



NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER

FIRST-YEAR EXPERIENCE® AND STUDENTS IN TRANSITION
UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

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Opening the Book: Outcomes of First-Year Common Reading Programs

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National Resource Center for

The First-Year Experience and Students in Transition

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Session Outline

- Background and purpose of common reading experiences
- Theoretical Framework
- Outcomes of common reading experiences
- Discussion



COMMON READING EXPERIENCES: BACKGROUND

Common Reading Experience: What?

- Book chosen for all entering students (or a targeted group)
- Series of events to promote a common intellectual experience
- Faculty, staff & extended community participate
- Are academically oriented
- Promote reading, critical thinking, & discussion skills
- Focus on a theme generated from the selected work

Goals of Common Reading Programs

- Most frequently named objectives of CREs:
 - Introduction and modeling of college academic content and intellectual rigor
 - Building community

(Ferguson, 2006; Laufgraben, 2006; Skipper, et al., 2010; Twinton, 2007).



Other Goals of Common Reading Programs

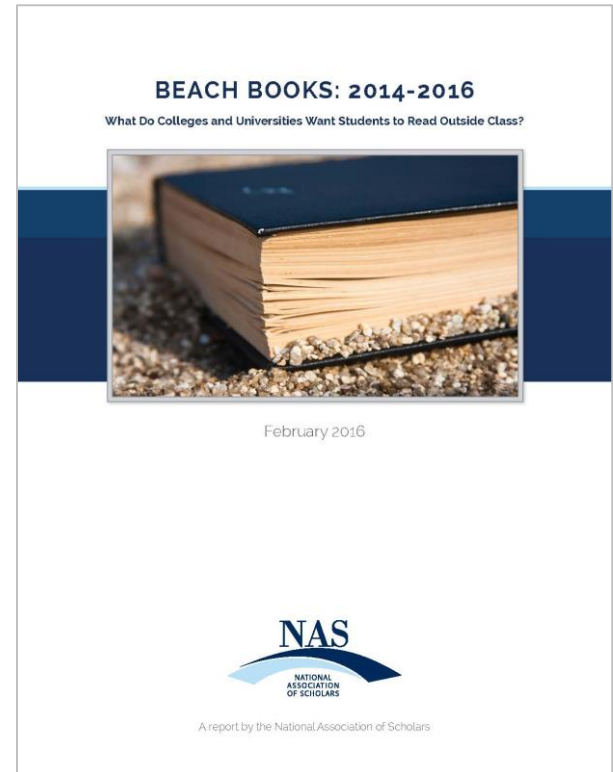
- Diversity and global learning
- Facilitating discourse across difference
- Advancing the understanding of interdisciplinarity
- Reading and reading comprehension

(Laufgraben, 2006; Sanger, Ramsey, & Merberg, 2008; Twinton, 2007)



Why NOT a Common Reading

- Beach Books, National Association of Scholars (NAS)
- One of the few national studies of common reading selections is conducted biennially
- Conclusions assert that common reading text selections are:
 - Too homogeneous across institutions
 - Too recent
 - Too liberal in their thematic content and perspective
 - Generally lacking in intellectual and academic rigor
 - Rarely include classic literature



(Randall, 2016; Thorne, 2015;
Thorne, Wood, Plum, & Carter, 2013)

Why NOT a Common Reading

In 2013, Purdue University abruptly cut CRE over winter break to save \$75,000



**"Let me put it this way: no one produced any evidence it was having great success." "The common reading program is really being replaced by things that we think will be more valuable to incoming students."
(Daniels, 2014)**

Previous Research on CRE

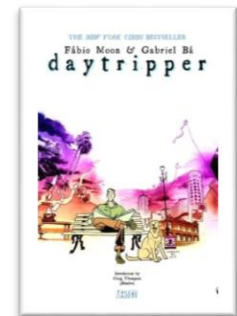
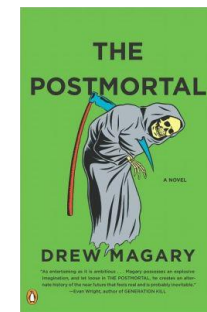
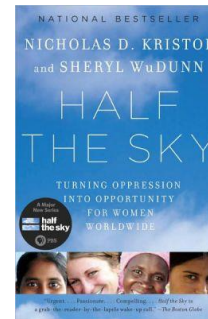
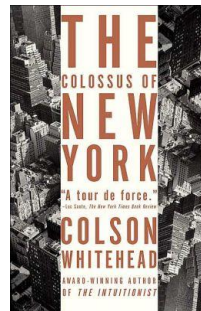
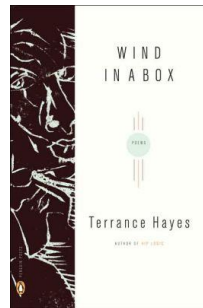
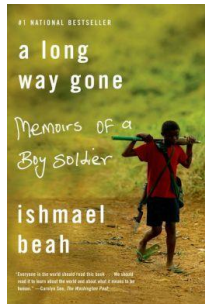
- CREs Positively Related to:
 - Development of first-year student community
 - Introduction of academic content to entering students;
 - Connections between curricular and cocurricular learning experiences
 - Exposure to new ideas, alternative perspectives, and diverse people
 - Information literacy
 - Critical thinking

(Delmas & Harrell, 2015; Goldfine, Mixson-Brookshire, Hoerrner, & Morrisey, 2011; Laufgraben, 2006; Mallard, et al., 2008; Sanger, Ramsey, & Merberg, 2008)



Previous Research on CRE

- Other single institution studies suggest CREs:
 - Have the power to develop empathy and remove stigmas surrounding LGBT issues (Madden, 2015) and mental illness (Feeg, et al., 2014)
 - Achieve their goals and were a worthwhile experience overall to students, faculty, and staff (Mallard, et al., 2008)



Previous Research on CRE

- Only two multi-institution studies of the impact of CREs on student learning outcomes:
- Twinton (2007)
 - CREs established community, forged commonality among new students, facilitated faculty-student interaction, and encouraged cross-campus collaboration
 - Based on a survey of faculty and staff opinions
- Soria (2015)
 - Participation in common reading programs are “significantly and positively associated with first-year students’ self-reported development in academic skills and multicultural appreciation and competence” (p. 29).
 - Sample of students at large, research-intensive institutions (SERU)

Theoretical Framework

Legitimate Peripheral Participation Theory

- Educational environments are communities of practice with masters (faculty and staff) and novices (students)
- On entry to a given community, learners are legitimate peripheral participants and with experience (may) become full participants

Lave & Wenger,
1991

Theoretical Framework

Legitimate Peripheral Participation Theory

- Success in an education system – learning – is full participation
- Students adopt and perform the valued practices of that community and in so doing contribute their own experience and modify practice and shift values.
- To achieve this, meanings and their negotiation are paramount and profoundly connected to identity.

Lave & Wenger,
1991

Theoretical Framework

Legitimate Peripheral Participation in CRPs

- Common reading programs may serve as an initial format for introducing students to the academic community of practice.
- Stated objectives of common reading programs are in line with the perspective of LPP such as introducing desired academic behaviors, setting expectations for college-level work, and fomenting an intellectual community on campus

Theoretical Framework

Legitimate Peripheral Participation in CRPs

- Related concepts in the discussion of student transition to college are sense of belonging, academic adjustment, student-faculty interaction, academic skill development, and creating a common first-year experience.
- Students who engage in common reading programs should have greater levels of participation in the academic community of practice and will thereby manifest increased learning, self-efficacy, and self-awareness as members of the intellectual community



COMMON READING EXPERIENCES: OUTCOMES

Study Details

- 9,831 students who completed both the 2015 Freshman Survey and 2016 Your First College Year Survey
 - 32% (n=2,656) participated in a CRE
- Blocked Regression analyses testing the impact of CREs on a variety of outcomes after controlling for demographics, background characteristics, and other college experiences

Is there a Relationship between CRE Participation and...

- Academic Behaviors and Orientation
 - Institution contributed to...
 - Intellectual and Practical Skills
 - Critical Thinking Skills
 - Academic Adjustment
 - Habits of Mind
- Introduction and Participation in Academic Community
 - Sense of Belonging
 - Faculty Interaction
 - Overall Satisfaction



	Intellectual and Practical Skills	Sense of Belonging	Faculty Interaction	Overall Satisfaction
Student Success Programs				
Academic support	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>
Undergraduate research	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>
Learning community	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>	+
FYS - academic inquiry focus	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
FYS - adjustment to college life focus	<i>n.s.</i>	+	+	<i>n.s.</i>
Common Reading Experience	+	+	+	+

$p < .05$



	Intellectual and Practical Skills	Sense of Belonging	Faculty Interaction	Overall Satisfaction
Institutional characteristics				
Control (Private)	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>
Selectivity	+	<i>n.s.</i>	-	<i>n.s.</i>
Demographics				
Students of color	<i>n.s.</i>	-	-	-
Sex (Female)	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
First-generation status	<i>n.s.</i>	-	-	<i>n.s.</i>
Income	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	-	<i>n.s.</i>
Background characteristics				
First-choice institution	<i>n.s.</i>	+	+	+
HS GPA	+	+	+	+
Need special tutoring or remedial work in reading	<i>n.s.</i>	-	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Need special tutoring or remedial work in mathematics	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>
Ultimate degree objective	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>

	Intellectual and Practical Skills	Sense of Belonging	Faculty Interaction	Overall Satisfaction
Experiences with Faculty				
Faculty empower me to learn here	+	+	+	+
Faculty encouraged questions and discussions	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	+
Faculty express stereotypes	<i>n.s.</i>	-	+	+
Faculty provided feedback	+	+	+	+

$p < .05$



	Intellectual and Practical Skills	Sense of Belonging	Faculty Interaction	Overall Satisfaction
Academic Engagement				
Made a presentation in class	+	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Discussed course with students outside of class	+	+	+	<i>n.s.</i>
Worked with classmates on group projects	+	+	+	+
Felt that courses inspired you to think in new ways	+	+	+	+
Exposure to diverse opinions, cultures, and values	+	+	<i>n.s.</i>	+
Contributions were valued	+	+	<i>n.s.</i>	+
Contributed to class discussions	<i>n.s.</i>	+	+	+
Current GPA	+	<i>n.s.</i>	+	+
Academic Disengagement	-	-	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Undecided about a major	<i>n.s.</i>	-	<i>n.s.</i>	-

	Intellectual and Practical Skills	Sense of Belonging	Faculty Interaction	Overall Satisfaction
Physiological and Affective				
Felt Isolated from campus life	-	-	-	-
Felt depressed	-	-	<i>n.s.</i>	-
Felt lonely or homesick	<i>n.s.</i>	-	<i>n.s.</i>	-
Felt unsafe on campus	-	-	+	-
Felt worried about health	-	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Felt overwhelmed	+	+	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>
Job responsibilities interfered with schoolwork	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	-
Family responsibilities interfered with schoolwork	<i>n.s.</i>	<i>n.s.</i>	+	<i>n.s.</i>
Felt family support	<i>n.s.</i>	+	-	<i>n.s.</i>

CRE Not a Predictor of:

- Habits of mind
- Inst. contribution to critical thinking skills
- Academic adjustment





COMMON READING EXPERIENCES: CLOSING DISCUSSION

Conclusions

- Results from study population a mixed bag:
 - CRE Significant and positive predictor of:
 - Sense of belonging
 - Faculty interaction
 - Satisfaction
 - Intellectual and practical skills
 - **Connects with previous multi-institution research NET of other covariates**
 - Non-significant predictor of:
 - Habits of mind
 - Critical thinking skills
 - Academic adjustment
 - **Does not match previous research (single- or multi-institution studies)**

Conclusions

- Background has an influence on feeling like a member of the academic community:
 - Significant contextual predictors:
 - Students of color (lower sense of belonging, faculty interaction, and overall satisfaction)
 - First-choice institution (higher sense of belonging, faculty interaction, and overall satisfaction)
 - HS GPA positive relationship with all outcomes

Conclusions

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Conclusions

- Reframing results
 - CRE a reasonable pathway to meet institutional goals related to:
 - Introduction and Participation in Academic Community
 - Sense of belonging
 - Faculty interaction
 - Satisfaction
 - Intellectual and practical skills

Conclusions

- Ideas for Future Research
 - Specifying path model based on theoretical framework and previous results
 - Does the book itself matter?
 - How can this be reconceptualized to become more advantageous for certain subgroups?
Does the Common Read serve as a mechanism for social reproduction?

Thank You!

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