



What is Learning in Service-Learning? Findings from Service-Learning Research at Beijing Normal University

Meilin Yao, Fangfang Guo

(School of Psychology, Beijing Normal University, China)

Wenfan Yan

**(College of Education and Human Development, University of
Massachusetts Boston, USA)**

Cong Wang, Yulan Li

(School of Psychology, Beijing Normal University, China)

Introduction to the SL program in BNU

Why do service-learning research?

- Poor problem solving transfer from classroom to authentic situation
 - High scores but low abilities
- Separation of academic development and social responsibility
- Few studies on how to utilize the pedagogy of service-learning into regular academic curriculum in Mainland China
- Few studies on the mechanisms of service-learning affecting students' outcome

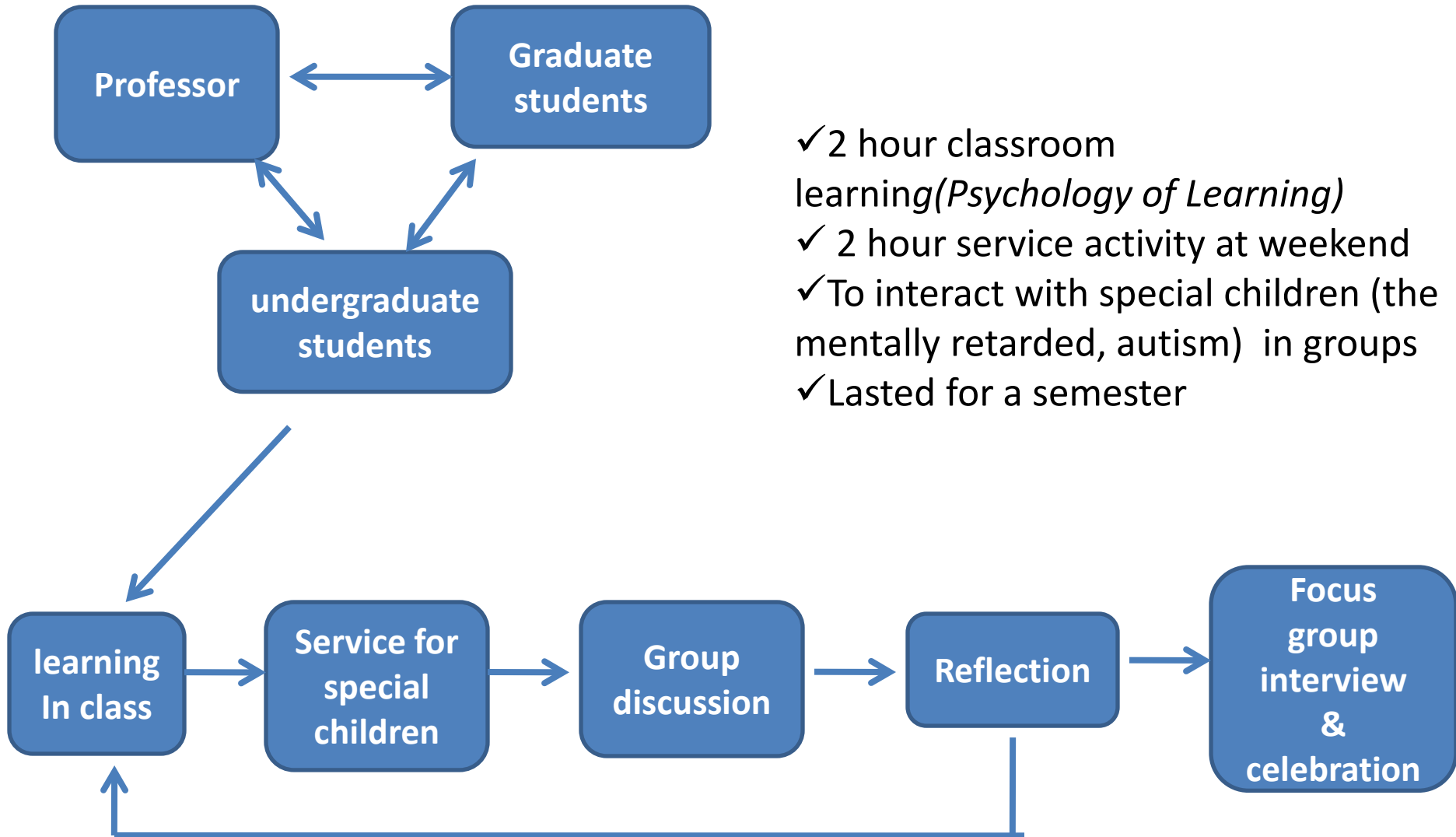
Pilot study

- 844 college students and 6203 middle and high school students were investigated
- Results
 - They had more or less service experience
- Samples of college students
 - *How many hours do you spend in service activities?*
 - 21.8% 40h./year
 - 44.9% 10h./year
 - *What kinds of service activities do you participate?*
 - 63.30% temporal
 - 5.70% continuous/sustainable

the quality of service experience

- Most service activities were temporal
- The time spent on service was very short
- Service activities had no relationship with school learning
- There was no challenge for students during service activities
- Students had no autonomy in service activities

Service-Learning program in BNU











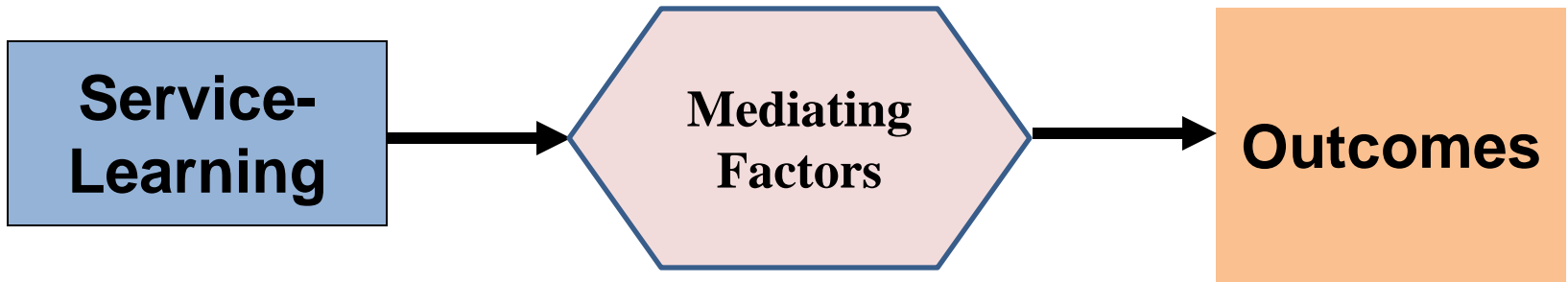
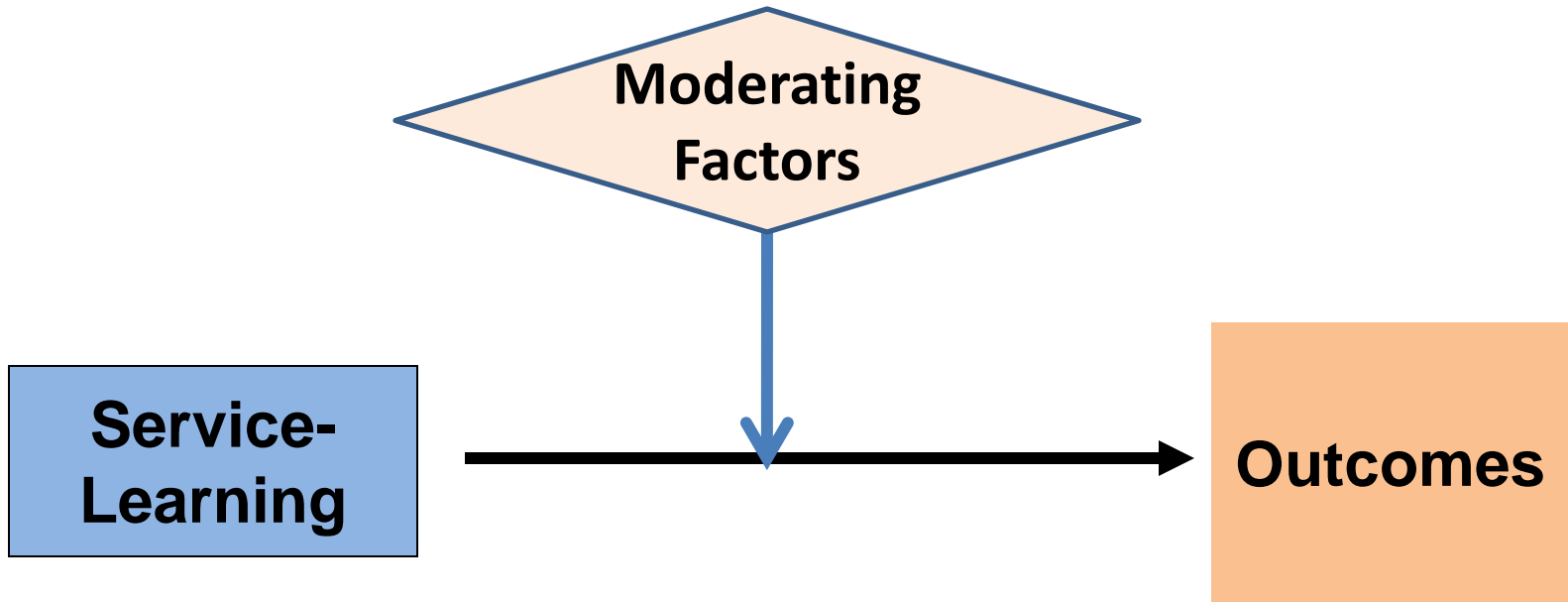
Samples of our studies

Goals

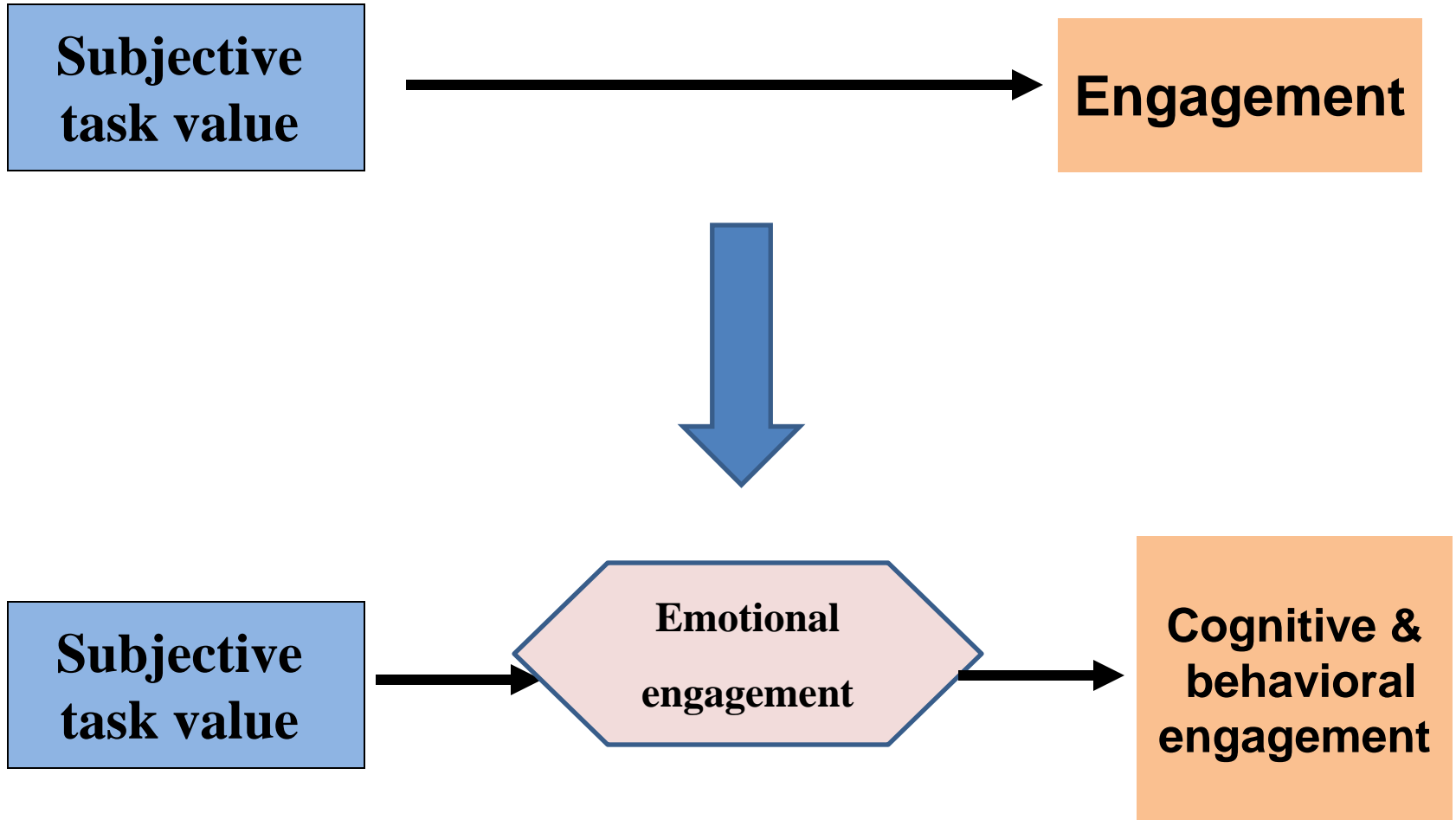
- To examine whether service-learning experience may enhance college students' academic expertise;
- To understand the role of service-learning experience plays in the development of civic responsibility;
- To explore the moderating or mediating effects that service-learning influences students outcomes

Research method

- mixed method
- Data collected
 - self-report surveys
 - interactive video
 - group discussion
 - focus group interview
 - reflection journals
 - feedbacks from parents of special children



Study 1

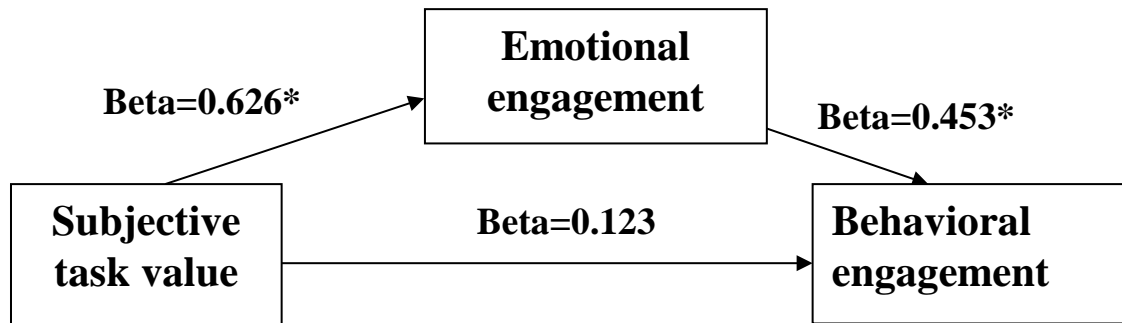
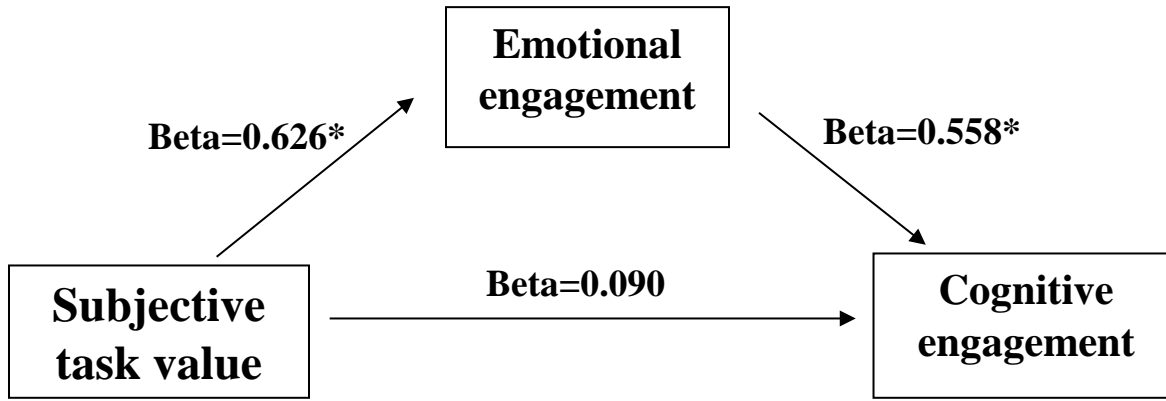


- **Participants: 57 college students**
- **Tools: self-report questionnaire**
- Engagement Scale
 - Skinner et al. (2008)
 - Pintrich et al. (1991): MSLQ (Motivated Strategies for Learning Questionnaire)
- The subjective task value Scale
 - 6 items from the MSLQ
- 7-point Likert scale: 1=“strongly disagree”, 7= “strongly agree”

Descriptive Statistics and Correlations for Variables (n=57)

variable	1	2	3	4	Mean	SD
1. subjective task value					5.85	0.78
2. emotional engagement	.626**				5.91	0.64
3. cognitive engagement	.439**	.614**			4.99	0.81
4. behavioral engagement	.407**	.530**	.262*		6.08	0.56

Note: *P<0.05, **P<0.01



➤ *Subjective task value influenced engagement*

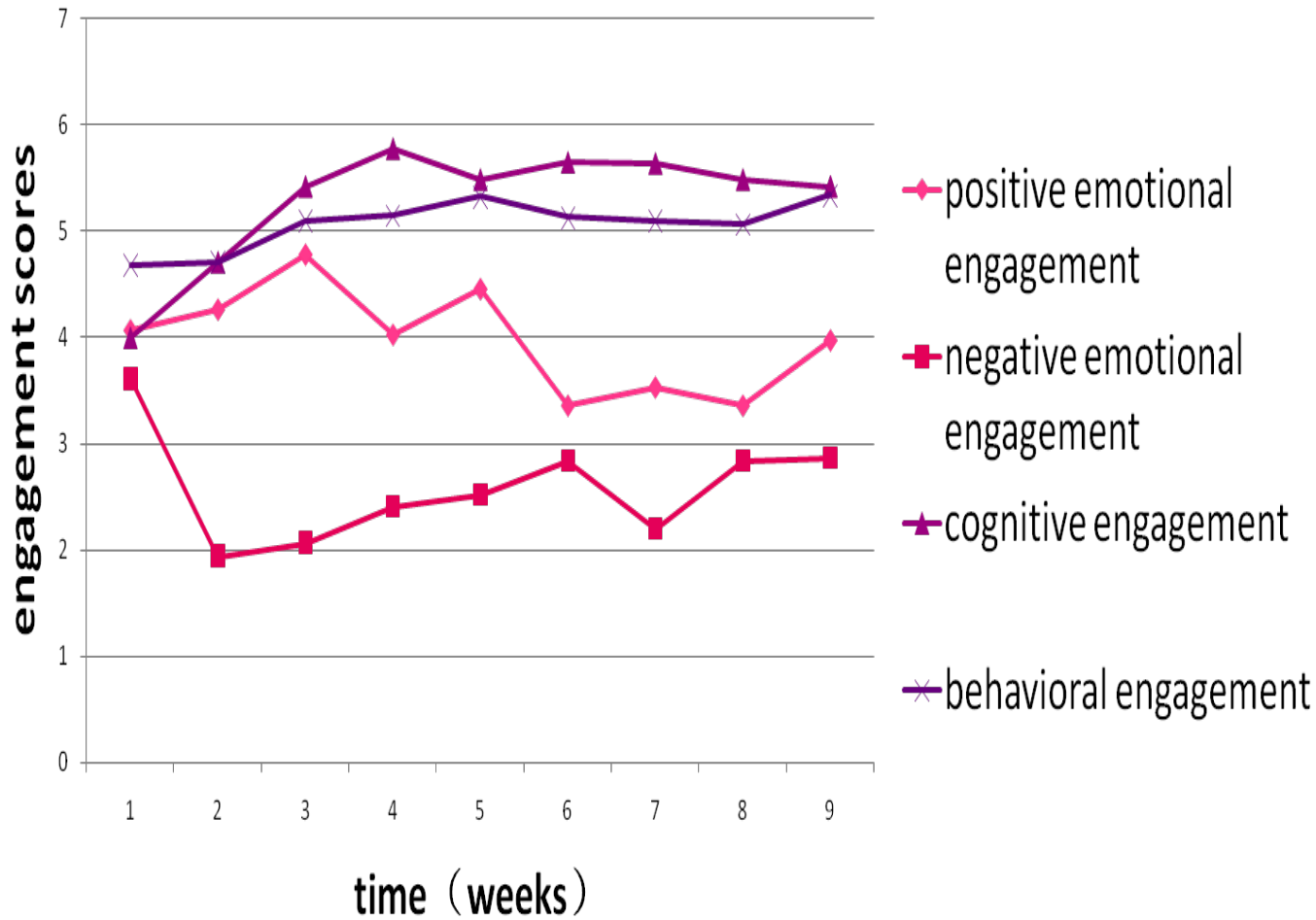
➤ *emotional engagement fully mediated the effects of task value on cognitive and behavior engagement*

The relationship between task value and engagement

* $P < 0.05$, $N = 57$

Study 2

- To explore the dynamic process of students engagement during the service-learning activities
- **Participants**
- 31 sophomores (18 females and 13 males, 18-22 years old)
- 279 reflection journals were collected and analyzed following the coding rubric for engagement



- 4 developmental stages:
- a) confusion and hesitancy,
- b) enlightenment and enthusiasm,
- c) fluctuation and adjustment; and
- d) stabilization and routinization

The developmental characteristics of engagement

Study 3

- To explore the effect of service-learning on problem solving transfer
- Participants:
 - Service learning group: N=63
 - Traditional group: N=48
- Data collected
 - Case analysis on how to use reinforcement effectively
 - Essay on praise application in education
 - Coding rubric

Comparison of students' learning transfer between traditional teaching group and service-learning group

variables		Traditional (N=48)		Service-learning (N=63)		t
		M	SD	M	SD	
Near transfer	Fluency	2.46	1.17	1.89	1.21	2.50*
	Accuracy	2.29	1.41	3.08	1.24	-3.13**
	Depth	2.46	1.44	3.02	1.48	-1.99*
	Total	2.40	0.76	2.66	0.69	-1.87*
Far transfer	Fluency	2.25	1.06	2.25	1.20	-0.18
	Adequacy	2.88	1.14	3.02	1.20	-0.63
	Depth	2.29	1.43	3.02	1.24	-2.86**
	conceptualization	1.67	1.67	1.59	1.65	0.25
	Total	2.27	0.88	2.47	0.84	-1.20

Study 4

- To explore the effects of service-learning on attitude toward special children
- Participants:
 - 47 college students who had interacted with special children for a semester
- Data collected
 - Mental Retardation Attitude Inventory (MRAI-R, Antonak & Harth , 1994): pre- and post-test
 - Case analysis on inclusion of special children in Mainland China

Case:

Should special children be included in normal school and not receive the education tailored for them?

	Acceptance		Conditional acceptance		Objection	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
N=47	14	29.79	7	14.89	26	55.32

- Understanding disabilities
- Showing empathy
- Recognizing individual uniqueness
- Being realistic
- Appreciating what they have and their abilities

What is learning in service-learning?

Learning the Course Content



ABA (Applied Behavior Analysis)
Reinforcement
Classical conditioning
Child development
Learning theories

Learning about Service



Interacting with special children
Teaching math, motor skills, et al.
Engagement
Subjective task value

Learning about the Social Issue



Realistic and positive attitude to special children
Understanding diversity

Adaptive expertise

Civic responsibility