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Inspiring the Civil Revolution: The Role of Bullying Education and Experiential Learning

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The authors explore service-learning as a pedagogy to promote bullying prevention within schools. Specifically, they explain the preparatory experiences necessary for students in an undergraduate Experiential Learning Principles of Management course to interface with high school freshmen and the reciprocal impact that students at both levels had upon one another. Information on classroom instruction to create bullying awareness is provided to assist educators considering this partnership and to showcase positive learning experiences (along with areas that could have benefitted from a different approach). The article concludes with implications for course restructuring to expand on civility and educational outreach.

Our actions will set the standard for what is right, and hopefully others will take notice and join us in our cause (college student presenter in a Principles of Management EXL course).

The increased conflict on school campuses experienced by principals, teachers, and students is of growing concern. Middle school students bullying a bus monitor (caught on camera phone) recently received international attention (Karimi, 2012). The suicide of Tyler Clementi, an 18-year-old Rutgers University first-year student, prompted New Jersey to enact what is considered the nation's toughest anti-bullying legislation. New Jersey public schools must now "(1) conduct extensive training of staff and students; (2) appoint safety teams made up of parents, teachers

and staff; and (3) launch an investigation of every allegation of bullying within one day" (Cohen, 2011).

Violation of others' physical/psychological boundaries is a threat to students, and a call to action for bullying prevention (Harris & Petrie, 2003). The U.S. Department of Education noted that in the 2008-2009 school year, 28% of students ages 12 through 18 reported they were victims of bullying at school; in addition, another 6% indicated they were cyber-bullied (U.S. Department of Education, 2011). Bullying can have a devastating impact, with its aftermath linked to (1) suicidal thoughts and actions in adolescents (Kim & Leventhal, 2008); (2) a tainted school climate, with increases in problematic behavior, aggression, and vandalism (Swearer, Espelage, Vaillancourt, & Hymel, 2010); (3) lawsuits that result from a lack of proactivity to prevent bullying from occurring on campuses (McGrath, 2007); and (4) violence, which is a self-perpetuating cycle (Coloroso, 2003). Being the target of repeated bad behavior has the potential to impair students' physical wellness, social skills, and academic performance (Harris & Petrie, 2003; Kristof, 2012).

According to Swearer and Espelage (2004) ". . . bullying does not occur in isolation" (p. 3). Its adverse impact is felt not only by individual students, but across school systems as well. If school bullying is left unaddressed, ramifications for society can include dysfunctional interpersonal relationships and problems with team output (Samnani & Singh, 2012). These negative effects are a result of a range of bullying behaviors, which include physical battery, emotional bullying (for instance, cyber-bullying, teasing, name calling, taunting), and relational bullying (ostracism, gossip) (Kowalski & Limber, 2007).

Although school administrators are the ones charged with crafting strategies to dissuade school violence, Renfro, Huebner, and Ritchey (2003) argue that it is university faculty who are skilled at research and methodology aimed at bullying prevention. They state that ". . . a university and school partnership is an ideal methodology to explore emerging school violence prevention practices" (p. 83). Likewise, universities typically stress integrating topics of morality and civics into the curriculum (Colby, Ehrlich, Beaumont, & Stephens, 2003), suggesting that students should learn valuable life, social, and community lessons. These include how to promote the welfare of their fellow workers, how to get along with others different from themselves, and how to care for diverse constituencies.

By describing an innovative approach to bullying education, the aims of this article are (a) to encourage university faculty to incorporate bullying prevention concepts into their curricula and (b) to promote partnerships with local schools to decrease bad behavior.

Why Bullying Education Through Experiential/Service-Learning?

Service-learning is a type of experiential education that emphasizes community outreach and conscious reflection (Kenworthy-U'Ren, 2008). It provides an element of realism and applicability to the course material while simultaneously enhancing conceptual understanding. In describing service-learning, Lepof (2002) notes,

Learning also occurs when students see what influences they can have in the community, witness how their privilege and how their experiences have shaped their lives, and broaden their views because they have seen how the world looks from someone else's view. (p. 25)

Service-learning strengthens students' moral fiber, stimulates their interest in lifelong learning, and helps them see the significance of their actions in a larger sphere. Godfrey, Illes, and Berry (2005) state that service activities promote an expansive education by seeking "... to balance academic rigor with practical relevance, set in a context of civic engagement, which furnishes students with a broader . . . richer, educational experience" (p. 309).

Experiential learning through service is a method to promote ethical management within business classes (Fleckenstein, 1997). As opposed to theoretical book learning, experiential techniques integrate students with their instructional material. They at once include hands-on instruction that immerses individuals in active learning, while providing them with valuable tools for future engagement.

The combination of these pedagogies can heighten and internalize students' understanding of bullying (and its impact), especially within the workplace. In the course described here, students studied the causes and consequences of uncivil business practice. Through research, they discovered the staggering impact of destructive behavior at work. In *The Cost of Bad Behavior: How Incivility Is Damaging Your Business and What to Do About It*, Pearson and Porath (2009) argue that a single bullying incident (experienced across half the workforce of a large company) can result in millions of dollars in damages.

In light of bullying's potential to impair both school and corporate entities, there is a need to explore opportunities throughout the educational curriculum. Bullying awareness within institutions of higher learning can help students understand the economic and emotional damage of destructive behavior while at the same time setting limits on their own behavior. The "trickle down" effect of presenting these concepts to high school

students simultaneously (1) reinforces the material; (2) helps students develop a better understanding of course content; (3) sharpens students' presentation skills; (4) educates the next generation of managers at multiple school levels, and (5) helps college presenters to receive the benefit of positively impacting their community through local partnerships. According to Harris and Petrie (2003), effective intervention programs can "... play a critical role in reducing the negative effects of bullying" (p. 9).

Twenty students (9 women, 11 men) in a Principles of Management EXL course at a southeastern university offered their reflections, which are provided both to inform and bolster the arguments contained within this article. Participation in the study was voluntary. One student commented as follows in his reflection paper:

With all that I've learned I feel like I have a new sense of empowerment; I can make a difference by sharing my knowledge. I will do this by analyzing the situations that I'm faced with more closely to help others that are being bullied, or explain to others why any form of bullying is not acceptable. Also, another major success of the course was my new understanding at how this relates to management. When I am out in the workforce I will be able to fight bullying by being on the frontline. I can share with my employees my new knowledge, and make sure that I've got an "iron fist" so to speak on any bullying that takes place. Hopefully more teachers will see the importance of this nontraditional subject matter, and in my lifetime bullying will be eliminated completely.

The learning process within this course consisted of several different experiential exercises, bolstered by a variety of learning materials and methodologies. Each of these is explained in detail to showcase the potential for student learning in other venues.

Description of the Experiential Learning Process and Bullying Awareness

A primary purpose of the Principles of Management course is to promote respectful interaction within the office environment. Student teams were required to present one of several bullying topics to explain how empowerment, or in this case "disempowerment" can occur as a result of managerial negligence. College student presenters crafted presentations that required them to discuss the impact of one of several different types of bullying behaviors. They were assigned to work in teams to research, produce, and present to students at a local high school. The following is an excerpt from the course syllabus:

Bullying within schools, organizations, and places of employment has received increased recognition as a growing phenomenon, and as a drain on individual self-esteem, health, and workplace productivity. Despite the devastating impact that blatant incivility can cause, the attention paid to educating a populace who can both recognize and prevent its occurrence is almost non-existent, despite the passage of some country and municipal legislation to curb its occurrence.

Because bullying is a serious public health concern and a rampant worldwide problem, it's important to educate the next generation of policy makers to the importance of this issue, and to how the subsequent culture of fear in organizations in which bullies rule results in unethical practices, and potentially in white collar crime. Your group has been assigned to present (in a PowerPoint) on one of the following bullying topics: hazing, cyber-bullying, corporate bullying, bullying in the school system, mobbing, or stalking.

The first phase of the semester-long service-learning project was the completion of a Team Agreement (see Gilbert & Flores-Zambada, 2011, for a sample of the Team Agreement and Bullying PowerPoint description). To create balanced work teams, students were randomly assigned to one of several different groups. Students made practice presentations in a private session with their instructor, and again during class time in front of their peers, who provided anonymous feedback on their presentations. Teams were encouraged to incorporate multimedia sources (for instance, SlideShare, YouTube) along with crafting "homegrown" movies and dramatic interpretations (skits). Bullying project resources within the course included a group work plan, in which students could formally delineate roles; a PowerPoint example from a previous class; a hotlink to the Digital Media Center; PowerPoint tips; videos featuring Dr. Gary Namie of the Workplace Bullying Institute; along with links to a variety of blog posts, podcasts, and newspaper articles on the topic. Students were introduced to related concepts through the integration of course materials within the class via an introductory lecture, a team lecture, and practice in effective communication and leadership. A sampling of how "bullying" topics were included within the course is described next.

Introductory Lecture

Students were shown a film explaining the monetary costs of unchecked aggression in the workplace and the mandate for managers to engage in

preemptive policy formation and education. This film was especially engaging because several different scenarios were role played to demonstrate a wide range of bullying behaviors. The instructor also showed the class excerpts of past student video clips, showcasing “homegrown” talent. Some students, for example, had utilized the digital media center on campus to craft a “news show” in which a “reporter” interviewed a “local police officer” on how victims and organizations can prevent stalking. Others created a collage depicting the phenomenon of “mobbing” set to music. Still another group simulated “hazing” on both a college campus and at work.

Teams Lecture

Students studied conflict resolution through activities examining their personal styles (for example, forcing, avoiding, accommodating, compromising, and collaborating) (Blake & Mouton, 1964) and in a role play of intergroup conflict, in which students experienced the intergroup development process by being placed into two groups. The “sales” group and the “engineering” group made lists regarding perceptions of themselves, perceptions of the other team, and how they thought the other team perceived them (Blake, Shepard, & Mouton, 1964). Students shared their lists, and the instructor debriefed the class regarding how quickly virulent negative perceptions can perpetuate.

Practice in Effective Communication

Students were assigned to read the articles “Don’t Touch That Send Button” (Poe, 2001) and “E-mails Are Forever” (Olson, 2008), which suggest that individuals (and, in particular, managers) can harm others by thoughtlessly composing and sending tactless correspondence, and by substituting e-mail for more personable communication techniques. Types of aggressive communication (interrupting, “throwing in the kitchen sink,” “you statements,” mind raping, objectification, “leading the witness,” and mocking) were also explained. Class discussions focused on how to communicate assertively both in person and electronically. Students later crafted their own version of a corporate e-mail policy using concepts they had learned throughout the semester.

Practice in Effective Leadership

Students listed descriptors of both good and bad supervisors, after which the instructor informed them that the number one reason employees

leave their job is their immediate boss (“No. 1 reason,” n.d.). In addition, students learned that “poorly managed work groups are on average 50 percent less productive and 44 percent less profitable than well-managed groups” (“No. 1 reason,” n.d.). Authoritative leader behavior and referent power were next contrasted to demonstrate the benefits of people-centered management. Students were provided the following scenario in class to generate discussion:

You are chairing a meeting. All of a sudden, one of the senior team leads begins shouting at one of the junior employees, in a manner designed to police his/her behavior, and put that person in his or her place. How would you as a manager handle the situation?

Students offered their solutions, followed by presentation of an optimal scenario response. As Ferch (2003) argues, “Meaningful dialogue gives rise to the forces that unhinge the way we harm each other, opening us toward a more accepting and empathic understanding of one another” (p. 10).

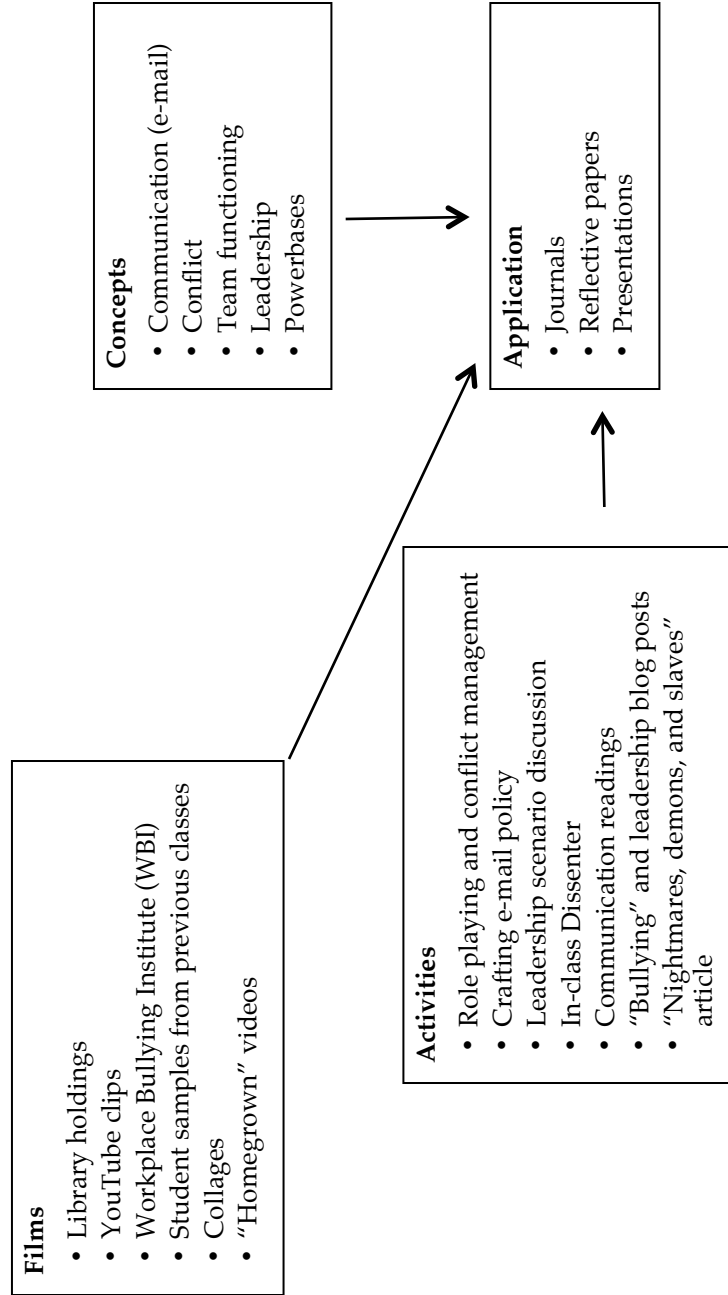
Students were shown film segments from the university library holdings that showcased abusive boss behavior along with those behaviors of leaders famous for their display of “people centered management.” They also read the article “Nightmares, Demons, and Slaves: Exploring the Painful Metaphors of Workplace Bullying” (Tracy, Lutgen-Sandvik, & Alberts, 2006), and they read several blog postings on the topic of bullying (see Gilbert, 2011).

In all instructor lectures, one student per class was assigned the role of “dissenter.” The dissenter’s job was to agree/disagree with the material and state why, suggest alternative viewpoints, and provide new perspectives. A summary and model of course activities to promote bullying education is provided in Figure 1.

The intended student learning outcomes for this course included the following:

- Promotion of respectful interaction through concept presentations, films, and lecture material.
- Problem solving skills, initiated through in-class scenarios and teamwork.
- Personal organizing skills developed through weekly meetings and planning sessions. These were showcased in a mid-semester “contest” at which each team presented their bullying project.

Figure 1
A Model of Course Activities to Promote Bullying Education Outcomes



- Effective team interaction. All students completed “peer assessments” for which they were required to rate their teammates numerically and to describe their working experience with each group member.

Chronicling Student Activities

During the semester, students kept a journal (in electronic format) describing their personal metamorphosis in the roles of a productive team member, leader, and change agent. They were encouraged to describe how they grew on a weekly basis as both a member of their team (for example, “How did you build upon your strengths and shore up your weaknesses?”) and as a leader (“How did you grow in confidence during this process?”).

Students ended the term with a reflective two-page paper demonstrating the importance of acting as advocates for their position and describing the meaning for them of civic engagement within their community. As Seibert and Daudelin (1999) have suggested, journals, reflection papers, blogs, and discussions all are ways to create an expanded worldview and a thoughtful viewpoint. Through keeping an informal record (Hiemstra, 2001), students were able to recognize common threads and recurring themes within their journals and to “purposely deliberate” (Hedberg, 2009) on their experiences. Similarly, Cooper (1998) describes reflective learning as a transformational process that allows students to see the bigger picture and, subsequently, to challenge their assumptions. In this case, students used journals to record information that later became a part of their reflective papers. The additive nature of these assignments fostered learning about management concepts as they related to bullying education.

A description of the journal assignment is provided in Table 1, while vignettes (bolstered by student samples) of the three areas in which students chronicled their growth (as productive team member, leader, and change agent) are detailed next.

Teamwork

Students were clustered into teams to demonstrate a very real dynamic with which they would be faced in the future. The move from centralized to more decentralized (organic) firms, coupled with the rise of globalization, necessitates the greater use of “virtual” teams within companies. According to *Which Classroom Skills Translate to the Job Market* (Moton, n.d.), “Being able to work effectively in a group is important at almost

Table 1
A Description of the Reflective Journal "Bullying" Assignment

You will end the term with a "reflective journal" recording your experiences with your team and what you learned from your group project. The final product will be a reflective two-page double-spaced paper that demonstrates the importance of acting as advocates for your position and describes the meaning of civic engagement within your community. You will describe how you transformed on a weekly basis in the following areas (as) a:

- productive team member (e.g., how did you build upon your strengths, and shore up your weaknesses?);
 - leader (how did you grow in confidence during this process?); and
 - change agent (how do you see yourself affecting peoples' lives, and how can you continue this process within future interactions?).
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every level of employment, from upper-level management on down." For the most part, students considered teamwork to be a positive experience. As one student said it,

Working in my group I got over my fears. I was able to voice my opinion without anyone getting angry or telling me my ideas were bad ones. Knowing that my group members wouldn't put me down made me feel comfortable enough to voice my opinions and ideas. I've learned that I can't sit back and let others motivate me all the time. Sometimes I have to motivate myself, and sometimes I might have to be the motivator. I do think I will always have some kind of fear about speaking or giving presentations in front of people; however, I am slowly getting over my stage fright. It's definitely not as bad when I have other people standing up with me during a presentation. Overall, this experience has been a good one.

Not all of the group experiences were positive. Working with a diverse team of individuals (as they will be expected to do upon graduation) made students realize that they, as managers, may sometimes have to make tough decisions. Although rarely exercised, students had the option to "fire" a group member. To do so, the decision had to be unanimous among the group (and in writing), and all other options of progressive discipline must have been exercised.

After having a challenging start in getting his group to coalesce, one student offered the following suggestion:

Ways to increase the effectiveness of the group work experience

would be to have weekly work reports so that each person gets up-to-date feedback, and . . . understands how [to] develop a team and [craft] work reports. This would allow the group members who are doing the most work the ability to feel like they have somewhere to report the issues . . . and allow members who are not productive to understand where they stand with the group. I feel like this would be very important, just because as students you still feel like there is not anything you can do to convince someone that they need to work with the group.

Given the difficulties some individuals experienced, in the future, teams will receive milestones regarding interim presentation deadlines and due dates to ensure that they are on the right track.

Leadership

Common leadership themes students reported in their reflective papers included the opportunity to grow in confidence, to develop presentational skills, and to act in a leadership role. In several groups the role of “unleader” (Manz & Sims, 1984) was shared, in that individuals took turns running meetings. In this nontraditional position, students acted as coaches, facilitators, and expeditors for their project:

What I really liked about my group was that one week one person would take the leadership role and make sure we were all up to date on our tasks. Another week, someone else would fulfill that role as a coordinator. . . I really enjoyed being a leader some weeks and then also following other members’ leads other weeks.

Change Agent

One of the primary purposes of service projects is to enable students to learn from giving back to their communities. Through interfacing with high school students, college students created a “win-win.” They were able to feel like “consultants,” who were imparting important knowledge, while the high school recipients were able to learn important lessons from individuals close to their age. The college students became not only change agents for classes to which they were presenting, but also future agents of change within their places of employment:

Bullying doesn’t just end in high school, but can exacerbate into your adult life and affect your welfare. It is important to keep that in mind; and even if we can’t put an end to bullying, we

can certainly work to not act as agents in it. Allowing bullying to happen is in its own regards being a bully, because you are aiding its proliferation.

Discussion and Implications

In this study describing a college/public school partnership, we (1) extend knowledge regarding the possibilities of service-learning as a pedagogy to promote bullying prevention in schools and (2) propose an innovative approach to integrating these concepts through experiential learning. As the literature suggests, partnerships between colleges and schools may lead to the successful implementation of bullying prevention programs (Renfro et al., 2003); likewise, service-learning provides an added benefit of a more engaged citizenship, while connecting learning with real-world experiences. We suggest that anti-bullying programs may provide a suitable service-learning canvas to teach the management concepts of teamwork, leadership, and change. Fleckenstein (1997) further asserts that management educators have an important role in encouraging social responsibility and civic engagement. Service-learning is a potentially powerful vehicle through which anti-bullying programs (to benefit a variety of constituencies within society) can be disseminated. The interweaving of partnerships, service-learning principles, and bullying prevention has the potential positively to impact students across multiple spectrums. As one of the college student participants described it,

People are watching you no matter if you think it or not. There are always children that are looking up to you and using you as a model for their life. It may be subconscious, but it still happens. When an older person is around and there are children in the vicinity, you can bet that one of them is thinking, "I want to be like her one day"—I know I did. So this does put a lot of pressure on our generation indeed. What will you do with it? I know for me the fear and honor of having anyone look up to me is scary, but exciting. Scary because now I'm afraid to mess up! What would we do if we squandered the dreams of a little one? All this is to say that this project really widened my eyes to the importance of standing up to those that try and tear this generation down by their remarks and dangerous actions that are not just on the Internet. This can take place in schools, homes, workplaces, everywhere. And what I've learned through life and especially in this class is this: *Be the change you want to see in the world.*

As opposed to an isolated service-learning experience, a more expansive effort to transform college curricula (to promote empathic learning and civic engagement) may be the next educational frontier. In college curricula, democratic management principles, such as coaching, voice, and servant leadership, can be enfolded into case studies of businesses that practice “people centered” management. The new curriculum can include lessons from exemplars that have turned the tables on autocratic leadership along with companies that have fared poorly when the value of greed became their overarching purpose. What were the lessons learned by leaders who were caught with their hands in the company cookie jar? An interdisciplinary team-taught course in logic, communication, and international human relations would engender students who can identify and defend their arguments, who can debate with the best possible solution in mind, and who are able to communicate in a way that preserves the other party’s dignity. In their article “Building Multiculturalism Into Teaching Development Programs,” Cook and Sorcinelli (1999) argue that an integrated curriculum embraces diverse perspectives, incites critical thinking, and transforms student apathy into active community concern (see Figure 2 for a list of courses, values, skills, and pedagogies in a transformational college curriculum).

Experiences that build upon the one described here include partnering with companies and, possibly, even countries. In terms of corporate outreach, A Principles of Management professor brought two “consulting” groups to a company headquarters to teach civility. Each of two teams presented (1) why they thought a civility policy was important, (2) the specific components of their own policy, and (3) why they thought their policy was a good fit for the respective corporation (“Students pitch,” 2013). Dr. Jim Patell of Stanford takes this concept to the next level in his Design for Extreme Affordability course by having students solve real-world problems for the world’s poor through prototype design—designs that can be replicated at minimal cost (Patell, 2013).

Social responsibility also is stressed in The University of San Francisco’s Martín-Baró Scholar’s Program, which provides learners with exposure to the poor and underprivileged (Prion, Ziajka, Marin, & Ranck, 2003). Students in the university’s Global Leadership course choose fieldwork from among countries such as South Africa, Mexico, and The Philippines. At Notre Dame’s Gigot Center for Entrepreneurship, students can devise development plans for countries such as Jamaica, Uganda, and Cambodia (Mendoza College, 2010). From in-depth case studies, students learn that extreme disparities between poverty and prosperity are destructive on many different levels, and that humanitarian concern makes both good moral and economic sense.

Figure 2 Skills, Values, Courses, and Pedagogies to Inspire the Civil Revolution	
Skills Deductive reasoning/logic Moral reasoning Collaborative problem solving Assessment of multiple constituencies Critical thinking Power sharing Positive interpersonal competencies	Courses International Diplomacy Mediation Multicultural Management Business Etiquette Group Dynamics/Team Building Organizational Development Geography Sustainable Development
Values Fairness Empathic concern Humility Contrition/forgiveness Compassion Other enhancement Inclusion	Pedagogies Service learning Role playing/debate Foreign immersion Round table discussions Collaborative projects Field trips to underprivileged populations Social entrepreneurship

Conclusions

Woven together, bullying education and experiential learning can create positive outcomes at the individual, school, and societal levels. More importantly, participating students are given the tools to create workplace and school cultures that value and respect other people. High school administrators perceived the experience as a “win-win,” in that students (at both levels) received high quality instruction on an important topic.

Programs and partnerships such as the ones described in this article can have a ripple effect. The cost effectiveness of high school/college partnerships, combined with their potent experiential impact, make this medium of bullying education one that can be replicated nationwide. Kristof (2012) aptly wrote, “Bullying and teenage cruelty are human rights abuses that need to be higher on our agenda.” Although no one anti-bully-

ing program or activity can serve as a silver bullet, partnerships between different educational levels have the potential to enact positive change.

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