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Program Evaluation Report: Hybrid Online CPE Pilot Program

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In response to evolving digital technologies, as well as changing needs and demands for alternative methods for offering adult and continuing education, the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA) has sought to support and expand a new online model for offering CPE training to chaplains serving in various community settings on behalf of the United Methodist Church. To examine and address potential issues and concerns with this new CPE model, the UMEA has undertaken a year-long mixed methods evaluation of this new model. The major findings from this evaluation project are summarized in the below report.

Interview, focus group, and participant observation data collected through the evaluation project showed a number of benefits associated with the hybrid online CPE model, including: (1) increased access to CPE for individuals previously unable to access a CPE program, and particularly among CPSP Latino and Filipino participants; (2) tailoring of CPE training to particular ministry settings or interests, possible through the flexibility afforded by online remote participation; (3) enhanced intimacy and bonding afforded by the online "view" into others' homes and other personal settings; and (4) a view of oneself through the online camera, and an awareness of one's own facial expressions and reactions to others in a group setting.

Even with these benefits, a number of challenges associated with the hybrid online model were noted. These included: (1) lack of access to the required technology for participation in online CPE, including the need to purchase new computer equipment and internet access (an issue for the Philippines group in particular); (2) ongoing technology-related glitches, as participants continued to experience a range of connectivity issues; and (3) online "hiding", or the greater ability of participants to feign involvement while engaging in other activities (e.g., checking email, surfing the web).

Survey results showed, importantly, that hybrid online participants did not differ significantly from residential participants in their reported confidence and abilities in skills related to CPE training. In other words, they do not appear to be any more or less prepared for their work than residential participants. This is critical counter-evidence to the potential criticism that hybrid online CPE training less sufficiently prepares participants for their work.

Surveys also showed that hybrid participants did not differ significantly from residential participants in their satisfaction with and attitudes about their CPE training, though hybrid online participants did report statistically significantly higher satisfaction with their CPE training overall and were more likely to agree that their CPE training was of value to their current ministry setting. The qualitative data suggest that these findings may be partly explained by the adaptability of hybrid online CPE training to particular ministry settings and interests, enhancing its direct applicability to participants' ministries.

In sum, this report provides compelling evidence that the hybrid online CPE model has important benefits to its participants, including those most in need of increased access to CPE training. Hybrid participants feel just as prepared for their work as residential participants, and even report more positive attitudes about and satisfaction with their training. These findings strongly suggest the value of continuing to develop and offer hybrid online CPE training to future classes of participants, even as they provide insights into some issues and challenges that warrant adequate consideration prior to significant scaling up of programming. ❖

INTRODUCTION

From 2014 to 2015, the United Methodist Endorsing Agency (UMEA) collaborated with the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry (GBHEM) Office of Research & Evaluation to conduct an in-depth evaluation of a new hybrid online model for facilitating CPE training in the United Methodist Church. The below report summarizes the major findings from these evaluation efforts, including evidence of the value and effectiveness of this new hybrid model as well as discussion of the challenges associated with this new model and recommendations for improving and scaling up this model.

In 2013 and 2014, preliminary research into existing models of CPE training uncovered several critical issues that suggested the need for a new, online model for facilitating CPE training. First, there was evidence that residential CPE programs, confined to specific onsite geographic areas, are difficult to access for individuals residing in isolated geographically areas and for individuals with limited means for traveling far distances to reach residential programs. Second, there has been a demand among non-English speaking groups to have greater access to CPE training, and a recognition that residential programs are currently unable to meet that demand. Finally, there is some evidence that the flexibility that would be afforded by an online CPE model may allow for opportunities for new ways of structuring and facilitating CPE training.

Hybrid online CPE training is not without its potential challenges and criticisms, however. As with any online educational model, there may be some concern that online learning is less rigorous and/or less effective, and therefore achieves diminished learning outcomes. Online training, in other words, may be a poorer quality model for CPE training. There may also be concerns related to the technological needs and barriers related to online training. Participation in online CPE training requires, at a minimum, updated computer equipment (including video and audio capabilities) and reliable access to the internet, both of which may be challenging for individuals and populations with limited technological capabilities. Finally, there are more practical and administrative aspects of CPE facilitation which may warrant consideration and which may be more problematic for a hybrid online model (e.g., remotely monitoring participant progress, individual supervision).

Thus, with these preliminary questions and concerns, UMEA's interest in conducting an evaluation of the hybrid online CPE model was two-fold. More positively, the evaluation would seek to establish what, if any, unique value and benefits the hybrid online model may offer, particularly in comparison to more traditional residential CPE models. The evaluation would also seek to uncover what, if any, challenges UMEA and other CPE-based institutions may encounter in more fully utilizing a hybrid online model.

The Hybrid CPE Evaluation Project sought to address these interests through a mixed methods effort comprised of the following phases of data collection:

- In-depth interviews and focus groups with hybrid CPE facilitators and participants in the US (including a CPSP Latino group) and in the Philippines
- Participant observations of one case study hybrid online group, including observations of the group's initial face-to-face gathering and subsequent online group sessions.
- A national survey of both residential and hybrid online CPE participants, focused on skills development and confidence and program satisfaction, and allowing for comparison between residential and hybrid online outcomes.

More detail on each of the above data collection phases will be provided in subsequent sections of this report, including methods and key findings for each.

It is hoped that this report will not only provide CPE professionals with compelling evidence of the value and effectiveness of new hybrid online models for CPE training, thus contributing to the continued facilitation (and perhaps even scaling of these models, but that it will also highlight promising practices and important challenges related to the successful implementation of these models. ❖

QUALITATIVE FINDINGS

The qualitative and case study portions of the evaluation project were conducted over a period of 12 months and included in–depth interviews and focus groups with CPE facilitators and participants, as well as participant observations of various components of the hybrid online program. These qualitative data were compiled together and analyzed, revealing the major analytic themes summarized below. Though their data are largely consistent, distinctions between the US case study, CPSP Latino, and Philippines groups are noted where appropriate.

Interviews were conducted with each of the 5 case study CPE group participants midway through the program and at the conclusion of the program (a sixth participant was dismissed from the group midway through for failure to participate and comply with program requirements). Interviews were also conducted with the case study group facilitator at the beginning, midpoint, and conclusion of the program, as well as with the facilitators of the CPSP Latino and Philippines programs.

Focus groups were conducted with the case study CPE group at the beginning of their program, as well as with the CPSP Latino and Philippines groups. (Spanish translation was provided for the CPSP Latino focus groups, and the Philippines focus group was conducted in English.) Interviews and focus groups were guided by questions seeking to uncover the following:

- Motivations for participating in CPE
- Anticipated or perceived benefits of CPE
- Anticipated or perceived challenges associated with CPE
- Experiences with the online component of the hybrid CPE model

These data were supplemented by researcher participation in and observation of various components of the case study CPE group. This included participation in and observation of the initial group face–to–face meeting in Colorado, observation of two online group sessions, and access to ongoing email communications between the facilitator and participants. The researcher's involvement in and observation of the case study CPE group was intended to provide the researcher with a "lived" encounter with the CPE program and a more enriched understanding of how one experiences their participation in the hybrid online model "on the ground".

Notes from the interviews, focus groups, and participant observations were recorded on a laptop computer or (when required) notepad and subsequently combined and analyzed line–by–line for common themes. The most prominent themes uncovered through these data are summarized in the following sections: (1) Value of the Hybrid CPE model; and (2) Challenges and recommendations for the Hybrid CPE model.

PROGRAM VALUE

- *Lack of access to traditional CPE training*

For many participants, the hybrid CPE model was valued for the easy access to CPE training that was otherwise unavailable to them through traditional, residential means. Participants described difficulty in traveling to a residential CPE program that was hours away from their own community, and some described even greater distances to reach a traditional CPE program. The hybrid CPE program made it possible for these individuals to finally be able to get the CPE training they wanted and needed.

Issues of access to CPE seemed even more pronounced and complex for CPSP Latino and Philippine participants. Historically there have been very few Spanish-language CPE programs offered within the U.S., requiring some CPE students to drive as many as 9 hours from their own community to participate in a residential CPE program offered in Spanish. Additionally, for these participants issues of access go beyond just language to include context and culture as well. As noted in an interview with CPSP Latino program facilitator Dr. Esteban Montilla, CPE curriculum most typically has been developed through the cultural lens of White Protestantism which in some ways may not resonate with a Latino CPE audience. For Latinos, Dr. Montilla observed, religion is “who they are, everything is seen through the lens of religion.” Greater access among Latino participants, then, includes access to more culturally appropriate CPE curriculum and materials.

For CPE students in the Philippines, access to CPE training is perhaps even more limited, with no CPE opportunities available whatsoever in recent years. This is due, in part, to the lack of an existing structure in the Philippines for educating and certifying native CPE facilitators. The value of hybrid CPE for greater access is thus significantly more pronounced for these participants.

- *Field-specific training*

For U.S. hybrid participants, a primary benefit of the hybrid model was the ability to tailor training to a specific type of chaplain setting (for our case study, the group was comprised of hospice chaplains). Whereas traditional residential CPE classes may be comprised of individuals with diverse interests and experiences, the greater ability of the hybrid model to organize participants from across the country according to field allowed participants to speak to and hear from other individuals who were experiencing similar field-specific issues and challenges and to commiserate with one another over these shared experiences.

For this reason, hybrid participants felt their program to be highly practical and directly applicable to experiences they were having in their ministries. Learning from one another in their shared experiences with a focus on their particular ministry settings, participants were able to overcome a number of challenges they were facing in their places of work. This practicality of the hybrid model seems to be supported by the significant differences between hybrid and non-hybrid participants in their survey ratings of the usefulness of CPE for their ministry settings.

- *Online intimacy*

Noted in both interviews and researcher observations, there is an intimacy afforded through online training that may not be possible in more traditional residential programs. Hybrid participants most typically logged into the group sessions while at home, giving others a glimpse (through their computer cameras) into more private aspects of their lives. While there are potential issues with this aspect of the hybrid model (as will be discussed below), participants mentioned enjoying seeing the other participants' pets and family members and other features of their home environment that would help create a greater sense of personal familiarity and bonding. One hybrid participant had a pet parrot that was present for all of the group sessions and became a frequent topic of conversation and laughter for the group.

In general, participants did not feel the online nature of their interactions were a barrier to group bonding and interacting. They felt they were able to bond just as well online as they would have bonded in person, and in one instance were even able to successfully overcome group conflict through their online meeting. It is important to note, however, that most participants felt this online bonding would not have been possible without the initial face-to-face gathering that took place in Colorado at the beginning of the program. Participants felt strongly that this initial face-to-face time was critical in building relationships and setting the tone for the rest of their time in the program.

- *Lack of geographically determined competition*

Several participants mentioned the benefit of not participating in CPE with others in their same Annual Conference or geographic area. That the group was so geographically dispersed meant there was no worry of competing with one another over the same jobs or professional opportunities, and it also meant more comfort in sharing personal details they may not have shared with colleagues in their immediate ministry settings.

- *Online reflection of self*

Finally, several interviewees noted an unanticipated benefit of the hybrid model - the ability to see and develop an awareness of one's own facial expressions, using the web camera on one's own computer. During an online group session, all participants' faces are displayed on the computer screen, including one's own face. Several individuals found this useful for developing an awareness of how they were facially reacting to others, an awareness that may be critical for certain counseling situations. The hybrid group facilitator mentioned highlighting this feature in future promotions of the program.

PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT

■ *Technology requirements*

Given the online- and video-based nature of the hybrid model, successful participation in such a program requires participants to possess the appropriate computer technology (with camera/video and audio capabilities) as well as Wi-Fi or internet access sufficient for live video streaming. Meeting these basic requirements for participation proved challenging for some participants, with more than one participant having to purchase a new computer and/or upgrade their internet service simply to be able to participate. These challenges were even more profound for participants in the Philippines, where computer and internet access are more difficult to secure. Plans to scale up the hybrid CPE model must give adequate consideration to the technological capacities of those targeted by the program and, if necessary, seek solutions to enhancing those capacities.

■ *Technological glitches*

Relatedly, even after participants successfully secure the necessary technology to participate in the hybrid program, ongoing glitches with that technology seemed to be a regular feature of the online meetings. Several interviewees mentioned occasionally being disconnected from the online group session and at least one instance in which the group facilitator lost audio capabilities for the duration of the session (the facilitator's remote location in the Colorado mountains, and the implications of this location for Wi-Fi signal strength, was speculated as a factor). In the researcher observations of the online group meetings, in each instance there was at least one participant (and in one observation two participants) who seemed to be experiencing technical challenges, evidenced by a frozen camera screen, heavy pixilation and distortion of audio, or disconnection from the chatroom altogether.

These technological glitches warrant attention and appropriate preventive measures (minimum required strength for the participant's Wi-Fi connection, for example). It is important to note, however, that these glitches were mentioned by participants more as minor inconveniences that seemingly did not detract from the overall quality of the program and the participants' ability to bond and interact with one another through their computers. These glitches may also occur more frequently in the earlier stages of the program as participants are still learning how to use the technology most appropriately (several participants mentioned this process of technologically learning and improving as the program progressed).

■ *Hiding in plain sight*

Based primarily on facilitator interviews and researcher observations, there appear to be potential challenges in the hybrid model related to the computer camera's limited field of vision and the inability in some instances to monitor participant activity. Participants, though still in view of their camera, may easily use their computer for other activities (checking email, surfing the internet) and become disengaged from group discussion often unbeknownst to the other participants and facilitator. The facilitator mentioned some disciplinary actions they have had to take in the past related to participants' "hiding in plain sight", and the researcher himself found this sort of

"disengagement" easy enough to do if tempted.

▪ *Computer location*

In several instances, it was reported or observed that hybrid participants may not have chosen the most appropriate locations for engaging in the online group meeting on their personal computers. One individual was observed participating while in bed in a darkened room. Though perhaps understandable, given this individual's nighttime work and daytime sleep schedule, it was difficult at times to discern whether this person was awake or asleep. In another instance, a participant reportedly logged into the meeting remotely from Disney World and was subsequently asked to leave the session due to the unreasonable level of background noise coming through her computer's microphone. It may be necessary, then, to develop guidelines for appropriate computer location, given the high level of mobility and flexibility available through the hybrid model.

▪ *Facilitator training*

Finally, it is worth noting that the hybrid group that served as the case study for this project benefited from a uniquely experienced and skilled facilitator who received very high praise from all of the participants. While certainly a positive aspect of this project, the "uniqueness" of this facilitator - their utilization of horse therapy at the face-to-face retreat, and their pioneering of unique hybrid methods and strategies - does raise questions about whether different and potentially less experienced or skilled facilitators would be able to successfully navigate the hybrid model and what, if any, training may be helpful for these other facilitators. If the hybrid model were to be scaled up and offered more broadly, facilitator training and readiness may be a critical challenge. ❖

SURVEY FINDINGS

For the second portion of the evaluation project, a survey was developed to measure several dimensions of participants' experiences of and outcomes from their involvement in CPE training, including:

- Confidence in various professional skills targeted through CPE training
- Satisfaction with CPE training
- Attitudes about CPE training and its perceived value for ministry

Of particular interest in the survey portion of the project was whether and to what extent residential and hybrid CPE participants differed in their satisfaction, attitudes, and outcomes associated with their particular CPE program. Accordingly, the survey was disseminated to recent participants of both types of programs (with participation being no longer than two years ago) and analyzed with a focus on similarities and differences between these two groups.

The survey was developed with the assistance of several CPE leaders and facilitators, including:

- Bruce Fenner, Director of Endorsement with the UMEA & GBHEM
- Pam Roberts, Director of Education, Centered Life, Colorado Springs ACPE Supervisor, hybrid online CPE facilitator
- Earl Cooper, ACPE Supervisor and Director of Education, Yuma Regional Medical Center
- David Johnson, Director of Spiritual Care and Education, Carolinas Medical Center
- Dr. Esteban Montilla, CPSP Supervisor, Assistant Professor of Counseling & Human Services, St. Mary's University
- Luzviminda Barela-Borst, ACPE Supervisor, Oregon State Hospital, hybrid online CPE facilitator

The survey was translated into Spanish by GBHEM staff for the CPSP Latino group and, at the recommendation of the Philippines group facilitator, was left in English for the Philippines CPE group.

The survey was disseminated via email in the form of an online link and was accompanied by several reminder emails in an effort to boost response rates (particularly among the CPSP Latino and Philippines groups, for whom responses were more difficult to secure). Responses were received from 142 recent CPE participants. The data were subsequently cleaned, coded, and analyzed for descriptives and group comparisons, summarized in the below sections.

Respondent Descriptives

Illustrated on the following two pages, in Figures 1 through 4, the survey respondents were comprised of the following traits:

- The majority of participants, at 63%, reported participating in a traditional Residential CPE program, with the remainder reporting participating in a hybrid online program.
- 87% of the respondents participated in an English-language US program, with the remainder participating in the Philippines and CPSP Latino programs.
- Just over half of the respondents were female, at 52%.

- 69% of the respondents were White, 14% were Black, 8% were Latino, and 6% were Asian

The mean age of the respondent group was **49**. Analyses showed that these demographic categories had no discernible, meaningful associations with responses to the other variables described below in the remainder of this report, unless otherwise noted.

Figure 1. Distribution of Respondent Program Type.

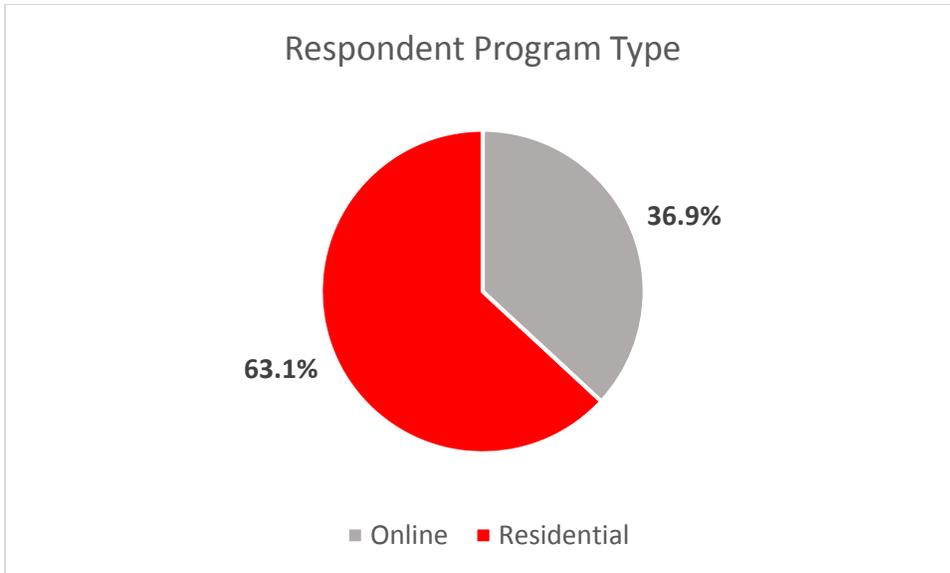


Figure 2. Distribution of Respondent Program Location.

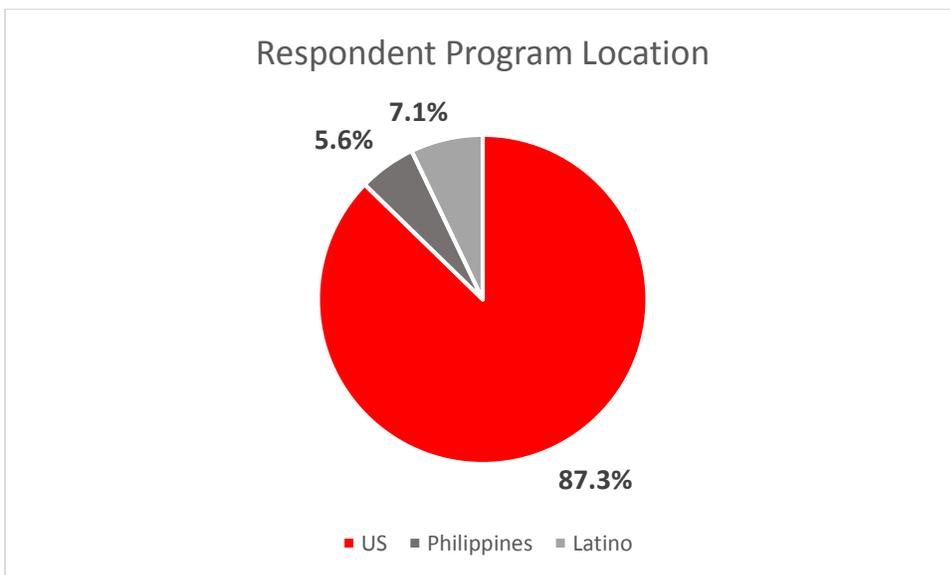


Figure 3. *Distribution of Respondent Sex.*

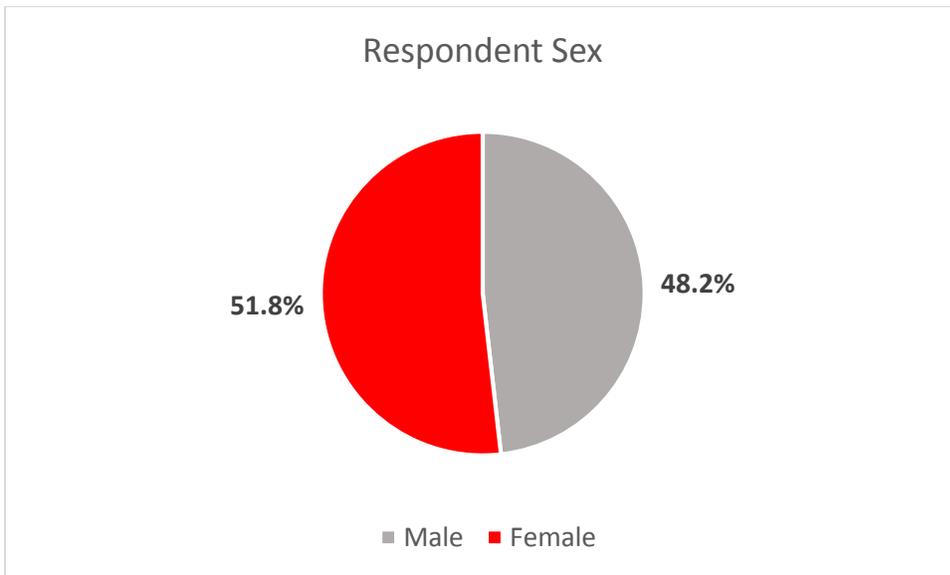
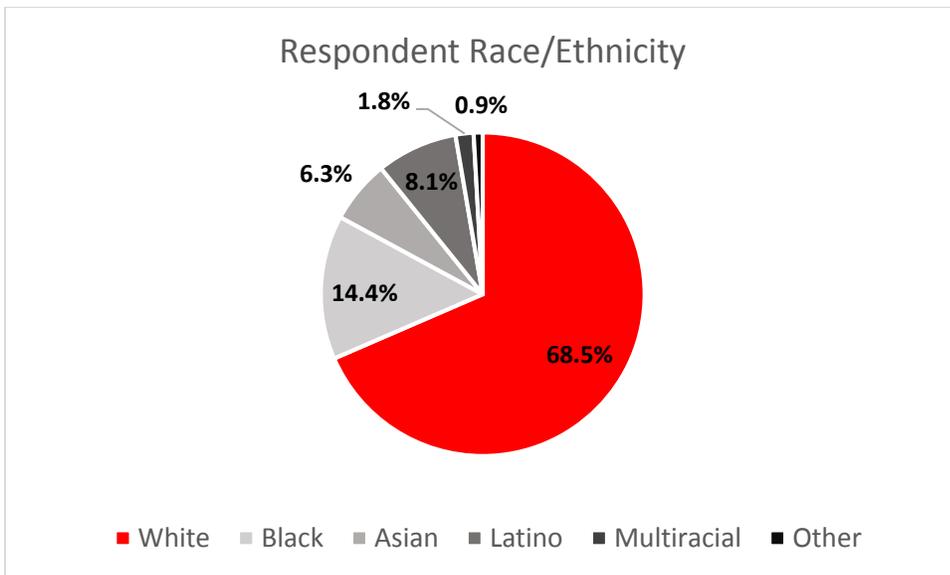


Figure 4. *Distribution of Respondent Race/Ethnicity.*



CPE Skills Confidence

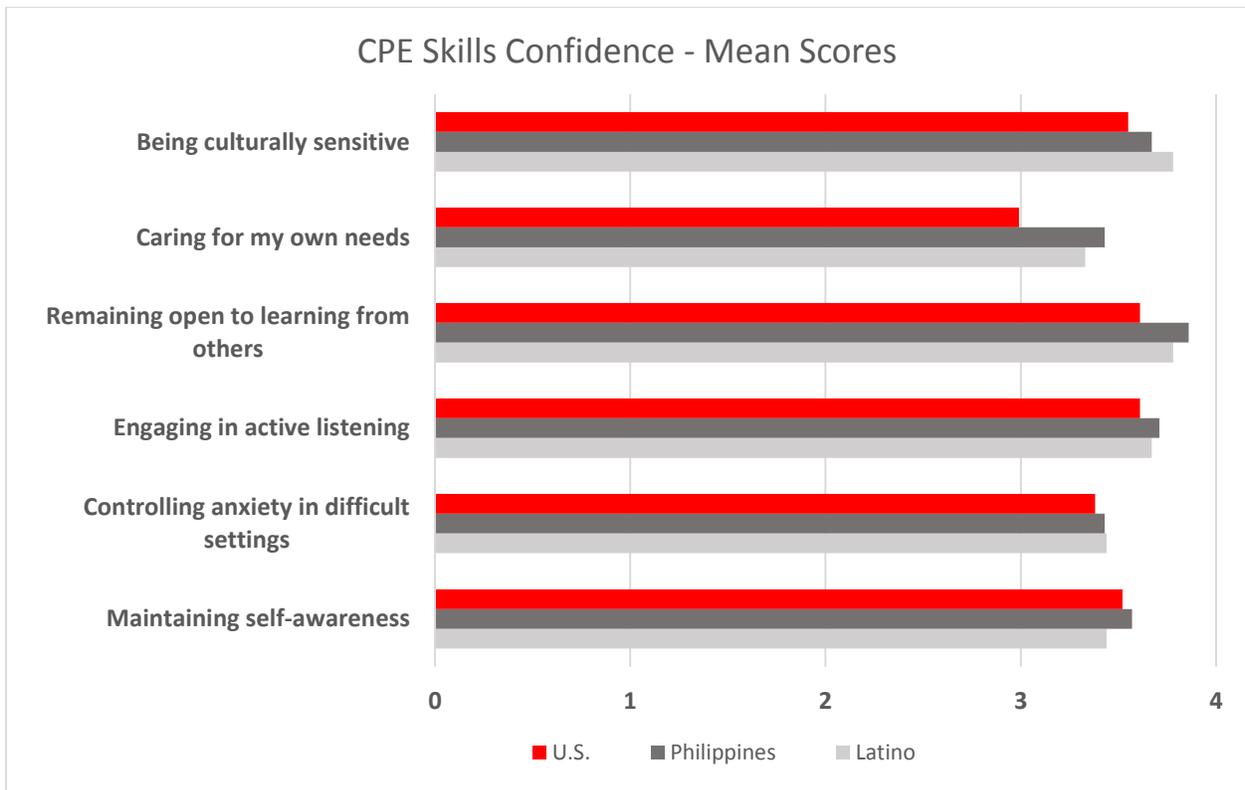
The survey asked respondents to rate their own performance in a number of skills areas identified as critical to standard CPE education (as understood for both the residential and hybrid/online models). These skills areas were identified with the help of the research advisors described in the Introduction section of this report and were believed to reflect the core aims of CPE training.

Specifically, the survey asked respondents to rate their performance, from “Excellent” (a score of 4) to “Poor” (a score of 1), in the following skills areas:

- Being culturally, ethnically, and theologically sensitive to those who are different from me
- Self-care, caring for my own needs appropriately
- Remaining open to learning from others
- Engaging in active listening while in conversation with others
- Controlling your anxiety in difficult settings or situations
- Maintaining a self-awareness of, and capability of monitoring, your own thoughts and feelings

Illustrated in Figure 5 just below, respondents across all three program locations rated themselves highly in all skills areas, staying between “Good” and “Excellent” on all areas. Notably, respondents rated themselves significantly lower in their ability to care for their own needs, with “controlling anxiety” being the second lowest rated skills area.

Figure 5. CPE Skills Confidence Mean Scores, by Program Location.



CPE Satisfaction and Work Engagement

The survey also asked respondents a series of questions related to their satisfaction with, and attitudes about, their participation in their CPE program, as well as their perceptions of their current ministry setting or place of employment. Again, these items were developed with the assistance of the above referenced research advisors and focused particularly on respondent attitudes about the CPE program itself and about the perceived usefulness of the CPE program.

Specifically, respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the following statements, with “Strongly agree” rated as a 5 and “Strongly disagree” rated as a 1:

- Overall, I am happy with the training I received through my CPE program
- Through my CPE program, I have learned new strategies for managing internal/external conflict
- There is a great deal of value in my CPE training for my current ministry/place of employment
- Overall, my relationship(s) with my supervisor(s) at work is/are very positive
- When I go to work, I make it a point to dress professionally
- Others I interact with through work would say I communicate (verbal and written communication) in a very professional manner
- The CPE training I received was just a certification requirement and otherwise has not been that useful in my ministry/place of employment (NOTE: as this item is worded negatively, we would hope to see the mean scores of this item be significantly lower than the other items)
- Through my CPE program, I have learned about myself and how I manage internal/external conflict
- I would recommend a CPE program to colleagues who have not yet been through CPE training
- I now receive more positive job performance feedback from supervisors and/or co-workers than I did before completing the CPE program
- I have noticed improvements in my job performance since completing the CPE program
- In my ministry/place of employment I frequently apply the learnings I acquired through my CPE training

Responses to these satisfaction and work engagement items are summarized below separately by program location (U.S., Philippines, and CPSP Latino) in Figures 6 through 8.

Analyses of these items across all three program locations show overwhelmingly positive attitudes about the CPE programs and their value to the respondents’ current ministry settings, as well as about the respondents’ own work engagement. Across all three program locations, level of agreement with the above statements generally landed between “Agree” and “Strongly agree” (and “Disagree” and “Strongly disagree” for the one negatively worded item).

There are several exceptions to this generally positive pattern worth noting, however. First, and for the U.S. respondents in particular (Figure 6), the level of agreement with the statement “I now receive more positive job performance feedback” was considerably lower than for the other statements, falling just under “Agree” with a mean score of 3.93. Their agreement with the statement “I have noticed improvements in my job performance” was also slightly lower than for the other statements, at 4.39.

Lower ratings on these two items, taken together, could potentially indicate some limits in the degree to which CPE training has direct implications for an individual’s current ministry or work setting.

Also notable, among Philippines respondents in particular (Figure 7), is the lower level of agreement with the statement “Others I interact with through work would say I communicate in a very professional manner.” While ratings on this item are not alarming (no one “disagreed” with this statement, they simply agreed with it less strongly), it may be worth further exploration and discussion as an area of focus for future programming in the Philippines.

Finally, it is worth noting that responses among the CPSP Latino respondents (Figure 8), while still overwhelmingly positive, were slightly less positive than for the other groups. In particular, “overall happiness with the CPE program” and “interest in recommending CPE to others” were rated slightly lower than with the other two groups (with a score of 4.44 and 4.56, respectively), and CPSP Latino respondents agreed somewhat *more* with the statement “The CPE training I received was just a certification requirement and otherwise has not been that useful in my ministry/place of employment”. [With fewer respondents in both the CPSP Latino and Filipino groups, it is difficult to generalize these ratings to the whole Latino and Filipino CPE populations. Ongoing data collection from these groups would help strengthen the generalizability of these findings.]

Figure 6. CPE Satisfaction Mean Scores, U.S.

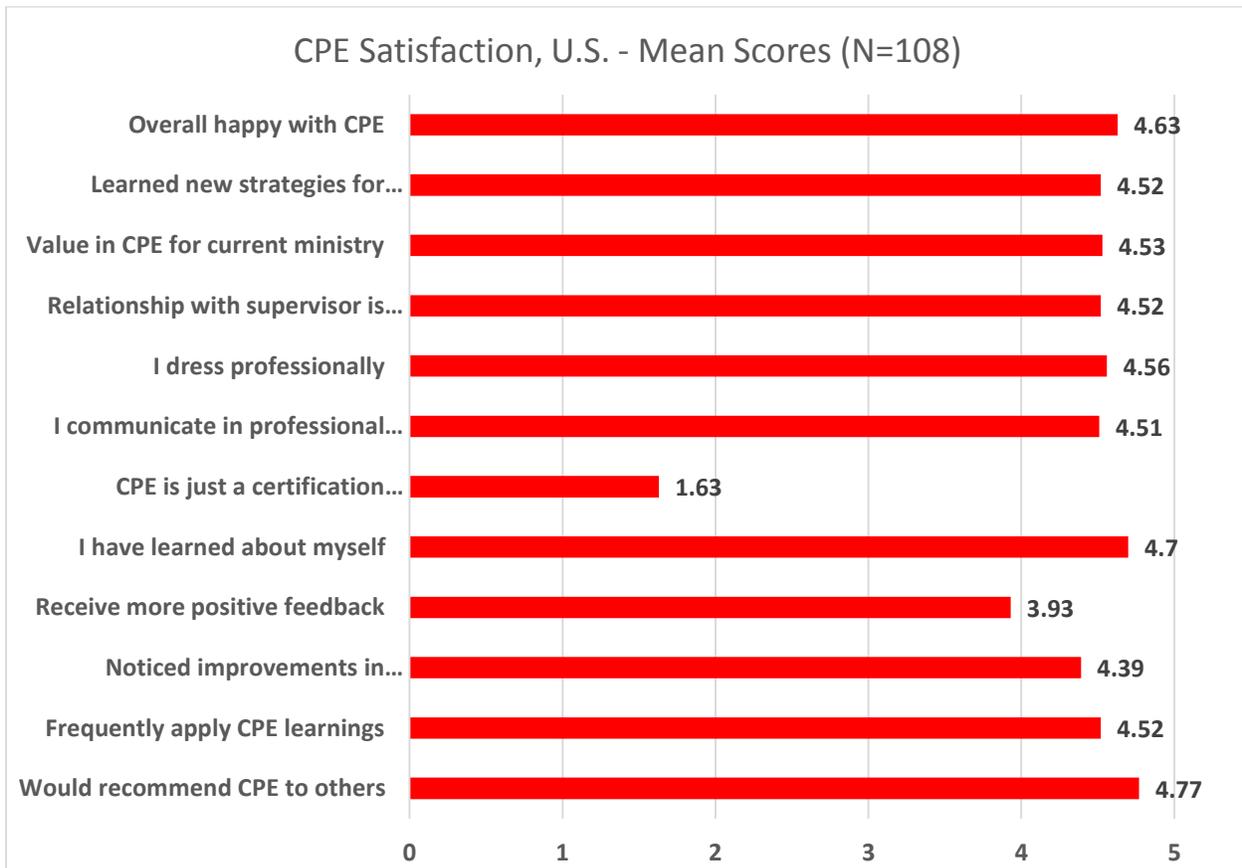


Figure 7. CPE Satisfaction Mean Scores, Philippines group.

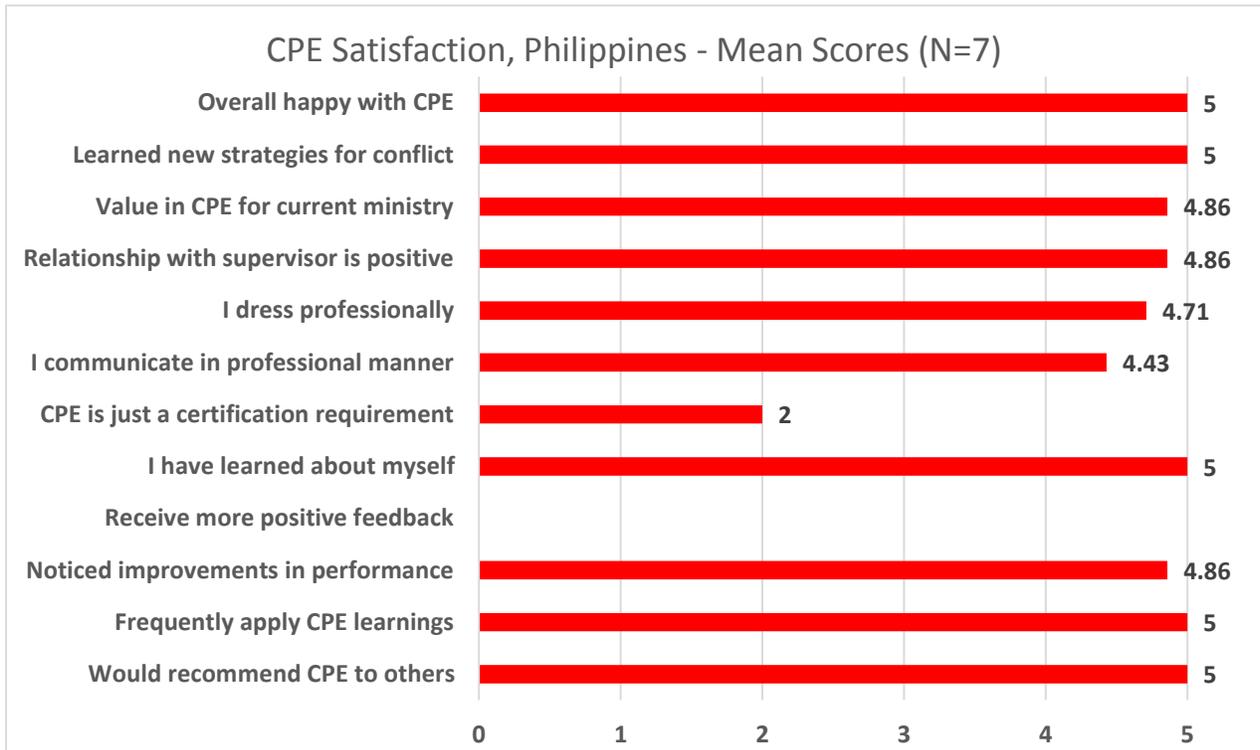
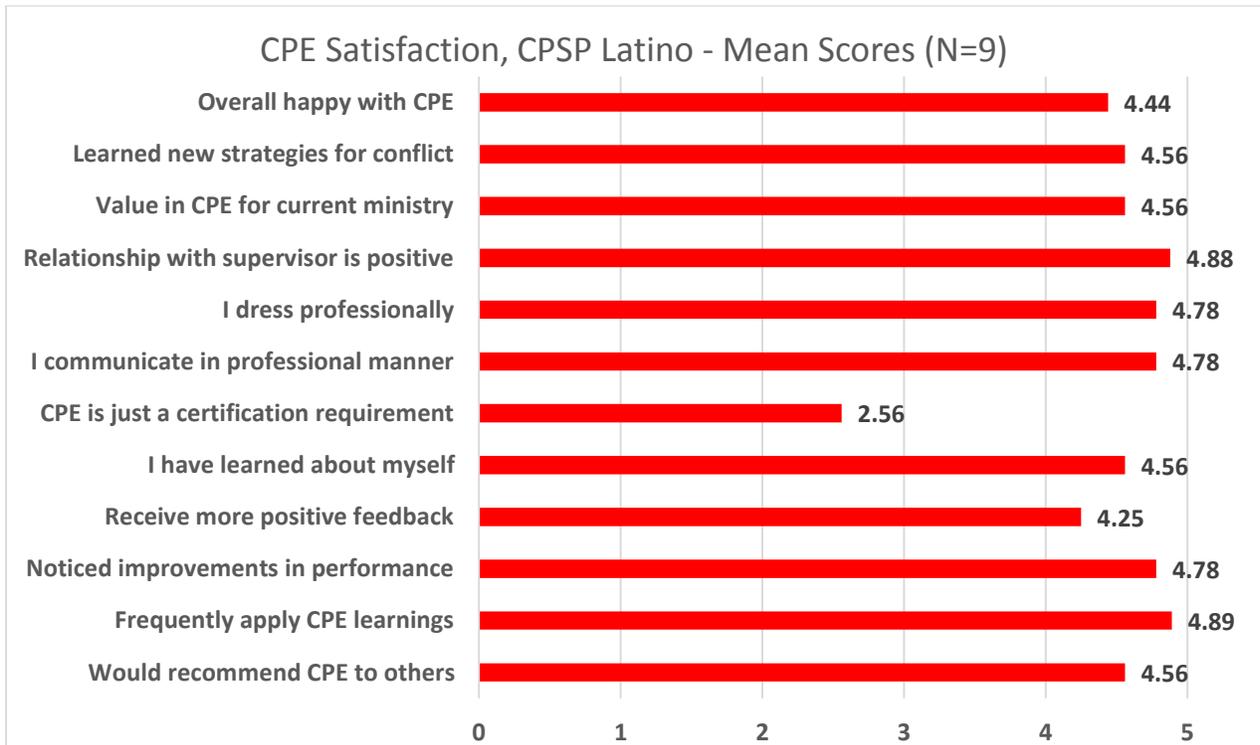


Figure 8. CPE Satisfaction Mean Scores, CPSP Latino group.



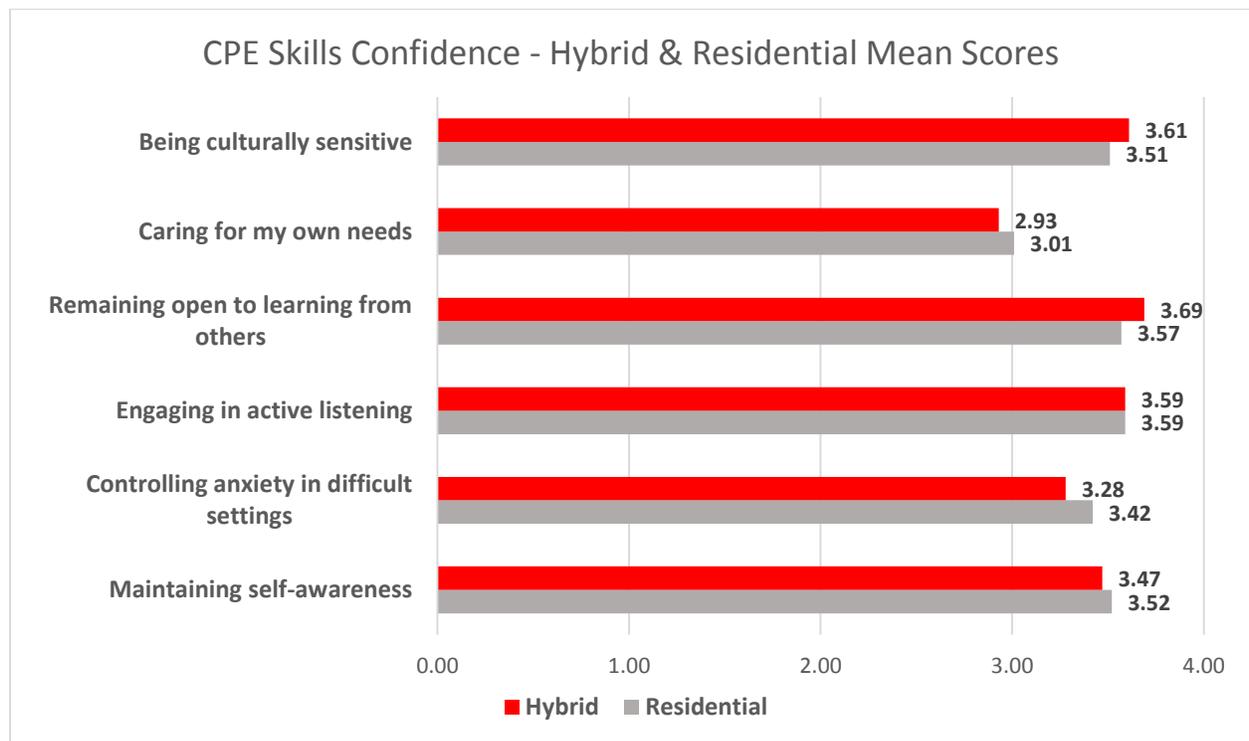
Residential & Hybrid Online Comparisons

One of the primary interests guiding the larger evaluation project is whether and to what extent Residential and Hybrid Online CPE participants differ in their CPE experiences and in the benefits they derive from CPE. If the quality of CPE training is in any way diminished or enhanced through the Hybrid Online model, we may be able to see some indication of that by comparing the Skills Confidence and Satisfaction ratings between Residential and Hybrid Online respondents.

First, comparing groups in their performance ratings (illustrated in Figure 9 just below), we find that the two groups do not show any statistically significant or meaningful differences in their performance ratings in those key areas of concern identified for CPE training. Both groups rate themselves between “Good” and “Excellent” on all items, with both groups ratings themselves noticeably lower in the area of caring for their own needs.

By their own ratings, then, Hybrid Online participants do not feel they are any more or less skilled or prepared in their work than their Residential counterparts, helping to refute notions that Hybrid Online models provide training of a diminished quality compared to more traditional Residential models.

Figure 9. CPE Skills Confidence Mean Scores, by Program Type.



Next, comparing groups in their ratings of CPE Satisfaction and Work Engagement (Figure 10 on the following page), we find, again, that the Residential and Hybrid Online groups do not differ a great deal in their responses to these items. Both groups indicate generally positive attitudes about their CPE programs and work engagement, with noticeably lower levels of agreement with the statement “I now receive more positive job performance feedback”.

There are, however, two items on which these two groups differ to a statistically significant degree that are worth brief discussion here. First, Hybrid Online respondents agree significantly more strongly that they are happy overall with their CPE training, with an agreement score of **4.97** compared to the Residential respondents’ score of **4.45**.

Second, Hybrid Online respondents also agree significantly more strongly that there is a great deal of value in CPE for their current ministry or place of employment, with an agreement score of **4.80** compared to the Residential respondents’ score of **4.38**. There may be several plausible explanations for these significant differences between groups.

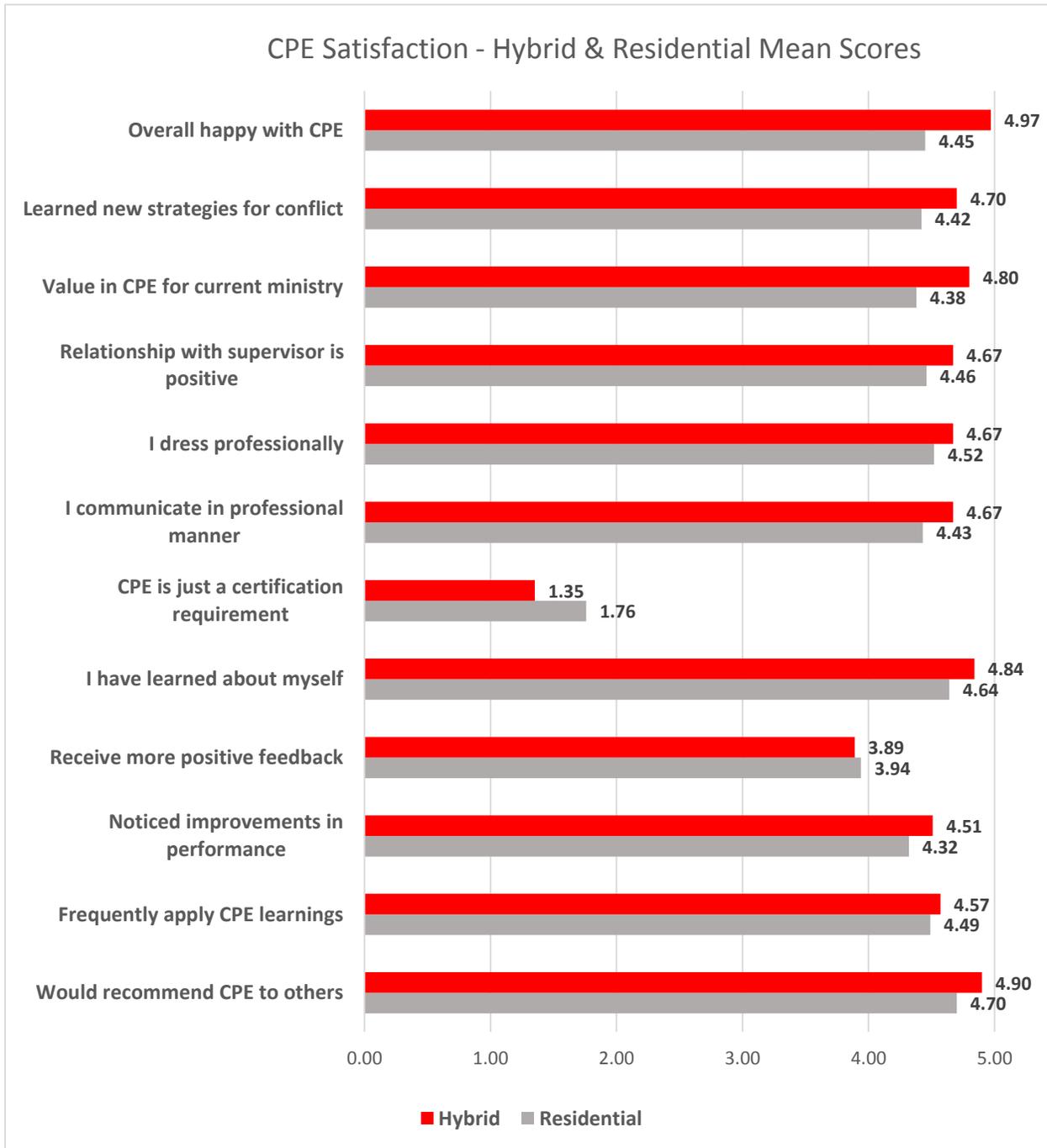
Discussed in the qualitative section earlier in this report, one of the unique features of the Hybrid Online model is its flexibility and adaptability to specific ministry interests and settings. In contrast to a Residential group comprised of varied professional interests and ministry settings, a Hybrid Online group may be comprised of one particular “type” of CPE participant (as with our Hospice Chaplains case study group) and thereby provide its participants with an outlet for sharing with and learning from others facing similar professional circumstances and challenges. This perhaps helps to give the Hybrid Online model a unique applicability to participants’ immediate ministry or work environments, which may help explain the Hybrid Online respondents’ higher ratings on these two items.

We may also consider that other features of the Hybrid Online model – the general flexibility afforded by online engagement, the greater access to CPE granted to those who previously did not have access – can also help explain the higher overall happiness rating in particular.

In sum, these survey data do not show a great deal of difference between Residential and Hybrid Online respondents in terms of both their performance ratings and their satisfaction with CPE and work engagement. Such an outcome may be of comfort to proponents of the Hybrid Online model in particular, given potential concerns over the ability of such a model to adequately train and prepare CPE students for their work.

In those few areas where these two groups of respondents did differ, and with the support of our qualitative data, we have compelling evidence that the Hybrid Online model does in fact offer several unique benefits, with a particular focus on this model’s adaptability and applicability to the participants’ specific ministry and work interests. ❖

Figure 10. CPE Satisfaction Mean Scores, by Program Type.



RECOMMENDATIONS

In conclusion, based upon the above evaluation findings, several recommendations may be offered related to the ongoing support and development of hybrid online CPE models both for the United Methodist Church and for other denominations and institutions committed to the facilitation of CPE training.

Note: These recommendations are made with the expectation that research- and evaluation-related activities will continue in an effort to further validate and expand upon the findings of the current evaluation project.

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- 1 The United Methodist Church, and the UMEA, should continue to pursue and develop opportunities for offering hybrid online models for CPE training. This recommendation is based upon the following observations noted in the above report:
 - The hybrid online model provides much-needed access to CPE training for individuals previously unable to access such training.
 - The hybrid online model provides a unique opportunity for affinity group CPE training (e.g., hospice-focused training).
 - Hybrid online participants report equal skills confidence and training satisfaction when compared with their residential counterparts, and report significantly more positively on the applicability of their training to their ministry or work setting.
 - 2 Efforts on the part of the UMEA and other CPE-related institutions to scale up existing hybrid online CPE models should first give adequate consideration to the **technological challenges** involved in implementing and scaling up such models. In particular, CPE-related institutions should consider whether and how they will provide support to populations and individuals with limited technological means for participating in online training.
 - 3 Efforts on the part of the UMEA and other CPE-related institutions to scale up existing hybrid online CPE models should also give adequate consideration to **practical implementation concerns** that are characteristic of and may continue to plague online training. In particular, the limited ability to monitor participant activity, boundaries for appropriate online engagement (e.g., work space, privacy), and ongoing internet and computer glitches seem to demand attention.
 - 4 CPE-related institutions and facilitators should continue to examine and promote additional unique benefits of participating in hybrid online CPE models. Noted in this project, specifically, are the benefits of viewing others' personal spaces through online cameras, thus enhancing intimacy, and the ability to view oneself (facial expressions, reactions) through the online camera.