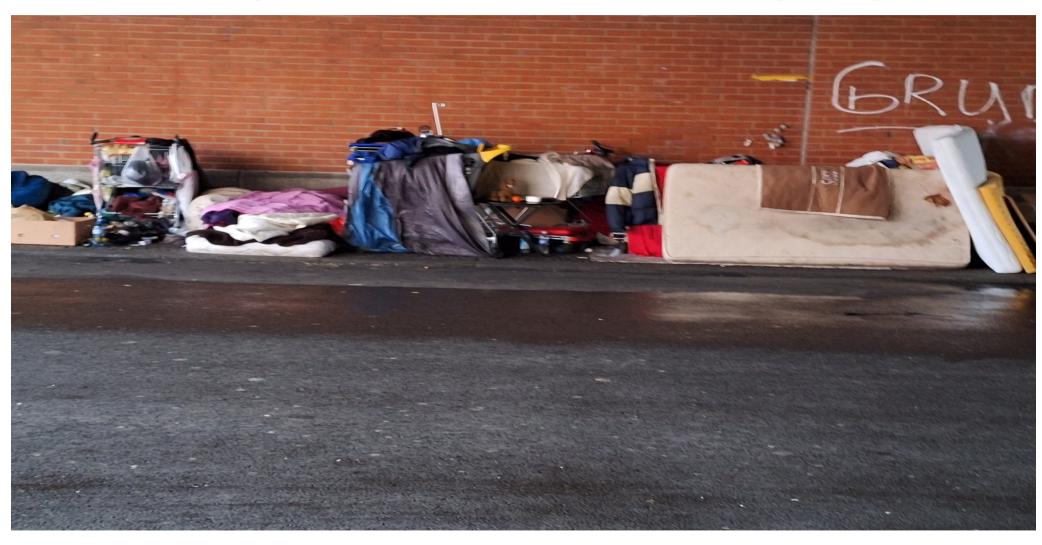
Janine Bittner & Janina Kempchen (presented by: Janine Bittner)

19 June 2024, Online Event

Acknowledgments & Supplementary Information

- Authors Contributions: Janine Bittner (senior lecturer) was responsible for the research design, the methods, the data analysis, presentation of the results. Janina Kempchen (student research assistant) was primarily responsible for conducting the online interviews, gave some valuable feedback to the interview guideline
- **Declaration:** There is no financial or conflict of interest with the given information, presented results of the study in this presentation
- **Acknowledgments:** We would also like to thank the students involved in the course and the community partners for their willingness to cooperate.
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Poverty, Homelessness, Social Inequality



Background





Working with Students at the two Case Study Locations in Essen und Bochum before the Start of the Covid-19 Pandemic, Visible Signs of Homelessness in the City of Essen (and Berlin)

Background



EVALUATION STUDY



COURSE TOPIC: SOCIAL INEQUALITY, POVERTY AND HOUSING



RESEARCH-BASED TEACHING AND LEARNING /

COMMUNITY-BASED RESEARCH



SERVICE-LEARNING



LEARNING THROUGH EXPERIENCE (KOLB 1984)

PRAGMATICAL EDUCATIONAL THEORY (DEWEY 1916)

Aim of Study / Research Questions

- We aimed to investigate the motives of geography students at the Ruhr University Bochum to enrol in a community-based research service-learning course that dealt with the topic social inequality, poverty and homelessness in the Ruhr area
- In addition, we wanted know who the participants were. What values they act on and what skills and abilities they bring to the table.
- **RQ 01:** What are the reasons for participating in this specific course?
- **RQ 02:** What are the personality traits of the participants in the course?
- **RQ 03:** Which values do the participants of the course consider to be particularly significant for their lives?
- **RQ 04:** What personal competencies and skills do the participants of the course have?

Background and Literature Review

- Small number of empirical studies that deal with the question of students' reasons for participating in service-learning courses
- Christensen, R. K., Stritch, J. M., Kellough, J. E., & Brewer, G. A. (2015) were able to show
 that there exist a positive correlation between public service motivation and the intension to
 participate in a service-learning course on the one hand and the willigness to volunteer for
 society outside of the curriculum on the other
- Muturi, Nancy; An, Soontae; Mwangi, Samuel (2013) investigated whether the motivation to participate in a service-learning course is more significant if there is already experience with service-learning
- Pearl, Andrew J. (2017) and Phillips, Lindsay A. (2013) used the Volunteer Motivation
 Inventory (VFI) as a test instrument to investigate the extent to which personality traits
 and value orientations play a role in interest in service-learning and forms of volunteering.
- It has been shown, that the reasons for enroling in a service-learning course are diverse, differences in student's gender and minority status exist and personal values, in particular, play a role in interest in service-learning activities and other extracurricular forms of volunteering.

Background and Literature Review

- We understand **personality** as "behaviours, styles of thought, speech, perception, and interpersonal interactions that are consistently characteristic of an individual." (see: Ellis, Albert; Abrams, Mike; Abrams, Lidia D. (2009))
- Personality traits are then 'fundamental characteristics of personality (...) that can be indirectly inferred and therefore also measured (...) and allow predictions of behaviour" (Spektrum Publisher (Ed.). (2000). Persönlichkeitseigenschaften.
 https://www.spektrum.de/lexikon/psychologie/persoenlichkeitseigenschaften/11386)
- In our study we orientated ourselves on the HEXACO model (Ashton, Michael C.; Lee, Kibeom (2007))
- We understand **values** at the individual level of interest for our study as "internalised social representations or moral beliefs that people appeal to as the ultimate rationale for their actions" (Oyserman, D. (2001): Values: Psychological perspectives.)

Data Collection

- qualitative interviews with students after completion of the course on a voluntary basis, conducted via the **ZOOM conference system**
- n = 13 92, 87 % participation rate, **interview length** usually around 60 min, between 32 min and 79 min (for all four substudies)
- We asked the following narrative-generating key questions:
- Can you please tell me what exactly motivated you to take part in the study project "Social Inequality, Poverty and Housing"? (RQ1)
- Put yourself in the situation where you are applying for an internship or a part-time job during your studies that you really want to get. Now you are sitting in an interview and are asked to openly and honestly describe up to three personality traits that make you stand out. So tell me about three personality traits that characterise you and possibly set you apart from others and describe them to me in more detail. (RQ2)
- What are the three most important values in your life? Can you also please describe to me exactly
 what you understand them to be and what they mean to you. You can also use an example. (RQ3)
- What would you say are three skills that set you apart? That is, something that you might be
 particularly good at, something that you are proud of and might set you apart from others? Please
 describe these in more detail. (RQ4)

Qualitative Content Analysis

- following the approach of Mayring
- methodical control or strong rule-based approach to text evaluation
- qualitative and quantitative analysis steps of text components can be later combined in the sense of a mixed methods approach
- this allows a more complete picture of the research subject and usually additional insights to be gained
- inductive category formation to work as closely as possible with the text material

Content Analytical Units

- Coding unit: smallest component of material which can be coded (sensibility) clear meaning component (seme) in the text / sinntragende Phrase
- Context unit: background for coding decision interview transcript, entire response range for the context unit
- **Recording unit:** all documents (13 interviews)

Reasons for Participation

Frequencies of main themes and subthemes – reasons for participation, themes with single occurrence are not reported

Main Themes and Sub Themes	Documents	Percentage (valid)
Lecturer related reasons	6	46.2
Topic-related reasons	10	76.9
Community-based research-related reasons	3	23.1
Study organization-related reasons	5	38.5
Social situation-related reasons	2	15.4
Prior knowledge-related reasons	3	23.1
Service-learning-related reasons	4	30.8
Connection with social engagement	3	23.1
Want to change something	2	15.4
Do something at the practical level	2	15.4
Documents with code(s)	13	100.0
Documents without code(s)	0	0.0
Analyzed documents	13	100.0
Total of coded segments	70	100.0



In any case, this topic somehow appealed to me directly. Because it's also a highly topical subject, a highly interesting Subject. (Topic Related Reasons - Own Interest in the Topic/ Transcript - Interview 13, pos. 137, Maria-Luise Haase)

Yes, it was actually my wish from the beginning to choose this study project, simply because of the subject matter. Yes.

(Topic Related Reasons – Own Interest in the Topic/ Transcript – Interview 14, pos. 121, Carmen Spieß)



Yes, just the criteria that it should not be a physical geography Topic Related Reasons -Do

Something with Human Geography/ Transcript - Interview 11, pos. 132, Rosi Trupp)

Generally speaking, I was more interested in human-geographical orientations right from the start of my studies.

(**Topic Related Reasons** – Own Interest in the Topic/ Transcript - Interview 9, pos. 113, Alfons Eberth)



So because of the teacher plus this method design in general, regional analysis. But less now because of the topic. Lecturer Related Reasons

-Transcript - Interview 6, pos. 89, Norma Girschner)

But then I also looked to see which lecturer was doing it. And since I already knew the woman (Bittner?) from Methods of Urban and Regional Analysis, I knew: Okay, that fits too. (Lecturer Related Reasons - Interview 4, pos. 81, Amelie Scheibe)



And I found it interesting because I often feel sorry for people who are so badly off. And then I found it helpful to work with people so that I could perhaps change something. (Service-Learning)

Related Reasons - Want to Change Something / Transcript - Interview 07, pos. 101, Berta Schleich)



and I definitely wanted to do something else, also with regard to the Master's degree, in order to get a better idea of where I wanted to go and to do something social and communityrelated. (Service-Learning Related Reasons - Connection

with Social Engagement, a Social Activity/ Transcript - Interview 01, pos. 67, Nico Gunf)



To be honest, that was definitely what I wanted to do because I found it so interesting. I just wanted to jump over my own shadow, let's put it that way. I wanted to make extra contact with these personalities, these vulnerable personalities, because I wanted to become a bit more aware of my fear in general. (Service-Learning

Related Reasons -Interest in Contact with Vulnerable People/ Transcript - Interview 03, pos. 67, Lotte Heinrich)

Students' Personality Traits

Frequencies of main themes – personality traits

Main Themes and Sub Themes	Documents	Percentage (valid)
Extraversion versus intraversion	4	30.8
Agreeableness versus hostility	9	69.2
Conscientiousness versus undependability	13	100.0
Neuroticism versus emotional stability	4	30.8
Openness (to experience) versus close-mindedness	8	61.5
Honesty versus humility	2	15.4
Documents with code(s)	13	100.0
Documents without code(s)	0	0.0
Analysed documents	13	100.0
Total of coded segments	78	100.0

Students' Values

Frequencies of main themes – students' values

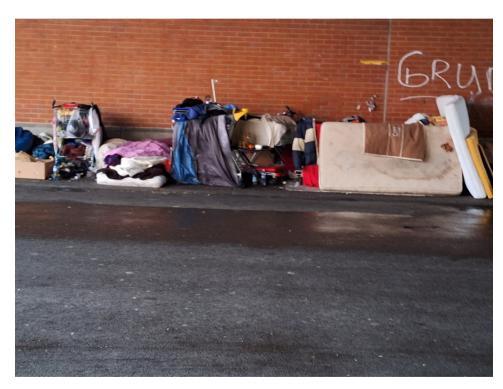
Themes	Documents	Percentage (valid)
Relationship-related values	10	76.9
Performance-related values	5	38.5
Stability-related values	3	23.1
Authority-related values	0	0.0
Innovation-related values	1	7.7
Other mentions, not assigned	1	7.7
Documents with code(s)	12	92.3
Documents without code(s)	1	7.7
Analysed documents	13	100.0
Total of coded segments	37	100.0

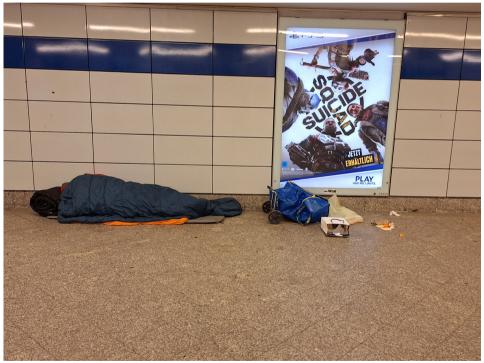
Students' Skills & Competencies

Frequencies of main themes – students' skills & competencies

Themes	Documents	Percentage (valid)
Skills & knowledge	9	69.2
Knowledge of statistics	2	15.4
Give a presentation	2	15.4
Writing of texts	3	13.1
Competencies	7	53.8
Being able to hold your own leadership position	3	23.1
Documents with code(s)	9	69.2
Documents without code(s)	4	30.8
Analysed documents	13	100.0
Total of coded segments	23	100.0

Discussion





Visible Signs of Homelessness in Berlin

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Street Newspapers, a Voice of (former) Homeless People, Bochum

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Image Sources

- · Visible Signs of Homelessness in Berlin: own pictures, Berlin
- · Visible Signs of Homelessness in Essen: own picture, Essen
- Street Newspapers, a Voice of (former) Homeless People, Bochum: own picture,
 Bochum