

EFFECTIVENESS OF A TAEKWONDO COURSE ON MULTICULTURALISM AMONG AFRICAN-AMERICAN COLLEGE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the effects of learning Taekwondo on awareness of and attitudes toward multiculturalism of African-American college students at a historically black university (HBU), who completed a survey on culture-related physical activity participation. Repeated measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), 2 (time period: pre and post) X 2 (diversity-related content exposure: Taekwondo and basketball classes) was conducted in order to assess the students' attitudes toward cultural diversity. It was found that Taekwondo participation can increase students' appreciation, valuing and implementation of cultural pluralism. These results suggest that culture-related physical activity participation can offer rich opportunities for participants to gain cultural knowledge and embrace cultural differences and similarities. The study adds to literature on cultural diversity among HBU students by showing that a culture-related physical activity course had a positive impact on their attitudes toward cultural diversity. These findings emphasise the value of culture-related activities and programmes as a way of promoting multicultural awareness and participation among students.

Keywords: African-American; Culture; Physical activity; Taekwondo.

INTRODUCTION

Multiculturalism is based on the principle that cultural diversity associated with language, religion, nationality, traditions and/or social norms and practices is to be understood and valued (Parekh, 2000). Accordingly, researchers from various disciplines have explored the concept of multiculturalism and ways to foster positive intergroup contact and interactions among individuals who have different racial and ethnic backgrounds (Neto, 2006; Ministry of Education, 2010). Probst (2003) proposed that higher education plays an important role regarding the promotion of cultural sensitivity and respect for cultural diversity. In particular, diversity-related courses and workshops provide students with a foundation for developing cultural awareness and understanding and improving interracial relations (Henderson-King & Kaleta, 2000; Adams *et al.*, 2004; Neto, 2006).

Researchers have also suggested that multicultural forms of physical education enhances a curriculum by fostering positive cultural understandings between teachers and culturally

diverse students (Choi & Chepyator-Thomson, 2011). It also develops educators' cultural competencies in educating students who have diverse cultural and ethnic backgrounds. For example, Kutame (1999) introduced West African children's games to physical education educators and found that multicultural games and activities allowed teachers to understand the value of multicultural education. In addition, through multicultural games, students can expand their worldviews, develop cultural sensitivities and expand their positive feelings toward others who have different racial backgrounds. McGreevy-Nichols and Scheff (2000) found that a multicultural dance programme helped children increase their awareness and appreciation of diversity and embrace the value of both differences and commonalities.

While some physical education activities are more or less universal, others are significantly associated with certain ethnicities and cultures, such as tap dancing with African-American, Tai Chi with Chinese, and Taekwondo with Korean cultures. IwaIwasaki and Barlett (2006) demonstrated that specific culture-related activities promoted cultural, psychological, and social benefits, supported by other studies showing that have fostered positive intergroup interactions and developed cross-group friendships among participants (Kim *et al.*, 2014; Kim, *et al.*, 2015). For example, Kim *et al.* (2014), in a qualitative study of the effects of Taekwondo activities on health, found that Taekwondo practitioners gained cultural knowledge, expanded their worldviews and developed more positive racial attitudes. This study suggested that Taekwondo provided unique cultural components that facilitated cultural growth. In addition, Gasparini and Cometti (2010) found that sports fostered multicultural dynamics and cultural exchanges that facilitated intercultural dialogue and social integration among players and spectators.

While a growing body of literature has suggested the value of culture-related physical activity for promoting multiculturalism, little research has investigated how culture-related physical activity courses contribute to positive racial attitudes among college students. The majority of previous studies have focused on exploring the value of culture-related activities among immigrants (Kim *et al.*, 2014; Kim, *et al.*, 2015). They also utilised qualitative methodologies to determine how these activities helped foster positive intergroup contacts and interactions, thus providing narrowly contextualised knowledge and leaving open the question of how culture-related physical activity college courses might influence positive racial attitudes among students.

More specifically, no previous study has investigated the relationship between culture-related physical activity and cultural benefits among African-American college students enrolled at Historical Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). Students from HBCUs tend to experience a lack of cultural diversity related to their faculty and courses (Dancy, 2005). For example, it is often difficult for African-American college students to participate in study abroad programmes because of their low socio-economic statuses (Penn & Tanner, 2009; Walker *et al.*, 2011). Second, HBCUs have a unique campus environment in that most of the students are African-American. This homogeneity provides limited opportunities for students to interact with others who have different racial and ethnic backgrounds.

To help fill this research gap, this study was an investigation of how culture-related physical activity courses might be related to racial attitudes among African-American college students attending a historically Black institution in South Carolina. For this purpose, Taekwondo was selected as the focal culture-related activity as it represents Korean cultural heritage and is an ongoing tradition (Donohue & Wong, 1997). Ko (2002) indicated that Taekwondo training can provide an effective educational platform by which to enhance cultural pluralism and diversity.

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this study was to examine the effectiveness of Taekwondo on attitudes toward race and multiculturalism of African-American college students. It was hypothesised that participating in a Taekwondo class would have greater positive effects on attitudes toward multiculturalism than participating in a familiar physical activity class. In particular, basketball was selected as the comparison activity, as it could be reasonably assumed to be a preferred physical activity course at HBCUs. Typically, on average, 30 students enrolled in a basketball course at the target university.

METHODOLOGY

Sample and data collection

The participants were selected from Taekwondo and basketball classes at a private HBCU in South Carolina of the United States. The data were collected via an online survey in the fall semester of 2017. An E-mail with an invitation to participate in the survey, a description of the study's purpose, a consent form and other necessary information was sent to students registered for Taekwondo and basketball courses.

The survey was administered during the first and last weeks of the 16-week semester. The Taekwondo instructor, who held a second-degree black belt, taught basic skills and techniques. According to the course syllabus and discussions with the instructor, by the end of 16 weeks, the students in the Taekwondo class were expected to have learned basic Korean terms (example, 차렷, 경례) and a basic series of movements that consisted of walking, standing, and defense/offence (*arae-makki*, *momtong-makki*, *momtong-jireugi*, and *ap-chagi* respectively), collectively taught as *Taegeuk IL Jang* or the first stage of Taekwondo, as well as the history and meanings of Taekwondo movements, which are rooted in Korean culture. On the other hand, in the basketball course, the students learned basic basketball skills and practised games with no cultural and historical contents or association of the activity with a certain ethnicity. The university Institutional Review Board (IRB) approved this study (#2015515).

A total of 189 questionnaires were returned (response rate 74%), of which 41 were omitted from the data analysis due to incomplete answers. Of the 148 survey respondents in the sample, 94.6% were African-American, 55.4% were male and 44.6% were female and 42.6% were sophomores, 48.6% were juniors, and 8.8% were seniors.

Measurements

The survey was composed of two main sections: Pluralism and Diversity Attitude Assessment (PADAA) and demographic items. The PADAA was developed by Stanley (1996) in order to examine the attitudes of pre-service physical education teachers toward multicultural education. The PADAA includes 19 questions divided into four subscales: (1) Appreciate Cultural Pluralism (ACP) ["Each student should have an equal opportunity to learn and succeed in education"]; (2) Value Cultural Pluralism (VCP) ["Cultural diversity is a valuable resource and should be preserved"]; (3) Implement Cultural Pluralism (ICP) ["Physical education activities should be representative of a wide variety of cultures"]; and (4) Uncomfortable with Cultural Diversity (UCD) ["Minority students are hard to work with in the general education classroom"]. Items were ranked on a 6-point Likert-type scale, which ranged from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Analysis of data

The data for the current study were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics were employed to provide the sample characteristics. A Repeated Measures Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and 2 (time period: pre and after) X 2 (diversity-related content exposure: Taekwondo and basketball classes) was conducted in order to assess the students' attitudes toward cultural diversity (ACP, VCD, ICP, UCD). Internal consistency reliability was examined using Cronbach's alpha, with all of the items exceeding the recommended value of 0.70.

RESULTS

Homogeneity test and analysis of the main and interactions effects

An independent sample t-test was conducted in order to determine the homogeneity of the cultural diversity between the two groups before participating in the Taekwondo and basketball classes (Table 1). Significant differences existed in the ACP ($t = -4.809$; $p < 0.001$) and VCP ($t = -3.240$; $p < 0.001$) between the two groups. Before the pre-test, the basketball group had higher ACP and VCP scores than the Taekwondo group.

Table 1. COMPARISON BETWEEN INDEPENDENT GROUPS FOR PRE-TEST

Variables	Taekwondo M±(SD)	Basketball M±(SD)	t-Value
ACP	5.29±0.29	5.51±0.26	-4.809***
VCP	4.93±0.50	5.16±0.26	-3.240***
ICP	5.03±0.45	5.05±0.38	-0.246
UCD	2.27±0.67	2.17±0.55	1.020

ACP=Appreciate cultural pluralism; VCP=Value cultural pluralism;
ICP=Implement cultural pluralism; UCD=Uncomfortable with cultural pluralism; *** $p < 0.001$

A mixed ANOVA analysis was performed in order to determine the main and interaction effects between the groups and time periods for the pre-and post-tests of cultural diversity. A 2×2 mixed ANOVA analysis was conducted to determine whether there were within-subject factors and between-subject factors (Tables 2 and Table 3). According to results shown in Table 2, significant differences existed between the two groups in regard to the ACP ($F = 15.681$; $p < 0.001$), VCP ($F = 17.830$; $p < 0.001$) and UCD ($F = 10.017$; $p < 0.01$).

Table 3 indicates that significant differences existed between the two groups in their pre-and post-test results for three subcomponents of cultural diversity: ACP ($F = 36.440$; $p < 0.001$), VCP ($F = 23.061$; $p < 0.001$), and ICP ($F = 5.430$; $p < 0.05$). Interaction effects were also shown to exist for time point x group for ACP ($F = 9.932$; $p < 0.01$), VCP ($F = 89.521$; $p < 0.001$) and UCD ($F = 25.535$; $p < 0.001$). These results indicate that these three subcomponents of cultural diversity (ACP, VCP, UCD) had interaction effects with the time point x group. Based on these results, the average trend graphs between the two groups for pre- (time 1) and post-test (time 2) are shown in Figure 1, Figure 2 and Figure 3.

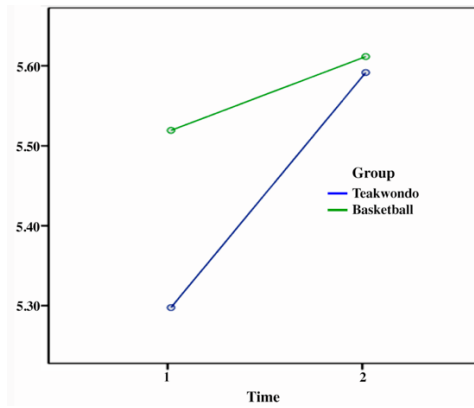


Figure 1. AVERAGE TREND BETWEEN TWO GROUPS IN ACP

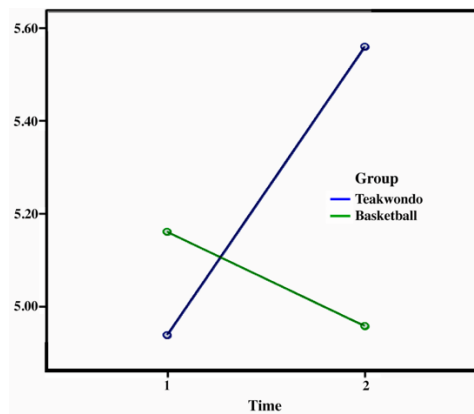


Figure 2. AVERAGE TREND BETWEEN TWO GROUPS IN VCP

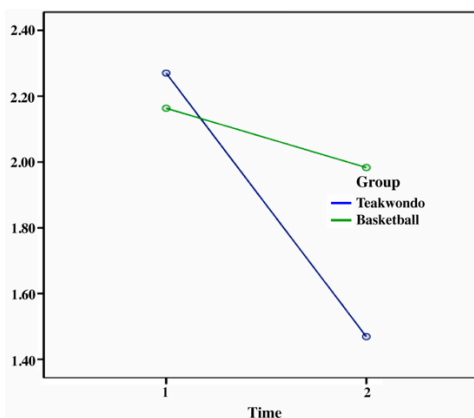


Figure 3. AVERAGE TRENDS BETWEEN TWO GROUPS IN UCD

Table 2. COMPARISON BETWEEN GROUPS

Variables	Source	SS	df	MS	F	Partial η^2
ACP	Intercept	8810.439	1	8810.439	129906.767***	0.999
	Group	1.064	1	1.064	15.681***	0.097
	Error	9.902	146	0.068		
VCP	Intercept	7744.531	1	7744.531	52614.876***	0.997
	Group	2.624	1	2.624	17.830***	0.109
	Error	21.490	146	0.147		
ICP	Intercept	7539.358	1	7539.358	48940.980	0.997
	Group	10.272	1	10.272	66.682	0.314
	Error	22.491	146	0.154		
UCD	Intercept	1144.309	1	1144.309	3940.691	0.964
	Group	2.909	1	2.909	10.017**	0.064
	Error	42.396	146	0.290		

*** p<0.001

** p<0.01

Table 3. COMPARISON WITHIN GROUPS

Variables	Source	SS	df	MS	F	Partial η^2
ACP	Time	2.720	1	2.720	36.440***	0.200
	Time*Group	0.741	1	0.741	9.932**	0.064
VCP	Time	3.194	1	3.194	23.061***	0.136
	Time*Group	12.398	1	12.398	89.521***	0.380
ICP	Time	0.646	1	0.646	5.430*	0.036
	Time*Group	11.238	1	11.238	94.440	0.393
UCD	Time	16.905	1	16.905	63.811	0.304
	Time*Group	6.765	1	6.765	25.535***	0.149

***p<0.001

**p<0.01

*p<0.05

t-Test analysis of the post-testing of dependent variables

In order to determine the differences between the groups in relation to cultural diversity for the post-test, an independent sample t-test was conducted (Table 4). Significant differences between the two groups existed in the ICP ($t=5.365$; $p<0.05$) and UCD ($t=6.436$; $p<0.05$) in that the Taekwondo group had a higher level of ICP and a lower level of UCD than the basketball group after week 16.

Table 4. COMPARISON BETWEEN DEPENDENT GROUPS FOR POST-TEST

Variable	Taekwondo M±SD	Basketball M±SD	t-Value
ACP16	5.58±0.24	5.60±0.27	1.741
VCP16	5.56±0.32	4.96±0.35	0.621
ICP16	5.52±0.27	4.75±0.34	5.365*
UCD16	1.49±0.34	1.99±0.49	6.436*

* $p < 0.05$ **Paired t-test analysis for the pre-post testing within the groups****Table 5. TAEKWONDO: WITHIN GROUP COMPARISON PRE- AND POST-TEST**

Variable	N	M±SD	t-Value
ACP Pre	83	5.29±0.29	-6.880***
ACP Post	83	5.58±0.24	
VCP Pre	83	4.94±0.50	-9.217***
VCP Post	83	5.56±0.32	
ICP Pre	83	5.03±0.45	-8.976***
ICP Post	83	5.52±0.27	
UCD Pre	83	2.27±0.67	8.515***
UCD Post	83	1.49±0.34	

*** $p < 0.001$ **Table 6. BASKETBALL: WITHIN GROUP COMPARISON PRE- AND POST-TEST**

Variable	N	M±SD	t-Value
ACP Pre	65	5.51±0.26	-1.945
ACP Post	65	5.60±0.27	
VCP Pre	65	5.16±0.26	4.254***
VCP Post	65	4.96±0.35	
ICP Pre	65	5.05±0.38	5.016***
ICP Post	65	4.75±0.34	
UCD Pre	65	2.17±0.55	2.595*
UCD Post	65	1.99±0.49	

*** $p < 0.001$ * $p < 0.05$

In order to verify the differences between the pre-and post-test on cultural diversity within each group, a paired t-test was performed (Table 5). Significant differences existed for ACP ($t = -6.880$; $p < 0.001$), VCP ($t = -9.217$; $p < 0.001$), ICP ($t = -8.976$; $p < 0.001$) and UCD ($t = 8.515$; $p < 0.001$) within the Taekwondo group. Table 6 shows the statistical differences of the pre-post testing on cultural diversity within the basketball group. These results indicate that three subcomponents of cultural diversity had statistically significant differences: VCP ($t = 4.254$; $p < 0.001$), ICP ($t = 5.016$; $p < 0.001$) and UCD ($t = 2.595$; $p < 0.05$).

DISCUSSION

The current study was an initial investigation into how Taekwondo, a traditional Korean activity, can contribute to a positive sense of cultural diversity. This study provided evidence that Taekwondo participation can increase students' appreciation of, value for, and implementation of cultural pluralism. In addition, the results indicated that Taekwondo can reduce uncomfortable feelings related to cultural diversity. These results suggest that culture-related physical activity participation can foster positive attitudes toward cultural diversity and multicultural values in college students.

This study supported previous qualitative findings (Kim *et al.*, 2014) that culture-related activities can be used to promote cultural competency and improve racial attitudes. The results also indicate that the Taekwondo group members' attitudes toward diversity and pluralism improved more than those of the basketball group. Kim (2006) demonstrated that Taekwondo, as a martial art that focuses on a unified relationship among body, mind and spirit, involves the unique cultural and historical background, language and tradition of South Korea. This suggests that by participating in Taekwondo, college students can experience the language, history and philosophy it embodies, resulting in the broadening of their cultural perspectives.

Prior studies have demonstrated that diversity-related courses can have positive impact on understandings of diversity of educators and students (Choi & Chepyator-Thomson, 2011). Zhai and Scheer (2002) found that students who had more exposure to cultural diversity scored higher on the global perspectives and cultural diversity scales. Building on these findings, the current study suggests that culture-related physical activities provide opportunities for exposure to and appreciation of cultural diversity. The results also highlight the value of multicultural education in physical education as a method for cultural exposure.

Kim *et al.* (2015) conducted a qualitative study to explore the value of culturally meaningful activities in providing social benefits for and supporting the psychological well-being of immigrants and found that such activities contributed to their personal development and cultural growth. Taekwondo, as a culturally meaningful activity, can serve as a vehicle for fostering cultural growth, as well as psychological well-being among HBCU students who may have limited opportunities to interact with other racial groups.

Some limitations need to be addressed related to this study. Firstly, this study focused on only attitudes toward diversity of HBCU students. Other racial groups may have different experiences related to diversity. Further research is needed to explore how culture-related activities affect other racial groups. Secondly, this study did not identify which components of Taekwondo, such as language, history or philosophy, influence the students' sense of multiculturalism, which should be investigated in future studies. Thirdly, in this study, changes between two points in time were evaluated. Although the outcomes were positive and significant, it is recommended that follow-up surveys need to be conducted to assess whether such changes persist.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This study provides insightful information for physical education educators and programme providers, especially those working with relatively homogeneous clientele. In particular, HBCUs need to offer a variety of culture-related recreational programmes and courses, such as Eastern Asian traditional activities, like Tai-Chi and traditional dances and games. Participating in various types of culture-related activities gives students rich opportunities to explore different cultural perspectives and develop positive attitudes toward diversity.

In addition, recreation programme providers need to create strategic plans that encourage students to interact with other racial groups through physical activities. For example, they can create special events for international or intercultural sports clubs and competitions, or culture-related demonstrations, such as Taekwondo. The provision of these programmes can assist students to understand different cultural values and beliefs.

This study adds to the body of literature on acceptance of multiculturalism among HBCU students by demonstrating that participating in an Asian culture-related physical activity course had a positive impact on their attitudes toward cultural diversity. It also provides evidence supporting the value of culture-related activities and programmes as a way of promoting intercultural competency among students.

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