

Examining the Use of Young Adult Literature and an Informational Text on Preservice and In-Service Teachers' Attitudes Toward Mental Illness

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Introduction

Mental Health in the Helping Professions

Despite movements to improve attitudes and to educate the public about individuals with mental illness by advocacy groups such as the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), Project Semicolon, the National Council for Behavioral Health, the Trevor Project, and Bring Change to Mind, public stigma continues to motivate people to engage in stereotyping and to have prejudice towards, and to discriminate against, individuals with mental illness (Corrigan & Watson, 2002). A comprehensive literature review by Parcesepe and Cabassa (2013) found that stigmatizing beliefs about individuals with mental illness include fears of violence, shame, incompetency, and criminal behavior – often leading to isolation and difficulties for those seeking mental health treatment.

Studies on attitudes toward mental illness of those in the helping professions (e.g., medical staff, social workers, and educators) have been on the rise in the past 25 years (Author 2, 2019). For example, in a cross-sectional study of medical and nursing students, Chang et al. (2017) examined the relationship of stigmatizing attitudes with sociodemographic and education factors. Using the Open Minds Stigma Scale for Health Care Providers (OMS-HC), researchers explored healthcare students' attitudes towards persons with mental illness and found that although the majority of participants held positive attitudes towards individuals with mental illness, most would not disclose

their own mental illness to their colleagues. Specifically, almost a third of nursing students agreed with the statement, “There is little I can do to help people with mental illness” (Chang et al., 2017, p. 7). Findings have suggested that healthcare educators should work to reduce stigmatizing attitudes toward those with mental illnesses while future teachers are still in training because their “views and behaviors can greatly influence social dispositions toward the mentally ill” (p. 9). Similarly, Whitley and Gooderham (2016) used a vignette-based measure of mental health literacy to ascertain the beliefs toward and knowledge of mental illness in 180 preservice teachers in a Bachelor of Education program. Their study revealed that

educators do have basic knowledge about various mental illnesses and are able to correctly identify these based on vignettes. Knowledge is lowest with respect to depression and ODD, compared to ADHD and anxiety. However, educators express the least confidence in teaching a student with ODD, regardless of current academic success [...]; those teaching adolescents had a higher tendency to suggest referrals rather than addressing issues within their classroom, a decision that may be well-justified.” (p. 82)

Moreover, in a national study of nearly 800 social workers in 2008 by Eack and Newhill, findings suggested that frustrations related to clients with severe and persistent mental illnesses influenced social workers’ attitudes more than frustrations with the mental health system. Problems with negative client behaviors and recidivism rates were noted most frequently as contributing to less than positive attitudes toward individuals with mental illness.

Mental Illness in Teaching English Language Arts

During the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, scholars in English Education and young adult literature also increased research on the issue of mental health. Publications focused on mental illness in young adult literature as well as on strategies for teaching students with diverse forms of mental illness have become more prevalent in leading scholarly journals and books related to teaching English Language Arts. In 2013, Pytash conducted a study of preservice teachers in a secondary English Language Arts program, collecting data from online literature circle discussions and focus group interviews about students' experiences with two young adult novels, *Thirteen Reasons Why* and *Hate List*. Pytash's findings suggested that preservice teachers imagined themselves in their future teaching roles and discussed the need for empathy and advocacy to stop bullying. Participants also "realized their role was to teach students and also to care for students, through developing relationships, taking a stance on bullying, and considering students' emotional well-being" (p. 478).

Moreover, in 2014, the *Language Arts Journal of Michigan* dedicated an entire volume to "Mental Illness," an idea that the *ALAN Review* took up in its Summer 2020 volume focused on "Exploring Adolescent Neurodiversity and Mental Health in YA Literature." Additional related publications included articles focused on representations of mental illness in adolescent literature, with discussions of schizophrenia (Wickham, 2018), obsessive-compulsive disorder (Scrofano, 2016), and eating disorders (Parsons, 2015); trauma literature (Moore & Begoray, 2017); and suicide (Fisher, 2011; Pytash, 2013). In 2019, Richmond authored a reference book, *Mental Illness in Young Adult Literature: Exploring Real Struggles through Fictional Characters*, that highlighted American young adult literature published after the year 2000 featuring characters grappling with mental illness. That same year, Takahashi (2019) penned *Serving Teens with Mental Illness in the Library*, which provided practical guidelines for creating collections and programs that help teens experiencing mental health challenges and offered advice for advocating for teens with mental illness.

Losinski, Maag, and Katsiyannis (2015) also published results of research focused on attitudes of 173 preservice teachers toward individuals with mental illness. Their study included the use of the Community Attitudes toward Mental Illness (CAMI) measure to examine specific characteristics of preservice teachers' attitudes towards individuals with mental illnesses. The study also considered which demographic variables might influence preservice teachers' attitudes toward individuals with mental illness. Political orientation, knowing someone with a mental illness, and believing ADHD and ASD were mental illnesses each contributed to participants' attitudes on the CAMI and its various subscales (p. 14).

The results confirmed that knowing someone with a mental illness tends to help individuals perceive them as less dangerous, and those participants who believed conditions such as ADHD and ASD were mental illnesses had more positive attitudes toward individuals with mental illness. Researchers recommended that future studies “examine the extent to which coursework in mental illness effects the attitudes of preservice teachers toward the mentally ill” (p. 15).

Context of Current Study

Using the work of Losinski, Maag, and Katsiyannis (2015) as a springboard, the current study utilized the CAMI as data collection tool and focused on how the use of adolescent literature featuring characters with mental illness combined with the implementation of an informative PowerPoint (treatment) about mental illness influenced preservice and in-service teachers' attitudes toward individuals with mental illness. Preservice teachers in this study were defined as those college students who were enrolled in a teacher preparation program at a university, whether at the graduate or undergraduate level. In-service teachers were defined as those who worked in public or private secondary schools; these teachers were also enrolled in graduate English Education courses.

Research Questions

Researchers in the current study hypothesized that in English Education methods and young adult literature courses, preservice and in-service teachers attitudes' toward those with mental illness would be changed after reading novels about characters with mental illnesses while also having been presented with information focused on issues such as the following: statistics on mental illness from the National Institute of Mental Health and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention; a definition of stigma (Hoffman, 1963) and examples of stigmatizing attitudes and behaviors (Anti-Defamation League, 2018); examples of stigmatizing language (Rose, Thornicraft, Pinfold, & Kassam, 2007); examples of authentic terms and negative terms in young adult novels (Author 2, 2019); and research related to social justice and empathy in teaching literature (Alsup, 2015).

In the current study, researchers sought out to answer the following questions:

- What changes occurred, if any, in participants' attitudes toward people with mental illness after viewing an informational PowerPoint and reading young adult literature featuring characters with mental illness in a pre- and post-test with regard to four factors as measured by the CAMI: authoritarianism, benevolence, social restrictiveness, and community mental health ideology?
- What differences, if any, were evident between the following groups with regard to the four factors measure through pre- and post-test CAMI: one group with undergraduate students only (preservice teachers), one group with graduate students only (in-service teachers), and one group (mixed) with both undergraduate and graduate students (preservice and in-service teachers).

Conceptual Framework: Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Undergirding this study was an understanding of culturally responsive pedagogy as an essential educational practice. Culturally responsive pedagogy emphasizes teacher’s stances and their classroom practices equally (Gay, 2010; Sleeter; 2012; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Moreover, researchers identify culturally responsive pedagogy as connected to dialogic interaction (Bakhtin, 1986). In Olan and Richmond’s (2017a) article, they explain,

Bakhtin (1981) describes the “languages of heteroglossia” (which coexist as varying languages and dialects that represent our individual and cultural realities as well as shades of meaning within those realities) as demonstrating “specific points of view on the world” that are characterized by their own “object, meanings and values” and that can be “juxtaposed to one another, mutually supplement one another, contradict one another and be interrelated dialogically. (p. 5)

In this study, utilizing the informational text (PowerPoint) and reading selected young adult literature texts was enhanced through participants’ dialogic interactions. During discussions at both research sites, participants engaged in viewing and analyzing factual evidence focused on stigma, language, and mental illness based on research by experts in psychology and language. They also examined information related to mental illness terminology and stigma associated with language used by and about adolescent characters in young adult literature texts. Moreover, through active dialogue, participants situated their own definitions regarding key concepts of mental illness, acknowledged their biases in how those were relevant, if at all, in the literature, and were made meaning and made sense of how mental illnesses can be portrayed in young adult literature novels.

Methodology

Because the purpose of this study was to examine preservice and in-service teachers' attitudes toward mental illness after viewing an informational PowerPoint about mental illness and stigma (treatment) and reading selected young adult literature books, researchers used quantitative methodology focused on an analysis of descriptive statistics (Mills & Gay, 2019). A mixed-design analysis of variance model was used to test for differences between two time points - Time 1 (pre-intervention) and Time 2 (post-intervention) – and three groups of participants (described below).

Participants and Setting

Two public universities serving undergraduate and graduate populations were the sites for this research. One is located in an urban setting and is the second largest university in the United States with an undergraduate enrollment of sixty-four thousand. Demographics for this school are diverse, with almost thirty-five percent of students identifying as Black/African-American or Hispanic/Latino. The other is located in a rural Great Lakes region and enrolls approximately nine thousand students, only ten percent of whom identify as Black/African-American, Hispanic/Latino, or Native American.

This study included sixty-seven (67) preservice or in-service education students at the undergraduate or graduate level. All were enrolled in required English Language Arts methods courses and/or young adult literature courses. Participants in this study consisted of six different groups of undergraduate and/or graduate students. Two groups were undergraduate students only; two were graduate students only; and two were a mixture of both. For the purposes of this study, the researchers combined participants into three groups: Group 1 - Mixed (both undergraduate preservice teachers and graduate in-service teachers); Group 2 - GR (graduate in-service teachers), and Group 3 - UG (undergraduate preservice teachers).

At the urban school, preservice and in-service teachers read and discussed (in face-to-face and online formats), the following young adult texts: *Challenger Deep*, *Darius the Great is Not Okay*, *Don't Call Me Crazy*, *The Fall of the Butterflies*, *Girl in Pieces*, *Highly Illogical Behavior*, *Hush*, *I'm Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter*, *It's Kind of a Funny Story*, *Turtles All the Way Down*, *When Reason Breaks*, *Paperweight*, *Fangirl*, *Dope Sick*, *Impossible Knife*, *Wintergirls*, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*, and *My Friend Dahmer*. At the rural school, preservice and in-service teachers read and discussed (in face-to-face format or in a web-based course) the following young adult texts: *Dope Sick*, *Impossible Knife of Memory*, *Wintergirls*, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian*, *My Friend Dahmer*, and *When Reason Breaks*.

Because some participants were situated as educators in public school classrooms (grades 6-12) and were frequently viewed as authority figures (Palmer, 2007) while simultaneously being expected to be benevolent (Alsup, 2015), identifying participants' perceptions of *authoritarianism* and *benevolence* were deemed to be important. Moreover, because preservice and in-service teachers worked in an environment that included, by law (U.S. Department of Education, 2015), individuals from all backgrounds including those with mental illnesses, measuring their attitudes toward *social restrictiveness* was also relevant. Finally, because participants lived in communities in which care for mental illness had been commonly de-institutionalized, their attitudes toward the therapeutic benefit of community and de-institutionalized care were relevant (Losinski, Maag, and Katsisyanis, 2015). What's more, gauging their attitudes toward people with mental illness was pertinent (*community mental health ideology*).

Data Collection Tools

To evaluate participants' perceptions of mental illness, the Community Attitudes Toward the Mentally Ill (CAMI) scale was used. Developed by Taylor and Dear (1981), the forty statements on the CAMI are rated on a Lickert scale of 5 points (1= strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree) on four attitude factors including *Authoritarianism* (considering those with mental illness as inferior and needing forced treatment), *Benevolence* (considering individuals with mental illness sympathetically based on humanistic or moral principles), *Social Restrictiveness* (considering those with mental illness as a threat to society), and *Community Mental Health Ideology* (considering the benefits from community and acceptance of care that is not institution-based).

With regard to the forty statements, they were organized into ten statements for each of the four factors, with half of those (5 of 10) expressing a positive sentiment with reference to the concept and half were worded negatively. For instance, with the *authoritarianism* scale, pro-authoritarian sentiment was expressed in five statements, and anti-authoritarian sentiment was expressed in five others. According to Taylor and Dear (1981), the statements were "sequenced in 10 sets of 4" and "ordered by scale" within each set, with the purpose being "to minimize possibilities of response set bias." Satisfactory reliability and validity of the CAMI were demonstrated by Taylor and Dear (1981).

The original scale exhibited adequate internal reliability with the following Cronbach's coefficient alphas for each factor: authoritarianism ($\alpha = 0.68$), benevolence ($\alpha = 0.76$), ideology ($\alpha = 0.88$), and social restrictiveness ($\alpha = 0.80$). With regard to validity, Taylor and Dear generated items for the CAMI through a procedure including a review of the literature, using existing validated surveys (Opinions about Mental Illness, Community Mental Health Ideology), and through factor

analysis that identified the four factors described above. However, other researchers identified a three-factor solution (Wolff, Pathare, Craig, & Leff, 1996; Barney et al., 2010).

Procedure

The CAMI scale was administered during the first three weeks of each semester and again during the last two weeks of each semester (Winter, Summer, and Fall 2018); each iteration (pre- and post-intervention) took approximately 15 minutes for participants to complete the scale. Students were given a description of the study and the CAMI and informed that their participation was voluntary. Those who chose to participate signed a consent form before the CAMI was administered. Each participant was assigned a study number to maintain confidentiality.

A PowerPoint entitled “Mental Illness in Young Adult Literature” (treatment) was shown to all participants after the first iteration of the CAMI (during the first three weeks of each class). The 28 slides focused on the following issues:

- Statistics on Mental Illness from the National Institute of Mental Health and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention
- Definition of “Stigma” (Hoffman, 1963)
- Results of a study of British teens’ specific language used to describe a person who experiences mental health problems (Rose et al., 2007)
- The Anti-Defamation League’s (2018) “Pyramid of Hate”
- Information about Bring Change to Mind (BC2M)’s high school clubs (designed to reduce stigma)
- Examples of Stigma about Mental Illness in the Media

- A Close Reading Activity designed to help students examine language used about mental illness in contemporary young adult novels (with excerpts from *Crazy* by Amy Reed (2013) and *Highly Illogical Behavior* by John Corey Whaley (2017))
- Examples of analysis of language, including authentic terms based on the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-5, 2013)* and negative (stigmatizing) terms, in three young adult novels: *Your Voice is All I Hear* by Leah Schier (2015), *When Reason Breaks* by Cindy L. Rodriguez (2015), and *Highly Illogical Behavior* by John Corey Whaley (2017)
- Research (Alsup, 2015) related to social justice and empathy in teaching literature
- Information about a new book on the issue of mental illness in young adult literature (Author 2, 2019)

Data Analysis

All data entry and statistical tests were completed using IBM SPSS v.20 software. Mean ratings of the CAMI and its four subscales (authoritarianism, benevolence, ideology, and social restrictiveness) served as the unit of analysis. Because each measure included equal numbers of positively and negatively worded items, after data were entered into the database, negatively worded items were transposed so that all items reflected answers to positive statements (i.e. 1=5, 2=4, 3=3, 4=2, 5=1). Data from the CAMI and each subscale were then transposed to allow the total score for each subscale to reflect a tolerant attitude toward the subscale (e.g., a large number on the authoritarianism subscale suggests the participant does not agree with a more authoritarian approach to dealing with individuals with mental illness). Reliability of each scale was then calculated using

Cronbach's coefficient Alpha and compared to findings from Taylor and Dear (1981). To determine possible influences on preservice teachers' attitudes toward individuals with mental illness, stepwise regressions were performed for each subscale to identify the extent to which certain demographic variables may have predicted scores on the CAMI and its subscales. An alpha level of 0.05 was used to determine statistical significance for all analyses.

Findings

The findings showed statistical significance in the four factors measured by the CAMI (Authoritarianism, Benevolence, Community Mental Health Ideology, and Social Restrictiveness) and on the pre- and post-test. Reliability of the subscales of the CAMI were assessed prior to all other analyses using Chronbach's Alpha coefficient: Authoritarianism = .711 (n = 10), Benevolence = .781 (n = 10), Community Mental Health Ideology = .678 (n = 10), and Social Restrictiveness = .759 (n = 10). All alphas were above 0.60, which is considered satisfactory and consistent with the coefficients originally obtained by Taylor and Dear (1981).

Sixty-seven (67) preservice or in-service education students at the undergraduate or graduate level participated with the intervention program. Ninety-seven percent (97.0%) had mean scores on the total CAMI of 122 (SD = 5.29). The subscale score for all four factors being examined were neutral (i.e., neutral = 30): Authoritarianism (27.94, SD = 2.84), Benevolence (29.73 SD = 1.55), Community Mental Health Ideology (30.15, SD = 2.08), and Social Restrictiveness (24.55, SD = 2.34) (see Table 1 in Appendix A).

Upon analysis of descriptive statistics, a mixed-design analysis of variance model was used to test for differences between two time points and three groups: Time 1 (pre-intervention) and Time 2

(post-intervention). The sample for Authoritarianism subscale at Time 1 was toward the lower end of neutral ($M=27.95$, $SD= 2.83$). Time 2 was slightly above neutral ($M=30.04$, $SD= 2.25$). The sample for Benevolence subscale at Time 1 was toward the lower end of neutral ($M=29.73$, $SD= 2.75$). Time 2 was slightly above neutral ($M=31.33$, $SD= 2.34$). The sample for Social Restrictiveness subscale at Time 1 was toward the lower end of neutral ($M=24.55$, $SD= 2.34$). Time 2 was slightly below neutral ($M=25.53$, $SD= 2.66$). The sample for Community Mental Health Ideology subscale at Time 1 was above neutral ($M=30.15$, $SD= 2.08$). Time 2 was slightly below neutral ($M=29.91$, $SD= 1.55$). This box test should not be significant, thus it violated homogeneity variances and co-variances (see Table 2 in Appendix B).

Table 3 Multivariate test shows that there is a statistically significant difference between groups (Wilks' Lambda $F(4.274)$, $P= .000$). There is also a statistically significant difference between groups Pre-Post $F(11.08)$, $P=.000$.) (see Table 3 in Appendix C).

Table 4 shows a use of Levene's test (which tests the null hypothesis that the error variance of the dependent variable is equal across groups) where the result is significant for one of the four subscales (Community Mental Health Ideology) (see Table 4 in Appendix D).

Table 5 test shows that there was statistically significant difference in CAMI's subscales (Authoritarianism, Benevolence, Social Restrictiveness) and two time points. There was statistically significant difference in CAMI's subscales (Authoritarianism, Benevolence) and three groups (see Table 5 in Appendix E).

Figure 1 represents the difference between two time points on the subscale of Authoritarianism (AU) among the mixed, graduate (GR), and undergraduate (UG) participants. In all

three groups there was a difference between the two time points on the subscale of Authoritarianism. All participants began with attitudes that were more Authoritarian, as demonstrated by the means decreasing.

The responses of the mixed group, of which the means were lower at both time points than the graduate and undergraduate groups, demonstrate a less authoritarian stance toward mental illness both before and after the intervention of the informational text and young adult novels. The graduate and undergraduate groups both showed a more authoritarian stance during test time one (see Figure 1 in Appendix F).

Figure 2 represents the difference between two time points on the subscale of Benevolence (BEN) among the mixed, graduate (GR), and undergraduate (UG) participants. All three groups demonstrated a difference between the two time points on the scale of Benevolence. All participants began with attitudes that were less Benevolent, as demonstrated by the means increasing.

The responses of the undergraduate group, of which the means were lower at both time points than the graduate and mixed groups, demonstrate a more benevolent stance toward individuals with mental illness after the intervention of the informational text and young adult novels (see Figure 2 in Appendix G).

Figure 3 represents the difference between two time points on the subscale of Social Restrictiveness (SORES) among the graduate (GR), undergraduate (UG), and mixed participant groups. In all three groups, there was a difference between the two time points on the subscale of Social Restrictiveness (viewing those with mental illness as a threat to society). All participants began with attitudes that were more socially restrictive as demonstrated by the means increasing in all three groups.

The responses of the undergraduate group, of which the means were lower at both time points than the graduate and mixed groups, demonstrate a less socially restrictive stance toward individuals with mental illness after the intervention of the informational text and young adult novels. The graduate and mixed groups both showed a less socially restrictive stance toward those with mental illness during test time one (see Figure 3 in Appendix H).

Figure 4 represents the difference between two time points on the subscale of Community Mental Health Ideology (CMTHLID) among the graduate (GR), undergraduate (UG), and mixed participant groups. In all three groups, there was a difference between the two time points on the subscale of Community Mental Health Ideology (considering the benefits from community and acceptance of care not institution-based). All participants began with attitudes that were less accepting of non-institution based care as demonstrated by the means increasing in all three groups between test time one and two. The mean for test time two is always is lower than test time one for all three groups.

The responses of the undergraduate group, of which the means were lower at both time points than the graduate and mixed groups, demonstrate a more accepting stance in terms of care toward individuals with mental illness. The undergraduate group showed growth in acceptance after the intervention of the informational text and the young adult novels; however, the mean of both test-time one and two were lower for the undergraduates than both the graduate and mixed groups (see Figure 4 in Appendix I.)

Discussion

The purpose of the present study was to determine the difference between teachers' (preservice and in-service) attitudes toward mental illness in English Language Arts (Methods and

Young Adult Literature) courses before and after reading young adult literature texts while also viewing an informational PowerPoint about mental illness and stigma. The study also sought to identify changes demonstrated in teachers' attitudes toward mental illness when measured using the CAMI scale as a pre- and post-instrument.

The findings in the present study show statistical significance in the four factors measured by the CAMI (Authoritarianism, Benevolence, Community Mental Health Ideology, and Social Restrictiveness) and on the pre- and post-test. The Eta-squared (0.2) showed a medium effect size of how factors differed in time between pre- and post-test (Cohen, 1965). All factors demonstrated an increase in the mean of sum for each factor. The mean improved, and it showed how participants do not agree with the authoritarian and social restrictiveness stances but do agree with benevolent and community mental health ideology stances. After the viewing the PowerPoint and after reading and discussing the selected young adult novels, preservice and in-service teachers were able to revisit their biases related to mental illness and their perceptions about mental illness. This happened during the discussion of the young adult novels at both research sites. For example, when considering aspects of mental illness in *My Friend Dahmer*, a nonfiction graphic novel about Jeffrey Dahmer in high school, participants were asked to reflect and to become reflexive about how mental illness was not only displayed in the characters but also how it is navigated by the characters and how it influences the development of the plot. Moreover, participants were asked to discuss stereotypes and stigma present in the novel and in their own lives.

In terms of the factor on authoritarianism (SUMAU), the pre-test showed a mean of sum 27.9403, and the post-test demonstrated a mean of sum 30.0448. Thus, participants' attitudes were more authoritarian (viewing the mentally ill as inferior) in the pre-test than in the post-test, which is

significant because the mean demonstrates a shift in their beliefs about those with mental illness and are less likely to view them as inferior.

In terms of the factor on benevolence (SUMBEN), the pre-test showed a mean of sum 29.7313 and a post-test mean of sum of 31.3284. Therefore, participants' attitudes were more likely to be benevolent (being sympathetic toward individuals with mental illness based on humanistic and religious principles. This is significant because the mean shows a change in their attitudes toward the mentally ill; the pre-test showed participants were less benevolent than in the post-test. This means that they were less sympathetic toward the mentally ill before viewing the informational PowerPoint and reading and discussing the young adult literature.

The pre-test mean of sum for the factor related to Social Restrictiveness (SUMSORES) was 24.5522; the post-test mean of sum for that factor was 25.5373. Participants' attitudes toward social restrictiveness (viewing the mentally ill as a threat to society) were improved. The pre-test indicated that participants perceived those with mental illness as more of a threat to society. After viewing the informational PowerPoint and reading and discussing the young adult novels, the preservice and in-service teachers were less likely to view the mentally ill as threatening.

In terms of the factor of Community Mental Health Ideology (valuing the therapeutic benefit of community and acceptance of de-institutionalized care), the pre-test mean of sum was 30.1493 and the post-test mean of sum was 29.6716. This means that participants were more likely to be accepting of institutionalized care for the mentally ill prior to viewing the informational PowerPoint and reading and talking about selected young adult novels. The post-test mean of sum indicated that preservice and in-service teachers were less likely to agree with institutionalized care and more likely to value the therapeutic benefit of community.

The data analysis was run between three groups of participants (Mixed /UG/GR) and two time points (pre/post) for four factors (AU, BEN, SORES, CMTHLID). Repeated measures ANOVA were used to run the data analysis. The results show that there is statistically significant differences between pre-post surveys and factors for the three groups (Mixed/GR/UG). The most significant one is between the mixed and undergraduate groups.

In 2015, Losinski, Maag, and Katsiyannis published a study of preservice teachers' attitudes towards individuals with mental illnesses. For their study, the authors used the CAMI scale and various subscales, as was the case in the present study. Losinski, Maag, and Katsiyannis's study included three groups of preservice teachers as participants: general education majors, special education majors, and education minors. They reported no significant differences between any of the three groups on the CAMI and its subscales. In the current study researchers draw on Losinski, Maag, and Katsiyannis's study and implement an informational text and young adult literature texts and discussion. Current researchers also expanded the participant population to include in-service as well as preservice teachers, using the CAMI and its subscales to examine their attitudes toward the mentally ill.

The present study also contributes to research completed by Roeser and Midgley (1997) who explored elementary in-service teachers' beliefs related to their role in addressing the social-emotional needs of their students. In their study, Roeser and Midgley found that 99% of their participants indicated that students' mental health care was a part of their role as a teacher (p. 122). Their study revealed that "teacher efficacy was related to the belief that mental health needs are part of the teacher role" (p. 127). Although their research focuses on elementary in-service teachers, the current study further examines related issues in a secondary setting and includes a focus on both

preservice and in-service teachers' attitudes toward mental illness in general. Moreover, the current study used the validated CAMI instrument (Taylor & Dear, 1981) as a pre- and post-test to measure teachers' attitudes toward the mentally ill after viewing an informational PowerPoint and reading and discussing selected young adult literature texts.

Additional research that informed the current study includes Gur et al.'s 2012 study of primary school teachers in two sites in Istanbul. The findings of their study concluded that the participants "displayed a negative attitude toward mental illnesses" (p. 1151). Gur et al. note that beliefs about people with mental illness are dangerous to others create "fear in the society" and lead to "negative and excluding attitudes toward people with mental illness" (p. 1151). They further note that teachers "should be informed and their awareness be increased as far as mental health services are concerned" (p. 1151).

In addition, Pytash (2013) states that many teachers do not feel prepared to respond to issues related to suicide despite needing to deal with that issue and other mental health issues in the schools. In her study of secondary English teachers, Pytash's research was completed in a secondary required course (Teaching Reading with Literature), which aims to expand teacher candidates knowledge of young adult literature and strategies for teaching such texts. Pytash notes that exposing participants to facts about mental illness (such as suicide) in support of reading and responding to young adult literature is key to preservice teachers' developing a "more nuanced understanding of [...] suicide" (p. 475). In her discussion, Pytash describes the importance of reading young adult literature to helping preservice teachers developing awareness and sensitivity toward youth, especially those who deal with issues such as "bullying, suicide, illness, sexuality, pregnancy, drug use, and body image" (p. 476). She writes,

By reading young adult literature, PSTs had the opportunity to reflect, gain insight, and develop introspective and empathetic points of view concerning their future students. Literature provides readers “the opportunity to feel more profoundly and more generously, to perceive more fully the implications of experience” (Rosenblatt, 1938/1995, p. 37). Young adult literature created a world for PSTs to picture themselves in the role as the person in whom a troubled adolescent confides. Reading young adult literature is one way to help PSTs develop the awareness, understanding, and empathy regarding the seriousness of the problems that many adolescents encounter. (p. 476).

The current study incorporated implementation of an informational text that includes important facts related to mental illness, identifies stigma and biases associated with mental illness, and provides language about mental illness as used by mental health professionals (e.g., *DSM-5*). The present study also included the reading of young adult novels by both preservice and in-service teacher participants. Results of the current study corroborate findings from Losinski, Maag, and Katsiyannis (2015), Roeser and Midgely (1997), Gur et al. (2012), and Pytash (2013). It also extends the research to include both preservice and in-service teachers as participants. Additionally, the focus of the present study was on the implementation of a validated CAMI scale and subsequent subscales as well as the implementation of an informational text and the analysis, interpretation, and discussion of young adult texts focused on mental illness.

Benefits of this study included informing teachers of the definition of mental illness, helping them identify the difference between stigmatizing terms and authentic terms about mental illness or individuals with mental illness according to the American Psychiatric Association’s *DSM-5*; facilitating

their revisiting of their own perceptions, beliefs, and biases about mental illness; and fostering preservice and in-service teachers' development of empathy toward those with mental illness, including their current or future secondary students. By providing preservice and in-service teachers with effective treatments such as the informational PowerPoint implemented in the current study, researchers attempted to "provide nonthreatening spaces" where participants could "explore their own identities as well as those of the secondary students they [may] teach" (Olan and Richmond, 2017b). As Cherry-McDaniel and Young (2012) argue, "English curricula should present texts that challenge students, disrupt narrative, create crisis of the mind, and engage students in examining their own understandings of difference" (p. 8).

Limitations

Researchers acknowledge the following limitations: the current study was limited in size of the population of participants (67) and did not specifically gather demographic information about participants (e.g., age, race/ethnicity, gender), their particular beliefs (e.g., religious, political, etc.), or their own experiences with mental illness symptoms. Future research might examine the ways that these variables influence teachers' attitudes (and actions) toward those with mental illness.

Inquiries and Future Research

It is interesting to speculate why participants' beliefs about the mentally ill related to authoritarianism (viewing those with mental illness as inferior) changed. Was there perhaps a direct connection between the information shared in the PowerPoint regarding definitions of mental illness and examples of stigma? Or, was their change in attitude more related to connecting with characters who had mental illness in the young adult novels? Or both? Many studies have shown a

correlation between reading fiction and the development of empathy. The current study, though not focused on empathy as a construct, supports the notion that teachers who are less authoritarian are more likely to be empathetic toward those with mental illness because they are not viewed as inferior. Bal and Veltkamp (2013) provide a copious list of studies on fiction and empathy and report that two experiments demonstrated that participants' empathy was influenced (over a period of one week) for individuals who read a fictional story when they were "emotionally transported into the story" (p. 1). Future researchers might take up a longitudinal study of the construct of empathy as related to the teaching of young adult literature and stigma associated with mental illness in diverse learning communities. While the present study examined benevolence as a construct, which is related to empathy in that those with benevolent attitudes could display more empathetic behaviors, the current researchers did not specifically examine empathy as a construct. In the future, researchers might focus on how benevolence is enacted as empathy in teaching and learning communities.

Another phenomenon addressed by Pytash (2013) in her research was related to preservice teachers' picturing themselves "in the role as the person in whom a troubled adolescent confides." Researchers might consider whether the participants in the current study identified with characters displaying symptoms of mental illness. Or perhaps, did the participants align themselves with the behaviors of characters in the helping professions (e.g., teachers, counselors, librarians, etc.)? A more in-depth examination of this issue is recommended in future studies.

The study by Losinski, Maag, and Katsiyannis (2015) was the first to interrogate attitudes of preservice teachers versus in-service teachers. The current study included both separate groups of preservice and in-service teachers as well as groups in which the two populations were blended.

Moreover, the present study added an informational PowerPoint (treatment) and incorporated reading multiple young adult literature texts about mental illness into the courses. Researchers emphasize the implementation of an informational PowerPoint as a treatment to inform students of research-based definitions of mental illness (*DSM-5*, 2013) and stigma (Goffman, 1963). Researchers posit that providing English Language Arts teachers with factual evidence (as Pytash, 2013, recommends) as well as relevant statistics and examples of stigmatizing attitudes, behaviors, and language related to mental illness (specifically as represented in the United States, England, and Canada) could assist teachers with identification of mental health problems in adolescents.

Furthermore, as Pytash (2013) argues, “Reading young adult literature is one way to help [preservice teachers] develop the awareness, understanding, and empathy regarding the seriousness of the problems that many adolescents encounter” (p. 476). The incorporation of young adult novels with characters who display symptoms of mental illness may empower teachers with a better understanding of mental illness and encourage them to dialogue with their students, administrators, mental health professionals, and other stakeholders about any concerns related to student behaviors. Additionally, bringing in both facts and fiction could help students to contextualize their knowledge about mental illness, which is often supplemented by popular culture and family beliefs as well as lived experiences. These interactions may affect their consideration of individuals with mental illness from a sympathetic or empathetic positioning (benevolence) and their positioning with relation to institution-based care. Implementing the CAMI, the informational text, and readings of young adult literature featuring characters with mental illness provided a conduit to further students’ knowledge regarding the language associated with the four factors of authoritarianism, benevolence, social restrictiveness, and community mental health ideology. This study provided researchers with a better understanding of students’ awareness of mental illness concepts, their own biases and positionalities

in relation to mental illness, and their comprehension of authors' portrayals of characters with mental illness in young adult literature texts.

There are still numerous areas related to teacher education and mental illness requiring investigation. For example, the current study was only looking at change over short amounts of time (6-8 weeks in summer courses; 15 weeks in winter and fall courses). Researchers do not know what the long-term effects could be for educators in the study. Therefore, it is recommended future researchers take up longitudinal studies to examine the effect of time on teachers' attitudes toward mental illness. Moreover, the scope of the current study was limited to participants in the United States. Researchers encourage future studies to expand beyond those borders to examine teacher attitudes toward mental illness across the globe in multicultural settings.

Conclusion

With more than 13% of children (ages 8-15) and 21% of teenagers (ages 13-18) experiencing a serious mental illness in their lifetime (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018), educators are invited to develop empathetic attitudes toward those with mental illness. Sharing research about mental illness and stigma (through an informational PowerPoint, as was the case in this study), along with the practice of incorporating young adult literary texts focused on mental illness, can help current and future English Language Arts educators to consider their biases and develop more benevolent attitudes toward those with mental illness.

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