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TV Clubs as a Pedagogical Approach in an Undergraduate Adolescent Development Course: A Qualitative Evaluation During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT. Using a Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) approach, the current study evaluated use of the Adolescent Media Project (AMP) as a pedagogical approach within an undergraduate adolescent development course. The AMP divided students into smaller groups ($n = 8$) in relation to an adolescent themed TV show. Students viewed the first season (or more) of the program throughout the semester. Students analyzed developmental accuracies and inaccuracies depicted in their assigned shows through completing individual written reflections, group meetings, and final individual projects. Implementation of the AMP occurred during the Spring 2020 semester, which allowed for understanding student experiences in transitioning the AMP to remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic. A longitudinal qualitative approach was implemented with 16 randomly selected students in one course. Three themes emerged: (1) embeddedness, (2) collaboration, and (3) agency. Implications for future implementation of the AMP and active learning during the pandemic are discussed.

Keywords: Adolescence, Television, Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

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TV Clubs as a pedagogical approach in an undergraduate adolescent development course: A qualitative evaluation during the COVID-19 pandemic

Family scholars should be equipped with understanding of developmental changes individuals experience within families across the lifespan, including adolescence (NCFR, 2014). Media and technology use has become ubiquitous in adolescence. Adolescents spend approximately nine hours per day with media and technology (excluding homework time and technology use at school; Common Sense Media, 2019). Thus, media is an important topic of discussion within undergraduate adolescent development courses. With a generation of highly media engaged young adults, TV or video clips have been recognized as an important teaching resource in university classrooms (Berk, 2009; Borry, 2018). The current study evaluated use of full seasons of adolescent-themed TV shows that were viewed out-of-class as a tool to assess accuracy or inaccuracy of their portrayals of adolescent developmental principles. Evaluation evolved when a national emergency was declared in the United States because of COVID-19 (The White House, 2020) and the course (and project) were transitioned to remote delivery.

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL)

Maurer and Law (2016) indicated a need to have more SoTL in Family Science. Hutchings (2000) proposed a taxonomy of questions for guiding SoTL inquiries. The current study relied on the *what is* (i.e., what does the pedagogical approach look like in practice?) and *visions of the possible* (i.e., how to meet goals for teaching/learning that have not yet been realized) SoTL questions. These questions were used to (a) highlight the structure of the teaching intervention and understand how students perceive the intervention in practice and (b) to identify if this deviation from traditional teaching techniques by using full seasons of teen-oriented TV shows in groups could be a meaningful approach to learning about adolescent development. SoTL questions also left room to explore how students experienced the transition from in-person to remote instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic (i.e., *what is*— what did the remote instructional changes look like in practice?; *visions of the possible*— did the TV-focused project still meet learning needs in a remote format?).

Adolescent Media Project

Fostering “students’ abilities to integrate their learning across contexts and over time” is a challenge higher education faces (Huber & Hutchings, 2004, p. 11). Integrated Learning (IL) is an instructional theory that aims to intentionally integrate course content with real-world experience. Beyond increasing learning through integration, IL can help build “habits of the mind that prepare students to make informed judgments in the conduct of personal, professional, and civic life” (p. 11). The Adolescent Media Project (AMP) that was situated in a sophomore-level course entitled *Middle Childhood and Adolescent Development* was developed using IL to integrate students’ learning about adolescent development via TV shows. Visual media in the classroom, like TV or movies, can be conceptualized as visual case studies that provide a “needed link between theory and reality” (Macy & Terry, 2008, p. 33). These examples of TV, video, or movie clips often occur as a small part of classroom instruction (Berk, 2009; Borry, 2018; Macy & Terry, 2008). Different from previous instructional use of TV or video clips, the AMP was designed for students to view whole seasons of a TV show throughout the semester. A full season of a TV show could potentially allow for more student engagement and learning

because viewing several episodes may provide a richer, more detailed visual case study (i.e., allowing students to view the same depicted adolescents in different contexts [e.g., relational, school, work, recreational] and over time) compared to one brief video clip.

The AMP divided the class into smaller groups based on each student's teen-oriented TV show preference. Throughout the semester, students completed individual reflection assignments and engaged in discussions with their groups (i.e., TV clubs) regarding accuracy of adolescent development as depicted in their assigned show (see Table 1). Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the plan was for students to develop and implement an in-class group presentation, which would give the entire class the opportunity to evaluate groups' performances.

The course instructor viewed several TV shows before the beginning of the semester. TV show selection criteria included (a) the main characters needed to be depicted as between the ages of 10-18, (b) the show had to be grounded in a real environment (e.g., no fantasy), and (c) family relationships needed to be addressed throughout the series. The prospective TV shows were briefly introduced on the first day of class. A document including links to show descriptions, parent guides, and information regarding show accessibility on streaming services (e.g., Netflix, Hulu) was provided on the online course management system. Students had the opportunity to rank their preferences, indicate if they had already viewed a show, and share information on whether the show would have deleterious effects on their mental health (not that they were just uninterested) in an online survey. The instructor then created groups, attempting to give students one of their top four or five choices.

Eight groups (i.e., TV clubs) were formed (see Table 2). Typically, each group viewed the first season of their assigned show during the semester, but some groups were assigned to watch multiple seasons to make the time commitment equal among all groups (e.g., 20 vs. 40-minute shows). Students received viewing guides indicating which episodes they were to view at different points during the semester to facilitate group pacing and dialogue.

Adolescent Media Project and the COVID-19 Pandemic

As the COVID-19 pandemic began in the United States, universities transitioned their courses for remote delivery (Hughes, Henry, & Kushnick, 2020). While it was acknowledged that there was not one right way to adapt courses to remote learning (Nordmann et al., 2020), several recommendations for best practices in transitioning courses emerged. These have included (a) basing adaptations to assignments/assessments on knowledge/skills students should have at the end of the semester (Hughes et al., 2020), (b) prioritizing asynchronous opportunities to promote flexibility for students (Nordmann et al., 2020), (c) ensuring students still had opportunities to interact with peers and professors (Kalman, Marcias Esparza, & Weston, 2020; Nerantzi, 2020; Nordmann et al., 2020), (d) considering technology access and limitations of students to ensure course inclusivity (Kalman et al., 2020), and (e) recognizing that remote learning can still include active learning opportunities (Nerantzi, 2020). Emerging research on students' experiences with adapting to remote teaching models during the pandemic indicates that students are more distracted, must rely more on learning material on their own, and lost motivation without the physical presence of peers and professors. Student motivation increased with synchronous opportunities with peers and professors (Kalman et al., 2020).

Table 1*Adolescent Media Project (AMP) Components and Descriptions*

Component of AMP	Description
Reflection Assignments	Individual work. Students individually completed six written reflection assignments throughout the semester. Reflection assignments asked students to personally reflect on adolescent development material covered in class and analyze how information was portrayed in their assigned TV show. For example, students learn about adolescent egocentrism (personal fable, imaginary audience) within course content, then share how this is accurately or inaccurately depicted in their TV show.
TV Clubs	Synchronous Group Work. Students were provided a viewing guide, so the same episodes were viewed by all group members before each TV club. Like book clubs, students met with peers who watched the same TV show for three TV clubs (2 in-person, 1 via WebEx) at the end of each course module. Students were required to each bring a discussion question and the instructor also provided several structured discussion questions on a handout that directly applied course content to their TV show. Students discussed and completed the handout. This took three entire class periods, was designed to prepare people for the exam in each module, and prepared students for completing their final project.
Annotated Bibliography	Individual work. In the final TV club, students selected a research topic related to their TV show that they wanted to learn more about and teach their peers about (e.g., eating disorders during adolescence, extracurricular activities, and adolescent well-being). The instructor approved the topic for each TV club to avoid duplication. Everyone in the TV club then completed their own annotated bibliography with a minimum of four peer-reviewed journal articles on the topic. After these were graded, students shared their annotated bibliographies with their TV clubs.
Individual Project	Individual work. COVID-19 transitioned a group presentation into an individual project where students could select to complete either a paper or a video. The project focused on adolescent development and the TV show was used to provide accurate/inaccurate examples of development. Individual projects required students to (a) highlight a minimum of three developmental concepts learned in class, (b) teach a minimum of three main points from a selected adolescent research topic related to their show, and (c) highlight resources in the local community related to their selected research area.
Individual Project Rough Draft Feedback	Asynchronous Group Interaction. Students posted rough drafts for their individual projects (e.g., complete drafts of papers or slides/written narratives for videos) to an online discussion board to receive feedback from their TV group. Students were required to share a minimum of two strengths of their peers' projects and one area for potential improvement.
Individual Project Final Draft Feedback	Asynchronous Group Interaction. Students were assigned to small online discussion groups where they were the only members of their TV club in the group. They posted their individual projects (videos or papers) to the discussion forum for peer-feedback. Students were required to review all individual projects in their small group and provide (a) one thing they learned from the project, (b) one strength they identified from the project, and (c) a question that was generated from the project.
AMP Evaluation and Reflection	Individual work. Students individually reported their experiences through a series of open-ended questions hosted on online course management system. They reported on their experiences (a) working with their TV club, (b) completing reflection assignments, (c) moving assignments to virtual, and (d) their thoughts on the AMP project as a whole. Students also provided recommendations for project improvement.

Table 2*TV Shows Selected for the Adolescent Media Project*

Show Title (year)	Season(s)*	Distributor	Network	Brief Description
<i>All American</i> (2018)	1	Warner Bros. Television	The CW	Based on a true story, a teen must navigate friendships and family relationships when he moves from Crenshaw to Beverly High to play football.
<i>Atypical</i> (2017-2018)	1-2	Netflix	Netflix	A teen with autism begins to navigate romantic relationships and college preparation in the context of his family.
<i>Awkward</i> (2011-2013)	1-3	Viacom Media Networks	MTV	Unwanted popularity is found when an unpopular teen's accident goes public and is perceived as a suicide attempt.
<i>Degrassi: Next Class</i> (2016-2017)	1-3	Netflix	Netflix	Set in a diverse community school in Toronto, high school students face issues with racism, sexuality, mental illness, relationships, and religion.
<i>Freaks and Geeks</i> (1999)	1	DreamWorks	NBC	Set in the 1980s, the show follows misfit high schoolers and a normally overachieving older sister who starts hanging out with peers who use drugs.
<i>Gilmore Girls</i> (2000)	1	Warner Bros. Television	WB	The story follows a teen and her single mother who act more like friends while living in a small New England town.
<i>Gossip Girl</i> (2007)	1	CBS Television/Warner Bros. Television	The CW	Teens living on the Upper East Side are tormented by an anonymous and far-reaching blogger.
<i>The O.C.</i> (2003)	1	Warner Bros. Television	Fox	Set in Orange County, California, a displaced teen from Chino finds a home with a family in an upper-class neighborhood.

The instructor did consider course objectives, along with student needs for flexibility, technology access, and continued peer and professor interaction, when adapting the AMP for remote learning. The goal of the adaptation was to continue moving forward with collaborative components of the AMP while also including more asynchronous opportunities and student choice. Table 1 includes all assignments and formats of the adapted AMP. The adapted AMP included the final TV club occurring via WebEx (synchronous). The final in-class group presentation was transitioned into an individual project where students could choose to write papers or create videos using the criteria originally associated with the in-class group presentation. To continue to promote peer collaboration and interaction (asynchronous), online discussion forums were used to allow students in the same TV club to provide feedback on rough

drafts of their peers' individual projects. Finally, students shared and received peer feedback on their final individual projects in online discussion forums (asynchronous) with small pre-assigned groups (i.e., students were assigned to small online discussion groups where they were the only members of their TV club in the group). The instructor presence continued by providing individualized feedback on reflection assignments, annotated bibliographies, rough drafts of individual projects, and final individual projects.

Purpose of the Current Study

Huber and Hutchings (2004) posited that student learning is enhanced when they integrate course content beyond the classroom. The AMP was designed to integrate students' learning of adolescent development with full seasons of teen-oriented TV shows in a collaborative setting. In this evaluative study, student experiences and perspectives were relied on to answer the *What is* and *Visions of the Possible* SoTL questions (Hutchings, 2000). The current study aimed to evaluate implementation of the AMP within an undergraduate adolescent development course and explore students' experiences with adaption of the project to remote learning. This research question guided the study: What were students' experiences of and perspectives on completing the AMP during the COVID-19 pandemic?

Methods

Sample

The sample included 16 students ($m_{age} = 21.68$, $sd = 2.65$) enrolled in one undergraduate Middle Childhood and Adolescence course during the Spring 2020 semester. Participants were mostly female ($n = 13$ female) and all participants identified as White. Participants reported the following class standings: sophomore ($n = 3$), junior ($n = 10$), and senior ($n = 3$). Student self-reported GPAs ranged from 2.18 to 3.98 ($m = 3.5$, $sd = 0.50$) and their self-reported semester course credit loads ranged from 6 to 21 credits ($m = 15.69$, $sd = 3.86$). Participants reported being assigned to the following TV shows (see Table 2): *All American* ($n = 2$), *Atypical* ($n = 1$), *Awkward.* ($n = 3$), *Degrassi: Next Class* ($n = 1$), *Freaks and Geeks* ($n = 2$), *Gilmore Girls* ($n = 2$), *Gossip Girl* ($n = 4$), and *The O.C.* ($n = 1$).

Procedures and Data Collection

Study procedures were approved by a university Institutional Review Board (IRB). A researcher who was unaffiliated with the course managed sample recruitment and data collection to protect student confidentiality and ensure students would not perceive participation as linked to their course grades. Forty-two students were enrolled in the Middle Childhood and Adolescent course. A purposive random sampling approach was used for promoting sample credibility by selecting and inviting participants "in advance of knowledge of how the outcomes would appear" regarding experiences with the AMP (Patton, 2002, p. 241). Determining sample size in qualitative research is "ultimately a matter of judgment and experience," but sample size should be neither too large or too small, with the goal of permitting "a new and richly textured understanding of experience" (Sandelowski, 1995, p. 183). Based on previous qualitative longitudinal research (Saldaña, 2003) and personal experience implementing this research design (Vaterlaus, Whittecar, Koltz & Stanley, 2019), the researchers anticipated that a minimum of 14-15 participants would be needed to reach data saturation (i.e., when no new thematic information emerges; Sandelowski, 1995) and recognized that attrition was possible with multiple data

collection points. Consistent with previous research (Vaterlaus et al., 2019), the researchers decided to initially invite 25 students to participate to account for non-participation and possible attrition. Twenty-five students were randomly selected and invited to participate via email. Initially, 20 students participated, but three participants withdrew from the course early in the semester and one participant completed only the first survey, resulting in a final sample size of 16 students.

Researchers relied on previous SoTL research in Family Science to develop survey and interview items (see Vaterlaus et al., 2019). Students completed an initial online survey during the first two weeks of the semester. They reported demographic information and indicated their typical course engagement, interest in the AMP, and any concerns about the AMP. In March 2020, an IRB amendment was approved to add questions related to the transition to remote learning for the pandemic for the remaining data collection. Students completed an online survey in April after finishing their third TV club. The survey asked questions about their group experience, thoughts about the TV club via WebEx, perceptions of the transition to individual projects for COVID-19, and their engagement and learning in the course. A third online survey was administered to students during the last week of the semester after they completed and shared their individual projects. Questions focused on experiences related to providing feedback on rough drafts, final projects, and overall experiences with the project. Students also finished the AMP Evaluation and Reflection assignment (see Table 1) in the last week of the semester. Their responses were included in the analysis.

Finally, multiple data collection methods are used as a form of data triangulation (Creswell, 2013). The researchers also decided to conduct in-depth interviews after the Adolescent Media Project was complete until reaching data saturation. Participants were selected at random from the sample and invited by email to be interviewed. In total, six students from the sample were invited to complete individual in-depth 30-minute interviews to expand on topics covered in the surveys. Interviews were transcribed verbatim. All items used in the study appear in the Appendix. The researchers compensated students for their participation with cash (i.e., \$5 for completion of each online survey, \$10 for completion of an in-depth interview).

Data Analysis

Saldaña's (2003) longitudinal qualitative analysis approach was used for data analysis, which required data collection prior, during, and after participants had completed the AMP. Consistent with the approach, each participant's response was placed in time order (beginning, middle, to end). Two independent researchers immersed themselves in the data (i.e., looked for similarities and regularities) and then met to identify/agree on themes that represented participants' experiences with accuracy. Data were coded independently by the two researchers (88% agreement) and disagreements were resolved through discussion and consulting the raw data.

Results

In total, 16 students shared thoughts about completing the AMP, including experiences related to the transition to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Three themes emerged from longitudinal qualitative analysis: (1) embeddedness, (2) collaboration, and (3) agency. Gender and age were provided parenthetically to provide context when direct participant

quotes were shared. At the conclusion of the results, we provide a case example to highlight each theme from one representative student's experience.

Embeddedness

After completing AMP, all students ($n = 16$) indicated higher levels of engagement because of the embeddedness of the AMP across the semester. Students described the embeddedness of the AMP in terms of application of course content, instructional components, and pacing. They also shared details on how the project's embeddedness helped them think more clearly about their roles as professionals.

Application of course content. At the beginning of the semester, students worried about their ability to apply course concepts to their assigned TV shows. As the course unfolded, students reported their concerns were quickly assuaged. Students reported higher levels of engagement because of real-world connections and shared experiences the TV clubs fostered. A student said:

I mean we all loved watching TV so it was nice to be able to use that to actually learn things and it made me think more about when I'm watching shows and stuff like that how it can actually apply to what I'm learning in school. (Female, 20)

Not only did students report enjoying the “book club, but with TV” learning model, they expressed that its embeddedness with course content throughout the whole semester enhanced their learning at multiple levels. At a foundational level, the structure grounded their understanding of course concepts— “TV clubs were very helpful in understanding adolescent development. It is much easier to actually apply an idea to a person or group of people rather than just having the concept” (Female, 21). Simultaneously, all students also reported the AMP required them to think critically as they analyzed their shows for realistic and unrealistic portrayals of adolescents. For example, one student observed:

[The AMP] got me thinking a lot more about that and like having to talk about inaccuracies or accuracies and made me go back through the lectures and the notes that I had to think about stuff. ... [The AMP] made you look for things in the show that you are not usually paying attention too. When watching the tv show, you noticed small things that you learned in class about adolescent development. Things like physical and cognitive development. You continued to ask yourself the question, "Did the producers accurately depict adolescent development in the show?" (Male, 21)

Project pacing. Students explained that the AMP's embeddedness worked because the instructor was organized and paced the assignments well throughout the semester. This organization and pacing were critical for a successful transition to remote learning for the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, one student said:

The project was really well paced. It was announced at the beginning of the semester and the assignments we did along the way really all built into it. Clear guidelines were established from the beginning and even the midsemester modification of format [for COVID-19] didn't affect those dramatically. (Female, 28)

Instructional components. Students did dissect the AMP's embeddedness and expressed thoughts on how all instructional components, including the instructor, were important for

different reasons. Students reported that TV clubs and reflection activities helped them organize, synthesize and expand their thinking. In terms of the TV clubs, students explained they developed “better understanding of information than solo work” and that the clubs allowed them to express ideas and opinions that led to “deeper meaning and reflection.” In contrast, two students expressed themselves on how they felt the TV clubs were repetitive and lengthy. Regarding reflection assignments, a student (Male, 27) explained, “I think the reflections helped me to formulate some of the concepts and observations into coherent thoughts.”

Application of course concepts continued as students developed their final individual products (i.e., paper or video); a process that included giving and receiving peer feedback (i.e., rough draft and final draft on the individual projects). Regarding providing feedback on peers’ final individual projects, one student said:

No matter what this TV show is about this [adolescent development] concept could be applied to like all these different characters. So, it was just really fun to see what people did in their projects and like what their research portion was about and just kind of learn more that way. (Female, 21)

Along with providing and receiving peer feedback, the instructor’s feedback during collaborative and individual components of the AMP allowed students to have clearer understanding of adolescent development concepts and to draw new connections between these concepts of the TV show. A student elaborated:

We were able to get a lot of good feedback from [the instructor] and like [the instructor] went around in the class a lot of times helping our group like expand on the ideas that we were thinking and he definitely gave us a lot of insight that I wouldn't have had otherwise. (Female, 20)

Personal and professional connections. Further addressing the embeddedness of the AMP, students explained that embedding their learning with “real life” media allowed them to think about their own lives, their future professional roles, and how media affect people’s perceptions of adolescence. A student reflected:

[The AMP] influenced my learning and allowed me to think about what we were learning in class and how it can be made into real life applications and examples. This definitely helped me be more aware of adolescent development throughout my daily life and helped put some real-life perspective into what we have been studying. (Female, 20)

In terms of professional development, students ($n = 11$) expressed concerns about inaccuracies of how adolescents are depicted in the media and how it is a professional responsibility “for us as educators and people who really do understand [adolescent development] to share with everybody else a little knowledge” (Female, 21). Summarizing the general sentiment, a student stated:

[The AMP] showed me how the media influences how society views adolescence and it made me more aware of the perceptions that these TV shows portray. It helped me put these concepts into reality and compare it to something that adolescents themselves use to discover their understanding of adolescence. (Female, 20)

Collaboration

Students ($n = 16$) explained that collaboration was a critical part of the AMP. They discussed collaboration in terms of increasing their engagement and perspective taking. Furthermore, students explained how the collaborative process taught them skills for interacting with others and highlighted areas for skill improvement.

Engagement. When the project began, most students ($n = 12$) reported feelings of worry, apprehension, and intimidation as they contemplated how their collaborative experience would unfold. Negative experiences in group projects in previous courses framed student concerns about unequal distribution of work, lack of peer engagement (e.g., “Group projects are never an actual group effort. I and sometimes others usually end up doing the majority of the work” [Female, 19]), and managing diverse perspectives (e.g., “I am worried my classmates won't view the show the same way” [Female, 20]). Fewer students ($n = 4$) indicated feelings of excitement to learn from others (e.g., “I'm looking forward to discussing my assigned show from a different perspective than I'm used to” [Female, 20]).

Once they began the AMP, students' descriptors of their TV club experiences shifted to words like “active” and “lively.” All students ($n = 16$) indicated that their engagement increased because of the ongoing collaboration. Students indicated that *enjoyment* (e.g., “It was interesting to have people discuss something that is meant to be more entertaining than a book like other classes” [Female, 20]), *shared TV show* (e.g., “TV group gave opportunities to talk about all the different things that gave you like a common topic to relate to versus the person next to you in class like you guys might not have anything in common” [Female, 21]), *peer accountability* (e.g., “I was more engaged with the TV club assignments because I want to be helpful to my group and because I enjoy the show we are watching” [Female, 21]), and *safety* (e.g., “[The TV clubs] Allowed me to be more engaged because I don't often speak out in class” [Female, 20]) were reasons for increasing engagement with the collaboration.

Perspective taking and learning. A majority ($n = 15$) of students indicated that the greatest benefits of collaborating in the TV clubs was examining course content from multiple points of view, developing new ways of thinking about their shared TV program, and fostering more in-depth conversations by learning from peer questions. For example, two students shared similar comments. “I enjoyed the project when it came to the group work a lot of very interesting questions were asked and answered from points of view that I was not familiar with, it was refreshing” (Male, 22), and

It was interesting to see what my group members thought. I had my own opinions going into it and then actually hearing their questions and their opinions about [the TV show and course content] was cool because there were a lot of things that I never even thought about. (Male, 21)

Students explained that this dialogue had a positive impact on the depth of learning, created a built-in study group, and cultivated better understanding of course concepts— “Working with other people always helps to learn information a little better for me because the information can be presented in different ways” (Female, 21).

Collaborative skills. Students indicated that the process of engaging in a collaborative environment fostered further development and practice of communication and problem-solving skills. A student (Female, 28) shared, “[Our group] also did well in giving everyone a turn to share their ideas and combining everyone's ideas into one cohesive answer. Everyone did a good

job being positive while still being constructive.” While most respondents reported positive group processes, two students described how their group had members who were not prepared or demonstrated poor listening skills. For instance, one of these students (Female, 21) disclosed:

[TV club meetings] only worked if all members had been attending class and reading (or at least skimming) the out of class [textbook] reading. A lot of the time my peers were just guessing the answers rather than actually looking for them in notes or the textbook.

As a result of COVID-19, the final synchronous TV club occurred virtually via WebEx. Students reported mixed outcomes resulting from the COVID-19 transition, with most students ($n = 8$) reporting online was not as effective. Other students ($n = 2$) preferred online collaboration (e.g., “It felt the same as if we were in the classroom completing it. We were just as productive even though we weren’t meeting in person” [Female, 21]). Challenges with online collaboration included “not everyone participated,” “the group was kind of shy,” “we couldn’t talk to other groups or the professor,” and various challenges with virtual meeting etiquette (e.g., people not muting, background noise, people walking around with their device, harder time taking turns speaking, interrupting each other). While some students indicated they would likely always prefer in-person discussions ($n = 4$), most believed the TV clubs could work virtually through building skills around active participation and virtual meeting etiquette.

COVID-19 shifted the final project to individual completion, but asynchronous collaborative elements remained (e.g., peer feedback on rough drafts, and reviewing peers’ final projects). As to providing feedback on rough drafts, students ($n = 10$) shared that peer feedback helped them identify what they could improve before completing the final project. However, giving feedback was reported ($n = 6$) to be challenging because students felt they were still developing their abilities to confidently provide constructive feedback. A student emphasized:

Giving feedback was difficult because I wasn't really sure what to look for, but I think when I got feedback it was really helpful and it was nice to have that feedback before turning my project in because it was something I didn't notice in my work so that was definitely nice to have that [feedback]. (Female, 20)

Students’ individual final project drafts were published on online discussion boards. All students ($n = 16$) offered positive comments about the feedback process and the discussion board facilitation structure. They reported satisfaction with sharing and receiving personal feedback on their work in a safe collaborative environment. One student (Female, 28) explained:

I could gauge my level of critical thinking when compared to other people's projects and gain awareness of perspectives I hadn't considered when analyzing my show. I think the discussion board structure of presenting our projects provided a safe environment where we were able to have confidence in our projects while also feeling heard with our feedback.

Some even argued the presentation approach was more effective than receiving feedback through in-person presentations— “It was really encouraging to see like what people actually thought what they actually got out my work versus in-class evaluations. [In class] they just like check things off.” (Female, 21).

Agency

Students appreciated the AMP's individual graded components (i.e., reflection assignments, annotated bibliographies), but were even more satisfied with the agency they gained during the transition to remote learning due to the COVID-19 pandemic. While maintaining collaborative components, the instructor made sure the final group project evolved into an individual project with choices (i.e., either a paper or a video). The remote learning approach also moved the remaining collaborative efforts to a virtual setting.

The transition from group to individual projects increased student agency, which received enthusiasm from most students ($n = 15$). They liked the opportunity to not rely on other group members and have control of their own learning (e.g., "I like being able to be dependent only on myself especially for something I'm earning a grade for" [Female, 28]) and felt they would learn more from completing an individual project (e.g., "I'm feeling excited about it. I enjoy group work but I'm excited about the opportunity to maybe get to dig deeper into a topic on my own" Female, 24]). Describing general appreciation for the increased personal agency, one student stated:

I actually liked the fact that we were able to do it as an individual project rather than a group project just because I feel like it was nice for each group member to go about the project in whatever way they wanted and just to tackle the parts of the project that they thought were more relevant to maybe their career or personally. (Female, 20)

Choice of the final product, selecting a video or paper format, further elevated student agency and received favorable reactions. While students wanted the agency to choose their product format, they also reported strong feelings about requiring a video (e.g., "Videos are a much better way to present this project because we are working the pieces of media. ...adding some sort of incentive to choose the videos/slides would be good." [Female, 21]) or a paper (e.g., "I felt like I was able to talk more in-depth about what interested me about our show" [Female, 20]) being required for everyone. Finally, students appreciated the agency afforded to them in the asynchronous nature of the rough draft and final draft feedback (i.e., online discussion boards) versus in-person synchronous options. A student (Female, 28) elaborated on this with her experience of the final draft feedback, "I loved having the diversity of the varying shows that were assigned, as well as being able to view projects in different ways (papers and presentations)."

Representative Case Example

Erin was a 19-year-old student assigned to watch *Awkward*. She reported viewing all episodes in her show in detail. Her TV club included five other students (2 males and 3 females).

Embeddedness. At the beginning of the project, Erin reported her concern that she "may not be able to completely understand every concept or topic involved in the curriculum." However, because of the embeddedness throughout the semester, Erin felt that the AMP "had a substantial influence on my learning about adolescent development." Embedding media created awareness about how the media affect people's perceptions of adolescence "I was totally not aware of all of the stereotypes that we tend to use."

Watching *Awkward* provided an accessible format to make real-world connections because episodes "were very easy to watch because they're only about 20 or minutes or so." Erin

explained the AMP “helped me connect class concepts to our show to analyze them for accuracy and consistency.” When dissecting the embeddedness, Erin reported value in all instructional components with an emphasis on the instructor:

[The instructor] challenges students to think outside the box and think critically when it comes to assignments. I have learned more practical, intriguing, and applicable information from [the instructor] in this course than I have in any of my other courses this semester. Almost all of the assignments were intertwined, which provided us with assistance with completing our final projects.

The student reported perceiving that the transition of the AMP for remote learning at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic was smooth due to the course’s strong organization.

Collaboration. At the beginning of the project, Erin reported “neutral” level of interest working with a TV group. She stated:

...my main concern about [the AMP] is not the workload itself, but the group work involved in the assignment as a whole... I worry that I will be tempted to take over the project when parts of the assignment aren’t getting turned in at the proper times by other members.

After engaging with her TV club, however, Erin described her collaborative experience as “engaging” and “active.” The collaborative nature of Erin’s group promoted perspective-taking (e.g., “The questions that were asked on the synthesis activities allowed me to gain multiple perspectives on how to approach my TV show for my final project”) and use of effective communication skills (e.g., “...we all communicated well we had a google doc that we were all sharing we had each other’s phone contact information...”).

Agency. Throughout the project, Erin reported enhanced levels of agency in several ways. When working collaboratively, she developed her voice— “the activities make me think on my feet and give me the authority to have my voice and not be afraid of my own thoughts.” Agency was further enhanced when Erin was given a choice of the final project format as the course shifted to remote learning because of the COVID-19 pandemic. Erin stated, “having the ability to do either a video or a paper and then present it online was really kind of a nice.” Working individually rather than collaboratively on the final project was also preferred because this allowed her to dig deeper into the topic—“I really like that because it pushed me to find so many resources instead of dividing up the work for each of us to do a small component.”

Despite preferring to complete the final project individually, Erin continued to report value in the collaborative feedback process. Erin stated, “I was grateful to receive feedback on my paper [rough draft]. Some feedback was more vague than others, but most provided constructive and specific comments on spelling or phrasing errors. Overall, this was a positive experience.” Agency was also perceived to be cultivated with the online discussion board format for sharing final individual projects and giving feedback. Erin elaborated:

The discussion board structure of presenting our [individual] projects provided a safe environment where we were able to have confidence in our projects while also feeling heard with our feedback. ... It was really nice being able to have everything there and people could view [peer final projects] as many times as they wanted, and they could ask questions if they wanted so that was really nice.

Reflecting on the value of the AMP project, Erin commented “there would be a huge hole in the class [without the AMP] ... it wouldn't probably be as diverse.”

Discussion

The current study aimed to identify students' experiences completing the AMP in an undergraduate Middle Childhood and Adolescent course during the Spring 2020 semester. The AMP was interrupted and adapted to meet remote learning requirements due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Overall, students reported having positive experiences with the AMP. Results are discussed in terms of theory and recommendations for future project implementation.

Integrated Learning

At the heart of IL is the notion that optimal student learning occurs when students can integrate course content beyond the classroom (Huber & Hutchings, 2004). Assessment of IL learning outcomes relies on student self-assessment and reflection. As students reflected on their experience with the AMP, they perceived that their learning increased and expanded as they made connections to their TV shows individually through reflection assignments and as they considered new and different perspectives as they discussed accuracies/inaccuracies of media portrayals within their TV clubs. IL requires faculty to be intentional about “designing better opportunities for [students] to connect their learning within and among courses and contexts,” which requires scaffolding, modeling, and reflection (Huber & Hutchings, 2004, pp. 8-9).

Initially, students were concerned about their ability to make connections between course content and their assigned TV shows. However, as the semester went on, the embedded and scaffolded assignments in the AMP allowed students to focus on benefits of making connections to something in “real life.” Students specifically addressed the importance of the project's pacing and organization and the instructor's role of joining in TV club conversations to further model connections between course content and the TV show. Another goal of IL is to help students develop IL skills, which prepares them to be intentional learners and more prepared for the nature of contemporary vocations (Huber & Hutchings, 2004). Students provided some reflection on how the IL in the AMP expanded their IL skills as they discussed making connections beyond AMP expectations to their personal lives and future professional lives.

Scholarship of Teaching and Learning

The current study used two questions from Hutchings' (2000) taxonomy for SoTL inquiries: *What is?* (i.e., focusing on what the pedagogical intervention looks like in practice) and *visions of the possible* (i.e., to meet learning goals that have not previously been met, p. 4). Previous publications indicated that brief video clips can be helpful learning tools in university classrooms because they can serve as case studies to which students connect their learning (Berk, 2009; Borry, 2018; Macy & Terry, 2008). The AMP expanded on this and created a semester-long opportunity for students to apply learning about adolescent development to shared viewing of a season(s) of a TV show within small groups. Students in this evaluation explained their experience of what the AMP looked like in practice (*What is?*) and perceived that the overall project increased their engagement and learning about adolescent development (*visions of the possible*).

Students have reported negative perceptions of group work in higher education because of the concerns about the levels of other group members' contributions and enhanced

expectations in course participation (Taylor, 2011). Consistent with this report, some students in this study did have initial hesitations with group work. However, once the AMP was completed only two of the 16 participants reported concerns about group member contributions. Most participants explained that the AMP group component (i.e., TV club) increased their engagement, accountability, relatability, and safety. Having the TV show and group allowed students to share ideas comfortably in small group settings while connecting their learning to shared “real-world” topics.

The transition to remote learning for the COVID-19 pandemic led to changes to the AMP. Students appreciated some changes and reported some areas for improvement. Previous research suggested students may have better group experiences when the project has individual and group aspects (Author Citation, 2019; Barkley, 2010). The AMP initially had individual and group assignments, but there was great enthusiasm about the transition to choosing between an individual video or paper for the final project. This may have increased students’ positive perceptions of their group experiences. Students reported finding benefits in the AMP’s continued asynchronous collaborative components (i.e., Individual Project Rough Draft Feedback, Individual Project Final Draft Feedback). A few students felt they did not know how to provide constructive feedback on peers’ drafts. The instructor did include several examples of constructive feedback within the assignment, but this may be an area for increased scaffolding within the project. Students also reported feeling like completing the individual projects increased their learning of adolescent development because it allowed them to explore the topic in more depth.

A change met with less enthusiasm was the synchronous virtual TV club. Several students explained that their final TV club via WebEx was not as effective as in-person TV clubs because people were shy, did not use appropriate online meeting etiquette, and because the instructor was not a part of the meeting. WebEx was the university’s adopted video conferencing platform. At the time of AMP implementation, breakout rooms were not available on this platform. Thus, individual meetings had to be scheduled for each TV club. As of Fall 2020, breakout rooms are now an option (see www.WebEx.com) and breakout rooms are also available through Zoom (www.zoom.com) and Microsoft Teams (www.microsoft.com). Using breakout rooms for TV clubs would allow the instructor to be present, which may improve student participation and perceptions of meeting effectiveness.

COVID-19 Pandemic Learning and Beyond

The COVID-19 pandemic led to significant disruptions in multiple sectors of society. Kalman and colleagues (2020) concluded:

Many people may not realize the true impact that COVID19 has had on college students. ... college students have experienced the upheaval of their learning experience into a new portal with no firm ground to stand on. The effect of this situation on their futures is untold. (pp. 3356-3357)

To help college students during the pandemic, faculty have been attempting to adapt courses to continue to support and advance students’ learning (Hughes et al., 2020). Some have suggested educators should look beyond the current crisis and consider how the crisis could improve learning within a course (Hughes et al., 2020) and in higher education more generally (Nordmann et al., 2020).

Conducting this SoTL study during the semester when the pandemic required a pivot to remote learning allowed for exploration of students' learning experiences during the pandemic and different aspects of the *what is?* and *visions of the possible* SoTL questions (i.e., what the AMP did/could look like with remote components). Narantzi (2020) argued that active learning pedagogies, which often involve peer interaction, activities, and instructor presence, can and should continue to be implemented in university courses during the pandemic. The adapted AMP provided evidence that active learning strategies work in remote learning contexts; students responded favorably to this learning approach. The perceived success of the transition of the AMP for remote learning may be attributed to facilitating peer-peer interaction while achieving the recommended balance (Nordmann et al., 2020) between asynchronous and synchronous expectations and connections among peers. Students valued the project's embeddedness (i.e., that there were interrelated assignments throughout the entire semester connecting to their TV show) and had positive group experiences. It is possible that relationships built in TV clubs at the beginning of the semester aided the switch to collaboration expectations in the transition to remote learning.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had various impacts on people generally (Thakur et al., 2020) and on college students specifically (Kalman et al., 2020; Lederer et al., 2020). College students may have had to take on additional caregiving responsibilities (e.g., children, siblings, parents, grandparents), work expectations (e.g., essential workers), and sometimes had limited internet access. Although students in this study indicated there was a smooth transition from the AMP to distance learning, there may be elements of privilege (e.g., internet access in their residence, not having to take on childcare responsibilities, no financial concerns) that made the experience what it was. To increase accessibility before the pandemic, the instructor selected shows for the AMP that were accessible in multiple ways (e.g., streaming service, download, or DVD) and provided clear dates on which students needed access to their shows. Prior to the WebEx TV club, the instructor also requested that students reach out if they had limited internet accessibility.

The instructor implemented the AMP again in 2021 using a blended model. To account for potential pandemic time limitations, the instructor provided a mix of shorter (e.g., 8 episodes) and longer (as in Table 2) TV show seasons to choose from to ensure all students had a variety of options and could still engage in the AMP with pandemic-related time demands. Still, there may be different outcomes on the AMP in terms of accessibility with students, depending on their university, region, and personal characteristics. Those wanting to implement the AMP should prioritize ensuring accessibility and overcoming other potential barriers to equity among students in their implementation planning during pandemic and post-pandemic times.

There is potential for the AMP to be a successful learning tool for in-person, blended, and online courses (with some synchronous components). Students experienced some challenges with the virtual TV club but believed that virtual meetings could be effective with some instruction and skill building. Nordmann et al. (2020) recommend teaching students specifically about etiquette in online environments and setting clear expectations for behavior. An instructor implementing the AMP could consider the best way to teach students these behaviors and encourage them to discuss appropriate behaviors in their first group meeting. Students in this study also valued agency within the assignment. Regardless of the larger course instructional format (e.g., in-person versus online), it may be important to retain individual projects (e.g., choice between video and paper) that groups support. This may be especially important for

retaining the balance of synchronous and asynchronous course components in blended and online models.

Limitations and Conclusions

The study does have limitations. Evaluation included students from only one course, the majority were female, and all students identified as White. The AMP should be implemented and evaluated in more adolescent development courses and at universities with more diverse student enrollments. Furthermore, the study relied on more indirect (e.g., student experiences and perspectives) versus direct (e.g., evaluation of student's actual work, psychometrically valid measures) student learning measures (Luce & Kirnan, 2016). While both types of measures are important in SoTL research, future research on the AMP could include student work within the evaluation (e.g., reflections, final projects, exams). Using existing measures related to IL (e.g., Integrated Learning Scale; Youngerman, Dahl, & Mayhew, 2021) and student collaboration (e.g., Collaborative Knowledge Practices Questionnaire; Karlgren et al., 2020), or developing new valid measures related to student agency would also be helpful to future evaluative research comparing the impact of teaching interventions across various adolescent development courses (e.g., comparing the AMP and an alternative teaching approach in another adolescent development course).

Despite its limitations, the study explored a novel IL teaching approach that students perceived as increasing their engagement and learning. The study also highlighted that students value choice and individual assignments within group projects. Students' experiences provide initial support for the proposition that active learning strategies can and should be implemented in remote teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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