

# We Walked Their Walk: A Poverty Simulation

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# Presenter Disclosures

- » Jakki Paik and Dolores Wright
- » No relationships or conflicts of interest to disclose
- » No sponsorship or commercial support was received
- » 1. The learner will be able to discuss a method designed to impact the affective domain of nursing students related to poverty.
- » 2. The learner will be able to compare poverty presented in a didactic format with a simulated poverty experience.
- » Loma Linda University Health: School of Nursing

# Background

- » Poverty is the most influential social determinant of health.
- » According to the US Census Bureau (USBS), (June, 2015), there are many characteristics/categories/types of poverty all of which have specific definitions.
  - ~ Absolute poverty thresholds vs. relative poverty threshold
  - ~ Annual poverty rate
  - ~ Average monthly poverty rate
  - ~ Chronic or long-term poverty
  - ~ Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

# Background (cont.)

- » Social determinants of health – “the conditions in which people are born, grow, live, work, and age” and “the fundamental drivers of these conditions.” (WHO, 2008)
- » Factors:
  - ~ Neighborhood features – walking, recreation
  - ~ Socioeconomic – income, education, wealth
  - ~ Housing – availability, condition
  - ~ Social policies – racial discrimination
- » “Strong links between poverty and health have been observed for centuries.” (Braveman & Gottlieb, 2014 p.21)

# Purpose

- » Public Health Nurses (PHN) provide care for people from all socioeconomic levels, including people in poverty.
- » People living in poverty often feel that health care providers are frequently insensitive to their needs and concerns.
- » PHN faculty must address poverty-related-to-health issues with their students.
- » As part of the nursing student's clinical experience, a four hour poverty simulation was developed to expose students to persons living in poverty and to explore students' attitudes about those living in poverty.

# The simulation

- » The 4 hour even began with the students completing Attitudes Toward Poverty (ATP) scale.
- » ATP is a 37 item scale and was first published in 1993.
- » Reliability: Cronbach's alpha is 0.93; split-half is 0.87, indicating a stable measurement tool.
- » Validity: Cronbach's alpha is 0.89 affirming the internal consistency of the tool.

# The simulation

- » About ½ hour was provided for briefing prior to beginning the simulation event. During this time students in small groups of 3 – 4 choose a family, decided who would become which member of the family, become acquainted with the needs of each family member, and the family's financial obligations for a month.
- » Each week was equal to 40 minutes.
- » All members of the family needed to stay together.
- » The families who choose to begin immediately had children who “got into trouble.”

# Learning about their family



# Stations where students must stop

- » Students must 'ride the buss' to the different stations
  - ~ There were 2 busses which accommodated 5 families each and traveled in only one route/direction
- » Transitional Aide for Needy Families (TANF [welfare])
  - ~ Welfare office for cash aide and annual Medicaid (health care) benefits survey, counseling, and then approval or denial
- » Grocery store
  - ~ Two chatty clerks, one of whom is in training, food may be purchased with cash, food stamps or WIC vouchers ( 2 different governmental food programs)

**Grocery store:** Two chatty clerks, one of whom is in training. Cash, food stamps, & WIC vouchers accepted



# Stations where students must stop

## »Counselor

~ Families to for personal reasons, marital strife, child behavior issues, and court ordered counseling

## »Bill Pay

~ Utilities, car payments, child support, and may apply for other resources for low income families

## »Property manager

~ Rent or mortgage payments; each family has a deadline during one of the 4 weeks

## »Pawn shop

~ In their packet, each family was given “Family Jewels” that they can pawn as needed

**Property manager:** Rent or mortgage payments.  
Each family has a deadline during one of the 4 weeks



# Stations where students must stop

## » School district Office

~ Most families had at least one child who is in school or needs to be there. Families would go to the district school office to register children for school or for disciplinary problems of the child.

## » Women, Infants & children (WIC)

~ This is a governmental food supplement program for pregnant women and children age birth to 5 years.

~ Like the real WIC, there were classes to take. After which there were quizzes to be taken and graded.

**WIC:** There are also quizzes to be taken and graded



# Other Stations

## » Pay day advance

~ Families fill out paperwork for a loan

## » Doctor's complex

~ All families need all members to see their physician at some time during the month, however, some families required weekly visits to medications and some for court monitoring

## » Police

» The officer may issue tickets for j-walking, loitering, and other types of illegal behavior; fines may also be imposed

# Other Stations

## »Jail

- ~ Sometimes families have difficulty paying their fines to become argumentative with the police
- ~ Two families were in jail, one family for stealing from another family, and the other family for bribery
- ~ It was rumored that a family tried to blackmail another family

**Jail:** Two families are in jail, one family for stealing from another family, the other family for bribery



# Wrap-up

- » The last 40 minutes of the afternoon are devoted to two activities.
- » Students reassemble in the classroom and for the second time, complete the ATP scale.
- » A verbal debriefing session is held. The students reflected on their simulated experience of living in poverty.

## Wrap-up (Cont.)

- » Several themes emerged from that discussion:
  - ~ Receiving government assistance is harder than people think
  - ~ Poverty isn't about being lazy
  - ~ Poverty creates a snowball effect in the family
  - ~ It is very uncomfortable to be stigmatized, marginalized, or stereotyped
  - ~ Good people may be driven by circumstances to do desperate things

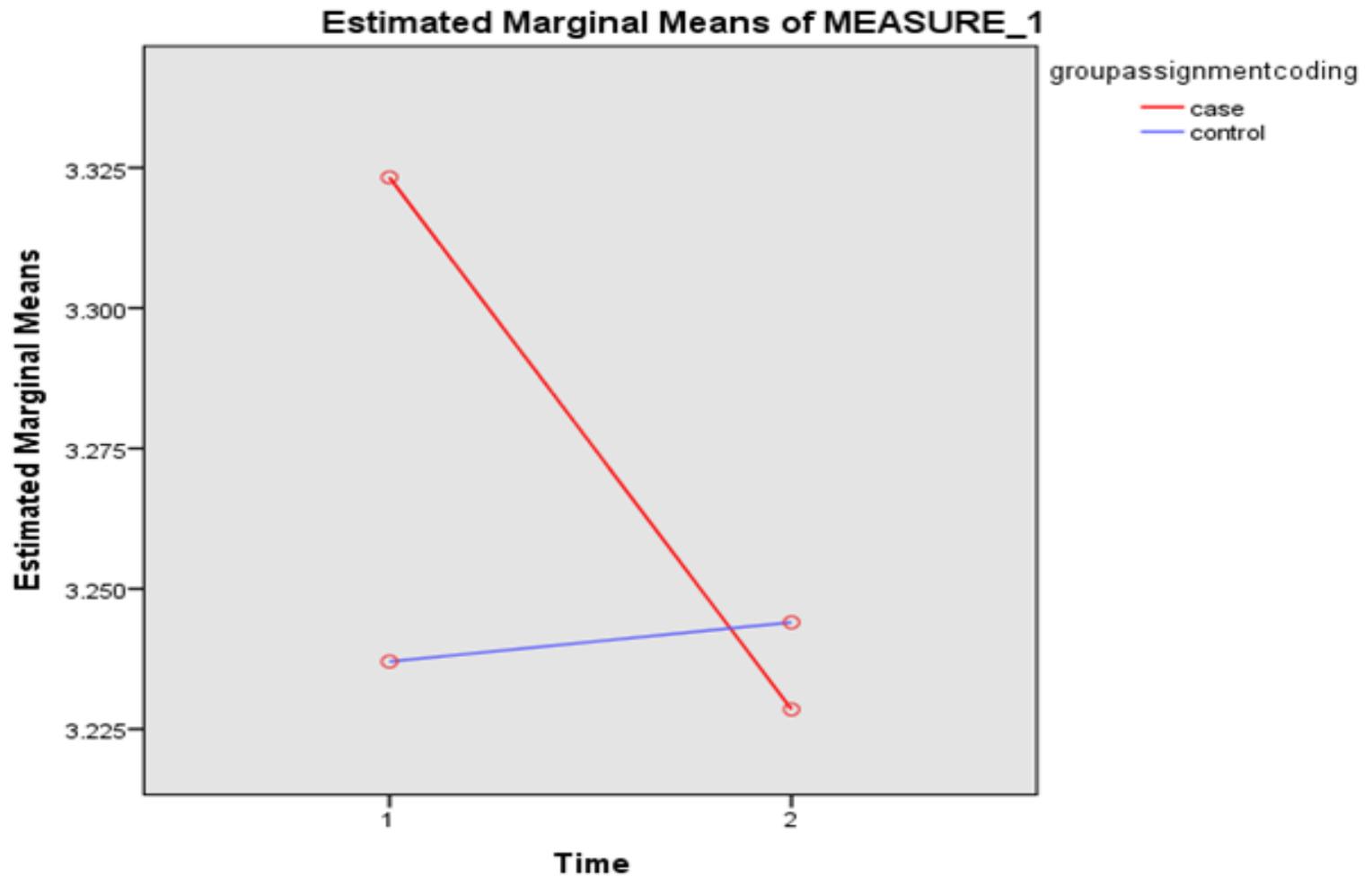
# The unexpected

- » Because the literature suggests that nursing students who participate in a poverty simulation improved their attitudes toward people living in poverty; we expected to see a difference in the scores of the ATP scale.
- » That did not happen. We found no change in attitude as measured by the 37 item ATP scale.
- » A paired samples T-test was done and it indicated no improvement in our students' attitudes toward people living in poverty.

# ATP Short Form

- » One term this simulation was cancelled. Control group, ( $n = 45$ )
- » The term the simulation was held. Experimental group, ( $n = 49$ )
- » The short form of the ATP scale, which is 21 items from the long form and demonstrated moderate internal reliability (0.671), was used (Yun & Weaver, 2010).
- » The analysis used was a two-way repeated measures ANOVA: time functioned as the within groups factor, while control vs. experimental designation constituted the between groups factor.

The interaction between time and group for mean attitudes lacked statistical significance ( $p = 0.061$ )



# More questions

- » Why is there a disconnect between either ATP scale scores and the verbal debriefing?
- » Did the placement of the poverty simulation during the term effect the scores on the ATP scale?
- » Did the students remember what they answered the first time they completed the ATP and repeated the same?
- » How much of their attitude toward people living in poverty is effected by their own socioeconomic level?
- » Because the ATP scale was developed many years ago, is it unable to identify attitude change in today's climate?
- » Is this tool a valid measurement for this population?

# Conclusion

- » We have more work to do in evaluating a poverty simulation as a learning experience directed toward improving students' attitudes about those living in poverty.
- » However the short form of the ATP scale did show that the negative attitudes of the students toward those living in poverty decreased.
- » Based on student feedback during the debriefing, the simulation was successful in sensitizing PHN students to the experiences of people living in poverty.
- » Further studies are justified to determine the reliability and validity of the ATP scales with nursing students.

# References

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**THANK YOU**