Bridging Educational Gaps Around Vulnerable Populations Through an Immersive Poverty Simulation

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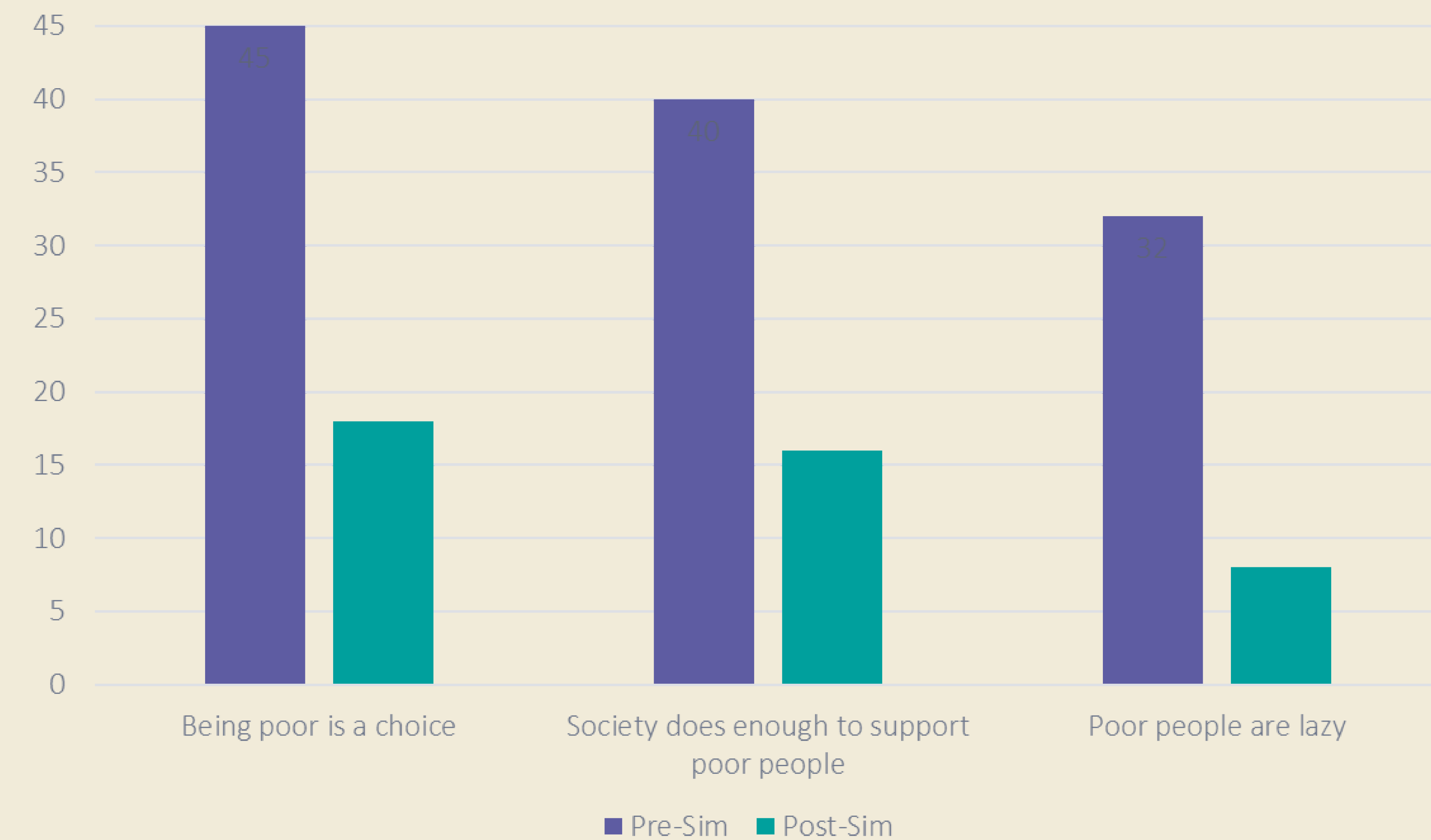SCHOOL OF **NURSING**
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PURPOSE

To create scaffolded experiential learning opportunities for students to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges and barriers that vulnerable populations face. First-hand experiences, including simulation, can help participants identify areas of change and advocacy to positively impact individuals, families and communities in poverty.

RESULTS

- Pre/post assessments, as well as in-depth post simulation debriefing, revealed participants gained significant self-awareness on attitudes and assumptions related to vulnerable populations.

- Students reported that this powerful experiential learning resulted in a deeper understanding of their unconscious biases, cultural humility, and a desire to more actively address social justice issues in their communities.

METHODS

- Pre-learning consists of didactic concepts of health disparities, social justice, vulnerable populations, and impacts of poverty.

- Students then complete windshield surveys throughout the community, conducting assessments of access to healthcare, food, safe/affordable housing, childcare, and public transportation, preparing them to participate in an immersive poverty simulation.

- During the simulation, students were tasked with surviving a month as a community member living in poverty

Chart — Pre-Sim / Post-Sim (y-axis 0 to 45):
- Being poor is a choice: Pre-Sim 45, Post-Sim 18
- Society does enough to support poor people: Pre-Sim 40, Post-Sim 16
- Poor people are lazy: Pre-Sim 32, Post-Sim 8

Legend: ■ Pre-Sim ■ Post-Sim

BACKGROUND

- Vulnerable populations and those living in poverty face significant challenges and are at greater risk for multiple social and health disparities.
- An educational gap was identified in our population health and DEI curriculum related to opportunities for our undergraduate and graduate students to acquire competencies around social justice.

CONCLUSION

An immersive poverty simulation is a powerful and meaningful learning activity to expose students to the harsh realities that exist for individuals living in poverty and fosters both awareness and desire to take action to address the complex systematic barriers that exist for the most vulnerable members of our communities.

"I didn't realize how hard it was just to do normal everyday things. How much I take for granted. Everyone should have to do this simulation."

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