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Poverty is a pervasive issue impacting many areas of human sciences and Extension. Individuals living in the United States may have varying attitudes toward poverty. Research has shown that poverty simulations are effective in modifying attitudes toward poverty. The Community Action Poverty Simulation (CAPS) program is one such example that exposes its participants to the lived realities of poverty in the United States. While research on CAPS is plentiful, little research has examined the experiences of those who simulated the community worker role. This research explored the experiences of students who simulated community worker roles during a CAPS simulation. This research used the Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach to analyze 50 sampled student reflection papers. The students were enrolled in a large, public land-grant institution in the Southeast. All students completed a family resource management course in either Fall 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019. Students shared that they learned about poverty by observing other students. They also expressed their intentions of donating, volunteering, and avoiding judgment of those living in poverty. This research contributes to the literature on CAPS outcomes, specifically for supporting community worker roles.

Keywords: teaching about poverty, poverty simulations, Community Action Poverty Simulation, experiential learning, Extension, poverty

Introduction

Poverty in the United States of America is a pervasive issue that spans all Extension and human services areas. For instance, those living in poverty have lower levels of nutrition, lower levels of school achievement, negative health issues, a lack of access to affordable health insurance, and a lack of affordable housing (Collinson & Reed, 2018; Dreyer, 2019; Keisler-Starkey & Bunch, 2020; Larrimore & Schuetz, 2017; Williams & Latkin, 2007). In 2019, 10.5% of American families lived in poverty (Semega et al., 2020), and the official poverty rate increased to 11.4% in 2020 because of the COVID-19 pandemic (Shrider et al., 2021). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services sets the annual poverty guidelines, which identify the minimum income needed to cover basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. According to the guidelines, a single person in 2022 earning at or below $13,590 is deemed to be living in poverty (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2022).

Research has shown that Americans have different attitudes toward poverty (Ekins, 2019; Feagin, 1972, 1975). For instance, lower-income, politically liberal, and minoritized households are more likely to believe that poverty is the result of systematic/structural barriers (Bradshaw, 2007). Examples of systematic/structural barriers include, but are not limited to, the rise of low-wage jobs, discrimination, and the high cost of living (Brady, 2019). On the other hand, affluent, politically conservative, and White households may believe that poverty results from individual attributions (Hunt, 1996, 2002, 2004). Examples of individual attributions include personal laziness, lack of education, lack of motivation to work, or substance abuse (Bradshaw, 2007). Although research shows that both individual and structural factors contribute to poverty, Americans and college students, especially from affluent communities, are more likely to believe individual attributions are the sole cause of poverty (Zosky & Thompson, 2012). As such, educational efforts to align college students' views with the lived reality of those in poverty are worthy of undertaking (Parks, 2023; Parks & Worthy, 2023).

One such effort, the Community Action Poverty Simulation (CAPS), was created by Missouri Community Action Network (MCAN) in 2003 to expose individuals to the realities of poverty in the United States. Over 2,000 organizations, including Extension programs at land-grant institutions, have used the CAPS program through a licensing agreement (Missouri Community Action Network [MCAN], n.d.). Examples include North Dakota State University Extension (Pankow, 2006), University of Georgia Extension (Chapman & Gibson, 2006; Nickols & Nielsen, 2011; Parks et al., 2023), and University of Tennessee Extension (Franck et al., 2016). This live-action role-play program enables policymakers, teachers, business owners, and students to experience the realities that those living in poverty may encounter. The objectives of the simulation are to (1) promote poverty awareness, (2) increase understanding of poverty, (3) inspire local change, and (4) transform perspectives about poverty (MCAN, n.d.). CAPS features several family types, including single parents, grandparents raising grandchildren, and homeless adults.

CAPS participants may simulate one of three roles (1) adult, (2) child, or (3) community worker (MCAN, n.d.). Usually, CAPS student-participants simulate only the adult role (Arnett-Hartwick & Davis, 2019; Arnett-Hartwick & Harpel, 2020; Nickols & Nielsen, 2011; Nnakwe, 2020). The CAPS facilitators might ask external volunteers (e.g., other professors or community members) to simulate community worker roles (Hartman et al., 2020; Mann, 2017; Smith-Carrier et al., 2019). Often, the child roles are left unclaimed or are simulated by dolls if there aren't enough student participants. Thus, little research examined the experiences of those who simulated the role of the community worker or child roles (Hartman et al., 2020; Mann, 2017; Parks et al., 2024).

The purpose of this research was to examine students' experiences simulating the community worker roles during CAPS. The students were enrolled in a family resource management course at a large, public land-grant institution in the Southeast. The program was offered by a local Extension agent for University of Georgia Extension, making it both a Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) and Extension program. This sample drew on 50 reflection papers from students who simulated the community worker role during a CAPS simulation from 2015 through 2019. The students were enrolled across five different years in the same family resource management course at a large, public university in the Southeast. Additionally, this research relied on Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Model to frame the student reflection questions. Braun and Clarke's (2006) Reflexive Thematic Analysis approach was used to analyze the student reflection papers.

This research makes a twofold contribution to the literature. First, it adds to the body of Extension studies that have used CAPS by specifically exploring community worker data (Arnett-Hartwick & Davis, 2019; Arnett-Hartwick & Harpel, 2020; Kihm & Knapp, 2015; Nickols & Nielsen, 2011; Nnakwe, 2020). Most of the studies about CAPS emanate from nursing and public health (Noone et al., 2012; Northrup et al., 2020; Phillips et al., 2020), with very few from Extension and Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS). Second, to the authors' knowledge, few studies have addressed the experiences of college students who simulated community worker roles (Hartman et al., 2020; Mann, 2017; Smith-Carrier et al., 2019), with even fewer studies examining the community worker roles in general. This lack of inclusion suggests that only the participants who simulate adult roles could have a meaningful experience with CAPS. However, there is merit in exploring whether the community worker role was likewise meaningful to student-participants. Exploring whether the community worker role is a useful learning activity for FCS college students could improve their empathy toward those living in poverty (Parks & Worthy, 2023).

Literature Review

Research suggested that poverty simulation education in Extension and Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) programming is beneficial (Chapman & Gibson, 2006; Nickols & Nielsen, 2011;

Parks & Worthy, 2023; Parks et al., 2024). Since Extension and FCS professionals are designed to serve their communities, it is imperative that their programs are sensitive to those of low socioeconomic status (Pankow, 2006). Therefore, teaching college students about the lived and complex realities of poverty may contribute to better Extension programming, helping them to better serve their communities (Parks & Worthy, 2023). The CAPS program is one of the many experiential learning tools used to teach about poverty (Nickols & Nielsen, 2011).

Use of CAPS in Extension

CAPS has been used among University Cooperative Extension programs (Chapman & Gibson, 2006; Franck et al., 2016; Pankow, 2006). These studies demonstrated the effectiveness of CAPS on attitude change (Arnett-Hartwick & Davis, 2019; Arnett-Hartwick & Harpel, 2020), increased empathy (Nickols & Nielsen, 2011), and general increase in the understanding of poverty (Kihm & Knapp, 2015). These studies underscore the utility and effectiveness of CAPS for both FCS college students and Extension professionals (Parks et al., 2023).

Chapman and Gibson (2006) showed that CAPS is effective in changing participants' attitudes and in increasing participants' level of confidence in helping the poor. According to Pankow (2006), North Dakota State University Extension has offered a CAPS program since 1996, with the first simulation featuring 50 Extension educators. Pankow's (2006) study conducted various simulations with 420 participants. Post-simulation surveys issued between 2001 and 2003 revealed that 80% of the participants indicated that their perceptions of those living in poverty had changed. Open-ended responses from follow-up phone interviews (n = 14) revealed that participants completed some form of action (e.g., donated or volunteered their time at a homeless shelter) and gained a better understanding of poverty.

Franck et al. (2016) partnered with a local school in Tennessee to increase awareness of student homelessness and childhood poverty among schoolteachers and community members. Fifty-six out of 102 participants completed the 16-item CAPS questionnaire. Results showed that participating in CAPS had effectively increased participants' awareness of poverty and elicited empathy for impoverished children and families. Results from the survey's two open-ended questions revealed three themes: concrete actions, increased awareness, and increased empathy. Participants shared that they were going to donate money, volunteer their time, and be less judgmental toward those living in poverty.

Although few CAPS studies emanate from FCS, those that do discuss a wide range of outcomes. Some discuss attitude change (Arnett-Hartwick & Davis, 2019; Arnett-Hartwick & Harpel, 2020; Nickols & Nielsen, 2011), empathy (Nickols & Nielsen, 2011), or increased understanding of poverty (Kihm & Knapp, 2015). The research spans several FCS programs, including Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS), FCS education (Arnett-Hartwick & Davis, 2019), family resource management (FRM), and nutrition programs (Nnakwe, 2020). FCS research also extends to non-college audiences, including 47 FCS teachers from the Midwest (Arnett-Hartwick

& Harpel, 2020). Studies by both Arnett-Hartwick and Davis (2019) and Arnett-Hartwick and Harpel (2020) used Yun and Weaver's (2010) scale and determined there were marginal changes in attitudes towards poverty among their sampled participants. Yun and Weaver's (2010) 21-item Attitude Toward Poverty (ATP) scale is widely used in CAPS literature and assesses undergraduate ATP pre- and post-CAPS. Kihm and Knapp (2015) used the scale embedded with the CAPS simulation and saw general changes in participants' understanding of poverty. Themes included the difficulty of living in poverty, poverty has many implications, and access to resources (Arnett-Hartwick & Davis, 2019). With the exception of one study (Nnakwe, 2020), research generally showed significant changes in ATP when FCS students participated in CAPS. Lastly, as noted in the literature, few studies have addressed the experiences of college students who simulated community worker roles (Hartman et al., 2020; Mann, 2017; Smith-Carrier et al., 2019).

Despite the many contributions that CAPS brings as an experiential learning opportunity, it has limitations. Scholars addressed some of the challenges of using CAPS, primarily related to how it can perpetuate negative stereotypes (Gaines, 2018). They noted that some of their Illinois teacher-participants drew stereotypical conclusions about all low-income persons as being criminals. Research also discussed the negative and possibly triggering impact that CAPS could have on low-income participants (Reid & Evanson, 2016; Smith-Carrier et al., 2019). Smith-Carrier et al. (2019) and Hartman et al. (2020) warned that facilitators and community workers must be properly trained so that CAPS is not too emotionally damaging for its participants. Franck et al. (2016), in their Extension work with teachers in Tennessee, stressed the importance of having well-trained volunteers involved in the debriefing phase. Pankow (2006), in their Extension work, warned that simulations could be counter-productive if learners do not have the chance to process their experience and discuss it.

Theoretical Framework: Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Model

This study relied on data from student reflection papers, which asked students to reflect on their experiences with CAPS. This research relied on Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Model (ELM) to frame the student reflection paper questions. The prompts were designed to help the student-participants process their feelings and share their experiences during the simulations. The ELM model contains four phases: (1) concrete experiences, (2) reflective observation, (3) abstract conceptualization, and (4) active experimentation. Concrete experience involves learners engaging in new experiences (Hughes et al., 2012). Concrete experiences (e.g., CAPS) require learners to become involved in hands-on learning activities. The reflective observation stage requires describing what happened during their CAPS experience (Browne & Roll, 2016). Reflective observation is relevant during both the debriefing period and when the students write their reflection papers. The abstract conceptualization, or the generalization stage, asks learners to integrate their experiences into logically sound theories and new perspectives (Kolb, 1984). This phase also includes comparing what one just observed in CAPS to what is already known

about poverty. In the case of the CAPS program, students entered the simulation with previously established attitudes toward poverty. Lastly, during the active experimentation phase, learners tested the theories formed in the abstract conceptualization phase. They then used these theories to guide future decisions and behavior (Sugarman, 1985). After completing CAPS, students were asked to write a two- to four-page personal reflection paper addressing several prompts:

1. Concrete Experience and Reflective Observation: Please provide a thorough description of your experience. (What role were you in during the simulation? What challenges did you face?)
2. Reflective Observation: Please describe how you felt about your experience during the CAPS.
3. Abstract Conceptualization: What did you learn from CAPS?
4. Active Experimentation: What were some of your takeaways (highlights/key points) from this experience?

Methodology

This research used Braun and Clarke's (2006) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) approach to examine a purposive sample of 50 student reflection papers. These college students simulated community workers as a part of their enrollment in either a Fall 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, or 2019 family resource management class at a large, public institution in the Southeast. These CAPS simulations were hosted by the University of Georgia Extension Program by a local FCS Extension agent, thus rendering it both a collegiate FCS and Extension program.

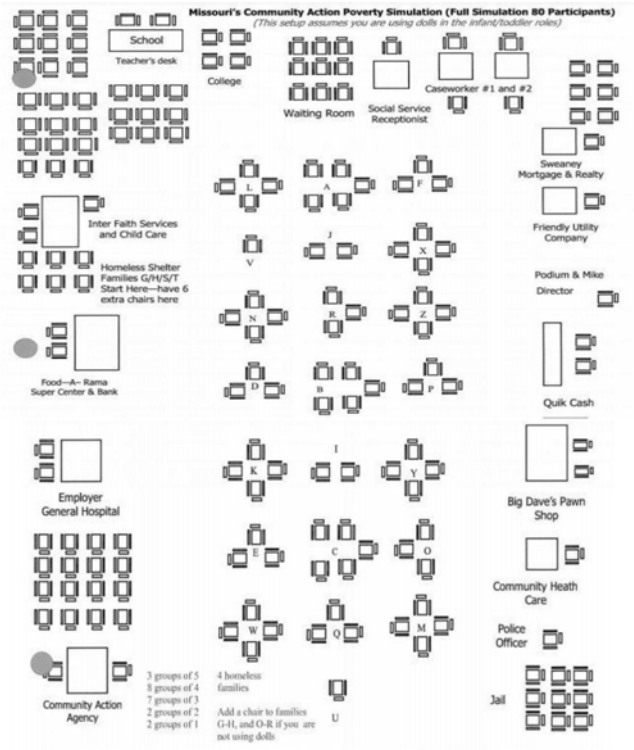
The CAPS Community Worker Roles

CAPS, as a simulation, is set in the fictitious "Realville, USA," where 26 low-income families neighbor each other (See Figure 1). In total, 88 people can simulate a family role (i.e., an adult or child), and between 15 and 20 persons can simulate a community worker role. Participants arrange themselves in family units. Each family is given a "Family Profile," which is a printed handout explaining their household structure, income level, and assets. Household structures can vary from recently unemployed breadwinners to single mothers and even grandparents raising grandchildren. For instance, the Aber family features a 42-year-old recently unemployed husband, a 39-year-old stay-at-home wife, two minor sons, and a 16-year-old pregnant daughter. Those simulating an adult role are responsible for going to work or seeking employment, paying bills, and managing their day-to-day responsibilities. Those simulating the child roles attend school receiving "school opportunity cards" (e.g., needing money for a school field trip) and engaging in efforts to raise money (e.g., babysitting) for their families. Those simulating children must remain in character. The child roles, especially the toddlers, are forbidden to pay bills, purchase groceries, obtain full employment, or provide advice to their "parents."

The community workers maintain table stations located around the periphery of the room. See Figure 1 for a diagram of the room layout. The community workers serve the family members

and represent the institutions that consumers encounter in everyday life. They include a banker, a doctor, a school teacher, and staff representing social assistance programs. For instance, the supercenter clerk accepts Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards to process the adult characters' Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The social service office caseworker connects student-participants with benefits such as Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and SNAP. The students who simulated the community workers typically met thirty minutes prior to the simulation to receive additional training on their roles.

Figure 1. Layout of the CAPS Room



The CAPS simulations in this particular study were different from the literature since some undergraduate students simulated the community worker role. At least 15 people can serve as community workers. During semesters with low enrollment, the facilitators relied on faculty volunteers to simulate the community worker roles. Thus, it was common to have semesters (e.g., 2018) where both students and external volunteers simulated community workers.

Table 1 shows the number of student reflection papers by semester. This research analyzed a total of 50 student reflection papers.

Table 1. Community Worker Participants by Semester

	Fall 2015	**Fall 2016**	**Fall 2017**	**Fall 2018**	**Fall 2019**	**Total**
Student Enrollment	98	66	97	100	99	460
Community Workers	9	3	12	14	12	50

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA)

As a means of data analysis, this research used Braun and Clarke's (2006) Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) approach to explore the experiences of students who simulated a community worker role. Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) contains the following 6 phases:

- Phase 1: Reading and Re-reading the Data
- Phase 2: Generating Initial Codes
- Phase 3: Constructing Themes
- Phase 4: Reviewing Themes
- Phase 5: Defining and Naming Themes
- Phase 6: Producing the Report

During the first phase, the researcher read all 50 student reflection papers twice. During each reading, the first author highlighted phrases and maintained a list of potential codes. Codes are concepts or phrases that are used to categorize and make meaning of data (Benaquisto, 2008). This study relies on inductive coding, which refers to allowing the codes to derive from the data instead of pre-selecting the codes (Benaquisto, 2008). In phase two, a list of potential codes and a working definition of each were compiled. The researcher expected to identify new codes that were not mentioned during the first phase. These secondary codes were considered in a later phase. At the end of every coding session, the inquirer maintained detailed notes justifying why themes and codes were suggested and changed from the previous sessions. Newly formed codes were later defined. The researcher organized each code category into potential themes, memo-ing along the way.

During the third phase, the researcher used ATLAS.ti to organize codes into meaningful themes. The researcher grouped the codes according to categories. For instance, codes related to feelings about the adult role were categorized as Perceptions of Adult Role." After identifying a list of candidate themes during the fourth phase, the researcher refined the themes and recoded them as necessary. The researcher knew when all the candidate themes reflected the data when a specific name and brief description of the theme were generated. During the penultimate phase, the researcher carefully chose which words were used to name the themes. The results section aligns with the final step.

Reliability and Validity

Many qualitative researchers are of the opinion that reliability and validity should be considered differently from quantitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 1986) and should be consistent with the research's theoretical framework and method. Reliability refers to the extent that research is consistent, stable, and could report similar results using the same procedure (Miller, 2008). This research followed standard reliability reflexivity practices such as memo-ing and reflecting on one's views or biases and how they emerge over time (Russel, 2008). Coding drift is a significant

threat to reliability, resulting in a shift in the meaning of codes (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). This problem would lead to generating themes that do not accurately reflect the data or are too broad. Memo-ing is a reliability practice that mitigates coding drift. The researcher was careful to list and define the codes that were used. Additionally, the coder documented the reasons for renaming or redefining codes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Inter-rater reliability (also known as between-coder agreement) was not employed, since only one researcher analyzed the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Validity, in qualitative studies, can be defined as whether the finding accurately represents the researcher's standpoint and the experiences of the data (Creswell & Miller, 2000). Subjectivity statements are a standard validity practice; they are autobiographical summaries of the researcher's relationship with the research (Creswell & Miller, 2000; Preissle, 2008). These autobiographical summaries might include gender, race, socioeconomic status, age, and education status. These subjectivity statements are intended to encourage reflexivity and to ensure coding validity (Peshkin, 1988).

Results

This research aimed to examine the experiences of students who simulated the community worker role during a CAPS simulation. The sample drew on 50 student reflection papers. The students were enrolled across five different years in the same family resource management course at a large, public university in the Southeast. The first author identified two themes after coding the data using Braun and Clarke's (2006) Reflexive Thematic Analysis: the importance of the community worker role and CAPS participation prompted future actions of the students. The two themes are outlined below.

Theme 1: The Importance of the Community Worker Role

> Theme 1 explored the pedagogical importance of the community worker role for the student-participants. Students gained a unique perspective by serving in the community worker role because they were able to observe the other students' behaviors during the simulation. The statement below from a 2015 student who simulated a Quik Cash worker illustrates this. The Quik Cash worker issues transportation passes, cashes checks, and authorizes title loans. Being able to work behind the tables instead of being in a family was a takeaway because we got to see what it was really like for poverty families with the hustle and grind they have to do each week to survive. The poverty simulation was a great experience to be a part of.

The student who simulated the Pawnbroker in 2016 echoed a similar sentiment. The Pawnbroker offers cash to families for their personal items, appliances, and furniture and cashes checks for the families. In their reflection papers, the students who simulated the Pawnbroker in 2016 mentioned short-changing customers and threatened to avoid doing business with those who

claimed they had been cheated. The student-participants were given the autonomy to conduct business as they wished. The student who simulated the Pawnbroker in 2016 remorsefully stated:

> This kind of corruption is upsetting, especially in a poor neighborhood. People in poverty are the ones who need the honest businessman the most. They are completely powerless against the companies. It became very clear that these families were trying their best, but even then it was not enough… Poverty is not always a choice and getting out of poverty could be near impossible if you are living your life with corrupt businesses. Even when poor people put their best foot forward in hopes to provide just the simple bare necessities for their families, they cannot always obtain that goal.

By serving in this community worker role, the student saw the impact of unscrupulous financial practices on low-income communities. This student's experiences illustrated the importance of the community worker role.

Another student, who simulated the Social Service Office Caseworker in 2019, also shared the impact that the poverty simulation had on them. The caseworker offers a variety of services, including medical, housing, nutrition, and employment assistance to the families in the simulation. The student who simulated this role in 2019 shared:

> Next, my personal view of poverty dramatically changed. … I thought to myself that in this century, it was very easy to find any kind of job and sustain a family. However, that is not the case. Through the families that came to my office, I started talking to them and learned that many of them were born into struggling families. Also, how [can] applying to a job can be so hard now since most applications now are being sent through online. So, what happens if those families do not have internet available? These are just some of the things that I did not think about, maybe because I view having internet as such a normal thing and honestly take it for granted. I now understand how hard it can be for those families if they live in rough areas of town and the difficulty of finding jobs.

By engaging with the families directly as a social service officer, this student began to see the impact of poverty on their clients.

Theme 2: CAPS Participation Prompted Future Actions of the Students

As captured by theme 2, some students simulating the community worker roles expressed specific poverty-reduction intentions after completing the CAPS. These actions ranged from donating and volunteering their time to reserving judgment of those living in poverty. The social service office caseworker works with clients with various medical, housing, and nutrition needs. They also process social assistance and welfare benefits. A student who simulated the social service office caseworker in 2017 shared their intention to avoid now making assumptions about those living in poverty.

> One of the biggest things that I took from this experience is to always remember that you never know what the person next to you is going through, or how they got there. There are many people in poverty who try without success to get away from poverty.

The student simulating the Quik Cash Worker in 2016 is another example. The Quik Cash Worker is responsible for cashing checks and offering title loans. This station is also the place where family members can buy their transportation passes. The student who simulated the Quik Cash Worker in 2016 stated,

> For those that are in poverty I would say that you aren't alone and there are resources out there that will help you get on your feet. Some include soup kitchens, food pantry, free GED classes, on the job training, and resume assistance. For others not in poverty, realize that one person is not better than the other due to their financial status; we are all a country that needs each other's help and unity to fight poverty each and every day.

This student's quotation illustrates the importance of everyone being unified. Additionally, the student suggested that they, too, should empathize with those living in poverty and stand in solidarity with those living in poverty. The student who simulated the Banker in 2015 specifically mentioned being more empathetic to those living in poverty. The Banker cashes checks and tracks savings account withdrawals and loan payments.

> I believe that yes, some people are born into way better or way worse circumstances as their neighbor, but most everyone has the capability of taking steps in the right direction. … Even though I say this, I don't want to take away from the importance of the issue. Some active, motivated, and talented people are just very situationally unlucky. These are the impoverished I really empathize with; the ones who bust their cans trying to improve their family's quality of life by all ethical means possible.

As a result of their experience with CAPS, students expressed various actions, including empathizing, no longer making assumptions about one's economic status, and working with others to end poverty.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to examine the experiences of students who simulated a CAPS community worker role. These students were enrolled in the same family resource management course at a large, public university in the Southeast. The sample drew on 50 student-authored reflection papers across five different years. This research's methodology includes inductive coding using Braun and Clarke's (2006) RTA. Additionally, this research relied on Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Model to frame the questions for student reflection papers. This research identified two themes: (1) the importance of the community worker role and (2) CAPS participation prompted future actions of students.

Discussion of the Theme 1

Theme 1 demonstrated that the students who simulated a CAPS community worker role could learn about poverty by observing other students' behaviors. To the researchers' knowledge, few studies have explored participants' experiences simulating the community worker roles or child role (Mann, 2017; Parks et al., 2024). Typically, past researchers relied on professors, graduate students, or external volunteers to simulate the community workers (Nnakwe, 2020; Smith-Carrier et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2014). Therefore, this study is novel in that it is one of the first to demonstrate the pedagogical benefits of the community worker role.

Students simulating community workers encounter all four stages of Kolb's (1984) Experiential Learning Model. The community worker role is a concrete experience in which learners involve themselves in a meaningful poverty simulation role (Browne & Roll, 2016). Additionally, observing other students (Theme 1) teaches them more about poverty. By reflecting on their experiences through the reflective observation stage, they begin to examine their previously held beliefs about poverty and make connections to what they learned (i.e., the active conceptualization phase). Theme 2 explains how active experimentation plays out among learners.

Discussion of the Theme 2

As shared in theme 2, the students who simulated the community workers' roles cited specific future actions they intended to take. These ranged from donating, to volunteering, to not passing judgment on those living in poverty. This finding related to the active experimentation phase of Kolb's (1984) four-phase Experiential Learning Model. Active experimentation (AE) suggests that learners test the theories formed in the abstract conceptualization phase and use them to guide future decisions (Sugarman, 1985). In this phase, students articulated potential attitude changes and future behaviors that they might adopt to assist those living in poverty. While behavioral change was not the focus of this project, this topic should be explored further in future research.

Limitations

While this research addressed several gaps in the literature, it is not without limitations. Although these findings cannot be generalized to all FCS post-secondary or Extension programs, they reflect this particular group of FCS student-participants. As with any reflection paper data, there is the chance for a social desirability bias to influence the findings. Students might feel tempted to provide overly optimistic responses if they perceive their grade is contingent on their reflection paper responses. The author contends that social desirability bias was not a major threat to validity since standard procedures were used to reduce it. First, students were given their grades before this research's inception. Additionally, many students willingly volunteered opinions that could be viewed as being less socially acceptable, such as disdain or apathy for

those living in poverty. Since students freely reported these beliefs, the researcher assumes a certain level of verisimilitude that students have in sharing their experiences with CAPS.

Implications and Future Research

This research offers implications for future academic research for Extension and FCS professionals. First, future research might examine the experiences of those who simulate the child roles. To date, little research (Mann, 2017; Parks et al., 2024) has examined the pedagogical benefit of this role. Next, little research addressed whether CAPS participation translates into actual and sustained behavioral and attitude change. Few studies used longitudinal data that followed up with students, post-simulation or even into future semesters (Browne & Roll, 2016; Noone et al., 2012). Behavioral change was little addressed in the literature (Hernandez et al., 2016). There is merit in following up with participants to see if they actually donated money or volunteered their time post-simulation. Third, the Spent poverty simulation has been used with family resource management students (Parks & Worthy, 2023), and future research might continue to explore its success among FCS students.

This research joined other studies (Arnett-Hartwick & Davis, 2019; Arnett-Hartwick & Harpel, 2020; Kihm & Knapp, 2015; Nickols & Nielsen, 2011; Nnakwe, 2020) that support the use of the CAPS program in FCS classrooms and Extension programs. Additionally, this research demonstrated that the community worker role is a useful learning activity to teach FCS college students about poverty. Historically, professors, graduate students, or external volunteers have simulated the role of community workers (Nnakwe, 2020; Noone et al., 2012; Smith-Carrier et al., 2019; Yang et al., 2014). Post-secondary FCS educators, FCS agents, and Extension program specialists could benefit from including the community worker role in their programs. This research added to the body of Extension and FCS studies by addressing the experiences of college students who simulated CAPS community worker roles. This research demonstrated that students who simulated the community worker role found it to be a meaningful experience. Many shared that they were motivated to donate, volunteer time, or work towards eliminating their biases toward poverty.

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