

# **Prior Knowledge of And Experience with Social Diversity and Its Relevance for Working in a Community-Based Research Service-Learning Project**

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## **Abstract**

Addressing issues of diversity during university studies is becoming increasingly important in today's complex society. This was achieved in various ways in the community-based research service-learning course on 'social inequality, poverty and homelessness' for bachelor students of geography. The following qualitative study examines students' prior knowledge of social diversity, their personal experiences and the relevance of these experiences for their work in the two-semester study project course at the Ruhr University Bochum. At the end of the course, we conducted qualitative interviews via Zoom with 13 students, which were analysed using qualitative content analysis method based on the approach of Mayring. It became apparent that the students were particularly able to draw on personal life experiences. Some reported practical experiences gained through voluntary work or project work at school. Regarding the theoretical prior knowledge, some students mentioned knowledge acquired during their university studies, vocational training, school education or self-study. Many students stated that previous experiences and prior knowledge were important or very important for their work on the project, that previous experiences and prior knowledge could be used for the project work, and that this contributed to greater motivation for the work in the project.

**Keywords:** pre-existing knowledge; personal experience; diversity; research-based learning; service-learning