

# Culturally Engaging Service–Learning With Diverse Communities

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Racial, ethnic, and cultural context impacts how communities perceive problems, and ultimately their perception of what is deemed helpful. Thus, a lack of awareness of these particularities can render service-learning efforts ineffective. This chapter highlights a 12-year service-learning partnership between a predominantly White, comprehensive, liberal arts college and the local Haudenosaunee community. Pedagogical strategies utilizing the Six Requirements (6Rs) of service-learning and informed by cultural humility act as a transformative way to facilitate student readiness to engage with the said community. Cultural humility is positioned as a process that transforms service-learning into critical service-learning, as it enhances students’ ability to engage in critical self-reflection, mitigating the toxic elements and empathic failures of uninformed service-learning efforts. This chapter contributes to more mindful service-learning efforts, challenging all to work with service-learning partners in a manner that keeps community voice and choice at the core of service.

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This chapter explores how service-learning programs offered by U.S. colleges and universities might partner with Native American communities on reservations. It reviews relevant scholarship on approaches to cross-cultural learning, such as the Authentic and Culturally Engaging (ACE). It provides background for the participating partners in a current service-learning program. It examines issues affecting cross-cultural service-learning on reservations in light of ongoing historical, social and cultural trauma. It addresses pedagogical issues unique to Humanities (Religion) service-learning programs. It provides

a description of various strategies used in the program that implement service-learning and learning theories. Throughout the chapter Native American voices and scholars serving as community partners for this specific program offer critical perspectives on pedagogy and partnerships.

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Myriad studies on service-learning agree on the benefits of service-learning for students. Because projects are designed with the needs of students and institutions in mind, the experiences of the Black communities served are seldom highlighted nor are the intricacies of the multiple relationships addressed. Voices of marginalized groups especially the Black communities—the community that is the focus of this chapter—needs to be incorporated in authentic and intentional ways to advance transformational service-learning for all involved. This chapter begins to examine issues and opportunities for best case scenarios for service-learning projects in Black communities.

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The course “Democracy and Diversity” used oral history gathering as a service-learning project. The obvious goal of the oral history project was to preserve valuable stories from the residents of Mt. Pleasant, a small community on Philadelphia’s Main Line, mostly African American. The second goal was to ease the problems caused by student renters in the neighborhood. The students primarily used the neighborhood for partying off campus and showed little respect for the longtime residents. The process of creating the oral histories created a bridge between town and gown and raised the consciousness of the students. The course used a variety of materials and practices to prepare students. One of the residents of Mt. Pleasant, Barbara Byrd, co-facilitated the course and provided a strong link and a welcoming role model for the class.

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In this chapter, the authors discuss the outcomes of a program evaluation of a university-middle school service-learning partnership. The initial goal was to evaluate the extent to which three middle school teachers, our community partners, were satisfied with the volunteer experience their seventh grade students had with first-year university students. The evaluation came after a three-year partnership between undergraduates enrolled in a liberal studies course focused on citizenship and education and a team of middle school students and their teachers. Interviews revealed that this partnership enabled teachers to view their students through a different lens than they had prior to the partnership. Further, teachers suggested that the service-learning activities facilitated a deeper understanding of students’ funds-of-knowledge and talents. This research supports the possibility that there are valuable unintended outcomes of service-learning partnerships between universities and public schools.

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Creating and maintaining meaningful, educational, and culturally engaging service learning partnerships between Asian American studies programs and Asian American community-based organizations (CBOs) is both challenging and rewarding. The Asian American Studies Department at San Francisco State University was founded in partnership with both student organizations and community-based organizations, and has sought to maintain the promise to bring university resources and knowledge into the community, while bringing community resources and wisdom into the university through a variety of campus-community partnerships. This study reviews that history in order to contextualize current relationships and practices within institutionally structured community service-learning (CSL) designated courses. A survey of students, community organization partners, and faculty engaged with Asian American service-learning in the San Francisco Bay Area reveals the benefits and challenges of culturally engaged service-learning, suggestions for best practices, and future directions.

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*H. Jordan Landry, University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh, USA*

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Service-learning projects that both engage the Hmong community and make oral storytelling a component of the projects have the potential to create transformative social change. Currently, images of the Hmong in the media as well as scholarship written by people of non-Hmong ethnicity tend to re-affirm stereotypes both of refugees and people who speak languages other than English. The Hmong community has an investment in both preserving its rich culture, history and traditions and educating about these. The storytelling that emerges in service learning projects focused on the Hmong are powerful counterpoints to the often violent and destructive discourse current in the contemporary moment about refugees, immigrants and speakers of languages other than English.

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*Melissa Cochrane Bocci, University of North Carolina at Greensboro, USA*

Youth Participatory Action Research offers service-learning practitioners a critical framework for guiding their projects, particularly those engaging diverse or marginalized communities. A YPAR-guided service-learning project is youth-led, centers and affirms youth identities, examines problems and takes actions on structural and personal levels, and bases those actions on original, youth-conducted research. As such, YPAR-guided service-learning explicitly promotes youth empowerment and positive identity development, which can result in increased academic engagement and motivation, making such projects a strong option for attending to the opportunity gaps marginalized students often face in their school systems.

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*Liliana E. Castrellón, University of Utah, USA*

*Judith C. Pérez-Torres, University of Utah, USA*

This chapter explores a first-year ethnic studies course to highlight the importance of engaging the diversity within the classroom in relation to the diverse communities being served. Students participating in this course are self-identified Students of Color, many of whom are first generation college students, from lower socioeconomic communities. Introducing a Critical Race Service-Learning framework, the authors highlight how Students of Color in this course learn about race, class, gender, language, citizenship status, phenotype, sexuality, etc. to challenge the status quo while also actively engaging in service-learning with/in diverse communities as an empowering pedagogy. Findings indicate the foundational tools learned within the course pushed students to speak back to the educational inequities they witnessed at their service sites and experienced in K-12 to further empower them to continue giving back to their communities beyond college.

**Chapter 10**

Lawrence2College: A Mentoring Initiative ..... 169

*Audrey Falk, Merrimack College, USA*

*Ashley J. Carey, Merrimack College, USA*

High school graduation and college access are critical vehicles for individuals' social mobility and for community change. This chapter provides an overview of Lawrence2College, a culturally engaging service-learning partnership which was initiated in 2014 and focuses on these issues. Lawrence2College facilitates high school achievement and college awareness through a mentoring and support program which connects students from Lawrence High School, a public school in Lawrence, Massachusetts, with graduate and undergraduate students from Merrimack College, a private, Catholic college in neighboring North Andover. Lawrence is a city in Massachusetts with a strong Latinx presence, including recent immigrants. Poverty and low literacy are challenges faced by residents. This chapter explains the rationale and conceptual underpinnings of Lawrence2College and describes its evolution and approaches. The chapter concludes with insights and recommendations for practice and research.

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Social Ecology of Engaged Learning: Contextualizing Service-Learning With Youth ..... 191

*Joan Arches, University of Massachusetts – Boston, USA*

*Chi-kan Richard Hung, University of Massachusetts – Boston, USA*

*Archana Patel, University of Massachusetts – Boston, USA*

This chapter presents a community-university partnership model of service-learning with urban, low income, middle school youth of color focused on promoting agency and efficacy through an All Star Anti-violence Youth Summit. The summit combined basketball and small group activities to define, analyze, and address the issue of gun violence in the community. The approach is intergenerational and intercultural, and was implemented through a semester long Civic Engagement service-learning class. The diverse group of students at a large, urban, public University applied the concepts of critical service-learning, British Social Action, positive youth development, and civic engagement.

**Chapter 12**

Writing Partners: Bridging the Personal and Social in the Service-Learning Classroom ..... 202

*Sarah Blomeley, Belmont University, USA*

*Amy Hodges Hamilton, Belmont University, USA*

This chapter describes and analyzes a writing assignment, an oral history project, developed for a college-level service-learning composition class. In bridging the writer with a single community partner and inviting the pair to jointly compose a memoir, this assignment can create a successful service-learning experience by engaging students and community members in projects that are beneficial and hold important personal, social, and political implications. The chapter also considers how the project, up to this point used successfully in local service communities, might fare in international service learning contexts.

**Chapter 13**

Doing Service-Learning on the Ground in Diverse K-12 Communities: The Critical Importance of Being There ..... 223

*D. Gavin Luter, Wisconsin Campus Compact, USA*

*Robert F. Kronick, University of Tennessee – Knoxville, USA*

This chapter is about designing service-learning and gives voice to college students engaging in service along with children and families who attend a culturally diverse urban Title One school. The various settings presented in this chapter show the numerous options open to service-learners in the University Assisted Community School. Engagement in this program realizes that schools with low resources have communities with low resources and communities with low resources have schools with low resources.

**Chapter 14**

Partnering With LGBTQ+ Communities: The Issues ..... 240

*Suzanne Fondrie, University of Wisconsin – Oshkosh, USA*

What issues and considerations are involved in developing and facilitating service-learning projects with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities? This chapter presents results of examining the limited scholarship on service-learning projects conducted with these communities. The author proposes possible reasons for the lack of scholarship and offers suggestions for pre-, during-, and post-project considerations. These suggestions include identifying and surveying potential collaborators, preparing students for engaging with the communities, facilitating reflection during the project, and debriefing students afterward, along with analyzing results in order to improve future collaboration efforts.

**Chapter 15**

Refugee Families and Undergraduate Nursing Service-Learning: Thinking Globally, Acting Locally ..... 248

*Ruby K. Dunlap, Belmont University, USA*

*Emily A. Morse, Metro Public Health Department of Nashville and Davidson County, USA*

This chapter describes a service-learning partnership between two refugee resettlement agencies and a school of nursing. The partnership has successfully completed its goals of both service and learning over many semesters to the present. This community-based learning opportunity has entailed a variety of health interventions with refugee families while the learning has involved essential competencies of cross-cultural nursing, insights into social determinants of health, and developing confidence in being able

to problem solve in a complex mix of health, social systems, poverty, language, and cultural barriers. In addition, assignments connected with this community engagement have encouraged students to develop an awareness of global health issues while intervening locally with their assigned refugee family, thus thinking and acting globally. The authors will discuss lessons learned from this long-term relationship and suggested directions for future work.

**Chapter 16**

Engaging Vital Older Adults in Intergenerational Service-Learning ..... 266  
*Reneé A. Zuccherro, Xavier University, USA*

The population of older adults within the United States is growing rapidly, which calls for increased understanding of that population. However, ageism is pervasive and one of the most engrained forms of prejudice. Intergenerational service-learning may be one way to reduce negative stereotypes and ageism. The Co-Mentoring Project is an intergenerational service-learning project that matches undergraduate students and vital older adult volunteers. Students meet with their partners at least four times over the course of the semester to conduct a life review and gather information to begin the older adults' memoirs. This chapter provides a rationale for intergenerational service-learning and information about its theoretical underpinnings. The chapter also offers information about service-learning best practices, including structured reflection, and how the Project's methodology is consistent with them. The multi-modal assessment conducted for the Project and its outcomes are discussed. Finally, directions for future research are described.

**Chapter 17**

Empowering Undergraduate Students Through Community-Based Research ..... 288  
*Gemma Punti, University of Minnesota – Rochester, USA*  
*Nitya V. Chandiramani, University of Minnesota – Rochester, USA*  
*Chelsea Maria Steffens, University of Minnesota – Rochester, USA*

Community-based research (CBR) is a powerful pedagogical tool for actively engaging and empowering undergraduate students in their research endeavors. This chapter explores how CBR facilitated undergraduate researchers' transformative learning and the development of their civic skills when collaborating with alternative schools. Using the undergraduate researchers' reflections, focus group interviews, and a survey, this case study reveals how developing relationships with young, underserved community members was essential in changing their perspectives regarding the educational system and themselves. Furthermore, the undergraduate researchers' obstacles in collaborating with the community and within their team cohorts became critical sources of civic learning. The challenges of working with various partners fostered their capacity to navigate ambiguity, develop flexibility, and determine which experiences to communicate to community partners. CBR compelled the undergraduate researchers to maneuver through the unforeseen challenges of real life collaborations.

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## Foreword

*Service-Learning*, the term evokes a range of thoughts and ideas about engaging young people in community activities beyond the school. In some cases service-learning programs become merely a form of volunteerism for students to complete as a part of a diploma requirement. However, in schools and communities where careful thought has been given to service-learning, these courses become well-developed strategies for both service and learning. In the service component students engage in meaningful activities that help improve a community, institution, or set of individuals. In the learning component students participate in clearly delineated sets of activities with learning goals, objectives, and outcomes. But, even in this optimum state where service and learning are well-developed, few service-learning programs provide opportunities for culturally and community relevant experiences.

Too often students enter service-learning either to complete a graduation requirement or because some teacher, counselor, or adviser does not think they are up to the “rigors” of an academic class. But what if we considered service-learning the core of our curriculum? Think about it. We are tasked with preparing students to be effective participants in a multicultural, multilingual democracy. But, how can we do that when our students are too often isolated from the lives and experiences of others who have different cultural, linguistic, economic, religious, ethnic, or racial backgrounds?

Consider the many challenges that face our society and the equally numerous opportunities for students to engage in community service activities to both serve and learn as they complete diploma and degree requirements. A curriculum with a service-learning core could and should be grounded in students’ deeper understanding of culture and cultural understanding. In my early research I worked with teachers who were successful with African American students. In one of the classes I observed, the teacher established a partnership with a nearby Veterans’ Administration hospital. She paired her students with veterans to record their life histories for a book they intended to publish locally. The students, in turn, agreed to help the veterans cut through much of the paperwork that stood in the way of their receiving benefits. The students were able to make phone calls, compose letters, and interpret documents for the veterans. This reciprocity is an important element of good service-learning projects.

A second element of good service-learning projects is the ability to expand students’ outlooks. Thus, projects that merely reinforce what students already know or believe about a community or a culture are not actually providing service or learning. They are charitable efforts that keep students locked in stereotypical thinking or ensure they develop sympathy toward “those poor people.” In reciprocal, expansive service-learning projects students discover the resourcefulness and ingenuity of communities they may have not previously recognized.

**Foreword**

A third element of good service-learning projects is cooperation. Too often service-learning projects are one sided. Institutions (i.e. schools, colleges, and universities) lay out the parameters and the terms of the relationship and communities are expected to be grateful for the extra sets of hands. However, in a high quality service-learning experience principals from both groups negotiate the terms of an agreement and create an environment that is mutually beneficial. It is important to attempt to construct equal status relationships to avoid the asymmetry that is prevalent in many of these arrangements. On one campus where pre-service teachers were required to spend 50 hours with students in a low-income, Black and Brown community as a part of a human relations requirement, the children would ask the pre-service teachers pointedly, “Are you hear to do your 50 hours?” The students realized that the pre-service teachers were not creating authentic relationships with them. They were merely completing a program requirement. A more cooperative relationship would help participants understand the need to create projects that truly met the communities’ needs and left the students with powerful experiences on which to reflect.

Finally, I would argue that good service-learning experiences include diverse teams of participants. Given the tendency for our schools to be relatively homogenous, good service-learning projects may require schools to partner with other schools or community groups to ensure that students get an opportunity to work alongside of people who have different experiences and backgrounds from them. The point of service-learning is to help schools in their citizenship building mission. They are not merely in place to give students an “interesting” outlet or diversion from mundane classwork. If we do service-learning correctly we can have our students explore big questions and consider big ideas. Instead of reading about “Black Lives Matter” service-learning projects can provide students with access to people in communities where they do not believe law enforcement has their best interests at heart. Instead of listening to a lecture about health care, students can work with local health clinics to learn more about the impact of limited health services for some communities. The point of this kind of service-learning is to provide needed service while helping to engage students in deep thought about major issues confronting the society. It is not busy work or charity work. It is real citizen work and perhaps the last opportunity we may have to develop thinking (and feeling), democratic citizens.

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## Foreword

Diverse communities do not need to be saved: they need to be heard, respected, appreciated, and partnered with for the ways they contribute to society. What drew me to this particular book is that the editors and authors argue that authentic service-learning is grounded in the idea of stakeholders building and sustaining partnerships, not in people swooping in to “save” a community. In order to create and sustain social action, it is crucial that those who find themselves in positions of power recognize their privilege and engage in community activism designed to work against that privilege and establish more equitable systems. This idea is a key component in an authentic service-learning approach. Too many well-intentioned programs in our society have the potential to result in making those in positions of power feel good because they either gave money or a little time to an organization. If people in power do not reflect on privilege after such an experience, then it is little better than slave owners who fed their slaves. That is not the foundation of a relationship, that is the foundation of power. Every chapter in this book addresses how essential it is for authentic service-learning to involve partners in engaging on an equal level in the learning process and in laying the groundwork for relationships.

Although individual chapters present partnerships with diverse communities and groups, from race to age to sexual identity, there is also a consistent message of addressing intersectionality. The authors and editors recognize and highlight the importance of how intersectionality is essential to addressing critical components, not surface-level issues. Once again, if you are going to talk relationships, you need to be honest, uncomfortable, and vulnerable. This book, chapter by chapter, addresses this need.

I have known and worked with the editors of *Culturally Engaging Service-Learning With Diverse Communities* for years and am delighted to be asked to write one of the Forewords. Few scholars are willing to address issues of diversity as openly and honestly as they are, and I recommend readers take the time to read and consider the “how” asked at the beginning, so you, too, can engage in authentic service-learning for true and sustainable social justice.

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## Preface

In 2015, the editors produced a sourcebook on service-learning and civic engagement. During the process of conducting research for this volume, the lead editor did a cursory search on Google Scholar for the keywords “service-learning and diversity,” “service-learning and multiculturalism,” “service-learning and minorities,” “service-learning in urban communities,” “service-learning in diverse communities,” “service-learning in cultural communities,” “service-learning and cultural competency,” and “service-learning and cultural competence.” Even taking into consideration that articles in the search results might appear in multiple returns, the results demonstrate that substantial scholarship existed at that time. Two years later in 2017, although such a search is in no way scientific, the same search was conducted, resulting in what could be deemed as an increase in scholarship in this field with an emphasis on multiculturalism and social injustice. For example, in two years, search results for “service-learning and multiculturalism” increased from 14,700 to 17,500, and search results for “service-learning in diverse communities” went from 33,600 to 44,100.

As the focus of this book is authentic community-engagement with diverse communities and groups, it seems fitting to begin with an overview about these groups, including demographic data, projections, and their experiences within the United States. Census data from 2015 show that historically and currently marginalized and underrepresented groups, also known as “minorities,” represent thirty-eight percent of the U.S. population, with demographic projections predicting that by 2055, they will be a racial majority with a fourteen percent increase (Pew Research Center, 2015). Unfortunately, this increase is in number only and does not reflect conditions, subordinate status, or experiences. The following facts demonstrate institutional injustices and reveal why some scholars still consider historically and presently racially marginalized and underrepresented groups as the social minority:

- Police brutality in the U.S. against people of color (Troutt, 2014): “Black males are 21 times more likely than their white counterparts to be shot and killed at the hands of police at a rate of 31.17 deaths per million as compared to 1.47 deaths per million for white males” (Milner, George, & Allison, 2016, p. 2).
- Persistent housing discrimination against “minorities” who are positioned to purchase homes (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013).
- Nearly 70 percent of children in U.S. working poor families are children of color (Children’s Defense Fund, 2016).
- School environments continue to be unsafe for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, queer, asexual, two-spirit (LGBTQIAA2s) students, with nearly sixty-six percent of that group experiencing discrimination and harassment (GLSEN, 2016).

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Experiences of historically and presently racially marginalized and underrepresented groups should provoke a critical awakening to scholars and practitioners in Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to adopt high-impact pedagogical practices that attempt to eradicate or dismantle institutional injustices. Because these groups are disproportionately impacted, it is no coincidence that the primary editor's cursory search on service-learning and diversity and multiculturalism resulted in a wide range of articles involving K-16 institutions using high-impact pedagogical approaches to attempt to engage in social change in communities.

It is not difficult to determine if scholars are attempting to engage in social change with students, as the research demonstrates they are in the form of Community-Service, Service-Learning, Community-Based Learning, Critical Service-Learning, Academic Service-Learning and Civic Engagement (Delano-Oriaran, 2015). The more important question is how? The editors of this book assert that the "how" attempts to impact social change, especially with affected communities and groups who continue to experience injustice and discrimination, thus the focus of this publication: *Culturally Engaging Service-Learning With Diverse Communities*. This publication emphasizes the critical part of "how." It is crucial to engage diverse groups that are enduring injustices, because they are the experts of their community, though they are not the perpetrators of the injustices committed against them.

A review of literature to determine which communities and groups IHEs engage in partnerships with reveals they are predominantly underrepresented and marginalized groups. The literature also reveals that some IHE partners who enter diverse communities to engage in service-learning may leave with unaffected negative student beliefs, reinforced white privilege, and entrenched stereotypes (Desmond, Stahl, & Graham, 2011), as a result of a lack of, or misguided approaches in, preparing them to work within and with diverse communities. The outcomes in misguided approaches prompted some scholars (Delano-Oriaran, 2012; Mitchell, 2008) to identify Authentic and Culturally Engaging Service-Learning (ACE) and Critical Service-Learning (CSL) as pedagogies that are recommended to use with--and in--diverse communities. Using such approaches to engage with these communities may support students in dismantling systematic oppressive institutions, in addition to gaining multicultural awareness and deconstructing prejudices and stereotypes.

The "how" as a pedagogical approach is rooted in high-impact practices such as Critical Service-Learning, which is service-learning "with a social justice orientation" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 51). Critical Service-Learning engages students to participate in social change in response to the needs of the community as identified by, for, and with the community. Mitchell (2015) further recommends that CSL be complemented by reflections, readings, assignments, and dialogues that reflect multiple perspectives, with an emphasis on critical thinking and action. Stevens (2003) asserts that Critical Service-Learning "is a practice and teaching philosophy seeking to partner community and academe for community betterment" (p. 25).

*Culturally Engaging Service-Learning With Diverse Communities* is intended for scholars, practitioners, students, and programs that are currently engaging or considering engaging in thoughtful and authentic partnerships with diverse groups. It is a compilation of chapters that demonstrate how various IHEs have approached culturally engaging service-learning opportunities with community partners, taking into consideration their past and present experiences, cultural norms, social agendas, community identified needs, and social injustices (white privilege, racism, ageism, prejudice, oppression).

**Preface****HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?**

The editors start with the words of noted scholars in multicultural education, who ask:

*How much do you know about the history and contemporary culture of African American women? Latin[x]? Asian Americans [Asian Pacific Americans]? Working class Americans? People with disabilities? If you are like most U.S. citizens, you may be able to cite only a few names and historic events. One way to enhance your knowledge about a group is to study it in more depth, from the group's perspective. (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p. 124)*

Like Sleeter and Grant (2009), this book frames a similar question, but the editors situate the question in the context of culturally engaging service-learning, community-based learning, or/and community-engagement: How much do we know about our partners? The editors assert it is important to have in-depth knowledge about partners prior to engaging with them.

Following Sleeter and Grant's (2009) characteristics of the single-group studies multicultural education approach, the editors suggest that IHEs conduct research on their service-learning partner/s group with a focus on (a) the group's perspective; (b) historical experiences and "how the dominant group has oppressed the group being studied" (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p. 126); (c), culture: contributions, way of life, and language; (d) current social agenda: present experiences and needs; and (e) issues of particular concern from their own perspective. The editors emphasize that race, despite its social construction, "still remains the foundation for systems of power and inequality...[and] the United States is still highly stratified along lines of race..." (Andersen & Collins, 2013, p. 1).

The editors attempt to provide an overview of presently and historically underrepresented groups that are typically engaged in service-learning with the K-16 community but emphatically note that this overview does not do justice to the breadth or depth of the stories, histories, experiences, cultures, languages, and degrees of injustices endured by the groups referenced in this text. They also caution readers of this volume to take into consideration that many of the partners that IHEs collaborate with experience oppression, domination, prejudice, discrimination, and other forms of injustices on multiple, intersecting levels (Collins, 2002; Choo & Ferree, 2010), resulting in varied experiences for individuals and groups.

**AFRICAN AMERICANS**

Referred to by some people as Blacks and as African Americans by many more, this group in 2015 represented 13 percent of the U.S. population, or 42 million people (Schaefer, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Analysts predict that by 2060, those who identify as Black alone or in combination with another race, will make up 74.5 million or 17.9 percent of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Despite past and present contributions, they are still entrenched in a system of institutional inequalities. The National Urban League's "State of Black in America" (SOBA) report revealed that:

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*Since 1976, the Black unemployment rate has consistently remained about twice that of the white rate across time, regardless of educational attainment. The household income gap remains at about 60 cents for every dollar. Black Americans are only slightly less likely today to live in poverty than they were in 1976. (National Urban League, 2016, p. 5)*

The SOBA report also identified key areas the nation needs to invest in over the next five years to dismantle the systems and apparatuses of institutional oppression, including universal early childhood education, a federal living wage of \$15 per hour indexed to inflation, funding urban infrastructure, expanded homeownership strategies, doubling the Pell Grant program, high-speed broadband and technology for all, and increased federal school funding to help eliminate resource equity gaps (National Urban League, 2016, p. 6).

Blacks or/and African Americans, as a socially constructed group, are highly diverse and include U.S. born and naturalized citizens with diverse religious, cultural, linguistic, sexual orientation, and economic identities. The U.S. is home to the largest number of Black immigrants (Mitchell, 2016, para 6), who come from countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria and Ethiopia; Spanish-speaking countries such as the Dominican Republic; and Europe and South and East Asia (Anderson, 2015, para. 6). Furthermore, Black immigrants, specifically Nigerian immigrants, are considered the most educated in the U.S. (Casimir, 2008). As IHEs continue to engage in opportunities with African Americans and/or Blacks, Moule (2012) notes that the following issues still shape their experiences: the African legacy rich in cultures, customs, contributions, and achievement; and the psychological and economic subjugation of people instituted during slavery but still entrenched in present-day society through racism and discrimination (p. 273).

## ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICANS

Asian Pacific Americans are far from a monolithic group. Using the term Asian Pacific Americans is one way to refer to the peoples from countries in the Far East, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific Islands. According to the Pew Research Center (2015), Asian Pacific Americans make up 5.8% of the U.S. populations and are quickly starting to outnumber the Latinx/Hispanic population. Countries represented by 83% of the Asian Pacific American population are (by order of largest population) China, the Philippines, India, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. Among U.S. demographic categories, Asian Pacific Americans have the highest income, the highest education levels, and are also the fastest-growing group (Pew, 2012).

One of the most significant issues facing Asian Pacific Americans is the idea of the Asian population as a “model minority.” In *The Myth of the Model Minority: Asian Americans Facing Racism*, Chou and Feagin (2014) discuss the pressure to excel placed on members of the community--especially immigrants from impoverished nations--despite the racism, sexism, and poverty that affect them. Chow (2011) notes how the stigma of being a model minority acts to silence the complexity of the community. The idea of a model minority also may skew outsiders’ perceptions of the serious issues being faced and downplay the oppression the community experiences. The editors believe the racism faced by Asian Pacific Americans in the U.S. places them at a disadvantage despite statistics.



**Preface****NATIVE AMERICANS/AMERICAN INDIANS/FIRST NATIONS**

One of the groups too often left out of conversations about race is indigenous to this continent: Native American Indians or members of First Nations. Even at “diversity” conferences, the phrase one often hears is “Black and Brown children.” The lack of acknowledgement about the oppression faced both historically and currently by indigenous populations speaks to the ability of those in privileged positions to ignore and refuse to address existing inequities.

The 2015 U.S. Census states there are 5.4 million American Indians and Alaskan Natives, including those of more than one race, which is 2% of the population. The Census Bureau predicts that by 2060, those who identify as American Indian or Alaskan Native will increase to approximately 10.2 million. The U.S. Department of Interior identifies 567 federally recognized American Indian Nation and Alaskan Native groups.

Although the Black Lives Matter movement has brought to the forefront issues facing African Americans and deaths through officer-involved shootings, it is important to note that members of Native groups also continue to experience police brutality. The Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice collected data from 1999-2011 on deaths at the hands of police. The data in the report notes that “the group most likely to be killed by law enforcement is Native Americans, followed by African Americans, Latinos[Latinx], Whites, and Asian Americans” (Males, 2014).

Native youths also experience inequitable treatment at a rate exceeding other groups. In 2015, the Lakota People’s Law Project released the report “Native Lives Matter,” addressing the inequities facing Native Americans and Alaskan Natives in the judicial system. The report states, “More commonly than any other ethnic group, Native Americans suffer the two most severe punishments that juvenile justice can offer, out-of-home placements and a transfer to the adult system” (Native Lives Matter, 2015, p. 4). In 2008, the report states,

*The national average for new commitments to adult state prisons by Native American youth is almost twice (1.84 times) that for white youth. In the states with enough Native Americans to facilitate comparisons, Native American youth were committed to adult prison from 1.3 to 18.1 times the rate of white youth.*

In terms of education, according to DeVoe, Darling-Churchill and Snyder (2008) the current rate of those in the U.S. who receive a graduate or professional degree is ten percent for the total population but only five percent for American Indians and Alaska Natives. The gap is even greater when one looks at Bachelor’s degrees, where only 9% percent of American Indians graduate as compared to 19% for the general U.S. population. The Pew Research Center (2012) shares a dropout [pushout] rate of 11% for American Indian and Alaska Natives as compared to 13% Hispanic, 9% Black, 5% White, and 3% Asian.

For poverty issues, members of American Indian and Alaskan Native groups do not fare much better. According to “American Indians and Alaska Natives--By the Numbers” (2014), the poverty rate for the nation is 14.7%; however, 26.6% of single-race American Indians and Alaska Natives were identified as living in poverty. The fact sheet also notes that the U.S. median household income is \$55,775, compared to \$38,530 for single-race American Indians and Alaskan Native households.

It is critical these issues are at the forefront of service-learning and civic engagement in order to address historical and current inequities. Approaching these concerns through a white savior mentality will not address the magnitude of the inequities. It is the goal of these chapters to explore service-learning opportunities that could bring real change to the community.

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### **ELDERLY**

The report “Aging in the United States” (Mather, Jacobsen, & Pollard, 2015) states that because of the increasing lifespan of those over 65 in the United States, this population will double from 46 million to 98 million by 2060. Looking at income issues, the elderly appear to be more secure than in previous years because of social security payments; however, when comparing across racial groups and gender groups, women make up 12% of people over 65 living in poverty while men in the same group are only 7%. Non-Hispanic whites over 65 living in poverty comprise 8% compared to 18% of Latinxs/Hispanics and 19% of African Americans (p. 8).

The National Women’s Law Center reports that women are “more than 35 percent likely to live in poverty than men (Tucker & Lowell, 2016). The same report finds that 7.1% of white women live in poverty but the numbers change dramatically when looking at specific racial groups: 23.1% of African American women, 22.7% of Native women, 20.9% of Hispanic women and 11.7% of Asian women live in poverty (Tucker & Lowell, 2016). The National Snapshot report continues by sharing data supporting that one in three single mother families are in poverty. The report also discusses how Medicare pays for only a little over half of all long term care needs and that women use more long-term care than men which is not paid for by Medicare. The emotional needs of those in long-term care, many of whom have no family close by, are as essential as the physical needs, and these emotional needs may be met by quality service-learning programs.

### **LATINX/HISPANIC**

One of the fastest growing U.S. demographic segments, the Latinx/Hispanic population makes up about 17% of the total. However, they are overrepresented in the specific areas of poverty (28%) and children living in poverty (37%) (Krogstad, 2014). According to the Pew Research Center the two top issues facing the Hispanic community in the U.S. are education and the economy (<http://www.pewresearch.org/>).

America’s Hispanic Population: An Economic Snapshot (2013) states that the Hispanic population is on average younger than other racial groups, and that of the Hispanic population over 25, one in five lacks a high school diploma (p. 2). Data collected by Pew claims the Latinx/Hispanic population was hurt more than any other racial group by the 2008 recession with wealth assets falling by 66%, unemployment rising from 6.3% to 11% and poverty climbing from 20.6 to 26.6% (Krogstad, 2016). The report finds that even though the Latinx/Hispanic employment data has improved, in September, 2013 the unemployment rate stood at 9%, a number which is 1.9% higher than the national average. The “Conditions of Latinos in Education” report (Santiago, Gladeano, & Taylor, 2015) finds that the enrollment of Hispanics in public elementary and secondary schools has “increased from 19 to 24 percent of all students” (p. 3) With the knowledge of the importance of early education, the report raises a concern when recognizing that “28% of Hispanic children (3-5 years) were enrolled in nursery school or pre- school, compared to African Americans (38%) and Whites (33%)” (p. 5). These educational realities are going to impact on employment which impacts on income which impacts on wealth. It is critical to disrupt the cycle created by the systemic inequities ingrained in this society that create emotional and structural barriers for the Latinx/Hispanic community.

**Preface****WORKING POOR**

Looking at the overwhelming need for service-learning in the communities predominantly addressed in this text, one has to recognize the intersectionality and the relationship of poverty across groups. The Center for Poverty Research at the University of California Davis defines the working poor as those who spend “27 weeks or more in a year in the labor force either working or looking for work but whose incomes fall below the poverty level” (Who Are the Working Poor?, 2017). According to the Working Poor Families Project, almost “one in three working U.S. families struggles to meet basic needs” and “the bottom 20% of working families receive less than 5% of the working pie.” This organization also reports that there are more than 48 million people, including 23.9 million children, currently living in poverty in the United States.

Turning to look at the intersection of poverty and race, the Center for Poverty Research at UC Davis says 11.7% of the working poor are Black, 11.7% identify as Latinx/Hispanic, 5.5% are White, and 4.3% Asian. The Children’s Defense Fund says in *The State of America’s Children* (2014) that “Children of color were almost half (47.2%) of the total U.S. child population.” This number is one of the highest rates of poverty for children in industrialized nations. The impact of poverty on the elderly and the young cannot be overlooked, but it is the intersection that is overwhelmingly depressing. Despite the War on Poverty President Johnson declared more than 50 years ago, The Children’s Defense Fund shares that “Nearly 60 percent of all our children and more than 80 percent of our Black and nearly 75 percent of our Latino children cannot read or compute at grade level in fourth and eighth grade and so many drop out of school before graduating” (*The State of America’s Children*, 2014). It is the editors’ belief that poverty is an essential element that must be addressed when developing quality service-learning projects for working with our diverse communities.

**LGBTQIA**

Unlike other demographic groups, it is difficult to provide exact numbers for people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, and asexual (LGBTQIA). These are members of an often invisible minority, given that self-identification and being out in some venues remains unsafe for many members of the LGBTQIA community. Although some research (Gates, 2011) puts the U.S. LGBTQIA population at just under 4%, a more recent study (Coffman, Coffman, & Marzilli Ericson, 2013) that used a “veiled method” to provide greater anonymity suggests that the number may be higher, as poll respondents are often unwilling to reveal their sexual orientation and/or gender identity. Despite significant civil rights gains during the last decade (Liptak, 2015), recent legislation has sought to roll back many protections for LGBTQIA people (American Civil Liberties Union, 2017).

The lack of submissions for this volume on service-learning with LGBTQIA communities serves to highlight the difficult issues inherent in such projects. Factors such the limited number of potential community partners, the danger of outing participants, and the need for carefully prepared service-learners may be among the reasons that little scholarship exists.



## Preface

### ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The book is organized into 17 chapters, presenting service-learning models that recognize how systemic social injustices continue to pervade society. These models thrive on agency and advocacy; cultural humility; identifying, challenging, and changing the status quo and oppressive societal institutions; reciprocity and collaborative engagement; and critical social justice awareness (Delano-Oriaran, 2015). The volume opens with chapters focused on race and then moves to ones dealing with other demographic markers such as social class, age, sexual/gender identity, before closing with a chapter focused on the theory of community-based research.

Chapter 1 highlights a 12-year service-learning partnership between a local Native American, Haude-nosaunee community and a predominantly White, comprehensive, liberal arts college in the northeastern region of the United States. It shows how cultural humility and service-learning are applied to expose and engage students to the historical and contemporary trauma and realities faced by Indigenous communities within the U.S.

Chapter 2 examines issues affecting cross-cultural service-learning by discussing pedagogical strategies adopted in a partnership with Pine Ridge (Lakota) and Wind River (Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho) reservations. The chapter includes Indigenous voices of partners and scholars who present critical perspectives on pedagogy and partnerships.

Chapter 3 examines issues and opportunities for high impact service-learning practices with Black communities. It offers suggestions for engaging respectfully with African American community partners.

Chapter 4 presents a case study that describes how gathering oral histories for a community connected students from a university with a neighboring community that is predominantly African American and undergoing gentrification. The experience exposed students to some of the history of racial injustice and gave community members a chance to preserve their history and experiences.

Chapter 5 provides a critical voice: that of the community partners. In this chapter, the authors examine the unintended outcomes of a university-middle school partnership, that are equally valuable for all engaged in partnerships with K-12 schools.

Chapter 6 presents a model that the largest Asian American studies department in the U.S. has used to infuse culturally engaging service-learning into its curriculum. This chapter contextualizes current relationships and practices within institutionally structured community service-learning (CSL) designated courses.

Chapter 7 discusses a community-based engagement opportunity with a Hmong community that employs oral storytelling to create transformative social change. The stories act as counterpoints to the often stereotypical images of the Hmong in the media as well as scholarship, while preserving their rich culture, history, and traditions.

Chapter 8 presents the findings of an ethnographic study of a Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR) guided service-learning project conducted with Latinx students in a Spanish for Native Speakers course at a public high school in the southern United States. It offers service-learning practitioners a critical framework for structured engagement opportunities that promote youth empowerment and positive identity with some Latinx students.

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Chapter 9 examines an approach that engages self-identified students of color in a Predominantly White Institution (PWI), many of whom are first-generation college students. The chapter highlights how students of color learn about race, class, gender, language, citizenship status, phenotype, sexuality, etc. to challenge the status quo while also actively engaging in service-learning with diverse communities. The authors share how they use this approach as a method to retain students of color (SOC) in higher education.

Chapter 10 provides an overview of a culturally engaging service-learning partnership that facilitates high school achievement and college awareness with Latinx students connecting high school students with graduate and undergraduate college students. This chapter shares how college students are engaged in college seminars on issues of white privilege, and oppression, in preparing them to authentically engage with community partners.

Chapter 11 offers a community-university partnership model of service-learning with students from working backgrounds in an urban community. The partnership adopts an intergenerational and intercultural approach to engaging middle school youth of color with an emphasis on promoting agency and efficacy through a youth summit oriented on anti-violence messages.

Chapter 12 describes and analyzes a writing assignment, an oral history project, developed for a college-level service-learning composition class. The assignment pairs writers with community partners to compose a joint memoir that offers insights to all.

Chapter 13 offers the voices of college students engaging in service along with children and families who attend a culturally diverse urban Title One school.

Chapter 14 highlights the lack of scholarship involving service-learning with LGBTQ communities. It examines the few projects involving these often invisible minorities and offers suggestions for educators who are considering partnering with these communities.

Chapter 15 presents a service-learning partnership between two refugee resettlement agencies and a school of nursing. The partnership encourages students to develop an awareness of global health issues while working locally with refugee families.

Chapter 16 offers an intergenerational service-learning project that matches undergraduate students and older adult volunteers to reduce negative stereotypes and ageism. Students meet with their partners to conduct a life review and gather information to assist with writing the older adults' memoirs.

Chapter 17 shows how community-based research could be used to engage students in developing or enhancing their civic skills. It shows the importance of equal roles, mutual respect, and cooperation and highlights how all partners (colleges, K-12 school and communities) benefit.

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# Chapter 1

## Critical Service–Learning and Cultural Humility: Engaging Students, Engaging Communities

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### ABSTRACT

*Racial, ethnic, and cultural context impacts how communities perceive problems, and ultimately their perception of what is deemed helpful. Thus, a lack of awareness of these particularities can render service-learning efforts ineffective. This chapter highlights a 12-year service-learning partnership between a predominantly White, comprehensive, liberal arts college and the local Haudenosaunee community. Pedagogical strategies utilizing the Six Requirements (6Rs) of service-learning and informed by cultural humility act as a transformative way to facilitate student readiness to engage with the said community. Cultural humility is positioned as a process that transforms service-learning into critical service-learning, as it enhances students' ability to engage in critical self-reflection, mitigating the toxic elements and empathic failures of uninformed service-learning efforts. This chapter contributes to more mindful service-learning efforts, challenging all to work with service-learning partners in a manner that keeps community voice and choice at the core of service.*

### INTRODUCTION

What happens when aspects of power and privilege play out within the context of service-learning? And, what happens when the acts of oppression that one intends to stand against are unintentionally undermined by a lack of awareness? While uncomfortable to consider, elements of power, privilege, and oppression

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are inherent in even the sincerest efforts to help, leaving communities of color contending with well-intentioned but unhelpful responses from outsiders (Deegan, 1990; Whilde, 2006). Furthermore, this sense of estrangement is compounded, as the historical experiences and contemporary realities of communities of color are silenced by the larger society. Because racial, ethnic, and cultural context impacts how communities perceive problems, and ultimately the perception of what is deemed helpful, a lack of awareness of these particularities can render service-learning efforts ineffective. To emphasize the significance of awareness, this chapter introduces the notion of *cultural humility* (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998) within the practice of *critical service-learning* (Mitchell, 2008).

Entailing a complex negotiation of difference, cultural humility is a process that requires scholars, professionals, and students to continually engage in critical self-reflection, actively work to bring power imbalances in check, and develop and maintain mutually respectful partnerships with communities (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). Aligning with cultural humility's cross-examination of self for the purpose of deeper relationships with "others"; critical service-learning calls for the interrogation of systemic and structural inequality. Consequently, this interrogation requires scholars, professionals, and students to question the role we play in maintaining oppressive social, economic, and political power distributions, for the purpose of developing authentic relationships (Mitchell, 2008).

Within counseling, therapeutic, and research contexts, the catalytic potential of cultural humility has been emphasized. Specifically, a cultural humility orientation in counseling and therapeutic contexts has the capacity to facilitate stronger working alliances, elicit more positive outcomes, and contribute to overall progress (Davis, Worthington & Hook, 2010; Exline & Geyer, 2004; Harris & Didericksen, 2014; Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington & Utsey, 2013; Tangney, 2000, 2005; Willis & Allen, 2011). Furthermore, within the context of cross-cultural qualitative research, a cultural humility approach was found to challenge researchers' beliefs and assumptions that are shaped by power and privilege, develop mutual esteem between researchers and participants, and increase the prospects of a richer yield of data (Willis & Allen, 2011). Combined, cultural humility and critical service-learning are positioned as a transformative way to facilitate student readiness to engage with communities of color, specifically the Haudenosaunee people, also referred to as the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. While this chapter breaks new ground by integrating cultural humility and critical service-learning, doing so offers great promise to culturally engaging service-learning efforts, as students' ability to engage in critical self-reflection is enhanced, mitigating the toxic elements and empathic failures of uninformed service-learning efforts (Deegan, 1990; Whilde, 2006). This chapter highlights a 12-year service-learning partnership between a predominantly White, comprehensive, liberal arts college in the northeastern region of the United States and the local Native American, Haudenosaunee community. As such, this chapter discusses the Native American experience of historical trauma and resilience, as the information provides students with the historical and contemporary contextual realities faced by Indigenous communities within the U.S. Pedagogical strategies utilizing the Six Requirements (6Rs) of service-learning and informed by cultural humility act as a transformative way to facilitate student readiness to engage with communities.

## **BACKGROUND**

It is necessary to state that the authors understand cultural humility as an extension of cultural competence, with competence viewed as a foundation on which humility builds (Ross, 2010; Terrance, 2016). Moreover, cultural humility is viewed as a disposition that develops over time (Tangney, 2000, 2005;



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Terrance, 2016). It is as a result of this disposition that the limit of one's own knowledge is recognized. Moreover, the development of this disposition can be initiated through external feedback; and requires individuals to reconcile the tension that exists between their role as sage and that of student (Langton, 1998; Schuessler, Wilder, & Byrd, 2012; Taylor, 1994; Terrance, 2016).

Given this understanding of cultural humility, it is also imperative to articulate the three underlying beliefs that frame this chapter. First, aligning with *critical race theory* (CRT) (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993), the authors assert that the power, privilege, and oppression must be considered in all contexts and social interactions. Second, endorsing the presence of *implicit bias* (Kirwan Institute, 2016), the authors believe that in order to see change in our own behavior, as well as others', the unconscious aspects of thought must be brought to bear. Finally, in consideration of *transformation theory* (Mezirow, 1991) the authors believe in the malleability of one's sense of self, thought, and behavior, thus it emphasizes a need for discomfort brought about by "disorienting dilemmas". In view of this, it is believed that the sense of discomfort brought about by increased awareness can be facilitated through the provision of service-learning experiences fused with rigorous feedback and critical reflection hence nurturing a humble stance (Watkins & Braun, 2005; Watkins, Hayes & Sarubbi, 2015).

### **Cultural Humility: Articulating the Cultural Context**

*Cultural authenticity: what does it mean to be culturally authentic—a 'real' Indian? That's hard to say because it means different things to different people. Some people automatically think of blood quantum, others think rez Indian or city Indian. There might be the question of, do you participate in ceremonies. But what I think is that it's in a person's state of mind—what do you believe, what do you stand for, how do what you do and the way you live serve our people? All of this can only be known through being in relationship (M. Terrance, Sr., Mohawk, service-learning partner, personal communication, March 30, 2017).*

While it is necessary to illustrate the cultural context that provides the foundation for this work, the authors recognize that the complexity of culture undermines the ability to predict individuals' beliefs and behaviors (Hunt, 2001). As such, the authors approach this discussion with great sensitivity; and it is within this discussion that the differences between *cultural competence* and cultural humility are illuminated.

*Culture* has been defined as "a shared system of values, beliefs, and learned patterns of behaviors" (Carrillo, Green, & Betancourt, 1999, p. 829); and as a "roadmap that tells us how to live and what kind of person to be to see ourselves as having value and significance in a meaningful world" (Salzman, M, 2001, p. 186). Yet, when one thinks of culture, the term is most often associated with what people do, as opposed to who people are. In turn, this stripping away of individuals' and groups' humanity also takes away from the ability to fully engage in relationship building across difference. As such, cultural competence, in and of itself, is viewed as contributing to this barrier.

Specifically, an aspect that emerges from the examination of the term "competency" is that it is most often associated with notions of achievement and mastery (Masten, Hubbard, Gest, Tellegen, Garmezy, & Ramirez, 1999). Hence, the idea of being or becoming competent, in fact, seems to promote the same ethnocentric, patriarchal, and hegemonically influenced discourse that has shaped the disparaging beliefs put forth regarding people of color, generally, and Native American people, specifically. To believe that one could come to fully 'know' about another group of people by reading a chapter minimizes not

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only that group's sense of personhood, but their lived experiences as well. It is along these lines that the tendency of competency-based models to codify characteristics of race, ethnicity, and culture into a set of decontextualized traits paradoxically perpetuates the very behavior that they were meant to prevent—stereotyping (Hunt, 2001).

Therefore, in elaborating the discussion of Haudenosaunee cultures, the authors emphasize cultural humility's way of 'being' in contrast to cultural competence's way of 'doing', recognizing the limits of our own knowledge; the heterogeneity that exists within and across Haudenosaunee communities; knowing that what is true for some is not true for all; and encouraging scholars, professionals, and students to have a willingness to be led by their service-learning partners, whoever they may be (Freeman, 2004; Masterson, n.d.; Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998; Thomas, Mitchell, & Arseneau, 2015).

## THE HAUDENOSAUNEE CONFEDERACY: A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

*What you call the United States, we Indians call the Great Turtle Island. This is where the Creator planted us and when He did, he made us free. Europeans were not planted here, but you came here because you wanted to be free like us. In our original Instructions we were told that nobody owned the land except the Creator. That's why we welcomed you. But Europeans claimed the land they lived on was theirs. That was funny to our people because we know that nobody could own the land. Then the Europeans decided that all of Great Turtle Island was theirs to own. That wasn't funny to us anymore (Tadodaho Chief Leon Shenandoah, as cited in Wall, 2001, p. 22).*

The legend of The Peacemaker, known as Deganawidah, is the spiritual master who brought together warring Northeastern tribes to form the Iroquois Confederacy centuries ago (Wallace, 1994). The epic of Deganawidah offers historical and cultural teachings that chronicle The Peacemaker's role to bring order and justice during times of chaos and violence amongst the tribes. According to legend, The Peacemaker's efforts brought together the nations to establish the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. Also known as the Haudenosaunee, or "The People of the Longhouse", the Iroquois Confederacy is comprised of six distinct Indigenous nations—the Mohawk, the Oneida, the Onondaga, the Cayuga, the Seneca, and the Tuscarora (Freeman, 2004; Masterson, n.d.; Waterman & Arnold, 2010). According to Onondaga Chief Irving Poweless, Jr. (Tucker, 1999), The Peacemaker gave the Haudenosaunee a way to conduct themselves to ensure the Nations would "endure through time".

The Peacemaker's legend continues to influence contemporary Native American systems of governance, and it is the alliance between the Six Nations that provided the framework for our own U.S. democracy, informing the writing of the U.S. Constitution (Tucker, 1999; Wallace, 1994). Furthermore, the Iroquois Confederacy, a spiritual and traditional based governing and social structure known as The Great Law, guides the Haudenosaunee worldview; a worldview that is framed by reciprocity, collective consciousness, oral tradition, and cultural resilience (Freeman, 2004; Masterson, n.d.; Thomas et al., 2015; Waterman & Arnold, 2010).

Testing this resilience, the threat to the Haudenosaunee way of life seemed especially doomed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as encroachment on Indigenous land and sovereignty persisted (John Mohawk as cited in Wallace, 1994). While drastically reduced by centuries of colonialism, traditional Haudenosaunee lands expanded beyond the boundaries of New York State into areas of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Ontario, and

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Quebec (Freeman, 2004). Protection of Native sovereignty and land came with costs, as governmental entities and Haudenosaunee Nations faced off threatening lives and traditional ways of living—“If we don’t keep up the ceremonies then Mother Earth will start to weep. She will be sad and the people will no longer be able to hear who they are and what their abilities are. That’s when the people will suffer” (Tadodaho Chief Leon Shenandoah, as cited in Wall, 2001, p. 26; Freeman, 2004; Wallace, 1994).

In relation to our service-learning partners, *Ganondagan State Historic Site*, part of New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, is the site of a 17<sup>th</sup> century Seneca town. When it was a thriving village in the 1600’s, it served as the home place of approximately 4,500 Seneca people who occupied an estimated 150 bark longhouses. In 1687, a campaign from New France (modern day Canada) was ordered to march to Ganondagan and destroy the village. The inhabitants of Ganondagan caught wind of the campaign, ambushed the New France army and fled to the next town, but not before burning their houses, denying the French victory.

Today, Ganondagan’s mission is to educate the public about Seneca and Haudenosaunee culture. It boasts an art and education center, a life-sized replica bark longhouse, and walking trails. The site employs knowledgeable interpreters who are available to provide tours to individuals and groups. In addition, Ganondagan partners with a volunteer-based organization, *The Friends of Ganondagan*, a not for profit, 501c3 organization that serves to “honor and promote Haudenosaunee history and culture and to strengthen traditions through inspirational and transformational programming and other activities at Ganondagan” (Friends of Ganondagan, 2016).

### **Community Barriers and Assets: Understanding Historical Trauma**

*Trauma as a result of deliberate intent produces a profound sense of dismay and alienation. Intentional violence threatens basic assumptions about an orderly, just world and the intrinsic invulnerability and worthiness of the individual (Sotero, 2006, p.95)*

Historical trauma considers the psychological and emotional consequences of historical events on the present functioning of individuals and groups. The concept of historical trauma provides a macro-level framework that is used to compare the life course of populations exposed to temporally situated trauma with that of unexposed populations (Sotero, 2006). In her work in the public health realm, Sotero (2006) outlined four assumptions of historical trauma theory: 1) that the mass trauma is deliberate and systematically inflicted upon a target population by a dominating population; 2) the trauma continues over an extended period of time and is not limited to a single event; 3) the traumatic experiences are resounding, creating a universal experience of trauma throughout the population; and 4) the weight of the trauma experience derails the population from its natural, historical trajectory resulting in a legacy of physical, psychological, social, and economic disparities that persist across generations.

Research in historical trauma has considered the experiences of various racial and ethnic populations, including African American (DeGruy, 2005), Asian Americans (Liem, 2007), Hispanic and/or Latino populations (Estrada, 2009), and Jewish Holocaust survivors (Felsen & Erlich, 1990). In the 1980’s, Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart began to conceptualize the experience of historical trauma in relation to the LaKota Nation, as she questioned why the “American dream” was not being realized by Native American people (Brave Heart, 2000). Historical trauma was referred to by Brave Heart (1998) as “cumulative” or multi/intergenerational trauma. Yet despite decades of research, according to the Six Nations

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Mohawk scholar Freeman (2004), a large portion of the general public does not know the overwhelming impact of historical trauma on both the collective and individual well-being of Haudenosaunee people.

In the experience of U.S. Indigenous populations as a whole, colonialism instituted elements of social order that structured and institutionalized oppression, establishing a foundation for the perpetual marginalization of a population of people. With regard to the Haudenosaunee experience specifically, the legacy of trauma associated with colonization included forced migration and assimilation through both the reservation system and institutions such as Carlisle Indian Industrial School and Thomas Indian School systems. The experiences within these institutions purposed to “kill the Indian save the man” have reverberated across generations, contributing to high rates of suicide, homicide, violence, abuse, alcoholism, and significant loss of individual and collective identity (Brave Heart, 1998, 2000; Freeman, 2004; Weaver & Brave Heart, 1999). Nevertheless, despite these historical and contemporary realities, Native American people continue to resist marginalization and remain resilient in the face of oppression.

*There have been many changes in our land since the arrival of the Europeans. Some of the changes have been good and some of the changes have not been good. Many things have changed. Many things have not changed. The Haudenosaunee still carry on the ways of our ancestors in the same manner as our ancestors (Chief Irving Powless, Jr. as cited by Tucker, 1999, p. 18).*

When discussing *resilience*, the authors endorse the conceptualization put forth by Thomas et al. (2015), a conceptualization that shifts the focus from individual hardiness and/or vulnerability to that of a collective experience. As such, Thomas et al. (2015) state that to maintain an individualistic view of resilience, “fails to acknowledge historical, political, social, economic and environmental realities of indigenous communities” (p. 1). Specifically, resilience is articulated as a collective strength that acts as both a product and producer of cultural knowledge (Thomas et al., 2015). The root of this resilience is said to lie in Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, and connection to cultural and ceremonial practices (Thomas et al., 2015). In sum, it is the authors’ understanding of both the historical and present-day richness of Haudenosaunee cultures, and the holistic awareness of barriers and assets associated with the Haudenosaunee community at Ganondagan that provide a foundation for culturally engaging service-learning (Freeman, 2004).

### **CULTURALLY ENGAGING SERVICE-LEARNING: TRAUMA-INFORMED YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

What is trauma? The authors often ask students this question. And, what is heard in their responses is something that the authors have been guilty of—defining the term based on a narrow perspective, emphasizing single events, individual pain, and quantifiable symptoms. A definition that has been enriched by cultural humility, what is now known is that the experience of trauma goes beyond the individual, permeating lines of kinship and community, becoming collectively embedded and individually embodied. But, how does one teach such a concept? What responsibility does faculty have to the individuals who share trauma narratives, and to the students who witness them? As faculty, a cultural humility approach warrants that the responsibility is first to invite those who own the narratives to tell their stories; and second to challenge those who witness these narratives to see themselves in what we often think of as ‘other people’s problems’.

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Undergirded by a commitment to positive youth development and social justice, *Trauma-Informed Youth Development*, the undergraduate course highlighted in this chapter, is housed within the *Community Youth Development (CYD)* program. As an interdisciplinary course, students across academic disciplines and class standing are welcomed. Placing emphasis on critical thinking, reflection, and integration of knowledge and skill, the goal of the course is to increase students' understanding of the risk and protective factors associated with history, culture, and the social environment impacting the lives of youth. Students enrolled in Trauma-Informed Youth Development typically take the course as a liberal arts elective within their academic major. By providing a foundational understanding of ecological systems theory, students' awareness of contextual risk and protective factors associated with sociocultural and historical factors increases, as well as their ability to draw connections between the impacts of past events on present behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). More specifically, the course is designed to guide students into a deeper level of 1) critical thinking and analysis, leading students to develop a broader understanding of trauma and resilience through the integration of historical and cultural trauma; 2) understanding in relation to the historical and contemporary factors that contribute to experiences of traumatic stress in people of color, particularly Haudenosaunee people; and 3) critical self-awareness, challenging students to develop a more informed way of engaging across difference.

As the majority of students enrolled in the course want to work with people in some capacity (i.e. youth work, social work, psychology, education, nursing, etc.), the need to understand that development and behavior do not occur in a vacuum, but within a multifaceted context is crucial to effective engagement. Additionally, as most U.S. institutions of higher education continue to lack diversity, the individuals who serve will most often look, live, and see the world differently from those who are being served (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Consequently, when differences exist in the context of these relationships—service-learning or otherwise—those charged with providing a service are bound to be faced with situations that trigger negative personal responses that may in fact undermine their ability to engage. Thus, maintaining a keen awareness of self and a commitment to self-evaluation and critique works to moderate these responses, facilitating a stronger alliance (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998).

In light of the racial, ethnic, and cultural context of the institution—according to 2016 statistics, students were primarily at the undergraduate level (2,159 undergraduate/724 graduate), with 77% identifying as White, 6.7% Black or African American, 5.3% Hispanic, 4% as Asian, and 0% as American Indian or Alaska Native—the reality is that students typically begin the course having little knowledge of, or interaction with Native American<sup>1</sup> people. Thus, it is the intersection of the historical and contemporary legacies of trauma and resilience, guided by cultural humility's commitment to critical self-reflection that creates a culturally engaging framework for students to explore the factors that impact youth's transition into adulthood.

With this goal in mind, the opportunity to broaden students' understanding of these realities is enriched through a 12-year service-learning partnership with individuals from Mohawk, Oneida, and Seneca Nations, some of whom are paid staff for Ganondagan State Historic Park and volunteers of its allied organization, the Friends of Ganondagan. The partnership has been sustained through the alignment of core values with Ganondagan's community outreach practices and the authors' service-learning pedagogy that emphasizes an appreciation of unique individual strengths that coalesce into collaborative synergy; a recognition of multiple perspectives and ways of knowing; the development of mutual outcomes; the collaborative determination of meaningful service activities; the incorporation of reflective time; and relationship-centered task completion (Watkins & Printup-Davis, 2007).



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As a result of these partnerships, students are able to witness first-person narratives of trauma and resilience. For example, as a part of Ganondagan's mission to educate and inform non-Native people, Haudenosaunee oral traditions serve as a primary source of scholarship. Ganondagan staff share their cultural worldview along with intergenerational legacies of trauma and resilience as they explain the Peacemaker's instructions of the Great Law, or their family's experiences in the Carlisle Indian Industrial School or Thomas Indian School. These sacred narratives of resilience and trauma permit students to witness policies and practices meant to eliminate Indigenous people and their cultural identity. Students are distraught and in disbelief as they learn of American governmental policies that have profoundly impacted our service-learning partners.

It is the opportunity to witness these narratives that initiates the process of cultural humility and personal transformation. Through this witnessing, students recognize our Haudenosaunee partners from Ganondagan as the true subject matter expert. Their personal sharing and historical perspectives become the "instructions" for service-learning activities. As a result, students gain factual knowledge, improving their ability to apply course material, and develop self-awareness. But more importantly, these narratives promote students' deeper connection and commitment to more mindful engagement in the service-learning project:

*When coming into this class, I had many views about the Native American culture and they were not favorable...The first day of class was interesting for me, because we discussed trauma with the intent of connecting it to Native American trauma...I kept my mouth shut because I didn't want everyone to know how prejudiced I was...the moment it became real was when [our community partners] told us their stories. I could not shut it out any longer at this point. [Our community partners] were there in front of me, in the flesh telling me their life stories, the stories that I had been pretending didn't exist for so many people... [Our community partners] inspired me to open myself up. They didn't hold back their stories, or their emotions, and there is so much that I have been able to learn and grow from because of them (College senior, spring 2014).*

### **INTEGRATING SERVICE-LEARNING**

Our 12 year service-learning partnership has contributed an array of programming support, and resource development to advance the mission of the Friends of Ganondagan's, particularly: 1) encouraging respect and understanding between Native Americans and non-native Americans; 2) collaborating with New York State, Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), and the local community to support and develop Ganondagan State Historic Site; and 3) extending values to the public that are alternatives to the popular culture (Friends of Ganondagan, 2016)

As an experiential education approach that is premised on "reciprocal learning" (Sigmon, 1979), the emphasis of the Trauma-Informed Youth Development—Ganondagan State Historic Site service-learning partnership gives equal weight to service as well as learning whereby the students and the community partners benefit equally (Keen & Hall, 2009; Samuelson, Smith, Stevenson, & Ryan, 2013). Because service-learning provides students with direct and intentionally planned engagement with individuals who are simultaneously dedicated to increase awareness of and living the historical legacy of cultural invisibility and inter-group ignorance, service-learning becomes an interactional model of learning and

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participation, in which students, faculty, and community partners are mutually engaged in performing acts of service together (Kinloch, Nemeth, & Patterson, 2015).

Specifically, service-learning activities embedded within the course are developed based on Ganondagan administrative leaderships' priorities. With regard to co-creating service-learning projects that benefit the mission of Ganondagan and the Friends of Ganondagan, students serve in various Ganondagan-sponsored and Haudenosaunee-led events, as well as provide indirect service to support administrative tasks that the staff and volunteers have limited time to perform. All service activities occur side by side with the cultural guidance and administrative mentoring of Ganondagan or Friends of Ganondagan staff. Additionally, three elements are embedded within these activities. First, students must capture their 'from/towards' reflections as a result of their engagement with the community and in the specific event. This type of "prelection" is a component of a journaling assignment that will be discussed in more detail later (Falk, 1995).

Second, students spend intentional time with members of the Haudenosaunee community either one-on-one, or in small groups of 3 or 4. Such intentional time allows for deeper engagement and interaction with Ganondagan and/or Friends of Ganondagan staff members and volunteers, who belong to the Haudenosaunee community. In addition, this opportunity introduces students to worldviews different than their own. As such, learning and participation also emphasizes intercultural appreciation, as well as recognizes the concept of community as a learning resource rather than a commodity of the dominant society's ignorance and forced invisibility (Kinloch et al., 2015). Finally, students must integrate the Six Requirements (6Rs) of service-learning—reciprocity and relationship building; relevant and responsive service; rigorous learning; reflection; risk and reality assessment; recognition and celebration (Watkins et al., 2015)—by discussing specific ways in which at least three of the requirements come into play.

### **THE 6RS IN DETAIL**

Overall, in order for the service-learning experience to encourage the mutual learning and participation amongst students, faculty, and community partners, a safe, trustworthy, collaborative and power-sharing learning community is established. Hence, while discomfort is a reality, the classroom and the Ganondagan Historic Site become safe havens to question, challenge and transform oneself from cultural ignorance and apathy to cultural humility. The pathway to frame the process of 'from' avoidance 'towards' the intended outcome of service-learning, action is guided through the 6Rs of service-learning:

#### **Reciprocity and Relationship Building**

*What is TRUE reciprocity? I feel if our general purpose is to break down barriers, then it seems to me we have all had a hammer in our hand helping to do the work—and good work at that (J. Miller, Mohawk, Friends of Ganondagan, Program Director, personal communication, April 3, 2017)*

With the overarching goal of introducing Native and non-Native communities to culturally correct education and awareness regarding Haudenosaunee people and ways of living, the Ganondagan staff members, who are living witnesses to the historical legacy of trauma, are a testament to resiliency, as despite broken treaties and the negative intergenerational impact of the Indian Boarding Schools they exclaim, "We are STILL here". As such, the focus upon reciprocity and relationship building has evolved

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from service-learning within a single course into a multidimensional infrastructure that supports the goals of Ganondagan, the college, and the Trauma Informed Youth Development faculty. Relationships and reciprocity have occurred in a three-tiered manner that coordinates institutional resources, facilitates interaction among faculty, Ganondagan and the broader Haudenosaunee community, and students for the purpose of engaging in co-created service activities.

Before any in-class discussion of historical and contemporary trauma, students engage in a personal meet and greet with our service-learning partners. Students begin the relationship building process with partners by visiting the Ganondagan farmhouse, a homelike building that houses the offices from which many of the Site employees and volunteers work. It is in this farmhouse that students sit around a kitchen table, interacting over tea and homemade cornbread—made of Iroquois White Corn—to discuss mutual areas of interest for service-learning projects, while getting to know our partners, in our partners' community. From classroom dynamics to lessons learned at the farmhouse, reciprocal relationships frame the service-learning experience. A Haudenosaunee elder teaches the “community bowl” philosophy—an idea that emphasizes the need for reciprocity. In encouraging students to articulate their learning goals and skills they bring, the elder asks; “What do you want to learn?” With the community bowl framework established, the elder offers a fundamental Haudenosaunee instruction that guides service-learning—each of us puts something in and takes something out of the bowl, but we never use more than we need.

Another crucial step is the inventory of our unique institutional and community strengths that facilitate the development of service projects that support the mission of Ganondagan State Historic Site while addressing the student learning outcomes within the course. For example, based upon the Ganondagan educational and programming outcomes, college students determine and secure the accessibility of college resources, such as space/equipment and facilities, service-learning curriculum stipends, departmental budgets and graduate assistants' programmatic support. In order to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, we combine the college's resources, including faculty and students' time, with the cultural wisdom, time, and personal contacts of the Haudenosaunee elders to enrich the service-learning experiences.

Throughout the years reciprocity in resource sharing has been exemplified through lecture series held at the college. Funded by the College and organized by students in collaboration with the Friends of Ganondagan, the highly successful lectures were open to the public—the Native American community, as well as the campus community. Lecturers included notable Haudenosaunee scholars such as Tom Porter, who taught the wisdom of the Thanksgiving Prayer, and Chief Oren Lyons who lectured about Native American sovereignty and the United States' encroachment on these rights. The importance of honoring the voices of these and other Haudenosaunee elders continues to solidify the relationship between the College and the Haudenosaunee community as evidenced in our service-learning partner, and co-author's statement:

*Within Haudenosaunee communities, we see our elders as wisdom carriers. We do not discredit their knowledge because it is based on generations of information and experience that has been handed down through oral history. In the world of academia, there is this thought that one needs credentials or has to be published in order to share information. The trust built in the relationship between Nazareth College and the Friends of Ganondagan provided an opportunity to share knowledge and wisdom of my elders and contemporaries by the promotion of the Native American Lecture series on the Nazareth College campus. (L. Jimerson, Seneca, personal communication, April 10, 2017)*



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In each campus-based service-learning activity, all the details of organization, implementation, marketing and hosting the event were the service-learning responsibilities of the students with the faculty and staff as their administrative guides. In addition to the campus-based programs, students serve as program assistants with the Ganondagan staff in educational programs facilitated at the newly built *Seneca Art & Cultural Center*. Through these semester-long service-learning projects, there is achieved personal growth that forms a sense of mutuality and reciprocity. The side-by-side engagement not only increases personal interaction and appreciation, but also facilitates the achievement of “encouraging respect between Native American and non-Native Americans” (Friends of Ganondagan, 2016), as told by one elder who shared her relief that not all White college students still think that “I live in a tepee”.

Furthermore, the dynamic interaction between the variety of resources within the college and Ganondagan creates a sustainability model beyond a faculty course assignment and the existing relationships between faculty and Ganondagan staff. The return on investment of time, funding, and creative energies has benefited both the college and the not for profit agency because college students are engaged in an intentional experiential learning experience and Ganondagan is collaborating with local community to support and develop Ganondagan State Historic Site (Friends of Ganondagan, 2016).

### **Relevant and Responsive Service**

A joint commitment to social justice, cultural humility, and student development serve as the core ethos of the Trauma Informed Youth Development course. For example, the course was designed, and vetted with Haudenosaunee elders before the course traversed through the approval process by the college’s Curriculum Committee and Dean. In keeping with the strategy of being culturally engaging, readings—such as, Alexie (2007), Braveheart & Debruyne (1998), Denham (2008), Holladay (2000), and Wall (2001)—in-class activities, and service-learning projects are reviewed by the elders to ensure that any course materials and pedagogical methods of the faculty are culturally relevant and historically correct.

As previously described, service-learning projects are determined with Ganondagan and Friends of Ganondagan staff to ensure relevancy and ‘real-time’ learning for students. For instance, local area k-12 teachers requested support from Ganondagan in teaching the history of the Iroquois Confederacy. In response to this request, college students researched content and co-created historically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate 4th and 7th grade lesson plan and educational packets for social studies teachers that responded to New York State Social Studies Core Curriculum Standards. In addition, students have researched, compiled historical documents and created literature reviews available to the Ganondagan staff. Also, videos explaining the proper pronunciation of Ganondagan and Haudenosaunee were produced for the Friends’ webpage.

Beyond specialized requests, annual service-learning projects include students’ ‘hands-on’ supportive roles within the Ganondagan’s annual Winter Games, a community event that emphasizes traditional social and recreational activities of Haudenosaunee people. Whether students are serving up corn soup and fry bread, creating Haudenosaunee inspired crafts with children, or serving as guides within the Seneca Art and Cultural Center, each service activity is designed by the Ganondagan staff, and researched and/or implemented by students with staff. In addition, students participate in the Iroquois White Corn Project, an initiative that focuses on reintroducing traditional Haudenosaunee foods into the diet of Native and non-Native American people. Finally, as an end-of-semester capstone event, students engage in the fundraising, co-planning and participation in an Iroquois Social, an event that highlights traditional

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Haudenosaunee dance and music led by William Crouse, Sr. and the Allegany River Indian Dancers. This event is open to the campus community as well as the general public.

### **Rigorous Learning**

While academic student learning outcomes guide the service-learning experience, there is an intensity of purpose to bridge academic goals with community interests, intentionality of course and project design and structure, and investment of resources to deepen the learning experience. Course learning objectives are linked to co-determined priorities with community partners through partnership and communication. Course materials such as lectures, readings, discussions, and reflection activities are applied and related to student experiences; and lastly, service experience is brought back to the classroom to enhance the academic dialogue, student comprehension, and critical self-reflection. As a result of students' involvement in real community educational and cultural programs sponsored by Ganondagan, their academic learning, skill set, and relationships are enhanced.

### **Reflection**

*What I soon realized is that in order to understand the human experience of traumatic stress with intention, selflessness, and nuance, you must be willing to close the textbook and search inside of who you are (College sophomore, Spring 2016).*

*[Student reflections remind] me of why I stay involved with this process, not that I need a reminder. Reading the student journals was rich. This tells me that my commitment to this partnership is immensely worthwhile because it provides a platform to share my stories that entail a point of view that is very often overlooked. It is the experience of a contemporary Onöndawa'ga' (Seneca) woman. What I gain from this partnership is not only the chance to be heard but to also be a part of someone's growth and that is a value that does not cost a cent (L. Jimerson, Seneca, personal communication, service-learning partner, co-author, April 10, 2017).*

Through the course, students embark upon a journey towards becoming trauma-informed to recognize the historical, cultural, and political influences on healthy youth development (The Trauma Informed Care Project). Integrating the notion of cultural humility, students engage in an iterative process critical self-reflection through journaling; a process that fosters candid thought, promotes integration of affect and cognition, and affords students the opportunity to make meaning out of their experiences (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998; Kerka, 2002). As an inherent aspect of any trauma-focused course is the emotionally triggering content, when the historical realities of trauma, along with power, privilege, and oppression are integrated into the discussion, students' experience of feeling overwhelmed and confused seems to increase. Thus, it is crucial to find creative ways for students to process their emotions. As such, students are challenged to draw upon multiple modalities to process and express their thoughts and emotions in response to the trauma narratives.

*Throughout all my journals, I had a hard time working through views that were dramatically different from what I was initially taught...The journal entries were sometimes hard to write...However, by doing*

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*them I have been able to become more aware...[and] have learned that there are multiple sides to every story (College junior, Spring 2016)*

Overall, student journals become a safe space to engage in dialogue:

*Journaling allowed me to speak freely about what was on my mind. It also allowed me to spend some time to sort out all the new information that I was receiving...I don't think I would have processed the information as well if I didn't have the journals because I probably would have just avoided thinking about what was discussed in class because it was both saddening and frustrating (College junior, Spring 2016)*

*Truthfully, I felt as if these journals [were] beneficial...but most importantly I felt as if we had a voice and were able to express it...honestly! (College junior, Spring 2016).*

Within student journals, instructor comments primarily take the form of questions that are aimed at challenging students to become increasingly aware of their implicit biases, and make connections between their past experiences and current behaviors towards individuals who are different from them. Students are then asked to respond to instructor comments and questions in a final portfolio assignment. This final assignment integrates a self-portrait a visually stimulating, creative assignment is inspired by the course text, Alexie (2007), a narrative in which the author offers his own depiction of self on page 57. As such, students are asked to illustrate their 'from' one perspective and 'towards' a different perspective that they gain based on their experiences throughout the semester with regard Haudenosaunee people. However, not only is this assignment based on students' learning about others, students are asked to depict how this learning impacts their own sense of self. In one student's use of tree symbolism, they wrote:

*My 'from' perspective contains...pictures...This side is more abstract because that was my view of Indian people and their culture...The 'towards' side does not contain pictures because my view has changed... Most of the leaves contain words [growth, realization, de-stereotype, understanding] but not all of them; this symbolizes how I am still learning and developing (College junior, Spring 2016)*

While arduous, the journaling process has shown preliminary promise in developing cultural humility, as students report the need to continue "checking" themselves by challenging their own assumptions and biases, as well as others, and engaging across difference in a more sensitive manner (Terrance, 2017).

In addition to individual student reflection, there is a significant emphasis placed upon reciprocity during the reflection process between community partners with students. Community partners describe their own 'from' and 'towards' experiences as they recognize their personal 'aha' moments. For example, during an end of the semester reflection, a member of Haudenosaunee community shared deep feelings as a result of hearing the students' journey: moved to tears, she exclaimed, "The students really listened to what I said—they really got it—and it moved me!"

### **Risk and Reality Assessment**

Through the process of critical self-reflection and in-depth discussion regarding power, privilege, and oppression within society; in addition to students entering unfamiliar environments, as service-learning moves them off campus onto the site of Ganondagan, which was once the grounds of pillage and plunder

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at the hands of the U.S. government, students are challenged to reassess reality (Holladay, 2000; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2004; Perry, 2001). In light of this reassessment, students begin to question: who am I? What do I *do* with this information? Now that I am aware of my privilege, how do I use it? It is through continued reciprocity and relationship building, and reflection that students begin to reconcile reality so that they are able to engage in relevant and responsive service.

### **Recognition and Celebration**

Students are guided to appreciate the arduous introspective process required to recognize their own information deficit, implicit bias, and lack of interaction with people who are different from themselves. Through engagement in critical service-learning, students transition from the inertia of ignorance to an intentional investment in acts of advocacy, positive intergroup communication, and trauma-informed, culturally engaging practices. As a result, the celebration of individual and collective contributions to the community bowl philosophy is strategized throughout the semester as a crucial component of the service-learning experience. Albeit, a considerable focus of the course is upon policies and practices that perpetuate cultural and historical trauma, there is equal emphasis placed upon the recognition of Haudenosaunee resistance and resilience. Through narrative sharing as well as participation in cultural celebrations, students learn to move beyond a deficit model of victimization of community partners towards an appreciation of the resiliency of Indigenous people. In addition, through journaling, this narrative component provides students the opportunity to explore and appreciate their own resilience.

### **CONCLUSION**

Despite our sincerest efforts to be helpful, aspects of power, privilege, and oppression are inherent within the context of service-learning, often leaving communities of color contending with well-intentioned but unhelpful responses from outsiders (Deegan, 1990; Whilde, 2006). Because racial, ethnic, and cultural context impacts how communities perceive problems, and ultimately the perception of what is deemed helpful, a lack of awareness of these particularities can render service-learning efforts ineffective. To emphasize the significance of awareness, this chapter introduces the notion of *cultural humility* (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998) within the practice of *critical service-learning* (Mitchell, 2008). Highlighting a 12-year service-learning partnership with the local Native American, Haudenosaunee community, this chapter discussed the Native American experience of historical trauma and resilience, as the information provides the historical and contemporary contextual realities faced by Indigenous communities within the U.S. To facilitate culturally engaging service-learning, pedagogical strategies utilizing the Six Requirements (6Rs) of service-learning and informed by cultural humility act as a catalyst to student readiness to more mindful engagement across difference.

Framed by critical race theory (CRT), the study of implicit bias, and transformation theory, cultural humility was put forth as a way of 'being' in contrast to cultural competence's way of 'doing' (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993; Kirwan Institute, 2016; Mezirow, 1991; Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). Consequently, a cultural humility orientation recognizes the limits of one's own knowledge; the heterogeneity that exists within and across Haudenosaunee communities; and encourages scholars, professionals, and students to have a willingness to be led by their service-learning partners, whoever they may be (Freeman, 2004; Masterson, n.d.; Thomas, Mitchell, & Arseneau, 2015).

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Overall, in order for the service-learning experience to encourage the mutual learning and participation a safe, trustworthy, collaborative and power-sharing learning community is established. Because this process can be disorienting for all involved, the 6 Requirements (6Rs) of service-learning incorporates both positive youth development and cultural humility by promoting a safe environment through the development of a cooperative agreement, a set of agreed upon guidelines that sustain the learning community (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2007). This cooperative agreement supports all members of the learning community in holding one another accountable, and acting in a trustworthy manner. Next, the pedagogical approach ensures that individuals have voice and choice. This is reflected in the development of service-learning assignments that honor the voices of the Haudenosaunee community, while providing students with the opportunity to determine the learning opportunity that best suits their interest and skill. This sense of choice also acts as a mechanism for establishing collaborative relationships both within the learning community and with community partners, while creating opportunities for power-sharing that encourages recognition of personal power as well as collective impact, as all contribute to the community bowl.

Finally, the 6Rs of service-learning framed by cultural humility transforms service-learning into critical service-learning, as students embark upon a journey learning about themselves in relation to the community around them. This transformative process is a difficult one as student and community partners attest to the deep level of reflection and recognition required to move beyond cultural stereotypes, myths, and misinformation. With that said, intentionally planned and implemented service-learning provides a catalyst for cross-cultural engagement to examine and explore social inequities, personal ignorance, and collective inertia while recognizing the resiliency of Indigenous nations.

In sum, over the past 12-years, a framework for culturally engaging service-learning has emerged. Through a review of student journals, and confirmed through reflective dialogue between our Ganondagan partners, course faculty, and students, as well as the collection of pilot data, we are witnessing transformation (Terrance, 2017). Within this process of transformation, students move from the disorienting dilemma—a sense of bewilderment that challenges students acknowledge and accept their privilege based upon many aspects of their social identity—towards more mindful service-learning that is culturally engaging and mutually beneficial (Mezirow, 1991; Watkins, 2013).

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### **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Critical Service-Learning:** Describes service-learning experiences with a social justice orientation. Critical service-learning has the explicit aim toward social justice and requires educators to focus on social responsibility and critical community issues.

**Cultural Humility:** A way of being that emphasizes critical self-reflection, active mitigation of the power imbalances inherent in helping relationships, and institutional accountability.

**Haudenosaunee:** Represents the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy—Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora.

**Historical Trauma:** Recognized as cumulative and intergenerational trauma.

**Resilience:** An individual and collective trait of adaptability and thriving. Within Haudenosaunee Nations it is seen as both a product and producer of cultural knowledge.

**Six Requirements (6Rs) of Service-Learning:** Articulated as reciprocity and relationship building, relevant and responsive service, rigorous learning, risk and reality assessment, and recognition and celebration.

**Transformation Theory:** is viewed as a way of facilitating the development of cultural humility. Transformative theory's focus on discourse and critical reflection as a way to move individuals from the "disorienting dilemma" to reassessing their beliefs, and taking action based on this reassessment, is crucial to framing the development of cultural humility.

### **ENDNOTE**

<sup>1</sup> The terms Native American, Native, and Indigenous are used interchangeably.

## Chapter 2

# Challenged by Respect: Rethinking Service–Learning on Native American Reservations

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter explores how service-learning programs offered by U.S. colleges and universities might partner with Native American communities on reservations. It reviews relevant scholarship on approaches to cross-cultural learning, such as the Authentic and Culturally Engaging (ACE). It provides background for the participating partners in a current service-learning program. It examines issues affecting cross-cultural service-learning on reservations in light of ongoing historical, social and cultural trauma. It addresses pedagogical issues unique to Humanities (Religion) service-learning programs. It provides a description of various strategies used in the program that implement service-learning and learning theories. Throughout the chapter Native American voices and scholars serving as community partners for this specific program offer critical perspectives on pedagogy and partnerships.*

### INTRODUCTION

Without critical reflection on the racial and cultural self and its social construction and pervasiveness in experiential reality, the goals of cross-cultural service-learning education cannot be met. For White U. S. students and teachers who are engaged in service-learning programs in Native American communities and reservations, this requirement creates a variety of challenges masked as privileges. More will be said about these challenges later in this chapter, but it should be recognized that White privilege—unearned privileges and advantages conferred on White Americans and not on persons of color—acts as an invisible veil that Euro-Americans may not view as a cultural system (Sue & Sue, 2013), creating unique problems for effective and meaningful service-learning with Native American reservations.

Because human beings are cultural beings, Whites often assume that the ideal values of Whiteness are shared with non-dominant cultures (Delano-Oriaran & Meidl, 2013). Yet, in the words of Vine Deloria,

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Jr. (Yankton Sioux), “There is no emotional unconscious that Indians and non-Indians share that can be tapped on behalf of American Indians, insofar as they are people, like other people. Their sufferings are historic and communal” (Deloria, 2003, p. 25).

Without critical racial and cultural identity work, White Americans seeking partnerships with Native American communities and organizations will fail to develop reciprocal, collaborative, and empowering partnerships. At worst, they will perpetuate the trauma of Euro-American colonization. Edward Valandra (Sicangu Lakota) (2005) asserts that the greatest challenge to mutual and reciprocal partnerships “is that our colonizers—with whom we have sometimes developed close relationships—fail to see themselves as perpetuators or agents of the status quo” (Valandra, 2005, p. 42).

The purpose of this chapter is to identify effective multicultural teaching strategies for cross-cultural service-learning on reservations. These strategies are demonstrated to be effective here not through measured outcomes for students and communities alone but rather because they facilitate collaboration between oppressed communities and their historical colonizers. This chapter is not simply an empirical or theoretical analysis of effective service-learning pedagogy and practice. It is an exploration of multi-cultural relationship-building on reservations as well as the accompanying challenges.

The chapter will describe an undergraduate cross-cultural, study-away, service-learning program with the Pine Ridge (Lakota) and Wind River (Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho) reservations. A literature review will engage relevant Identity Development theory, Service-learning models, the Authentic and Culturally Engaging service-learning approach, Transformative Learning theory, and Indigenous Education. A background of the program as well as brief histories of the Lakota, Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho peoples will provide context for subsequent sections. Six issues relevant to service-learning on the reservation will be examined: White privilege, Trauma, the Reservation, Imperialisms, Sovereignty, and Respect and Reciprocity. A selective description of the service-learning program and pedagogical strategies employed will give future program leaders an example of a cross-cultural service-learning experience. Throughout each section, Native American scholarship and research will help focus and refine dominant culture theory and pedagogy. A closing comment about the pedagogical approach to the challenges discussed and their meaning in light of the value of respect and practice of reciprocity will conclude the chapter.

The author is aware of the limitations of this chapter. First, it is written from a Euro-American, dominant culture perspective. It seeks to guide dominant culture service-learning pedagogy into empowering partnerships with Native American communities. The irony of this chapter lies in this point: it seeks to dismantle White privilege through relationships with persons and communities oppressed by White privilege, while acknowledging that the process will be lengthy and involved for both the colonized and the colonizer (Valandra, 2005, p. 49). Second, it does not provide data on measured benefits and harms to the community. Because this service-learning program is primarily designed as a civic or social engagement program, the author hopes to generate qualitative data about measurable benefits and harms in the next three years.

At this point a word about terminology is needed, specifically as it applies to naming and describing people groups. In this chapter, indigenous peoples found in the United States will be referred to as Native Americans. Many indigenous persons prefer to be described as Native American or American Indian. These terms are found in federal documents, laws and institutions. Some prefer the terms “Indigenous person” and/or “Indigenous American.” The Native American Journalist Association states that both “American Indian” and “Native American” can be formally and respectfully used when speaking of indigenous peoples in the United States but that tribal names are the most accurate when speaking of



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identity. When speaking of persons who are of European ancestry and who benefit from White culture (Euro-Americans), the term “dominant culture” will be used.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Identity Development

Delano-Oriaran and Meidl (2013), using several models for White identity development, propose that in the case of White teachers serving culturally and linguistically diverse (CDL) students, socially constructed White racial identity must undergo deconstruction, reconstruction, and transformation for cultural competency to be achieved. This is a multi-step process of developing a conscious awareness of race and privilege through critical work with assumptions, feelings, emotions, attitudes and actions.

Similarly, Sue and Sue (2013) offer a model of White identity development that benefits White students through a personalized approach. White students often find themselves in the midst of challenging psychological and spiritual work as they become conscious of their racial identity. The authors’ approach reflects strong ties with consciousness models of identity development, but the framework of cross-cultural counseling gives their model a “richness in allowing White people to view their developmental history better and gain a sense of their past, present and future” (Sue & Sue, 2013, p. 330).

This process contains seven steps that integrate characteristics from other models (pp. 331-335): *Naiveté*—early curiosity about race; *Conformity*—often unconscious ethnocentrism; *Dissonance*—experienced inconsistencies force acknowledgment or privilege; *Resistance and immersion*—racial self-hatred and identification with minority group; *Introspective*—reflection on White identity framed less by guilt and more by desire; *Integrative Awareness*—formation of a secure non-racist White identity that values multi-culturalism; *Commitment to anti-racist action*—empowerment to maintain a non-racist White identity.

A basic outline of this model—along with the creation of safe spaces for critical learning (Delano-Oriaran & Parks, 2015)—serves as an invaluable resource to students for service-learning on reservations. Becoming aware, understanding, and affirming of cultures other than one’s own requires both rewarding and troubling self-work. Developing an understanding of the thoughts, feelings, and emotions experienced during this process—such as shame, guilt, ignorance, and dissonance—orients White students to the challenges of an authentic and culturally engaging service-learning program.

### Service-Learning Models

Because university service-learning is committed to change on both societal and individual levels, challenges emerge from both real-world experience and reflection on that experience. However, the dynamics of the service-learning context itself often obscure learning goals common to most programs. These goals range from increased civic responsibility and moral development in students to an understanding of the causes of the social problems (Murullo, 1998). Thus service-learning programs take measured risks; they expose students to various kinds of difference while concurrently promoting positive interactions and partnerships with community members and leaders. For this reason, challenges to service-learning goals inevitably arise when dominant culture students encounter social inequity causally connected with



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their own social privilege. Service-learning educators and community leaders must be prepared for these challenges on Native American reservations.

The benefits of service-learning for students in terms of the goals stated above have been well-documented. Service-learning contributes to the theoretical understanding and cognitive development of students (Krain & Nurse, 2004; Seider, Rabinowicz, & Gillmor, 2010). Students develop a greater appreciation for tolerance and diversity through self-work, course-work, and community-work (Krain & Nurse, 2004; Jacoby, 2003). The service-learning experience fosters knowledge application, social awareness, and a sense of social responsibility and efficacy (Krain & Nurse, 2004).

Although the intentions of service-learning programs are benevolent, the results may harm both the provider and the recipient. Service experiences often end up reinforcing prejudices in students and could have been better planned and critically engaged in preparation (Reed-Bouley & Kyle, 2015, p. 23). Some college students became less receptive to progressive, race-based social policy than they were prior to instruction. They became receptive to progressive race-based social policies only when they also engaged critiques of misapplications of concepts such as meritocracy and equal opportunity (Reed-Bouley & Kyle, 2015, p. 23). Other studies reveal the risks that service-learning takes in terms of racism and White privilege. Absent “teaching-learning strategies” that minimize risk and maximize opportunity for reflection on racial identity and privilege, White students engaged in social distancing from those they serve (p. 23).

Service-learning seems often to reinforce White students’ stereotypes and sense of themselves as unfairly maligned by marginalized groups (Reed-Bouley & Kyle, 2015, p. 24). Four risks in service-learning emerge for students consciously and unconsciously invested in White privilege: (a) the reproduction of dominating systems, (b) the exacerbation of false paradigms of racial innocence, (c) hidden curriculums conflicting with explicit curriculums, and (d) the harm research exacts on individuals and communities (Reed-Bouley & Kyle, 2015, p. 24). Dominating systems are reinforced and reproduced in cross-cultural service-learning whenever diverse perspectives are not fully represented, heard, and *diminished* (Reed-Bouley & Kyle, 2015, p. 24). Racial innocence is sustained when dominant culture students possess little or inaccurate knowledge of the history, oppression, and current social situation of others of different and/or marginalized cultures. Consequently, attitudes of inferiority and blame are projected onto the population served.

Philanthropic service-learning activities often reinforce assumptions of the universality of learning more than civic responsibility service-learning programs (Seider et al., 2010). Furthermore, altruistic objectives—like those grounding direct service experiences—promote different visions of citizenship. Community-based organizations (CBOs) such as charity agencies, youth programs, and health organizations account for 90% of all service-learning activities offered to college students. These kinds of direct service can reinforce students’ belief that individual actions are sufficient for social change. They often diminish commitments to common responsibility intrinsic to citizenship (Seider et al., 2010). With direct service, students often learn more about being a personally responsible citizen rather than a participatory citizen or, even more so, a justice-oriented citizen (Seider et al., 2010).

### **Authentic and Culturally Engaging Service-Learning**

Delano-Oriaran (2012) provides a model for service-learning for an increasingly multi-cultural and multi-linguistic society that responds to many of the challenges discussed above. Authentic and Culturally Engaging (ACE) service-learning takes an asset-based rather than deficit-based approach to community-based

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education. In deficit-based approaches the community is characterized by its problems, weaknesses, and needs (p. 404). These perceptions are more common in philanthropic and altruistic-minded direct service programs. The asset-based approach considers the community to have strengths and empowers residents to make their own decisions. It seeks to develop long-term interactive relationships between faculty, students and communities (Delano-Oriaran, 2012, p. 404). It prioritizes mutual teaching and learning.

The ACE framework contains seven elements: (a) investing in community needs, (b) planning and preparation, (c) community engagement and empowerment, (d) curricula infusion of multicultural education, (e) bridging theory and practice, (f) recognition and celebration, and (g) reflection and evaluation (Delano-Oriaran, 2012, p. 404). The strength of this approach lies in the initial affirmation that the community is necessary for critical learning; that its members are sources of wisdom, knowledge and expertise in their own right; and that cultural competency is relational.

The service-learning program described in this chapter incorporates many of these elements into its pedagogy and praxis. Native American authorities are necessary in order for education programs to have the most impact for Native communities (Bowman, 2003). For example, critical reflection for Belmont students is deepened when they sit at the feet, so to speak, of Native speakers and writers.

## **Transformative Learning**

Patricia Bolea (2012) offers a learning model for service-learning with Native Americans that avoids the legacy of colonialism (Bolea, 2012, p. 286). Rather than annihilating Native American culture as Euro-American educational practice has, this model intentionally seeks to “harvest community-based knowledge and strategically connect it with academic learning” (Bolea, 2012, p. 288), integrating experiential and academic learning.

Bolea utilizes transformative learning theory for its emphasis on social responsibility and community-based learning (Bolea, 2012, p. 288). This theory maintains that learning is transformative when students are able to critically review, challenge, confirm, and adjust their ways of knowing, believing and feeling (Bolea, 2012, p. 289). It is grounded in a process of transforming unconscious frames of reference for reality to make them more inclusive, discriminating, open, emotionally capable of change, and reflective (Bolea, 2012, p. 289). The process must include reflective discourse and open communication with others in order to identify and assess frames of reference.

## **Indigenous Education**

Gregory Cajete’s (Tewa) (2015) work focuses on that identity of an Indigenous teacher, as well as the foundations of Indigenous education. Though it is primarily addressed to Indigenous readers, it serves a helpful role in the process of dominant culture students’ transformations. It engages the process of cultural awareness and competency from the Native American viewpoint.

Cajete describes how Native American communities place learning with the context of the worldview that “we are all relations” (Mitakuye Oyasín, Lakota) (Cajete, 2015, p. 23). Learning is a process of finding face (identity), finding heart (passion), and finding foundation (vocation) in an ecology of relationships within community and nature (p. 11). Education—teaching and learning—is unconsciously and consciously understood as a “way of life” (Cajete, 2015, p. 18). “Most indigenous people’s worldviews seek harmony and integration with all life, including the spiritual, natural and human domains,” he writes (Cajete, 2015, p. 18).

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Furthermore, Indigenous people's ways of knowing are built around ecological sustainability and rooted in local culture. Nature and culture exist within a framework of cosmology, community, and continuity (Cajete, 2015, p. 18). Each person is both a learner and a teacher in the community ecology of relationships, participating in "endogenous" education educating for wholeness (Cajete, 2015, p. 35). Cajete identifies ten patterns that generate the kind of Indigenous education described above: (a) learning comes from one's center and the natural world, (b) learning emerges from hard experiences, (c) learning grows through emotions and subjective experiences, (d) learners and teachers are unique individuals, (e) each experience offers unique opportunities for learning, (f) teaching and learning involve a collaboration, (g) learning comes from experiencing diverse perspectives, (h) learning develops through stages, (i) learning engages the whole of life's experiences, and (j) learning goes on within a community (Cajete, 2015, p. 43).

Cajete contrasts Indigenous education with Euro-American education by noting that the tradition of honoring the sage teacher educating the whole person began to erode in the Enlightenment (Cajete, 2015, p. 15). Western education has been stripped of its capacity to provide a deep ecological understanding of reality, concerned instead with technical skills and facts. "At no other time in history have the basic principles of perennial wisdom and holistic education been so poorly understood and practiced," he writes (Cajete, 2015, p. 16). Furthermore, the Western worldview found in modern schooling—a worldview which separates knowledge from the tasks of "living well in a specific place over a long period of time" (Cajete, 2015, p. 19)—have placed Indigenous cultures in harm's way. The colonizer then views indigenous learning and knowledge as primitive and inferior that must be placed under homogenizing Western methods and practices. This conditioning continues today through aggressive educational practices as well as a technology and science orientation. It has created ecological illiteracy concerning community and environment (p. 20).

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Belmont University Program**

Since 2014, undergraduate students at Belmont University in Nashville, Tennessee have traveled to the Pine Ridge Reservation (Lakota) in South Dakota and Wind River Reservation (Eastern Shoshone/Northern Arapaho) in Wyoming for a May study-away intensive. One of the program's goals is to develop sustaining relationships that engender respect and reciprocity. Although students do not receive Service-learning (SL) credit for the courses taken in the program (Belmont does not offer SL for study abroad/study away programs), the program has been designed over several years to meet Belmont's service-learning requirements. The slower pace of this process corresponds to the nature of developing long-term mutual partnerships of trust with communities harmed by Western education (Cajete, 2015; McCaslin, 2005; Bolea, 2012). At the time of the writing of this chapter, the author is petitioning the university for Service-learning status for the program.

Belmont University describes itself as a "student-centered Christian community providing an academically challenging education that empowers men and women of diverse backgrounds to engage and transform the world with disciplined intelligence, compassion, courage and faith." With a vision to be

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“a leader among teaching universities, bringing together the best of liberal arts and professional education in a Christian community of learning and service,” Belmont enrolls more than 6,200 undergraduate students, more than 80 percent of whom identify as White. Because religion and education historically have been vehicles for American imperialism against Native Americans (Cajete, 2015; Treat, 1996; Kidwell, Noley, & Tinker, 2001; Bolea, 2012), the Christian foundations underlying the learning and service encountered in this program are salient points for the critical reflection that follows.

At least two general education courses are taught on the trip: junior-level courses in religion and writing. The author teaches the religion course, “Questions that Matter at Pine Ridge and Wind River.” The learning objectives for the religion course have been developed through three years of listening and learning with tribal members on how to best empower Native American partners. The course invites students to think critically about the various cultural perspectives and attendant religious questions emerging from cross-cultural interactions.

The general learning goals of the course are cultural competency, community collaboration, and problem solving. The research project centers on a social justice issue emerging from community partnerships which places dominant culture Christianity and Native American ways of life in conversation. No more than ten undergraduate students participate in the program. In the history of the program, only one of 26 students has identified with a race other than White. The two faculty members from Religion and English who teach the religion and writing courses are both White.

### **The Reservation**

While the descriptions that follow are rudimentary historical sketches, they offer a base narrative with which to begin to explore many of the issues that impact the effectiveness of cross-cultural service-learning on reservations. More will be said about the development of reservations and the impact they have had on the health and wellbeing of Native American tribes and communities later in this chapter. Histories of broken treaties, tribal land confiscation, and forced removal document the traumatic injustice of the existence of the reservation for each of the three tribes: Lakota, Eastern Shoshone, and Northern Arapaho.

### **Pine Ridge**

The Pine Ridge Reservation in the southwest corner of South Dakota officially originated in 1889 as the federally mandated home of the Oglala branch of Lakota Teton Sioux. Before that it had been part of the 20 million acre Great Sioux Reservation established by the U. S. government with the Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1868 (Ostler, 2010). However, after the U. S. military’s support of White settlements and mineral mining, protected by the Homestead Act of 1862, reduced the Great Sioux reservation, Sioux territory was divided into five individual reservations situated mostly in South Dakota, one of which is Pine Ridge.

Several landmark events mark the history of Pine Ridge. The most painful is the massacre at Wounded Knee in 1890 which saw the refitted 7<sup>th</sup> Calvary (once General Custer’s unit until he was defeated and killed at Little Big Horn by the Sioux in 1876) slaughter 300 of Chief Big Foot’s Minneconjou Sioux, including the elderly, women, and children. Pine Ridge currently has more than 30,000 enrolled tribal members living on almost two million acres of federally reserved land.

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### **Wind River**

The Eastern Shoshone (*Kuccuntikka*) do not share the same tragic military history with the U. S. government. However, they were colonized in much the same way. Having occupied the western Wyoming Wind River mountain range for more than 10,000 years, this Aztec-origin tribe encountered Euro-Americans around 1805 with the Lewis and Clark expedition (easternshoshone.org). With the 1862 Homestead Act opening settlement roads to the West and the United States government negotiating with Algonquin-origin tribes to the East, the Eastern Shoshone negotiated the 1863 Ft. Bridger Treaty for the Wind River reservation covering 44 million acres. However, five years later a new treaty reduced the reservation size to 2.7 million acres, which was reduced further in the 20<sup>th</sup> century to 2.2 million acres. In 1878, the U. S. government relocated the traditional enemy of the Shoshone, the Arapaho, onto the Wind River reservation. Since then, the Northern Arapaho population has outgrown the Eastern Shoshone population, causing friction in inter-tribal and tribal-federal government relationships. According to the Eastern Shoshone tribal website, the membership population of the Eastern Shoshone tribe is 3,600.

The Northern Arapaho (*Hinono-eino*), sharing with the Lakota a more violent history of forced removal than that of the Shoshone, came to the Wind River reservation in 1878 (Roberts, 2016). Before that, the 1851 Ft. Laramie Treaty set aside Arapaho lands in Northern Colorado and South Central Wyoming. The Arapaho began to experience crises from White settlement and mining when gold was discovered near Denver in 1858 and were pressured to split into southern and northern bands in 1861. A small band of Arapaho and Cheyenne was slaughtered by a Colorado militia led by a former Methodist minister (Roberts, 2016). The Sand Massacre of 1864 resulted in the murder of peaceful Arapaho women, children, and elderly men. It touched off several years of fighting leading to the forced removal of Southern Arapaho to Oklahoma. The Northern Arapaho joined Cheyenne and Sioux camps in the Red Clouds war and Little Big Horn in 1876, but after the losses to the U. S. military in the Sioux Wars, they agreed to be placed on the Wind River reservation with their traditional enemy, the Shoshone. According to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Northern Arapaho have grown to 8,600 members.

### **ISSUES**

Dominant culture students are often ignorant of the historical, cultural and social justice issues that will shape the service-learning experience. This predicament arises through false beliefs (absent beliefs) and the ignorance of privilege (Frost-Arnold, 2015). It is simultaneously sustained by social norms, cultural ideologies, and collective memories. Mezirow describes these structures as one's "frame of reference" (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5), comprising two distinct dimensions. Habits of mind—habitual ways of thinking, feeling and acting governed by assumptions—are formed by cultural, social, psychological, and educational codes (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). In turn, judgments—feelings and attitudes arise about those we consider the other—emerge from these habits. White privilege is one example of this dynamic. Mezirow contends that unless one becomes aware of one's own frame of reference, transformative learning cannot occur (p. 10).

The six general issues listed below are not exhaustive, but they specifically affect the service-learning experience on Native American reservations. They present considerable cognitive and emotional problems for dominant culture students. They also manifest potential injury for Native American communities on reservations.



**Challenged by Respect****White Privilege**

As discussed above, White privilege is both the assumption of the universality of White experience and the unearned social advantages White persons possess. It is a socially constructed framework that shapes thought and action. In addition, becoming culturally competent requires an awareness of one's own racial-cultural identity. When dominant culture students—in Belmont's program these students by population percentage will be mostly White—engage in service-learning on reservations, critical reflection on one's White identity is required.

An effective cross-cultural service-learning program should view White privilege as a “threshold concept” (Delano-Oriaran & Parks, 2015). Identifying it as such recognizes the potential challenges it presents to the beneficiaries of White privilege as they struggle with forms of racism and unearned social advantage/disadvantage. The analysis of White privilege creates strong feelings, cognitive dissonance, emotional resistance, and intellectual dismissiveness (Delano-Oriaran & Parks, 2015 pp. 16-17). As a threshold concept, White privilege is necessary for teaching critical race awareness in students because of its intersectionality (Delano-Oriaran & Parks, 2015 p. 16). It opens analysis to other areas of academic, personal, and professional inquiry. Yet, as a threshold concept, it requires the creation of safe spaces that invite students to begin critical reflection on an individual and perspectival plain rather a fact-based objective one. It must address the issues of power that come not only with White privilege in society but with teaching White privilege in the classroom (Delano-Oriaran & Parks, 2015 p. 17). This reality does not alleviate the burden of critical race identity development but empowers it.

**Trauma**

*For Native Peoples, being dispossessed of our homelands through imperialism constitutes the greatest form of trauma, from which we have not recovered. Furthermore, colonialism—as a project of this imperialism perpetrated initially by Europeans and now Americans—remains a major cause of trauma for Native Peoples (p. 29).*

Valandra, like other Native American writers, argues that the “winning of the West” by the United States can only be described as colonization, imperialism, holocaust, genocide, and destruction. These are neither easily understood nor willingly accepted realities for dominant culture students and faculty. The constructed framework of White persons disputes the truths of facticity and interpretation. More importantly, imperialism imposes the framework of the colonizer onto the colonized; many of the Native American community partners on reservations have internalized this framework. Basil Brave Heart (Oglala Lakota) names this the “crossover phenomenon,” the point at which native students have identity crises (Brave Heart, 2011, p. 44; Archambault, 1996, p. 148). He describes watching movies as a boy in boarding school where the cavalry and the Indians were having a war. He remembers how the Native boarding school students cheered for the cavalry. These students no longer identified with their native roots and were caught between the two worlds of the boarding school and their native heritage. The crossover phenomenon for him is the effect of trauma.

The trauma of colonization can be understood as the “cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences” (Denham, 2008, p. 396). It is the conquest and control of other peoples' land and goods (McCaslin, 2005, p. 13). It is an ongoing reality for Native Americans, arising from the loss of traditional homelands, the



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loss of traditional sustaining practices, the disintegration of traditional communities, the loss of economic self-sufficiency, and the loss of traditional languages (Cajete, 2015, p. 126). Trauma is connected to the hegemony of Euro-American colonialism, its “maintenance of dominance through consensual social practice and structures” that disguises power and privilege (Bolea, 2012, p. 285). Several mechanisms of cultural destruction used to sustain White hegemony include forced removal, war, murder, religion, education, and boarding schools.

Denham (2008) asserts that the “sustained impact of colonial intrusion and related trauma on American Indian families resulted in rapid change, adjustment and loss” (p. 392). The prominence of tragedy leads dominant culture scholars and professionals often to ignore or dismiss the strengths of individuals and their communities as expressed through “powerful stories, songs, histories and strategies of resilience” (Denham, 2008, p. 392). A better understanding of the nature of trauma reveals the need for a more constructive understanding of the challenges faced by Native Americans.

Denham further explains that traumatic events do not always result in psychiatric distress. Distress resulting from a traumatic event is not due to the “traumatic event per se but the response attributed to, or meaning derived from, trauma experience” (Denham, 2008, p. 395). Citing Yellow Horse Brave Heart, Denham distinguishes between historical trauma and the historical trauma response. Subsequently, a better understanding of the sources and causes of contemporary social issues plaguing Native American communities comes into focus (Denham, 2008, p. 397).

### **The Reservation**

The reservation has been the most powerful source of trauma, for it represents a form of “soul death” for Native Americans (Cajete, 2015, p. 48). Cajete explains that the connection of Native People to their land traditionally has symbolized their connection to the spirit of life itself. The reservation, as the end of forced removal from homelands, has disconnected Indigenous peoples from the “inner kinship with the world” found deep in the human psyche, initiating a whole set of social and psychological problems (Cajete, 2015, p. 49).

Few dominant culture people understand the legal definition of a reservation or its intended and real impact up tribes and communities. Originating with the Indian Appropriations Act in 1851, the reservation became the bounded land which identified the relationship of the Indian tribes and the federal government as one of ward and guardian (Hakansson, 1997). Although tribes are beneficiaries of the land, the U. S. government holds the deeds in trust. And though reservations were originally intended to isolate Native Americans from settlers and constrain them from their traditional lands, they began to be seen as vehicle of assimilation in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century (Hakansson, 1997, p. 2). Reservations soon became vehicles for state and private intrusion and the confiscation of land through the General Allotment Act of 1887, also known as the Dawes Act.

Allotment was an effort “to convert the nomadic hunters to Christian farmers by eliminating Indian tribal government, social fabric, religion, and culture (Hakansson, 1997, p. 2). It created three types of use: tribal trust lands, allotment lands, and fee lands. In all three forms the government holds the title and the user the beneficiary interest. Allotments are parcels of land given to individuals, who then gain U. S. citizenship subject to state criminal law upon receipt. Fractionation is the consequence of allotment whereby the number of owners of the title to the lands grows exponentially with successive generations. Fractionation results in an almost complete inability to develop land or gain profit from it after over a hundred years of atomizing ownership, making allotment lands virtually unproductive.

## Cultural and Cognitive Imperialism

Other sources of ongoing trauma are found in different manifestations of Euro-American imperialism. Cultural and cognitive imperialism shape the lives of Native Americans in ways hidden from the consciousness of dominant culture citizens. Here Deloria's idea of "no shared unconscious" bears remembering.

Cultural imperialism is one of a number of oppressive relations that may implicitly and explicitly operate between dominant and subordinated cultures. It facilitates a type of cultural acquisition via conceptual assimilation, according to Laure Anne Whitt (Choctaw descent). This kind of acquisition and assimilation, Whitt (1995) explains, is found when, "Euro-American culture seeks to establish itself in indigenous cultures by appropriating, mining, and redefining what is distinctive, constitutive of them" (p. 2). In effect, the ways of life that make Native Americans a people, a culture, and a wisdom tradition have been appropriated and redefined as peripheral and exceptional to civilized culture. On the other hand, cognitive imperialism is a form of cognitive manipulation used to disclaim other knowledge bases and values. It denies people their language and cultural integrity by maintaining the legitimacy of only one language, one culture, and one frame of reference (Battiste, 2011).

Whitt (1995) notes that as a form of oppression, cultural imperialism secures and deepens the subordinated status of cultures under the dominant culture. She explains, "In the case of indigenous cultures, it undermines their integrity and distinctiveness, assimilating them to the dominant culture by seizing and processing vital cultural resources, then remaking them in the image and marketplaces of the dominant culture" (p. 3). Examples of cultural resources subjugated and made into commodities are spiritual knowledge, rituals and objects of the people. Taken are the "essentials of cultural lifeways" (Whitt, 1995, p. 3). This form of trauma is often hidden to those who exact it, but creating partnerships with persons enduring this form of oppression requires the awareness of it.

Language is a cultural resource subjugated and annihilated by Euro-American imperialism. Several Belmont students noted in their journal entries from Pine Ridge the relationship between language, culture, and health spoken of by Lakota elders Basil Brave Heart and Leonard Little Finger. Little Finger is founder of the Sacred Hoop School, a Lakota language school in Oglala, South Dakota. In one discussion he provided a different viewpoint of the central place of language through a definition of culture as "a patterned way of life by a group of people which is articulated through language." One student connected Little Finger's notion that thought itself is the "beauty of culture coming together" to Brave Heart's experiences in the boarding school of his youth, where he was not allowed to speak Lakota for fear of punishment with soap in the mouth or rubber bands popping the lips. "[T]o deny native people and not allow them to speak their language, there is a trauma inflicted that affects the whole being of a person," he writes (Brave Heart, 2011, p. 43.)

## Sovereignty

Cultural and cognitive sovereignty, on the other hand, stand opposed to the imperialisms above. They are powers of self-determination. It must be noted that cultural sovereignty is not, in the Native American context, simply tribal sovereignty or the legal power of self-determination in land and politics. It begins with language and with culture, which cannot be distinguished from religion in Indigenous societies (Gross, 2003). When a tribal nation loses its sense of cultural identity, it suffers a loss of sovereignty, as exemplified in the injuries done by Western criminal justice systems (Melton, 2005, p. 118). Culture, from an Indian perspective, is a lifestyle by which a people act. It is self-expression, but not a conscious self-expression. Rather, it is the expression of the "essence of a people" (Deloria, 1969).

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### **Respect and Reciprocity**

George Tinker (Osage Nation) explains that “what is clear to all American Indian peoples is that respect for creation, that is, the whole of the created realm, or for all our relations, is vitally important to the well-being of our communities” (Tinker, 1997). In the worldview of Native Americans, *respect* for creation emerges out of the perceived need for maintaining balance in the world around them. He writes with Clara Sue Kidwell (White Earth Chippewa/Choctaw) that respect is a key word in Native American culture: respect for a tree, for all of life, for each other, and for all of creation. It carries with it a moral emphasis, a notion that might be understood as *reciprocity* (Kidwell et. al, 2001). Reciprocity is the foundation for balance and requires an understanding that the cosmos is sacred and alive (Kidwell et. al, 2001, p. 41). Humans are seen as a part of this whole and not apart from it. Human responsibilities for balance and well-being are lodged within the worldview of respect for all life.

Kidwell et. al, (2001) argue that the necessity for reciprocity becomes most apparent where violence is concerned. The reality of reciprocity as balance and harmony requires reparation and restitution. Whenever dominant culture students engage with Native Americans as partners in community service, they must remember the effects of cognitive and cultural imperialism on the community. They must be prepared to acknowledge that they represent the presence of imperial power by their affiliation with dominant culture institutions, pedagogy, communication styles, and knowledge sources. They must accept the reality that respect between individuals working towards common goals is susceptible to the effects of colonization when working with those traumatized by it. Respect can wind up being a tool for the kind of reciprocity that will advantage the colonizer.

### **PROGRAM AND PEDAGOGY**

The Belmont University study-away service learning experience has, from the outset of its partnerships on the Pine Ridge and Wind River reservations in 2014, sought to develop the value of respect and the practice of reciprocity in its pedagogy, curriculum and activities. In 2015, when relationships with tribal and community members “thickened,” the author began to construct the program as a cross-cultural service-learning program, indirectly following the approaches of the ACE (Delano-Oriaran, 2012) and transformative learning (Mezirow, 1997; Bolea, 2012) models. The program has taken an asset-based view of community, seeking community-led partnerships that empower, teach to cultural competency, integrate theory and practice, address social inequity and White privilege, and develop a model of critical reflection for a (a) short-term, (b) study-away, (c) cross-cultural, (d) service-learning Religion course.

### **Initial challenges**

Two challenges would affect the shape and content of the program early on: settling on the kind of community-based partnership engaged and shaping the content and scope of academic religious experience.

Intentional thought was given to the shape of community service as either direct service, civic engagement, or both. This turned out to be an uneasy choice, for both forms of service pose problems for relevant and meaningful service, and as well as for democratic academic learning. As noted above,

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philanthropic service-learning activities often reinforce assumptions of the universality of learning more than civic responsibility service-learning programs (Seider et al., 2010). Direct service often reinforces students' belief that their individual actions are sufficient for social change and diminish commitments to common responsibility intrinsic to citizenship (Seider et al., 2010). With direct service, students often learn more about being a personally responsible citizen rather than a participatory citizen or, even more so, a justice-oriented citizen (Seider et al., 2010). Yet, the civic engagement approach, with the goal of engendering civic responsibility and fostering moral development, risks cultural imperialism. As Butin (2007) poignantly asks of service-learning programs, "What kind of democracy are we being apprenticed to?" (p. 179). Butin contends that "powerful anti-oppressive pedagogical strategies must first and foremost help students 'unlearn' their oppressive assumptions before any other justice-centered work can be done."

For example, one Belmont student, after talking with a Lakota artist living on very modest means, remarked in a journal assignment:

*My own field of study is entrepreneurship, and as \_\_\_\_\_ spoke, my mind raced about ways in which I could help her expand her business through online sales, accounting techniques, marketing, and packaging. I dreamed of selling her products internationally, creating many jobs on the reservation, and boosting the economy through this passionate entrepreneur and her one-of-a kind bracelet. As I snapped out of my daydream, I realized that I was flexing my profit-maximizing capitalistic mindset that would not be compatible with the sacred Native American religion and culture.*

For this student, the virtues of democratic capitalism embedded in dominant culture notions of civic responsibility and perhaps social justice as well became a critical issue.

The second issue concerns religions experience. Religion is one of the general education courses taught in the program. Belmont students may (and have) enroll in the program expecting it to give them a missional Christian experience. Some confuse it for one of the annual mission trips offered by the Christian university. Others may desire, out of deep convictions enculturated outside of Belmont, to "evangelize" Native Americans by ministering to them through direct service or "convert" them through conversations.

Because religion has helped "wipe out" Native American history from the public memory of the United States, the value of respect and practice of reciprocity mandates that these habits of thoughts and viewpoints be critically challenged. (Archambault, 1996). Marie Archambault (Hunkpapa Lakota) points out that, despite "the centuries of European invasion and occupation, attempts to "civilize" us, and the misguided evangelization which accompanied it, we survived..." (p. 134). Hernández-Díaz (2011) observes that historically when the powerful insist on obedience to God, the supposed beneficiaries of such obedience have usually paid a horrifying price. Evangelism participates in the decimation of Indigenous peoples because, Hernández-Díaz explains, "European evangelism was no mere expansion of religion, but a violent conquest that forced a complete change of economic, political and cultural systems" (p. 212). Furthermore, religion does not always foster community health. It has been a source of issues like chemical codependency, charity codependency, and paternalism (Archambault, 1996). Without critical reflection on the sad history education and religion have in the treatment of Indigenous peoples in the United States, dominant culture students will ignore the embedded imperialisms in their work.

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### **Community Partnerships**

Belmont faculty and staff first established relationships with Pine Ridge tribal members around 2005 and have been committed to supporting various community-based organizations (CBOs), as well as individual work and initiatives. On both reservations, the points of contact with tribal leaders and organizations initially were, and in many ways continue to be, dominant culture organizations and individuals. This dynamic has been important for mostly White students possessing dominant culture frameworks. They have helped guide the process of racial/cultural identity awareness in students as living examples of White persons who have a secure non-racist White identity (Sue & Sue, 2013, p. 335). These organizations and individuals have encouraged the development of independent and mutual relationships with members of the community.

The collaborative partnerships with Lakota tribal members are facilitated by a White pastor, Karen Ressel, who lives on the reservation in the city of Pine Ridge and directs the Lutheran/Presbyterian Pine Ridge Retreat Center. The Pine Ridge Retreat Center is a religiously affiliated center whose mission is “to foster better understanding between Indian and non-Indian peoples and to make contributions to the life of the people living on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation.” Its primary contribution is the after-school care of children of families burdened by devastating poverty and afflicted by chemical addiction. It provides temporary assistance to the hungry and homeless, a source of income for community members, medical referrals, advocacy for tribal sovereignty, and partnerships with tribal organizations and businesses. It hosts direct service and civic engagement programs from churches and colleges with the goal of developing long-term reciprocal partnerships. Its religious mission is shaped by an anti-racist approach to a long-term, sustainable investment in the community.

The Belmont group engages both direct-service and civic engagement activities, with most of the week spent listening to and learning from Lakota educators and community leaders like Leonard Little Finger and Basil Brave Heart, both of whom are published in print, audio or visual media, as well as others who as artists share meals, stories, and their work with the group. In these education sessions, Native Americans serve as educators. In addition, the Belmont group helps facilitate after-school programming for children at the Pine Ridge Retreat Center as well offers other kinds of service when asked or invited.

Ressel understands the potential harms existing within the role performed by the Pine Ridge Retreat Center. The reality of faith-based organizations perpetuating and sustaining codependency and paternalism is at the front of her approach to living in the community with respect and reciprocity. Since coming to the Center in 2015, Ressel has engaged tribal and community members and organizations for guidance and mutual collaboration.

In Ressel’s experience, service-learning service trips can be destructive depending on how the students and their instructors prepare for the experience. There is a need to have at the very least a working knowledge of the violence perpetrated against Indian peoples since the landing of Columbus. Groups that have begun to dislodge themselves from their culturally embedded stereotypes will have a better opportunity to truly listen and appreciate what they are hearing and seeing during their stay. In addition, she warns that one of the greatest challenges visitors to Pine Ridge face is to leave problem-solving skills at home and to truly listen to the people with whom they partner. The image of co-learners and co-workers can help to avoid offering solutions that are not viable in a culture that is not one’s own.

On the Wind River reservation, the collaborative partnership between the Belmont program and Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho community members is shaped by several new relationships. The College of Theology and Christian Ministry at Belmont has developed a program relationship with the



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Wind River Native Advocacy Center (WRNAC) on the reservation and will place a student extern with the center for the summer of 2017. In addition, Belmont students spend four days every May nurturing collaborative activities that further the issues of tribal sovereignty and trust responsibility, economic sustainability, health education, income equality, and racial and cultural understanding.

The center's director is Jason Baldes, a member of the Eastern Shoshone tribe who holds B. S. and M. S. degrees in Land Resources and Environmental Sciences from Montana State University. Together with the Board of Directors he developed the center's identity vision as "A community engaged in self-determination for education, health, economic development and equality for the Wind River Reservation." Its mission is to "To empower Native Americans in Wyoming for a stronger voice through community organizing, education, research, legal advocacy and leadership development."

Baldes emphasizes the unique issues that many tribes, especially in Wyoming and Montana, share. He insists that the many problems cannot, and should not, be solved by tribal members working on their own, stating

*Working with non-tribal members, organizations, and others off the reservation develops relationships that can last a lifetime. Cross-cultural awareness, respect, and appreciation enhance the communities in which we live. Building relationships with those unlike ourselves diminishes misunderstanding and builds trust.*

Baldes underscores the notion that not until people can work among cultural differences and perspectives and within multiple jurisdictions will real world problems be solved.

A relationship of the kind Baldes describes exists between WRNAC and the Wyoming Association of Churches. Chesie Lee, its executive director, is a White attorney who moved to the edge of the Wind River reservation to be an advocate for and supporter of the Wind River Native Advocacy Center.

For Lee, service-learning groups must understand that the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho are hospitable and welcoming, but they want to be in charge of what is said and done. They want people to know how important family and community are to them but that they are individuals as well. They are not looking to be converted, but they do not mind sharing what they believe and what visitors believe. They do not want pity, but they want dominant culture people to know their history and that historical trauma is still experienced by the community. Dominant culture people must understand the importance of respect for nature and creation, relatives and harmony. She gives one last piece of advice. The tribes are sovereign nations and want self-determination to be respected.

## Pedagogy

The Belmont program is a three-week intensive that allows students to enroll in at least two courses, junior-level general education religion and writing courses. The program consists of several elements that reinforce one another: pre-trip preparation, on-site critical reflection, community partnerships (both direct service and civic engagement), and post-trip critical reflection. Many of the pedagogical approaches describe in the literature review above are valued and selectively utilized in order to achieve the learning objectives listed. Following is a partial list of strategies crafted from ACE and transformative learning pedagogy. The strategic ends are Reciprocity, Respect, Effective Communication, Cultural Awareness, and Critical Reflection.



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### Reciprocity

In order to engage reciprocity, cultural competency, and build sustaining long-term relationships (Delano-Oriaran, 2012), intentional efforts to “harvest” knowledge (Bolea, 2012) from tribal and community members have been implemented at the front end of the program. Learning proceeds through authentic collaboration with community partners who are valued as teachers and instructors (Delano-Oriaran, 2012).

For example, in the initial stages of the program’s development, the author invited community leaders on both the Pine Ridge and Wind River reservations to provide narrative answers to questions pertaining to dominant culture volunteer groups like Belmont’s. Two of the questions were: (a) What is the most important thing people generally want non-Indians to learn when they come to the reservation? and (b) How important is it generally for people that non-Indian people learn the history of White violence towards Native Americans and/or Native ways of life, including beliefs about creation and the kinship of all things, tribal and family traditions, and/or ceremonials?

The initial reaction to this set of questions was positive, but a different approach that empowered Native American students at Wind River to answer in their own voices was needed. Chesie Lee condensed the questions to one and include it on a mid-term given to tribal members taking her class, “Legal and Ethical Considerations for Human Services,” offered on the reservation as part of a degree program run by the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh’s College of Education and Human Services. It read:

*A small group of college students from Tennessee are coming to the Wind River Reservation for three days for a tour and to learn. This is a field trip for them and most are majoring in human service related work. They know little about Native Americans, but want to learn and are potential allies. Some may want to come to work here after they graduate from college or at least to do an internship here.*

*List the five most important things you would want them to learn while they are here. Be specific. For example, not just “our history and our culture,” but what about the history and culture? What would be the best way for them to learn these things? What ethical concerns would you have about their being here and perhaps want to work here?*

Several students commented on the need to understand many of the effects of the trauma of imperialism on the tribes. Two responses spoke specifically about the trauma, one using the language of trauma itself. Kara St. Clair, an Eastern Shoshone student, wanted dominant culture students to

*...watch a video on the history of boarding schools, there’s two that exist here: the church up at Trout Creek and St. Stephens. This will show them why we have alcohol and substance abuse. [Talk about] what is trauma/historical trauma. Have elders from both communities [Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho] tell stories. Show them the immersion school in Ethete. Show them the old buildings at Circle of Love in Ethete. Show them the old buildings around the BIA agency [and their] history.*

Latonna Snyder (Eastern Shoshone) connects the events of history to the present circumstances of the reservation. She thinks non-Native students should learn

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*Our history, our story, how we ended [up] on this plot of land, who our chief was. How far our reservation once extended, but because of acts of congress our land got smaller and smaller... Let them know why we are in the situations we are in, the alcoholism, the drug abuse, the domestic violence, the child abuse. We are a unique people with unique traditions... [learn] what our values are, why we treat people with respect. How we survived years of oppressing our language.*

On the Pine Ridge and Wind River reservations, tribal members engage the Belmont group as teachers, instructors, and partners educating it by “showing” the history of the tribes at sacred sites, demonstrating values, and telling stories and their ancient and traditional ways of life. They exhibit the strengths of their respective communities by partnering in the learning process, even while receiving knowledge, resources, and energy from the Belmont group.

At Wind River, the Wind River Native Advocacy Center creates and shapes the opportunities and content of engagement, from political empowerment work like generating information materials concerning tribal and state government policy, to helping local agencies with social needs from infrastructure to health care. At Pine Ridge, in addition to the work done with the retreat center, students are organized by the SuAnne Big Crow Boys and Girls Club in direct service for facilities maintenance, as well as learning about social issues from the perspective of the organization’s director.

**Respect**

The insistence that dominant culture students and partners respect the trauma caused by imperialism is deeply connected to understanding and respecting Native ways of life. Several Wind River students indicated just this when responding to the question above.

Etheleen Potter, a Northern Arapaho student, writes that she would want non-Native students to learn the history of the reservation, understand cultural ways like powwows and the social meaning of preparing regalia for those and other events like the Sun Dance: “The best way for [non-Native students] to learn would be to live in the community, like those that were non-Native who went to Standing Rock... [I]f they didn’t respect how the native community lives, then they should not work in a community like this.”

Another student writes about the kind of respect needed for cooperation and collaboration: “Respect for our culture, the people, the land, our religions...” She emphasizes the seriousness role that respect has when she states that non-Native visitors should “ask the proper persons before engaging in any activities or cultural relevance,” and “to get permission from both tribes [Northern Arapaho and Eastern Shoshone] for programs or people to ask questions.”

Learning itself is a function of respect in Native communities and is grounded in the ecology of community and the environment (Cajete, 2015). When Charles Aragon, Jr. (Eastern Shoshone) lists what he believes non-Native students should learn while at Wind River Reservation, he, too, begins with culture and the history of the tribes but also includes the environment—the mountains, rivers, grasslands, animals. A deep connection exists between grasping in some way the significance of all of the elements that provide the foundation for Native ways of life and respect. For him, “...knowing the community, knowing the people—not coming in with a plan, but maybe an idea and how or who wants to get involved” seems to require a sense of joining a journey in the middle and needing to do catch up work.

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### **Effective Communication**

In transformative learning theory, the frames of reference of students that define their life worlds are engaged through discourse (Mezirow, 1997, p. 5). Discourse, defined as a dialogue devoted to assessing reasons for beliefs by examining alternative points of view (p. 6), is undertaken during pre-trip and on-site “classroom” sessions. This dialogue process in these sessions is governed by the use of a talking circle and talking stick (Wolf & Rickard, 2003, p. 40) and borrows from Schirch and Camp’s (2007, pp. 36-57) dialogue model, which consists of (a) establishing common intentions and norms, (b) sharing experiences and perceptions, (c) exploring diversity and commonalities, and (d) exploring possibilities for action. Thus, the style of communication becomes a lesson in culture. Students are asked to respect and follow certain rules that characterize the communication patterns of Indigenous peoples (Mercurieff & Roderick, 2013) when speaking within their group and with community members. Students practice silence, non-interruption, lengthy pause for consideration, indirect eye contact, physical spacing, speaking for one’s self, the role of narrative, and equity.

On both the Pine Ridge and Wind River reservations, visitation of sacred sites and participation of ceremonials like smudging are led by tribal members who teach and display respect. Students cognitively engage respect, and they sensually encounter it with sight, sound, smell, touch and taste. We are guided to respect these sites with gifts of tobacco in order to honor “all our relations.”

### **Cultural Awareness**

Pre-trip preparation includes the process of creating a safe place for exploration and questioning. In four meetings, students and faculty participate in telling personal stories of experiences with Native Americans. Students research and give short presentations on the history, culture, and reservation life of Lakota, Northern Arapaho, and Eastern Shoshone peoples, which is followed by a brief journaling exercise around the prompt, “What new thing have you learned, and what is your feeling toward that new thing?” When available, Mark Charles (Navajo) joins a pre-trip session to talk about Native American views on time. Veterans of the program join the group for one session to talk about their experiences and stimulate insights unique to those who have engaged in multicultural learning.

In order to implement the suggestions of the Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho students, the author solicited a list or suggested readings from Jason Baldes at Wind River and asked Lakota community members for suggested films which would accurately display the history and social issues impacting the tribe. Baldes recommended the author Gregory Cajete (2015), whose work is included in this chapter, and Gary Roberts’ *Massacre at Sand Creek: How Methodists Were Involved in an American Tragedy*, sections of which are used for instruction. Lakota elder Basil Brave Heart recommended his own book, *The Spiritual Journey of a brave heart* as well as *Black Elk Speaks*. Both are incorporated into class sessions pre-trip and on the reservation. Furthermore, students engage Brave Heart and Baldes about these texts when the two teach the group for two to three hours. Leonard Little Finger recommends George Tinker as a helpful Native American voice concerning questions about Indian religion. For this reason, students are introduced to different Native American beliefs, both religious and ways of life, through texts like *A Native American Theology* (Kidwell et. al, 2001).

Creating safe spaces for identity development requires mitigating the threats that accompany the acquisition of troubling knowledge of the self, particularly when it comes to White privilege (Delano-Oriaran & Parks, 2015). *Neither Wolf nor Dog: On Forgotten Roads with an Indian Elder* (Nerburn,

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2010) is an effective introduction to some of the cultural issues students will encounter on the reservation and for generating conversation about the frames of reference shaping White privilege. Its limitations are found in the depth of engagement it gives to the tough questions posed to Nerburn (2010) (White author) by Dan (Lakota elder). Other texts help prepare the group for cross-cultural education. Sherman Alexie's (Spokane-Coer d'Alene) *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* (2007) contemporizes Native American experiences in dominant culture, and *The Way to Rainy Mountain* (2009) by N. Scott Momaday (Kiowa) provides history, biographical experience, and cultural storytelling to teach about the Kiowa and Indigenous peoples.

Several documentaries and films are available for discussion, each portraying more vividly the trauma of Euro-American violence on Native Americans and its continuing effects in racist policy and reservation life. The recent Independent Lens documentary *What Was Ours* (Hames et al., 2016) provides a contrast to the portrayal of many documentaries on the Lakota, Eastern Shoshone and Northern Arapaho. It displays the strength and resilience of a small group of Wind River residents in search of their history and identity. For a more confrontational look at effects of Euro-American imperialism in the context of the reservation, see *A Thunder-Being Nation: The Oglala Lakota of Pine Ridge Indian Reservation* (Simpson et al., 2012); *The Canary Effect: Kill the Indian, Save the Man* (Davey et al., 2010); and *Incident at Oglala: The Leonard Peltier Story* (Apted & Redford, 2004).

Before and during the service-learning experience, student awareness of racial and cultural identity is addressed. Before the trip students are briefly introduced to Sue and Sue's (2013) seven steps of White identity development described earlier in the chapter. This cursory summary helps students anticipate the feelings, emotions, and thoughts they will experience on the trip. It provides a cognitive framework for understanding their experiences with the explicit qualification that it serves as a reflection resource.

Because most accurate assessments of bias come not from those who enjoy the privilege of power but from those who are most disempowered (Sue & Sue, 2013), cultural awareness is complemented and deepened by the interactions and collaborations with tribal and community members. Speakers and service partners address White privilege and colonization from the Native American perspective, asking students to evaluate critically privilege in their own lives.

## Critical Reflection

Students are guided in exercises and assignments of critical reflection on their experiences through three-step journals that require post-trip reflections on entries written on-site. These entries are made in response to prompts from professors. In addition, scholarly work that engages social justice issues and the Christian religion is required throughout at least four pre-trip sessions and five on-site discourse sessions. Finally, a post-trip questionnaire is given to students six months after the experience. One student response is significant. The question asks, "Did the Pine Ridge/Wind River reservation study-away program have an effect on your world view during the trip, and is that effect still with you? Can you give an example of that effect?" The student responded,

*Yes. It had an effect on my view as an American completely unaware of the Native American communities living within the country I thought I knew so well. I feel infinitely more aware of myself by spending time, listening, and learning from the people on these reservations. This is my history as an American and to think I was so completely torn away from this history makes me feel now that this trip had to happen if I was to ever be an educated, sensitive, and caring American citizen.*

**Challenged by Respect****CONCLUSION**

Native American communities—especially those on reservations—provide unique opportunities and challenges for service-learning education in American universities and colleges. Facilitating experience and community-based education with indigenous communities requires displacements of various kinds of “centers” for students formed and shaped by Euro-American culture—a culture of Whiteness. The most confrontational displacement is that of the universalization and normalization of cultural privilege. Dominant culture students are confronted in Native American contexts with a flurry of cultural dynamics directly affected by American colonization. Developing pedagogy for an authentic and culturally engaging service-learning program on a reservation requires attention to various teaching, service-learning and identity development theories, social and cultural issues, and a deep understanding of the history and the impact of the reservation as trauma. This is especially true when it comes to understanding the tensions between two core values of both service-learning and Native American ways of life—respect and reciprocity.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Cognitive Imperialism:** The imposition of ways of knowing, thinking, reasoning and communicating through systems of education and governance by a dominant culture onto a subjected culture.

**Cultural Imperialism:** The imposition of social, economic, artistic, educational, political and religious values and beliefs by a dominant culture onto a subjected culture.

**Decolonizing:** Undoing the social and political effects and the cultural meanings of colonialism that have been enforced on a dominated group.

**Eastern Shoshone:** Branch of the Shoshone tribe, an Indigenous American people inhabiting the Great Basin and the Rocky Mountains, speaking an Aztecan language, and settling in Wyoming on the Wind River Reservation after 1868 after the U.S. Government reduced their traditional territory.

**Indigenous Peoples:** People groups with a continuous pre-colonial existence on land or in a region.

**Internalized Oppression:** Persons of an oppressed group understand themselves through the prejudiced stereotypes of an oppressor group and act on that understanding.

**Northern Arapaho:** One of four bands of an indigenous American people occupying the great plains. In 1878, after the Sand Creek Massacre in Colorado, they were placed on the Shoshone Wind River Reservation by the US Government.

**Oglala Lakota:** A band of the Lakota (Teton) Sioux, one of seven Siouan tribes of the great Sioux people, who migrated from Minnesota to the high plains, and who were confined to the Pine Reservation in South Dakota in 1889, and speak an Algonquin language.

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## Chapter 3

# Don't Touch My Hair: Culturally Responsive Engagement in Service–Learning

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### ABSTRACT

*Myriad studies on service-learning agree on the benefits of service-learning for students. Because projects are designed with the needs of students and institutions in mind, the experiences of the Black communities served are seldom highlighted nor are the intricacies of the multiple relationships addressed. Voices of marginalized groups especially the Black communities—the community that is the focus of this chapter—needs to be incorporated in authentic and intentional ways to advance transformational service-learning for all involved. This chapter begins to examine issues and opportunities for best case scenarios for service-learning projects in Black communities.*

### THE FOCUS OF THE CHAPTER

Although students and service-learning educators highlight the values of service-learning in general and see these efforts as opportunities to advance communities, questions abound regarding the process and the impact on those communities (O'Grady, 2000). Black communities are concerned about projects that render them “invisible” partners in problem-solving efforts (Calderón, 2003; Einfeld & Collins, 2008). Further, they are concerned about practices that do not utilize the insider knowledge their voices bring to the table. This chapter explores the intersection between service-learning, culturally responsive pedagogy, and Black communities. In this chapter, the students engaged in service-learning are characterized as the Servers and the community is identified as the Served (Henry & Breyfogle, 2006). Freire's theory of critical consciousness informs the chapter.

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## BACKGROUND

Freire's scholarship has had a significant impact on service-learning, particularly service-learning for societal transformation. In his pivotal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (2014), asserts that students are not merely vessels to be filled with knowledge and that education should engender critical consciousness. Only then he argues can we break down institutional and individual vestiges of oppression. Freire coined the term "banking" to describe a pedagogical method in which students operate as agents of their own subjugation. He argues against the "banking" concept, asserting that students have something to contribute to the creation and sharing of knowledge, thereby making education more of a dialogue and the eventual vehicle for liberation rather than oppression. An interpretation of Freire's work in service-learning is that the Servers are partners with the "Served." This means the Served are not to be viewed from a "banking" approach to problem-solving in which they are merely vessels to be filled with "superior" solutions by those who have the privilege and access to resources, but that they, too, have something to contribute from their insider knowledge about their communities and to become co-creators of knowledge (Cohen, 2012; Freire, 2014). Critical consciousness in service-learning facilitates societal transformation through group dialogue, participatory action, and empowerment between the Servers and the Served.

### "The" Black Community and Diversity

Black communities are not monolithic—they are varied. Understanding the diversity within the Black community is essential to service-learning design and approaches. Aspects of diversity in the Black community come from dimensions of a difficult social, political, and cultural history (Broman, Neighbors, & Jackson, 1988). Black diversity also comes in the form of culture, language, and national origin. Although viewing the Black community from the perspective of skin color may suggest to some a singular group, even in this instance there is diversity based on whether one identifies as belonging to two or more races.

Black community diversity also entails variations based on regional, urban, and rural differences, and in some communities, age and socioeconomic status (Broman, Neighbors, & Jackson, 1988; Du Bois, 1903). Some may prefer to be referred to as African American, and others prefer to be characterized as Black. The individual needs to be asked. Yet others do not wish to be identified by a single racial label and may prefer bicultural, mixed, or biracial. These contexts are critical for the efficacy of service-learning projects in Black communities. This chapter utilizes Black in referring to communities of people of African descent.

## ISSUES, CONTROVERSIES, PROBLEMS

There is much miscellany of opinion about how Black people characterize their ethnic background. The individual needs to be given the opportunity to express their preference. Few studies have examined the impact of service-learning programs on communities (Donahue, Boyer, & Rosenberg, 2003; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009) and the role that communities play in determining the goals of service-learning programs. There is a consensus on the value of service-learning and the potential to bridge communities. However, for service learning to attain the goals of refining student learning, cultivating civic-minded citizenry, and addressing Black community needs, the insider knowledge and voices of Black communities must



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be a centerpiece (Conner, 2010). Most of the service-learning research presents the Black community as a unidimensional entity that holds similar values, attitudes, experiences, and has a shared perception of itself as a social entity. Further, in general, service-learning design presumes that the Black community is a homogeneous unit devoid of intra-racial conflict (Broman, Neighbors, & Jackson, 1988). This perspective of Blacks that aggregates their experiences and backgrounds assures that the diversity within the Black community is minimized and overlooked (Novek, 2000). Following are examples of ways to become engaged in critical consciousness while performing service-learning in Black communities.

### **We Don't All Look Alike**

In 2014, a news anchor interviewing actor Samuel L. Jackson confused him for Laurence Fishburne, with Jackson responding, "I am not Laurence Fishburne. We don't all look alike" (Jackson, 2014). Many Black people have shared experiences of being mistaken by their White peers to be somebody else. When confronted, a common response is, "They all look alike to me." Cognitive bias, also known as the "other-race effect" is one of the frameworks that explains this dynamic. In cognitive bias situations, people find it easier to distinguish the faces of those that share their race. Studies on cognitive bias explain that face recognition biases may occur not because of the Server's lack of ability, but because faces perceived as belonging to a social "out-group" are processed at a definite level, whereas "in-group" faces are individualized and personalized (Bernstein, et al., 2007). Other scholars posit that in-group identities influence the lens through which we view situations, our preferences, thoughts, behavior, and determinations of what is "normal" and basic social concepts (Banks, 2009; O'Grady, 2000; Mitchell, 2008). For example, that people are better at recognizing members of their own race or ethnicity than at recognizing members of other races is explicitly explained through the own-race bias (ORB) phenomenon (Malpass & Kravitz, 1969; Sporer, 2001). The relevance to service-learning is that self-selection involving ORB exacerbates power differentials between the Server and the Served. Cognitive bias is one of the many challenges in service-learning in Black communities that causes a cultural discontinuity for the Served and causes them to retreat from meaningful engagement and relationship building with the Servers.

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Cognitive bias also manifest itself in the subject of hair touching. In communities where the Served are Black, there are reports of the issue of hair touching without permission. There appears to be a great deal of wanting to touch black hair, the author asserts, as opposed to wanting to touch Caucasian or Asian-textured hair. This hair touching ritual is often justified by statements such as, "What do you use to comb it? Do you wash it? Is it yours?" While it could be interpreted that curiosity is a trait that can be beneficial, curiosity is not always experienced the same by everyone. This approach to hair touching without permission and the barrage of questions that follows the touching suggests to Black people that somehow their hair is different or even odd. This becomes magnified when White middle class students are in engaged in the community with partners who are Black children. Hair is very personal to Black people regardless of how they characterize their ethnic identity. Issues raised around hair presents immediate cultural discontinuity for some Black people. The intrusion through hair touching creates an immediate cultural dissonance with the Servers not understanding the implications of personal space and body invasion and the Served struggling to make meaning of the queries and to find the elusive what is "normal." It is compounded by the dominant culture in the U.S.A. that centers blond Caucasian hair

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as the ultimate symbol and standard of beauty. Thus, having “different” hair that does not conform to the norms of beauty creates yet another instance of cultural discontinuity and reinforces stereotypes of whose hair is “normal.” This situation does not do anything to build effective relationships, an ingredient necessary for transformative and reciprocal service-learning. Instead it leaves a psychological scar on the Served. Emerging studies on race in service-learning pose the question about the relevance of service-learning that does not challenge the root causes of social inequality and on eliminating racial stereotypes and promoting a deeper awareness of racism and privilege (Dunlap, Scoggin, & Davi, 2007; Caro, et al., 2009; Mitchell, Donahue, & Young-Law, 2012).

Mitchell, et. al. (2012) challenge that service-learning pedagogy should illuminate the cognitive bias that relies on “a pedagogy of whiteness,” by designing activities and service-learning courses that meet the needs of White students. This approach, Mitchell, et al. (2012) argue, perpetuate color-blind discourses that do little in the way of providing critical consciousness and understanding of the root causes of the deprivation of the communities in which the Servers perform “service.”

Mitchell (2008) articulates Critical Service-Learning as a transformative approach that considers the issues and concerns raised by scholars regarding the impact of service-learning on communities. Critical service-learning differs from traditional service-learning in that social change and power redistribution are central elements. The focus is on engaging the Servers in understanding root causes of inequality and developing an environment where the Served are not viewed as deficient by their own making but rather as partners for social change.

Mitchell (2008) advocates for intentional power distribution as a central element of service-learning practice. The process of power redistribution is facilitated when the Servers are systematically walked through personal reflection on identity and the complexity of social concerns before they embark on service-learning projects.

### **The Power Imbalance**

According to Butin (2006), data on the demographics participating in service-learning is generally not widely available but scholars conclude that “the overarching assumption is that the students doing the service are White sheltered, middle class, single, without children, un-indebted, and between the ages of 18 and 24” (p. 481).

The term “service” already infers an imbalance in the relationship of those engaged (Rosenberger, 2000). Despite enhancements in service-learning models, the predominant versions are still based on the principle of caring. While caring is indeed a noble human quality, within the context of service-learning, this approach perpetuates the philosophy of doing something for the disadvantaged and does not necessarily go the extra step to understand and challenge social and systemic inequities. Further, it also invokes a deficit thinking approach which places the Servers as possessing the resources and intellectual capital that the Served do not possess.

The current process is antithetical to the goals of service-learning in that it places the Server at a higher role than the Served. When we take into consideration that the Server may not be adequately prepared prior to undertaking service-learning the situation is one that further disadvantages the community. In some instances, students are not exposed to the deeper dialogue to understand the larger structural forces underlying social problems and the reasons for the position and social place of the Served. The caring philosophy and approach do not take into consideration critical consciousness. Critical consciousness delves into intentional processing of the placement of self in society and the intersectionality of race,

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culture, social class, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, on how one views situations of inequality (Banks, 2009; Gay, 2000; Gay, 2010; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 2009; Grant & Sleeter, 2011).

Pompa (2002) expresses concern by stating, “Unless facilitated with great care and consciousness, ‘service’ can unwittingly become an exercise in patronization. In a society replete with hierarchical structures and patriarchal philosophies, service-learning’s potential danger is for it to become the very thing it seeks to eschew” (p. 68).

O’Grady (2000) asserts that the dominant model of service-learning is Euro-centric and that scholarship on the subject tends to focus on White students engaged in service-learning. Power dynamics as a critical element of service-learning preparation is not adequately addressed in the scholarship on service-learning. The fact that power is not addressed reveals what is described in the literature as the helping approach to service. Robinson (2000a) agrees with the dissonance in this approach to the essential tenets of the intent of service-learning, stating that service-learning without the social understanding of systemic inequities and activism to address them is a “glorified welfare system” (p. 607). Service-learning models that do not delve into critical consciousness the process by which the Servers, identify the root causes of social problems, and engaging in initiatives to address them is futile. Without embedding critical consciousness, such approaches to service learning only result in eliciting good feelings for the “Servers.” Such approaches are in the end detrimental in that they preserve systems of inequality and reinforce systems of privilege (Brown, 2001).

O’Grady (2000) agrees with the above scholars stating, “Responding to individual human needs is important, but if the social policies that create these needs is not also understood and addressed, then the cycle of dependence remains” (p. 13). Cultural humility and sensitive is one of the avenues that can be utilized to mediating power dynamics (Brown, 2001; Ross, 2010).

According to Ross (2010), cultural humility is a multifaceted concept that comprises processes to acknowledge the intersectionality of race, social class, national origin, and power dynamics. The process of cultivating and maintaining cultural humility and power mediation entails an ongoing examination of one’s own biases through self-reflection and the willingness to “relinquish the role of expert, work actively to address power imbalance in communication to create respectful and dynamic partnerships with the community, and ultimately become a student of the community” (p. 318).

### **Service-Learning**

The benefits of service-learning for students have been long extolled by scholars and practitioners (Astin, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Seider, Huguley, & Novick, 2013). Scholars postulate that service-learning enhances students’ academic, personal development, and sense of civic responsibility. Moreover, these scholars posit that service-learning supports institutional missions of service. However, there is a paucity of research on the experience of the recipients of service—the Served and very limited focus on the Served who are members of the Black community (Blouin & Perry, 2009). The population that engages in service-learning continues to be predominantly White students, often from the middle and upper class, and the Served tend to be marginalized and often communities of color of low socio-economic status (Jones, Robbins, & LePeau, 2011; O’Grady, 2000; Rosenberger, 2000; Sleeter, 2001). Service-learning is often utilized as a pedagogical strategy in teacher preparation programs to support the application of culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching practices. This aspect is more critical than ever given the shifting national demographics. Proponents of culturally responsive pedagogy underscore the importance

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of preparing students to mediate and negotiate nuanced cultural reference points within the communities where they are performing service-learning (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Hundreds of studies have examined the impact of service-learning on university students. These studies agree on the benefits for students in general but very few observe the experiences of students of color engaged in service-learning or the direct experiences of the communities served (Holsapple, 2012). Because institutions define service-learning different ways, there are multiple definitions of service-learning. Bringle & Hatcher (2009) define service-learning as an

*educational experience in which students (a) participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs, and (b) reflect on the service activity in such a way as to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of personal values and civic responsibility (p. 38).*

Jacoby (2014) states: “Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes” (pp. 1-2). Furco (2000) espoused a conceptual definition of service-learning that emphasizes reciprocity: “Service-learning programs are distinguished from other approaches to experiential education by their intention to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring” (p. 12).

Regardless of the definition that is espoused, O’Grady (2000) asserts that the common elements of most definitions of service-learning comprise of four themes: (a) institutional collaboration with community, (b) the importance of reflection, (c) active learning, and (d) the development of a sense of caring. The various definitions center around student learning. Perhaps a nuanced definition that incorporates reciprocity would serve better. This chapter advocates for an experiential model of service-learning in which students critically learn about the societal, social, historical, political, and economic factors that perpetuates inequalities and devise active solutions to these problems with the community. The definitions, goals, and intentions of service-learning by the Servers are especially critical given the shifting national demographics. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, by 2044, more than half of all Americans are projected to belong to a minority group (any group other than non-Hispanic White alone); against this backdrop is the school age population which is also projected to be culturally and linguistically diverse. The numbers indicate that by 2025, students of color will comprise 50% of US school age children, and by 2050, students of color will make up half of the U.S.A. population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014). The current status quo will result in half of the nation’s population unable to achieve the socio-economic mobility that education supposedly procures. And here is where service-learning pedagogy is critical. But, unless the current model of service-learning is transformed utilizing culturally responsive and critical consciousness raising techniques, these communities will continue to be marginalized and service-learning will continue to be beneficial only to the Servers and not the Served.

Despite proposals for new directions in service-learning, current and traditional models tend to be from a deficit framework rather than from asset-based models. Black communities do present many strengths and insider knowledge about how things work in the respective communities (Ross, 2010). Yet, current approaches of service-learning design and implementation still lack the authentic and

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purposeful integration of their voices in determining the types of service-learning efforts (Stoecker & Tyron, 2009). Best-practices research involving the community in service-learning design is recent and scant. What exists tends to frame the issues on the nature of the partnerships between universities and the community. As such the unit of measurement is seldom about the experience of the community in the processes involved (Clarke, 2003; Dorado & Giles, 2004; Worrall, 2007).

## **SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

So, what must practitioners of service-learning do to authentically engage with Black communities?

Calderón (2003) argues that “the connections between the classroom and community based learning are all about translation.” Calderón continues by clarifying that at their best, these interactions are about getting students to “understand communities outside of themselves and to become engaged interpreters” (p. 22). Meaningful community building and transformation in the Black community can only occur when the translation process is built upon a foundation of intercultural sensitivity. It is in the moments of self-examination and reflection of the self, identity and the intersectionality of identity and social placements that the Servers will understand that deficits do not reside in Black people and their communities but that they are structural manifestations of inequity. The developmental model of intercultural sensitivity is a useful tool in the process of preparing the Servers for culturally responsive service-learning.

The developmental model of intercultural sensitivity is not simply an exercise in sensitivity. It encompasses a process to recognize the underlying intersectionality of social place and identity (Bacon, 2002; Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Zeichner, LePage, Darling-Hammond, Duffy, & McDonald, 2005; O’Grady 2000). Social place manifests itself through societal structures of inequality that continues to relegate communities of color in an “ever present social jeopardy” (Cooper, 2014, p. 13). Unpacking and deliberating on social place, intercultural sensibility, and privilege are all imperatives for transformational service-learning.

### **Best Practices in Service-Learning**

Our cultural sensitivities are influenced by expectations, values, beliefs, language, and communication styles from our background. These attributes also influence our interpretations of social events and communities. The author asserts the need for cultural humility guided by the following questions (Bacon, 2002; Banks, Cochran-Smith, Moll, Richert, Zeichner, LePage, Darling-Hammond, Duffy, & McDonald, 2005; O’Grady 2000), which are helpful prompts for reflection. Responses to these questions will enable the Servers to engage in critical consciousness by intentionally reflecting on the values of their own communities and families. Later on these reflections become meaningful foundations to glean the values of the Black communities and to utilize culturally responsive approaches as they engage with Black communities in service-learning. The prompts are:

1. What are my family’s expectations about responsibility, dependability, and getting the job right the first time?
2. What are my family’s expectations around time and punctuality?



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3. What is my family's language use—tone, loudness, words?
4. What is my family's non-verbal communication—closeness, eye contact, hands?
5. What are my family's ways of acting toward or acceptance of others who are different?
6. What are my family's beliefs and/or expectations based on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, levels of ability, age, and/or gender?

Further, advance preparation is key to mitigating miscommunications and deleterious effects on the Black community during service-learning. The preparation should entail learning about the racialized history of Blacks in the U.S and the historical and social underpinnings. Use pedagogy that underscores the importance of the Servers mindfulness and awareness of social and political use of language that address the Black community experience with disempowerment, oppression, disinvestment, and racism that Black communities experience. The author further recommends that prior to engaging in opportunities with Blacks or African Americans, service-learners and their faculty consider the following advice:

- Be real, genuine, and respectful with individuals.
- Understand that family ties are important in Black communities and strong kinship bonds are valued.
- Recognize that Black families take care of their own and value what is considered the “extended family unit.”
- There is a strong religious orientation with the church playing a major role in social change; however non-traditional spirituality must also be respected.
- There is strength in the use of informal support networks – church or community.
- There is a sense of distrust of mainstream establishment and distrust of government and social services: “Big Brother doesn't care about us.”
- Some don't like to admit the need for help as there is a strong sense of pride. Black women will seek assistance more so than Black men.
- There is a strong work orientation.
- There may be a lack of knowledge about available services and how the system works.
- Poverty impacts education, self-esteem, quality of life, and lifestyle across the lifespan.
- Seniors are highly respected. Aging represents respect, authority, and wisdom. Identify people as Mrs. or Mr. until given the permission to call individuals by their first name.
- They tend to keep things hidden within the family system and may fear being disgraced or having the family be disgraced.

**Tips for Communication**

- We don't know every Black person and cannot speak for them.
- Prolonged eye contact may be perceived as staring and interpreted as confrontational/aggressive.
- Engage community and/or religious leaders if assistance is needed.
- Show respect always, as a history of racism and sense of powerlessness impacts interactions.
- Don't use “street slang,” which may be interpreted as ridicule.
- The decision-maker is usually the eldest adult child.
- We do not like to be asked questions about finances and past relationships, whether married or not.

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### **CONCLUSION**

Unfortunately, as Cruz and Giles (2000) have shown, the research that has examined the impact of service-learning on communities is almost nonexistent. With regards to the Black community, such scholarship is absent. As noted earlier, most of the outcome measures have focused on personal changes in students. As colleges and universities turn to service-learning as a solution to re-engage teaching and learning to advance Black communities, it is critical that these efforts be designed with Black community input at all levels. Viewing the Black community as co-creators of knowledge while challenging for the academy, is an important step towards shifting the discourse on service learning from that which is predominantly the voice of the academy to that which places the Served in the discourse (Amatea, Cholewa, & Mixon, 2012; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009).

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Service-learning can be the bridge between the academy and communities. It can also be fertile research and social action ground for examining a new concept of humanity. Future studies should start out with the community members' sense of empowerment as the focal point of the research. The data collected on service-learning is typically based on reflection journals, which are self-reports of the Servers. Self-reports, while helpful to the students involved, also have the potential to result in self-monitoring, especially in research on service-learning and impact on communities. Future research should review community reactions and authentic voices to service-learning beyond self-report reflection journals. Intentional and deep exposure to and dialogue about cross-racial exposure can assist in mediating cognitive bias. However, studies about and strategies of negotiating cognitive bias in Service-learning is not prevalent. Scholarship on strategies for mitigating cognitive bias in service-learning occurring in Black communities is absent. Studies on the broader manifestations and implications of cognitive bias in service-learning occurring in Black communities needs further exploration.

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## *Don't Touch My Hair*

### KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Black Community:** People of African descent.

**Critical Consciousness:** Refers to an individual's awareness of how they and others are impacted by dimensions of culture, race, class, ethnicity, gender, and sexual orientation, as well as how these dimensions are related to the political, social, and economic systems in the United States.

**Cultural Discontinuity:** Differences between the culture of a middle-class teacher (usually White) and the school as a White institution and students of the non-dominant race or culture. Often characterized by differences in sociolinguistics, interpersonal or intergroup relations, the absence of certain concepts in certain ethnicities, and conflicts in teaching and learning style.

**Cultural Humility:** The ability for one to be open to the "other" in relationship to cultural identity aspects that are most important to the person.

**Culturally Responsive Pedagogy:** The overarching philosophy for teaching and practice. Generally refers to awareness on the part of the teacher of how culture, race, class, gender, and other societal structures impact teaching and learning.

**Ethnocentric:** A belief that one's own culture is superior to other cultures.

**Power:** A relational term. It can only be understood as a relationship between human beings in a specific historical, economic, and social setting.

**Privilege:** A right, favor, advantage, immunity, specially granted to one individual or group, and withheld from another.

**The Served:** As used in this chapter it refers to the Black communities where service-learning takes place.

**The Servers:** As used in this chapter it refers to students and faculty engaged in service-learning.

## Chapter 4

# Experiencing Democracy and Diversity: Gathering Oral Histories

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### ABSTRACT

*The course “Democracy and Diversity” used oral history gathering as a service-learning project. The obvious goal of the oral history project was to preserve valuable stories from the residents of Mt. Pleasant, a small community on Philadelphia’s Main Line, mostly African American. The second goal was to ease the problems caused by student renters in the neighborhood. The students primarily used the neighborhood for partying off campus and showed little respect for the longtime residents. The process of creating the oral histories created a bridge between town and gown and raised the consciousness of the students. The course used a variety of materials and practices to prepare students. One of the residents of Mt. Pleasant, Barbara Byrd, co-facilitated the course and provided a strong link and a welcoming role model for the class.*

### BACKGROUND

Cabrini University has had a long history of service-learning. In 1989 Cabrini (then Cabrini College) made service-learning a requirement for its Seminar 300 program and for graduation. This requirement was continued when the Seminar 300 program morphed into the Engagements in the Common Good (ECG) curriculum, and the program was extended to cover the first three years of the students’ Cabrini experience (i.e. ECG 100, ECG 200, ECG 300). Any department can offer an ECG course, and the expectation is that the courses will be somewhat interdisciplinary as well as hands-on or experiential in nature. These ECG courses are part of the larger university curriculum that is known as the Social Justice curriculum.

“Democracy and Diversity” is an ECG 200 course designed for second-year students who have had ECG 100 and have been exposed to the idea of community and the concepts of human dignity and civic

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literacy. ECG 200 expands on this base and adds the requirements that students “contribute to a community partnership and analyze dispositions towards concepts like inequality, violence, discrimination, poverty, social justice and environmental degradation.” It further states, “students will increase their civic literacy by gaining an operational understanding of the challenges faced by community organizations” (Cabrini University Catalog, 2016). In ECG 300 students are expected to use the academic skills they have acquired to engage with their community partners in research and advocacy that benefit the partner organizations and the community at large.

The ECG 200 Democracy and Diversity course at first focused on the needs of the Latinx community in nearby Norristown, Pennsylvania. However, the focus shifted when a student renter problem became evident. Although students from other local colleges were also renting in the community, Cabrini was the closest institution, and Cabrini students were clearly part of the problem. The thought was, if students were the problem, then students, in collaboration with the community, would have to be part of the solution.

### **The Community**

Meanwhile, the “town” had already recognized the problems that developers and students were causing in their neighborhood and had organized to deal with it. The community has always been self-sufficient and tight knit -- with its own community name: Mt. Pleasant. Both the university and Mt. Pleasant are part of Wayne, Pennsylvania, a town on what is called the Philadelphia Main Line. Mt. Pleasant is surrounded by suburban mansions, old and new, and Cabrini University occupies one of the old mansion estates. There is a noticeable economic difference between the houses in Mt. Pleasant and most of the surrounding neighborhoods. Some Mt. Pleasant residents historically served as chauffeurs and maids to inhabitants of these larger houses. Today the community is predominantly African American and a mix of professionals, small business people, blue collar workers, retirees, and college students.

Mt. Pleasant consists of three streets and the main street that connects them. One street is a dead end, and the other two form a “U.” There are 84 housing units in Mt. Pleasant, mostly single-family homes that have been passed down through generations but some larger buildings that have apartments. Of these housing units, African Americans inhabit 59 percent, 17 percent are student rental units, and 24 percent are white or other (Informal tally by Barbara Byrd, 2012). Many of the older residents were dying, and although some of their children continued to live in the community, others were moving farther afield to more modern, newly developing areas. The developers who bought properties often tore down the older houses and deforested the landscape. Empty lots became overrun with trash and vermin, endangering the community’s children. This situation was aggravated by the recession of 2007/2008 that made it difficult for developers to raise money for redevelopment. Those developers who kept the houses on their properties rented, primarily to students.

Mt. Pleasant has a civic association that meets whenever the need arises. Through the association, the residents organized and took their concerns to the Tredyffrin Township Board of Supervisors. Individual supervisors met with the Mt. Pleasant community, and Mt. Pleasant residents in large numbers attended the official monthly township Board meetings, making their concerns known. As a consequence, the township agreed to enforce township code violations that were being ignored and passed two new ordinances, one that required a special-exception approval for turning a property into a student rental and a second that limited the number of students who could rent and required the owner to register the student renters with the township.

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These resolutions defused some of the problem, especially the rate of turnover from single-family housing to student renter housing, but they did not totally resolve the student renter issue. For one thing, the ordinances had no enforcement provisions. Property owners generally failed to register their student renters with the township. Student rentals often housed more than the three-person limit stated in the ordinance, and there was no provision for checking up on violations. When student parties got out of control, Mt. Pleasant residents were told to call the police. Understandably, many residents were hesitant to do this. This led to a kind of Catch-22. If the residents complained, township employees described them as complainers. If they let the nuisance continue, the township got the impression that the problems had abated.

The parties did not stop. In fact, at Cabrini it became almost a rite of passage to attend a Mt. Pleasant party. Even students who had not attended a party knew that that was “the place.” One of the student rentals was described on the Cabrini campus as a “fraternity,” even though Cabrini has no fraternities. Another had its own identity as the house of one of the sports teams. Beer bottles continued to overflow trash cans into neighbors’ yards, and young men relieved themselves in back yards during parties. One night, two groups of students fought, knocking down the wall belonging to a long-term resident. Some students who were late for class threatened community safety by driving too fast on the narrow streets. There are no sidewalks in Mt. Pleasant, so children and adults often walk in the street. This was definitely a serious “town and gown” problem happening a mile from Cabrini.

Residents of Mt. Pleasant were clear that they did not dislike students and even tried to welcome them into their community, recognizing that students will be students. What upset them was the lack of respect they believed was at the heart of the behavior. They believed that these same students would not behave in the same way in their home neighborhoods. Moreover, they felt that race and perceived economic differences were partly responsible for the students’ behavior. The students, on the other hand, believed that the renters should be allowed to do what they wanted because they were paying to live there, and they tended to defend their peers’ behavior. In classroom discussions they admitted that they would behave differently in their home neighborhoods. More than once they referred to Mt. Pleasant as a “ghetto.” Given that a core value of a Cabrini University education is Respect, Cabrini clearly needed to become engaged.

### **Identifying the Need**

Because of a prior connection with Mt. Pleasant, the author was able to learn about the community’s efforts in its own behalf and connected with Barbara Byrd, a long-time African American resident of Mt. Pleasant and a member of one of the largest families in the community. Byrd and the author spent many meetings exploring possibilities for connecting Cabrini students and Mt. Pleasant residents so that the two communities could interact with one another in an opportunity that brought people together in a positive way rather than as potential adversaries. The expectation was that such an opportunity could raise the level of mutual respect and reduce the incidence of student-created nuisance. The students would feel more like neighbors and understand that living in a neighborhood has responsibilities.

The author developed the course curriculum that would support the experiential aspects of this goal. Byrd became a co-facilitator to the class and an integral part of the experience of Democracy and Diversity. The course is one semester, and although it is difficult to get a meaningful result in that time frame, the co-planners worked hard to create a series of experiences that would help students and residents come together. The oral history project has been much more successful in meeting the objective of creating

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more face-to-face contact between Cabrini students and Mt. Pleasant residents and encouraging respectful behavior. The oral history gathering also aids in preserving some of the community's rich history. Many of the older residents are passing on, and the community is losing their stories. One of the goals of this project is that the histories will be available to historians and to the next generation of Mt. Pleasant families. Students liked the idea that their efforts preserve something of potential value, although some expressed doubt that anyone would have a real interest in their product.

The oral histories were the spring semester project of Democracy and Diversity from 2011-2016 (the author retired from Cabrini in 2016). There are current discussions about expanding the project to other neighborhoods, but these are still in the planning stages. The oral history gathering has been the consistent service-learning project for the course in the spring semesters. Other forms of service-learning have been tried in the fall semesters. The fall service-learning activity has had the intention of bringing student renters together with their Mt. Pleasant neighbors, but it has not been as successful as one would like. For example, several years the class planned an after-church barbeque and invited the whole community, both long-term residents and student renters. The event was held on the church grounds and was well attended by residents but not attended by students other than those in the class. The targeted group—student renters—has been hard to draw out. Students are often busy on weekends, and differences of race and age have probably also been a deterrent. A spaghetti supper held at the church fared no better. Members of the class and members of the community attended. Student renters did not.

## **CONCURRENT COURSE CURRICULUM**

### **Readings**

Besides the classroom activities supporting the gathering of the oral histories, there are reading assignments, reflection papers, a personal justice paper, and class discussions that connect to the ideas of community, diversity, and democracy.

The first reading explores the idea of community in an effort to bridge from the first-year discussion of community in ECG 100 to the specific idea of community in Mt. Pleasant. Students read the Willie Perdomo poem "Where I'm From" (1996) and then write their own version about where they are from. They share these and their stories. The focus then shifts slightly to Mt. Pleasant and that community's sense of being threatened by gentrification and student renters. Gentrification is a new term for most students; one could spend a whole semester on its meaning and how it affects neighborhoods. Some students have already seen it in their own communities. There are many video accounts of gentrification online, but the one that makes the biggest mark on students is the *Saturday Night Live* skit "Bushwick, Brooklyn" (Michaels, 2015), done by Kenan Thompson, Kevin Hart, and Jay Pharoah, which gets its point across—with humor.

To begin thinking about diversity, the students take three Implicit Bias Tests (Project Implicit, 2011), available through Harvard University's Project Implicit, reflecting on the meaning of their results. They test their attitudes on the differences of fat/thin, gay/straight, and people of color/people of northern European descent. Like many who take these tests, they are surprised by their own results, often denying them to the point of misrepresenting their results in the reflection they write and faulting the test. When they learn that others have had similar results, they begin to see the quiet racism that pervades our society. Some, however, continue to maintain that it is the tests that are biased.



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As mentioned above, one of the goals for ECG 200 courses is for students to examine concepts such as inequality, violence, and social justice. To this end, President Obama's *Dreams from My Father* (1996) introduces the students to what it is like to grow up as a Black man in the United States. They read the first section of the book where he describes his family background and school days. Because of a shortage of time, students read excerpts of the text in class and listen to President Obama read from the CD version, especially his conversations with Ray about race in their high school. Some students resist this text, saying that they do not like President Obama or his politics, but most see that the book is not about politics and not a typical political memoir. It is about being biracial and finding one's identity in a white majority society. This work is accompanied by other readings about race, identity, and difference that vary from year to year. One of the most effective of these is the video from "Eyes on the Prize" (*Bridge to Freedom*, 1965) of the march across the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma, Alabama. Students are shocked, as were Americans watching their televisions that evening, by the brutality of the treatment of the marchers. This is a visual generation, and this visual helps bring home to them the nature of the Jim Crow era that they have heard about but the violence of which they do not believe. Many of the oral history interviewees lived through that era, so it is important students understand what their interviewees experienced and how difficult it has been to achieve civil rights.

Because this course is a philosophy course, there are philosophical readings, both ancient and contemporary, presenting ideas of justice proposed over the last two thousand-plus years. One of the goals of the course is for students to develop their own idea of what justice consists of, and the readings present an array of choices to help them in this endeavor. This work is very difficult for them, because although they are very opinionated about what they think is an injustice, they are not sure why or what principle of justice might be involved, nor do they want to think about that. They often just want to emote. Justice issues are difficult for many people, as they have different ideas about both the principles of justice and their application. Aristotle's definition of justice as treating like cases alike is a good starting point, but the students (and not just students) have difficulty filling in the relevant categories of likeness and difference. Most students want to stick with the naïve view that justice is in the eye of the beholder. This avoids argument or having to rethink one's own views.

The justice reading that is most popular is John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty* (1978). The class is assigned to read Chapters One and Three, which introduce them to liberal democracy: government should not be involved in individuals' lives except when their behavior might do harm to others and that individuals should be able to choose their own values and lifestyles without government interference. This liberalism characterizes both political parties in the United States. Students like the libertarian views of Chapter One and quickly relate it to laws they see as unnecessary for preventing harm to others, such as teenage drinking and marijuana use.

Chapter Three of *On Liberty* is about conformity and the ways that democracy fosters it. Although students recognize the forces of conformity in their own lives, they are less able to understand the role democracy plays in that pressure, thus this text is an important one for generating discussion of difference in a democracy. Mill is adamant that diversity (his word is *eccentricity*) is necessary to save democracies from deadness. A few students make the jump from protecting diversity in a democracy to preserving diverse communities, but most simply like the libertarianism that connects to where they are in the own lives.

The Mill reading is followed by excerpts from two modern advocates of liberal democracy who are on opposite ends of the political spectrum, Robert Nozick (1974) and John Rawls (1971). Nozick suggests that the best way to handle differences in a democracy is to privatize everything, to let people take care

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of themselves as long as they do it legally. This is appealing until students realize that Nozick intends that public services like police and fire departments fall under this approach. On the other hand, Rawls' idea of justice being what individuals would contract for if they were under a "veil of ignorance" and not aware of who they are is a difficult one for college students. Some of them tend to be concrete thinkers and struggle with thought experiments.

Nevertheless, exposure to Rawls is relevant, as Rawls' idea of justice is one of the most important pieces of twentieth century philosophy. It is also important because it asks the student to think about the needs of those people less fortunate than they and about protecting those groups. Because many students are working very hard at school and sometimes have two jobs, they have difficulty imagining people in the United States less well off than they are. Further, the idea that there might be privilege involved in their success is hard for them to accept.

The students at Cabrini connect better to Catholic Social Teaching (2010), which is less theoretical and more familiar to them. Catholic Social Teaching has seven principles beginning with the principle that all people are sacred and including the principles of solidarity with the poor, the dignity of work, and the rights of workers. The Social Justice curriculum at Cabrini is tied to Catholic Social Teaching, so students have heard something about it before this class. They read excerpts from the U.S. Bishops' letter on the economy, which reminds them of how demanding the ethic of Christianity is.

Although not all Cabrini students are Catholic, the catholicity of Cabrini is explicit. Many students are engaged in charitable activities. It is important, however, to distinguish between acts of justice and acts of charity and to delineate the differences between them. Sometimes this exercise is successful and sometimes not. Students, like most people, would rather be agents of charity than of social change. It is hard for them to accept that there are systemic factors involved in economic success when they see themselves as deserving of success because of their hard work and ambition. Moreover, they have difficulty with the notion of taxation as a way of redistributing wealth for purposes of social change in the United States. They tend to be as tax averse as any segment of society and often express anger that their taxes support "welfare." Many students have little understanding of taxes, so they are introduced to the difference between progressive and regressive taxes. This helps them understand the origins of some of the gross inequality of wealth in contemporary America. This also connects to their understanding of the lives of their interviewees, some of whom are retirees living on social security with little left over to keep their houses in good repair.

The final theoretical/philosophical reading of the semester is James Madison's (1787) paper "Federalist No. Ten," in which he argues that "passions and interests" always threaten to divide the country and lead to the dominance of one group over another. The Constitution, he argues, is designed to control these passions and interests. The Constitution establishes a *pluralistic* system, although he does not use that term, where interest groups have to come together to form coalitions to get anything done. This keeps one group from dominating and leads to a succession of compromises. It is a deliberate, institutional system for pulling groups of people together and making one out of many. Obviously, this does not always work. Stagnation and populism do happen in U.S. politics, but Madison gives the students an alternative and sophisticated way to think about liberal democracy and how to make it work despite all the divisions and differences among the citizens.

After students explore race and economic differences, the "Democracy and Diversity" class looks at differences in cultural values. To show that the issues of democracy and diversity are not limited to the United States, this difference is examined in the European context. Students read newspaper accounts of France and the Netherlands to see how these two countries have reacted to the growing presence of

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Muslim immigrants. They learn that the French have had a strongly assimilationist policy and demand that Muslims accept French values and culture. The French see this requirement as liberal and liberating. The Dutch have followed what they, too, feel is a liberal approach and have taken a strong multicultural stance, supporting the public funding of Muslim schools and mosques. Both countries have had political backlash against the Muslim communities within them. The original intent of the readings was to look at the problem of democracy and diversity from the position of a neutral observer, but this is no longer possible, now that there is anti-Muslim sentiment in the U.S. as well.

In the U.S., an issue of cultural conflict that pushes back against the liberalism of liberal democracy is gay rights. One person's lifestyle and right to marry is seen by some as being in conflict with religious views that marriage is an institution limited to a man and woman. The students debate whether liberal democracy can handle this kind of value conflict and, if so, how. Some students take the stance that whom someone marries does not affect them, so why care about it. Others defend freedom of religion as one of the fundamental rights in this country, which brings the discussion back to the rights of Muslims in the U.S.

These cultural diversities are the current challenge for democracy, in the course and for democracies around the world. As for the oral history project, there is some cultural gap between the students and the Mt. Pleasant interviewees, but that gap is generally a familiar one, similar to the one students have with their grandparents or the "older generation." In this sense the interviewees are familiar and very "American" (one interviewee was a Muslim and did not want to be pictured in the video but did not mind being audio recorded).

## **COMMUNITY PREPARATION**

Barbara Byrd, a long-time African American resident of Mt. Pleasant, visits the class, introducing the students to Mt. Pleasant and giving some of the history of the community and its major families. She bases this introduction on stories passed down in the Byrd family and from other members of First Baptist Church, the most important institution of Mt. Pleasant, and on historical research (e.g. Robbins, 1966). She follows this classroom introduction by inviting the students to her house for brunch. Students pile into her kitchen and are treated to pancakes, sausage, eggs, and bacon. After the brunch, she takes the students on a walking tour of Mt. Pleasant, pointing out where different families and students live and introducing the students to whomever happens to be out and about during the tour. This whole event takes about an hour and half, and students are back on campus in time for their next class. Students, if asked, would likely say this event is the high point of the class for them. Byrd's warm and welcoming demeanor, not to mention her excellent cooking and homey kitchen, puts students at ease and makes them more comfortable with differences of race and age in the neighborhood. Through this introduction, students begin to feel the sense of community that infuses Mt. Pleasant.

## **Community Organizing**

Barbara Byrd recruits the neighborhood individuals to be interviewed by students. She is well connected in the community and is an effective spokesperson for the importance of preserving the community's history and for making better town and gown relations. Some residents volunteer when they hear about the project, and some people have to be coaxed. Some are uneasy about having students come to their

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home or about coming to a neutral place to talk to students who are strangers, and others get cold feet and decide not to participate after having agreed. Byrd's enthusiasm for the project tends to win out in the end. She prepares a list of willing interviewees with their phone numbers.

### **Class Organizing and Preparation**

In the meantime, the author organizes students into pairs, trying to create partners that can work together and balance each other's strengths. For example, a shy student might be paired with a gregarious student, a resistant student with an enthusiastic student, and, where possible, pairing friends with friends. Then Byrd and the author assign pairs to the interviewees, trying to make the match as congenial as possible. A somewhat reluctant interviewee might be assigned to an outgoing pair that is confident and not intimidated by the activity. A talkative interviewee might be assigned to a diffident student pair. The students are taking a required course so they run the gamut of student types, and interviewing a stranger can be a daunting project for some.

Classroom activities help prepare students to be interviewers. They read several articles about the process and how other students have been similarly engaged. They also practice skills by interviewing someone in the class they do not know. The latter activity is very well received, with students often discovering commonalities with their peers that surprise them. The class then works together to create a list of possible interview questions that relate to the personal experience of the interviewee, the experiences with student renters, and to the topic of the class, namely the issues of diversity in a democracy. Each pair is given a consent form to be signed by the interviewee that allows the history to be shared "solely for the purposes of protection and documentation of the history of Mt. Pleasant... and disseminated for educational scholarly purposes only." However, only about half of the pairs return with a signed consent form.

The partners also receive instruction in the use of the university's camcorders to create the videos. Some students pay attention and practice beforehand. Most do not. There could be more emphasis on this training leading to better quality videos, but there is not that much time, and this is not the focus of the course. Consequently, the quality of the actual video recording varies greatly.

### **Engaging in the Community**

The biggest obstacle to gathering the oral histories is getting student momentum. The students receive the name and phone number of their interviewee at the end of February, and the history is due in mid-April. Even though there are due dates along the way, the students sometimes procrastinate. They also find it is harder to set up an appointment than they expect. The interviewees have their own schedules that are not necessarily in sync with the students' schedules. Leaving a message on an answering machine is rarely sufficient for a call back, when people get so many unwanted solicitations. The author stressed that it is the students' responsibility to get the interview and not the interviewees' and that the interviewee is extending them a privilege in agreeing to be interviewed, a privilege they need to respect.

Setting up the interview is the hardest part of the oral history assignment, involving persistence and many phone calls. Both interviewers and interviewees are a bit anxious and consequently are not rushing to make the interview happen. The author constantly monitors who has made the necessary connection and who has not and who is having a legitimate problem in connecting because an interviewee is sick or has changed their mind. Byrd always has some back-up interviewees in these circumstances.

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Most interviews take place in the homes of the interviewees, but some do not. Some have happened on the Cabrini campus, and some have been in the Mt. Pleasant church (First Baptist) or the Carr School, a community building where after-school programs and civic association meetings take place. It is up to the interviewee, as not everyone feels comfortable inviting two strangers into their home. Because the interviewees are identified by first and last name in the classroom, students have to be reminded that they are not personally on a first-name basis with their interviewee and that they should address that person as they would a friend of their parents.

The final product is a transcript of the interview that is handed in for a grade. Students balk at this part of the assignment, but, when reminded, they are happy it is not a term paper. They receive instruction in how to write up their transcript so that it captures the spirit of the interview without the gaps and repetitions that can characterize an interview. Unfortunately, but not surprisingly, the interviewees often speak of events, people, and places unfamiliar to the students, and the students do not bother to figure out or research the intended references. This is in addition to the misspellings and typos that occur. The transcripts are a useful record, however, as they can be reviewed more quickly than an online video. They also help students learn how to write dialog and force them to review what they have heard and learned about their interviewee. The interviewing pairs can split up the jobs as they like, but they both receive the same grade. One might be responsible for the scheduling, and one might feel more comfortable doing the interview while the other does the recording. They often split up the transcription.

### **CLASS PRODUCTS**

Each spring semester the class gathered between seven and nine oral histories, depending on the size of the class. These histories were generally captured on video, but one or two were not. At least one interviewee lived sufficiently far away that the interview was a phone recording. When the earlier interviews were uploaded to the university's web site, the longer ones had to be divided to be able to fit the technology, so some interviews are in as many as three pieces. Altogether there are about fifty separate interviews gathered over a span of six years now available on a private YouTube website under the auspices of the Cabrini University Holy Spirit Library. Transcripts for most of these interviews are in the process of being prepared for access through the library. There has been some effort to catalog the transcripts by topics covered during the interview, but this process was minimally successful due to the similarity of the topics. Efforts have been made to make the website available through the local library that serves the Mt. Pleasant community, but it is not clear at this time how successful that effort has been.

Students, as noted above, prepare the transcripts. They also choose two or three notable quotes of one hundred words or more from the interview they gathered. These quotes are then grouped into a meaningful sequence and woven into a "script" that the students present to the university at its annual spring Research Symposium. At the Symposium, students read a quotation from their interviewees. The audience consists of other students, some faculty, sometimes an interviewee or two, and the co-facilitator, Barbara Byrd. The students are given instructions on how to read the script and practice the reading in class before presenting it, although it is not intended to be a performance. After the script is read, members of the audience ask questions of the class. This presentation is another part of the effort to extend the goals of the class to the campus as a whole: to raise respect for the residents of Mt. Pleasant and to build bridges.



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This presentation is a very important part of the learning process of the students. Even though they balk at having to speak publically, they clearly feel very proud of what they have done. They often invite roommates, and some invite their parents. It reinforces what they have learned and the respect they now have for the people they have met. The faculty often ask questions about what the students have learned from their experience but often note privately that the students do not quite understand what wonderful gems of human wisdom and warmth their interviewees have shared with them. The students tend to see the presentation as one more hurdle in the class. These class presentations have been videoed and are available on the Cabrini library YouTube site with the interviews.

## **OUTCOMES**

At the end of the semester, the author does a survey of the class on their attitudes toward the work they have done and toward the Mt. Pleasant community as a whole. The survey is qualitative, not quantitative, and has been consistent over the six years of oral history gathering (see Appendix). In the first part of the survey, the students are asked questions about what they learned from their Mt. Pleasant experience. The answers vary, but overall they show that the oral history experience has a positive result. Students make comments such as, "Everyone wants to be treated with respect," "Student renters tend not to have respect," "The U.S. is diverse and not always fair," and so on. They frequently mention the strong sense of community that exists in Mt. Pleasant, and some even express the wish that their own communities could be more "together." They seem to understand the role that race has played in the history of Mt. Pleasant: "Race has allowed Mt. Pleasant to keep a close bond in hard times like segregation." Their answers are not as clear about the systemic issues that Mt. Pleasant has faced, such as those connected with zoning and urban revitalization.

When it comes to what they personally have learned from their experience, the students diverge. Some note that they learned they could do more for "my world and community," that they "love community service," and that they should "be more grateful." There are always one or two who have rejected the experience from the beginning and say they have learned little to nothing. Many say that they were surprised by how welcomed they were and how friendly the community was despite the student renter issue. A few students state that student renters have the right to do as they please in the community because they pay to live there and that the neighborhood should just accept that. The majority opinion, however, is, that "It is a great community and worth preserving."

The author has used the oral histories from the earlier classes to help orient later classes to the Mt. Pleasant community. In particular, before the fall semester class puts on its barbeque or before the students take a walk through the community, the author divides students into groups and assigns them an oral history of a community member to watch, so they can introduce that person to the rest of the class. This use of earlier interviews helps the class learn what to expect and to think about the nature of community, diversity, and the specific community of Mt. Pleasant.

One American Studies student used the oral histories for her senior research paper. She catalogued them by theme and reported on the recurring themes. She presented the results as a paper to her department and also presented her work to a meeting of the King of Prussia Historical Society. The author and Byrd also presented at this meeting and at two other local historical societies, the Tredyffrin Historical Society and the Radnor Historical Society. In the latter two presentations, the voices of the Mt. Pleasant

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residents themselves made up the bulk of the presentation through using some of the materials from scripts from the Research Symposium mentioned earlier and asking the audience to participate by reading one of the “voices.” The presentation for the Radnor Historical Society was held in the First Baptist Church in Mt. Pleasant, and there was a large interracial crowd that included some of the interviewees who read an excerpt from their interview in their own voice. Altogether it was a very successful evening and brought two groups together that had not known each other well. The church was generous to lend the space for the evening, and the setting was conducive to making it a warm and congenial experience for everyone. Hence the oral histories have had positive repercussions outside the classroom and outside Cabrini University. The author and Byrd would like to have more programs like this, but these three programs basically cover the gamut of the local historical societies. The author has drafted an article from the oral histories for a local historical society publication, but it has yet to be published.

## **EVALUATION**

Successes include a diminishment of negative student renter behavior. This is a judgment and not a quantified piece of data, as there are no “before” or “after” data to consider; thus, the evidence is anecdotal. Support for this conclusion comes from the fact that there have not been recent civic association meetings devoted to student renter problems, and residents have not been bringing this issue to the township Board of Supervisors. Student groups still rent houses in Mt. Pleasant, and they still have parties. Some of the student renters, however, are students who have taken the course. They are much more conscious of the needs of the community than they might otherwise be. Overall there is more awareness on the Cabrini campus of Mt. Pleasant as a community, one that must be respected.

Some students had such positive personal connections with their interviewees that they expressed their intentions after the interview to keep in touch even after the class and the semester ended. The author and Byrd, however, have not heard of this actually happening. Student reflections for the class often expressed surprise at the commonalities they found when they met their interviewees. Although students did not think of their oral history gathering as a charitable action, they did see themselves as doing a service for the community in preserving its history, and that made them feel good about themselves. They also felt strongly that the community had a history worth preserving.

Class discussions on racial diversity had mixed results. The class varied in its proportion of white students to students of color. In a class of eighteen, the black student population ranged from two to six. The oral histories put names and faces to the discussion of race and made the discussion more real. Some students used incidents they had garnered from their interviews as examples for these discussions. White and black students in the class were sometimes able to discuss in sensitive and significant ways the kinds of slights that people of color experience. How much this was a function of the readings and how much of the interview experience is difficult to judge.

The oral histories have also brought local groups together who generally do not interact with each other. The discussions at the historical society presentations have been open and revealing with white participants saying things like, “I didn’t know that that’s what was happening to you in high school!” and “I had no idea...” (King of Prussia Historical Society, 2014). Some people reconnected after long-ago high school experiences and expressed intentions to stay in touch, but, as with the students, it is not evident that they did.

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There are a number of weaknesses in the project, some of which could be easily addressed and improved, as well as others that are more difficult to change. One area in need of improvement is that there is not much dialog between the student interviewers and the interviewees. They do get some familiarity and some mutual respect, but the interview is mostly a question-and-answer session. There is no follow up, where the participants might be more comfortable on a second meeting. Also, Mt. Pleasant is a small community, and the number of older residents to interview is diminishing. It may be difficult to keep this up as a class project going forward. There is discussion currently at Cabrini of expanding the gathering of oral histories to other African American neighborhoods in the vicinity that have expressed an interest in having their history preserved, but this is in the beginning stages.

There is little resistance by community members to being interviewed, but a few students resist the whole engagements and social justice program at Cabrini. These students see the ECG program as a diversion from their career goals and therefore a waste of time. While they perform the required tasks, they grumble and complain. Some students resist the course and the program because they require that students reflect on their own views of social justice and the concurrent concepts of dignity and power and privilege—both of which can be very uncomfortable. The goal of the program is to promote social justice, and that generally means that some people will have to give up some of the privileges they enjoy so that others can share them. The ECG program at Cabrini tries to expand the capacity of students for this reflection process while working with their community partners to promote the common good. The student reflections in the Appendix give some indication of how well the oral history project meets these program goals.

There are specific aspects of this oral history project that could be improved. For one, the quality of the videos would benefit from more time spent on videography techniques and sound issues. For another, there is the problem of the consent forms that are often neglected. Unfortunately, there is too much to do in one semester to make all the technical improvements one might like to make.

## **CONCLUSION**

Gathering oral histories can be a way to cross racial bridges that might exist either in a community or between communities, or, as in this case, between town and gown. It serves more purpose than the simple preservation of stories of the past. If the goal is simply the preservation of valuable history, then students are not always the best interviewers because of their naiveté and because they are doing it for a grade, but engaging with people and learning about their lives can be mind-opening, if not mind-changing. It can help build community at all levels.

This initiative has helped to build community between Cabrini University and the neighboring community of Mt. Pleasant, and it has helped connect students of various races within the classroom. It has expanded the reach of some local historical societies and connected residents of the larger community who often do not gather on a social basis. One does not know if there will be any lasting effects from this project on the people who participated in it. Making one out of many is a dynamic, on-going process, and this oral history gathering activity is a little piece of that process.

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**KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Byrd, Barbara:** Mt. Pleasant community leader and co-facilitator of “Democracy and Diversity.” Member of the Byrd family of Mt. Pleasant, one of the prominent African American families in Mt. Pleasant.

**Cabrini University:** Formerly Cabrini College, a liberal arts college outside Philadelphia founded by the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart. Unique for its Social Justice curriculum and its Engagements in the Common Good Core courses -- summed up in the motto “education of the heart.”

**Community:** Group of people who identify with one another geographically, socially, or politically.

**Democracy:** A form or organization of government that has several variants from majoritarian democracy that stresses numbers to liberal democracy that stresses individual rights. Different versions of democracy are explored in the “Democracy and Diversity” course.

**Diversity:** A term used to distinguish/group people on the basis of their differences. In this project the diversities considered are race, economic status, and cultural commitments. Not to be conflated with the uniqueness of the individual.

**Gentrification:** Pattern of dynamic change in a neighborhood when lower income residents are replaced or pushed out by people of higher economic means.

**Mt. Pleasant:** Designation given to a small mixed race community living on three connecting streets in Wayne, PA. Historical origin of the name is unclear.

**Race:** A socially constructed concept that commonly groups people by ancestry or skin color.

**Town and Gown:** Used to refer to the relationship between an educational institution and its surrounding community. This relationship can be mutually beneficial but can sometimes be adversarial.

**Social Justice:** A term with many meanings. Used here to mean changing social behavior and public policies to increase equality—racial, economic, and gender—and to decrease discrimination and the consequences of historical accidents that lead to unequal opportunity.



**Experiencing Democracy and Diversity****APPENDIX**

Following are representative student in-class reflections on Democracy and Diversity from the spring of 2012:

**Exercise #1:** What we have learned about Mt. Pleasant:

1. What does Mt. Pleasant and its effort to deal with the problem in its community of student renters reveal about democracy in the United States?
  - Money can easily be used to get what you want*
  - Voices can be heard*
  - Trying to find common ground between old and new*
  - People can try to make change*
  - Democracy is present*
  - There are places where voices are not being heard*
  - Some are OK with student renters and some are not*
  - Their issues are not taken seriously*
  - The people asked the local government to make landlords accountable and it worked*
  - It is the students' right to live there*
  - Even the smallest group has a voice*
  - Not everyone can have their way*
2. How is Mt. Pleasant an example of the diversity that exists in the United States?
  - Wayne put the poorer people in Mt. Pleasant*
  - Brings diversity to dominantly white area*
  - Is itself diverse*
  - Formed of people of different backgrounds*
  - Everyone is very different from most people who live on the Main Line*
  - A lot of history and very tight-knit*
  - A bit secluded*
  - People from different backgrounds make it work*
  - Was all black; now more diverse*
  - A melting pot of cultures, just like the U.S.*
3. What are the systemic issues that affect Mt. Pleasant as a community?
  - Students*
  - Township issues*
  - Landlords not respecting residents*
  - People renting, not buying*
  - Outsiders only concerned with money*
  - General lack of care: vacant lots, trash everywhere*

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*People want to buy land and modernize the community*

*Gentrification*

*Being small and trying to keep bigger communities from taking over*

*Not enough income to fix up homes*

*Two different townships*

*New buildings will affect property values*

4. What role has race played in the history and in the present life of Mt. Pleasant?

*Used to be a servant area and many never moved out*

*In Mt. Pleasant all races are accepted*

*Has a lot of African American families and their personal experiences make the town what it is today*

*It separates it from the surrounding areas*

*Has given blacks a safe place to live*

*They dealt with segregation growing up*

*Some residents had bad experiences growing up*

*It affected their occupations*

5. What did you learn about the nature of community from your experience with the Mt. Pleasant community?

*It is hard to watch people with money taking over*

*Everyone came together to help one another*

*Communities contribute to people's identities*

*It's all about community*

*The community wants to be close again*

*It's more self-preservation than anti-student*

*They really value one another*

*They have lost some sense of community*

*They look out for one another*

*Still a strong sense of community*

*A lot of nostalgia for the past*

*People still remember the fun they had*

*Mt. Pleasant as a community is fading into the background*

**Exercise #2:** What we have learned from being a community partner:

1. What did you learn about yourself from your experience with the Mt. Pleasant community?

*Change is inevitable*

*That I like learning about other cultures and communities*

*I can make a difference, with a small change*

*I can be open and accepting*

*That I want to help in any possible way*

*Even when we are different, we have many things in common*

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*Every community has a story  
I was naïve to other areas and people unlike myself  
Helping made me feel good  
It is important to be open to diversity and difference  
That my community is not as close as it should be  
That I cared more than I thought I would  
To understand the uniqueness behind a suburban community  
To be more respectful of your community members  
To step out of my comfort zone and take on leadership roles  
Communities want to keep members together  
There are people who genuinely care about their community  
That I am very fortunate; all houses in my community are owned*

2. How do you feel your efforts have benefitted or have the potential to benefit the Mt. Pleasant community?

*We were caring listeners  
That I am a part of history  
More documentation of Mt. Pleasant  
Helped to preserve the rich history  
Capturing history before it is lost  
Voices were heard  
More awareness of issues  
No benefit  
Raising awareness of the community to others  
Small benefit but keeps history alive  
To give Mt. Pleasant a voice  
To share great things that people might not see in the future*

3. What surprised you most about “partnering” with the Mt. Pleasant community?

*Not all interviewees were upset about student renters  
The stories  
How easy it was to do the interview  
Barbara was amazing – there are still nice people in this world  
It was so close to where we are; right down the road from Cabrini  
How close everyone was  
Learning the history of a town that I’d never heard of  
It was nice to know it was there; I hadn’t!  
The history within just three streets  
Some people had lived there so long  
How much my interviewee had endured  
How welcoming they were*

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4. If you had the opportunity to speak briefly at a Mt. Pleasant Civic Association meeting, what would you say?

*They are not in the wrong for wanting better*

*Cabrini cares*

*How much community spirit they have*

*Have more community events*

*Document their history; it may not be there much longer*

*Don't give up trying to fix what they are unhappy about*

*They are a model community whose history should be preserved*

*They are a great community; I believe in them*

*Make homeowners and landlords responsible for how a house looks*

*Get rid of the empty lots*

*(Re)Build a community center*

  
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## Chapter 5

# Gaining Perspective: The Unintentional Outcomes of University–Middle School Service– Learning Partnerships

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### ABSTRACT

*In this chapter, the authors discuss the outcomes of a program evaluation of a university-middle school service-learning partnership. The initial goal was to evaluate the extent to which three middle school teachers, our community partners, were satisfied with the volunteer experience their seventh grade students had with first-year university students. The evaluation came after a three-year partnership between undergraduates enrolled in a liberal studies course focused on citizenship and education and a team of middle school students and their teachers. Interviews revealed that this partnership enabled teachers to view their students through a different lens than they had prior to the partnership. Further, teachers suggested that the service-learning activities facilitated a deeper understanding of students' funds-of-knowledge and talents. This research supports the possibility that there are valuable unintended outcomes of service-learning partnerships between universities and public schools.*

### INTRODUCTION

In an era where public schools are consistently underfunded and any “extras” are quickly cut from yearly school budgets, teachers, principals, and other stakeholders reach out to universities in surrounding areas to supply much-needed volunteers for test proctoring, after-school tutoring, and a host of other activities for which they cannot find help. Similarly, colleges and universities seek to form partnerships with community agencies and K-12 schools in order to provide undergraduates with a deeper under-

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standing about issues related to public education. More specifically, teacher education programs pursue partnerships with schools so that teacher candidates develop a holistic and nuanced understanding of the responsibilities of teachers.

The authors teach in the College of Education at a large university in an urban area in the southeastern United States. Our proximity to at least eight area schools enables students enrolled in our courses to easily travel to these schools to volunteer their time. As a result, both authors have developed long-term partnerships with area elementary and middle schools, using service-learning as the common link. In this chapter, the authors discuss an evaluation of one such partnership that developed with an urban middle school over three years. Through this partnership, undergraduate teacher candidates fulfilled the need for after-school tutors, lunch buddies, and test proctoring, all the while learning more about the concerns of adolescents and the issues that make public school education such a contentious topic. Additionally, the middle school learners gained voice and agency through the service-learning project, while showing off their talents. However, the authors were curious if the participating teachers reaped any benefits from this partnership; after all, the authors took two hours of their instructional time each week and requested that they help plan and promote the community event. In this interpretive case study, the authors explore the perceived benefits, challenges, and limitations of this partnership from the perspective of these teachers.

Middle school has traditionally been viewed as the weak link between elementary and high school, the place where hormones rage and classroom management tactics provide teachers some type of order in the chaos. Yecke (2005) wrote that American middle schools are the place “where academic achievement goes to die.” Teaching early adolescents requires a special set of skills and talents and sometimes challenge middle school educators to wear a variety of hats in one school day. Teachers must find ways to engage adolescent curiosity, set high standards for learning and performance, and provide leadership that motivates middle level students to be successful. The Association for Middle Level Education (AMLE, 2012) supports the foundational idea that teachers who hope to successfully educate early adolescents must both value their unique characteristics and be effectively prepared to teach them; further, development of an appreciation for their individuality can only serve to heighten ultimate success (Bailey, 2015; Faulkner, Howell, & Cook, 2013; NMSA, 2010).

In this chapter, the authors discuss findings from an evaluation of a service-learning research project in which middle grades educators explained that they developed these critical characteristics outlined by the AMLE for successfully responding to educational needs of middle grades learners. More specifically, the authors found that engaging in university partnership that supported a bullying prevention program helped these particular middle grades teachers to deepen appreciation of their students and become more supportive of their individual, academic, and personal development.

Since the mid-1980s, U.S. colleges and universities, with the help of Campus Compact, have attempted to fulfill their civic duty through participation in service projects within both the local and global community. Although there has been ample research that contributes to the development of strong service-learning partnerships between universities and community agencies (Cruz & Giles, 2000), there has been a dearth of research dedicated to in-depth perspectives of community partners involved in service-learning partnerships with colleges and universities (Edwards & Marullo, 2000; Miron & Moely, 2006; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Stoecker & Tryon, 2009; Tinkler, Tinkler, Hausman, & Strouse, 2014). Research suggests that assessing perspectives of the community partner is as essential as learning the outcomes for service-learning participants, both from the university and within the community (Birdsall, 2005; Stukas, Clary, & Snyder, 1999; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000). Although a few studies

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have evaluated the experiences of community partnerships with institutes of higher education (Bushouse, 2005; Moely & Milton, 2005; Tryon & Stoecker, 2008; Worrall, 2007), rarely have partnerships been examined thoroughly to understand better the reciprocal benefits and challenges (Gerstenblatt, 2014; Petri, 2015) of such relationships from the perspective of the community partner.

Assessing the outcomes and opinions of the service partner is a crucial component of program evaluation but is often sidelined for studies that evaluate how service-learning students benefit from the experience (Coffey, 2010; Birdsall, 2005; Sandy & Holland, 2006; Stukas et al., 1999; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000).

The literature on benefits of a service-learning-based curriculum in P-12 settings is extensive; service-learning partnership experiences promote greater parental involvement in school activities, improves the school environment for learning, increases students' active participation in school community, and often expands community support in school-based activities (Nandan, 2010; Otis, 2006). In fact, several researchers have credited meaningful service-learning experiences with powerful youth movements toward social change and community engagement (e.g. Carlson, 2006; Nandan, 2010; Nyreen, Kwon, & Sanchez, 2006; Wilhelm, Douglas, & Fry, 2014).

In an effort to add to the body of literature highlighting the importance of community partner perspectives, this chapter provides an example of how service-learning partnerships between institutions of higher education and local middle schools might be developed with the teacher partner perspectives at the core. A detailed description of the partnership and outcomes will assist other university instructors in designing effective service-learning partnerships with middle schools.

## METHOD

In order to gain a holistic description and analysis of this partnership in one semester, the authors engaged in an interpretive case study. The case study approach enables the researcher to utilize a variety of methods (Davies, 2007), while developing rapport with participants and gaining deeper insight into the nuances of the partnership. The authors selected the case study approach both based on their small number of participants and their intent to capture the "how" and "why" questions they had about the partnership. The goal in this study is to support theory building (Yin, 2009) around the need for participant voice in university-public school service-learning partnerships as there is a dearth of research in this area. Because both authors engage in university-school service-learning partnerships as intentional, clinical opportunities in teacher preparation, they sought to determine whether this project would contribute to their understanding of how classroom teachers experience these partnerships. They hope to use insights from this case-based theory building research to inform future practices and research projects.

In order to learn more about how the participating teachers viewed the semester-long partnership, the authors conducted individual interviews at the end of a five-month collaboration. They were interested in answering the following questions:

1. What aspects of the service-learning partnership were viewed as particularly beneficial by the participating teachers?
2. According to the teachers, what were the challenges that limited their practice or the partnership?
3. How might this service-learning partnership between an urban middle school and a public university have implications for others interested in developing similar collaborations?

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### **Participants**

The participants of the study were teachers who worked at an urban middle school in the southeastern United States. Anna, a 39-year-old African American female teacher who had been teaching English language arts at the school site for 10 years, was the point person for communication between the university course and the middle school team. The other two participating teachers included Kerrie, a 23-year-old White first-year social studies teacher, and Amy, a 23-year-old African American first-year science teacher who joined the faculty in December of that school year.

### **Procedure**

Each of the three participating teachers was asked about their experiences in individual semi-structured interviews for one hour; interviews were conducted by a graduate assistant not associated with the partnership. Each interview was audio-recorded in the teacher's classroom and was guided by the following questions:

1. How would you characterize this partnership?
2. How has this partnership influenced your students?
3. What specific actions can we take [at the university] to improve the experience for participants in the future?
4. What recommendations do you have for developing this partnership in the future?

Additionally, follow-up questions and probes (Bernard, 1995) were asked during each interview to ensure that the researcher was capturing the participants' thoughts accurately.

### **Design and Data Analysis**

All data was reviewed through the lens of the community partner (Cruz & Giles, 2000), which requires researchers to analyze the actual partnership as the unit for analysis, which involves evaluating the consistency of the partnership in regard to good service-learning practice; utilizing the action research model in which community partners have a participatory role in developing goals and outcomes for service; and focusing on an asset perspective as opposed to a needs assessment or deficit appraisal.

Once interviews were completed and transcribed, researchers generated codes and themes using an inductive approach in order to condense the data into summary format, establish connections between our goals and the findings, and develop implications for how this research might inform future service-learning partnerships between universities and public schools. Using the responses of teachers to the authors' questions, they considered the intersections between the research on service-learning, community partner perspectives, and middle grades teachers. The following findings are presented using participant language.

### **History of the Partnership**

The partnership between a large public university in the southeast United States and George Washington Middle School (GWMS) was purposefully developed based upon an existing professional development

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relationship. Informed by the work of Deering and Stanutz (1995) who found that “attitudes formed through experience tend to be more stable than those arrived at in other ways” (p. 390), undergraduate university students engaged in a service-learning experience in order to learn more about urban education from a “non-student” perspective. Over a three-year period, three different groups of mostly first-year college students enrolled in “Citizenship and Education,” a course that focuses on modern issues related to public school and society’s responsibility to education. The course instructor developed this partnership with Anna, a seventh grade English language arts teacher who became the community partner liaison in all three years. Initial contact was established by the middle school administration seeking professional development in the area of literacy and standardized testing preparation for ELA teachers.

Subsequently, the principal and instructor decided that a partnership between the service-learning course and the school would be mutually beneficial and introduced the instructor to Anna, who invited students in the service-learning course to tutor her group of seventh grade learners. Learning goals and outcomes were developed each fall prior to the spring service experience based on academic and social needs of participating middle school learners and college students. Being intentional about partnership reciprocity, a critical element of service-learning, the university instructor continued to offer professional development workshops on newly adopted English language arts curriculum and End-of-Grade test preparation strategies for all seventh grade English faculty.

During the three consecutive spring semesters, the course was taught on the middle school campus where first-year university students volunteered 30+ hours. University students engaged in tutoring and program planning with a team of 90 seventh graders two hours each week. The service-learning participants (SLPs) were grounded in theory through course readings on issues related to urban schooling, social justice, and the foundations of service-learning.

The participating middle school is one of the largest in the state and has been identified as a “Priority” school according to the federal No Child Left Behind Act, which means that 50-60% of students are performing at expected growth levels. Thus this Title I school has less than 50% of students achieving proficiency on End-of-Grade exams. Students in this school are African American (70%), Latinx (18%), White (6%), and Asian Pacific American (5%).

When establishing strong university/school partnerships, it is critical to allow for opportunities for students to build relationships and create programs collaboratively (Tinkler et al., 2014). In this case, in addition to tutoring and planning community-building activities with participating middle level students (MLS) for 15 weeks, SLPs engaged MLS in conversations about world issues of concern, and each week the middle school students and SLPs participated in dialogue and activities that facilitated a deeper understanding of these issues and hypothesized about potential solutions regarding these concerns. MLS identified bullying, poverty, and uncertainty about the future as primary concerns.

For example, during the course of one semester, MLS identified bullying as the issue that most concerned them in their lives. As a result, SLPs worked with MLS to plan and implement a week of activities designed to raise awareness about bullying and to involve the entire school and surrounding community culminating in a large community event. Throughout the week, MLS developed anti-bullying awareness activities that included reading statistics and stories about bullying on the morning announcements, engaged peers in team building activities, and challenged the entire student body to take a leadership role in being more supportive of their peers. These MLS, in collaboration with the SLPs, also planned a student assembly for the entire seventh grade team, where they invited student and adult speakers and local musicians to entertain while sharing their anti-bullying message. MLS also learned a dance to a popular song with an empowering message and taught the dance to their peers during the assembly.

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The culminating event, “Anti-Bullying Blues Night,” was able to take place because the SLPs solicited community donations. Dinner was provided for MLS, family members, and community stakeholders. T-shirts touting the MLS-created anti-bullying campaign slogan “Think before you speak. Don’t make others weak!” were given to all MLS, teachers, and SLPs. Local musicians and students performed songs and spoken word related to the theme of empowerment. MLS had the opportunity to make crafts and play games with SLPs outside of school time, thus solidifying the understanding these SLPs were invested in their lives. Furthermore, SLPs contacted local community businesses to attend the event to raise awareness about the concerns of MLS so that these stakeholders would have a deeper understanding of the students who attend GWMS.

The overall goal of the partnership was to promote engagement among SLPs in support of achieving a more meaningful and purposeful learning experience and to encourage an understanding of the concept of social justice, while providing requested tutoring and mentoring for students and aid for teachers. The benefits of this partnership extended beyond the experience of the SLPs to the MLS and the participating teachers as well.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

Examining our findings through the evaluative lens of the community partner as described by Cruz and Giles (2000), our analysis reveals that the participating teachers identified benefits and gains, in addition to limitations in the partnership, which supported three emergent themes:

1. University students provided mentorship and motivation for middle level students,
2. The partnership facilitated a relationship not only between the students being served but also between the students and teachers on the team, and
3. The partnership reduced the amount of bullying that was occurring within the team and even the school.

Further, interview data provided the authors with a frame for understanding the benefits and challenges of this particular university-school partnership. In the sections that follow, the authors discuss how the participating teachers identified benefits and challenges related to this partnership and provide potential implications for how this and other partnerships between universities and middle schools can be successfully developed.

### **Benefits**

#### **University Students Provided Mentorship and Motivation**

As the course and project progressed, both the participating teachers and the university instructor noticed a sort of mentorship developing between MLS and SLPs. In fact, the teachers noted that after the first couple of sessions getting to know SLPs, MLS were already talking about playing sports in college, talking more about their educational goals, thinking and asking more about college, and requesting to visit the college campus, which had been done in previous years through the partnership. More specifically, the participating teachers acknowledged that the partnership resulted in relationship building almost immediately.



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### One-to-One Connections and Mentoring

Anna noted that one of her MLS began to open up to an SLP and that his attitude changed for the better:

*... his self-esteem was just awful. His attitude was awful, authority, he wanted to go against all authority, and so he and I were able to start building a relationship, and then when the college students came in, it gave him somebody that was maybe a little bit closer to his level that he could talk. He didn't necessarily talk to them about things he was going through, but just having somebody else, you know, to give him that attention that he was wanting so badly.*

Another example of the one-to-one relationships developed between MLS and SLPs occurred when one student knocked on the classroom door during the actual class portion of "Citizenship and Education" and gave an SLP a piece of paper with a poem/song he had written. He and the SLP had previously discussed their shared interest in writing poetry/songs, and he wanted to show her the work he had completed for his English class. There were several other instances of this relationship-building between MLS and SLPs that were discussed in the weekly reflective component of class.

Participating teachers also noted that MLS felt safe to discuss personal issues with SLPs; this conclusion was supported by the comments from the SLPs about their discussions with the MLS. All three teachers noted that the non-judgmental environment that was created through small group interaction with the MLS provided the opportunity to talk candidly and often one-on-one with the college students about issues that concerned or excited them. Teachers reported that MLS told them they felt they could "be open" with the SLPs because they shared their own stories in order to relate. It was during this small group interaction that teachers believed MLS shared their fears. Kerrie explained:

*I would say it was like a mentoring type program where they came and worked with the kids about issues they're going through but might not talk it about it much so like bullying. Any issues at home any type of those things that aren't brought up in the day to day in the classroom, so it was somewhere the students could release and openly talk not feel like they were going to be judged.*

When SLPs polled MLS about issues they were most concerned about, the teachers explained that this opened the door for class and whole-group discussions about how bullying impacted them on a daily basis. Then, when the SLPs brought the idea of an anti-bullying campaign to MSS, they were "validated" and felt that the SLPs valued what they had to say.

### Change in Behavior

Another theme that emerged through the teacher interviews was a sense that MLS were changing how they behaved around one another and with the whole student body. Anna noted that although some of her students were still participating in bullying, they were more likely to recognize when this was happening and to identify the characteristics of bullying as discussed with the university instructor and SLPs: "I've noticed more that even a few of them are speaking up against it [bullying] now, you know, and saying we wear these shirts, but we're still picking on people. Though it's that awareness I think that was able to be brought out with them as well." By the end of the semester, Anna explained that MLS were asking to wear their "Think before you speak. Don't make others weak!" campaign t-shirts on Fridays (school

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uniforms are required) as a reward for performing good deeds and doing well in class. She explained that she did not think students were participating in helpful behavior in order to wear the shirts, but that the shirts reminded them of their commitment to empower friends instead of hurting them.

### **Reduction in Bullying Activity**

According to teachers and students, bullying had been a major issue within the school—throughout grade levels, on the buses to and from school, and even in the neighborhoods. Thus, MLS and SLPs collaboratively developed the service project with a focus on developing awareness about bullying and educating the faculty, staff, and students about resources that existed to prevent bullying and support students who were being treated unfairly. As a result, many of the MLS began to recognize that their behavior was often construed as bullying and not just teasing as they may have intended. Kerrie noted that “seventh grade is such a tough age, and they’re all going through these changes and not wanting to stand out so they kind of join with those doing wrong things. I mean it’s [the anti-bullying campaign] definitely something that helped.” Kerrie also provided a specific example of a student who had been positively affected by the anti-bullying campaign: “. . . he came half way through the school year . . . he really loved those Friday mornings. I’d see him like helping other students; he was much kinder to me even.”

A review of the data suggests several ways that MLS behaviors changed according to what the teachers explained was a direct response to implementation of the program and the combined service project. All three participating teachers witnessed students helping their peers, especially between classes at their lockers and students demonstrating kindness (i.e. standing up for bullied peers, helping one another clean up in the cafeteria, etc.).

### **Student Engagement/Motivation**

Participating teachers noted that they began to observe how the excitement and commitment surrounding the Friday morning activities began to translate into the performance and behavior of their students on a more regular basis. According to teachers, students looked forward to the program and would work diligently all week in order to be allowed to participate. Teachers began using Friday morning mentoring/planning sessions as a behavior incentive. Kerrie reported

*I think it’s [the partnership] good for the students...it’s a break from coming in and doing regular class work and it’s something they really look forward to. I think it was just really good having them in the small groups and working one on one and with the [university] students ‘cause it was like a mentoring program they got to have that one on one connection so I definitely think it was good for them.*

Participating teachers noted that students enjoyed preparing for the anti-bullying campaign and that this program gave them an alternative way to view their students outside of the traditional classroom environment/education. Seeing students in this non-standards-based environment gave them an opportunity to recognize their talents and gifts outside of the classroom. For example, when preparing for the Anti-Bullying Blues Night, the teachers were able to see how some students with whom they had difficulty connecting were extremely talented dancers, singers, and spoken-word artists.

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Amy also suggested that the partnership resulted in the development of self-esteem for many of her students, noting, “It gave them communication skills and helped them to become aware of things that are not just in their world and a lot of times you know students, they don’t get that exposure.” Teachers suggested that this newly developing sense of self-esteem may also have been linked to the dissipation of bullying on the team.

## Relationship Building

Participating teachers explained that over the course of the semester student relationships were facilitated by the small group discussions and activities planned and implemented by the SLPs; however, they also noted that their relationships with the students also benefitted. During her interview, Anna explained, “I just think a lot of them want to come back and talk about the things that they discussed with the college students they are talking about going to college and just having different experiences.”

Similarly, Amy gave a more detailed response of how the partnership positively affected her relationship with students:

*The partnership has been beneficial because it gave the kids something to look forward to and it was an incentive that we really didn't have for them at the beginning of the school year. The kids always looked forward to it; they knew Fridays were coming and they were able to build relationships and then I also had the opportunity to see the kids in a different context instead of Monday through Friday...it's all instruction and doing labs and things like that. They had an opportunity to just be themselves to talk about things that were bothering them that maybe I didn't know about until they had that conversation in the meeting on Friday.*

According to participating teachers, the service partnership, in some ways, enabled them to take a step back from being the teacher, providing a new lens through which to view their students. During these moments, they were not primarily concerned with test scores and meeting annual growth but were able to see the non-academic abilities of students. Interview data from this project also demonstrate that the teachers value the dedication of the SLPs because they have shown genuine concern for the welfare of the participating MLS and the rest of the student body.

This particular middle school has a district-wide reputation for being challenging, due in part to its suspension record. During the interview, Anna, a bit overwhelmed with emotion, said,

*I like had to fall back a little bit 'cause I was feeling emotional, but to see a group come in who really, on a regular day aren't necessarily top stakeholders, but to come in and become stakeholders with these children, you know and to care about them as much...it was so heartwarming to see them with the kids and just like, “Oh my God, they care as much as I do.” You know and just with the negativity I've seen throughout my years here at [GWMS], that's good, it's big.*

SLPs demonstrated that they did not view the MLS from the deficit perspective; instead, they learned valuable lessons about how to interact with students and view them as people with talents, gifts, and cultural wealth.

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### **Challenges**

Accepting an offer from a university service-learning partnership definitely adds to the responsibilities of the participating teachers. As university instructors engaging undergraduates in service-learning partnerships, the authors have several non-negotiable requirements. These requests often present challenges to administration and teachers. For example, the authors request classroom space in the participating school for their reflective activities. They also solicit feedback from teachers on service-related needs. Often, since the authors' service takes place during regular school hours, they require teachers to shorten their lesson plans and trust that the work the authors are doing is actually beneficial to the students and the teachers themselves. Depending on the strength of the partnership, these requirements can present challenges that may outweigh the benefits. For this reason, the authors asked participating teachers to talk more about the challenges that they encountered while engaging in this service-learning partnership.

### **Timing of the Partnership**

From the middle grades teacher perspective, it is beneficial for university partnerships to begin at the start of the school year. Yet, this is problematic for universities which operate discrete semesters. As this course began in mid-January, it was necessary to provide an introduction to service-learning theory and issues related to urban schooling. Thus, SLPs did not get to meet participating teachers and students until the third week of class in early February. At this point in the semester, MLS had already developed an identity as a team, and participating teachers were already preparing for End-of Grade standardized testing. Despite their need to work with students to cover material related to state curriculum, the teachers found this program valuable enough to dedicate the first hour of every Friday to the activities and discussions the authors prepared. The middle grades teachers made available instructional time for the partnership even though the timing in the school calendar was not ideal.

### **Lack of Preparation and Experience of University Students**

Wanting to give SLPs some ownership of the course and the service project, the instructor encouraged them to develop ice-breakers and activities related to the Anti-bullying Campaign. Participating teachers noted that SLPs often struggled to implement activities developed by their college peers, and this occasionally had a negative influence on the morning activity with the MLS. For example, when SLPs arrived at the school without reading the university student-generated proposed plan for the week, they seemed unprepared, which left MLS confused. Participating teachers explained that when MLS were not engaged, they felt "antsy" and did not behave as well.

Unfortunately, a challenge associated with giving SLPs the responsibility of planning an activity and sharing with peers is that they have not taken education planning courses, thus preventing them from thinking through all the possibilities associated with timing and expectations for the daily activity. Although this was a teachable moment about how much time to allot to certain activities and how to ask questions that facilitate discussion, they were not well-prepared, which in the long run, could have made a negative impression on MLS.

Comments from participating teachers and researcher observations have provided a rationale for revising course content to include more specific introductions to the planning and implementation portions of the curriculum. Future recommendations include having participating teachers offer a quick lesson or panel discussion about tips for planning activities for MLS.

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### Implications for Developing Partnerships

During the final interview, all participating teachers recommended that SLPs continue to engage MLS in a service project as part of the program. They suggested that involvement outside of the classroom would enable MLS to see how they can affect the community and that the experience would introduce SLPs to the community surrounding the university. Kerrie explained, “I think it would be cool if we could do a service project with kids where maybe they could go somewhere for the day with [university] students and like clean up or do something that simple where they’re doing something in the community and seeing how they are affecting it.”

A focus on the words of participant teachers provides valuable insight into how this partnership might build on current practice and evolve over the next few years. Anna continues to keep in touch with students, now in high school, from the first year of the partnership. She explains that it was impactful and that they remembered the activities from the partnership. This validates the themes of positive impact and relationship building and is testimony for the potential long-term positive effects this type of partnership can create when university-community partners work together to develop goals and service projects for the mutual benefit.

As Hidayat, Pratsch, and Stoecker (2009) suggest, requiring a more in depth training on the desired outcomes of community service-learning would benefit the middle grade teachers in that SLPs would have a deeper understanding of how service-learning can be both beneficial and limiting to members of a given community based upon the way the service is implemented. Although SLPs in this course understand the expectations for attendance and presence during the weekly sessions, it would be valuable to have them read and discuss more of the literature on the potential negative effects of service-learning if done incorrectly.

Our findings indicate that service-learning partnerships between universities and middle schools have the potential to assist in the development of characteristics necessary to be successful educators of early adolescents as identified by AMLE (2012). These characteristics embrace the crucial inclusion of genuinely valuing these middle level students and responsively addressing affective as well as academic needs. The link of service-learning such as the partnership described here between a university and a middle school is not only conceivable but highly valuable for all stakeholders.

### Limitations of the Partnership

As with any service-learning partnership, limitations arise when there is little-to-no budget, only one semester of service hours, and often unpredictability in school scheduling/programming. Primarily because this course is only taught in the spring semester, this partnership is considered a short-term service experience. Anna noted that she would be interested in changing that aspect of the program in order to improve the benefits for both her students and herself. When asked what the ideal length of service would be for her, Anna responded, “I would really if possible like the entire school year.” Then, she went on to say how we could expand the service to other groups within the school:

*I would even like if we could do more than one team on a grade level if that were possible, like the whole grade level...I would like to see them help us out with more community building...I think that would just make even more relationships just build a stronger community that we could possibly take into the entire*



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[President's] Village. One parent I spoke to for a long time said she was just amazed that the college students had done all of it, you know, and I just told her this isn't George Washington, per se.

Stoecker & Tryon (2009) suggest that short-term service projects are less successful and impactful than long-term service; however, the university schedule does little to improve this situation, as courses that last longer than one semester are rare. Thus, there is evidence to suggest that the course instructor, community service partner, and university might need to make this course part of a two-semester sequence.

## **CONCLUSION**

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, there is inadequate attention paid to the community partner perspective in service-learning research. According to the interviews of teachers who facilitated this partnership between university students and middle school learners, this particular community partnership facilitated the development of an informal mentor program, increased motivation and ability of MLS to discuss personal issues, heightened awareness about bullying resulting in altered behavior of the MLS, and enabled teachers to see their students in new ways. Teachers revealed that by giving up time for lessons in response to the service partnership, this established an opportunity for SLPs to create and implement weekly activities that revealed a more personal side of the MLS. These experiences facilitated connection and fostered more collaborative relationship between the teachers and MLS.

Earlier in this chapter, the authors highlighted the importance of evaluating community partner perspectives in a service-learning partnership in order to determine the presence of reciprocity. They also established that middle school students experience major changes during this part of adolescence, challenging teachers to develop a unique set of skills to support their emotional, physical, and psychological development. If the findings from this research inform the potential for service-learning partnerships between universities and middle schools, then the authors can hypothesize that intentional, well-developed partnerships between university students and middle school learners might help teachers gain a deeper understanding of the interests and expectations of their students. This study confirms that it is critical to include the perceptions and experiences from the middle school teacher partners, thereby creating a more holistic picture of the experience, which ultimately is informative for future research in the evaluation of community partnerships.

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**Gaining Perspective****KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Adolescence:** Period of time when children experience emotional, physical, and psychological development.

**Community:** Refers to a variety of stakeholders within the service-learning partnership. This term might refer to the partner with whom the academic service provider is engaging or even the geographic location of the partnership.

**Middle Schools:** Refers to grades 6-8 and students are typically grouped into learning teams that focus on their personal and academic development.

**Partnerships:** Are integral to the success of service-learning experiences. The community partner and the service provider must work together to establish goals and expectations for the participants on both sides of the equation.

**Service-Learning:** An approach to teaching and learning that integrates skills and knowledge in ways to address genuine community needs.

**Urban:** Densely populated space when describing a geographic location. Urban also serves as a code word for groups of people living in highly populated areas without access to resources such as healthy food options, high-quality education, and affordable housing and medical care.

**University-Community Partnerships:** This often begins as a relationship between the instructor in a service-learning course and a community partner. In the area of teacher education, these partnerships often evolve between the University and K-12 schools.

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## Chapter 6

# “What Am I Doing Here?” Making Meaning in Culturally Engaged Asian American Community- Based Service-Learning

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### ABSTRACT

*Creating and maintaining meaningful, educational, and culturally engaging service learning partnerships between Asian American studies programs and Asian American community-based organizations (CBOs) is both challenging and rewarding. The Asian American Studies Department at San Francisco State University was founded in partnership with both student organizations and community-based organizations, and has sought to maintain the promise to bring university resources and knowledge into the community, while bringing community resources and wisdom into the university through a variety of campus-community partnerships. This study reviews that history in order to contextualize current relationships and practices within institutionally structured community service-learning (CSL) designated courses. A survey of students, community organization partners, and faculty engaged with Asian American service-learning in the San Francisco Bay Area reveals the benefits and challenges of culturally engaged service-learning, suggestions for best practices, and future directions.*

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## *“What Am I Doing Here?”*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The bored student volunteer who does not know anything about the event or the organization. The frustrated, overworked staff person who has no time to train another batch of student volunteers every six months. The professor trying to coordinate multiple sites and make meaning out of what often seems like menial work, disconnected from lofty-sounding lectures about community and Asian American identity. How do stakeholders connect and balance the twin goals of community service and of learning? After nearly fifty years of teaching, learning, scholarship, and service that are intricately interconnected, what has the department of Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University learned about culturally engaged community-based service learning in Asian American communities?

Being uniquely located in the San Francisco Bay Area, the department of Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University is surrounded by an almost overwhelming variety of community-based organizations serving both pan-ethnic and ethnic-specific Asian American populations. These range from direct-service organizations offering health care, legal aid, housing, youth education, citizenship lessons, food service, political advocacy, etc., to those supporting diverse artistic and cultural expressions and those supporting the communication of Asian American histories. Some are long-established while others are relatively new. The department of Asian American Studies has supported many organizations since its founding after the student-led coalition of student groups that became the Third World Liberation Front Strike in 1968, which caused the founding of the field of ethnic studies generally, and at SFSU caused the formation of the College of Ethnic Studies. Faculty members, in their passion for “serving the people” as politically engaged members of Asian American communities have founded organizations, served on their boards and advisory boards, and even acted as executive directors. Their scholarship and teaching often informs their service and vice versa. Integrating service-learning into teaching presents myriad challenges, but it forms the third side of the triangle of service-learning, research, and teaching that is the original, founding basis of the Asian American Studies department at SFSU, and, to some extent, the field of Asian American studies as a whole, or, as the department Mission Statement says, “Social justice, equity, and activism within Asian American communities, and respect for differences, especially ethnic diversity, are fundamental principles that guide our work.” The department tenure and promotion guidelines allow for “service” to be defined more broadly than most other departments on the campus, which only recognize service on campus or in professional organizations; in contrast, the department recognizes and values service in Asian American community organizations.

This evaluation provides the historical context for community-based service learning in relationship to the history of the AAS department, and the larger College of Ethnic Studies in which it is housed. It also evaluates the current state of community-service learning through three case studies and a survey of current faculty, students, and community partners involved in service-learning related to the authors’ courses.

### **DOING ASIAN AMERICAN STUDIES IN THE SF BAY AREA**

California has the largest and one of the most diverse populations of Asian Americans of all the states: 14.9% of the state’s population (as of 2010: 5,556,592 residents). The City and County of San Francisco is approximately one-third Asian American (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). The Asian American population of the city and county of San Francisco is predominantly Chinese Americans followed by Filipino

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Americans. The Asian American demographic also includes Asian Indian American, Vietnamese Americans, Korean Americans, Japanese Americans, Pakistani Americans, Cambodian Americans, Hmong Americans, Laotian Americans, Taiwanese Americans, Thai Americans, and Asian Americans of mixed heritage, including a significant number of Asian transracial/transnational adoptees. The line between “Asian immigrant” and “Asian American” is sometimes difficult to discern and cannot always be drawn at legal citizenship. Given the history of racist immigration laws like the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act, the Immigration Act of 1917 that formed the “Asiatic Barred Zone,” and the 1924 Immigration Act that set up a racial quota system, Asian American identity is considered an identity of intent more than it is of law. Given this understanding, Asian Americans have a long history in San Francisco reaching as far back as the Gold Rush and the building of the transcontinental railroad with the arrival of Chinese laborers who then would be followed by Japanese, Korean, Asian Indian, and Filipino laborers (Ancheta, 2006).

The department of Asian American Studies at San Francisco State University is the largest Asian American studies department in the country, currently staffed with seventeen tenured/tenure-track (TTK) faculty and six lecturers, with no double-appointments of TTK faculty members. Dedicated to teaching, studying, and serving the diverse Asian American communities, the following ethnic units have been established within the department: Chinese American, Filipino American, Japanese American, Korean American, South Asian American, Southeast Asian American (Cambodian and Vietnamese), and Asian Americans of Mixed Heritage. The faculty are specialists with a wide spectrum of academic/disciplinary training, including literature, law, sociology, psychology, ethnic studies, community health, education, social work, film, visual art, cultural studies, gender studies, music, religious studies, and history. Originally founded as a program within the School (now College) of Ethnic Studies, Asian American Studies became a department offering a BA degree in 1997, and launched a Master’s program in 1999. In addition to many courses that have earned a CSL designation over the years, the department currently offers “Asian American Community Changes and Development” (AAS 681), a majors-only course built entirely around community-based service learning, in which students commit to sixty hours of service-learning on-site during the semester. The course uses service-learning assignments including readings and weekly journals that include descriptions on their-site experience and to reflect on Asian American community changes and needs in the community.

## **TO STRIKE AND TO SERVE: THE COLLEGE OF ETHNIC STUDIES**

In the late 1960s, San Francisco State College saw increasing numbers of students of color being taught Eurocentric curricula by mostly white faculty. In the fall semester of 1968, student frustration with this situation was externalized through actions designed to call attention to the curricular absence of diverse people, cultures, and histories (Collier & Gonzales, 2009). The 1968 San Francisco State College student strikers advocated not only for the inclusion of people like themselves within higher education curriculum but also assurance that the knowledge generated in the college would always be intimately connected with their communities (Chew, 2009). One fundamental principle that has helped guide each unit of the College of Ethnic Studies since its founding is the commitment to bringing the resources of the university into direct service of the community (Hirabayashi, 2009). Thus, Ethnic Studies at SF State has always been rooted in community service-learning, far before service-learning had a name or was recognized by white social work faculty. Early service-learning at San Francisco State College typically included direct outreach to Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities in the

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surrounding area. A prime example of this is the landmark struggle to save the International Hotel, or I-hotel, a low-income single room occupancy (SRO) hotel on the border of Chinatown, Manilatown, and the Financial District (Habal, 2007), which built an interracial anti-gentrification coalition and fed the student movements for ethnic studies.

The College of Ethnic Studies’ focus on community-service learning has created a legacy of community-service learning programs that still exist at San Francisco State. Poetically, the inception of Ethnic Studies through protest was in itself a form of community-service learning: ethnic minority students and allies learned to navigate a political warzone in order to establish their independence, as well as to gain access to higher education for their communities. This direct confrontation with white power structures informed their own tools for revolution and thus created a material basis for the beginnings of the very curriculum that they had just sowed. The realization of these skills has served the AAPI community to this day: Asian American Studies has existed at San Francisco State for forty-seven years and now includes community service-learning throughout the curriculum.

However, although Asian American Studies as both the larger discipline and as this department was originally founded in order to create systemic change by bringing the tools and knowledge of the university to serve the community and informing student education with community wisdom and knowledge, the increasing demands of academic “professionalization” have made it difficult to provide direct service to AAPI communities. The external demands on research pressure faculty for quick results that can be antithetical to community bonds. These pressures are unfortunately not always imposed externally; in some areas of the academic field of Asian American studies, this intimate connection between the academy and the community is no longer valued. Although the academic institutionalization of Asian American studies allows departments and programs to become “successful” in the academy and to gain structural autonomy, it also comes at the cost of distance from the community that scholarship and teaching are ideally meant to serve.

### Direct Faculty Service and Liberation Pedagogy

One of the Asian American Studies program goals is to apply the skills and knowledge acquired toward the self-determination and empowerment of Asian American communities. In service to that ideal, Asian American Studies faculty members become founders, board members, and advisory boards of many of the community organizations where we engage students in community service learning (see Appendix). In addition, faculty members have worked as partners with community organizations in community-based participatory research projects. Their work as researchers and teachers is deeply integrated in service-learning instruction. Alumni have also founded community organizations, and sometimes community organization leaders become their students, for example entering the Master’s program in order to support grant writing.

Through the perspectives of educators and community service practitioners, *Integrating Service Learning and Multicultural Education in Colleges and Universities* calls for the need to integrate both academic and experiential knowledge by interweaving multicultural education with service-learning. Rosenberger (2000) indicates that the dynamics of power and privilege in service-learning need to be critically analyzed, in order to “generate a practice that seeks to transcend the status quo and promote justice and equality” (Rosenberger as cited in O’Grady, 2000; p. 24). O’Grady (2000) articulates how multicultural education and service learning relates to critical pedagogy: “When students can learn to

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analyze, to critically reflect on, and ultimately – if they choose to – to transform oppressive situations through action, they are engaged in a form of political activism” (p. 5).

Ethnic Studies and service-learning reflect the model of reflection and action in Paulo Freire’s definition of praxis (Freire, 2000). This praxis creates an understanding of context and the motivation to change and serve our communities. Freire (2000) illustrated an educational approach that promotes critical thinking, self-determination, action, reflection and dialogue to create a sense of humanization (pp. 43-44). Freire critiqued the still prevalent model of education as “banking” knowledge into the empty vaults of students’ minds and instead postulated problem-posing pedagogy (pp. 72-73). This “banking” model also functions to describe dominant academic relationships between the institution and the community as one in which researchers raid the community for knowledge without reciprocation. In contrast, problem-posing pedagogy introduces the concept of dialogue through a reciprocal exchange of ideas between teacher and student, thus creating a space for both student and teacher to manifest new understanding (pp. 79-83).

The foundation of this problem-posing, critical pedagogy relies on the basis of hope. Freire (2000) expressed that “Hope, as it happens, is so important for our existence, individual and social, that we must take every care not to experience it in a mistaken form, and thereby allow it to slip toward consequence and the cause of inaction and immobilize” (p. 9). The meaning of hope allows one to have the belief in creating change and fostering a sense of humanization. Elevating one’s consciousness to understand a sense of humanization transforms one’s understanding of community and their power to foster change.

Critical education scholar bell hooks (2003) expands the notion of education as a space to transform one’s consciousness through the interaction between teacher and student. hooks takes the concept of the classroom as a “place that is life-sustaining and mind-expanding, a place of liberating mutuality where teacher and student together work in partnership” (hooks, 2003, p. xv). hooks interprets the role of teaching as praxis to foster personal growth and developing a sense of community. The role of critical pedagogy allows for the validation of one’s presence in the classroom. It allows for students to bring forth their experiences into their learning environment, and community service learning seeks to include service to the community as a significant part of students’ experiences so that their learning will be informed by the needs and goals of the community.

Critical pedagogy, civic engagement, and ethnic studies reinforce what Freire explains as the “process of humanization” (Freire, 2000, pp. 43-69). These three components provide an understanding for people to legitimize or validate their experiences inside and outside the classroom and to view themselves as historical, cultural, social beings. Freire (2000) further explains that “People develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation” (p. 83). Critically analyzing power, culture, and finding avenues for dialogue allows space to understand one’s identity to engage in community transformation. Personal and community transformation stem from the influences of civic engagement, ethnic studies and critical pedagogy. It creates a social, historical, and cultural context that inspires the political ideology “to serve the people.”

By focusing on establishing self-determination for its communities, ethnic studies are inherently tied to community service-learning. Historically speaking, the battle for ethnic studies coincided with the battles for community self-determination. This has exploded into notable civil rights movements in San Francisco history, which include the American Indian Movement’s occupation of Alcatraz (November 20, 1969 to June 11, 1971), the preservation of the histories of Chinese immigrants detained at Angel Island during early waves of Asian immigration to the US, and the movement to save Filipino residents of the

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International Hotel from eviction (Habal, 2007). Furthermore, it was not uncommon for TWLF student leaders and activists to partake in these protests; for example, SF State student Richard Oakes (Mohawk) led the American Indian Movement’s Occupation of Alcatraz while also spurring the development of American Indian Studies and encouraging other American Indians to enroll at SF State (Fung, 2014).

### **THREE CASE STUDIES: PEP, ANGEL ISLAND IMMIGRATION STATION FOUNDATION, ASIAN AMERICAN WOMEN ARTISTS ASSOCIATION**

In this section, the authors highlight three community organizations with which their department has varying degrees of service-learning relationships. The organizations vary from educational to historical to artistic. All three were founded with some level of input from AAS department faculty members. One remains closely identified with the faculty member who founded it and is deeply integrated into the department curricula with Pin@y Educational Partnerships (PEP); another was founded with the support of an adjunct and founding member of the department and is systemically connected to the service-learning program (AIISF); and the third was co-founded by a long-time adjunct (lecturer) faculty member and has maintained intermittent ties with service learning (AAWAA).

#### **Pin@Y Educational Partnerships: Pep**

The Pin@y (Pinay/Pinoy) Educational Partnerships (PEP) is a service-learning program that has created a “partnership triangle” between the university, public schools, and the community to develop this counter-pipeline that produces critical educators and curriculum at all levels of education and in the community. PEP’s partnership triangle includes: Bay Area universities/colleges, San Francisco public schools, and the Filipino American Development Foundation (FADF). Uniquely, the counter-pipeline implements a transformative decolonizing curriculum and pedagogy, incorporating all grade levels including primary, middle, secondary, post-secondary, and graduate students. As volunteer teachers of the program, graduate and undergraduate students, from San Francisco State University and surrounding universities who are pursuing careers in education or community service, receive a unique opportunity to teach critical Filipina/o American studies. They gain skills in the practice of critical pedagogy, curriculum development, lesson planning, and teaching.

With the high rates of Filipina/o and Filipina/o American pushout [dropout], teenage pregnancy, substance abuse, gang violence, and mental health issues at Balboa High School located in the Excelsior District in San Francisco, Dr. Tintiangco-Cubales recruited twelve undergraduate and graduate students who were interested in addressing the needs at Balboa High School. They conducted “sala” talks (conversations with students) to discuss issues that concerned them, issues such as identity, low numbers of Filipina/o teachers and faculty representation, the lack of Filipinas/os and Filipina/o Americans in the curriculum, and a fractured sense of community. Dr. Tintiangco-Cubales and her students organized workshops on Filipina/o American her/history, hip hop, spoken word, and theatre as a means to address these issues and develop solidarity. The interest in Ethnic Studies for Filipina/o and non-Filipina/o students began to grow, and PEP students organized their classmates to create a petition to implement a Filipina/o American experience course in the spring of 2001 (Tintiangco-Cubales, 2005).



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What started as a humble lunchtime mentoring program manifested into the Pin@y Educational Partnerships (PEP) becoming a year-long Filipina/o American studies class at Balboa High School, a large public school in the southern part of San Francisco. It soon expanded to the following schools: Longfellow Elementary as an after-school program established in 2005; a year-long course at Philip & Sala Burton High School (2005) and James Denman Middle School (2008); and through partnerships with professors & instructors at each of the following institutions: introductory courses at City College of San Francisco (2007), Skyline College (2012), and University of San Francisco (2013). The PEP high school course is a Step-To-College and A-G Credited class, in which PEP high school students can receive college credit and use it towards satisfying their A-G requirements for University of California and California State University applications. PEP consists of over three hundred elementary, middle, high, and community college students per year; sixty PEP teachers who are undergraduate and graduate students; three directors; a partnership with Asian American Studies; the Filipino American Development Foundation; and the Filipino Community Center.

PEP has been instrumental in the institutionalization of Ethnic Studies in San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) and functions as a strong advocate for full implementation of Ethnic Studies throughout the state and the nation (Tintiangco-Cubales, Magbual-Daus, & Magbual-Daus, 2010). PEP has also been primary in the development of the Filipino Enrichment FLES Pathway curriculum in SFUSD and has trained and mentored hundreds of PEP Teachers & Students to enter higher education, teaching credential, graduate, and doctorate programs around the nation.

PEP is not integrated within a course in Asian American Studies but serves as an opportunity for undergraduate and graduate students who have an interest in teaching or serving youth. It provides them with the hands-on experience in teaching in the classroom, serving the needs of K-16 students and helping them find a pathway to a career. Students apply for PEP at the end of the spring semester, get training in the summer, and begin their year-long commitment to the organization during the school year. Some students join PEP for one year, and some stay for a few years. It is a space to take the knowledge they gain in their Asian American studies classrooms and apply it to lesson plans they teach at the school sites. SFSU students can receive credit through the community service-learning site if they choose PEP as a service-learning location. Learning outcomes for PEP include being able to understand and apply critical pedagogy; develop culturally relevant and responsive syllabi and lesson plans; develop relationships with co-teachers and students; work with administrators, faculty, and staff at the school sites; and to develop and engage with projects that address service, arts, and activism.

The overall vision of PEP is to support learning and teaching as practices of freedom, particularly in order to create critical spaces in the educational system and in the community where students and teachers study the struggles and survival stories of Filipina/os in the United States and throughout the world, and thus promotes and advocates for services, social justice, and self-determination. The specific goals of PEP are to retain both Filipino high school and college students; recruit high school students to pursue college and to recruit college students to pursue careers in education; reflect on historical and contemporary experiences of Filipino Americans; and to provide research, training, and service-learning opportunities for students. The main objectives for the PEP program are to address the lack of Filipina/o American curriculum; address the lack of Filipina/o American teachers; create university-community partnerships; promote service-learning & learning service; provide practical and creative training to future social justice educators; provide services for youth and students to reach their potential and pur-

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sue their goals; use Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a means to study and address community issues; develop and implement a critical pedagogy, which includes a critical and cultural curriculum that focuses on Filipina/o American Studies & Ethnic Studies. This vision and these goals and objectives are directly in line with the larger department of Asian American Studies mission, particularly in the context of service-learning. The success of PEP has been far-reaching, both in terms of achieving retention, graduation, and post-graduate education for hundreds of Filipina/o, Filipina/o American, Asian American and Pacific Islander students, but also in serving as a model for bringing ethnic studies into the K-12 curriculum in order to serve not only a diverse student population, but also their families and communities.

## **Preserving and Teaching History: Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation**

The Angel Island Immigration Station operated from 1910 to 1940. The station plays an important role in the history of Asian Americans. Anti-Asian sentiments and exclusion laws led to its opening. The preservation of the Angel Island Immigration Station has deep roots in Asian American community activism. San Francisco State College and especially the Department of Asian American Studies played a major role in the movement to save Angel Island. In 1970, the immigration station was slated for demolition. Alexander Weiss, a park ranger and a San Francisco State college student, slipped into the abandoned detention barrack and was astonished to find entire walls covered in calligraphy. Defying orders from his supervisor to ignore the “graffiti,” Weiss, an immigrant himself, sensed that these carvings were a significant part of the Island’s untold immigration story and spoke to his then San Francisco State College biology professor George Araki. Araki then worked with Mak Takahaski to photograph the calligraphy on the walls (Daniels, 1997; Hackenbracht, n.d.). These individuals both emerged as leaders in a movement to save the Immigration Station.

The effort to preserve the Station became a beacon for confronting the racism and exclusion Asians faced in America. Sparked by the discovery, Bay Area Asian Americans, spearheaded by Paul Chow, formed the Angel Island Immigration Station Historical Advisory Committee (AIISHAC). This organization studied how best to preserve the station for historical interpretation. Historical research by AAS department faculty member Him Mark Lai, who co-taught the first course in Chinese American history with Phil Choy, helped establish the context and meaning of the station<sup>1</sup>. In July, 1976, the hard work came to fruition as the state legislature appropriated \$250,000 to restore and preserve the Immigration Station as a state monument. The barracks were opened to the public in 1983, and members of AIISHAC created the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation (AIISF) to continue preservation and educational efforts for the site and to increase awareness of the contributions Pacific Coast immigrants make.

Faculty in AAS maintain a connection to AIISF by supporting the research needed for the organization and students actively engage in service-learning through the following courses: AAS 218: Asian American Culture, AAS 216: Introduction to Asian American Literature, AAS 360: Koreans in the US, AAS 330: Nikkei in the US, AAS 512: Asian American Children and Teen Literature, AAS 540: South Asians in the US. Annually, the courses on Japanese Americans have hosted a Nikkei Pilgrimage to Angel Island. Student volunteers, instructors, and local groups work to help host this event. Currently, the Asian American Studies Department is partnering with the Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation to collect and edit stories of Angel Island immigrant detainees for the Immigrant Voices blog on the foundation website, to increase education and awareness of the period of exclusion and the significance of Angel Island through play performances at local schools, and to increase resources available

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for teachers interested in introducing Angel Island Immigration Station through the use of lessons plans. This service-learning project by the San Francisco State University’s Asian American Studies department addresses a need of AIISF for continued education and resources for the community on the Angel Island immigration experience.

### **Service Through Art: AAWAA**

Asian American Women Artists Association (AAWAA) was founded in 1989 in San Francisco by Betty Kano (a long-time lecturer in the SFSU AAS department on Japanese American art and literature from 1999-2015), Flo Oy Wong, and Moira Roth as a spin-off from the Kearny Street workshop specifically to promote the visibility of Asian American women artists and the idea of Asian American women’s art. In 2007, AAWAA was guided to non-profit status under the leadership of Debbie Yee and Nancy Hom (former Executive Director of Kearny Street Workshop), and from 2008 to the present, Cynthia Tom and Shari Arai DeBoer have led the organization.

In addition to being co-founded by Betty Kano, AAWAA has also been supported by AAS department faculty Isabelle Pelaud and Wei Ming Dariotis, both of whom have exhibited artwork with AAWAA group exhibits and served on the advisory board, and Valerie Soe, who has supported the organization with her research. As taught by Dariotis, the AAS course, “Asian American Women Literature and the Arts” (AAS 582, formerly 622), gained SFSU-recognized Community Service-Learning designation through partnership with AAWAA, and students have conducted interviews of AAWAA artists as part of their service. All three faculty have been involved in bringing students to volunteer with AAWAA; several of these students have gone on to formal positions with the organization, and one was awarded by the organization for her volunteer accomplishments. The service-learning aspect of working with this organization is developed through readings related not only to the work of artists in the organization but which reflect on the role of Asian American women in the arts and the role of community-based arts organizations (in contrast to organizations designed to support artists as individual professionals). Students write reflection essays on their experiences doing work with the organization and discuss issues such as the politics of arts funding in the San Francisco Bay Area and the application of key issues and theories of Asian American studies (such as Orientalism) to the practice of arts organizing. The work entails organizing events, including exhibits; doing community outreach through traditional and social media; and special projects, including creating an informational brochure.

AAWAA builds community between Asian American women artists and supports them through exhibitions, publications, readings, talks, and the development of educational resources. They also function as an advocacy group, educating art establishments that have historically excluded works by Asian American women artists, including major museums, galleries, collections, and publications. AAWAA has also supported research into the historical significance of Asian American women artists, like Bernice Bing, an early AAWAA member whose work is now in the permanent collection of the de Young Museum, a fine arts museum located in San Francisco’s Golden Gate Park, in California.

AAWAA leadership and members have been highly aware of the significance of community-based art and thus have implemented community programs to provide opportunities and resources for Asian Pacific American women in the arts not only as a support platform for individual artists but more for the larger community of Asian American women artists. Its publications are used in academic curricula in art, ethnic studies, and Asian American studies departments locally and nationally. AAWAA also maintains an active Speaker’s Bureau program in order to formalize opportunities for members to

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speak to classes and to community groups, and members have given lectures at twenty-three college campuses. AAWAA published a unique anthology of Asian American women’s art, poetry, and short fiction: *Cheers to Muses: Contemporary Works by Asian American Women* (2007). It is included in the curriculum in courses at UC Berkeley and San Francisco State University and was used for a special curatorial fellowship funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities focusing on Asian American Art at New York University. This creation of curricular materials by a community organization marks an important aspect of community-university partnerships, in which university expertise is put in service to community cultural productions.

In 2008, as part of a women’s arts healing project, AAWAA’s curatorial director, Cynthia Tom, began developing *A PLACE OF HER OWN* art exhibitions at Driftwood Gallery, the De Young Museum, and SomArts Cultural Center (as part of Asian Pacific Islander Cultural Center’s United States of Asia America Festival), which have featured AAS faculty and students as participating artists. This exhibit was created into a series of workshops in 2011 for Asian American social workers and clients. During that same year, AAWAA implemented the Emerging Curators Program to encourage a curatorial focus on Asian American Art. Student interns from the AAS department have been integrally involved in the development of these exhibits and programs.

In 2012, AAWAA implemented the Emerging Curators Program to develop curators who would be specifically attuned to Asian American art. This is a professional development program that allows both curators and participating artists to gain planning, programming, producing, promoting, and presenting skills within the context of producing an art exhibition. The following year, AAWAA created *underCurrents & the Quest for Space*, a multimedia exhibition about the myths and ancestral trauma that affect Asian American women. AAWAA continually produces these programs as a means to break down stereotypes, open dialogue on taboo subjects, and build a stronger, more compassionate and interactive community. AAS department students have volunteered with AAWAA to support their events and to work as long-term volunteers as well. Some former students have become AAWAA staff as well as participating as artists in their exhibits and events.

### **EVALUATING SERVICE: STUDENTS, FACULTY, AND COMMUNITY PARTNERS’ INPUT**

Reviewing historical partnerships with community organizations provides the backdrop for the current state of community-based service learning in the authors’ department. They asked students, faculty, and community partners to provide an evaluation into the functionality of the current program as well as an estimate of how this work is understood by various stakeholders. A symposium is planned in which these results will be shared with faculty and community partners and will also be used to develop best practices, write memoranda of understanding, and construct rubrics by which to measure the success of student learning outcomes and community-based organizational needs being met. This evaluation will also be shared with students enrolled in community-service learning courses as a basis to help make meaning of their service.

As part of the authors’ ongoing work with community partners, a periodic assessment is done on the benefits and challenges of continually sustaining community service learning in our courses. In the authors’ evaluation of the department’s community service-learning work, input was received from current and former students enrolled in a community service learning internship course, the faculty, and current community partners to provide input on the following questions:

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1. What are students doing in community service learning?
2. What benefits are students gaining from the experience?
3. What are benefits to community partners?
4. What are challenges to sustainability?

In this assessment, partners, faculty, and students commented on the benefits and challenges of community service learning, while also providing reflections on the meaning of service-learning from their perspectives.

### **Hope for the Future: Community Organization Views**

When the authors asked community organizations to comment from their perspective on how the community service learning opportunity benefited the students, they mentioned that the students would gain real world experience, be able to apply what they learn in the classroom, and make connections in the community. One community respondent put this in terms of “hope” of what would be achieved, saying, “I hope that most students learn why Asian American media and representation is important to them and the larger U.S. dialogue.” This organization partner emphasized the benefit of direct access: “They get direct access to the premier AA talent and creative makers. We ... also do our best to be available to talk to them and make sure they learn about our own [Asian American media] history.” Another mentioned that students would benefit from a “sense of belonging and life purpose. [And a] strong connection to community.”

Community connection is seen by the authors’ community partners as a key component of the service-learning connection. Community partners are aware that students are engaging in service learning in order to apply theories they learn in classes to real life situations. One organization believes it “provides a space for students to learn and grow, as Asian American studies students because they are exposed to real people who need help whether it’d be Asian immigrants dealing with certain hardships of living in a space they are not familiar with.” Students also recognize the value of these connections; as one student writes, “It allowed me to network within the community which will assist me once I graduate.”

### **“Useful” Service-Learning**

Many of partners emphasize that although some of the skills students learn may be boring, they are “real,” particularly in relationship to office work, such as “time management office, computer and research, writing skills, all transferable work competency skills strong work relationship.” A student noted being given “Administrative tasks that included answering calls, taking tuition payments, and making copies.” Another learned how to “Log and archive previous newspaper editions. Make deposits. Scan to PDFs deposit information. Assist with annual Angel Island Pilgrimage. Assist with ad sales for N.Y. edition. Input data into Google sheets for donations and ticket sales.”

In addition to general office work, the kind of work students do encompasses “community engagement, education, [and providing] organizational development [that] supports public programming [to] help preserve the history and cultural resources.” Some of this work specifically utilizes knowledge students have gained in Asian American Studies courses such as researching articles and news and summarizing for community organizations. Some students provide direct service to clients; a community partner notes, “Students have helped us with our After School Program along with helping us with clients that



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we help daily.” Other activities are related to big events hosted by the organizations, for which they need many extra hands. Organizations are grateful for this support, as this organizer mentions: “They have provided much help to us especially with our limited resources.” And this relationship sometimes results in volunteer work performed outside of the aegis of college credit:

*One of our students from last semester became very interested in our institution, particularly our education program and became very involved with it. Outside of her regular hours, she came in to consult and film videos to promote the program and attract a younger audience.*

Sensitive that students are volunteers, some organizations strive to meet the students’ needs and interests. In addition to work determined by organizational priorities, one student reports being “given tasks and projects based on what I was interested in.”

### **Student Perspectives on Service-Learning**

When the authors asked students the benefits of community service-learning to their personal and academic growth, they noted practical skills, community connections, and even life-changing epiphanies. For many students, service-learning also afforded them deeply meaningful “first-time” experiences. Students also recognize the value of volunteer and internship work for building their resumes. However, resume-building was a secondary rather than primary goal for the following student, who states, “Not only have these internships helped flesh out my resume but they have given me personal experience in what it’s like to photograph an event by myself, something I had never done before.” Practical skills include are highly valued by students, such as this one, who notes:

*These internships helped me gain experience in actually working a job I would have in the future in terms of photography and graphic designing. They also taught me time management, multitasking, and prioritizing between the internships and schoolwork to get all projects done by the time they were due.*

Perhaps most significant of all are the life-changing and personal growth aspects of the service-learning experience. One student comments, “They have all given me insight on what I could expect if I pursued these jobs, which is something I’m doing now, and they also helped confirm my desires in becoming a graphic designer, photographer, and illustrator.” Another student shifted career goals after the service-learning experience: “It made me realize that I thrive in creative environments and so I decided to change my career path.”

Service-learning opportunities also help students with interpersonal communication skills, as this student shares: “Also, as someone who takes a while to warm up to new people, I found myself having to overcome my anxiety of talking and working with new people.”

Finally, some students view the experience beyond the benefit to themselves personally, as this student attests:

*Everything I have learned in Asian American Studies has helped me understand the importance of all these organizations as well as help me see how far each community has come and also how far we have yet to go. These organizations bring awareness to our very existence as well as spreading our culture to different communities.*

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### **Teaching Service: Faculty Perspectives**

Faculty value student participation in community service-learning for helping achieve the goal of community engagement among students. One faculty member believes service-learning helps students “become more engaged, develop concern for interests outside of just their own personal interests.” From the faculty perspective, service-learning provides an opportunity for students to practice what they learn in the classroom, and thus for those classroom lessons to become more meaningful: “Engaging in praxis—applying the theories they learn through books in the real world—is the most important aspect of service-learning.” Other faculty emphasize the benefits to the community, such as this respondent who comments, “long-term, student volunteers often become staff members, long-term volunteers, or otherwise engaged in the organizations. In doing so, they bring what they have learned in AAS out into the community where it can do some good.” Faculty recognize the value of service learning, and thus have developed Student Learning Outcomes (see below) that emphasize the relationship between classroom learning and community-based praxis.

### **CHALLENGES OF COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING**

This section focuses on the ways service-learning challenges experienced by students and community organizations from the perspective of our community partners, students, and faculty.

Community organizations have commented on the difficulties of sustaining community service-learning. Several faculty, community partners and students themselves comment on the lack of capacity to provide direct supervision. Training can be difficult to conduct when there is lack of resources or staff time. Students who work, are going to school, or have long commutes and rich family lives may have little time for deeply engaged service-learning. Community partners are generally patient and understanding; however, they have work to do and services to provide and rarely have the time to train a new set of volunteers every semester. As this community partner puts it, “We normally find students very engaged and willing to help out, however, students normally have limited time to spend with our organization, and at times may be difficult to give them substantial projects due to their timing and needing to train them on tasks that require more in-depth knowledge.”

Recognizing that students are students, community partners may want more connection with faculty in order to understand faculty goals for student service learning: “Also, it would be nice to know their learning outcomes so that our work can be more applicable to what they are studying as the expectation seems to be that they are volunteering but do not have clear goals or outcomes other than filling the time.” Other challenges include practical limitations, such as “No space available on site for students.” Sometimes, communication with students can be challenging, and this respondent cites “occasional lack of communication response” as a challenge.

Faculty, especially those integrated directly into the organizations themselves, raise concern about the difficulties of student service-learning creating a drain on organization resources. Guided by a principle of non-exploitation, faculty sometimes struggle to maintain the balance of mutual benefit and are fearful of either the students feeling exploited or unappreciated, or conversely of the organization being exploited to provide “learning” for students who are not equipped to provide equivalently valuable “service” in return. One faculty member fears the worst, stating “Sometimes they are only volunteering to

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build up their resume and as such they just want to do what it takes for it to look good, but not enough to have an impact.”

Another faculty member notes that lack of resources can create a challenging situation for both the organization and the student:

*When there’s an effective volunteer coordinator for a non-profit student can be effectively placed based on their skill-level and knowledge; but when there’s no coordinator, students, especially those with little or no skills, get underutilized or become a drain on the staff of the organization.*

From the student perspective, lack of clear direction can be frustrating also, as this student notes, “I did not know my tasks....As a result, I often questioned myself, “What am I doing here?”

Students are aware of these issues as well as a different set of challenges, including lack of time, lack of instruction or training, and lack of direction. Negotiating between work, school, and community internships can be challenging, especially in the context of changing from one organization or task to another, as this student notes: “Some challenges I faced in these internships was juggling between my school projects and going to the internships. Also, since some of the internships were short, I had to be quick to pick up on what was going on.” Another student pointed out the frustration that having to complete tasks according to the organizations timetable sometimes came at the expense of schoolwork or paid jobs:

*For the most part, I had to miss work to be part of the service learning project. I had to catch up on my hours. This means I was not earning money from work to pay off my financial necessities. All in all, it was difficult to be motivated because I kept asking myself, “What am I doing here?” when I feel I could be doing something important elsewhere such as studying or working.*

Motivating students to see value in their work may be the biggest challenge of all. Student motivation is tied to understanding the value of the work they are doing both for the organization and for the larger community it serves. Gaining skills they perceive as valuable can motivate students, just as failing to gain those skills can frustrate them.

Creating meaning in culturally engaged community-based service-learning involves addressing structural issues in organizations, like having a volunteer coordinator; clarifying and communicating student learning outcomes to both students and community partners; and relating course content to service experiences.

**COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING: STUDENT LEARNING OUTCOMES (SLOS)**

Does the service-learning experience meet the Student Learning Outcomes set by the Department of Asian American Studies? Students face many challenges in finding meaning while engaging in service-learning. They also benefit from the gaining of valuable, real-life skills, connections to community members and to community organizations, and they are able to apply the lessons from their classes in order to

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- Gain an interdisciplinary understanding of the histories, cultures, and racialization of Asian Americans.
- Apply course concepts and critical theories and methodologies to identify the structural and ideological forces that shape the lives of Asian Americans.
- Apply the skills and knowledge acquired toward the self-determination and empowerment of Asian American communities.
- Develop values of social justice, equity, activism, and respect for differences.
- Construct evidence-based and persuasive oral and written arguments with proper citations and support from multiple forms of knowledge, including community and academic resources that communicate what students have discovered.

The extent to which these Student Learning Outcomes are achieved by individual students is determined by complex factors, but faculty can work with community partners to ensure that the department’s SLOs are recognized and implemented in the service-learning experience.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING: COMMUNITY OUTCOMES**

In addition to considering the desired Student Learning Outcomes, it is also important to consider the goals of community organizations and how they are met in this relationship. It might seem obvious that organizations “get” free labor from student volunteers, but what else happens in that relationship and what *should* happen? In the model posited in the founding of Asian American Studies and the College of Ethnic Studies, students bring not only their labor but also their knowledge—gained in the classroom—back out into the community. As our survey shows, students also become deeply embedded in the organizations in which they volunteer.

### **COMMUNITY SERVICE-LEARNING: FACULTY OUTCOMES**

Faculty also gain something from the Community Service-Learning partnerships; these benefits may appear less tangible than what is gained by the students who gain real-life experience in the community and who learn how to apply what is learned in the classroom or what community based organizations gain from student intern support, but what the authors’ evaluation reveals is that faculty are deeply engaged in service and in learning from service. They support community organizations through research that is used in writing grants, through participating in community-based publications, and as active members and leaders of organizations. Additionally, they bring students into organizations through means that are both formal (i.e. through CSL-designated courses) and informal (word of mouth and personal connection). Community partners also often provide speakers to enrich the classroom experience and events that help students witness real Asian American community life in action.

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## LEARNING AND SERVICE OUTCOMES: CONCLUSION

This evaluation of community service-learning by faculty and students reveals that service-learning is deeply valued in the authors’ department. Faculty are committed to it, even if it poses significant challenges. Next steps include a deeper conversation with community partners and a collective process to determine best-practices, communicate SLOs, find ways to support organizational oversight of students, and where appropriate, develop memoranda of understanding. After almost fifty years, the CSL program is due for review, reflection, and refinement to take it through the next generation of faculty, students, and community partners.

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**ENDNOTE**

- <sup>1</sup> Demonstrating the intricate connections between service, teaching, and scholarship, a major study of the poems carved into the walls of the Immigration Station was conducted by historian Him Mark Lai, poet Genny Lim, and UC Santa Cruz historian Judy Young, titled, *Island: Poetry and History of Chinese Immigrants on Angel Island, 1910-1940* (1980).

**“What Am I Doing Here?”****APPENDIX***Table 1. Sample of Service-Learning Sites in the San Francisco Asian American Community*

Organization	Type of Organization	Website	Mission in Brief
Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation	Historical Preservation	aiisf.org	Raises awareness of the experience of Immigration into America through the Pacific. Collects and preserves the rich stories and personal journeys of thousands of immigrants, and shares them with visitors and everyone living in America through education initiatives and public programs.
Asian Pacific American Community Center	Afterschool program	apaccsf.org	To help strengthen Asian Pacific American families living in Visitation Valley by providing linguistically and culturally appropriate programs and services.
Bayanihan Community Center/ Filipino American Development Fdn.	Community center	bayanihanc.org	To strengthen the social, physical, and economic well being of the Filipino American community and the South of Market community with special attention to the underserved segments of the community.
Cameron House	Social Service Agency	cameronhouse.org	To empower generations of Chinese-American individuals and their families to fully participate in and contribute positively toward a healthy society.
Center for Asian American Media	Media organization & festival	caamedia.org	Dedicated to presenting stories that convey the richness and diversity of Asian American experiences to the broadest audience possible.
Chinese Cultural Center	Cultural Center	ccesf.us	Dedicated to elevating underserved communities and giving voice to equality through education and contemporary art.
Chinese American Historical Society	Historical Society	chsa.org	Dedicated to the interpretation, promotion, and preservation of the social, cultural and political history and contributions of the Chinese in America.
Diasporic Vietnamese Artists Network (DVAN)	Arts Organization	dvan.org	Promote artists from the Vietnamese diaspora whose work in literature, visual art, film, and performance art enriches our communities and strengthens ties between Vietnamese across the globe.
Japanese American National Library	Library	janlibrary.org	The only national Japanese American resource center that devotes its attention to collecting and preserving primary and secondary source material related to Japanese Americans.
National Japanese American Historical Society (NJHAS)	Historical Society	njahs.org	Non-profit membership organization dedicated to the collection, preservation, authentic interpretation, and sharing of historical information of the Japanese American experience.
Pin@y Educational Partnerships (PEP)	Educational Program	pepsf.org	Developing education to be accessed as a means toward global, local, and personal liberation; creating critical spaces in the educational system and in the community where students and teachers study the struggles and survival stories of Filipina/os in the United States and throughout the world; and promoting and advocating for services, social justice, and self-determination.

## Chapter 7

# “Hmong That Could Fit Into All of Asia”: The Power of Hmong Storytelling in Service–Learning Projects

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### ABSTRACT

*Service-learning projects that both engage the Hmong community and make oral storytelling a component of the projects have the potential to create transformative social change. Currently, images of the Hmong in the media as well as scholarship written by people of non-Hmong ethnicity tend to re-affirm stereotypes both of refugees and people who speak languages other than English. The Hmong community has an investment in both preserving its rich culture, history and traditions and educating about these. The storytelling that emerges in service learning projects focused on the Hmong are powerful counterpoints to the often violent and destructive discourse current in the contemporary moment about refugees, immigrants and speakers of languages other than English.*

### INTRODUCTION

Kao Kalia Yang (2008), a Hmong American woman writer, begins her memoir by showing the many contrasting images of Hmong people confronting her at an early age. Her parents offer her an image of Hmong people’s strengths as the foundation of identity. Yet, negative images of Hmong people popular in Thailand and the United States haunt her and threaten to undermine her understanding of what being Hmong means. Moreover, Yang stresses throughout her autobiography that American schools play a critical role in rendering her people silent and invisible. Likewise, American texts reduce the Hmong to “not [even] a footnote in the history of the world” (Yang, 2008, p. 4). From Yang’s perspective,

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American representations of history are both false and exclusionary in their erasure of the Hmong. Her memoir becomes the story of writing her people and herself into visibility, history, and consciousness in opposition to these many forms of silencing.

For Yang, then, Hmong people must tell their own stories in their own words. Such stories challenge the validity of the stories often told about Hmong people within American institutions, even ones viewed as potentially liberatory, such as schools. Yang’s critique (2008) raises important questions for instructors who are developing service-learning experiences for students. How do instructors structure service-learning experiences for students that foreground the voices, perspectives, and concerns of Hmong people? How do instructors prepare students to see the Hmong in ways consistent with how Hmong people view themselves? What curricular materials will thwart perpetuation of standard stereotypes of Asian, Asian American, and Hmong people and best reflect the histories and realities of the Hmong? Through engaging such questions, instructors can create service-learning opportunities that have the potential for transforming students’ understanding of Hmong people.

As noted by researchers, one drawback of service-learning projects focused on diverse communities is that they often take place within a structure that frames the student as the giver of needed service, knowledge, or expertise and the member of the diverse community as the hapless victim who needs such aid (Mitchell, 2008; Rice & Brown, 1998). This framework encourages students to understand themselves as performing charitable acts. It positions students to embrace a seductive and culturally popular image of themselves as saviors to less fortunate “others” (Mitchell, 2008). For the Hmong, interacting with students with such attitudes has the potential to echo their own or their family’s experiences with aid organizations as a refugee both in Thailand and the United States. In turn, such interactions could remind Hmong participants in the service-learning project of the false popularized image of the United States “as a benevolent savior-rescuer” of the Hmong people (Vang, 2016). The service-learning relationship between student and Hmong participants, then, has the potential to replicate long-standing historical injustices toward Hmong people.

Mitchell (2008) suggested in her overview of the research that a disruption of these kinds of injustices, hierarchies, and narratives is possible through critical service-learning. A key to this form of service-learning is foregrounding community knowledge (Mitchell, 2008). As both Goodkind (2006) and Blum and de la Piedra (2010) show, it is critical to include Hmong people’s own voices and ways of knowing in service learning projects. Until the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, almost all research and published stories about the Hmong were written by researchers of non-Hmong ethnicity and told through their lens (Vang, Nibbs, & Vang, 2016). Thus, the historical, academic and literary record of the Hmong is dominated and often controlled by White Western perspectives. This erasure of Hmong perspectives in the written record makes it all the more crucial that Hmong voices from the community be foregrounded within critical service-learning projects.

One strategy for achieving the goals of challenging the privileged White perspective and incorporating Hmong community knowledge into the service-learning experience is to create a form of story project as a component of students’ learning experience. Oral histories, ethnographies, biographies, digital storytelling, or other forms of multimodal video projects are a compelling means of teaching students about Hmong culture and worldview. Hmong storytelling has the power to reveal to students authentic images of Hmong people as embracing agency, countering popular Asian stereotypes and retaining connections to the Hmong culture as a source of strength.

In a story project at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh (UWO), this power of Hmong storytelling was conveyed in Mee Lor’s vision of the role her stories could play in students’ lives:

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*[J]ust don't hate us for who we are. I mean without knowing what we've been through. . . I want you ... to know the story and, so, when you hear someone else talk about it that you know what we went through... as a people and what we did. So it's not, not just an assumption about why we came here or we came here just for, you know, opportunities or things like that. Um, that isn't the case at all. And, then, so, you ... can take these stories out there and know when you hear something and people make the wrong assumption that that's not true.*

In her direction to UWO students, Mee Lor captures the powerful essence of Hmong storytelling. She acknowledges that deep racism exists in the United States toward the Hmong, yet she also insists on the power of Hmong people's stories to disrupt these false racist assumptions and to assert the truth of the Hmong experience. Thus, through story projects with the Hmong, UWO students record stories that confirm the voices, visions and visibility of Hmong people, stories consistent with Kao Kalia Yang's dream.

**BACKGROUND****Brief History of the Hmong**

Most researchers trace the origins of the Hmong people back to southern China (Lee, 2007; Michaud, 1997; Vang, 2010). By the mid-nineteenth century, large-scale migrations of the Hmong had begun into regions south of China, including Vietnam, Laos, and Thailand (Lee, 2007; Michaud, 1997; Vang, 2010). The Hmong who migrated to Laos settled in mountainous areas (Faderman, 1998). They built a life which revolved around subsistence farming that relied on slash-and-burn methods which forced them to move frequently (Faderman, 1998; Michaud, 1997; Vang, 2010). Once the Hmong became America's allies in the 1960s, however, many Hmong gave up the tradition of farming and moved to the area around Long Cheng, which was the primary military base of the Hmong (Vang, 2010).

At a time when the Vietnam War was deeply unpopular in the United States, the C.I.A. viewed the alliance with the Hmong as a clandestine and cheap way to stem the Communist advance into Laos and, simultaneously, maintain a low American death toll (Vang, 2010). What came to be known as the “secret war” in Laos, a secret only to the American public, relied on Hmong and other ethnic minorities in Laos to be the ground troops in American Cold War efforts against the Communist-backed North Vietnamese and Pathet Lao military forces (Faderman, 1998; Vang, 2010).

On the Hmong side, Vang Pao, who would become a general and a hero for many Hmong (Ng, 2008), saw an alliance with the C.I.A as a means to preserve the Hmong homeland in Laos and to receive forms of aid (Vang, 2016). However, the cost was also extremely high. By the end of the war, the Hmong had suffered tremendous losses amounting to the deaths of 17,000 soldiers (Vang, 2010).

With the fall of Saigon in 1975 and the subsequent failure of the United States to play a role in the transition of power in Laos, the new government added to these losses by declaring its intent to exterminate the Hmong (Vang, 2010). As attacks on them increased, many Hmong chose to flee toward Thailand. Vang (2010) argues that “[o]f the 102,479 [ethnic minorities] who arrived in Thailand by 1980, an estimated 95 percent were Hmong” (p. 41). The vast majority of the Hmong had made their way on foot through the jungles of Laos, across the Mekong River and into Thailand, all without any aid from the Americans (Faderman, 1998). Many Hmong people died trying to escape to Thailand whether from attacks, disease, starvation, drowning, or accidents (Vang, 2010).



### ***“Hmong That Could Fit Into All of Asia”***

In the Thailand refugee camps, some Hmong people were able to reunite with their families while others waited for family members who never arrived. The conditions in the camps were overcrowded, affecting access to food and lodging. As one example, even as late as 1992, the Chiam Keng camp held 18,000 refugees, ninety-five percent of whom were Hmong (Cha, 2005). These refugees lived in a mere 160 long houses (Cha, 2005). Hmong people waited in the refugee camps until they either were able to go to another country, typically Australia, France, or the United States, or they decided to return to Laos.

For many Hmong, there was fear and uncertainty in the camps, but with the future at stake, taking refuge in the United States seemed like the best option (Faderman, 1998). The first wave of Hmong migration to the United States, which comprised about 50,000 people, occurred between 1975-1980 (Lie, Yang, Rai, & Vang, 2004). When the relocation camps in Thailand started closing between 1987 and 1990, the second wave of Hmong resettled in the United States (Lie, Yang, Rai, & Vang, 2004; Faderman, 1998). It is estimated that more than 130,000 Hmong relocated to the United States between the mid-1970s and early 1990s (Faderman, 1998). The largest concentration of Hmong resettlement was in California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin (Faderman, 1998).

Initial adjustment to life in the United States was difficult for the Hmong. One of the biggest challenges for the first wave of Hmong was not receiving adequate training in learning the English language at either the relocation camps or at service organizations in the United States. Lack of access to this training left them without the ability to read, write, or speak the English language and led to limited job opportunities for many. The majority found themselves working menial jobs, often in the manufacturing industry, for very little pay (Vang, 2012). This caused financial stress for large Hmong families (Vang, 2012). Most Hmong ended up residing in urban areas, where rent was cheap but crime rates high (Vang, 2010).

The Hmong are family oriented, placing a high value on the well-being of their family and community (Duffy, Harmon, Ranard, Thao, & Yang, 2004). This strong sense of community and the willingness of the Hmong to help one another created a web of support. Many relocated to be closer to family or to areas where there was an established Hmong community so that they could share information, resources, and employment and training opportunities (Vang, 2010). Different community-based organizations were set up in response to help community members adjust to life in America and to provide resources to decrease language barriers, improve employability, and develop job skills (Vang, 2010). This response to adversity demonstrates the resiliency of the Hmong people.

As they built a new life in the United States, the Hmong faced exposure to the Western European culture and a more individualistic society, which created some push and pull within the family dynamic and the community at large (Faderman, 1998). Hmong refugees often found themselves caught between the Hmong and “American” cultures (Lie, Yang, Rai, & Vang, 2004). One result of this conflict of cultures was a shift in gender roles and expectations among the Hmong, especially for women. Traditionally the family structure of Hmong is patriarchal in nature; men are the head of the household and primary source of income for the family, while women take care of the family and oversee domestic responsibilities (Chan, 2003). As women became financial contributors assisting their families, their status enhanced (Chan, 2003). This shift allowed women to have a stronger voice in decision-making regarding their family and personal life. Increased access to education also promoted upward social mobility for many women (Vang, 2012). This change in women’s roles and status challenged the traditional social structure and was met with resistance by some. For others, both men and women alike, this change was embraced as it improved the well-being of the family and larger community.

Other cultural conflicts revolved around differences in parental authority, mode of teaching and punishment, religion, and modern medical practices (Vang, 2010; Faderman, 1998). Generational dif-

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ferences and personal experiences influenced each individual’s level of assimilation differently (Lie, Yang, Rai, & Vang, 2004). Some Hmong realized they had to adapt to the new culture in order to succeed. They adjusted to certain aspects of the Western European culture while trying to maintain their Hmong cultural identity (Faderman, 1998). Others assimilated much more into this new culture. Some of the Hmong, in particular the elders, saw the potential negative impact this could have on their own heritage. For example, as young children went to school and learned English, they spoke less and less Hmong (Faderman, 1998). The elders saw this as threatening the loss of the Hmong culture (Faderman, 1998). Many Hmong are trying to protect their youth from total assimilation and looking for ways to help their children succeed, while continuing Hmong traditions and cultural identity (Lie, Yang, Rai, & Vang, 2004).

The Hmong have always been a group of people able to adapt to new circumstances while still maintaining their core cultural values and identity. For Hmong people, the ability to adapt is central to survival. No matter where they have resettled, the Hmong adapted but have “remained culturally separate and ethnically distinct from other Southeast Asian people” (O’Connor, 1995). Rather than looking at the impossibilities, the Hmong looked towards the possibilities. While many Hmong elders still yearn for their traditional way of life and hope to go back to Laos, they are making strides toward becoming self-sufficient by focusing on the skills they brought with them such as farming and needlework (Faderman, 1998; Lie, Yang, Rai, & Vang, 2004).

Today, many Hmong have successful businesses and jobs and have steadily moved out from urban communities into residential areas (Lie, Yang, Rai, & Vang, 2004). A large number of Hmong pursued education as a means to improve quality of life for their families and have earned college degrees, leading to more employment opportunities (Faderman, 1998; Vang, 2010). There are still many challenges today, but the Hmong have worked hard and adjusted in order to build a life for themselves, their families, and their community. They are working to define what it means to be Hmong in America while continuing to carry on their traditions and culture (Vang, 2010).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Only two peer-reviewed in-depth studies exist of service-learning projects centered on the Hmong (Blum & de la Piedra, 2010; Goodkind, 2006). By expanding the research base to Southeast Asians generally, two further projects emerge in which courses partner with Southeast Asian refugees (Shaddock-Hernández, 2006; Smolen, Zhang, & Detwiler, 2013).

All of the service-learning projects involved students assisting Southeast Asian refugee or immigrant communities in the transition process to the United States (Blum & de la Piedra, 2010; Goodkind, 2006; Shaddock-Hernández, 2006; Smolen, Zhang, & Detwiler, 2013). Another commonality was participants in all the projects were English language learners.

All but one of the service-learning projects focused on groups—the Hmong and refugees from Myanmar—that Ling (2008) calls underrepresented Asians. Ling distinguished underrepresented Asians in two ways: 1) they were part of Asian groups who sought asylum in the United States due to the wars in Vietnam and Laos, and 2) they were understudied (Ling, 2008). These refugee Asian groups include the “Burmese, Hmong, Indonesians, Kashmiri, Laotians, Mong, Roma, Thai, and Tibetans” (p. 3). The smaller numbers of these populations along with the lack of research generally on them may explain the limited research on service-learning projects with these groups.

*“Hmong That Could Fit Into All of Asia”***SERVICE LEARNING WITH SOUTHEAST ASIANS OTHER THAN HMONG**

The two service-learning projects on Southeast Asians other than Hmong represent two ends of the spectrum on creating equitable relationships with community members. On the one hand, Shaddock-Hernández (2006) created a project in which students who themselves were immigrants and refugees taught Cambodian and Vietnamese refugee youth the fundamentals of photography in order to affirm the identities of all participants in the project and transform society through action. The project culminated in an exhibition of the youths’ and students’ art. For students, this experience of having their identities reflected in the classroom further led them to criticize their earlier education for its failure to validate and engage their identities as immigrants and refugees.

On the other hand, Smolen, Zhang and Detwiler (2013) framed Karen refugees from Myanmar (Burma) in their service-learning project almost entirely in terms of deficits, going so far as to name “a dependency mindset” as one of their challenges (p. 539). Although the project began by taking place in Karen refugees’ own homes which “helped to forge mutual understanding and trust,” it quickly moved to “coax[ing]” the refugees to take the courses in a more traditional setting (p. 539). Ultimately, the project’s immersion in a conventional savior/saved paradigm is best symbolized through the findings regarding student learning outcomes: “They were aware of [the Karen] students’ social and emotional problems and demonstrated a real commitment to helping them” (p. 549).

**SERVICE LEARNING WITH THE HMONG**

To create more equity between students and participants, articles reviewed showed opportunities involving the Hmong were structured to include components that moved students outside of the traditional service-learning paradigm. Goodkind (2006) created a more equitable space of mutual learning between the Hmong community members and students by having one aspect of the service-learning be the sharing of stories across cultures. Similarly, in the part of their research focused on Hmong immigrants, Blum and de la Piedra (2010) reported that the instructor, Blum, intentionally forced her students to have experiences that resonated with those of the Hmong refugee students they were tutoring. Although her students teaching at the Hmong school service site often felt excluded and struggled to communicate as the Hmong students at the school talked in Hmong to each other, she left them to figure out the solution on their own. Ultimately, the students needed to find ways to communicate on the Hmong students’ own terms. Both Goodkind’s and Blum and de la Piedra’s research found that destabilizing the typical power differentials in service-learning projects resulted in students’ recognition of the unnaturalness of the power and privilege that they are granted within the dominant society. This shift in viewpoint enabled self-reflection on strategies by which to destabilize these hierarchies.

Of course, there are many service-learning projects focused on the Hmong at colleges and universities in California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin, the three states with the largest populations of Hmong people. However, not many of these projects have resulted in peer-reviewed research. The most common form of service-learning projects with the Hmong is English language programs such as conversation partners and tutors. Western Technical College (Herlitzke & Allard, 2007); University of Wisconsin, Madison (Griswold, 2005); and Marquette University (Marquette University, 2017), all in Wisconsin, have offered such opportunities. All of them also work closely with local Hmong organizations. Both the University of Minnesota and the College of St. Catherine collaborated with the Jane Addams School

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for Democracy to provide a range of language learning opportunities to Hmong participants (Wallace, 2000). The BRIDGE, a community center providing services to Southeast Asians, including the Hmong, has partnered with Trinity Lutheran College to provide a tutoring program to Hmong students and with Stanislaus State to offer a range of services from tutoring and translation to training in organic gardening and nutrition, to name just a few (The BRIDGE, 2014).

## **HMONG ORAL HISTORY PROJECT AT UW OSHKOSH**

In the research on service-learning with Southeast Asians, students reflect almost exclusively on the participants' refugee and immigrant status which they see as tied to their ethnicity but not to their class (Blu & de la Piedra, 2010; Goodkind, 2006; Shaddock-Hernández, 2006; Smolen, Zhang, & Detwiler, 2013). Similarly, even in the research by Goodkind (2006) in which all the participants were Hmong women, the students do not discuss gender as a salient aspect of the participants' identities. Indeed, Goodkind discusses Hmong women almost entirely in terms of deficits.

In contrast, the UW Oshkosh project, the focus of this chapter, considered the Hmong women's stories in terms of their experience of the intersection of Hmong ethnicity, class, and gender.

## **THE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT FOCUSED ON HMONG WOMEN**

The following discussion of the community engagement experience at UW Oshkosh with Hmong community members follows aspects of Delano-Oriaran's (2012) "authentic and culturally engaging (ACE) service-learning framework" by addressing three key components of service-learning with diverse communities: "(a) investing in community needs, (b) planning and preparation, (c) community engagement and empowerment (i.e., collaboration, mutual reciprocity, and self and collective empowerment)" (p. 405).

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

As part of the new general education program called the University Studies Program at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh, a team developed a community engagement project for a Women's and Gender Studies course. The project centered on two groups: Hmong students at the university and Hmong women in Oshkosh and the surrounding community. In the initial vision stage and the first implementation of the project, the team consisted of a White instructor who identifies as transgender, four Hmong university staff members (one man and three women), one Hmong student who served on the board of the Hmong Student Union (HSU), and two White women alumni mentors.

Of the eight members of the team, five were Hmong, and all five were members of local Hmong communities. The four staff members brought with them a range of expertise about the Hmong community both on and off campus. They work in Admissions, Advising, Career Services and the Multicultural Retention Program. One of the staff members also is the advisor to both HSU and the Asian Student Association. The student contributed significantly to the project by working to recruit family members of students as well as his own family members to participate.

## *“Hmong That Could Fit Into All of Asia”*

### **INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY NEED**

Together, the team created a project that both served a need within the Hmong community and would teach students about the culture, strengths, worldview, and beliefs of Hmong people. The team determined that one current agenda of Hmong people, particularly elders in the community, was to preserve cultural history which many feared was being lost and to challenge common misperceptions of the Hmong.

Gary Yia Lee (2006), a renowned researcher on Hmong culture and a cultural insider, confirms that Hmong adults often fear losing Hmong culture in the United States. Further, Lee and Tapp (2010) framed their book which records the customs, culture and history of the Hmong as a way for Hmong youth to connect again with their people.

The team decided on an oral history project with two foci. One would be Hmong women, particularly elders, who farmed in the area. The other would be students at the university who identified as Hmong. Through interviewing these two groups from different generations, first-generation elders who were refugees and mostly third-generation young people who were born in the United States, students could gather the stories of Hmong women, record the cultural shifts among young people in relation to Hmong culture, and educate the campus and local community about the contributions elders make to Hmong culture.

Altogether, the Hmong women who shared their histories with students in the course originally lived in Laos, escaped into the jungles when genocide was declared, lost loved ones to the genocide, journeyed to refugee camps in Thailand, and eventually travelled as refugees to the United States. All of the women spoke Hmong as their primary language. Although each of the women could understand English and speak it to varying extents, they all chose to communicate with the students through an interpreter. In addition, all of the women were trained in traditional Hmong methods of farming and were also local farmers who sustained themselves and their families through farming.

Hmong students who participated in the project were overwhelmingly third-generation Hmong in the United States, although a few were second-generation Hmong. Students expressed a range of connection to Hmong culture from embracing traditional Hmong culture to resisting its influence to feeling torn between two cultures—Hmong and American. Often, students expressed loss at not knowing enough, from their perspective, about the Hmong language, history, and/or culture. Most of the students communicated experiences of racism in the local community and/or on campus. The majority acknowledged facing challenges in terms of how Hmong culture was viewed in the United States such as the dominant American culture’s devaluation of shamanism, the Hmong language and other facets of the Hmong culture.

### **COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND EMPOWERMENT**

The four Hmong staff members contributed to and decided the shape of the project in multiple ways. In early brainstorming sessions, the Hmong members of the team advocated for the project to highlight the stories of Hmong women elders in the community. One of the team members, an expert in interpreting, suggested that each interpreter in the project meet with the Hmong woman for whom they would interpret in order to provide an orientation for her. In addition, as students were developing in class their questions for the project, Hmong team members provided feedback to small groups of students. All of the team members also interpreted for the women and, thus, led the collection of the oral histories in multiple ways.



### **“Hmong That Could Fit Into All of Asia”**

Team members taught students in the interviews as well as the audience at the public presentations about the power of the women’s stories and their meaning in a time when refugees and immigrants are seen as a threat to American society. The project only had the power to effect transformative change because the members of the Hmong community on campus played a central role in it. They consistently improved the project through their contributions and defined the project as social action through their presentations.

In meetings with the instructor of the course, Hmong community members who agreed to participate in the project identified two key goals that they wanted to meet through participation in the project: 1) to challenge false assumptions about the Hmong and 2) educate the public about their history, culture and experiences. They also shared contributions that they would like to make to the project. For example, many of the woman wanted to show students Hmong tools for gardening and specific Asian vegetables. In the first meeting with students, Mee Lor, one of the leaders of the Hmong women, determined the initial format, suggesting that the participants address students in a large group in order to create community between students, interpreters, and Hmong community partners.

The women in the project continuously shared stories with the clear intent of addressing students’ bias toward Hmong people generally and Hmong women specifically. In stories of Laos, the women participants often told stories that emphasized the role Hmong women played in sustaining the group. For example, Sheng Lee told stories that showed the mother’s crucial acts in preserving the family:

*When we [the members of Sheng Lee’s family] got lost and dispersed when the Vietnamese were shooting at us, my mom and I got dispersed. So, we were just at the edge of our town. So we decided to go back to our town and we were stuck there for a year. We gardened and finished a whole plot of land that whole year.*

Beyond providing for Sheng Lee and herself independently after losing her husband and children at the Mekong River, the mother also provided for the family in the Thailand refugee camps:

*When we were in the camps [in Thailand], my mom went and started a rice field. But, then, the Thai soldiers and government wouldn’t let us finish so she didn’t, they didn’t [her mother and father] have the opportunity to finish their garden as they [the Thai authorities] wouldn’t let them go out in a drought. But, then, my parents secretly went and were able to harvest up to at least 2 bags of rice.*

Moreover, several of the women in the oral history project told stories that questioned popular assumptions of Hmong refugees as dependent on welfare. Their stories of Hmong women leading their families out of Laos and of their role in providing for their families in the United States challenged popular stereotypes of Asian women as dependent and passive. Mee Lor’s story is representative of many stories told in the project:

*My dad had gone off to fight the war. And, so, it was just myself, my other siblings and my mom, ... and, you know, my grandma, um, fleeing. And, then, eventually, my mom got killed, um, and, then, it was, it was just us left, the kids left with my grandma. And, so. . . that’s who, um, we grew up with was our grandma. And, so, we just lived from place to place and hid from place to place until, um, we got to Thailand. Yeah, when I got to this country, I always dreamt that ... my mom was still alive and she was still living in Laos so that I could go back and visit with her. Yeah, when my mom was killed by the com-*

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*munists, um, I also got hit on my knee as well. . . during that time. And, so, when I got to this country. . . I was asked whether I wanted to be on disability because of my injuries, um, during that time. But, I said no I didn't want to be on disabilities because I wanted to be a model for my kids so that they can work hard. . .*

Mee Lor intentionally counters stories that students might have heard about Hmong people being welfare-dependent and seeking out government assistance. Her emphasis that she was wounded in her flight out of Laos, was offered assistance and refused it in order to be a better model for her children provides a dramatic challenge to the stereotype of refugees' and working-class people's dependency mindset as well as to the stereotype of Asian women's passivity to and dependence on men.

## **CONSIDERATIONS WHEN WORKING WITH THE HMONG**

When designing community engagement or service-learning projects that involve the Hmong, a more effective learning experience for all participants can be ensured through awareness both of Hmong people's strengths and the potential challenges posed by students' interactions with the Hmong. Working with the Hmong women, we became aware of a number of challenges and opportunities inherent in the oral history project. One of these challenges was the issue of privacy. Telling oral histories, narratives, and stories has been the way that the Hmong passed down their values, beliefs, and practices from generation to generation (Lie, et al., 2004). While telling oral histories is second nature to many Hmong, there may be certain aspects of their oral histories and stories they may not want to disclose. The Hmong women who participated in the project all experienced and witnessed traumatic events such as the death of family members, being chased under gun fire, and losing their homes when they escaped into the jungle. There were concerns among some of the women about how the stories would be viewed by people of non-Hmong ethnicity and by those who may not be familiar with the Hmong history and culture. For others, they simply did not want to recall or relive the horror of war and death. Another thing to note is that, for the Hmong, losing face is a sign of embarrassment. Disclosing personal problems, especially publicly, is often perceived negatively (Leong, Lee, & Chang, 2008). It is critical to remember, then, that in sharing their stories, the Hmong are taking risks.

One dilemma that coincided with this issue of privacy centered on how the students could ask questions that showed respect for the women's privacy while still engaging the women in storytelling. Acknowledging this challenge and letting the Hmong women know up front that they did not have to answer questions with which they were not comfortable helped to create an open and safe space for dialogue. By asking open-ended questions and allowing the women to lead the conversation, students were able to engage in rich dialogue with the women while respecting the limits women set on their sharing of stories. Given this experience, increased success in the interviews comes from training students to ask open-ended questions that invite community members to lead the conversation. This strategy will create a supportive space where participants can tell their stories in their own words, at their own comfort level.

Trust is also a key factor to be considered when working with the Hmong community. There was some degree of distrust of students among the Hmong women participants before the interviews began.

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A number of the Hmong women in the project expressed concern about how the students were going to interpret their stories. For example, a number of the women shared information about cultural practices such as polygamy and payment for brides. When sharing such stories, there was fear among the women that their culture and practices would be viewed negatively by outsiders whose cultural worldviews differed.

A few of the women also stated they worried about how the students would view them because of their limited education and understanding of the English language. There was an assumption among the women that they may not be valued because they did not speak fluent English. Their underlying concern was whether or not students would truly understand their cultural worldview and the struggles that they endured. It is worth emphasizing that when a Hmong person expresses concern about how others will view them, it is not necessarily because they doubt their own intellect, feel shame, or perceive their point of view as not valuable. Instead, although the Hmong women participants understood themselves to be rich with knowledge, culture, and experience, they downplayed these strengths.

Similarly, students were also, at times, hesitant in interactions because they did not want to offend the women. There were occasions when the women shared very emotional and personal stories, and rather than responding to these stories, the students quickly asked a different unrelated question. It was difficult for some students to process the women’s emotional stories and to know what the appropriate reaction was. In these situations, it was especially beneficial that we had an alumni mentor on hand, as well as the instructor making rounds of all the interviews to assist students and model cross-cultural exchange. In addition, the interpreter often provided crucial insight to students in the moment. This created opportunities for the team to train students immediately on how to be more present and better conduct the conversations. This enhanced mutual trust and enriched the students’ and women’s overall experience. This increased trust was demonstrated through the women’s open invitation for the students to visit them at home or their farms if they wanted to learn more. Open invitations in the Hmong culture are an expression of appreciation, trust, and respect (Lie, et al., 2004).

Another challenge posed by the oral history project was interpretation and loss of translation even when using Hmong interpreters. Doing literal translation from English to Hmong can alter the meaning of the question. There are English words for which the Hmong do not have a direct translation. Depending on tone and how the question is asked, it could be interpreted in different ways which could elicit different responses. Sometimes the women used traditional words or phrases with deep meanings that were harder to interpret and understand. In this way, certain emotions and meanings may be lost through the interpretation. If interpreters are necessary, it is beneficial to have interpreters who are members of the local community. This strategy will enhance the interpretive process. Having interpreters who had a shared cultural understanding and were members of the local community helped to establish rapport and support between the Hmong women and students. The interpreters’ knowledge of the Hmong culture and community was critical to helping the students develop culturally appropriate questions and to rephrasing questions when necessary. Finding interpreters who can have a consistent presence can also help establish relationships. This strategy could help community members to be more comfortable with the interpreters and vice versa.

Keeping these challenges and opportunities in mind has the potential to help educators develop service-learning projects that are both beneficial to students’ learning and the Hmong community members’ experience.

*“Hmong That Could Fit Into All of Asia”***PREPARATION OF STUDENTS**

To prepare students in the course to interview Hmong women and HSU students, students were first given a written assignment on exploring their own cultural and ethnic background and how it shaped their identities. Rice and Brown (1998) as well as Jay (2008) argue that student gains in intercultural knowledge and competence depend on students' understanding of their own identities and the relationship between their identity and their perceptions, beliefs, and worldviews. In the class, the essay on ethnic identity asks students to reflect on their culture of origin and examine the basic values, beliefs, and worldview that they acquired through it. This assignment starts students off on a semester-long journey of reflecting on the power of society to shape their perspectives.

Next, students wrote an essay evaluating their level of implicit bias toward Asians if they were non-Asian or toward African Americans if they were Asian or Asian American. Non-Asian students take the Asian Implicit Association test available at Project Implicit online and choose one specific American institution to write about in terms of its influence on their biases (<https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>). Asian and Asian American students take the Race Implicit Association test which evaluates the level of bias against African Americans and, like non-Asian students, write about how one social institution shaped their bias.

Two threshold concepts crucial to introduce in relationship to this assignment are institutionalized racism and privilege and power. Chick, Karis, and Kernahan (2009) identify these two concepts, among others, as ones students named as facilitating their learning about race. They found that privilege challenged “assumptions of invisibility, normalcy and one right way of doing things,” while institutionalized racism “expanded comfortable assumptions that one’s loved ones—including one’s government, one’s family and oneself—have no part in the evils of racism” (p. 13). Introduction of these threshold concepts in relationship to the assignment on implicit bias and its shaping through social institutions can effectively fuel critical analysis of individuals’ perceptions and worldviews in the classroom. These concepts encourage students to analyze the role institutions play in the social construction of race, the historical context within which social institutions reinforce white privilege and the oppression of people of color, and the role institutions play in widely disseminating and falsely naturalizing racism and racist images.

In service-learning projects with diverse communities, students must examine closely their power and privilege. In order to facilitate this process, students engaged in activities and discussions focused around McIntosh’s (1997) seminal essay “White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack” and Butler’s film (2013) “Cracking the Codes: The System of Racial Inequity.” From “Cracking the Codes,” the class focused on Joy DeGruy’s story in which her African American sister-in-law, Kathleen, who is often perceived as white, uses a check without incident at a grocery store, while DeGruy, who is seen because of her darker skin as African American, is interrogated for using a check and pushed to show multiple forms of identification. Through close analysis of this story, students begin to understand at a deeper level Peggy McIntosh’s theory of white privilege.

Students recognized the ways in which Kathleen’s being viewed as white meant she enjoyed a range of positive invisible benefits. The students also engaged in analysis of the grocery clerk’s unconscious racism and use of microaggressions which revealed the power of whites who occupy seemingly powerless roles. This focus on the intersection of white privilege and both blatant racist acts as well as microaggressions opened up a discussion of how power and privilege operates in the community engagement experience. Students must be trained to reflect on the ways in which their own interactions with Hmong community members are structured by power and privilege in order to engage in equitable relationships

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within the project. In-class activities and discussions focus students on the micro-level of their interactions that might impact relationships and move students to think about the often unacknowledged ways aspects of their communications with others reveal their unconscious bias. These themes are returned to again and again over the semester in order to recognize and transform often unacknowledged aspects of power and privilege happening in students' interactions with Hmong people.

Students must further understand race itself as a social construct which, nevertheless, has powerful material consequences shaping the lives of real people. Students read essays that historicize and theorize the social construction of race and the role dominant institutions play in perpetuating illusions about race. Writings by Omi and Winant (1994) on racial formation and by Haney López (1994) on the construction of race by the law are particularly effective because of their clarity in exposing race as an American myth made real only through the power of institutions.

Before they conduct the interviews for the oral history project, students must begin to reflect on the ways in which their perceptions of Hmong people are shaped by popular stereotypes of Asians and Asian Americans. Schein, Thoj, Vang and Jalao (2012) argue that there are two dominant media stereotypes of Asian men. On the one hand, Asian men are cast as aggressive murderers and sexual predators and on the other as passive intellectuals and feminized asexuals. Similarly, Kim and Chung (2005) point out that Asian and Asian American women are also framed doubly in the dominant American media; they are represented as either weak, passive, and silent women who are sexually submissive, or they are villainous, aggressive, and truculent women who are sexually sadistic. Thus, stereotypes of both men and women are highly gendered and sexualized.

Through discussions of the proliferation of popular Asian and Asian American stereotypes in the media, the influence these have on students' perception and the ways this perception tinges their seeing of the Hmong, students become better prepared to reflect critically on their own seeing of the Hmong and are positioned to see the Hmong more empathically.

This process also revealed that students' most powerful and entrenched stereotypes were of Asian and Asian American women. In class discussions and written assignments, students revealed their firm belief in the naturalness of images of Asian and Asian American women as submissive to men, imprisoned within the domestic realm, and unthinking slaves to culturally conservative gender roles. Indeed, students often misinterpreted radical images of Hmong women intended to challenge and revise popular stereotypes of Hmong women. They read these as simply the same old standard stereotypes.

In this way, students simplified nuanced complexities of Hmong culture, gender roles and lived experiences to fit into their own limited perception. They also often understood the concept of stereotypes generally in an oversimplified way. For example, in Yang's memoir *The Latehomecomer* (2008), the grandmother leads the women and children in her family out of hiding in order to surrender to the Pathet Lao army which has cornered them. Ultimately, her act allows the men in her family to escape the Pathet Lao immediately and will allow the women and children to escape at a later date. Yet, students interpreted this act as subservient and consistent with her role as caretaker of the family. In other words, students reasoned that any act of the grandmother that connected to her cultural gender role automatically turned her into a stereotype within the text. Only through ongoing critical dialogues about Hmong women could students begin to acknowledge the grandmother's continued agency, heroism and strength in the face of genocide.

After examining their bias toward and assumptions about the Hmong people, students were immersed in curricular materials that establish the agency and cultural assets of Hmong people. This goal was met through assigned literature and histories written by and about Hmong people. This point may seem so



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obvious as to be unnecessary. However, the majority of accounts of Hmong history, culture and traditions are written by outsiders to Hmong culture. The representation of the Hmong by these researchers of non-Hmong ethnicity focus on the Hmong people’s victimization, inability to negotiate multiple forces at work against them and the dependence on the benevolent paternalism of white actors (Vang, Nibbs, & Vang, 2016; C. Y. Vang, 2016; M. Vang, 2016). Thus, research by insiders to Hmong culture should be privileged whenever possible.

New possibilities for incorporating Hmong insiders’ knowledge into the classroom continue to unfold. Research on Hmong women by Hmong women has only recently emerged as Dia Cha became the first Hmong woman to be awarded a Ph.D. in 2005 and focused her subsequent research on Hmong women (Vang, Nibbs, & Vang, 2016). Similarly, the first memoir by a Hmong American by a national press was published in 2008 by Kao Kalia Yang. And, Mai Neng Moua (2002), editor of *Bamboo Among the Oaks*, called the first- and second-generation Hmong American contributors to her edition “the first to write creatively in English” (p. 3).

The key pattern in both the literature and the histories is the representation of Hmong people as agents of their own destinies who, by relying on a wealth of cultural strengths, survive despite the many social institutions ranged against them. By reading emergent literature, histories and research written by members of the Hmong community, students incorporate into themselves an image of the Hmong as active agents who have made and continue to make critical choices at every stage of their journey to shape their futures.

Given the importance of incorporating perspectives of the Hmong held by Hmong people themselves into the course, the most important training the students received came right before they met the Hmong women and HSU students. It was the orientation provided by three members of the team who identified as Hmong. Instruction was provided to the students on how to interact with interpreters, since all the women chose to use interpreters to communicate with students. In turn, classroom activities led by two women members of the team situated students to consider their assumptions about people who speak a different language than them. The activities revealed how cultural misunderstandings happen and how to minimize such missteps through questioning one’s cultural assumptions, listening with empathy, and maintaining an openness to the exchange.

A brief history of the Hmong was also shared with students. It outlined the losses Hmong people experienced in coming to the United States such as the loss of jobs, leadership positions, and role status that they held in Laos and/or Thailand. It also emphasized Hmong cultural strengths. It encouraged students to reflect on their cultural assumptions and how these assumptions might influence their interactions with the Hmong women and shape their understanding of the women’s stories.

## **FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND CONCLUSION**

The next phase of the oral history project with Hmong people will involve developing the current community engagement experience into a service-learning project. New campus organizations joining the team will be the Office for the Academic Support of Inclusive Excellence (ASIE) and the library, and, in the local community, FIT Oshkosh. The library is invested in creating a new digital archive that preserves local Hmong history from oral histories to photographs to letters to the papers of Hmong groups and organizations. Through ASIE and FIT Oshkosh, the other new direction the project will take is students contributing to workshops focused on race generally and Hmong people specifically. Both groups

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currently provide trainings and events on issues related to race. The workshops will aim to increase the visibility of the Hmong and their culture and transform participants’ understanding of the contributions that Hmong people make to local communities as well as to the larger American society.

Service-learning opportunities that both engage the Hmong community and make oral storytelling a component of the projects have the potential to create transformative social change. Currently, images of the Hmong in the media as well as scholarship written by researchers of non-Hmong ethnicity tend toward images that reaffirm stereotypes both of refugees and people who speak languages other than English. The Hmong community has an investment in both preserving its rich culture, history, and traditions and educating others about them. The storytelling that emerges in pursuing these goals are powerful counterpoints to the often violent and destructive discourse current in the contemporary moment about refugees, immigrants, and speakers of languages other than English.

In turn, through dialoguing with Hmong people, students’ stereotypes of Asians, Asian Americans, and the Hmong are constantly undermined in light of the actual experiences of Hmong people. In hearing the stories of Hmong women about leading their families out of Laos to Thailand, sustaining their families through farming, and rejecting government assistance, students’ stereotypes about Asian women’s submissiveness, dependency, and passivity are revised. The students’ ideas about America, and possibly themselves, as a savior of refugees and immigrants cannot survive the stories that Hmong people tell of their journey from Laos to Thailand without the aid of Americans even though the Hmong were the Americans’ allies in the war in Laos. Ultimately, the Hmong people’s stories provide an opportunity for students to gain a global perspective in the local. They connect the historical events in Laos in the 1960s to what is happening in communities right outside the campus in the early twenty-first century.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**Asian Stereotypes:** Popular and widely accepted notions concerning Asians as a group that are rooted in falsehood and reduce individuals in the group to a false shallow image.

**Critical Service-Learning:** A form of service learning that moves beyond the traditional helper/helped paradigm and seeks to create social change through action.

**Hmong:** An ethnic group that originated in Southern China. Most Hmong living in the United States came as refugees after they were targeted for genocide in 1975 because of their being military allies of the U.S.

**Hmong History:** The record and study of past events involving Hmong people as a group.

**Institutionalized Racism:** The entrenchment of racism through institutions, such as media, schools, businesses, and the law, that discriminate on the basis of race.

**Oral Histories:** The collection, analysis and preservation of interviews with individuals who participated in past events in order to gain a richer version of history that is oftentimes undocumented.

**Service-Learning:** Learning that connects students with community partners who collaborate together in a reciprocal way to produce benefits both for the community and the students.



# Chapter 1

## Critical Service–Learning and Cultural Humility: Engaging Students, Engaging Communities

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### ABSTRACT

*Racial, ethnic, and cultural context impacts how communities perceive problems, and ultimately their perception of what is deemed helpful. Thus, a lack of awareness of these particularities can render service-learning efforts ineffective. This chapter highlights a 12-year service-learning partnership between a predominantly White, comprehensive, liberal arts college and the local Haudenosaunee community. Pedagogical strategies utilizing the Six Requirements (6Rs) of service-learning and informed by cultural humility act as a transformative way to facilitate student readiness to engage with the said community. Cultural humility is positioned as a process that transforms service-learning into critical service-learning, as it enhances students' ability to engage in critical self-reflection, mitigating the toxic elements and empathic failures of uninformed service-learning efforts. This chapter contributes to more mindful service-learning efforts, challenging all to work with service-learning partners in a manner that keeps community voice and choice at the core of service.*

### INTRODUCTION

What happens when aspects of power and privilege play out within the context of service-learning? And, what happens when the acts of oppression that one intends to stand against are unintentionally undermined by a lack of awareness? While uncomfortable to consider, elements of power, privilege, and oppression

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are inherent in even the sincerest efforts to help, leaving communities of color contending with well-intentioned but unhelpful responses from outsiders (Deegan, 1990; Whilde, 2006). Furthermore, this sense of estrangement is compounded, as the historical experiences and contemporary realities of communities of color are silenced by the larger society. Because racial, ethnic, and cultural context impacts how communities perceive problems, and ultimately the perception of what is deemed helpful, a lack of awareness of these particularities can render service-learning efforts ineffective. To emphasize the significance of awareness, this chapter introduces the notion of *cultural humility* (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998) within the practice of *critical service-learning* (Mitchell, 2008).

Entailing a complex negotiation of difference, cultural humility is a process that requires scholars, professionals, and students to continually engage in critical self-reflection, actively work to bring power imbalances in check, and develop and maintain mutually respectful partnerships with communities (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). Aligning with cultural humility's cross-examination of self for the purpose of deeper relationships with "others"; critical service-learning calls for the interrogation of systemic and structural inequality. Consequently, this interrogation requires scholars, professionals, and students to question the role we play in maintaining oppressive social, economic, and political power distributions, for the purpose of developing authentic relationships (Mitchell, 2008).

Within counseling, therapeutic, and research contexts, the catalytic potential of cultural humility has been emphasized. Specifically, a cultural humility orientation in counseling and therapeutic contexts has the capacity to facilitate stronger working alliances, elicit more positive outcomes, and contribute to overall progress (Davis, Worthington & Hook, 2010; Exline & Geyer, 2004; Harris & Didericksen, 2014; Hook, Davis, Owen, Worthington & Utsey, 2013; Tangney, 2000, 2005; Willis & Allen, 2011). Furthermore, within the context of cross-cultural qualitative research, a cultural humility approach was found to challenge researchers' beliefs and assumptions that are shaped by power and privilege, develop mutual esteem between researchers and participants, and increase the prospects of a richer yield of data (Willis & Allen, 2011). Combined, cultural humility and critical service-learning are positioned as a transformative way to facilitate student readiness to engage with communities of color, specifically the Haudenosaunee people, also referred to as the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. While this chapter breaks new ground by integrating cultural humility and critical service-learning, doing so offers great promise to culturally engaging service-learning efforts, as students' ability to engage in critical self-reflection is enhanced, mitigating the toxic elements and empathic failures of uninformed service-learning efforts (Deegan, 1990; Whilde, 2006). This chapter highlights a 12-year service-learning partnership between a predominantly White, comprehensive, liberal arts college in the northeastern region of the United States and the local Native American, Haudenosaunee community. As such, this chapter discusses the Native American experience of historical trauma and resilience, as the information provides students with the historical and contemporary contextual realities faced by Indigenous communities within the U.S. Pedagogical strategies utilizing the Six Requirements (6Rs) of service-learning and informed by cultural humility act as a transformative way to facilitate student readiness to engage with communities.

## **BACKGROUND**

It is necessary to state that the authors understand cultural humility as an extension of cultural competence, with competence viewed as a foundation on which humility builds (Ross, 2010; Terrance, 2016). Moreover, cultural humility is viewed as a disposition that develops over time (Tangney, 2000, 2005;

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Terrance, 2016). It is as a result of this disposition that the limit of one's own knowledge is recognized. Moreover, the development of this disposition can be initiated through external feedback; and requires individuals to reconcile the tension that exists between their role as sage and that of student (Langton, 1998; Schuessler, Wilder, & Byrd, 2012; Taylor, 1994; Terrance, 2016).

Given this understanding of cultural humility, it is also imperative to articulate the three underlying beliefs that frame this chapter. First, aligning with *critical race theory* (CRT) (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993), the authors assert that the power, privilege, and oppression must be considered in all contexts and social interactions. Second, endorsing the presence of *implicit bias* (Kirwan Institute, 2016), the authors believe that in order to see change in our own behavior, as well as others', the unconscious aspects of thought must be brought to bear. Finally, in consideration of *transformation theory* (Mezirow, 1991) the authors believe in the malleability of one's sense of self, thought, and behavior, thus it emphasizes a need for discomfort brought about by "disorienting dilemmas". In view of this, it is believed that the sense of discomfort brought about by increased awareness can be facilitated through the provision of service-learning experiences fused with rigorous feedback and critical reflection hence nurturing a humble stance (Watkins & Braun, 2005; Watkins, Hayes & Sarubbi, 2015).

### **Cultural Humility: Articulating the Cultural Context**

*Cultural authenticity: what does it mean to be culturally authentic—a 'real' Indian? That's hard to say because it means different things to different people. Some people automatically think of blood quantum, others think rez Indian or city Indian. There might be the question of, do you participate in ceremonies. But what I think is that it's in a person's state of mind—what do you believe, what do you stand for, how do what you do and the way you live serve our people? All of this can only be known through being in relationship (M. Terrance, Sr., Mohawk, service-learning partner, personal communication, March 30, 2017).*

While it is necessary to illustrate the cultural context that provides the foundation for this work, the authors recognize that the complexity of culture undermines the ability to predict individuals' beliefs and behaviors (Hunt, 2001). As such, the authors approach this discussion with great sensitivity; and it is within this discussion that the differences between *cultural competence* and cultural humility are illuminated.

*Culture* has been defined as "a shared system of values, beliefs, and learned patterns of behaviors" (Carrillo, Green, & Betancourt, 1999, p. 829); and as a "roadmap that tells us how to live and what kind of person to be to see ourselves as having value and significance in a meaningful world" (Salzman, M, 2001, p. 186). Yet, when one thinks of culture, the term is most often associated with what people do, as opposed to who people are. In turn, this stripping away of individuals' and groups' humanity also takes away from the ability to fully engage in relationship building across difference. As such, cultural competence, in and of itself, is viewed as contributing to this barrier.

Specifically, an aspect that emerges from the examination of the term "competency" is that it is most often associated with notions of achievement and mastery (Masten, Hubbard, Gest, Tellegen, Garmezy, & Ramirez, 1999). Hence, the idea of being or becoming competent, in fact, seems to promote the same ethnocentric, patriarchal, and hegemonically influenced discourse that has shaped the disparaging beliefs put forth regarding people of color, generally, and Native American people, specifically. To believe that one could come to fully 'know' about another group of people by reading a chapter minimizes not

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only that group's sense of personhood, but their lived experiences as well. It is along these lines that the tendency of competency-based models to codify characteristics of race, ethnicity, and culture into a set of decontextualized traits paradoxically perpetuates the very behavior that they were meant to prevent—stereotyping (Hunt, 2001).

Therefore, in elaborating the discussion of Haudenosaunee cultures, the authors emphasize cultural humility's way of 'being' in contrast to cultural competence's way of 'doing', recognizing the limits of our own knowledge; the heterogeneity that exists within and across Haudenosaunee communities; knowing that what is true for some is not true for all; and encouraging scholars, professionals, and students to have a willingness to be led by their service-learning partners, whoever they may be (Freeman, 2004; Masterson, n.d.; Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998; Thomas, Mitchell, & Arseneau, 2015).

## THE HAUDENOSAUNEE CONFEDERACY: A HISTORICAL AND CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

*What you call the United States, we Indians call the Great Turtle Island. This is where the Creator planted us and when He did, he made us free. Europeans were not planted here, but you came here because you wanted to be free like us. In our original Instructions we were told that nobody owned the land except the Creator. That's why we welcomed you. But Europeans claimed the land they lived on was theirs. That was funny to our people because we know that nobody could own the land. Then the Europeans decided that all of Great Turtle Island was theirs to own. That wasn't funny to us anymore (Tadodaho Chief Leon Shenandoah, as cited in Wall, 2001, p. 22).*

The legend of The Peacemaker, known as Deganawidah, is the spiritual master who brought together warring Northeastern tribes to form the Iroquois Confederacy centuries ago (Wallace, 1994). The epic of Deganawidah offers historical and cultural teachings that chronicle The Peacemaker's role to bring order and justice during times of chaos and violence amongst the tribes. According to legend, The Peacemaker's efforts brought together the nations to establish the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy. Also known as the Haudenosaunee, or "The People of the Longhouse", the Iroquois Confederacy is comprised of six distinct Indigenous nations—the Mohawk, the Oneida, the Onondaga, the Cayuga, the Seneca, and the Tuscarora (Freeman, 2004; Masterson, n.d.; Waterman & Arnold, 2010). According to Onondaga Chief Irving Poweless, Jr. (Tucker, 1999), The Peacemaker gave the Haudenosaunee a way to conduct themselves to ensure the Nations would "endure through time".

The Peacemaker's legend continues to influence contemporary Native American systems of governance, and it is the alliance between the Six Nations that provided the framework for our own U.S. democracy, informing the writing of the U.S. Constitution (Tucker, 1999; Wallace, 1994). Furthermore, the Iroquois Confederacy, a spiritual and traditional based governing and social structure known as The Great Law, guides the Haudenosaunee worldview; a worldview that is framed by reciprocity, collective consciousness, oral tradition, and cultural resilience (Freeman, 2004; Masterson, n.d.; Thomas et al., 2015; Waterman & Arnold, 2010).

Testing this resilience, the threat to the Haudenosaunee way of life seemed especially doomed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, as encroachment on Indigenous land and sovereignty persisted (John Mohawk as cited in Wallace, 1994). While drastically reduced by centuries of colonialism, traditional Haudenosaunee lands expanded beyond the boundaries of New York State into areas of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Ontario, and

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Quebec (Freeman, 2004). Protection of Native sovereignty and land came with costs, as governmental entities and Haudenosaunee Nations faced off threatening lives and traditional ways of living—“If we don’t keep up the ceremonies then Mother Earth will start to weep. She will be sad and the people will no longer be able to hear who they are and what their abilities are. That’s when the people will suffer” (Tadodaho Chief Leon Shenandoah, as cited in Wall, 2001, p. 26; Freeman, 2004; Wallace, 1994).

In relation to our service-learning partners, *Ganondagan State Historic Site*, part of New York State Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation, is the site of a 17<sup>th</sup> century Seneca town. When it was a thriving village in the 1600’s, it served as the home place of approximately 4,500 Seneca people who occupied an estimated 150 bark longhouses. In 1687, a campaign from New France (modern day Canada) was ordered to march to Ganondagan and destroy the village. The inhabitants of Ganondagan caught wind of the campaign, ambushed the New France army and fled to the next town, but not before burning their houses, denying the French victory.

Today, Ganondagan’s mission is to educate the public about Seneca and Haudenosaunee culture. It boasts an art and education center, a life-sized replica bark longhouse, and walking trails. The site employs knowledgeable interpreters who are available to provide tours to individuals and groups. In addition, Ganondagan partners with a volunteer-based organization, *The Friends of Ganondagan*, a not for profit, 501c3 organization that serves to “honor and promote Haudenosaunee history and culture and to strengthen traditions through inspirational and transformational programming and other activities at Ganondagan” (Friends of Ganondagan, 2016).

### **Community Barriers and Assets: Understanding Historical Trauma**

*Trauma as a result of deliberate intent produces a profound sense of dismay and alienation. Intentional violence threatens basic assumptions about an orderly, just world and the intrinsic invulnerability and worthiness of the individual (Sotero, 2006, p.95)*

Historical trauma considers the psychological and emotional consequences of historical events on the present functioning of individuals and groups. The concept of historical trauma provides a macro-level framework that is used to compare the life course of populations exposed to temporally situated trauma with that of unexposed populations (Sotero, 2006). In her work in the public health realm, Sotero (2006) outlined four assumptions of historical trauma theory: 1) that the mass trauma is deliberate and systematically inflicted upon a target population by a dominating population; 2) the trauma continues over an extended period of time and is not limited to a single event; 3) the traumatic experiences are resounding, creating a universal experience of trauma throughout the population; and 4) the weight of the trauma experience derails the population from its natural, historical trajectory resulting in a legacy of physical, psychological, social, and economic disparities that persist across generations.

Research in historical trauma has considered the experiences of various racial and ethnic populations, including African American (DeGruy, 2005), Asian Americans (Liem, 2007), Hispanic and/or Latino populations (Estrada, 2009), and Jewish Holocaust survivors (Felsen & Erlich, 1990). In the 1980’s, Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart began to conceptualize the experience of historical trauma in relation to the LaKota Nation, as she questioned why the “American dream” was not being realized by Native American people (Brave Heart, 2000). Historical trauma was referred to by Brave Heart (1998) as “cumulative” or multi/intergenerational trauma. Yet despite decades of research, according to the Six Nations



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Mohawk scholar Freeman (2004), a large portion of the general public does not know the overwhelming impact of historical trauma on both the collective and individual well-being of Haudenosaunee people.

In the experience of U.S. Indigenous populations as a whole, colonialism instituted elements of social order that structured and institutionalized oppression, establishing a foundation for the perpetual marginalization of a population of people. With regard to the Haudenosaunee experience specifically, the legacy of trauma associated with colonization included forced migration and assimilation through both the reservation system and institutions such as Carlisle Indian Industrial School and Thomas Indian School systems. The experiences within these institutions purposed to “kill the Indian save the man” have reverberated across generations, contributing to high rates of suicide, homicide, violence, abuse, alcoholism, and significant loss of individual and collective identity (Brave Heart, 1998, 2000; Freeman, 2004; Weaver & Brave Heart, 1999). Nevertheless, despite these historical and contemporary realities, Native American people continue to resist marginalization and remain resilient in the face of oppression.

*There have been many changes in our land since the arrival of the Europeans. Some of the changes have been good and some of the changes have not been good. Many things have changed. Many things have not changed. The Haudenosaunee still carry on the ways of our ancestors in the same manner as our ancestors (Chief Irving Powless, Jr. as cited by Tucker, 1999, p. 18).*

When discussing *resilience*, the authors endorse the conceptualization put forth by Thomas et al. (2015), a conceptualization that shifts the focus from individual hardiness and/or vulnerability to that of a collective experience. As such, Thomas et al. (2015) state that to maintain an individualistic view of resilience, “fails to acknowledge historical, political, social, economic and environmental realities of indigenous communities” (p. 1). Specifically, resilience is articulated as a collective strength that acts as both a product and producer of cultural knowledge (Thomas et al., 2015). The root of this resilience is said to lie in Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing, and connection to cultural and ceremonial practices (Thomas et al., 2015). In sum, it is the authors’ understanding of both the historical and present-day richness of Haudenosaunee cultures, and the holistic awareness of barriers and assets associated with the Haudenosaunee community at Ganondagan that provide a foundation for culturally engaging service-learning (Freeman, 2004).

### **CULTURALLY ENGAGING SERVICE-LEARNING: TRAUMA-INFORMED YOUTH DEVELOPMENT**

What is trauma? The authors often ask students this question. And, what is heard in their responses is something that the authors have been guilty of—defining the term based on a narrow perspective, emphasizing single events, individual pain, and quantifiable symptoms. A definition that has been enriched by cultural humility, what is now known is that the experience of trauma goes beyond the individual, permeating lines of kinship and community, becoming collectively embedded and individually embodied. But, how does one teach such a concept? What responsibility does faculty have to the individuals who share trauma narratives, and to the students who witness them? As faculty, a cultural humility approach warrants that the responsibility is first to invite those who own the narratives to tell their stories; and second to challenge those who witness these narratives to see themselves in what we often think of as ‘other people’s problems’.

### **Critical Service-Learning and Cultural Humility**

Undergirded by a commitment to positive youth development and social justice, *Trauma-Informed Youth Development*, the undergraduate course highlighted in this chapter, is housed within the *Community Youth Development (CYD)* program. As an interdisciplinary course, students across academic disciplines and class standing are welcomed. Placing emphasis on critical thinking, reflection, and integration of knowledge and skill, the goal of the course is to increase students' understanding of the risk and protective factors associated with history, culture, and the social environment impacting the lives of youth. Students enrolled in Trauma-Informed Youth Development typically take the course as a liberal arts elective within their academic major. By providing a foundational understanding of ecological systems theory, students' awareness of contextual risk and protective factors associated with sociocultural and historical factors increases, as well as their ability to draw connections between the impacts of past events on present behavior (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). More specifically, the course is designed to guide students into a deeper level of 1) critical thinking and analysis, leading students to develop a broader understanding of trauma and resilience through the integration of historical and cultural trauma; 2) understanding in relation to the historical and contemporary factors that contribute to experiences of traumatic stress in people of color, particularly Haudenosaunee people; and 3) critical self-awareness, challenging students to develop a more informed way of engaging across difference.

As the majority of students enrolled in the course want to work with people in some capacity (i.e. youth work, social work, psychology, education, nursing, etc.), the need to understand that development and behavior do not occur in a vacuum, but within a multifaceted context is crucial to effective engagement. Additionally, as most U.S. institutions of higher education continue to lack diversity, the individuals who serve will most often look, live, and see the world differently from those who are being served (U.S. Department of Education, 2016). Consequently, when differences exist in the context of these relationships—service-learning or otherwise—those charged with providing a service are bound to be faced with situations that trigger negative personal responses that may in fact undermine their ability to engage. Thus, maintaining a keen awareness of self and a commitment to self-evaluation and critique works to moderate these responses, facilitating a stronger alliance (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998).

In light of the racial, ethnic, and cultural context of the institution—according to 2016 statistics, students were primarily at the undergraduate level (2,159 undergraduate/724 graduate), with 77% identifying as White, 6.7% Black or African American, 5.3% Hispanic, 4% as Asian, and 0% as American Indian or Alaska Native—the reality is that students typically begin the course having little knowledge of, or interaction with Native American<sup>1</sup> people. Thus, it is the intersection of the historical and contemporary legacies of trauma and resilience, guided by cultural humility's commitment to critical self-reflection that creates a culturally engaging framework for students to explore the factors that impact youth's transition into adulthood.

With this goal in mind, the opportunity to broaden students' understanding of these realities is enriched through a 12-year service-learning partnership with individuals from Mohawk, Oneida, and Seneca Nations, some of whom are paid staff for Ganondagan State Historic Park and volunteers of its allied organization, the Friends of Ganondagan. The partnership has been sustained through the alignment of core values with Ganondagan's community outreach practices and the authors' service-learning pedagogy that emphasizes an appreciation of unique individual strengths that coalesce into collaborative synergy; a recognition of multiple perspectives and ways of knowing; the development of mutual outcomes; the collaborative determination of meaningful service activities; the incorporation of reflective time; and relationship-centered task completion (Watkins & Printup-Davis, 2007).

### **Critical Service-Learning and Cultural Humility**

As a result of these partnerships, students are able to witness first-person narratives of trauma and resilience. For example, as a part of Ganondagan's mission to educate and inform non-Native people, Haudenosaunee oral traditions serve as a primary source of scholarship. Ganondagan staff share their cultural worldview along with intergenerational legacies of trauma and resilience as they explain the Peacemaker's instructions of the Great Law, or their family's experiences in the Carlisle Indian Industrial School or Thomas Indian School. These sacred narratives of resilience and trauma permit students to witness policies and practices meant to eliminate Indigenous people and their cultural identity. Students are distraught and in disbelief as they learn of American governmental policies that have profoundly impacted our service-learning partners.

It is the opportunity to witness these narratives that initiates the process of cultural humility and personal transformation. Through this witnessing, students recognize our Haudenosaunee partners from Ganondagan as the true subject matter expert. Their personal sharing and historical perspectives become the "instructions" for service-learning activities. As a result, students gain factual knowledge, improving their ability to apply course material, and develop self-awareness. But more importantly, these narratives promote students' deeper connection and commitment to more mindful engagement in the service-learning project:

*When coming into this class, I had many views about the Native American culture and they were not favorable...The first day of class was interesting for me, because we discussed trauma with the intent of connecting it to Native American trauma...I kept my mouth shut because I didn't want everyone to know how prejudiced I was...the moment it became real was when [our community partners] told us their stories. I could not shut it out any longer at this point. [Our community partners] were there in front of me, in the flesh telling me their life stories, the stories that I had been pretending didn't exist for so many people... [Our community partners] inspired me to open myself up. They didn't hold back their stories, or their emotions, and there is so much that I have been able to learn and grow from because of them (College senior, spring 2014).*

### **INTEGRATING SERVICE-LEARNING**

Our 12 year service-learning partnership has contributed an array of programming support, and resource development to advance the mission of the Friends of Ganondagan's, particularly: 1) encouraging respect and understanding between Native Americans and non-native Americans; 2) collaborating with New York State, Haudenosaunee (Iroquois), and the local community to support and develop Ganondagan State Historic Site; and 3) extending values to the public that are alternatives to the popular culture (Friends of Ganondagan, 2016)

As an experiential education approach that is premised on "reciprocal learning" (Sigmon, 1979), the emphasis of the Trauma-Informed Youth Development—Ganondagan State Historic Site service-learning partnership gives equal weight to service as well as learning whereby the students and the community partners benefit equally (Keen & Hall, 2009; Samuelson, Smith, Stevenson, & Ryan, 2013). Because service-learning provides students with direct and intentionally planned engagement with individuals who are simultaneously dedicated to increase awareness of and living the historical legacy of cultural invisibility and inter-group ignorance, service-learning becomes an interactional model of learning and

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participation, in which students, faculty, and community partners are mutually engaged in performing acts of service together (Kinloch, Nemeth, & Patterson, 2015).

Specifically, service-learning activities embedded within the course are developed based on Ganondagan administrative leaderships' priorities. With regard to co-creating service-learning projects that benefit the mission of Ganondagan and the Friends of Ganondagan, students serve in various Ganondagan-sponsored and Haudenosaunee-led events, as well as provide indirect service to support administrative tasks that the staff and volunteers have limited time to perform. All service activities occur side by side with the cultural guidance and administrative mentoring of Ganondagan or Friends of Ganondagan staff. Additionally, three elements are embedded within these activities. First, students must capture their 'from/towards' reflections as a result of their engagement with the community and in the specific event. This type of "reflection" is a component of a journaling assignment that will be discussed in more detail later (Falk, 1995).

Second, students spend intentional time with members of the Haudenosaunee community either one-on-one, or in small groups of 3 or 4. Such intentional time allows for deeper engagement and interaction with Ganondagan and/or Friends of Ganondagan staff members and volunteers, who belong to the Haudenosaunee community. In addition, this opportunity introduces students to worldviews different than their own. As such, learning and participation also emphasizes intercultural appreciation, as well as recognizes the concept of community as a learning resource rather than a commodity of the dominant society's ignorance and forced invisibility (Kinloch et al., 2015). Finally, students must integrate the Six Requirements (6Rs) of service-learning—reciprocity and relationship building; relevant and responsive service; rigorous learning; reflection; risk and reality assessment; recognition and celebration (Watkins et al., 2015)—by discussing specific ways in which at least three of the requirements come into play.

### **THE 6RS IN DETAIL**

Overall, in order for the service-learning experience to encourage the mutual learning and participation amongst students, faculty, and community partners, a safe, trustworthy, collaborative and power-sharing learning community is established. Hence, while discomfort is a reality, the classroom and the Ganondagan Historic Site become safe havens to question, challenge and transform oneself from cultural ignorance and apathy to cultural humility. The pathway to frame the process of 'from' avoidance 'towards' the intended outcome of service-learning, action is guided through the 6Rs of service-learning:

#### **Reciprocity and Relationship Building**

*What is TRUE reciprocity? I feel if our general purpose is to break down barriers, then it seems to me we have all had a hammer in our hand helping to do the work—and good work at that (J. Miller, Mohawk, Friends of Ganondagan, Program Director, personal communication, April 3, 2017)*

With the overarching goal of introducing Native and non-Native communities to culturally correct education and awareness regarding Haudenosaunee people and ways of living, the Ganondagan staff members, who are living witnesses to the historical legacy of trauma, are a testament to resiliency, as despite broken treaties and the negative intergenerational impact of the Indian Boarding Schools they exclaim, "We are STILL here". As such, the focus upon reciprocity and relationship building has evolved

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from service-learning within a single course into a multidimensional infrastructure that supports the goals of Ganondagan, the college, and the Trauma Informed Youth Development faculty. Relationships and reciprocity have occurred in a three-tiered manner that coordinates institutional resources, facilitates interaction among faculty, Ganondagan and the broader Haudenosaunee community, and students for the purpose of engaging in co-created service activities.

Before any in-class discussion of historical and contemporary trauma, students engage in a personal meet and greet with our service-learning partners. Students begin the relationship building process with partners by visiting the Ganondagan farmhouse, a homelike building that houses the offices from which many of the Site employees and volunteers work. It is in this farmhouse that students sit around a kitchen table, interacting over tea and homemade cornbread—made of Iroquois White Corn—to discuss mutual areas of interest for service-learning projects, while getting to know our partners, in our partners' community. From classroom dynamics to lessons learned at the farmhouse, reciprocal relationships frame the service-learning experience. A Haudenosaunee elder teaches the “community bowl” philosophy—an idea that emphasizes the need for reciprocity. In encouraging students to articulate their learning goals and skills they bring, the elder asks; “What do you want to learn?” With the community bowl framework established, the elder offers a fundamental Haudenosaunee instruction that guides service-learning—each of us puts something in and takes something out of the bowl, but we never use more than we need.

Another crucial step is the inventory of our unique institutional and community strengths that facilitate the development of service projects that support the mission of Ganondagan State Historic Site while addressing the student learning outcomes within the course. For example, based upon the Ganondagan educational and programming outcomes, college students determine and secure the accessibility of college resources, such as space/equipment and facilities, service-learning curriculum stipends, departmental budgets and graduate assistants' programmatic support. In order to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes, we combine the college's resources, including faculty and students' time, with the cultural wisdom, time, and personal contacts of the Haudenosaunee elders to enrich the service-learning experiences.

Throughout the years reciprocity in resource sharing has been exemplified through lecture series held at the college. Funded by the College and organized by students in collaboration with the Friends of Ganondagan, the highly successful lectures were open to the public—the Native American community, as well as the campus community. Lecturers included notable Haudenosaunee scholars such as Tom Porter, who taught the wisdom of the Thanksgiving Prayer, and Chief Oren Lyons who lectured about Native American sovereignty and the United States' encroachment on these rights. The importance of honoring the voices of these and other Haudenosaunee elders continues to solidify the relationship between the College and the Haudenosaunee community as evidenced in our service-learning partner, and co-author's statement:

*Within Haudenosaunee communities, we see our elders as wisdom carriers. We do not discredit their knowledge because it is based on generations of information and experience that has been handed down through oral history. In the world of academia, there is this thought that one needs credentials or has to be published in order to share information. The trust built in the relationship between Nazareth College and the Friends of Ganondagan provided an opportunity to share knowledge and wisdom of my elders and contemporaries by the promotion of the Native American Lecture series on the Nazareth College campus. (L. Jimerson, Seneca, personal communication, April 10, 2017)*



### **Critical Service-Learning and Cultural Humility**

In each campus-based service-learning activity, all the details of organization, implementation, marketing and hosting the event were the service-learning responsibilities of the students with the faculty and staff as their administrative guides. In addition to the campus-based programs, students serve as program assistants with the Ganondagan staff in educational programs facilitated at the newly built *Seneca Art & Cultural Center*. Through these semester-long service-learning projects, there is achieved personal growth that forms a sense of mutuality and reciprocity. The side-by-side engagement not only increases personal interaction and appreciation, but also facilitates the achievement of “encouraging respect between Native American and non-Native Americans” (Friends of Ganondagan, 2016), as told by one elder who shared her relief that not all White college students still think that “I live in a tepee”.

Furthermore, the dynamic interaction between the variety of resources within the college and Ganondagan creates a sustainability model beyond a faculty course assignment and the existing relationships between faculty and Ganondagan staff. The return on investment of time, funding, and creative energies has benefited both the college and the not for profit agency because college students are engaged in an intentional experiential learning experience and Ganondagan is collaborating with local community to support and develop Ganondagan State Historic Site (Friends of Ganondagan, 2016).

### **Relevant and Responsive Service**

A joint commitment to social justice, cultural humility, and student development serve as the core ethos of the Trauma Informed Youth Development course. For example, the course was designed, and vetted with Haudenosaunee elders before the course traversed through the approval process by the college’s Curriculum Committee and Dean. In keeping with the strategy of being culturally engaging, readings—such as, Alexie (2007), Braveheart & Debruyne (1998), Denham (2008), Holladay (2000), and Wall (2001)—in-class activities, and service-learning projects are reviewed by the elders to ensure that any course materials and pedagogical methods of the faculty are culturally relevant and historically correct.

As previously described, service-learning projects are determined with Ganondagan and Friends of Ganondagan staff to ensure relevancy and ‘real-time’ learning for students. For instance, local area k-12 teachers requested support from Ganondagan in teaching the history of the Iroquois Confederacy. In response to this request, college students researched content and co-created historically, culturally, and developmentally appropriate 4th and 7th grade lesson plan and educational packets for social studies teachers that responded to New York State Social Studies Core Curriculum Standards. In addition, students have researched, compiled historical documents and created literature reviews available to the Ganondagan staff. Also, videos explaining the proper pronunciation of Ganondagan and Haudenosaunee were produced for the Friends’ webpage.

Beyond specialized requests, annual service-learning projects include students’ ‘hands-on’ supportive roles within the Ganondagan’s annual Winter Games, a community event that emphasizes traditional social and recreational activities of Haudenosaunee people. Whether students are serving up corn soup and fry bread, creating Haudenosaunee inspired crafts with children, or serving as guides within the Seneca Art and Cultural Center, each service activity is designed by the Ganondagan staff, and researched and/or implemented by students with staff. In addition, students participate in the Iroquois White Corn Project, an initiative that focuses on reintroducing traditional Haudenosaunee foods into the diet of Native and non-Native American people. Finally, as an end-of-semester capstone event, students engage in the fundraising, co-planning and participation in an Iroquois Social, an event that highlights traditional

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Haudenosaunee dance and music led by William Crouse, Sr. and the Allegany River Indian Dancers. This event is open to the campus community as well as the general public.

### Rigorous Learning

While academic student learning outcomes guide the service-learning experience, there is an intensity of purpose to bridge academic goals with community interests, intentionality of course and project design and structure, and investment of resources to deepen the learning experience. Course learning objectives are linked to co-determined priorities with community partners through partnership and communication. Course materials such as lectures, readings, discussions, and reflection activities are applied and related to student experiences; and lastly, service experience is brought back to the classroom to enhance the academic dialogue, student comprehension, and critical self-reflection. As a result of students' involvement in real community educational and cultural programs sponsored by Ganondagan, their academic learning, skill set, and relationships are enhanced.

### Reflection

*What I soon realized is that in order to understand the human experience of traumatic stress with intention, selflessness, and nuance, you must be willing to close the textbook and search inside of who you are (College sophomore, Spring 2016).*

*[Student reflections remind] me of why I stay involved with this process, not that I need a reminder. Reading the student journals was rich. This tells me that my commitment to this partnership is immensely worthwhile because it provides a platform to share my stories that entail a point of view that is very often overlooked. It is the experience of a contemporary Onöndawa'ga' (Seneca) woman. What I gain from this partnership is not only the chance to be heard but to also be a part of someone's growth and that is a value that does not cost a cent (L. Jimerson, Seneca, personal communication, service-learning partner, co-author, April 10, 2017).*

Through the course, students embark upon a journey towards becoming trauma-informed to recognize the historical, cultural, and political influences on healthy youth development (The Trauma Informed Care Project). Integrating the notion of cultural humility, students engage in an iterative process critical self-reflection through journaling; a process that fosters candid thought, promotes integration of affect and cognition, and affords students the opportunity to make meaning out of their experiences (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998; Kerka, 2002). As an inherent aspect of any trauma-focused course is the emotionally triggering content, when the historical realities of trauma, along with power, privilege, and oppression are integrated into the discussion, students' experience of feeling overwhelmed and confused seems to increase. Thus, it is crucial to find creative ways for students to process their emotions. As such, students are challenged to draw upon multiple modalities to process and express their thoughts and emotions in response to the trauma narratives.

*Throughout all my journals, I had a hard time working through views that were dramatically different from what I was initially taught...The journal entries were sometimes hard to write...However, by doing*

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*them I have been able to become more aware...[and] have learned that there are multiple sides to every story (College junior, Spring 2016)*

Overall, student journals become a safe space to engage in dialogue:

*Journaling allowed me to speak freely about what was on my mind. It also allowed me to spend some time to sort out all the new information that I was receiving...I don't think I would have processed the information as well if I didn't have the journals because I probably would have just avoided thinking about what was discussed in class because it was both saddening and frustrating (College junior, Spring 2016)*

*Truthfully, I felt as if these journals [were] beneficial...but most importantly I felt as if we had a voice and were able to express it...honestly! (College junior, Spring 2016).*

Within student journals, instructor comments primarily take the form of questions that are aimed at challenging students to become increasingly aware of their implicit biases, and make connections between their past experiences and current behaviors towards individuals who are different from them. Students are then asked to respond to instructor comments and questions in a final portfolio assignment. This final assignment integrates a self-portrait a visually stimulating, creative assignment is inspired by the course text, Alexie (2007), a narrative in which the author offers his own depiction of self on page 57. As such, students are asked to illustrate their 'from' one perspective and 'towards' a different perspective that they gain based on their experiences throughout the semester with regard Haudenosaunee people. However, not only is this assignment based on students' learning about others, students are asked to depict how this learning impacts their own sense of self. In one student's use of tree symbolism, they wrote:

*My 'from' perspective contains...pictures...This side is more abstract because that was my view of Indian people and their culture...The 'towards' side does not contain pictures because my view has changed... Most of the leaves contain words [growth, realization, de-stereotype, understanding] but not all of them; this symbolizes how I am still learning and developing (College junior, Spring 2016)*

While arduous, the journaling process has shown preliminary promise in developing cultural humility, as students report the need to continue "checking" themselves by challenging their own assumptions and biases, as well as others, and engaging across difference in a more sensitive manner (Terrance, 2017).

In addition to individual student reflection, there is a significant emphasis placed upon reciprocity during the reflection process between community partners with students. Community partners describe their own 'from' and 'towards' experiences as they recognize their personal 'aha' moments. For example, during an end of the semester reflection, a member of Haudenosaunee community shared deep feelings as a result of hearing the students' journey: moved to tears, she exclaimed, "The students really listened to what I said—they really got it—and it moved me!"

### **Risk and Reality Assessment**

Through the process of critical self-reflection and in-depth discussion regarding power, privilege, and oppression within society; in addition to students entering unfamiliar environments, as service-learning moves them off campus onto the site of Ganondagan, which was once the grounds of pillage and plunder

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at the hands of the U.S. government, students are challenged to reassess reality (Holladay, 2000; Kirk & Okazawa-Rey, 2004; Perry, 2001). In light of this reassessment, students begin to question: who am I? What do I *do* with this information? Now that I am aware of my privilege, how do I use it? It is through continued reciprocity and relationship building, and reflection that students begin to reconcile reality so that they are able to engage in relevant and responsive service.

### **Recognition and Celebration**

Students are guided to appreciate the arduous introspective process required to recognize their own information deficit, implicit bias, and lack of interaction with people who are different from themselves. Through engagement in critical service-learning, students transition from the inertia of ignorance to an intentional investment in acts of advocacy, positive intergroup communication, and trauma-informed, culturally engaging practices. As a result, the celebration of individual and collective contributions to the community bowl philosophy is strategized throughout the semester as a crucial component of the service-learning experience. Albeit, a considerable focus of the course is upon policies and practices that perpetuate cultural and historical trauma, there is equal emphasis placed upon the recognition of Haudenosaunee resistance and resilience. Through narrative sharing as well as participation in cultural celebrations, students learn to move beyond a deficit model of victimization of community partners towards an appreciation of the resiliency of Indigenous people. In addition, through journaling, this narrative component provides students the opportunity to explore and appreciate their own resilience.

### **CONCLUSION**

Despite our sincerest efforts to be helpful, aspects of power, privilege, and oppression are inherent within the context of service-learning, often leaving communities of color contending with well-intentioned but unhelpful responses from outsiders (Deegan, 1990; Whilde, 2006). Because racial, ethnic, and cultural context impacts how communities perceive problems, and ultimately the perception of what is deemed helpful, a lack of awareness of these particularities can render service-learning efforts ineffective. To emphasize the significance of awareness, this chapter introduces the notion of *cultural humility* (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998) within the practice of *critical service-learning* (Mitchell, 2008). Highlighting a 12-year service-learning partnership with the local Native American, Haudenosaunee community, this chapter discussed the Native American experience of historical trauma and resilience, as the information provides the historical and contemporary contextual realities faced by Indigenous communities within the U.S. To facilitate culturally engaging service-learning, pedagogical strategies utilizing the Six Requirements (6Rs) of service-learning and informed by cultural humility act as a catalyst to student readiness to more mindful engagement across difference.

Framed by critical race theory (CRT), the study of implicit bias, and transformation theory, cultural humility was put forth as a way of 'being' in contrast to cultural competence's way of 'doing' (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993; Kirwan Institute, 2016; Mezirow, 1991; Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998). Consequently, a cultural humility orientation recognizes the limits of one's own knowledge; the heterogeneity that exists within and across Haudenosaunee communities; and encourages scholars, professionals, and students to have a willingness to be led by their service-learning partners, whoever they may be (Freeman, 2004; Masterson, n.d.; Thomas, Mitchell, & Arseneau, 2015).

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Overall, in order for the service-learning experience to encourage the mutual learning and participation a safe, trustworthy, collaborative and power-sharing learning community is established. Because this process can be disorienting for all involved, the 6 Requirements (6Rs) of service-learning incorporates both positive youth development and cultural humility by promoting a safe environment through the development of a cooperative agreement, a set of agreed upon guidelines that sustain the learning community (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2007). This cooperative agreement supports all members of the learning community in holding one another accountable, and acting in a trustworthy manner. Next, the pedagogical approach ensures that individuals have voice and choice. This is reflected in the development of service-learning assignments that honor the voices of the Haudenosaunee community, while providing students with the opportunity to determine the learning opportunity that best suits their interest and skill. This sense of choice also acts as a mechanism for establishing collaborative relationships both within the learning community and with community partners, while creating opportunities for power-sharing that encourages recognition of personal power as well as collective impact, as all contribute to the community bowl.

Finally, the 6Rs of service-learning framed by cultural humility transforms service-learning into critical service-learning, as students embark upon a journey learning about themselves in relation to the community around them. This transformative process is a difficult one as student and community partners attest to the deep level of reflection and recognition required to move beyond cultural stereotypes, myths, and misinformation. With that said, intentionally planned and implemented service-learning provides a catalyst for cross-cultural engagement to examine and explore social inequities, personal ignorance, and collective inertia while recognizing the resiliency of Indigenous nations.

In sum, over the past 12-years, a framework for culturally engaging service-learning has emerged. Through a review of student journals, and confirmed through reflective dialogue between our Ganondagan partners, course faculty, and students, as well as the collection of pilot data, we are witnessing transformation (Terrance, 2017). Within this process of transformation, students move from the disorienting dilemma—a sense of bewilderment that challenges students acknowledge and accept their privilege based upon many aspects of their social identity—towards more mindful service-learning that is culturally engaging and mutually beneficial (Mezirow, 1991; Watkins, 2013).

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### **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Critical Service-Learning:** Describes service-learning experiences with a social justice orientation. Critical service-learning has the explicit aim toward social justice and requires educators to focus on social responsibility and critical community issues.

**Cultural Humility:** A way of being that emphasizes critical self-reflection, active mitigation of the power imbalances inherent in helping relationships, and institutional accountability.

**Haudenosaunee:** Represents the Six Nations Iroquois Confederacy—Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora.

**Historical Trauma:** Recognized as cumulative and intergenerational trauma.

**Resilience:** An individual and collective trait of adaptability and thriving. Within Haudenosaunee Nations it is seen as both a product and producer of cultural knowledge.

**Six Requirements (6Rs) of Service-Learning:** Articulated as reciprocity and relationship building, relevant and responsive service, rigorous learning, risk and reality assessment, and recognition and celebration.

**Transformation Theory:** is viewed as a way of facilitating the development of cultural humility. Transformative theory's focus on discourse and critical reflection as a way to move individuals from the "disorienting dilemma" to reassessing their beliefs, and taking action based on this reassessment, is crucial to framing the development of cultural humility.

### **ENDNOTE**

<sup>1</sup> The terms Native American, Native, and Indigenous are used interchangeably.

## Chapter 9

# “I See Myself in Them”: Understanding Racialized Experiences of Students of Color Through Critical Race Service–Learning

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter explores a first-year ethnic studies course to highlight the importance of engaging the diversity within the classroom in relation to the diverse communities being served. Students participating in this course are self-identified Students of Color, many of whom are first generation college students, from lower socioeconomic communities. Introducing a Critical Race Service-Learning framework, the authors highlight how Students of Color in this course learn about race, class, gender, language, citizenship status, phenotype, sexuality, etc. to challenge the status quo while also actively engaging in service-learning with/in diverse communities as an empowering pedagogy. Findings indicate the foundational tools learned within the course pushed students to speak back to the educational inequities they witnessed at their service sites and experienced in K-12 to further empower them to continue giving back to their communities beyond college.*

### INTRODUCTION

As the demographics of today’s college students continue to become more diverse, service-learning educators must restructure classroom approaches in order to better serve and engage this shifting population and the communities with which the students will engage. Although service-learning has played a critical role in higher education and is widely recognized as the best economical approach to address today’s societal needs and issues (Gilbride-Brown, 2008), service-learning literature has generally rep-

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resented the experiences of White middle-class university students who serve an *unknown* community off-campus (Mitchell & Donahue, 2009).

Within a service-learning model, university students are asked to academically reflect on the connections between the class and the “unknown” community (Mitchell & Donahue, 2009). Such “academic” reflection can influence students to format responses based on their grade and can further underscore the separation between the students and the communities being served. Consequently, university students and communities are left further harmed and divided by an “Us vs. Them” dichotomy. Such recognition lacks an asset-based representation of the racially diverse university students within these classrooms and those who serve their own/similar communities. Several scholars have challenged traditional service-learning models by calling attention to the need to further fulfill the students’ engagement with diverse communities through the use of Critical Service-Learning (CSL) (Mitchell, 2008; Rosenberger, 2000). CSL scholars explain the need to extend beyond the deconstruction of stereotypes and assumptions about diverse communities and move towards the examination of why service needs to happen in the first place (Mitchell, 2007, 2008; Rosenberger, 2000). The authors build on this work and argue that conversations on race, racism, and socioeconomic status can help students to understand better how socially constructed barriers and dominant discourses continue to oppress historically marginalized communities.

This chapter explores an existing first-year program in a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) that incorporates an ethnic studies course and participation in CSL as a method to retain students of color (SOC) in higher education. This analysis explicates how using critical race pedagogy enabled students to develop an understanding of the racialized educational experiences they faced and witnessed in the communities they served. The authors argue for the need to implement race-based service-learning curriculum with a social justice agenda that focuses on preparing all students to challenge existing White structures and privileges within education and to become racially and socially conscious agents for change.

This study adds to CSL by offering a new lens named Critical *Race* Service-Learning (CRSL). While the program in this analysis is not explicitly named CRSL, the authors, both of whom have coordinated the service-learning component of the course over the past years, seek to introduce it as such. This approach provides a theoretical framework for students to understand how race is systematically tied to institutional injustices in the educational system (Howard & Navarro, 2016; Solórzano, 1997; Yosso, 2006), further building a racial and social consciousness (Rosenberger, 2000). CRSL can inform how SOC understand social injustices through their racialized educational experiences while attending a PWI of higher education. It can also provide a platform for SOC who participate in CSL at minority-serving institutions to examine their experiences and the experiences of the community they may be serving. This study can be utilized to inform current and future CSL scholars and practitioners within racially diverse classrooms and communities.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **The Diversity Scholars Program**

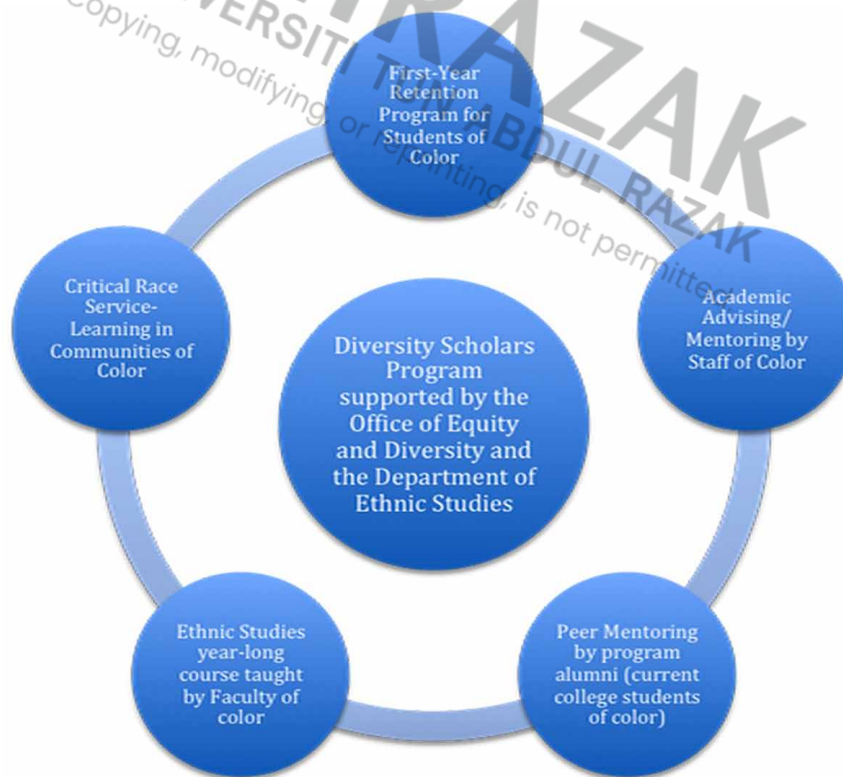
The Diversity Scholars Program (DSP) is a first-year program created during the 2007–2008 academic year. The institution’s Associate Vice President for Equity and Diversity at that time framed the program

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based on higher education research which showed that when students of color at PWI’s begin college with opportunities to network with each other, engage with faculty of color in their courses, participate in staff (of color)-led personal and academic enrichment activities, and, most importantly, develop the awareness, language, and critical navigational skills to succeed in college, they were more likely to graduate with stronger commitments to contributing to social justice and social equity (Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998; Villalpando, 1996). It was by incorporating these four components that the DSP was conceptualized as a for-credit, academic enrichment program for SOC, with the intent to enhance their retention and graduation rates. A CRSL pedagogy that seeks to introduce SOC to a set of concepts and theories from which to understand better their own educational experiences and realities as historically marginalized students, was added as a fifth component (see Figure 1), which also served to further support research on first-year retention of SOC.

The DSP and the course has been the subject of multiple research endeavors that have shown the unique and beneficial impact this first-year program with a mentoring component and a curriculum centered on race can have on students’ educational outcomes after college (Alemán & Gaytán, 2016; Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017; Delgado Bernal, Alemán, & Garavito, 2009; Pérez-Torres, 2017). This study is the first to focus particularly on the CRSL framework used within the program. For the purpose of this analysis, the authors only focus on the ethnic studies yearlong course curriculum.

Figure 1. The Five Components of the Diversity Scholars Program



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### The Ethnic Studies Course

The ethnic studies course incorporates tenets from Critical Race Pedagogy (Alemán & Gaytán, 2016) and Critical Service-Learning (Mitchell, 2008) which the authors refer to here as Critical Race Service-Learning (see Figure 2). The course aims to conceptualize educational social injustices as a sustained critique of PWIs, from the perspectives of those often marginalized from mainstream university discourse (Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Pizarro, 1998). The course is a unique one-year cohort model that challenges students to be reflective about their personal educational experiences and how these relate to structural schooling conditions of SOC. Throughout the course, students are familiarized with poetry, short stories, narratives, *testimonios*, and critical essays, along with empirical research on the experiences of SOC. By applying the concepts and theories introduced in class (see Figure 3) to their own educational and CRSL realities, students are able to engage in deep reflection about the educational disparities among different racial/ethnic groups in the United States.

Since its inception, the course has gone through many iterations to improve the course content based on feedback and reviews by former professors, academic advisors, peer mentors, graduate teaching assistants, and students who have taken the course. According to Alemán & Gaytán (2016), the students participating in this course identify as first-year university SOC, and approximately 80% of them are first-generation college students. Although the course is geared toward self-identified students of color, White students may enroll if they wish. The number of students enrolled in the course has fluctuated between 60-120 racially diverse students. The professors teaching the course also change from year to year. Primarily there have been three to five critically engaged professors who have offered to teach the course per year, based on their line of work dedicated to critical race and gender-based pedagogies aimed at empowering SOC (Alemán & Gaytán, 2016). Although each professor is assigned their own students and classroom, all the professors work diligently with one another prior to the semester to create an academically rigorous syllabus, in addition to meeting prior to each class session to reflect and update each other on their students' educational journey in the class and at their sites.

The course includes short lectures, assigned readings, films, guest speakers, and intensive group discussions about topics, issues, and concepts that are often difficult to address: racism, sexism, classism, heterosexism, power, privilege, citizenship status, and intersectionality. The service-learning site is the *Adelante* Partnership, where university students become mentors in serving a local yet disengaged (from the university) Title I elementary school. It is important to note that while service-learning courses normally require a significant amount of service hours, the professors are cognizant of the needs of the enrolled students, as many hold one or multiple jobs; therefore serving one hour a week seems to be manageable and not overwhelming.

Although this course is a rarity in that all students self identify as SOC, the mere existence of such support is due to research and studies which argue for the need for creating academic programs that can impact SOC experiences in higher education under a critical curriculum that centers on the experiences and epistemologies of SOC. All the components of the course are what make the course overall unique, purposeful and successful.

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Figure 2. Critical Race Service-Learning

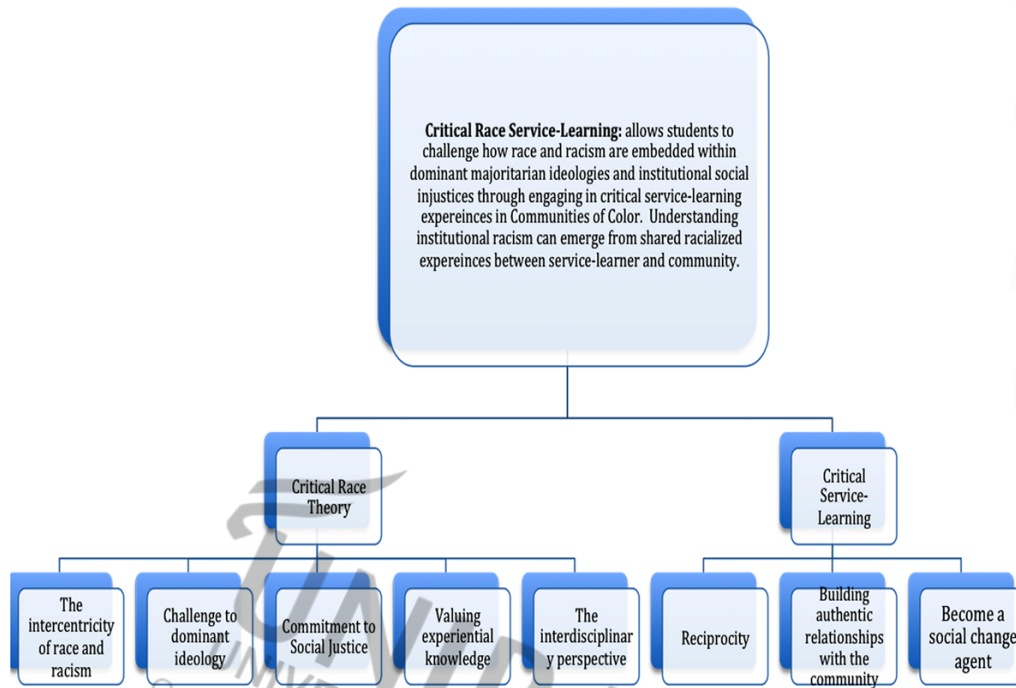


Figure 3. Explanation of course content

**Semester 1 (4 units): Introduction to Ethnic Studies**

- Service-Learning Designation
  - 11 hours a semester
- Introduction to concepts:
  - Whiteness
  - Meritocracy
  - Intersectionality
  - Institutional Racism
  - Deficit Thinking

**Semester 2 (4 units): Navigating a PWI for Students of Color**

- Service-Learning Designation
  - 11 hours a semester
- Focus on tools to navigate the institution:
  - Campus Racial Climate
  - Affirmative Action
  - Resistance and Student Activism
  - Faculty of Color educational pathways

**“I See Myself in Them”****Adelante: A College Awareness and Preparatory Partnership**

*Adelante* is a college awareness preparatory program that provides opportunities for underrepresented elementary, middle, and high school students to experience the local university. The partnership was founded in 2005, in response to a body of research that indicates that the earlier students and their families begin to consider college as an option, the more likely students are to pursue a higher education (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). *Adelante* acknowledges that while Latinx comprises the fastest-growing ethnic group within the state; they continue to have the lowest access to higher education compared to other racial ethnic groups (Pérez Huber, et al., 2015; Solorzano, Villalprando, & Oseguera, 2005). The focus is to increase awareness about college as early as kindergarten among students and their families at Jackson Elementary School. The partnership selected to work specifically with Jackson due to (at that time) being one of the only public schools in the district to provide a Dual Language Immersion (English-Spanish) Program and for having a large population of diverse students, primarily Latinx. Delgado Bernal, et al. (2009) and Delgado Bernal & Alemán (2017) describe the Jackson community as approximately 83% of the student population identified as SOC, and 93% of the students qualify for free or reduced-price lunch. The ultimate goal of the partnership is to contribute to a college-going culture by enabling young SOC to see themselves as future college students through the presence and interactions with the university mentors of color, who in turn are participating in CRSL. The *Adelante* Partnership is designed to present and reinforce college attendance as a viable option for each SOC as early as possible in their educational careers, while also creating formal network of resources to help their families navigate an often-exclusionary higher education system.

**CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK****Connecting Critical Service-Learning and Critical Race Theory in Education**

Critical Service-Learning is based on the understanding that students will reflect on their experiences and positionalities in relation to their site to deconstruct how power and privilege manifests within pre-conceived notions of why there is a need for service-learning (Mitchell, 2008). This prompts the need for including equity and social justice as a foundation within the classroom curriculum and discussions (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Howard & Navarro, 2016; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002) in order to focus on equity and social justice work that challenges language on inclusion and tolerance for outside communities (Goodman, 2000). The need to stop the replication of injustice in society can be addressed by first understanding the history of racialized inequities that have subtly been taken up as normative ways of living. This awareness is needed in order to understand the continued need for services and programs that can lead to a more equitable society.

While there exist a handful of researchers that have in some way or another taken up a CRT pedagogy, it has often been used to analyze, critique and/or challenge traditional service-learning pedagogy (Becker & Paul, 2015; Espino & Lee, 2011; Lee & Espino, 2010; McKay & Estrella, 2008; Winans-Solis, 2014). However limited, there is some research that presents Critical Race Theory/LatCrit and even a Chicana feminist pedagogy (Delgado Bernal, Alemán, & Garavito, 2009; Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017) to complement and redefine CSL for university SOC and to politicize (Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017) them through resiliency (Parker, 2003) in serving their communities while attending PWI's.



*“I See Myself in Them”***Why Critical Race Theory?**

Critical Race Theory derived from Critical Legal Studies where scholars of color such as Bell (1980, 1987), Crenshaw (1988, 2010), Delgado (1987, 1989), Matsuda (1987) among others brought to light to how race and racism are enacted within legal studies. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT in education “as an analytic tool for understanding school inequity” (p. 48), and it has been further theorized to provide a methodological praxis that examines and brings forward the voices of those who have been historically oppressed (Howard & Navarro, 2016; Yosso, 2006). The field has grown to include historical and current perspectives of race, racism, Whiteness, and its intersections to deconstruct inequities in social structures such as educational policy (Gillborn, 2005), the K-12 school system (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005), and higher education (Villalpando, 2003). Several scholars have outlined at least five main tenets of CRT in education (Howard & Navarro, 2016; Solórzano, 1997; Yosso, 2006):

1. **The Intercentricity of Race and Racism:** Race and racism are endemic in American society. CRT research centers its arguments on the social construction of race and its intersections (class, gender, sexuality, citizenship, ability, etc.) and how it has historically and currently oppresses Communities of Color.
2. **The Challenge to Dominant Ideology:** Problematizes dominant ideologies, such as race neutrality, colorblindness, liberalism, and meritocracy, arguing that these concepts are used to maintain power and privilege of the dominant group.
3. **The Commitment to Social Justice:** Grounded in social justice and “views education as a tool to eliminate all forms of subordination and empower oppressed groups—to transform society” (Yosso, 2006, pp. 7).
4. **Valuing Experiential Knowledge:** Views the experiential knowledge of people of color as valid and legitimate. People of color have a “unique voice” as their experiences differ from the dominant population. Experiential knowledge can be found in various types of oral traditions.
5. **The Interdisciplinary Perspective:** Utilizes an interdisciplinary and historical approach to examine racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, etc.

For SOC, there is no doubt that they hold multiple truths, realities, and concerns that have been consistently ignored and/or simplified without accounting for race, culture, language and its intersectionalities (Parker & Lynn, 2002). Using CRT gives students the tools to deconstruct structural inequities and majoritarian ideologies such as meritocracy, colorblindness, and deficit thinking.

Aligning these two theories helps the authors to conceptualize how a CRSL framework allows SOC to learn about race, class, gender, language, citizenship status, phenotype, sexuality, etc. and to challenge the status quo while also actively engaging in service-learning with diverse communities as an empowering pedagogy. The authors define Critical Race Service-Learning as a framework that allows students to challenge how race and racism may be embedded within dominant majoritarian ideologies and racialized institutional social injustices through engaging in critical service-learning experiences in communities of color. Using this lens enabled the authors to see an underlying theme in the findings of this study of students making connections between their own experiences and the experiences of the community they are serving, prompting the authors to hear in course conversations repeatedly, “I see myself in them,” meaning I see myself in the community I serve and relating to the educational experiences of the youth they are serving.

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### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### The Racialized Educational Experiences of Students of Color

Within the field of CSL there exists limited literature that recognizes the increasing number of students who are possible residents of the communities they are serving or who can culturally relate with the community (Mitchell & Donahue, 2009). This literature review bridges literature on the U.S. educational pipeline, dominant majoritarian ideologies, Critical Service-learning, Critical Race Pedagogy, and bringing it all together to conceptualize a Critical Race Service-learning Pedagogy. Understanding the educational pipeline, especially as it applies to SOC, will help to identify the need for strategic programs and/or approaches that support and retain SOC in higher education, while also encouraging SOC to develop a racial & social consciousness that challenges dominant ideologies. Further, it will help contextualize the experiences of SOC in service-learning.

#### Understanding the U.S. Educational Pipeline

The U.S. educational pipeline shows the educational progress of five racial and ethnic groups in the United States (see Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). Solórzano, et al., (2005) point to several reasons for lower university graduation rates for SOC. These include lack of institutional retention and access programs, a negative campus climate, and a lack of institutional aid. Pérez Huber, et al. (2015) re-examine the educational pipeline, and find that rates of students by race/ethnicity graduating college have slightly increased across all groups. One implication they made is the availability of ethnic studies courses with curriculum that reflects the student body as they have been proven to increase graduation rates (Paris, 2012; Ramírez, 2014).

Likewise, service-learning courses have also been linked to increased retention in higher education (McKay & Estrella, 2008) as they provide for students the opportunity to embrace and explore their identity (Donahue & Mitchell, 2010), which for SOC a strong identity is further linked to greater persistence in higher education (Villalpando, 2003; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005). Thus both an ethnic studies course and critical service-learning course that discuss race, racism, and its intersections, can empower SOC to persist and increase the likeliness of giving back service to their community (and communities like their own) after college (Alemán & Gaytán, 2016; Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017; Pérez-Torres, unpublished dissertation; Villalpando & Solórzano, 2005).

Alemán and Gaytán (2016) note that SOC enrolled in the Diversity Scholars ethnic studies course, had a higher retention rate from their first-year to their second-year in comparison to Students of Color in the same university not enrolled in the course. Although the ethnic studies and CRSL portions of this course are not the only factors that contribute to the retention rate, providing the space for the students to deconstruct race and racism in the educational pipeline and other systemic inequities, equips students with language to “speak back” to racial and systemic injustices in their own lived experiences (Delgado Bernal, et al., 2009). Furthermore, students are empowered to take actions that deliberately disrupt dominant U.S. ideologies that have been used as tools of oppression for many Communities of Color (Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017).

## “I See Myself in Them”

### Challenging Dominant U.S. Ideologies

Of the many themes and topics that the ethnic studies course covers, deficit thinking, meritocracy, racial microaggressions, and problematization of majoritarian stories are perhaps the most impactful. Students read, reflect, and engage in discussions that deconstruct and challenge ideologies that continue to oppress SOC and further contribute to inequitable educational pathways. For many students in the course they are enthusiastic about these topics because of how relevant they are to their own lived experiences.

Valencia (1997) explains that deficit thinking is based on individual notions of school-failure as opposed to systemic inequities, thus influenced by the ideology of meritocracy. Meritocracy is the belief that one is able to advance in this society based on merit alone. McNamee and Miller (2004) refer to it as “the myth of meritocracy,” because it ignores the societal factors that may be the cause of some individuals’ economic success, such as: inheritance, social and cultural advantages, and access to education. Deficit thinking and meritocracy are linked in that they prevent SOC from advancing in the educational pipeline and the larger society (Valencia & Black, 2002; Valencia, 2010).

Racial microaggressions are subtle forms of racism, often overlooked and unacknowledged (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Sue, Bucceri, Lin, Nadal, & Torino, 2009). Racial microaggressions may appear as compliments but are undergirded by racial bias and stereotypes. Examples include statements such as, “You speak such great English for being \_\_\_\_\_.” Racial microaggressions may even exist in the form of mispronouncing and deliberately changing someone’s name to make it easier for the speaker to pronounce (Solórzano & Kohli, 2012).

These dominant ideologies feed into majoritarian stories, which Yosso (2006) describes as everyday narratives that recount the experiences and perspectives of the dominant group. Majoritarian stories often are “embedded with racialized omissions, distortions, and stereotypes,” and reflect binaries of “good” versus “bad” neighborhoods or schools (p. 9). Yosso provides two examples of majoritarian stories: 1) if students of color are not doing well in school, their cultures must not care about education; 2) if a qualified White student did not receive admissions to a university, their spot was taken by a SOC who received “racial preference”. Majoritarian stories are told by both people of color and Whites (Alemán & Gaytán, 2016; Yosso, 2006). Because these stories are ingrained in our society, they appear natural and almost become invisible (Yosso, 2006). To counter these stories, Critical Race Theory (CRT) uses counterstories, which are narratives told from the experiential knowledge of people of color that challenges dominant ideologies (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006).

These dominant U.S. ideologies contribute to an “uneven playing field” for SOC, who must work twice as hard in comparison to their White counterparts. SOC must combat institutionalized forms of racism and discrimination that contribute to the leaky educational pipeline, just to get the education that is afforded to their White peers. The incorporation of SOC racialized experiences in education in collaboration with CRSL can contribute toward the dismantling of (internalized) dominant ideologies.

### Critical Service-Learning

Much of the service-learning literature within higher education takes on the approach of *providing service to those in need* by placing university students into what seems to be an *unknown community* to teach students about “civic responsibility” as doing “good” in society (Becker & Paul, 2015; Kinefuchi, 2010; Rondini, 2015; Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue, 2003). Such an approach centered on

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students’ learning outcomes (Becker & Paul, 2015) can mislead students to assume that the “community is the problem” and the university students are the “problem-solvers” (Kinefuchi, 2010, p 79).

Consequently, there must be careful attention to how CSL, as much as traditional service-learning models, continues to be led by dominant ideologies that frame service-learning as the *helping hand* to communities, often identified as communities of color (as cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2006; Becker & Paul, 2015; Kinefuchi, 2010; Rondini, 2015). CSL, when applied for the benefit of improving society overall, needs to take the approach of understanding that the service provided is not a community-based issue but rather a societal issue that needs to change. CSL courses need to go beyond the exploration of the root causes of society’s problems and shift the focus from “How can we help *these* people?” to “Why are conditions this way?” (Goodman, 2000, p. 231). Such an approach enables students to remove themselves from a “savior” mentality and to begin thinking critically about the problem as social versus an individual problem.

Becker and Paul (2015) recognize that traditional service-learning models can continue reproducing color-blind racism. Becker and Paul encourage a more robust service-learning pedagogy that includes a social justice approach. They believe it begins by placing discussions about race at the center and holding these discussions inside the classroom throughout the semester. Although talking about race and racism is seen as “taboo” and students often embody resistance to discussions on race & racism and its intersections, deconstructing these themes help students better understand systemic inequities in CSL courses (Espino & Lee, 2011).

Mitchell & Donahue (2009) explain that service-learning pedagogy has traditionally targeted privileged students and holds the assumption that all the university students in the course are not familiar with the communities being served and/or come from White middle-class backgrounds. This is particularly concerning as university student demographics are changing at rapid rates and becoming more diverse (Goldrick-Rab & Cook, 2011).

### **Critical Service-Learning for Students of Color**

For university SOC who may end up actually serving the community that they identify with as their home, or similar, classroom discussions about their community through a deficit lens would be uncomfortable at best and often filled with microaggressions toward them as members of the community (Mitchell & Donahue, 2009). Mitchell & Donahue (2009) further state how many university SOC often feel as though they are providing more service within the classroom where they are one of the few or the only SOC, and they are constantly asked to provide their White peers with insight, knowledge, and understanding of the community being served.

SOC participating in service-learning classrooms express feelings of discomfort in hearing stereotypes portrayed and perceived about their communities. In observing the written reflections of university students, Mitchell and Donahue (2009) noticed a difference in how SOC made sense of their experiences in comparison to their White classmates. The authors concluded that CSL is experienced and expressed differently for White students, even when attempting to teach them “consciousness about racism” (p. 173). Espino & Lee (2011) add that SOC who may come from a more privileged background and cannot associate with the communities they are serving and/or can pass as White, may have a hard time learning about consciousness about racism and Whiteness. On the other hand, CSL can serve to provide SOC the opportunity to explore and/or remake their own racial/ethnic identities (Delgado Bernal, Alemán, & Garavito, 2009; Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017; Donahue & Mitchell, 2010).

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## Filling the Gap Through Critical Race Service-Learning

Grounded on research that examines how SOC often find themselves in the midst of two worlds – between *mi comunidad* [my community] and the university (Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017) – CRSL validates both experiences (Ayala, Herrera, Jiménez, & Lara, 2006). It embodies the experiences of students of color serving communities of color and uses these experiences as a source of empowerment, reciprocity, and racial consciousness (Mitchell & Donahue, 2009; Alemán & Gaytán, 2016; Delgado Bernal & Alemán, 2017). CRSL allows the authors to begin understanding how this pedagogy can have a positive impact for SOC as they draw from their communities of color as a source of knowledge and richness that allows them to navigate spaces that are “other” to them (e.g. PWIs) grounded in an understanding of their racial and cultural identity.

Thus, it is critical to begin exploring educational strategies to further support today’s fastest growing racial/ethnic groups, and to embrace the integration of racial consciousness among other educational strategies. These efforts can help to institutionalize a viable and powerful CRSL pedagogy as a vehicle to build on the commitment of giving back and contributing in a critical, socially conscious democracy (Butin, 2006; Chandler & McKnight, 2009).

## Moving Towards a Critical Race Service-Learning Pedagogy

A Critical Race Service-Learning pedagogy allows instructors to go beyond being “culturally competent” and move towards a critical analysis of how race and racism manifests within social structures. For the authors, the term “culturally competent” continues to center Whiteness as the normative measure, as the term implies sensitivity and understanding of any culture “other” than White. The authors call for using CRT within the classroom, also known as critical race pedagogy (Lynn, 1999; Lynn, Jennings, & Hughes, 2013). A Critical Race pedagogy allows for the deconstruction of power, race, and racism, and how they are embedded within institutions (Lynn, et al., 2013). Educators who utilize this pedagogy are often educators of color who center the intersectional experiences and epistemologies of their students within the course content (Alemán & Gaytán, 2016; Lynn, 1999).

Ledesma & Calderón (2015), state how easy it is to recenter Whiteness and majoritarian ideologies even when utilizing a critical race pedagogy. In their literature review, they cite Vaught & Costano (2008), who outline the ways in which Whiteness manifests when teachers focus on individual notions of race and racism, as opposed to structural manifestations. They argue that the lack of understanding that racism is a structural tool is a form of White supremacy. Although there are many White teachers who employ a social justice approach and aim to teach about race and institutional racism in CSL, Matias & Liou (2014) warn that White educators should be mindful of perpetuating a White savior complex and/or missionary mentality. Further caution is given as the White savior complex can also exist amongst educators of color who may be invested in majoritarian ideologies and/or are not trained to critically deconstruct colorblind and majoritarian ideologies (Brown, 2014).

Ledesma & Calderón (2015) state that when educators do not use critical scholarship that deconstructs race and racism, dominant ideologies of colorblindness, race-neutrality, etc., remain in place, and therefore do nothing for educational equity and racial justice. Therefore, it is important for instructors who will be utilizing a CRSL pedagogy to ensure they are centering the experiences and epistemologies of students of color (Ledesma & Calderón, 2015) and the communities of color the students are engaging in during their service. This is essential, as traditional service-learning has been critiqued for maintaining



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the status quo and embodying a savior complex (Becker & Paul, 2015; Kinefuchi, 2010). While teaching CRSL, instructors should maintain a critical approach to deconstruct dominant and normative ideologies among all students, in order to not isolate and/or do more harm to the experiences of the students of color within the classroom and the community partners.

## **METHODOLOGY**

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

The authors collected data as part of a larger longitudinal investigation that examined the college persistence, retention, and graduation of SOC in the Diversity Scholars Program. A qualitative approach was essential in order to understand how participants define their experiences on their own terms (Marshall & Rossman, 2006). The authors surveyed students pre school-year and post school-year. Students were prompted with a visual image of the U.S. Educational Pipeline, as provided in Solórzano, et al., (2005) and asked, “What factors do you think contribute to the difference in educational achievement of these groups?” Additionally, the authors collected course-assigned written reflections to inspect further the learning that students demonstrated between entering and ending the academic school year, during fall 2011-spring 2015.

The authors used a content analysis approach (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), with a CRT lens to code the data (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). Data was analyzed through open coding methods (Saldaña, 2013) and themes were grouped together. They then proceeded with a second round of coding that connected themes to course content and placed special attention upon the content of the narrative with a focus on how race, racism, and majoritarian ideologies were enacted or challenged throughout the narratives.

This approach allowed the researchers to understand how the students identified their CSL experiences through a racialized lens as described by the actual participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008, p. 11) which led them to conceptualize CRSL. Marshall & Rossman (2006) state that the gathering of personal narratives via written assignments/reflections can serve as a qualitative strategy, as it recognizes and validates the voices of the participants as creators and sources of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002) that is often not legitimated within the context of more conventional research (Strand, et al., 2003). The inclusion of a narrative perspective can also add to the racial dimensions and intentions of a qualitative inquiry and ethnographic research (Parker, 1998). Using a CRT lens enables the authors to draw from and encourage the use of counterstories and narratives, whether written or spoken (Delgado, 1989; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Yosso, 2006), of racially marginalized students to speak back about their experiences on predominantly White campuses (Parker, 1998).

## **FINDINGS**

Utilizing a CRSL framework to analyze the findings, the authors identified three themes regarding the ways students understand racialized educational inequities by: 1) differentiating individual/communal and structural reasons for the U.S.’s leaky educational pipeline, 2) challenging traditional service-learning frameworks, and 3) theorizing racialized experiences through tools learned in class and their service sites.

**“I See Myself in Them”****Differentiating Reasons for the U.S. Leaky Educational Pipeline**

During the first day of class, the students are presented with the U.S. Educational Pipeline (see Solórzano, Villalpando, & Oseguera, 2005). Students are then given the following question: “What factors do you think contribute to the differences in educational achievement of these groups?” (i.e. educational, resource, and opportunity gaps). This same question is posed on the very last day the second semester. The authors found that there are significant differences in the ways the students understood educational inequity on the first day and on the last day of class. There was a clear shift from deficit perspectives of communities of color toward an understanding of social inequities that stand as barriers. The authors attribute this shift to the students’ CRSL experiences with local youth of color in educational settings. Based on the answers provided through the pre and post reflection the authors found two common themes in the students’ responses: the focus on individual/communal and on structural factors.

Throughout the analysis of the students’ answers, there was a recurring pattern each academic year. During the first semester, many of the answers reflected individual and communal reasons that placed blame on students, families, and cultures. The second semester reflected more structural reasons for explaining the gap (see Figures 4 and 5).

After students have gone through a full year in the course, they are able to identify racialized educational inequities and structural barriers on the educational gap. This is noticeable in the answers they provide in their pre and post reflections. Gerry’s pre- and post-reflection is an example of students shift in perspectives. On his first day of class, Gerry writes,

*From my point of view, the biggest factor that contributes to the differences in educational achievement would be culture. Not to be stereotypical but Latinos have a mindset that they weren’t meant for school and that they would rather work... My opinion is that everybody is an individual. If they want to achieve greatness, then they have to put in to work for it. (Fall 2011)*

Despite being Latino, Gerry’s ideology at the beginning of the academic year reflected a deficit perspectives of Latinx communities as not valuing education and instead choosing to work. While acknowledging his response is based on stereotypes, through his comment, he separates culture and community from individual success. Gerry portrays a meritocratic perspective that if you work hard you can be successful, without acknowledging the systemic barriers. His comment is conclusive with Yosso (2006) and Alemán & Gaytán (2016) who explain that sometimes SOC feed into majoritarian stories because they are deeply embedded within national discourse and ideologies. Ten months later, his answer was very different:

*These numbers represent a system that is affective for the majority (White Anglo) this is because since the beginning of time they have adapted the system for their benefit. The thing is it never fit our ways of education, the base system was founded on the soul [sic] purpose to benefit the children of the land and not fit the people who were the minority. As time progressed the system became harder and harder for the individual who tried to work for it. In the end the educational system was made for us to fail as the years progressed. (Spring 2012)*

This answer is consistent with Critical Race Theory, as it recognizes that historically the U.S educational system was originally created to benefit the majoritarian culture and does not necessarily fit the

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Figure 4. Examples of student responses in the first semester

<b>Individual/ Communal</b>	Personal problems (i.e. students get pregnant or join gangs)
	lack of finances
	students have to work to help their families
	some women feel they should stay home and work instead of go to school
	some families and cultures appreciate education more than others
	Students of Color do not want to go to college
<b>Structural</b>	Lack of resources in schools
	Lack of opportunities
	lack of college access an preperation
	institutional racism

Figure 5. Examples of student responses in the second semester

<b>Individual/ Communal</b>	Students need to work and have family obligations
	Students have low expectations of themselves
	Students lack role models in their family
	Personal problems
<b>Structural</b>	Institutional inequities
	There is an uneven playing field
	Few faculty of color to look up to in PWIs
	Discriminational and Racism in the system and in teachers ideologies
	Racial microagressions and stereotypes attributed to students of color
	Students are "pushed out" of school
	Unhealthy racial campus climate

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needs of historically marginalized cultures. Though not using theoretical language, Gerry touches on concepts such as White privilege and racialized educational inequity. By using the term “us” he identifies himself as a member of a historically marginalized community that has been systematically oppressed. This shows that he has come to a new understanding of the gap in the educational pipeline and his own lived experiences within it.

**Challenging Traditional Service-Learning Models**

Another finding is how the course pushes students to challenge traditional service-learning models. Lisa, who lived in the service-learning-themed housing community on campus, began to question her initial perceptions of service-learning. After reading about CSL and attending the CSL orientation, she writes,

*The Service Center that I am currently involved with and actually live in the Service House, is what they called Traditional Service Learning. I saw that many of my peers had the mindset that they were doing the community a favor and they saw these communities as inferior, a good way to get “exposure” to diverse communities. I was completely disappointed in the Service Center because I didn’t want to be associated with a program who saw the community I am from as inferior and a way to be exposed to diverse communities. I am very defensive about my community and so when the Service Center informed me their big service day, called Wasatch Service Day was going to be in West Wasatch, I was absolutely furious, this form of oppression was happening right in front of me. (Fall 2011)*

Lisa’s reflection was much like many other reflections read over the years. However, she was able to witness what was being taught in the course with what she was seeing in her service-learning themed housing. Her intersecting identities (i.e. a university student living on campus and a local off-campus resident, from a lower socioeconomic status, community member, and a woman of color in a PWI) allowed her to deconstruct the multiple layers of power existing among her peers who were engaging in service in a local community of color of lower socioeconomic status. It gave her insight in making sense of how a deficit approach to the community, and seeking self-serving benefits, such as “exposure,” can be harmful to communities and to the students who embody multiple roles as a both service-learner and member of the community.

Lisa’s example fits well with what Mitchell and Donahue (2009) explain happens when students return to their own communities, or similar to their own, as service-learners: they often feel that they need to defend the community. Lisa resisted wanting to take part in this service project with the Service Center because she realized that traditional service-learning can cause harm in communities; as she refers to it, it is “a form of oppression.” Yet when it came to doing her service through the ethnic studies course, she felt relieved:

*I walked into the school and walked into the afterschool program, I saw what resembled my elementary school and high school which was predominantly communities of color. To be honest, I took a sigh of relief .... (Fall 2011).*

For both Gerry and Lisa, the ethnic studies course, with a CRSL framework, provided a space to work through perceptions they had prior to entering the course and their service site. Through her reflection, Lisa uses a CRSL lens to challenge the type of service her peers were engaging in and point out how

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service, if not done well, can continue to perpetuate oppression (Mitchell, 2007). Lisa demonstrates how she was empowered by this pedagogy to work directly with diverse students at an elementary school in her community.

## **Theorizing Racialized Experiences**

Some students entered the course already racially conscious, but the course content gave them the tools to theorize what they and other SOC were experiencing. Such was the example of Michelle, who wrote:

*On my first day at my service site, I was talking with the teacher of the sixth grade class I was assigned to. He told me, “make sure you mention that you are going to college because most of these girls want to just go to high school then get married and have kids.” I immediately recognized this as a racial microaggression and deficit thinking. These kids were only in sixth grade, eleven years old, and he already assumed they would not or did not even want to go to college. This was a microaggression to the kids in the class as well as to myself, since I was once a kid in the same position they are in today. (Fall 2012)*

For Michelle, the course allowed her to immediately acknowledge and name the teacher’s comment as a racial microaggression and understand the power behind the racialized, gendered, and classed assumption that led this teacher to make this request. In further discussion of this incident, it was evident that, while Michelle named it as a microaggression, her hierarchical positionality as a young college student and woman of color, in relation to the White, male, middle-aged teacher made her unsure about how to handle the situation<sup>1</sup>. The incident and the course content allowed her to fully understand how power, racism, and subtle forms of racism continue to exist, even within systems that are actively working against dominant ideologies, such as within the *Adelante* Program.

Sandra, is another student who writes about a racial microaggression experienced at her site:

*I was waiting to start and the teacher knew that I was outside waiting and she told me that I should feel free to come in. I have been taught by my culture and parents that it’s important to show respect and do not interrupt a class or any conversation. The teacher made a comment to me about my English. I thought it was rude for the first time I been there. I did care about the comment because it is of those comments that bring you down. I felt it was a micro aggression, but it’s something I have to deal with...During these four weeks mentoring my mentees from fifth grade, I realized how important is to pay attention to the young diversity community and how they can be affected by how society tries to identify you and how others will define you. Society will identify people based on their race and ethnicity. (Fall 2014).*

For Sandra, what she defined as “rude” can be further understood as being “othered” when her accented English was pointed out immediately. She explains how within her culture she was taught a set of manners and was thrown off by how the teacher did not hold back on making a rude statement. She seems not so much concerned about what he said, but more that he said it on her first day there, as if to “put her in her place.” Her expression that such “rude” comments were something she “had to deal with” demonstrates how the intersections of language and racially oppressive actions are normalized rather than challenged, as speaking back can be seen as something taboo or “rude.”

Over the year, Sandra developed a deeper understanding of how race, language, and other intersecting identities systematically oppress communities, which is why, for her, it was so important to pay atten-



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tion to the children’s racial, ethnic, and linguistic identities. By the second semester Sandra talks about feeling like a part of the community and promoting a positive racial identity:

*I see myself as part of a community in my side, because how I mention before I feel more involved not only because my language and my ethnic background, but also as I live in West Wasatch. When it comes to reading in Spanish, I feel that I can transmit parts of me and my culture. Some of my mentees does [sic] not like to read in Spanish. Every time when they told me that, I encourage them to like it. I chat with them about how important it is to know where you come from and accept your culture. I want them to feel proud of their roots and their family. The value of my roots and my background for me is really important and I want them to recognize their identity and have the opportunities that life offers them; knowing that they are priceless and they had good tools as being bilingual speakers (Spring 2015).*

In many ways, Sandra’s experience with the teacher served to inspire in her an act of resistance, as she became determined to build a positive social, racial, and linguistic identity among the youth. Many linguistically and racially diverse youth grow up not wanting to speak their native language or feeling like they must assimilate to the dominant culture. Sandra observed this in the children, and drawing from her own personal experiences in being shamed for her language and culture, she became a social change agent with the youth by motivating them to be proud of who they are, their native tongue, their culture, and their background. Sandra went from accepting a microaggression as something she had to “deal with” to pushing youth to be proud of their identities. This example serves to demonstrate how Sandra challenges the dominant narrative that teaches students to assimilate or to leave diverse aspects of themselves behind.

Although all four reflections have different ways of conceptualizing their CRSL experiences, the authors were interested in demonstrating the various ways students’ responses were shaped by the curriculum, their own experiences at their service-learning sites, and by drawing on their own racialized experiences in their K-12 settings. The classroom provided students the space and opportunity to make the connections between what they were learning in theory and what they were seeing in practice. With these foundational tools, students were able to speak back to the educational inequities they witnessed and experienced.

## **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

Tatum (1992) writes that there is resistance from both White students and SOC to speak about race in classrooms. Many students believe that the U.S. is an equal and meritocratic society, and thus race is regarded as a taboo topic. Disrupting these notions can cause many students to feel guilty or upset and lead to superficial conversations about race and racial injustice (Tatum, 1992; Sue, et al., 2009). Likewise, many educators and facilitators are not fully trained or equipped to effectively manage critical and often times emotionally intense, conversations about race (Sue, et al., 2009). It is with this understanding that the authors continue to stress the need to engage in critical dialogues about race. Furthermore, the authors argue that a rightful site for such conversations is within courses that include a CSL component, as these directly aim to develop active agents of social change by deconstructing the root causes of social inequities (Mitchell, 2007, 2008).

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This study conceptualizes that SOC who identify with the community they are serving, often feel a sense of personal responsibility to the community, and need a space to reflect and process what they are experiencing. A CRSL framework provides outlets in the classroom that push conversations to deconstruct social inequities, but also provide a space to process what they are learning.

This ethnic studies course is particularly compelling due to the theoretical perspectives and tools that the students are exposed to, as for too long traditionally ahistorical approaches to education have systematically ignored and denied their relevance. The course enables the use of racial and ethnic epistemologies to examine, theorize, and understand what factors prompt SOC to feel empowered to persist in their education, and to build a stronger sense of identity and agency to navigate a PWI.

In today’s polarized perspectives on racism and racial (in)justice, it is imperative that discussions which bring these topics to the forefront are taken up with instructors who are well trained on facilitating these difficult conversations. On one hand, there is a belief that we live in a post-racial society and racism no longer exists, except among a couple of deviant individuals (Alemán & Gaytán, 2016). On the other hand, current events such as the #BlackLivesMatter Movement (Hamilton, 2016), immigrant rights activism (Muñoz, 2015), activism around the Dakota Access Pipeline (Penn-Roco, 2016), and racist language actively used by the current presidential administration (Castrellón, Reyna, & López, in press), are moving the national conversation toward an analysis of systemic racism. CRSL allows space to bring these current events to class through weekly critical thinking reflections and discussions on the historical realities of continue to contribute to educational and societal inequities.

The inclusion of these topics in an academic CSL context can empower SOC to counter the dominant narratives held by their classmates and professors. However, there needs to be care taken to avoid putting SOC in the position to educate their classmates on race or to feel obligated to share very personal racialized experiences for the educational benefit of the class. Rather, course instructors should utilize critical scholarship, such as those that center race and racism, but push the conversation from the traditional perspective of racism as the problem of individuals toward a more robust analysis of structural and institutional forms of racism. The instructor must know when to step into discussions as to not leave the SOC exposed to racial microaggressions or “othered” by their peers (Sue, et al., 2009). Too often SOC find themselves in these vulnerable positions, which frequently leads them to withdraw themselves from the course content (Alemán & Gaytán, 2016; Espino & Lee, 2011; Mitchell & Donahue, 2009). This is ultimately a disservice to the very students the curriculum should aim to empower.

The field of ethnic studies has undergone a renovation to center and interrogate intersections of identity and to articulate the multiple social categories and relationships (Ramírez, 2014) each student of color brings to the classroom. Likewise, service-learning must also honor the lived experiences of students in the classroom, what they are experiencing at their service sites, and the epistemologies of the communities students are serving. Given the intersectionalities of identities that people of color embody, the authors acknowledge there is not one singular experience for communities of color (Anzaldúa, 2007). Therefore, it becomes critically important to include the multiple layers and epistemologies SOC and communities being served each carry as a way to inform the complexities experienced in their daily lives (Delgado Bernal, 2002). Although CRSL is not the only solution to deconstruct how race and racism manifest in social injustices, when students engage in service-learning, it provides for a model that centers the experiences of people of color in the classroom and in a larger context.

*“I See Myself in Them”***BEST PRACTICES, SOLUTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

As a best practice, instructors must be cognizant of the experiences and feelings of SOC in the classroom by asking, “How are students (dis)connecting to the curriculum?,” and “Is the classroom a safe space for students to reflect and process emotions?” Recognizing the multiple viewpoints within the classroom, instructors should be well trained to facilitate difficult conversations in the classroom as conversations on race, racism, and privilege can easily recenter Whiteness (i.e. by privileging the emotions of White students and White guilt) and can further marginalize students and communities of color (Espino & Lee, 2011; Mitchell & Donahue, 2009). It is important to avoid depending on SOC to discuss their racialized experiences unless they volunteer, as they may not feel comfortable sharing out loud and prefer to silently write their thoughts through journaling. Regardless of reflection method, the instructor’s role is to ensure that students feel their experiences are validated within the classroom and community.

**LIMITATIONS**

The findings in this study are limited as they reflect only one program that consists of all SOC in the classroom. This study could serve as an example for traditional university courses with a service-learning component and students of mixed racial backgrounds, to take similar approaches of incorporating CRT or other frameworks that center race and racism. Although it may provide for a different classroom climate and different understandings of race and racism (and its intersections), it would add to the ways in which students understand the need for service, and provide tools for students to move toward becoming agents of social change to combat systemic inequities.

**FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

The authors propose to expand on CRSL by seeing the ways in which it may manifest within other similar setting. This CRSL study can serve as an example to encourage other educators and researchers to conduct similar courses, which engage with communities as a method for providing opportunities for social justice transformation and liberation inside and outside the classroom. Future research should examine how a CRSL framework can push beyond students’ “exposure” to diverse communities and towards the realization that there is much that students can learn about their social positionality in relation to the communities they are serving and beyond college.

For researchers, there is also much potential to learn about the centrality of racial injustices from the students’ reflections on the topic and their positionalities within the community. The hope is that students critically understand how race intricately impacts structural injustices and to disengage from the savior mentality. Thus, the authors propose that future research should follow students several years after they have taken a course using a CRSL framework, exploring what role it played during college and beyond (Pérez-Torres, unpublished dissertation).

**“I See Myself in Them”****CONCLUSION**

This chapter seeks to inform service-learning practitioners about the need to implement nontraditional service-learning modules with a social justice agenda, through using a Critical Race Service-Learning model. CRSL employs methodological rigor that places priority on understanding the racialized educational injustices that persist among students of color and allows SOC to see themselves in the community they serve. A critical race pedagogy seeks to challenge current research around social justice in order to better serve the increasing number of racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse students within classrooms whom are expected to serve communities that reflect their own *comunidad*, their own home. With this understanding, a CRSL lens is committed to serving populations of students who are traditionally underserved and denied opportunities within the educational pipeline. A CRSL lens includes the experiential knowledge of SOC and recognizes students from underrepresented communities through an asset-based lens that validates their experiences and regards the diverse students and diverse community as creators and holders of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002).

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**KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**College Students of Color:** College students who identify with a minoritized racial or ethnic background.

**Diversity Scholars Program:** A program for first-generation college Students of Color at the University of Utah.

**Dominant Majoritarian Ideologies:** Ideologies that seem “normative” within the United States, such as equal opportunity, meritocracy, deficit thinking, etc. (see literature review for further description).

**Ethnic Studies:** Historical and scientific studies of race, class, and intersecting identities within the United States.

**Intersectionality:** The assertion of intersecting identities, such as race, class, privilege, gender, sexuality, language, phenotype, citizenship status, etc.

**Racism:** The ways in which there is hatred and systemic inequities target towards communities that do not identify as White.

**Systemic Inequities:** Inequities that are embedded with social structures and institutional levels.

**ENDNOTE**

<sup>1</sup> Given that this happened within the site, one of the authors was able to work with the principal to instill trainings for teachers on racial microaggressions and the effects they can have on SOC.

# Chapter 10

## Lawrence2College: A Mentoring Initiative

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### ABSTRACT

*High school graduation and college access are critical vehicles for individuals' social mobility and for community change. This chapter provides an overview of Lawrence2College, a culturally engaging service-learning partnership which was initiated in 2014 and focuses on these issues. Lawrence2College facilitates high school achievement and college awareness through a mentoring and support program which connects students from Lawrence High School, a public school in Lawrence, Massachusetts, with graduate and undergraduate students from Merrimack College, a private, Catholic college in neighboring North Andover. Lawrence is a city in Massachusetts with a strong Latinx presence, including recent immigrants. Poverty and low literacy are challenges faced by residents. This chapter explains the rationale and conceptual underpinnings of Lawrence2College and describes its evolution and approaches. The chapter concludes with insights and recommendations for practice and research.*

### INTRODUCTION

Educational access and attainment are critical to a democracy (Laguardia & Pearl, 2009), to the economy (Rouse, 2007), and to the pursuit of a just and equitable society (Brennan & Naidoo, 2008). This chapter will provide an overview of Lawrence2College, a service-learning partnership initiated in 2014 which connects youth from Lawrence High School with students from Merrimack College for mentoring and support focused on high school success and college awareness.

Lawrence High School is the sole public secondary school in Lawrence, Massachusetts, a city situated north of Boston in the Merrimack Valley. Lawrence has a high level of poverty, high numbers of immigrants, and a large Latinx population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, 2015). Merrimack College is a

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Catholic college in North Andover, Lawrence's neighboring suburb. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2015), 72% of students at Merrimack College identified themselves as White while just five percent identified as Latinx and 12% did not to disclose their race or ethnicity (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015). A regional college, 67% of Merrimack College students are considered in-state residents. Less than a quarter of Merrimack College students receive Pell grants (National Center for Education Statistics, 2015), which are federal scholarships awarded to students from (low-income) working families. Many students come to Merrimack College with negative perceptions about Lawrence. This is largely a consequence of the cycle of socialization into racism, classism, and other forms of oppression (Harro, 2013) that is prevalent in American society and locally, in communities such as Lawrence and North Andover.

Atkinson's (2012) article, "Lawrence, MA: City of the Damned," published in *Boston Magazine*, identified Lawrence as the poorest city in Massachusetts with the worst public school system in the state and pointed to problems such as high unemployment rates and increases in violent crime. The article was upsetting and unsettling to residents of the city. This is an example of media framing a city from a deficit perspective, thereby reinforcing existing negative stereotypes. It is disempowering for community members as the media hold the power to use data to reaffirm stereotypes.

Deficit models are a disservice to individuals and communities and can lead to a self-fulfilling prophesy syndrome. Harry & Klingner (2007) discussed this common problem in their article about the disproportionate number of students of color in special education. Green (2006) raised similar concerns about the impact of the deficit model when applied to low-income, first-generation college students. Walsh, Hewson, Shier, and Morales (2008) raised concerns that media coverage of their youth initiative overemphasized negative stereotypes and may have consequentially reaffirmed stigmas pertinent to the community.

Deficit models are debilitating as they advance internalized oppression whereby those who are oppressed view themselves as innately inferior. Community Engagement (CE) graduate students who work and/or live in Lawrence attest that they have witnessed residents who are stunted by internalized oppression caused by the negative stereotypes frequently applied to the city. Statements like, "Well, it's Lawrence, what do you expect?" are not uncommon responses to instances of negative occurrences in the city.

Lawrence2College operates from a strength-based perspective. Strength-based programs utilize the assets of students, families, schools, and communities to promote empowering environments (Bryan & Henry, 2008). Practitioners developed strength-based programming in response to the power imbalance between community-based professionals and the communities they service (Nelson, Prilleltensky, & MacGillivray, 2001). By building solidarity with youth, families, and communities, youth programs can create empowering environments for youth to thrive and reach their full potential.

As a strength-based program, the premise of Lawrence2College is that the youth of Lawrence High School have the capacity for academic achievement in high school, graduation, and college access, retention, and graduation as well. Lawrence2College exists to facilitate and support high school students' secondary school achievement and college access through information, resources, and relationship-building.

Lawrence2College offers college students the opportunity to gain a more accurate and complete understanding of Lawrence. Through participation in Lawrence2College, graduate and undergraduate students gain insights into some of the more positive and affirming aspects of Lawrence and its residents, including individuals from a wide range of countries who embrace their ethnic and cultural identities, care about their city, love their children, and are committed to individual growth and community betterment.

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With increasing diversity in the United States as a result of global immigration (Banks, 2008; Putnam, 2007), students must be prepared for employment and engagement in a diverse society (Banks, 2004). Colleges across the United States are making efforts to diversify and to educate students about diversity. Brayboy (2003) critiqued the implementation of diversity and social justice on college campuses, arguing that colleges need to pursue broad-based institution-wide changes rather than minor modifications which serve to reinforce the status quo. Banks (2004) supports an educational model that balances unity and diversity, allowing students to maintain and explore their cultural identity, while uniting around values like justice and equality. He suggests that students' understanding of their own cultural identities can serve as a pathway to empathy and acceptance.

Aligning with a focus on strengths and an appreciation of diversity, cultural engagement is an important aspect of Lawrence2College. Having Latinx mentors, some of whom live or work in Lawrence, involved in this initiative has afforded the opportunity to create stronger connections with families, provide outreach in Spanish, and to help orient other mentors to the community of Lawrence.

This chapter will provide an overview of Lawrence2College, including the rationale for initiating the partnership, and its evolution, challenges, and accomplishments. It will discuss the critical issues of high school graduation and college access as vehicles for individuals' social mobility and community change. The chapter will explore literature on mentoring and family engagement. Furthermore, it will describe and explore conceptual frameworks and values that have informed the Lawrence2College initiative such as assets and strengths-based approaches and Freire's (2006) concept of humanization. The chapter will describe how undergraduate and graduate students have been prepared and supported to engage urban youth and how reflection has been used to provide opportunities for challenging perceptions and individual transformation. Furthermore, the chapter will highlight how graduate student participatory action research has been used to inform and strengthen the initiative.

This chapter may be of interest to faculty, staff, and administrators engaging in service-learning with schools and school systems, those engaged in mentoring programs, public schools interested in pursuing mentoring partnerships, researchers interested in mentoring for urban youth, and those interested in college access for underrepresented youth.

## **BACKGROUND**

The background section provides a rationale for the Lawrence2College initiative and focuses on four major areas: high school graduation and college access, the mentor gap, family engagement, and service-learning. The impact of college attendance on individuals' long-term earnings is discussed, and the relationship between college and economic mobility for low-income individuals is described. Mentoring is defined and discussed with an emphasis on mentoring for college access and success. The need for mentors for students from working (low-income) families is demonstrated. The value of family engagement is highlighted along with common barriers to engagement. Foundational information about service-learning is provided with a focus on its value for expanding students' appreciation of diversity.

### **High School Graduation and College Access**

High school graduation and college access are critical vehicles for individuals' social mobility and for community change. According to Greenstone, Looney, Patashnik, and Yu (2013), individuals who

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graduate high school and do not attend any college will likely earn less than \$30,000 a year while college graduates will earn nearly \$60,000 per year. Thus, education is widely regarded as *the* catalyst for upward social mobility in the United States.

Horace Mann (1848), an early American educator, asserted that education is, “the great equalizer of the conditions of men [people]-- the balance-wheel of the social machinery” (pp. 59-60). Indeed, a college degree facilitates socioeconomic mobility for working individuals (Greenstone, Looney, Patashnik, & Yu, 2013). Despite the potential benefits of a college degree for students from working families, students from poor families are far less likely than other students to graduate from high school, attend college, and earn a college degree (Putnam, 2015). According to Putnam (2015), high schools in impoverished communities lack many resources and opportunities that are prevalent in affluent areas. Notably, public high schools in the U.S. with high levels of poverty, as defined by the percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch, offer fewer Advanced Placement courses and have higher rates of disciplinary issues than high schools in more affluent communities. Additionally, Putnam (2015) theorized that the focus on achievement that is pervasive in affluent communities creates a positive motivating force in the schools in these communities whereas life stressors associated with poverty may undermine the efforts of schools in high-poverty school districts.

Thus, despite recent increases in enrollment in higher education among students of color, the demographics of students in American colleges and universities are not consistent with the diversity of the nation (Cates & Schaeffle, 2011). Low-income, racially diverse, and first-generation students account for a disproportionately low number of college attendees (Thayer, 2000; Cates & Schaeffle, 2011). Latinx students are particularly underrepresented in American colleges and universities (Zarate & Burciaga, 2010; Cates & Schaeffle, 2011). Students from these groups face multiple barriers to success in college such as economic hurdles, lack of knowledge of systems needed to navigate college, and inadequate academic preparation (Engle & Tinto, 2008; Hsiao, 1992). This leads to high rates of college pushout (dropout) among low-income, racially diverse, and first-generation college students (Thayer, 2000).

## The Mentor Gap

Mentoring is broadly defined as a relationship in which an individual with experience supports an individual with less experience. Hughes, Welsh, Mayer, Bolay, and Southard (2010) defined mentoring as a one-to-one relationship involving a caring adult supporting a youth. Formal mentoring entails a relationship formed by an organized program, whereas informal mentoring is defined by relationships that form organically between students and adults in their lives such as teachers and coaches (Putnam, 2015; Coles & Blacknall, 2011).

According to Coles (2011), mentoring promotes college access and success by increasing academic promotion (to the next grade), decreasing absences, improving relationships, improving student motivation and efficacy, generating interest in attending college, and de-mystifying barriers like financial aid and the admissions process. Effective planning, recruitment, training, matching, monitoring, and evaluation are critical evidence-based practices (Coles & Blacknall, 2011).

Despite the value of mentoring, a mentor gap exists between students from working families and their more affluent counterparts (Putnam, 2015). Putnam (2015) found that 64% of affluent students have informal mentors while 62% of students from working families do not (Putnam, 2015). He proposed that formal mentoring programs can fill this gap by increasing the social capital of at-risk students through quality relationships with individuals who have college experience.

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Indeed, mentors are critical for providing information and support to increase college access and retention, particularly among underrepresented college populations (Coles & Blacknall, 2011). Both academic and social skills that may be acquired through participation in mentoring programs can be of tremendous value to first-generation college students (Thayer, 2000). Mentoring and related pre-college programs can increase the aspirations of low-income and potential first-generation college students (Engle, Bermeo, & O'Brien, 2006) and better prepare Latinx students for the college experience (Za-laquett & Lopez, 2006).

## **Family Engagement**

Family engagement is traditionally viewed as parent involvement or collaboration between families and schools. Hill and Taylor (2004) define traditional roles in the school setting as volunteering at school, communicating with teachers and other school personnel, assisting in academic activities at home, and attending school events, meetings of parent-teacher associations (PTAs), and parent-teacher conferences. Family engagement plays an integral role in students' academic success and achievement (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012), attendance and positive social-emotional development (Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012), and resiliency (McMillan & Reed, 1994).

Parents from urban neighborhoods are often unable to participate in family engagement by fulfilling traditional roles. Auerbach (2007) found that school and community-based programs that take the time to build trust and collaborate with working families will see greater educational ambitions from their students.

Although Latinx and Hispanic families represent the largest ethnic group in the United States, they experience low levels of traditional parent engagement and the highest high school pushout (dropout) rate of any ethnic group (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008). Despite caring deeply about their children's academic success and wanting to be involved in their education, they are affected by known obstacles to family engagement. These include, for example, low levels of parental education, negative interactions with or feeling intimidated by schools, and long work hours and little time for traditional parent engagement (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008). Smith, Stern, and Shatrova (2008) also found the language barrier between English-speaking schools and Spanish-speaking families is a major roadblock to positive school-family engagement. Letters and informational notices that are not translated for Spanish-speaking parents results in a break in the communication barrier. Parents then must rely on their children as messengers. When schools and school groups do not make the effort to translate documents for parents, it adds to the feeling of being unwanted or unwelcome in schools that many Spanish-speaking parents feel.

## **Service-Learning and Social Justice**

Service-learning is an educational process that engages students in active learning, while benefiting a community. Giles and Eyler (1994) traced the usage of the term "service-learning" to 1967. Researchers root the practice in Dewey's theory of knowledge, which is largely based on the themes of citizenship and democracy (Giles & Eyler, 1994; Megivern, 2010).

Strong service-learning programs practice reciprocity in which all parties teach and learn from one another (Jacoby, 1999; Kendall, 1990). Additionally, Jacoby (1999) expresses the importance of reflection as a vehicle for student learning. More recent literature seeks to distinguish traditional service-learning from critical service-learning and advocates for the latter, which is rooted in social justice (Mitchell, 2008).

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Service-learning is considered an effective tool to prepare individuals to work with diverse populations (Einfeld & Collins, 2008). Research has found that service-learning programs have the capacity to reduce negative stereotypes and increase acceptance of diversity (Eyler, Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001; Einfeld & Collins, 2008). Service-learning programs create opportunities for students to learn aspects of multicultural competency like self-awareness, knowledge of various cultures, and the attainment of multicultural skills specific to working with diverse communities such as empathy and trust-building (Einfeld & Collins; Kumagai & Lybson, 2009). Service-learning is commonly used in fields such as health (Amerson, 2010; Flannery & Ward, 1999), counseling (Baggerly, 2006; Vera & Speight, 2003), and education (Meaney, Bohler, Kopf, Hernandez, & Scott, 2008) to prepare professionals to work with diverse populations.

Einfeld and Collins (2008) assert that multicultural incompetence perpetuates social inequality. It is dangerous for professionals who lack multicultural skills to work in diverse environments, as these professionals can cause harm to the communities they are serving and also promote a culture of systematic injustice (Einfeld & Collins, 2008).

Therefore, Kumagai and Lybson (2009), in writing about medical education, propose that programs must focus on raising students' critical consciousness. In the authors' words, the journey to critical consciousness requires "critical self-reflection and discourse and anchors a reflective self with others in social and societal interactions" (p. 783). This relates to Freire's (2006) concept of *conscientização*. Similarly, contemporary academics focus on service-learning as a method of social justice education (Roschelle, Turpin, & Elias, 2000; Megivern, 2010). Notably, Megivern (2010) defined service-learning as "an engaged pedagogy that encourages students to explore social justice in depth" (p. 61). Social justice education is described as an ongoing process (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004), and reflection can serve as a critical bridge between service and learning (Dubinsky, 2006). This is consistent with Freire's (2006) concept of praxis. Along these lines, Boyle-Baise and Langford (2004) propose that justice-oriented service-learning involves analysis of oppression at individual, cultural, and institutional levels and explicit connections between analysis and action.

## LAWRENCE2COLLEGE: EMERGENCE AND EVOLUTION

Lawrence2College is an initiative to support the educational success and postsecondary aspirations of low-income youth from Lawrence through mentoring and relationship-building. This initiative emerged from existing partnerships between Merrimack College and Lawrence High School. This section discusses Lawrence, the Lawrence Public Schools, and the graduation rates and postsecondary education activities of Lawrence High School youth. The Community Engagement Program, the Merrimack College program which initiated Lawrence2College with Lawrence High School, is introduced. This includes a description of the program and relevant courses. The evolution of the program over the past few years is described and includes information about new partners and approaches.

### Contextualizing Lawrence

Lawrence has a long history as an immigrant city. Situated on the Merrimack River in Massachusetts, immigrant groups first began working in this industrial revolution city producing textiles during the 1840s (City of Lawrence, 2016). Today, 35% of the economy is still manufacturing-based (textiles, ap-



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parel, and shoes), though much of this industry has been moved elsewhere (City of Lawrence, 2016). Lawrence was negatively impacted by the Great Recession, which The National Bureau of Economic Research defines as a period of economic contraction from 2007-2009 (National Bureau of Economic Research, 2010). Lawrence experienced a peak unemployment rate of 17.7% in January of 2010. Current unemployment rates hover around 8%.

Lawrence is frequently named the poorest city in Massachusetts, a factoid supported by Census Bureau data. Lawrence's current median household income is \$32,851, which is less than half of the state median household income of \$67,846 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, 2015). Most families (63.87%) are tenants. Levels of educational attainment are also lower in Lawrence, than in the rest of Massachusetts. According to the most recent U.S. census data, 68.5% of Lawrence's population over 25 have a high school diploma (compared to 89.5% statewide) and 11.9% have a bachelor's degree or higher (compared to 40% statewide) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010, 2015).

While the city has seen waves of diverse immigrant groups throughout its history (including Irish, French-Canadian, British, German, Italian, Polish, Lithuanian, and Syrian immigrants), Dominicans and Puerto Ricans began entering Lawrence around 1985. Recent waves of immigration have included individuals from Vietnam and Cambodia (City of Lawrence, 2016). Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) currently serves a student population of 13,900 students that is 91.3% Latinx.

Despite dire economic conditions, Lawrence has a strong sense of community. Annual cultural events like *Semana Hispánica* (celebrating the many Caribbean cultures that exist in Lawrence), *Feast of the Three Saints* (Italian celebration), and *Dominican Independence Parade* often draw large numbers of attendees (Blessing, 2015; St. Alfio Society, 2016; *Semana Hispánica en Lawrence*, 2016). Community members gather through local churches, as there is a strong Christian and Catholic presence in the city.

## **Lawrence Public Schools**

In 2011, the Lawrence Public Schools district (LPS) came under state receivership after years of being deemed "chronically underperforming" and failing to show adequate gains in areas such as student test scores, graduation rates, and dropout rates ("History of the Lawrence Public Schools," 2015). A state-appointed receiver has the power of both a superintendent and a school committee. As a result of the receivership and the subsequent development of the school turn-around plan, Lawrence High School has undergone major changes in school structure and faculty.

At the time of the inception of Lawrence2College, the high school was comprised of six autonomously run themed high schools, referred to as "academies": Business, Management, and Finance High School (BMF); Math, Science, and Technology High School (MST); Humanities, Leadership, and Development High School (HLD); Health and Human Services High School (HHS); Performing and Fine Arts High School (PFA); and International High School (INT) (a school designed for students who had recently immigrated to the United States). The new building that housed the six individual high schools was constructed and outfitted specifically for the autonomous programs, which focused on providing students the benefits of small learning communities. Small learning communities including "schools within a school" models are designed to personalize education for students through increases in student support, improved school culture, and improved community and family partnerships (Felner, Seitsinger, Brand, Burns, & Bolton, 2007; Cotton, 2001). Cotton (2001) defines small learning communities as independent, personalized school "units," of varying levels of autonomy, within a larger school context.

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Despite the potential benefits of small learning communities, the administration determined that the separate school model was limiting student access to certain enrichment opportunities, academic courses, and elective course options. For example, under the small learning communities model, students were limited to the course options offered by their individual, themed academy rather than having access to the full range of courses available within the whole high school. In order to provide greater student access to classes, to better assist students in acclimating to the high school experience, and to better prepare them to pass the state exam (a state-mandated graduation requirement), the district determined they would need to re-structure the high school. Thus, the high school is currently being re-consolidated. This ongoing process, which began in 2015, will result in having one main high school and two special programs, including a program for recent immigrants and Abbott Lawrence Academy, an accelerated exam school.

### Graduation and Post-Graduation Plans

The four-year high school graduation rate for students attending secondary school in Lawrence has dramatically improved over the last several years. In 2008, the four-year graduation rate was at its lowest at 35.8%. That same year, 36.5% of students were pushed out of school (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2008). For the 2015 school year, the four-year graduation rate was 71.8% and the pushout rate was 10.8% (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015).

In 2015, 76% of Lawrence graduates attended college, compared to 82% of graduates in the state of Massachusetts. Of the college-bound Lawrence students, 56% were enrolled in two-year college programs and 20% were enrolled in four-year college programs. Conversely, 60% of high school graduates in Massachusetts were enrolled in four-year college programs and 22% of graduates were enrolled in two-year programs (Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, 2015). Despite increases in the number of students attending higher education, many students in Lawrence are not attending four-year programs.

### The Community Engagement Program: A Natural Partner

Lawrence2College was initiated through the Community Engagement Program at Merrimack College, located in neighboring North Andover, an affluent suburban community, in partnership with the high school. The Community Engagement Program is a Master's program that aims to provide knowledge, skills, and experiences to graduate students to prepare them for careers strengthening communities through collaboration and assets-based programming and research. The program attracts students interested in careers in service and social change. It is grounded in social justice and supports students to engage in critical thinking and reflective practice.

The Community Engagement Program is housed within the School of Education and Social Policy. The program includes concentrations in Community Organizations, Higher Education, and PreK-12 Education. Many graduate students in the program are Latinx and live or work in Lawrence or other nearby urban centers. Most students in the program work full-time or complete intensive 25-hour per week fellowship experiences in schools, colleges, or community organizations in or around Lawrence. Many alumni remain local and pursue nearby employment opportunities, thus maintaining ongoing activism in local communities. Some alumni have taken full-time employment in the Lawrence Public Schools and, in particular, in the high school.

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The Community Engagement Program offers a speaker series that is open to the public. The Director of the Family Resource Center has been a speaker through this series in the past, and occasionally staff members from the Lawrence Public Schools attend these events. There have been several speakers representing various organizations in Lawrence over the years. For example, representatives of local arts organizations and a soup kitchen have shared with participants their experiences in the Lawrence community. There have also been speakers who have discussed critical issues relevant to Latinx families. For example, one session explored colorism while another focused on hate crimes against Latinx immigrants. Although a separate initiative from Lawrence2College, the speaker series serves as an invaluable resource to mentors for reflecting on and discussing important issues relevant to diversity and social justice.

Through students' culminating capstone projects, students engage in action-oriented community initiatives. By its very nature, the Community Engagement Program has close ties with local schools, colleges, and community organizations. Capstone courses focus on issues such as respectful engagement, cultural responsiveness, and ethical issues in community engagement.

## **An Evolving Partnership**

With an interest in building a mentoring partnership focused on high school success and college access, Lawrence2College began as a service-learning initiative through a foundational course in the Community Engagement Program called Community Engagement: Theory and Practice. During the 2014-2015 year, Lawrence2College served mentees in the Business, Management, and Finance Academy and the Humanities and Leadership Development Academy. Sixteen graduate students enrolled in the Community Engagement: Theory and Practice course mentored forty junior and senior high school students in the fall. Students continued their mentoring in the spring although there was no formal corresponding spring course. That year, in addition to building mentoring relationships, Lawrence2College provided college access and learning opportunities including a professional development day, a college majors fair, and an outing to Merrimack College which included a hockey game and campus tour.

Through conversations with partners in the two academies, a decision was made to focus exclusively within the Humanities and Leadership Development Academy during the second year of the program. During the 2015-2016 year, the Community Engagement: Theory and Practice class continued to be the primary vehicle for the partnership, with the Dean of Students at the high school identifying the high school students to participate in the initiative. However, some undergraduate students participated in the initiative as well. These students were recruited through the VISTA in partnership with the campus service-learning center and typically were able to receive credit for the service experience through an undergraduate course they were taking. Over the course of the year, twenty-five undergraduate and graduate students mentored thirty high school students and several events were held, similar to those which took place during the first year of the program.

In 2015-2016, Lawrence2College initiated outreach to parents and families of mentees. Lawrence2College hosted a family event at the Family Resource Center in the fall. Despite low attendance at this event, several Spanish-speaking Community Engagement students spearheaded an effort the following spring to reach families through volunteering at the Family Resource Center and calling parents to speak with them about Lawrence2College. These students also translated some materials about Lawrence2College and college access into Spanish in order to make the materials more accessible to Spanish-speaking families.

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Due to continued organizational restructuring and uncertainties at Lawrence High School, the Dean of Students at Humanities and Leadership Development facilitated the transfer of Lawrence2College to Abbott Lawrence Academy for the 2016-2017 academic year. In preparing for 2016-2017, efforts were made to communicate and collaborate with the Merrimack College O'Brien Center for Career Development, the Honors Program, Admissions, Stevens Service Learning Center, and the faculty teaching the undergraduate course Introduction to Social Justice, as well as Lawrence High School's Abbott Lawrence Academy. In 2016-2017, the mentoring initiative focused on the sophomores of Abbott Lawrence Academy. Abbott Lawrence is a selective exam school program which emphasizes college preparation, so Lawrence2College aligns well with its mission and overall approach. In 2016-2017, new graduate courses in mentoring and youth development have integrated Lawrence2College as a service-learning component. The goal is for the Lawrence2College partnership to be increasingly institutionalized by collaborating more closely with campus partners to ensure the sustainability and growth of the program.

### Coursework

The Community Engagement: Theory and Practice has been the primary service-learning course involved in Lawrence2College, and all students in the Community Engagement Program are required to take the course. This course provides a broad overview of community engagement as it is conceptualized and practiced in school, college, and community settings. Topics covered include, for example, service-learning and reflection, institutionalizing community engagement on college campuses, engagement across the lifespan, and civic and political engagement. Students become familiar with the work of pioneers in service-learning, community engagement, and experiential education such as Giles and Eyer (1994), Boyer (1996), Kolb and Kolb (2005), and Hatcher and Bringle (1997). Community Engagement: Theory and Practice provides students with opportunities for engaging in service and reflection while simultaneously learning about the history of community engagement and conceptual models and best practices.

Community Engagement students are also required to take another foundational course, Diversity and Social Justice, which discusses identities, privilege, and oppression, and provides an overview of various forms of oppression, including, for example, racism, classism, sexism, and ableism. The course currently utilizes readings from Davis and Harrison's (2013) *Advancing Social Justice: Tools, Pedagogies, and Strategies to Transform Your Campus* and also Adams, et al.'s (2013) *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*. Students are encouraged to view issues locally, globally, and historically to best understand how to promote equality and justice as community workers.

The diversity and social justice course also highlights the need for self-knowledge and reflection on one's own lived experience. Learning about social justice through ongoing self-reflection allows the course material to meet students where they are as individuals on a journey to understand and promote social justice and embrace diversity as a value. Students are required to complete multiple reflective essays throughout the course that engage students to consider their own experiences in relation to social justice topics and how their experiences fit into the complex, diverse, and intersectional world. Students must also complete a social justice action project as the culminating assignment. Having a strong background in social justice and diversity education aids CE students who participate in Lawrence2College. Students with prior coursework in social justice and diversity education are best able to serve diverse communities with sensitivity and reciprocity.

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In order to further strengthen and deepen the connection between the service experience and course content, a decision was made to develop new youth-focused courses for the Master's Program in Community Engagement offered for the first time in 2016-2017. Graduate students can take these courses in fall and spring while simultaneously participating in Lawrence2College. These courses utilize readings from Hamilton and Hamilton (2004); Edginton, Kowalski, and Randall (2005); and other texts. They focus on positive youth development and mentoring and leadership for social change, providing strong links between theory and practice and enabling students to explore critical questions regarding cross-cultural mentoring and youth's cognitive, emotional, and social development.

Prior to this year, undergraduate students wishing to participate in Lawrence2College could do so through service-learning courses they were taking, but there was no formal relationship between the courses and Lawrence2College. In 2016-2017, a partnership involving the Honors Program and, specifically, the Honors Introduction to Social Justice courses, has been implemented. Each of the instructors for the three Honors Introduction to Social Justice courses agreed to make Lawrence2College one of a small number of service options available for the service-learning component of their course.

As part of the Community Engagement Program, graduate students are required to implement capstone projects. For the past two years, since the inception of Lawrence2College, there have been student capstone projects related to Lawrence2College. The first year, a group of students conducted a formative evaluation of the initiative. In 2015-2016, one group of students conducted research to understand the needs better of first-generation college students and, as part of their study, they reached out to Lawrence2College youth as prospective first-generation college students. Another graduate student conducted a capstone project to explore successful models for engaging adolescents, and she, too, reached out to Lawrence2College youth. These capstone projects complement Lawrence2College and help to strengthen the initiative through better understanding of the Lawrence High School students, their needs, and how to best support them. Some of the programmatic enhancements that have been made to Lawrence2College, such as adding the youth development courses for Community Engagement graduate students and more intentional matching of mentors and mentees, have emerged directly from these capstone initiatives.

Through a partnership with the undergraduate Honors and Social Justice programs, students in the undergraduate Honors Introduction to Social Justice course are encouraged to participate in Lawrence2College. This course is open to Honors students from all majors and fulfills a general education requirement so it attracts a wide range of students. There is a service requirement for this course, and Lawrence2College is one of the highlighted options for students.

With increased outreach to undergraduate students and classes to become engaged in Lawrence2College, graduate students and VISTA volunteers have had the opportunity to develop and implement orientation and reflection sessions for undergraduate mentors. For example, the second author of this chapter developed and implemented an orientation workshop for undergraduate students participating in the undergraduate Honors Introduction to Social Justice course. Specifically, the graduate student facilitated an interactive activity that demonstrated how privilege operates and often goes unseen by those who possess privilege (Pyle, 2014). Students also watched a short video clip from MTV's *Decoded* that explored why discussing privilege can create hostility in conversation or make people uncomfortable (MTV, 2016). The video uses an intersectional approach to describe different kinds of privilege and frames privilege as things that everyone should experience. Students responded positively to both the activity and video, and some mentioned that they appreciated that the activities were not trying to "blame" them. The graduate student returned to the same Introduction to Social Justice class toward the end of the semester to engage the class in follow-up reflection activities.



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Aligned with this movement toward having graduate students actively engaged in supporting undergraduate students' involvement in Lawrence2College, a social justice education capstone pathway was formed. Through this offering, graduate students may opt for an additional social justice course and a capstone project focused on social justice outreach and education. These courses utilize the text *Teaching for Diversity and Social Justice* (Adams, Bell, Goodman, & Joshi, 2016) and focus on the development and implementation of diversity and social justice education initiatives.

## INSIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based upon the literature and the successes and challenges of the Lawrence2College Program, this section highlights three critical areas for continued development of Lawrence2College and for consideration by those interested in engaging in service-learning partnerships with diverse K-12 institutions. These areas are intentional diversity and social justice education, implementing cross-cultural mentoring, and critical and ongoing opportunities for reflection.

### Intentional Diversity and Social Justice Education

Social justice and diversity education may have the greatest impact when college classes are paired with service-learning projects in which students engage with communities. Mobley (2007) highlights the importance of engaging college students in diversity education through service-learning. Students who participate in service-learning projects alongside traditional learning methods see substantial positive changes in their perceptions of community members being served. They also see increased confidence in their ability to enact social justice through change. Although students who participate in traditional academic activities see reserved positive changes, these changes are not as broad or significant. University students reap major benefits when they witness and experience the outcomes of putting social justice into action.

Faculty, staff, and administrators leading college students in service-learning experiences with diverse K-12 populations ought to be intentional in the identification of appropriate courses to correspond with these service experiences. It is particularly important to ensure that students receive adequate instruction in social justice and diversity. Diversity training prior to engaging in service-learning can help student-mentors understand any misinformed stereotypes they may hold.

Diversity training is an important aspect of preparing individuals to mentor diverse students in today's multicultural society. Freire (2006) advocates for education as a reciprocal process, one where student and teacher learn together and from each other. This concept can be employed in a mentoring relationship. College students who are participating in a service-learning program can learn about diversity and social justice, both inside and outside the classroom, as they embark on a journey to both serve and learn from individuals in a multicultural society.

### Cross-Cultural Mentoring

Cross-cultural mentoring involves building trusting and supportive relationships. These relationships may be enhanced with patience, openness, and respect. Mentors who are Latinx and may also live or

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work in Lawrence can help facilitate relationships for those who are less knowledgeable about Lawrence or the Latinx communities within this city. As relationships build over time, by providing access to first year and sophomore students at Merrimack College to mentoring opportunities with Lawrence2College, there is the possibility of longer mentoring experiences that could last over a period of years. Although service-learning functions well for faculty and students when it fits neatly into a semester or a class, it may serve schools best when it breaks beyond these boundaries. Family outreach including communication in Spanish has occurred; however, there is opportunity for greater work in this area.

### **Building Trust and Building Relationships**

In addition to more traditional approaches to social justice education, there is a need for mentor training that addresses potential mistrust between students of color and white mentors (Townes, Chavez-Korell, & Cunningham, 2009). Building trust is cited as one of the most crucial elements in a positive and successful cross-cultural mentoring relationship (Brinson & Kottler, 1993; Thomas, 2001; Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2002).

Yim and Waters (2013) suggest that aspects of interpersonal mentoring relationships, such as trust, can be improved by taking part in shared experiences in a less formal atmosphere. In the past, Lawrence2College has organized events, such as group outings to hockey games, as a way for both mentors and mentees to bond and become more comfortable with one another. Some Lawrence2College mentor/mentee pairs have held their sessions over lunch, another strategy suggested by Yim and Waters (2013). Incorporating techniques like relaxed social gatherings or sharing a meal can improve trust in mentor-mentee relationships.

In cross-cultural mentoring relationships, it is critical to acknowledge racial and/or cultural differences (Johnson-Bailey & Cervero, 2002). Though acknowledging cultural and racial differences is vital, it is equally important to acknowledge human connections beyond race or culture. Lawrence2College requests information about hobbies and interests to match mentors and mentees. Pairings are assigned based on these mutual interests, which serve as a basis from which trust can build and a relationship can form.

### **Engaging Families**

Lawrence2College recognizes the importance families play in increasing students' academic success (Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Horsford & Holmes-Sutton, 2012). As such, a goal of this partnership has been to engage families. The language barrier can be a roadblock in the goal of open communication between Spanish-speaking families and predominantly English-speaking school faculty. Failing to provide appropriate documents can promote an environment where Spanish-speaking parents feel uncomfortable or worse, unwanted at their child's school (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008).

In order to promote a welcoming atmosphere within the Lawrence2College program, open houses, phone outreach, and Spanish-language materials have been utilized. These efforts have been warmly welcomed and appreciated by parents. When programs fail to tap into the resource of parental involvement, they are failing to engage a critical component of academic support and encouragement for the students they are serving (Smith, Stern, & Shatrova, 2008).

## Mentee-Driven Sessions

The agenda for mentoring sessions is driven by the students at Lawrence High School. The college student mentors provide services such as direct tutoring or test preparation, assistance with college applications and essays, or even just a listening ear depending on what the high school students determine they themselves need. It is important to engage the youth in setting the agenda for these sessions. This is especially critical when mentors who may identify with several aspects of privilege are working with mentees of color from working (low-income) families. Arnstein's (1969) ladder of civic participation provides an instructive visual for considering the balance of power in community initiatives and the possibilities for promoting social justice through ally behavior.

## Critical and Ongoing Opportunities for Reflection

Reflection is a critical aspect of service-learning. Ongoing reflection creates opportunities for meaningful connections between the service experience and course content. It is essential to breaking down negative stereotypes and perceptions.

Dubinsky (2006) posits that reflection activities should give students space to consider their service-learning in an intellectual and emotional manner. In addition, reflection activities should be carried out frequently during the course of a service-learning experience (Hatcher & Bringle, 1997; Dubinsky, 2006). Dubinsky assesses that one primary focus of student reflections should be the value of the service-learning experience (both to them and to the community they are serving). By reflecting on the reciprocal value of service-learning, students are able to keep Freire's (2006) tenet of social justice at the heart of their work.

In developing engagement experiences with diverse K-12 populations, faculty, staff, and administrators are urged to provide ongoing opportunities for reflection. Service-learning offices or centers for teaching excellence on campuses should provide support to faculty to facilitate this work.

## FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

There is considerable need for more research relevant to effective practices in service-learning practices with diverse K-12 communities. In particular, for a mentoring initiative such as Lawrence2College, longitudinal studies which follow mentors and mentees can demonstrate the value of such partnerships and provide understanding of the long-term impact of such programs. Future research relevant to mentees' high school graduation and college acceptance rates and matriculation and persistence rates would be valuable. Mentors' ongoing professional and personal commitments to service and various forms of community and civic engagement ought to be explored.

Urban school environments, especially those undergoing school reform, face frequent changes. These can include staff and administration restructuring and attrition, alterations to the schedules and routines of the school day, and re-grouping of student populations within a school or district. The ever-changing nature of urban schools can present challenges for college-based programs working with the schools. Maintaining contacts and building relationships proves difficult with frequent leadership and staff changes. Scheduling within urban school turnaround environments presents additional challenges. Often, there is little spare or flexible time during a packed school day for students to meet with mentors.

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Likewise, it is difficult to navigate the scheduling requirements of prospective college student mentors with the scheduling requirements of high school mentees. Future research is needed on how college and community-based programs can best adapt within the changing K-12 environments where they wish to serve.

Though class-based models provide the highest level of academic alignment within a service-learning experience, they are limiting in the number of college students they can involve. Institutionalizing a program on a college campus could provide access to a considerably larger pool of potential mentors. Research on scaling up and institutionalizing service-learning initiatives is needed.

## CONCLUSION

Mentoring programs can and should be utilized by colleges as a means for college students to engage with diverse communities. It is critical that the mentoring experience is meaningful for both the college students and the youth. The goal is to increase understanding and decrease stereotypes by building reciprocal relationships with the students they serve. Tilley-Lubbs (2009) addresses the importance of reciprocity, particularly when working with immigrant groups, warning that it is easy for college students, who have a degree of privilege from their educational status, knowledge of the English language, and potentially higher socioeconomic level, to be imperceptive to lessons being taught by the community they are serving. College students risk viewing their own service as charity, thereby negating any reciprocity in their relationships with the community (Tilley-Lubbs, 2009). Failing to engage in reciprocal relationships can compound the oppression faced by oppressed groups, further “dehumanizing” them (Freire, 2006). Mentor training and reflection should be used as a tool to help college students make sense of their service experience, and programming should be provided that helps college students be effective in their mentoring and relationship-building.

Lawrence2College is a relatively small program and still in the early stages of development. The authors present it less as a model and more as a case. There is much that the program is still working on, and some of it is very basic: how to effectively recruit students, how to effectively prepare students, and how to measure success. The chapter provides an overview of Lawrence2College with the hopes that it will build interest in and momentum around service-learning mentoring initiatives focused on high school graduation and college access for urban youth.

Higher education has an obligation to communities and their students to do work that engages and benefits the community. Service experiences that create pathways for traditionally marginalized populations to access college are imperative. Further research to support doing this work well will benefit students, colleges, and communities.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**First-Generation College Students:** Individuals who represent the first generation in their families to access a college education.

**Internalized Oppression:** Individuals who are oppressed based upon their social identities and are socialized to believe they are inferior.

**Mentoring:** Supportive relationships between individuals with differing levels of information, experience, and resources such that a mentor can offer guidance to a mentee. Mentoring may be individualized or group and may be more or less formalized.

**Strengths-Based Perspective:** Approaches to education, human development, and community engagement that identify assets within individuals, families, and communities and seek to build upon those assets.



# Chapter 11

## Social Ecology of Engaged Learning: Contextualizing Service- Learning With Youth

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter presents a community-university partnership model of service-learning with urban, low income, middle school youth of color focused on promoting agency and efficacy through an All Star Anti-violence Youth Summit. The summit combined basketball and small group activities to define, analyze, and address the issue of gun violence in the community. The approach is intergenerational and intercultural, and was implemented through a semester long Civic Engagement service-learning class. The diverse group of students at a large, urban, public University applied the concepts of critical service-learning, British Social Action, positive youth development, and civic engagement.*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents a community-university partnership model of service-learning with urban, low-income, middle school youth of color focused on promoting agency and efficacy. The model is intergenerational and intercultural, incorporates service-learning, and is mindful of the socially marginalized status of the youth and the learning needs of multicultural, urban, public university students ranging in age from 18-55 years.

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## Social Ecology of Engaged Learning

Applying the concepts of critical service-learning (Mitchell, 2008) and sociological and behavioral science theories as they apply to youth development and civic engagement (Arches, 2013; Arches & Fleming, 2007; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Delgado & Staples, 2007; Hamilton & Hamilton, 2007; Mills, 1970; Stoecker & Beckman, 2010; Vygotsky, 1978), this model was embedded in a semester-long Civic Engagement class project.

### The Partnership: Contextualizing Youth Development

The partnership involved sixty-five public school youth in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades, the majority of whom were students of color, along with an ethnically, racially, and age diverse group of University of Massachusetts Boston students (hereafter, University students), the University Athletics Department, the Massachusetts attorney general's office, and a small nonprofit, the 3Point Foundation, with programs combining athletics and academics for urban middle school youth. The purpose of the partnership was to put together an All Star Anti-violence Youth Summit to discuss what could be done to reduce gun violence. The content was structured in part to address the anti-violence health standards in the public school curricular frameworks, and was carried out through an All Star Anti-violence Youth Summit held at the University of Massachusetts Boston in Spring 2016.

Embedded into an undergraduate Civic Engagement course covering knowledge, skills and values of civic engagement, civic learning, and civic action, University students read material on social justice, community building, civic engagement, and participatory methods of engaging with diverse communities. The University students worked as partners in a project that was designed to address gun violence, and to promote efficacy and agency while striving to create a *space* where youth are respected, valued as partners, and are active participants in decision-making (Bolzan & Gale, 2012; Ginwright, Noguerra, & Cammarota, 2006; Hammond, 2015). The guiding tenets of the partnership were based on positive youth development, culturally responsive pedagogy (CRP), and British Social Action which stress a strength-based approach, supporting youth voice as independent learners, providing opportunities and structures for meaningful participation, and respect for local knowledge (Downs, et al., 2009; Hammond, 2015; Pittman, Irby, Tolman, Yohalem, & Ferber, 2011).

Recognizing and building on strengths, the University students fostered opportunities for learning in a safe environment, with connections to a diverse group of supportive adults. The University students approached the youth as partners in a collaborative effort. They were not there serving the youth, as might have been the case in more traditional service-learning, but rather as partners there to listen, develop relationships, analyze conditions, reflect on learning, and facilitate a process of youth led social change. They applied the theories of positive youth development, social change, civic engagement, and social justice (Stoecker, 2016) that they were learning in class. Their focus was on flattening unequal power relationships, understanding root causes of issues, and developing authentic relationships to facilitate a process of youth defined social change. The interactions with the youth were based on the groupwork practice of creating an *interrupted space* (Bolzan & Gale, 2012; Hammond, 2015) where power dynamics based on marginalized identities are set aside and youth define and determine the work as they generate knowledge in a setting that is collaborative and respectful. The youth voice and their empowerment were paramount as the University students facilitated groups where the youth were developing critical thinking and analytical skills as the basis for action (Bolzan & Gale, 2012; Arches, 2012; Mitchell, 2008).

In a parallel process to what the University students were doing with the youth, the professor modeled the theories and practices in the classroom for students to develop their own knowledge, civic engage-

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ment skills, and self-awareness. This approach was grounded in the methods and tenets of Social Action with its accompanying methodology of Self-Directed Groupwork (Mullender, Ward, & Fleming, 2013), critical service-learning, and ecological systems theory. The classroom became an interrupted space.

While the University and community partners met as a team to develop the structure of program, planning was informed by the input of youth carrying out a pilot in an after-school program addressing gun violence. The University students pre-tested, and reflected on all activities in class. Process was an important aspect of the engagement for both middle school and University students.

This learning strategies reflected the cognitive theory of Vygotsky (1978) who emphasized the importance of the social environment and social interactions that stretch young people as they learn and develop in what he termed zones of proximal development. It further recognized the importance of role models and meaningful adults in the learning process respecting cultural knowledge. Most of the University students came from backgrounds similar to the sixty-five youth who were African American, Haitian, Jamaican, Dominican, Puerto Rican, Chinese and Vietnamese with a small percentage from European backgrounds. The variations in learning styles accompanying the activities allowed for multiple ways to demonstrate knowledge. The age and similar cultural diversity of the University students enabled a more syntonic socio-cultural link to learning (Bandura, 1994; Bronfenbrenner, 1986; Hammond, 2015; Vygotsky, 1978).

### **SOCIAL ACTION FOR EMPOWERMENT AND AGENCY**

British Social Action reflects the assumption that people who are experiencing an issue are the experts on their circumstances (Fleming, 2013; Fleming & Boeck, 2012; Matthies, Turunen, Albers, Boeck, & Närhi, 2000). Too often young people are not asked or expected to articulate what they think is going on in their lives and what they think should be done. Adults define their issues and tell them what they should do. Based on the work of Paulo Freire (1968), British Social Action, like Critical-Service Learning and Community-Based Research (Beckman & Long, 2016; Mitchell, 2008; Stoecker, 2016) focuses on the community, builds on strengths, affirms local knowledge, and applies theories of social change. This is carried through facilitating group dialogues that lead to thinking about oppression, fostering critical consciousness with the goal of transforming power relations, and improving conditions in the environment. Participation and empowerment are key components. As the group develops, participants come to see their individual problems as similar and reflecting larger social structural inequities. They discover those parts of their lives that they can change through collective action, subsequently expanding their options. This process builds on culturally sensitive pedagogies and high order thinking in paving the path to success with youth in low-income communities of color (COSEBOC, 2012).

The Social Action method is rooted in the belief that people acting collectively can improve their lives when they act on their own behalf to achieve their collectively identified goals. The groupworkers facilitate a five-part process in which the group members: 1) identify and document problems, and answer the question: *what*; 2) analyze why the problems exist as they respond to prompts about: *why*; 3) arrive at an action plan as they decide: *how*; 4) *carry out the plan*; and 5) continuously *reflect* upon the learning (National Writing Project, 2006). With the University students participating in the Social Action/Self-Directed Groupwork methodology in the service-learning classes, both groups, University students and youth, learned to identify and document problems, analyze root causes, prioritize their needs, and assess their options for meeting those needs.

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The principles informing this practice are rooted in social justice and challenge inequality and oppression in relation to race, gender, sexuality, age, religion, class, culture, disability, or any other form of social differentiation. Acknowledging all people have skills, experience, and understanding that they can draw on to tackle the problems they face, there is an understanding that people are experts in their own lives, and we can use this as a starting point for our work. The young people have rights to be heard, to define the issues facing them, and to act on their own behalf. Injustice and oppression are complex issues rooted in social policy, the environment and the economy. People working collectively can be powerful. People who lack power and influence to challenge injustice and oppression as individuals can gain it (Mullhender, Ward, & Fleming, 2013; National Writing Project, 2006).

Applying this to their own weekly reflections, the University students stated they felt empowered, and they demonstrated enhanced knowledge and leadership as they applied the theories to their own lives. Both University students and the community youth developed a critical consciousness of the social structures affecting their lives:

*...people then get excited and carried away with doing things that they haven't thought of before and it's more the politics of human relationships, it's about having an experience of finding that the system can deliver things for you on your behalf that could never be delivered before so in terms of politics and conscientiousness, it's about having higher expectations and also it's about people having experiences of working positively together with a wider range of human beings and so there's the politics of collaboration and working together (Ward, 2001)*

### SOCIAL JUSTICE BEGINS WITH SELF-DIRECTED GROUPWORK AND INTERRUPTED SPACES

Starting with an anti-oppression focus of self-directed groupwork and creating interrupted spaces where the youth are defining issues, the group helps them understand that this is not solitary work: you cannot carry out civic engagement and social justice work alone. They share and learn about themselves and each other as they confront their own stereotypes. In this manner, their consciousness begins to change. The University students also engage in the process confronting their own inherent biases. The enhanced consciousness and knowledge of social problems was used to support social relationships based upon active participation, mutuality, empathy, collaboration, and respect, recognizing common ground and experience. This in turn enables the students to be more effective in their work in the community and to develop skills they can use in their own communities in the future.

Becoming aware of the complex factors underlying unequal social interactions (a principle of Social Action) is an important step in meeting social justice goals. The focus is on connecting private troubles--their individual problems with public issues--and inequities resulting from policies and programs (Mills, 1970). Students were encouraged to see how the individual problems and behaviors of the youth connect to the issues of race and class in the community. In other words: *How are the individual problems and daily life events of the youth connected to oppression, systems of privilege, social policy, and inequality in the larger social and economic systems?* This is often overlooked, but using the Social Action process and the *WHY*, we can make the connections.



## *Social Ecology of Engaged Learning*

### **CONTEXTUALIZING LEARNING AND SERVICE**

Working with a population that is marginalized, stereotyped, and oppressed the interactions were asset based. The model recognized strengths of the young students' life experiences, as it supported their voice and agency in co-creating knowledge. We needed to keep in mind ways they could have an impact. The engagement focused on the social and cultural nature of learning (Bandura, 1994; John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Kolb, 2015; Leonard, 2011; Vygotsky, 1978), the diverse university student body, and providing multiple meaningful role models for the youth. Given the significance of basketball in the community (Woodbine, 2016), an all-star tournament was recognized as an important part of the program.

The model for this project grounded the University students in the theories of Vygotsky and Bronfenbrenner on learning and development. These theories acknowledge the significant role of culture and experiences with multiple meaningful relationships expressing care, challenging growth, sharing power, and expanding possibilities. The roles of caring adults in schools and connections with families have been documented as significant elements supporting satisfaction and success in public schools (Benson, Scales, Hamilton, & Sesma, 2006); De los Reyes, Nieto, & Diez, 2008). Knowledge is best accessed within the community context as younger and older members together carry out the activities of daily living (Thompson, 2004). Referred to as an "apprenticeship in thinking" (Rogoff, 2003), this is an intergenerational part of the developmental process through which children acquire the cultural tools of understanding their environment and giving meaning to their world.

Learning for the University students was understood as a cultural construction (John-Steiner & Mahn, 1996; Thompson, 2004; Vygotsky, 1978). Conversations became a source of learning, providing a means for intergenerational and intercultural exchange. Groups learn collaboratively through conversations that respect and give expression to their different cultural beliefs, activities, and ideologies (Elbaz-Luwisch & Orland-Barak, 2013, pp. 106-107). This emphasis on intergenerational and intercultural learning is integral to learning in diverse contexts. Such learning moves beyond simply knowing that children are from another culture to a rich sharing of cultural perspectives on life, traditions, and experiences (Lee, 2008).

Authentic learning is respectful, builds on mutual relationships, supports perspective-taking, and reflects intercultural understanding. When dominant cultural values and standards of learning are privileged and other cultural beliefs are marginalized, authentic learning is constrained, if not sacrificed, and other systems are impacted upon as well. (Kaufman & Rizzini, 2002).

When universities engage with communities, recognizing the cultural heritage and histories of participants is important. To contextualize the interactions between individuals and their environments, Bronfenbrenner discusses the impacts of historical changes, culture, and nationality (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The social address, where people were born, is more than a category of people with shared attributes. Culture and nationality are contexts for understanding the process of development, how meanings are constructed, and how values influence people in their daily lives (Rogoff, 2003).

Community engagement which is attentive to changes in people's social address and chronosystems opens up possibilities to develop creative approaches to authentic learning and to address both the root causes and impacts of community exclusion. Such community engagement provides universities with an opportunity to give priority to education that empowers citizens with knowledge, skills, and hope rather than education that tracks, trains, and marginalizes pupils (Palmer, 2010).

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### THE PROCESS AS METHODOLOGY

Activities on the day of the Youth Summit consisted of a basketball tournament, campus tours, lunch, and a visit and a short basketball game with the state attorney general, who is a former professional basketball player. The more academic part of the program followed this. An improvisational group performed vignettes on gun violence to which the youth were asked to respond. After the improv, the University students facilitated small groups of youth, guiding them through an activity in which they identified youth violence, which corresponded to defining “What is the problem?” Following this was an activity designed to address “Why is this is a problem?” To facilitate their thinking about root causes and consequences, participants drew trees to analyze root causes (the roots of the tree) and explore impacts (the leaves of the tree). From their analysis, they were able to identify what they could do as individuals and what they thought their schools and the community should do. After this, they wrote letters to the attorney general telling her in what manner they thought her office could be helpful. They ended with reflecting on how they felt and what they learned.

Activities such as playing basketball, visiting campus, and having lunch together are different ways to break down the barriers among the similarly diverse youth and University students and bring them into an interrupted space for conversation --- leading to groupwork and social action. In the process, the voices of the youth were heard, and they thought critically and were empowered. Their letters to the state attorney general are tangible fruits of agency, efficiency, and civic engagement.

Multiple methods of data collection were utilized at the *All Star Anti-Violence Youth Summit*: attendance sheets with name and grade of all attendees; exit assessments asking what they learned and how they might use it in the future, information about what they liked and found helpful, what they would have liked to have seen done differently. The youth letters and pictures of the work they did in their analysis of root causes and impacts were analyzed as well. The University student facilitators took notes on their sessions and reflected on strengths and aspects they thought could be improved.

### FINDINGS AND RESULTS

At the end of the day of the Youth Summit, forty-four students (68%) handed in written evaluation forms on what they liked about the activities, what would make the summit better, what they learned, and what three things they could do to prevent gun violence. There was a common agreement that the youth liked playing basketball and enjoyed doing the posters which identified root causes and impacts. The youth liked the open discussion and the fact that everyone participated, including the adults. When they were asked about things they could do to prevent gun violence, many of them simply said to have an open dialogue, speak up, be a leader, to stand up, and help others. A few students stated that simply walking away also would prevent gun violence, and a few mentioned organizing programs to prevent such situations. One quote that captured learning was from the youth who wrote, “No voice is too small to make a difference.”

For the University students, final reflection papers and course evaluations provided evidence as to how their engagement enabled them to apply theory to practice, gain insights into their own implicit biases, and believe in the transformative process and impact of civic engagement. They learned about themselves, culturally sensitive models of social change, and the ability of young people to act on their own behalf.

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### **THEMES IDENTIFIED IN YOUTH SUMMIT LETTERS**

The youth letters to the attorney general showed findings of four related themes: gun control, community resources, education enhancement, and a more connected law enforcement. At the policy level, stricter gun laws, cracking down on illegal gun ownership, more working cameras on the streets, and quicker and better emergency response systems were among the refrains about guns and safety. Suggestions for curtailing gun violence included stricter consequences for illegal transfer of guns, gun license checks, age restrictions for purchase of guns, and a record of community gun owners. One group of youth felt that workshops and programs on anger management would be helpful for people who had been incarcerated for gun-related offenses. Another group felt more attention was needed to address bullying and the role of the social media.

Regarding community resources, the youth wrote that it would be more beneficial if there were more community activities and events to encourage civic participation. Every response mentioned more indoor activities for the youth: in schools, in the community, and outside the community. They were clear about the need to develop more safe places such as community centers to allow them to stay off the streets. They referred to places that may be considered *interrupted spaces* for positive youth development.

Many youths came up with suggestions around education enhancement, namely having field trips, summer programs, after-school activities, sports, as well as arts and crafts. They also suggested raising awareness of violence by having the attorney general's office provide information, conduct workshops, and send guest speakers to schools. Some students suggested getting rid of metal detectors in schools because they were putting fear into the students.

The youth also had a lot to say about law enforcement. They hoped to see more police officers in the streets and parks, including some from within the communities that they served. Other youth suggestions include more training for law enforcements on how to deal with people of color and better and quicker emergency response systems.

In addition to the agency and empowerment impact on the youth, the youth summit has obvious efficacy effect on the University students. After a semester-long process to help prepare for the event, these University students saw for themselves the fruits of their civic engagement efforts on the day of the summit. Seeing the youth's response to their group facilitation is itself an affirmation of the efficacy of their labor. The maturity of the youth's suggestions, some of which are not unlike adult comments on the gun violence issue, further attests to the potential of their participation in giving youth a voice.

To the schools the youth came from, the findings point to opportunities for further collaboration inside and outside of the school setting. The youths' recommendations to the attorney general also reflect their underlying concern for safety in the communities or even schools. For the right community issues directly affecting the youth, cultivating the youth voice in an appropriate setting at a larger scale will have greater and longer-lasting impact on the youth and the community. Aggregating the youth voice may supplement other community voices schools collect regularly through formal channels such as parent-teacher associations or student clubs. With its extensive reach of students, schools are important partners in this effort.

**Social Ecology of Engaged Learning****CONCLUSION**

Even more important than the substance of the youth's suggestion to combat violence is that the majority of them at the Summit expressed their voice. This is a diverse group of youth living in Boston's urban neighborhoods. When they were given the opportunity to voice their opinion on an issue directly affecting them, their young age was no barrier to their speaking out. The University students, through service-learning, facilitated a safe environment for inter-cultural and inter-generational conversations with tangible results.

Because of the letters, the partnership will continue and be brought into ten additional middle schools as an afterschool program staffed by coaches, teachers, and University students. With young people, generally, and particularly when working with youth in working-poor communities of color, applying theories that promote critical thinking and encourage action to change oppressive conditions and power relations can provide opportunities for enhancing efficacy and agency. Learning and social-emotional development thrive with interactions that are in safe spaces, allow for open communication, acknowledge the complex economic factors impacting their lives, focus on strengths, encourage risk taking, ignore marginalized statuses, address power dynamics, and contextualize mutual respect.

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## KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

**British Social Action:** Developed in the 1970s, Social Action is a philosophy and theory for social change based on the work of Paolo Freire, the tenets of Popular Education, and influenced in the United Kingdom by the disability movement, black activists, and the women's movement. Participation and empowerment are key components in this form of practice that is committed to social change and social justice through a five part group process consisting of defining a problem, analyzing why it exists, deciding on a change effort, carrying out the social change activity, and reflecting throughout.

**Critical Service-Learning:** An approach to service-learning that uses a lens focusing on power relationships, authenticity, and a social change perspective (Mitchell, 2008). University students apply theory to practice as they work with community groups to support their agenda for community development and social justice.

**Ecological Systems Theory:** Based on the work of Urie Bronfenbrenner, the focus is on the mutual influence of social systems in order to understand how changes in one's environment can alter traditional relationships and arrangements. Making connections across systems and within an historical and cultural context leads to connections with policies and practices affecting individuals, families, and communities.

**Interrupted Spaces:** Based on the work of Bolson and Gale (2012) interrupted space is a method of practice that brings people together in partnerships that promote hope, respect, trust, and inclusive learning. The traditional roles, statuses, and marginalized identities that serve to separate people are interrupted in a group process that is deliberately interrupting the status quo.

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**Positive Youth Development:** Principles, practices, and policies that build on the strengths of young people; highlight activities that foster competencies, character, connections, contribution, and confidence; and nurture youth growth and development in spaces where they can learn and take risks.

**Self-Directed Groupwork:** Developed by Audrey Mullender and Dave Ward (Mullender, Ward, & Fleming, 2013), this is a method to facilitate the movement of the groups from individual members experiencing assorted problems to becoming a collective body taking ownership of the group and action on its behalf. This methodology incorporates the values of empowerment, participation, and anti-oppression practice. It has been used along with British Social Action as a process to achieve empowerment for groups addressing unequal power structures.

**Socio-Cultural Development:** Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that all learning is social and develops as part of a dialogical process. Learning and development are based in social and cultural interactions where young people learn to make meaning of their world. Later learning is enhanced by experiencing multiple, meaningful relationships across systems expressing care, challenging growth, sharing power, and expanding possibilities.



## Chapter 12

# Writing Partners: Bridging the Personal and Social in the Service–Learning Classroom

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter describes and analyzes a writing assignment, an oral history project, developed for a college-level service-learning composition class. In bridging the writer with a single community partner and inviting the pair to jointly compose a memoir, this assignment can create a successful service-learning experience by engaging students and community members in projects that are beneficial and hold important personal, social, and political implications. The chapter also considers how the project, up to this point used successfully in local service communities, might fare in international service learning contexts.*

### INTRODUCTION

Belmont University, a private regional comprehensive university in the South, made experiential learning a required part of its general education curriculum in 2005. Students must take two experiential learning (EL) courses at Belmont which

*include an out-of-class component that involves the students in “doing” an aspect of the course. These active learning experiences complement the students’ in-class learning. Essentially, the experience applies the course of study, giving it greater resonance, while the classroom studies give the students’ “doing” greater contextualization” (Belmont University Experiential Learning, n.d.)*

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Belmont University is not alone in this move toward experiential learning as part of students' general education requirements, nor are they alone in including service-learning under the "experiential" umbrella. Service-learning programs have grown as a result of national organizations like Campus Compact, American Association of Higher Education, and Council for Adult Experiential Learning. Service-learning in higher education is a powerful way to engage students with the local and global communities in which they live and work, as well as increase their cultural competencies and sense of civic responsibility. Barbara Jacoby (2015) defines service-learning as "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs, together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes" (p. 2). Its benefits are being noted across college campuses and at academic conferences more each year. Butin (2010) further highlights these benefits:

*Service learning advocates point to research demonstrating that service-learning enhances student outcomes (cognitive, affective, and ethical), fosters a more active citizenry, promotes a "scholarship of engagement" among teachers and institutions, supports a more equitable society and connects colleges and universities with their local and regional communities. (p. 3)*

As service-learning programs continue to grow and develop, Eby (1998) and others note that service-learning practitioners are in need of robust, vibrant examples of successful service-learning assignments if they are to evolve beyond programmatic and logistical concerns. This chapter offers one such assignment—an oral history project assignment developed for a college-level writing class, which is adaptable to a variety of grade levels and individual contexts. In this assignment, student writers are linked with community partners, and together they either compose joint memoirs centered around a common theme (such as family, loss, or addiction), or they collaborate to produce an oral history of the community partner's life. This project has been implemented successfully in an upper-division college course for English majors, but it could be easily adapted for general education writing, humanities, or social science courses; study abroad courses; or high school writing courses. In bridging the writer with a community partner through a long-term writing project, this assignment can create a successful service-learning experience by engaging students and community members in projects that are mutually beneficial: the students receive valuable experience in a real-world writing context and develops a deeper understanding of their community through interactions with the writing partner, while the writing partner receives a polished piece of life writing and an opportunity to tell a story that may not otherwise be heard by a wider audience. It can, in other words, invite the writing partners to empathetically engage with each other as they collaborate.

## CONNECTING WRITING AND SERVICE-LEARNING THEORIES

Most scholarship on the teaching of writing comes from the field of Rhetoric and Composition, which focuses on the theory and practice of teaching writing. Traditionally, composition and rhetoric pedagogy and service-learning pedagogy have intersected in one of two ways. In the first, the activity of writing has been imported into any number of interdisciplinary service-learning classrooms, often in the form of journals and reflective essays, as a way to keep tabs on and record students' experiences with their community partners. In this pedagogical model, writing is a mode of learning that helps students

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process what they have seen, done, and learned (Emig, 1977). Fulwiler (1987) calls journals a genre where students can “find meaning in the world by exploring it through language—through their own easy talky language, not the language of textbook and teacher” (p. 1). Through the use of colloquial diction, first-person pronouns, informal punctuation, “the rhythms of everyday speech,” and experimentation, students are able, Fulwiler says, to focus on cognitive activities conducive to critical thinking: observing, questioning, speculating, digressing, synthesizing, and revising (Fulwiler, 1987, p. 2-3). Journaling is itself a mode of reflective writing, defined by Yancey (1998) as the tripartite action of projection (goal-setting and looking forward), review (looking back over what has happened), and revision (re-casting one’s thinking and writing in light of what has happened). Thus, reflective writing and journaling, like the act of composing in general, facilitate what Berthoff (1981) calls “the making of meaning,” and writing in the service-learning classroom allows students to grapple with the complexities of their experience while moving theory into practice and back again—or, at least, it should.

The National Service Learning Clearinghouse considers reflection to be a “core component” of service-learning. Eyler and Giles (1999), too, point to the importance of reflection in service-learning contexts, arguing that “learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection, not simply through being able to recount what has been learned through reading and lecture” (p. 7). However, Anson (1997) notes that, while the goal of reflective writing in the service-learning classroom is “to encourage a movement between observation and intellectual analysis or consciousness-raising, and conversely to apply abstract concepts (such as citizenship, public ethics, or social justice) to contexts beyond the classroom” (p. 167), the lack of attention paid to assessing and responding to that reflective writing has long allowed students to spout simplistic platitudes and vague generalities in place of genuine “meaning making,” as Berthoff (1981) would say. Anson (1997) encourages service-learning teachers to promote journals “not as a place for idle contemplation or the passive recording of feelings, moods, or new experiences but as a place to actively explore difficult problems in which they, as members of their culture and community, may be implicated, if only by their inaction” (p. 172). In other words, journals and other reflective genres should reflect difficult, messy critical thinking instead of tidy moralizing. Similarly, Deans (2000) finds simple reflection problematic in the service-learning classroom; he calls this kind of composing “writing about” the community, and he posits this writing about as inferior to two other models—writing for and writing with (p. 16). While reflective writing in the service-learning classroom can “create the connection between academic coursework and the immediate social, political, and interpersonal experiences of community-based activities” (Anson, 1997, p. 167), the indiscriminate use of writing in the service-learning classroom is a risky proposition: an activity that can lend the appearance of learning without the substance. When used critically, however, reflective writing can help students—and their instructors—process the “intellectual surprises” of service-learning (Anson, 1997, p. 167).

In the second, converse, relationship, service-learning as an activity has been imported into the writing classroom as a way to provide content, context, and practical weight to the act of composing. This intersection is natural in some ways, as modern composition pedagogy traces its roots back to classical rhetorical education with its focus on speaking and writing for the agora. Whereas rhetoric in ancient Greece and Rome was conceived almost entirely as a public art, by the middle of the twentieth century it had become quite private—compositions written by students for teachers. A number of scholars have revived classical rhetorical for the modern composition classroom, revising ancient rhetorical concepts such as *dissoi logoi*, *imitatio*, and *topoi* for contemporary students (Corbett & Connors, 1998; Crowley & Hawhee, 2011). But another approach involves pitching student writing for larger, broader audiences—what Peter Mortensen (1998) calls “going public.”



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One way to do this, of course, is through service-learning writing. “Given the roles rhetoricians have historically played in the politics of their communities,” Cushman (1996) declares in “The Rhetorician as an Agent of Social Change,” “I believe modern rhetoric and composition scholars can be agents of social change outside the university” (p. 7). Writing teachers have responded to Cushman’s call by, among other methods, designing composition classes around service-learning activities. Instructors who organize their classes around service-learning projects praise the “real” rhetorical context it provides, the authority it grants students, and the investment in process and product by both students and teachers (Arca, 1997; Bacon, 1997; Deans, 2000; Fleming, 2010; Heilker, 1997; Walters, 2002).

Once service-learning courses began to flourish in the 1990s, composition scholars began paying attention to the pedagogical “microrevolution” that occurred as it was studied and theorized beyond “logistical and administrative issues” (Adler-Kassner, Crooks, & Watters, 1997). As mentioned previously, Deans (2000) distinguishes between service-learning composition pedagogies: those which ask students to write for the community and those which ask students to write with the community. He advocates these approaches, as opposed to those which ask students to write about the community, because they “invite students to use writing itself as a tool to expand their involvement in activity and genre systems beyond college classrooms and academic disciplines” (p. 290). Similarly, Heilker (1997) identifies four types of service learning in the composition classroom. The first is that which supplies content for composition classes, wherein students reflect, separate from their experience, on the act of doing community service. The second is that which “construes the experience of doing community work as research—research to be used as a work consulted or work cited for a term paper or as a basis for criticizing an author’s treatment of a topic” (p. 74). Another links the service component to “coursework that critiques the systemic inequities and injustices that make service work necessary in the first place.” The last, according to Adler-Kassner, uses the service work to help teachers “concentrate on developing students’ acumen with academic writing” (as cited in Heilker, 1997, p. 74). Heilker (1997), like Deans (2000), proposes a fifth model: a service-learning composition class wherein “students actually complete essential writing tasks for the nonprofit agencies in which they are placed,” a context which “offers students real rhetorical situations in which to work: real tasks, real audiences, real purposes for writing” (p. 75).

In these and other models of service-learning that put community partners and public audiences back in the composition classroom, Fleming (2010) sees a “recasting” of rhetorical education, one that has involved “a literal (and not just conceptual or metaphoric) move away from school and toward society, away from the classroom and toward the community, away from solitary, impractical exercise in decontextualized skills and toward situated, collaborative, concrete human action” (p. 214). In other words, rhetoric and composition as a field has come full circle, re-entering the public sphere. This recasting renders learning “both more authentic—because it is oriented to the particular, local, and embedded—and more radical—because it encourages students to question and chance the world rather than merely reproduce it” (p. 215)—though ultimately Fleming cautions against the “academic self-hatred” that sometimes marks rhetoric’s public (re)turn, arguing that we should “avoid all forms of binary thinking about school and society...[and] adopt a more Janus-faced attitude to school and society, focused on what each does best educationally” (p. 225). Put another way, writing teachers should not see service-learning as a panacea for the modern composition classroom but rather embrace its potential to add depth and nuance to a course.

So again, scholars caution against the uncritical adoption of service-learning for “content” alone; without critical reflection students can be easily lulled into a sense of volunteerism, which can in turn abet the “savior mentality” service-learning practitioners caution against. As Coles (1993) reminds

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those who would require service of their students, the Latin “root of the word ‘volunteer’ is voluntas--a choice--which comes from velle, to wish” (p. 85). Merely wishing that one’s service, no matter how well-intentioned, will do some good is not enough; students must be asked to examine critically their service and its implications.

As a field that has nurtured cultural studies and critical pedagogies, composition studies is well outfitted to articulate the problems with volunteerism and noblesse oblige. Flower (1997) identifies the “insidious” problem that “well-meaning volunteerism can unwittingly replicate the social structures [that define] some people as the knowledgeable servers while casting others as the clients, patients, or the educationally deficient” (p. 96) and argues for classrooms where “community problem-solving dialogue” might “transform community service into an educating inquiry (p. 104). This collaboration, she says, would “let students and community members seek out, interpret, and negotiate culturally diverse perspectives on live issues and their human consequences” (p. 105). Indeed, Delano-Oriaran (2012) reminds scholars incorporating culturally engaging service-learning pedagogy that “community engagement and empowerment is a critical element that can impact the success of the entire process of a service-learning project. It is based upon the following assumptions: collaboration, mutual reciprocity, self and collective empowerment, and partnership” (p. 405). This idea of partnership echoes Schutz and Gere (1999), who admit that a focus on service-learning “provides a ready and practical solution” for teachers who want to connect their students with “the situated complexities of issues and communities outside the classroom” (p. 180) but warn that “instead of assuming that what they offer is automatically of use, students need to discover how they might contribute to a local context with a history and set of complex issues all its own.... Students need to begin not as teachers but as learners in a community setting” (p. 197).

Ver Beek (2002) agrees that a “learner” stance, as opposed to a “servant” stance, is the key to meaningful service-learning work. The “vast majority” of service learning projects result in:

*learning that is mediocre at best. Students and professors are intruding into poor peoples’ lives, often trying to fix things they do not understand. This type of service often causes volunteers to think better of themselves, worse of the poor, and makes them too busy to take full advantage of their learning opportunities. More importantly, this service based on superficial understanding seldom empowers the poor or builds up their capacity. It is often neither equitable nor sustainable. (p. 55-56)*

The solution, he says, is to focus on the learning rather than the service. He recounts two separate service projects in Honduras, one where students built houses and one where they simply interacted with the Honduran people to learn about their lives: “the coordinator said he felt very blessed by [our] visit. He said it was the first time that a group had come to humbly listen to the people, visit their farms and houses, and see how their lives were changing, without some other agenda. He said he felt very encouraged by the fact that they cared enough to be willing to come ‘just to learn’ from the people” (p. 62). Ver Beek reminds readers that they must carefully consider “whether or not the service-learner is truly learning how to better understand the world, its problems, and how to best address them. The most common message that seems to be transmitted in service-learning efforts is that a poor person has a need, and the student can and should fix it” (p. 65). Helpfully, Cushman (1996) supplies the language of “reciprocity” to help teachers and scholars think through the negotiation of power and privilege that necessarily attends any work that aligns community members with representatives from the university. Cushman argues that students and professors in the academy should be transparent about the exchange of services and power that attends any academic’s work in the community, including the work of service-learning. However,

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Dostillo, et al. (2012) refine the language of reciprocity in service-learning by articulating three potential “orientations” toward reciprocal learning--orientations toward exchange, toward influence, and toward generativity--and argue that reciprocity is a matter of not only mutual benefit but also of mutual trust, respect, communication, and risk-taking.

The most lauded service-learning models are those that place students in “real” rhetorical contexts--public writing for public audiences (Deans, 2000; Heilker, 1997). This essay contends that the same framework could be applied to personal writing, in particular, an oral history assignment. In this model, student writers are paired with community partners, and together the pairs compose the community member’s memoir. Though the memoir is more personal than, say, a newsletter or website--often the genres produced in more publicly focused service-learning courses--the audience and rhetorical context are no less “real.” As collaborators on a life writing project, the students are providing valuable service to community members, whose stories might otherwise go unwritten. In return, students are receiving the valuable practice with the task of collaborative writing. Perhaps more importantly, students may develop greater empathy as a result of service-learning writing, as Lundy (2007) has demonstrated.

## **MOVING THEORY INTO PRACTICE: ORAL HISTORY AND SERVICE-LEARNING**

In the college-level writing classroom, personal writing assignments have been criticized by composition scholars like Faigley (1992) and Bartholomae (1995) for their lack of attention to intellectual or macro sociopolitical issues. The impact of personal writing on students’ growth remains under-investigated because of this opposition. Faigley (1992) questions the authenticity of personal writing: “Why is writing about potentially embarrassing and painful aspects of one’s life considered more honest than, say... [the] student who tries to figure out what Thucydides was up to in writing about the Peloponnesian War?” (p. 121). Bartholomae (1995) also discounts the emphasis of personal writing as “sentimental realism,” and he finds the genre “corrupt” (p. 488).

Bartholomae (1995) further argues that composition classes should teach students to become critical, academic writers, and he would argue that this cannot happen through a focus on personal writing. The focus on expressivism--a writing pedagogy that promotes the notion of process over product and emphasizes freedom, expression, discovery, and a search for the writer’s authentic self--is viewed by Bartholomae (1995) as non-academic and even dangerous, particularly in required composition courses, stating, “I don’t want my students to celebrate what would then become the natural and inevitable details of their lives” (p. 488). However, why would opponents of expressivism invite students to investigate the community and culture they live in, but not their own lives?

According to opponents of expressivism and personal writing, writing classrooms should teach about the public, not the private... what students think, not what they feel. The result of such divisions, evocative of previous centuries’ separation of the public sphere (defined as male) and the private sphere (defined as female), is dangerous. Anderson and MacCurdy (2000) challenge this dichotomy as false with their definition of writing as “...an ongoing, recursive process in which self and community challenge, affirm, serve, and extend each other in the drama of personal and public history” (p. 17). Students come to the writing classroom with many literacies or discourses—personal, cultural, global. Connors (1987) suggests that personal writing is valuable precisely because it can serve as a launch pad for investigations into broader social and cultural issues:

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*The question persists as to what place personal stories and citing personal observations should have in the process of teaching students to write...but as teachers, we always have to encourage, even demand attempts at the next step—to go beyond merely personal accounts, either outside into encompassing the world in discourse, or inside into shaping our personal observations into the touching, deeply empathetic and finally metapersonal stuff of which the greatest writing is made. (p. 180-181)*

Writing about topics generated from their lived experiences, students are well positioned to then investigate contextual issues in a more traditionally “academic” way. For example, students who have struggled with addiction may begin by writing a personal account, but they could then move to research the War on Drugs and its effects on federal and state drug policies, law enforcement, and incarceration rates. Thus, student-writers should be invited to write personal stories within community discourses as a way to more effectively understand the historical and political realities in which they live and write. Witherell and Noddings (1991) explain: “Through telling, writing, reading, and listening to life stories—one’s own and others’—those engaged in this work can penetrate cultural barriers, discover the power of the self and integrity of the other, and deepen their understanding of their respective histories and possibilities” (p. 4). Understanding the self is a first step in understanding one’s neighbor, which in turn is a first step in understanding one’s culture and community as a whole.

### Writing in and With the Community

In order to respond to this need for cultural understanding and engagement, one college-level writing professor designed a service-learning writing course titled “Writing in the Community” around this very idea of empathetic engagement. In this course, students were invited to explore a range of communities and their place within them—from local communities, such as a halfway house for recovering addicts and sex workers, an assisted living facility, a school in an urban area, to global communities like the Eating Disorder International Coalition. Students picked a particular group to research and were then assigned a partner from that group—an elderly resident of the assisted living facility, for example, or a resident of the halfway house (see Appendix I for Community Partnership Proposal Form). Students also analyzed their own, their peers’, and published writing to learn more about writing conventions, research options, stylistic alternatives, and audience expectations. The course goals, listed on the syllabus, highlight how the main course assignment—the oral history project—is organized as a service-learning educational experience:

*By the end of the course, students will do the following:*

- *Engage in a 15-hour service-learning project that employs oral history through community engagement, reflection, and collaborative writing*
- *Produce 12-15 pages of polished life writing to be shared with community partner*
- *Apply service-learning theory to experiential practice in a 3-5 page process memo, to be turned in with oral history project*
- *Develop an understanding of service-learning theory as it relates to personal and social rhetoric, as evidenced by class discussions and online discussion board posts*
- *Enhance writing and research skills*

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The assignment sheet for the service-learning project further elucidates the course goals:

*Memoir/Oral History Project: This community writing project can take place in one of the following three ways, and the formal written project should be 12-15 pages in length:*

**Option 1:** *The student and community member draft their memoirs together by writing together weekly, sharing drafts, prompting each other with questions for further investigation, etc. They will present their life stories together at the final collaboration presentation/reading.*

**Option 2:** *The student will assist their community partner in the writing of her life story through an oral history project. The student will ask questions, record the community member's life story, and they will craft her memoir together weekly. The community member's life story will be presented at the final collaboration presentation/reading.*

**Option 3:** *Like Option 2, the student will assist their community partner in the writing of her life story through an oral history project. The student will ask questions, record the community member's life story, and they will craft her memoir together. In addition, the student writer will incorporate stories from both the community member's life and their own life to compose a connected memoir. An excerpt from both sections of the memoir will be presented at the final collaboration presentation/reading.*

## Oral Histories: Memoirs of Service-Learners and Community Partners

As evidenced by course evaluations, the end-of-semester reading that gathered students and community partners, the lasting relationships forged by students and community partners, post-course interviews, and--in one case--the published writing that came out of the oral history collaboration, this project was overwhelmingly successful. Many students and community members made the decision to write out of times of deep loss. For example, one student, Bethany, wrote alongside an international student from an urban high school, and they both found tumultuous familial relationships as their focus. Bethany opens her memoir with the following: "Reverend Charlie T. Kittrell. His name still sends chills down my spine. He was a bastard. This man raped my mom. This man was her dad." Another student, Katy, collaborated with Jewel, an 82-year-old resident at Morningside, an assisted-living facility adjacent to campus. Although Katy invited Jewel to share stories from across her life, every week Jewel recounted stories from her early childhood, including the deaths of her two sisters. The details of her sister Pearl's death when she was just four are moving: "I can still see her little frame lying static in our bed. Mama put copper nickels over her eyelids to keep them closed. When it came time for her funeral, I didn't own any socks that didn't have holes in them; Mama had to borrow a pair from our neighbor, Maria Rice."

Another moving memoir comes from Beverly, a "sister" of Magdalene House, a halfway house for recovering sex workers. Mackenzie worked with Beverly to recount her life story, and they chose abuse as the focus of the project. Beverly explained at the end of the semester that although she certainly could have shared stories solely from her addiction or her life as a sex worker, the abuse that runs throughout her life seems clearest still. In the collaborative memoir, Mackenzie demonstrates that abuse in palpable ways:

*I woke up on the floor. I couldn't see anything. Were my eyes really open? Was I dreaming? What happened; who did this to me? My stream of conscious ran wild. I took deep breaths; calm down, get yourself together. I tried to get myself up and could barely see that he was lying on the couch watching TV.*



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*“I think... I need to go to the hospital, I think I need help.” I thought. I struggled to mumble these words but it hurt. I was half way sobbing, not knowing what was happening.*

*“F\*\*\* you. I’m not taking you anywhere. You’ll jus’ turn me in.” He barked.*

*I got up and stumbled my way up the stairs, feeling very disoriented and dizzy. I made it up to the bathroom and when I caught a glimpse in the mirror my heart stopped and my whole body was seized. My own reflection sent me into shock and I passed out only to wake up once more in a state of confusion. I called a cab to take me to the hospital; I didn’t want an ambulance, nor to make a scene. As the cab driver pulled up to the house, I stammered out the front lawn and spilled myself into the backseat.*

*“H, Hah, Hos-al, Pla...” I uttered, I couldn’t move my face; my jaw was broken. The cab driver was horrified at the sight of me.*

*“Who did this to you! Who did this to you!” he screamed.*

*He drove as fast as he could to the hospital and must have warned them on the way, because they were waiting for me.*

*When I walked in the lady behind the wide desk gasped in awe. “Don’t blow your nose, don’t blow your nose, it could be brain matter. Here, here sit down,” she cried. Then darkness.*

Other community members focused on issues ranging from marriages and relationships, moving from Iran, addiction, and struggling with eating disorders. As they formed relationships with their community partners, collected the intimate details of their lives, and then collaboratively shaped those details into memoirs, students were invited to move beyond mere observation to empathy.

In order to successfully implement the oral history project, it is most important to establish a naturally discursive environment that integrates personal and social rhetoric and depends on the community’s ability to be supportive, critical, and united. Students worked to connect academic knowledge within community contexts from the start of their partnerships, which contributed to their overwhelming success. The course readings, particularly Coles’ (1993) *A Call to Service*, supports the careful and conscientious process of merging the academy and the community, and the students read and analyzed the global issues surrounding service-learning (such as problems with volunteerism), as well as studied their individual community organizations before the partnership began. Community-Campus Partnerships for Health (n.d.) further supports the need for this connection to help establish strong and effective partnerships with the following principles:

1. Agreed-upon goals and values on how to progress toward accomplishing them
2. Mutual trust, respect, authenticity, and commitment
3. A balance of power and sharing of resources
4. Open and accessible communication
5. Commitment to spending the time it takes to develop these elements (2001)

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Across the semester, as students focused on the idea of place and displacement within communities, they read texts such as Jeanette Walls's *The Glass Castle* and Maya Angelou's (1969) *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, which confront issues such as age, ability, economic status, and race. It is crucial to introduce students to critical and creative texts early in the semester before the partnerships begin in order to acknowledge the possible socio-economic differences between the students and the individuals with whom they will partner. In an end-of-semester reflection, one student, Anneke, explained her growing understanding of social rhetoric across both the theory and practice of the course and how the service-learning experience impacted her attitude, values, and actions surrounding these important issues:

*Service-learning gave the class the unique opportunity to take a writing course combined with first-hand experiences related to the topics; these experiences would guide our critical thinking about the issues that were being read and researched. It was an active and engaging way to broaden my understanding, particularly in how economic status affects an individual, as it related to the woman I was eventually partnered with. And although you showed us that there is an argument that writing courses such as this "raise issues of class distinctions and replicate divisions between the service provider and the service recipient ... [students] replicate condescending models of charity and missionary work that do more to undermine than advance the goals of multicultural education and social transformation" (Julier, 2001, p. 142). However, in this course I discovered that my fellow students and I were not so much focused on making social changes or counseling as we were in being able to articulate well what we were learning about social mindfulness. The passion for this stemmed from our desire to write the stories of our partners honestly (Doeve, 2015, p.1).*

The classroom community also discussed how knowing and studying memoirs, psychology, and social justice texts guides the conversation for an understanding of and awareness for the community authors' circumstances and for the students' place in the midst of these stories.

It is also powerful for students to understand their experiences as socially constituted; therefore, as responders, teachers should continually invite students to engage in the social and political constructs surrounding their experiences. In their end-notes attached to the response rubric applied throughout the drafting and revision process (Appendix II), teachers could recommend an outside text on their subject, ask them to research a particular idea presented in the essay, or tell them about community and cultural events connected to their topics. As evidenced throughout these various students' examples, the writing classroom can be an important site for recognizing and understand the experiences of others, honoring their stories, and initiating social change through awareness and action.

As students are encouraged to acknowledge the social situatedness of this project, they shift away from introspection and toward research and reflection, which enables teachers to focus their responses on issues of writing growth. Throughout the semester, students moved through the writing process while completing the project through individual writing conferences, peer response workshops, and the submission of professional drafts for teacher response and evaluation. These activities help students see their writing process as social, collaborative, and recursive; students were motivated to revise their writing because they wanted to make their community partners proud. Anneke, a student mentioned above, moved her oral history project into a public space through publication in the *Undergraduate Journal of Service Learning and Community-Based Research*. The opening of Anneke's community partner's story is raw and painful:

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*I grew up in East Tennessee. It's a little town, but you won't believe how much stuff goes on. The drugs, the violence. I been surrounded by it my whole life cause my mom done it. Yeah, my mom done it. The first time I ever smoked pot I was five year old. I'm not even playin'. My mom gave it to me. I come home from school, from kindergarten, I remember it to this day. I mighta been six. I come in from kindergarten and I said, "Mommy, you gonna have to quit. You gonna have to stop. It's gonna kill you, blah blah blah." I was cryin', I was so upset. She was always just layin' there on the couch, an' bein' so little, it made me so scared. She's like, "No, it doesn't. It's not gonna hurt you. I promise." She said, "Here, I'm gonna show you it's not gon' hurt you. It's like a cigarette."*

*So my mom gave me some pot, tryna show me that it wasn't bad. Well, I got it in my mouth – I didn't inhale, I was little, I didn't know. She was like you gotta – and she showed me to take a big breath - and I started coughin'. I puked and some more stuff. I was feelin' so sick. And she left me. Out in the yard, layin' on my back, just starin' because I was so messed up. And I liked the way it made me feel. I wasn't worried, I wasn't upset, it just pushed all them things.... Away.*

*Cause I had to be... mom. And I was so little and had so many worries. But yeah, I had to be mom. I started takin' care of my sisters and brother cause she would just pass out. My brother would be hungry, and I'd have to lift her shirt up and put him on her boob. I learned how to make eggs in the microwave for my sisters, and I bet they were so nasty, but they ate 'em cause they were hungry. I remember goin' out in the garden - and watching mom, I knew how to do it – dig up potatoes, and we would eat 'em with the peelin' on 'em. I didn't know how to peel 'em. (Doeve, 2015, p. 3-4)*

In the introduction published along with the oral history, Anneke explains the collaboration between herself and her community partner, Belaina, and her understanding of collaborative writing as an example of writing as social action:

*Together, Belaina and I wrote the story of her life through weekly conversations, crafting her memoir one day at a time. Coming from a past community where her reality was minimized, she was eager to tell me all that had happened to her. I asked her permission to record audio of our time together, and would take it home to construct something I hoped she would be proud of. Her tragic story was difficult to listen to over and over in my home, and she had given me all the details. For weeks, the heaviness of it filled me with compassion for her and anyone with experiences like hers, and drove me to write her story well. I felt passionately that this should be mine and Belaina's most honest work. Belaina was special because she was determined to have the stamp of her name on this piece. She fervently told me what has happened in her life, speaking openly of the tragedies and the joyful moments.*

*Simultaneously, I was in class reading and discussing the beauty and enlightenment of telling one's stories. When reading the extraordinary Maya Angelou, this quote stood out: "If growing up is painful for the Southern Black girl, being aware of her displacement is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat. It is an unnecessary insult" (1969). I came to realize the importance of this project and of the woman vulnerably sharing her identity with me. It was a safe place to expose her story, because Belaina had control over what she shared, how it would be interpreted, and how it was told. Being a witness to her self-awareness was life-changing. (Doeve, 2015, p. 2)*

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By acknowledging Belaina's agency in the collaboration, and in grounding their writing in the work of Maya Angelou, Anneke brings Belaina's experience into relief against existing narratives and demonstrates the power of this project to foster mutual respect, mutual goal-setting, and mutual benefits.

## Mutual Reciprocity

Since the conclusion of that course, a majority of the students have remained actively engaged in both local and global communities. For example, Bethany, now a PICU nurse, explained that many of the children she cares for have been abused, and her experience grappling with her own and her writing partner's history of abuse has allowed her to better empathize with them. Katy is studying history in graduate school, which she became interested in while recording Jewel's oral history project. And Mackenzie and Bethany still meet monthly for coffee, while Mackenzie volunteers at Magdalene House, the community program where Beverly recovered from her life of abuse and prostitution.

The post-course interviews conducted with Mackenzie and Beverly demonstrate the long-term mutual benefits of the oral history project. When asked to reflect on what she took away from the partnership two years after the conclusion of the collaboration, Beverly responded:

*My time spent with Mackenzie was very "releasing" for me as in being "released from prison." That may be a thought not many can wrap their mind around unless they have been there. Often times, after years of abuse and addiction, the horrific pain we have experienced is held inside and bottled up or "shelved", a part of ourselves not many are willing to talk about for fear of being judged. I am so grateful I was able to talk to Mackenzie and very blessed she was able to put my words to paper in such a loving and caring way. It was, to say the least, extremely healing.*

Mackenzie, the college student partnered with Magdalene House and Beverly, echoed Beverly's experience:

*It's hard to really say how I feel about the course and my experience with Beverly in a few sentences. Working with Beverly was very inspiring, I could not have spent enough time with her and I think our partnership is what led me to love the project so much. After hearing her story and putting it in words, it was even more beautiful to share in class. To come together to read our final projects was simply incredible. It was definitely a milestone in my life, in that it confirmed my belief that everyone has their own story, and there is not a single story that doesn't deserve to be heard.*

Both women, it seems, came away from the project satisfied with the result and pleased to connect with each other so deeply. Another student, Bethany, reflected two years after the conclusion of the course:

*The most memorable event of "Writing in the Community" was the final reading of my memoir. Sharing about the most difficult struggle of life was anything but easy. However, somehow by sharing, I realized I was not alone. Somehow, the community, the class and the group gathered there, allowed me to restore the broken pieces of my family. I truly feel like writing helped lead me through the grieving process.*

The students in Writing in the Community worked in powerful ways across the semester to restore humanity in their own and their community partners' lives through writing. As social psychologist Judith

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Herman's (1997) research supports, the final stage in the overall healing or growth process only occurs when the survivor shares the experience with a community and begins to rebuild social ties: "Traumatic events destroy the sustaining bonds between individual and community ...trauma isolates; the group recreates a sense of belonging. Trauma dehumanizes the victim; the group restores her humanity" (p. 214). This project fosters community and bridges that might otherwise be viewed as a disconnect between student-writers and community members. In its capacity to encourage empathetic engagement, the oral history project has the power to connect and restore humanity in academic classrooms and beyond by establishing community.

### **BROADENING THE CONTEXT: INTERSECTING SERVICE-LEARNING AND STUDY ABROAD**

Although the oral history assignment detailed above was developed for a college-level writing class, the assignment could be adapted for a variety of grade levels, content areas, and community partners. The rest of this chapter is devoted to imagining how such an oral history project might work in an international study abroad context--that is, a context that places students in communities entirely different from their own.

Bringle and Hatcher (2011) assert "the combination of service learning and study abroad has interesting implications for designing successfully internationally based educational experiences for students. Students do more than study in another nation; they are also engaged in organized service activities that (a) complement and augment their classroom learning, (b) contribute to the community in the host country, (c) support face-face interaction with other, (d) increase cross-cultural understanding of others, and (d) challenge students to clarify and reconsider their role as a citizen" (p. 11).

This section presents first, an existing study abroad course; and second, a proposed course.. Both examples, though, highlight the transferability and adaptability of the oral history assignment.

In existence for a decade, the Belmont in "Africa" program [the Belmont in Countries in Africa program] is a Maymester service-learning study abroad opportunity that combines service projects, sightseeing, and general education coursework, and takes place in South Africa and Botswana. Traditionally students have been attracted by the opportunity to take required general education courses in a study-abroad context, though many often report that the service-learning component is a draw as well. The Belmont in "Africa" program consciously blends service work with sightseeing and cultural activities, such as trips to Robben Island and Table Mountain, museum visits, game drives, walking tours, and hikes. As they move back and forth between radically different contexts—the familiar world of shopping malls and museums and the unfamiliar world of post-apartheid townships—students often experience quite a bit of cognitive dissonance. Such discord invites reflection: What is to blame for this economic disparity? How does the history of a country influence the lived experience of present-day citizens? What are the ethical dilemmas of cultural imposition and tourism? Class discussions, journal prompts, and essay assignments give students the opportunity to consider such questions, research the underlying issues, and refine their thinking. For the service-learning component, the group partners with local mission groups and social service organizations such as Noordhoek Valley Educare, SOS Children's Project, Holy Cross Hospice, and Kamogelo Daycare Centre. As is typical with many community-based learning initiatives, students are often given a choice between manual labor (painting, gardening, mending fences, repairing playground equipment) and teaching/child care.



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One of the two classes offered, a required junior-level composition course, affords students the opportunity to consider the intersections of reading and writing with the course theme of Truth and Reconciliation—a theme which draws directly from the post-Apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commissions organized by the South African government. After studying the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions specifically, students then interrogate the role of storytelling and narrative in the pursuit of justice and reconciliation more broadly. During the trip, classes take place in the evenings, usually every two to three days. Students keep a detailed journal on the trip and produce three papers after returning home. This excerpt from the course syllabus offers more detail on the writing assignments:

*Reflective Essay: In this paper you will answer a broad (but important) question: What is the meaning of reconciliation? You will rely on personal and textual sources as you craft your answer.*

*Field Research Project: For this paper, you will identify a place we visit that you feel engages our theme—truth and reconciliation. In a carefully researched and thesis-driven essay that is both descriptive and reflective, you will investigate that place from a variety of perspectives.*

*Truth and Reconciliation in American Contexts Essay: Having read Desmond Tutu's No Future Without Forgiveness, and having visited sites such as Robben Island and the District Six Museum, you will use this final paper to research the possibilities of Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in American contexts. More broadly, you will consider the role of narrative in the pursuit of justice.*

*Daily Journal: Because this class is so heavily experiential, you will need to keep a daily record of not only what you do, but also what you think and feel. I want you to think of yourself as a writer on this trip, so I will ask you to keep a journal in which you write 2-3 pages every day we are in Africa [South Africa]. You may use this journal to reflect on any aspect of the trip, but I expect you to engage with the reading and with our course themes of truth and reconciliation. Along with our class discussions, your journal entries should show me that you're doing the reading. You may also use this journal as prewriting for your larger projects; indeed, I expect that many of your initial notes for the Field Research Project will come from journal entries. To that end, make a habit of carrying your journal with you on sightseeing trips, etc. You never know when you'll see an image, hear a phrase, or encounter a person you'd like to write about. Finally, we will use the journals in our class meetings, so you'll need to have them with you when we meet.*

*I will look at your journal while we are on the trip to make sure you are keeping up with your writing, though I will not read every entry. You do not have to share all of your writing if you feel it is too personal; simply fold over the pages you don't want me to look at. I will likely ask you to share excerpts from your journals in our class discussions, though you get to decide what you make public. Likewise, you will post 3 (revised and edited) journal entries on Blackboard when we get back to the US, though—again—you get to decide what and how much to share.*

In their focus on description and reflection, these assignment “serve the purpose of creating a log or record of experience” (Anson, 1997, p. 169), as Anson says of much of the writing projects assigned in service learning classrooms; however, just as Anson warns, these assignments perhaps “fall far short of encouraging the critical examination of ideas, or the sort of consciousness-raising reflection, that is the

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mark of highly successful learning” (p. 169). Though observation and reflection are themselves complex actions, the assignments allow, but do not necessarily demand, students to engage with the culture--and, thus, to learn from the culture in ways that challenge or add nuance to their own understanding. Indeed, in the aside, “You never know when you’ll see an image, hear a phrase, or encounter a person you’d like to write about,” the journal assignment prompt essentially lumps together the South African landscape, language, and people as a monolithic bloc to be digested via a student’s outsider, Western gaze. What if, instead, students had been paired with one person whose story they could learn, write, affirm, confirm, and share--say, a teacher at the daycare, a nun at the church, or a patient at the hospice? In truly reciprocal fashion--that is, the type of reciprocity oriented toward “exchange” (Dostillo, et al., 2012)--the student could offer the completed narrative as a gift back to the community partner, while the immediacy of the rhetorical context (that is, writing about and being accountable to a living, breathing person) could force the student to confront, temper, or challenge cultural assumptions and easy conclusions. Furthermore, having students share all the narratives at the end of the class would highlight the multiplicity of South African culture--or, indeed, any culture--rather than encourage students to report on it as an undifferentiated collection of experiences.

Using the shortcomings of the Belmont in “Africa” writing assignments as a lesson, a newly developed Belmont study abroad program to the Dominican Republic will import the service-learning oral history project to provide students with a deeper knowledge of the social and political issues the developing world, and to have students engage more deeply with local residents. Despite the fact that the Dominican Republic is a relatively small island, the women and children who live there are at great risk for the following reasons, according to MERCY, the site for the course’s service-learning project (“Mercy Jewelry,” n.d.):

- The Dominican Republic ranks 4th in the world in sex tourism.
- More than 25,000 children under the age of 18 are involved in prostitution in the D.R.
- The number one reason for a woman to prostitute herself is to feed her family.
- Women and teens are lured with promises of jobs, then sold into sexual slavery to other countries (MERCY).

MERCY, an arm of the church-based community organization DR Vision in San Pedro de Macorís, is an outreach program whose mission is to “teach and train rescued women and offer them an alternative so they can support themselves with dignity (DR Vision, n.d.). The ministry also offers help to women in other situations of risk such as abandonment, neglect and abuse” (“Mercy Jewelry,” n.d.). Students in the Dominican Republic study abroad program will engage in a two-week long service-learning project with the women and children involved in MERCY Ministries through not only the oral history assignment, but also website design, photography, and videography meant to call attention to the need for social action while, at the same time, honoring the power of each life and story, many of which have been previously silenced. As the founder of MERCY, Allison Hale, explains, “As we walk the streets of the Dominican Republic, we see WOMEN. They are mothers who have tucked their children in bed, locked the door and have gone into the streets of the cities to sell their bodies for the price of the next day’s meal” (“Mercy Jewelry,” n.d.). The goal of the oral history assignment in this context will be the same as in the stateside courses: to listen, to collaborate with, and to honor community partners whose stories may not otherwise be told.

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MERCY has organized two businesses, a jewelry workshop and a formal dress rental shop, that support and sustain these outreaches to women and children, and students will also partner with these organizations as part of the study abroad experience. In order to most effectively understand the social and political constructs surrounding these businesses, the country's history, and social issues like the global sex trade, this course will be organized around psychological and sociological service-based texts that help shed light on the larger problems, along with practical pedagogical materials to help students understand the power and importance of the oral history project itself. As in the Writing and the Community course, the purpose will again be multi-pronged: to encourage empathetic engagement on the part of the students, to honor the stories of the women who have agreed to become writing partners, and to bring the groups into community. As Morton and Bergbauer (2015) argue in their consideration of service-learning and "civic engagement," practitioners should seek "an alternative to the binary of traditional and critical service-learning" (p. 21). The goal of this chapter has been to disrupt that binary with an assignment that brings students and community members together with a common purpose.

## CONCLUSION

In "Why Service Learning is Bad," Eby (1998) notes the need "case studies showing creative and innovative ways to do effective service in service-learning" which can be used "as models for planning and evaluation" (p. 7). The oral history writing assignment detailed in this chapter is an attempt to heed this call, an example of an activity that teachers, students, and community partners alike deemed successful. Eby goes on to note, though, that "studies of ineffective programs can help identify critical factors for success. Research should specifically examine the impact of service-learning on local communities and on persons served" (p. 8). This chapter heeds that call as well, showing how the Belmont in "Africa" program, which previously used the typical service-learning writing genres of journals and reflective essays, might benefit from the oral history assignment, which requires more careful, sustained, and empathetic engagement with a single community partner. As service-learning practitioners, the instructors of these courses know that writing has great potential in the service-learning classroom, but it must be used responsibly if it is to have the greatest impact on students and community partners.

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**KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Empathy:** The ability to understand others on their own terms and from their own perspectives.

**Oral History:** A type of life writing in which an informant and an outside writer collaborate to write a portion of the informant’s life story.

**Reflection:** In writing, the act of recalling, synthesizing, and making meaning out of past events and actions.

**Rhetoric and Composition:** In English studies, the study of writing and argumentation.

**Study Abroad:** University-level educational programs conducted outside of the United States.

**Writing and Trauma:** A burgeoning field of inquiry examining the theory and practice of writing about trauma as a way to gain a sense of deeper understanding and healing.

**Writing in the Community:** An undergraduate university service-learning course wherein student writers work with community partners to write Oral Histories.

## **Writing Partners**

# **APPENDIX 1**

## **Community Partnership Proposal**

Note: this proposal form involves students in the process of choosing their community partnerships. As Heilker (1997) argues in “Rhetoric Made Real: Civic Discourse and Writing Beyond the Curriculum,” “Having the choice both increases students’ enthusiasm for doing a good job and protects from indoctrination” (p. 76).

### **Community Partnership Proposal**

In this 1-2 page proposal, please explore the community group you are most interested in collaborating with this semester taking into account the theory we’ve read thus far on service-learning and community outreach. The four groups we will work with are Morningside of Belmont, The Next Door, Smyrna Primary School, and Vanderbilt Children’s Hospital, and Morningside at Belmont. In your proposal, be sure to address the following:

- Your rationale as to why this group is of most interest to you as a writer and community member and what you hope to gain and give through this collaboration.
- Your second and third community choices and why.
- The days/times you are NOT available to meet with your community partner, as well as the days/times you would most like to set up the weekly meetings.

**Writing Partners**

**APPENDIX 2**

*Table 1. History Project Rubric*

	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Acceptable	Fair	Poor
The following criteria are worth a maximum of 25 points each (Excellent=25, Very Good=22, Good=19, Acceptable=16, Fair=13, Poor=10)						
Engages with the community member to recount the oral history in a deep and meaningful way						
Draws significant insight from the community member's life experiences						
Resists easy "moral-of-the-story"-type conclusions to complicate the narrative with evidence of research and nuanced thinking						
Shows the reader the community member's story rather than tells the reader their story						
Presents compelling characters in whom the reader is invested						
Creates a vivid setting						
Provides appropriate context and background information—but not so much as to overwhelm the reader						
Provides telling details						
Has a clear tone of community member's voice						
Is organized thoughtfully and carefully so that the reader transitions easily from sentence to sentence and paragraph to paragraph						
The following criteria are worth a maximum of 10 points each (Excellent=10, Very Good=8, Good=6, Acceptable=4, Fair=2, Poor=0)						
Has an interesting title that forecasts the essay in some way						
Has an interesting introduction that makes the reader want to keep reading						
Has a conclusion that provides an appropriate sense of resolution						
Demonstrates a command of the English language in terms of grammar, syntax, and diction						
Is a pleasure to read						

# Chapter 13

## Doing Service–Learning on the Ground in Diverse K–12 Communities: The Critical Importance of Being There

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter is about designing service-learning and gives voice to college students engaging in service along with children and families who attend a culturally diverse urban Title One school. The various settings presented in this chapter show the numerous options open to service-learners in the University Assisted Community School. Engagement in this program realizes that schools with low resources have communities with low resources and communities with low resources have schools with low resources.*

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes and analyzes what transpires when university students from a public research-intensive institution from a variety of majors engage in service-learning with urban Title I elementary students in a University Assisted Community School (UACS) (Basma & Kronick, 2016; Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007; Kronick, 2005; Luter & Kronick, 2017). The students in the UACS school speak twenty languages and come from twenty-five countries. They are refugees, migrants, and nascent students from working families (low socio-economic status). The school's accountability report card notes that the school has 16% English Language Learner students, 64.6% economically disadvantaged students, and 15% students with disabilities. Students are 42.1% white, 42.1% Black, and 13.6% Latinx. The university students are generally middle class, white, and female. Service-learning at the university has been

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ongoing since the 1970s, but recently the university has attempted to institutionalize civic engagement and is striving to be an anchor institution (Taylor & Luter, 2013). This chapter focuses on working with diverse K-12 communities and sharing experiences through stories for those service-learners who seek to or will soon enter the world of practice.

Service-learning is experiential learning in that students learn through doing. John Dewey, arguably the most recognized scholar of experiential learning, was ultimately a philosopher of education. Not only did he theorize about how experiential learning works, but he also theorized about how schools should better interact with society, leading to his seminal publication *The School as Social Center* (Dewey, 1902). When he spoke of the school as the community and the community as the school, he was speaking of service-learning. This was learning in the messiest sense: making sure learning was connected to real-world problems and making sure learning was grounded in everyday democracy.

The authors begin with a theoretical basis for service-learning and explain the potential this pedagogy has for teaching about the complexities of K-12 educational issues. Then, they introduce the UACS concept and explain the multiple stakeholders involved in the UACS effort (faculty, students, and urban Title I children, UACS staff). After, they present stories that are at the heart of service-learning and help to show the kind of learning about social justice that is possible when university students are in public school settings engaged with diverse populations. These stories are placed in a context of action theory (Argyris, Putnam, & Smith, 1985), that distinguishes service-learning from volunteering. Finally, after describing the context and the stories of students and faculty doing work in a multicultural and multilingual school, the authors reflect on implications for universities as culturally responsive anchor institutions.

#### **SERVICE-LEARNING IN BRIEF**

Service-learning by its very nature is connected to a course: middle school, high school, or college. Readings are tested in the field, and theory and practice advance through this integration. Through this integration, the teaching/learning of service-learning leads to a stronger research agenda for faculty. All of this activity is synergistic and makes service-learning a dynamic field.

Service-learning has three critical components: integration, reciprocity, and reflection (Kronick, Cunningham, & Gourley, 2011). These components are indicators of differences between service-learning and volunteering. Integration is the crossing and mutual influence of theory and practice. Theory can drive practice, and practice can reshape theory. In the seminal work *The Looking Glass Self*, Cooley (1972) found that people get a sense of who they are from the reflections they get from others.

Reciprocity is how service-learners absorb experiences from and are informed by the community partners with whom they engage, resulting in learning that is circular rather than linear. Stories in this chapter illustrate how university students learn from K-5 elementary students and how those elementary students learn from the university students. This reciprocal learning is an exciting phenomenon and is a privilege for the professors who engage in service-learning teaching.

Reflection, the third foundational leg of service-learning, tends to be the most difficult of the three for students. In a rapid-paced society, taking time to think and feel is difficult, and journaling helps to get students to reflect. Journal reflections enable instructors to learn about students' behavior and ideas and to guide classroom discussion and learning. In this instance, service-learning refocuses teaching and creates a vibrant learning environment in the classroom while engaging in service to many who would not otherwise receive these needed services.



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Service-learning teaching is not for everyone. Based on the authors' experiences, they offer practical insights about the practice of service-learning. First, if service-learning is a course in and of itself or if it is part of a course, time is a major constraint. Instructors (or, in some cases, staff) must find the placements. Once the placements have been made, students require a site supervisor. This person assumes extra work, usually without remuneration. Due to liability issues, students engaging in service-learning with K-12 schools must have background checks, which have financial costs that a program must cover. Nonetheless, this initial startup requires time and thought so a partnership infrastructure can be built (see Luter, Lester, & Kronick, 2013). Once planning is completed, students must travel to the site on a regular basis, which requires a car, mass transit, or coordination of carpooling.

As the semester progresses, various assignments must be evaluated, which can also be time consuming. Also, a formal plan for closure must be built into the experience so that, as in the authors' case, the K-5 children do not feel they are being abandoned (Packwood, n.d.).

The authors were fortunate to collaborate with a partner—University Assisted Community School (UACS)—that is open year-round, limiting the loss of bonds that are built between university students and elementary school students. An advantage to the agency for the added work they must do in accommodating the service-learners is that they bring additional support to the organization.

### **SERVICE-LEARNING AS SOCIAL JUSTICE EDUCATION**

Given that most of the program's service-learning students are White and from mostly-White areas, this may be the first time the students have interacted with populations from various racial and ethnic backgrounds. As a result, the authors felt the need to briefly discuss social justice. They also view the program as disrupting social *injustice*. The following four principles are useful to the service-learners they engage in service-learning that promotes social justice:

- Recognize deficit thinking (Higgs & Tarsi, 1997) and work to promote resilience rather than failure;
- Understand and challenge the notion of the "culture of poverty." Oscar Lewis' (1959) work based on a small Mexican village is resurging in today's society;
- Understand meritocracy and how it supports victim blaming and ignores structural/systemic explanations of behavior; and
- Reflect upon class privilege: microaggressions (Sue & Sue, 2016) and White privilege are current phenomena that service-learners can learn first-hand through service-learning.

Recognizing the underlying causes of social inequity may call into question values that many people have never questioned. Conscientization for the privileged requires reflection outward in the world as well as inward on one's place in the world. (Rosenberger, 2000, p. 36). Exploring these issues through service-learning has unlocked a new field of inquiry: critical service-learning (Mitchell, 2008). The authors specifically encourage students to reflect with an eye toward social justice, given their exposure to students of diverse backgrounds. Reflection is the process of creating meaning from newly shared information. Reflecting involves integrating disparate sensed facts and general knowledge, and from this integration strengthening one's beliefs or creating new understanding about those facts and knowledge,

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(Kronick, Cunningham, & Gourley, 2011). Reflection turns experience into learning (Boud, Keogh, & Walker, 1985).

Sometimes students fall into deficit thinking (Higgs & Tarsi, 1997), which has a way of becoming a self-fulfilling prophecy. Treating children as if they are “academically deficient” and destined to drop out of school or fail may result in them being more likely to act on those expectations. It is just as easy to teach/work with children as if they are bright/smart and get that result from them. Service-learners can play a role in this positive thinking and avoid deficit thinking and its consequences.

Culture of poverty, originally introduced by Oscar Lewis, proposes that poverty results in further poverty, a self-perpetuating phenomenon with no escape. It is characterized by a predominance of Black mothers and absence of Black fathers. Critics of the culture of poverty argued that it was political and victim blaming (O’Connor, 2001, p. 209). The authors encouraged university service-learners to challenge arguments related to a culture of poverty by having them reflect on actual experiences and conversations with students.

Meritocracy is the illusion that all one has to do to succeed is work hard (McNamee & Miller, 2009). This is the flip side of victim-blaming, which suggests that failure of all types is due to personal, psychological factors and that structural factors such as institutional racism do not have any effect. Racism and classism are strong determinants of behavior or blocks to behavior. These are higher order concepts that students will learn from service-learning.

Socioeconomic status is a strong predictor of behavior (Molnar, Cerda, Roberts, & Buka, 2008). Service-learners can learn a great deal about the impact of socio-economic status and its effects that clearly tilt social justice against groups that are marginalized and/or exploited. Race and class and their effects on behavior are best discussed through Jonathan Kozol’s work.

Where there are low-resourced schools, there are low-resourced communities, and where there are low-resourced communities, there are low-resourced schools. Given this proposition, the challenges that K-12 schools face are to be dealt with by universities, not simply schools/colleges of education. Schools have come to see that their problems are too complex to fix by themselves. They must work collaboratively with others such as mental health, business, corrections, welfare, and other local social institutions to address the complex issues that manifest in schools (Benson, Harkavy, & Puckett, 2007). Students are introduced to these issues when working in the context of the UACS program.

## **TEACHING ABOUT K-12 EDUCATION USING SERVICE-LEARNING**

Service-learning is experiential learning. As such, university students often know many details about those partners with whom they are engaged (in this case, elementary school students). Hence the roles of teachers and students change from their traditional roles. As discussed earlier, the concepts of reciprocity, integration, and reflection are very important to service-learning. Reciprocity is of key importance: in the UACS, the elementary students learn math, reading, and social skills; and service-learners gain insights and learn about the lived experiences and realities of students who identify as refugee or immigrant or are from working families. Freire describes this as a partnering situation between teachers and students and contrasts the problem-solving model with the banking model, where the teacher knows everything and the students know nothing, “and where the teacher is depositor, prescriber, domesticator” (Freire,

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1970, pp. 73-75). Two key points for service-learning that emanate from Freire's philosophy are that people have problems in living rather than being problem people, and the problem of inert knowledge (described by Alfred Whitehead, 1956) is overcome with experiential service-learning. Inert knowledge, or knowledge that is only valuable in a classroom, becomes testable through service-learning.

By focusing on problem solving, service-learners move away from deficit thinking, victim blaming, and stigma. They see first-hand that people who have problems can learn how to solve them. Learning is critically important, as it allows people to move on in their lives and not suffer labels that stigmatize them (Goffman, 1967). Thus, mental health issues, poverty, and crime, can be attacked systemically when service-learners work to support positive community development. This approach works in corrections, welfare, and other social institutions. Focusing on problems in real-world contexts orients the service-learner and the system to assets rather than deficits, enabling participants to see resilience rather than risk. This idea then evolves into an approach where society does not stigmatize behaviors that keep individuals from seeking help. Focusing on problem solving, resilience, and positive thinking and avoiding stigma are all outcomes of doing service-learning. This is the kind of lasting impact the authors hope to have on service-learning students who will work with K-12 schools. Even if they do not work in the field, they will be citizens who will have to vote on K-12 education issues. In the community, theory and practice are tested.

### **THE SETTING: THE UNIVERSITY ASSISTED COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

The concept of a UACS appears in literature by Benson, Harkavy, and Puckett (2007), Lawson (2010), Richardson (2009) and Dryfoos (1994). Dryfoos is especially important as the modern progenitor of full-service community schools. These schools, which are open to the community for extended hours, days, and weeks, are excellent placements for service-learning.

The program in this chapter is a UACS at Pond Gap Elementary School (PGES). All PGES students are on free/reduced lunch. Almost 37% of students move during the academic year. Around 40% have parents who are or have been incarcerated, and the population speaks 20 languages from 25 countries, with Spanish and Arabic being dominant. The international students are refugees and immigrants and come from various parts of the world, including Mexico and countries in Africa, South America, and the Middle East. Most of the problems the international families face in their country of origin are contemporary, not historical. The authors work with an agency that helps new international families get settled in the community. Graduate students who are bilingual do service with this agency.

PGES students are generally lower socio-economic status with a high percentage African-American. The faculty is mostly White but with a low turnover rate. The authors have spent five years building a strong partnership between the university and the school, so there is a close relationship between school staff (teachers and administrators) and UACS staff. The authors refer to the two groups of teachers as "Shift One" and "Shift Two" (3-7 pm) teachers, because the largest program offered by the UACS is the after-school program. Many—but not all—support services are available after the formal school day ends.

All of these variables provide generous opportunities for service-learning by university and high school students and grow out of the programs that are offered during "Shift Two," some of which have been developed by University of Tennessee-Knoxville (UTK) students: Legos, Robotics, Saturday Sci-

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ence, and Art. High school students also assist with physical education classes and gardening. The garden is a quarter-acre produce and teaching garden that is also used when students with ADHD need to get back on task, as the staff realized that weeding and picking can have a calming effect. Based on these experiences, the UACS has been an ideal placement for service-learning students, a win-win situation. For a more complete overview of program offerings, and ways that the university is involved, see Luter and Kronick (2017).

## **ACTION THEORY**

Narratives about students in the UACS program are fertile ground for action research. Action theory grows out of the dictum of Kurt Lewin (1951) that the best way to understand something is to try to change it. Action theory underlies the service-learning approach trying to make something better and if it works, using the situation as evidence to support a theory compatible with the outcome, (Kronick, et al., 2011). Action theory progresses in a slow upward spiral from specific cases, applying hypotheses laterally—from one study to the next—determining whether something that works in one situation can work in a parallel situation and elsewhere. Transferring success from one situation to another confirms, sharpens, and strengthens the theory (Kronick, et al., 2011, p.31).

Every student's reflection or every story of working with a community group is information that can go into building action theory. For example, the authors encourage students to try different approaches when working with students with so-called "behavior problems" and then continue to refine their assessment about why the student is behaving that way. The college students eventually develop working theories that help guide their practice in the UACS.

## **STUDENT NARRATIVES**

The following stories give voice to the partners with whom the authors engage in service-learning. It is through the university students' experiences that they learn about collaboration, prevention, and systems change. More importantly, they also make learning about social justice come to life.

### **Story One**

The first piece is about a Mexican family who recently came to the United States. There are two children from this family who attend the UACS. The focus of this story is the fifth grade boy. He was hit by a truck, and the company offered a \$4,500 settlement. The UACS coordinator suggested that the family not take the money. Students working with the boy were supportive. Due to the injury, he was not able to get around and to participate in our physical activity program. As a result, he put on weight. Through the efforts of the UACS and the support of his family and service-learners, he had successful orthopedic surgery, lost the weight, and now returns to the school to volunteer. His sister has also moved successfully to middle school, and the family has done well in the community.

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### **Story Two**

One day, a fourth grade Black girl arrived at school with her head shaved, which raised many questions: Who shaved this child's head? Was it the child's own grandmother, the guardian? Or could it be the child herself? When the grandmother was asked, she said, "I got your attention." When staff met with the grandmother, they found that what she was saying was that her other four grandchildren were in state custody and that she did not want to lose this one (to state custody). She wanted the staff's attention, their support, and she got it.

This story is important because children who come into state custody in this state and many others generally do not exit; they merely move from juvenile to adult services. Thus, the program puts emphasis on preventing students from entering state custody.

### **WHAT ARE SERVICE-LEARNERS SAYING?**

Robert Coles expresses his call to service by stating, "They were teaching me, or better, enabling me to learn, putting me in a situation where I had plenty to do. I was constantly learning by experience rather than through abstract discussions. We serve, and they serve us by coming here giving us a chance to serve and so offering a service to us" (Kronick, 2005, p. 105).

Coles' reflection referred to Dorothy Day, a founder of the Catholic Worker Movement, and William Carlos Williams, a physician in Paterson, New Jersey. Coles felt he and his students learned more from Day and her guests, as she called her clients, than anyone else. Coles learned from Day and Williams to "learn what you can where you can." This was his call to service.

Stories are an important piece of service-learning, and these stories are part of our clinic volunteer program, a program for service-learners who are Pre-Medicine majors. This program was started by three undergraduate service-learners who were Pre-Med. All three now have doctoral degrees: two are practicing physicians, and one is a counselor who runs a twenty bed in-patient psychiatric facility. Their work with one of the authors has led to a program for Pre-Health students serving 33 urban elementary schools.

The following two quotes reflect what those Pre-medicine service-learners had to say about their experience:

*Not all of my reflections led me to insights that were relevant to medicine. I came to the conclusion that the reason these elementary schools score below average on standardized tests is not necessarily the fault of the teacher, school, or children. The children at our schools constantly endure more suffering than I could have imagined at that age. Many do not receive adequate meals or live in adequate housing. They often come from broken homes and live in neighborhoods where gunshots are heard so often that at the tender age of eight they can distinguish between the sound of a gun and the backfire of a car.*

*The most important thing I learned from my reflections is how much you have to look at the society and the environment a child comes from before you can begin to treat them physically, emotionally, or even academically.*



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As evidence by the language in the quote, these students, usually first-year students and sophomores, have unexamined biases and assumptions that require interrogation. For example, the student above remarked that the children come from “broken homes.” This reflection provided an excellent opportunity to link experiences to course content related to assumptions about entering into a culture different from their own. Still, the overall reflection indicated a sincere change of perspective when dealing with vulnerable children that can be taken into future experiences and career situations.

Another quote illustrates how one Pre-Med student felt about interacting with diverse populations.

*The children taught me a lot about myself- about how much I really do like children and how my actions as a child shaped the person I am today. I often saw myself in those children. Through my work with the inner-city children, I developed a greater tolerance for people different from me.*

### **A CALL TO ACTION**

Elie Wiesel (2006), accepting the 1986 Nobel Peace Prize, stated:

*I remember he asked his father, “Can this be true? This is the twentieth century, not the middle ages. Who would allow such crimes to be committed? How could the world remain silent?” And then I explain to him how naïve we were, that the world did know and remained silent. And that is why I swore never to be silent whenever and wherever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim...whenever men and women are persecuted because of their race, religion, or political views, that place must – at that moment – become the center of the universe. Human rights are being violated on every continent. More people are oppressed than free. How can one not be sensitive to their plight? Human suffering anywhere concerns men and women everywhere. (pp. 117-120)*

This call to action by Elie Wiesel thirty years ago is one the authors offer students. Within the UACS model, oppression is manifested at the micro level of the school, and this project offers students from a predominantly White institution of higher education an opportunity to view oppression up close and contribute to a solution. It rings true in Knoxville, Baton Rouge, Minneapolis, Turkey, France, and so many other places where people are not free and where others will suffer indignities and even death.

Social justice thus is a central part of service-learning as much as reflection, and participants can play a crucial role in co-creating social justice in the twenty-first century. Kahne and Westheimer (1998) contend that using a service-learning framework that explicitly integrates civic engagement is an important first step for embracing cultural diversity and social justice principles (Butin, 2003). The resulting service politics and justice learning (Butin, 2003) help students move from giving to caring and from doing their “civic duty” to participating in social reconstruction. As a result, education becomes transformative rather than merely additive (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996).

Although Butin’s and Kahn’s and Westheimer’s ideas are fine for academic discourse, the authors have strong concerns about the pragmatic probability of doing service-learning. Statements such as these muddy the waters and prevent people from distinguishing between service-learning, community service, and civic engagement. Freire says it best when he sets up the dichotomy of structural or systems change

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of direct service. We must do both. A total focus on systems without interventions leads to inertia. Merely doing the good leads to victim blaming, colonization, providing unwanted, unnecessary programs that no one uses because they were not collaborators in the process.

## **SERVICE-LEARNING AND SYSTEMS CHANGE**

Freire's social critiques challenge individuals to confront the inequities perpetrated in society, and his scholarship also provides empowering strategies for system change. Entering a system is the most important and difficult aspect of service-learning. Family, economics, political, and theological systems must be entered and worked with. Entry into one system, such as the family, is sufficient for cursory service. Entry into all systems makes for transformative changes for individuals, groups, and communities. Considering interactive systems is the most productive strategy for service-learners to bring about positive changes in these systems. Bronfenbrenner (1979) delineates how multi-systems work in *The Ecology of Human Development*. Service-learners may be more successful learning from such scholars as Freire and Bronfenbrenner.

## **A SERVICE-LEARNER IN ACTION**

One former service-learning student, upon graduation, worked in Harlem, New York for two years, attained a Master's in School Counseling, and worked in Knoxville, Tennessee as a school counselor. She was able to apply her experiences from service-learning and design a program for K-12 students in a community school called the "Savoy Program."

The "Savoy Program" was a four-week summer enrichment program intended to teach third and fourth graders about the visual and performing arts of the Harlem Renaissance. Students were exposed to a variety of arts and artists, from the literature of Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston to swing music and dance pioneered in Harlem's nightclubs during the 1920s and 1930s. The program focused special attention on artists with strong connections to Knoxville and East Tennessee. Each session was centered on a hands-on learning experience, most often painting in the style of the highlighted artist but also learning choreographed dances based on tap and jazz. A main goal of the program was to provide students with a positive learning environment while studying arts to which they might not otherwise have been exposed. Participating students were then to be tracked during the following academic year to chart any changes in achievement or engagement in school.

The program's curriculum was based on a two-days per week, four-week program. The first week included Introduction to the Harlem Renaissance, authors Langston Hughes and Zora Neale Hurston. Week 2 presented artists Jacob Lawrence and Joseph and Beauford Delaney, with a guest speaker visit from the director of an art gallery. Week 3 involved looking at musicians Ella Fitzgerald, Bessie Smith, Duke Ellington, and Louis Armstrong. The final week introduced students to dance through Frankie Manning and Norma Miller as well as guest dancers, along with exhibition introductions and completion of exhibition preparations.

The Delaney brothers, Joseph and Beauford, are from Knoxville. Joseph worked with Jackson Pollock, and Beauford, an abstract painter, worked with Pablo Picasso and author James Baldwin. The student

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teaching the program thought it was important that children of color see work by people who look like them and grew up in their community. In 2016, the UACS children were introduced to the Delaney brothers' work on a field trip to a local museum. The service-learning students themselves also learned a great deal about local artists of color notable in this field.

Several outcomes emerged from the Savoy Project. One child, when he heard Louis Armstrong, exclaimed, "You mean beat boxing came from scat?!" Another, when listening to Billie Holliday, said, "That is one angry woman." A painting in Kronick's (2005, p. 109) *Full Service Community Schools* was done by an eleven-year-old boy and is a strong reproduction of Jacob Lawrence's original. The Harlem Renaissance program was taught by an undergraduate service-learning student who was White, while the children were all African-American. From a teaching perspective, the service-learning teacher observed that as the lesson became increasingly experiential, the students became increasingly involved in the subject and needed little to no behavioral prompting. The service-learner also observed that listening to Louis Armstrong calmed them as they learned cognitive aspects of literature, art, music, and dance.

As with any endeavor, certain predictions were made before the program began, mostly relating to the students' reactions to the curriculum. The hands-on experiential learning was anticipated to be the most engaging part of each class. However, the service-learner expected varied student reactions to the different activities. Students were expected to be especially interested in painting, as their public school most likely provided little, if any, exposure to hands-on art activities. This was especially true: students could be overheard discussing their enjoyment of the activity, and their behavior reflected similar emotions. Discipline problems were rare, and those that did occur usually came from a shortage of supplies and students being overeager to receive their materials. These experiences seemed to be a culmination of the learning process, allowing them to combine what was learned in class discussions with exposure to music. In their reflection journals and in conversations with them after class, nearly all participants stated that painting was their favorite part of the program. When they could not recall specific facts or ideas relating to an artist, they could be prompted with one of the facets of their painting assignments.

Dancing was predicted to be particularly difficult; girls were more agreeable and excited to learn than the boys. Though it did prove to be difficult, this outcome seemed most related to facility issues. The boys were actually more excited to dance than the girls, contrary to predictions; they were able to have fun, stylizing and improvising steps in a way unavailable to the girls. Girls were far more concerned with accuracy and precision, working mostly to imitate exact movements rather than to interact with the dance on their own. Surprisingly, the girls asked far more questions during the special guest performance by local swing dancers; boys were relatively quiet and disinterested.

Music was thought to pose the most difficulty in getting the students attentive, interested, and interactive with the material, and this prediction was quite accurate. Most students were resistant to critically listening to and analyzing the music, and almost all lacked the vocabulary to do so confidently. One remedy to discipline problems during these times was to have the students close their eyes. Without visual distractions – watching each other – they were able to concentrate on the task at hand. Another helpful tool was preparing the class by watching short video clips of the artist before beginning the listening activity. During a discussion about Louis Armstrong, for example, two short video clips were presented, first allowing the students to watch uninterrupted. After a short discussion of what they perceived, the clips were played again, taking time to point out specific instruments, trademarks of Armstrong's style (e.g. puffed cheeks and carrying a white handkerchief), and noting the important events in his music by connecting them with visual cues. The class was more responsive and seemed more focused than on days lacking relevant clips.

### **Doing Service-Learning on the Ground in Diverse K-12 Communities**

The following observation from the project's service-learner illustrates the dynamics of doing service-learning across racial lines. Her observations should be useful to service learners, beginners as well as experienced.

*The program was intended to focus on the art of the Harlem Renaissance, but camp administrators used it to fulfill an African-American history requirement. This exacerbated an already tense situation: as a young, White girl teaching African-American history, I anticipated many questions about my qualifications and intentions. All staff initially appeared either skeptical or disinterested at the outset; many seemed unconvinced that a Caucasian girl had any knowledge of African-American art, and one teacher assigned to assist during a particularly crowded class left within ten minutes because she "hated paint." During an observation day before the program began, I spent a few hours learning my way around the building, trying to become acquainted with the teachers and observing the students. Only one teacher, "Mr. Lobari," made any effort to speak with me. Our conversation certainly began as a test; he was interested in knowing my personal background as well as my experience with urban children. He repeatedly insisted that one who works with these children must be "aware of their culture." After discussing my experience with both children and the curriculum, and talking about our own personal goals and experiences, Mr. Lobari and I developed a more congenial relationship – one of the best I had with any of the teachers at the camp. It seemed obvious from the beginning that he was interested in testing both my knowledge and my intentions. With these divulged, he appeared much more comfortable with my presence in the school and ability with the students.*

Race figured most prominently in the program's success. The quote above showcases a few key racial tensions. First, the White service-learner knew that she was stepping into a situation where her presence and authority would be questioned. After all, who was this White student to teach Black children about African-American art history? Second, she encountered silent dissent among some of the Black teachers. Given that racism now operates in a "color-blind" fashion (Bonilla-Silva, 2010), Blacks may be particularly resistant to Whites coming to teach something in their school, especially when this person was only coming in to do a special project. Finally, her experience highlights the ideas behind contact theory (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2011). When the White female service-learning student approached the situation, she assumed that she was no better than anyone else, thus reinforcing the idea of equal group status within the situation. She worked to establish common goals: to engage students in learning about their cultural history. She worked with other teachers and sought a relationship with them, which showcases intergroup cooperation through interaction. The teachers and adults in the situation were from a different race than the service-learner, so it is possible that they wanted to ensure that she was authentically interested in the students and their cultures, and not some White person coming into to "save" the children. She learned from this service-learning experience the attitudes, skills, and knowledge that will help her interact with different cultures through life.

### **UNITING SERVICE-LEARNING, COMMUNITY SERVICE, AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

Up to this point, the chapter has discussed the UACS project from the perspective of service-learning. The authors now pivot the discussion to the broader community engagement movement in higher education.

### ***Doing Service-Learning on the Ground in Diverse K-12 Communities***

Two quotes introduce this discussion:

- *The great universities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will be judged by their ability to help solve our most urgent social problems* (Benson, et al., 2007 p. 85), and
- *It's not enough to expand the intellect and talents of our students if we fail to rouse their souls to serve others and engage them in the larger issues of the day. Nor is it enough, he would say [Martin Luther King, Jr.], for us to make great discoveries in the lab and develop theoretical solutions to society's problems if we do not use them to tackle the kinds of challenges we face every day.* (Judith Rodin, former President, University of Pennsylvania, 2000)

Wiesel, Benson, Harkavy and Puckett, and Rodin make a strong argument for civic engagement, community service, and service-learning to be a central part of higher education's cultural ethos. For many advocates of civic engagement, the goal is simply to ameliorate conditions, and “give back” to the community, rather than socially transform society by re-creating communities. This so-called “anchor institution” role of the university has gained popularity.

The literature on anchor institutions has largely been centered in a neoliberal, economic development paradigm, in that it views the university (and other similar institutions within a locality) as a purchaser of local goods and services, an engine of property development, an employer (and workforce developer) of citizens, a catalyzer of future capital and talent staying within that locality, and a builder of city infrastructure (Institute for Competitive Inner Cities, 2010). If a university is to become involved in community-based problem solving, the university must make an intentional move in this direction. The “Social Purpose” mission is not inherent to anchors; instead, it must be intentionally adopted (Taylor & Luter, 2013). It is through service-learning with diverse communities that the social purpose mission can be advanced. When students experience service-learning in these types of contexts, they can pressure the institution to become more culturally responsive, especially to exploited and/or under-resourced groups in the area. These experiences can challenge the dominant narrative of the university as a neoliberal entity (Kandiko, 2010). Based on this, universities might consider working with groups like Campus Compact and the Democracy Collaborative to usher in intentional practices that challenge the “university as neoliberal development agent” paradigm. Through processes like the Civic Action Planning Process, universities could consider assessing their success by different measures that are driven by a social justice and racial equity framework (Dubb, McKinley, & Howard, 2013; Kellogg Foundation, n.d.).

## **INVOLVING THE UNIVERSITY IN TRANSFORMATIVE CHANGE**

In the final section, the authors offer an example of how the UTK has been called on to adopt their social purpose mission. Race and socioeconomic status vie for importance in understanding human behavior. Both are of course critically important in determining and explaining human behavior. Jonathan Kozol is the most important source on these two variables in contemporary America. Kozol (2000), in speaking of neighborhoods surrounding inner-city schools, says these neighborhoods are often described as toxic and sometimes irreparable ghettos that must be done away with. These are the desolate views that



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in the past have spawned calls for eminent domain, removal of “blighted” and politically weak communities, urban renewal and gentrification, (Kronick, 2005). All of these are evidence of the need for an ecological systemic approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) to these problems and for service-learners to become involved in transformative change. Kozol and Coles do a superb job of helping service learners do on-the-ground work as well as transformative change.

Transformative change is key to understanding and changing the current violence in America. Shootings that are newsworthy occur weekly and those that do not make the news are occurring daily. The shooting of Zaevion Dobson, a fifteen-year-old African-American boy who was trying to shield two girls in his neighborhood in Knoxville, Tennessee, prompted the service-learning project that follows. The shooting led to a meeting between UTK faculty, staff, and students with the City of Knoxville Office of Community Relations.

The meeting held on July 28, 2016 brought together people who shared in common that they want to prevent future violence and solve the shootings of Zaevion Dobson and his cousin JaJuan. The stated outcome goal of this meeting was for the university to partner with Save Our Sons, an arm of the city government, and provide service-learners to work in the neighborhood where the majority of shootings have taken place. The following quotes are a look at what this initial meeting on community violence is about:

- We can no longer live in isolation. What happens in other neighborhoods impacts all of us.
- No central location to find information about who is doing what – recapping service-learning in the community. What was learned about the community from children who live there?
- Students felt discrimination from teachers.
- Students did not feel safe walking home.
- Residents want these children to have an opportunity to give back to their community.

The following issues came out during the meeting:

- Lack of responsiveness by the community to programs that have been offered.
- Look for and emphasize positives of Black culture, i.e., resourcefulness, problem solving skills, and common sense.
- Faculty doing service-learning in the community need to be rewarded and recognized.
- And finally, integrate service into teaching and learning.

These revelations have the opportunity to help with problems and bring about transformative change.

UTK, as part of its quest for a “Top 25” ranking, has designated being a civically engaged university as a part of this quest. Perhaps the most perplexing part of this process is organizing the service-learning projects that are ongoing. Kronick, while working on this community violence project, has led 18 faculty and staff, ranging from Agriculture to Geography, to get involved in the community violence project. This may well result in a service-learning consortium that will have an interdisciplinary focus. This is one example of how the UACS effort has helped to encourage the university to adopt its social purpose mission.

**Doing Service-Learning on the Ground in Diverse K-12 Communities****CONCLUSION**

If service-learning is to be successful, the following four outcomes along with attention to social justice and transformative change will be present:

- Students engage in experiential learning and value learning across various stages of development.
- Students work on real world problems. As Kurt Lewin (1951) so aptly put it, the best way to understand problems is to change them. The great universities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century will do this work, (Benson, et al., 2007).
- Collaboration is learned and practiced by students. Kronick (2002) has a full discussion of collaboration.
- Integration, reciprocity, and reflection are skills that, along with attitudes and knowledge, are essential to robust service-learning.

All of the above set the groundwork for service-learning that goes beyond the land grant mission. Entering a university system, a research-oriented one, that wants to move up in academic standing, with the purpose of getting the university civically engaged in doing service-learning is a major challenge, but it is happening. Civic engagement is one way of acquiring prestige for the university. It may not bring in the grants that science does, but it does garner positive public relations. The UACS where UT-K students do service-learning has had major publicity over the past seven years. Music, Circus, Robots, Legos, and Gardening are courses or experiences that service-learners have generated or worked in with UACS staff. These experiences circulate back to the university and make it more civically engaged through faculty entering the university system. Most importantly, the UACS program is a forum for university students who want to do work with diverse communities, but with a specific emphasis on social justice.

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### **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Anchor Institutions:** Large, spatially immobile, mostly non-profit organizations that play an integral role in the local economy. These three characteristics are interrelated, although spatial immobility is the defining feature of an anchor institution.

**Inert Knowledge:** Knowledge of use in a classroom.

**Reality Therapy:** Focuses on reality, responsibility and right and wrong behaviors.

**Service-Learning:** Learning while doing. The integration of theory, practice, reciprocity between server and recipient, and reflection on the experience(s).

**Social Justice:** Focuses on combating deficit thinking, culture of poverty, meritocracy, and class privilege.

**Urban Title I:** The classification of schools under the federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act characterized by over 40% of their student population that is low-income.

**University Assisted Community Schools:** A school that meets the needs of all its children. It is a hub of services. The university coordinates additional supports and helps catalyze the neighborhood development process alongside residents.

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# Chapter 14

## Partnering With LGBTQ+ Communities: The Issues

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### **ABSTRACT**

*What issues and considerations are involved in developing and facilitating service-learning projects with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) communities? This chapter presents results of examining the limited scholarship on service-learning projects conducted with these communities. The author proposes possible reasons for the lack of scholarship and offers suggestions for pre-, during-, and post-project considerations. These suggestions include identifying and surveying potential collaborators, preparing students for engaging with the communities, facilitating reflection during the project, and debriefing students afterward, along with analyzing results in order to improve future collaboration efforts.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

What unique considerations apply to service-learning initiatives that work with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) partners? What should educators and other collaborators be aware of before engaging in such projects? What mediation and/or supports do participants need before, during, and after these collaborations? The author's intention for this chapter was to examine existing research that involves service-learning with LGBTQ communities: synthesizing it and providing an overview for those who wish to engage in similar collaborations. However, there are few studies available, the reasons for which the author will speculate on. By widening the search to include service-learning that involves other populations that require a degree of confidentiality, the author provides suggestions for preparing participants before beginning, along with in-project and post-project mediation approaches educators may use for effective outcomes for all parties involved.

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## ***Partnering With LGBTQ+ Communities***

### **OVERVIEW OF CHAPTER**

First, the author presents reasons why a lack of scholarship exists about service-learning with LGBTQ communities. Next, the author offers planning suggestions and preparation approaches for educators and project developers. Then, the author discusses strategies useful for supporting participants and mediating their experiences as they engage in the project. After, the author analyzes post-project follow-up and approaches useful for helping participants to reflect on and internalize the project and their part in it. The chapter concludes with a call for increased efforts to engage with LGBTQ communities through service-learning.

### **DEFINING LGBTQ**

As Mayo (2007) notes, the terms lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer are contested terms. For the purposes of this chapter, the author follows Renn's (2010) approach of grouping sexual orientation categories (lesbian, gay, bisexual) with gender identity (transgender) and including the term queer, which for some people acts as "an identity category including sexualities and gender identities that are outside heterosexual and binary gender categories" (p. 132). It is important to note that Renn (2010) acknowledges that the combination of sexuality and gender is also contested, as people's experiences within and across these categories and designations may vary greatly.

### **THE SCHOLARSHIP GAP**

The call for proposals for this book resulted in only a single chapter on service-learning with LGBTQ communities. Further, a search of journal databases and service-learning texts by the author and a graduate assistant revealed few service-learning projects with LGBTQ communities. It was also troubling to note that the few published papers focused on projects that worked with these constituents contained little discussion of how to prepare participants for the project or how to process and reflect on the experience.

There are multiple reasons for a dearth of scholarship about service-learning with LGBTQ communities. First, the LGBTQ community is a small part of the overall population, and it is also an invisible minority. Service-learning projects are collaborations with community-based partners, and organizations that support the LGBTQ community tend to be rare except in larger cities. For example, Chicago, a city of more than 2.7 million people, has only one LGBTQ community center. Although it is true that many colleges and universities have LGBTQ groups and centers, the author's own included, they tend to serve the university community and not the surrounding area. Second, a lack of awareness of potential sites may hamper outreach efforts. Maccio (2010) notes, "The paucity of LGBT service-learning projects may be the result of any number of factors, not the least of which may be service-learning administrators and instructors simply not knowing how to find, engage, and serve the LGBT community" (p. 85). Third, existing LGBTQ service-learning scholarship tends to emerge from the health professions, namely medicine and counseling. Such a narrow focus necessarily limits the number of publications available for inclusion in this chapter. Fourth, even within the health professions, because of confidentiality issues present when working with LGBTQ populations, the logistics of engaging in service-learning may be too daunting for instructors who wish to. Also, university instructors who ask students to engage in

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service-learning partnerships with on-campus centers may also encounter confidentiality issues and run the risk of “outing” their own or other students. Fifth, because of the impact of cultural and religious backgrounds on students’ acceptance of LGBTQ people, a service-learning project may result in a negative impact on participants. Donahue (2012) warns, “While service learning for LGBTQ communities can help all students grow in empathy, do not impose students who are struggling with trans/homophobia on communities and organizations whose work could become sidetracked as a result” (Practicing Service Learning section, para. 3). Similarly, Jones & Abes (2003) note the impact of homophobic students on the organizations with whom they are partnered.

### **CONSIDERATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE PROJECTS IN LGBTQ COMMUNITIES**

Below, the author offers considerations and strategies for educators who wish to partner with LGBTQ constituents, organizing approaches in three phases: pre-, during, and post-project.

#### **Before Beginning**

Locating potential partners and identifying their needs is the initial step in any service-learning collaboration. In larger cities, there may be social and legal centers, arts initiatives, political advocacy groups, or health care organizations that serve the LGBTQ community. In these instances, it is relatively easy to identify and contact the sites and discuss their needs. However, because of limited access many instructors in smaller communities have to established LGBTQ organizations, these educators may need to search for other avenues and sites. For example, Donahue (2012) recommends exploring services for homeless youth, after-school centers that have anti-bullying projects, and local arts organizations that wish to focus on LGBTQ topics. All of these sites have the potential to work with LGBTQ issues and populations. Donahue also recommends having students find innovative ways to support on-campus initiatives, such as collecting LGBTQ alumnae oral histories for the library and collaborating with a group to develop a student space (Practicing Service Learning section, para. 4).

When considering a site, it is crucial to reflect how interactions between participants might serve to reinforce or promote stereotypes. Jay (2008) recommends that student participants work with adult constituents, in order to “avoid the pitfalls when students from advantaged backgrounds tutor children from disadvantaged backgrounds” (p. 261). He continues, “Ideally, younger college students should be working with adults who have something to teach the student and thus are assets for learning, not problems to be managed or solved.” Similarly, in a counselor education service-learning graduate course, students “were instructed not to approach the persons they would work with as a person in need of their help, and they were specifically advised not to be in the role of counselor. A service-learning program centered on charity and benevolence would perpetuate a missionary ideology” (Burnett, Hamel, & Long, 2004, p. 185). By asking students to make transparent and interrogate their assumptions before they begin the project, instructors may avoid issues later. Also, pre-reflection lays a foundation and provides a comparison point for reflecting on experiences during and after the project.

Once a site has been located, the instructor must collaborate with the organization to determine how the students’ (or course’s) needs overlap with the organization’s needs and how partners might work together to meet them. This may take the form of an informal survey or an interactive discussion that negotiates goals for each constituent. Burnett, Hamel, and Long (2004) recommend that members of

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the communities that the organization serves be a part of the discussion and decision-making process. In their study, community members “conveyed concerns about the students’ ability to connect with their backgrounds and needs” (p. 185). The authors also had the goal of involving community stakeholders, with the hope that they would continue the projects after the course ended.

Ideally, student participants would be a part of the selection and planning process. For example, after meeting with local organizations, the instructor could offer a list of possible projects and ask students to assess each for its merits and potential impacts on constituents. Or, students could select from several service-learning options, choosing the one that best fit their background, experiences, or identified needs. This approach has the potential for greater personal investment, as teams of students who have chosen the same project would be more likely to support each other to its completion. Counseling students who engaged in a project that implemented an informational event focused on sexuality, career issues, and mental health noted that they wanted more input into the project, with one student suggesting that the project would have been ““more beneficial to the students if...[they] had a little more say in the direction of the project in terms of content or approach”” (Murray, Pope, & Rowell, 2010, p. 39).

After selection, further preparation is necessary so that student participants are ready to meet the challenges of the project. In the case of service-learning with LGBTQ communities, this may mean initial surveys or questionnaires that expose students’ thinking about engaging with members of this community. For example, questions could direct students to consider interactions they have had in the past or preconceptions they have.

In the field of counseling psychology, Toporek and Worthington (2014) advocate for using difficult dialogues pedagogy as a pre-project means to enhance service-learning experiences in low-income communities. The authors prepare participants by using strategies such as reacting to words (“poverty,” “homeless,” “out of work,” “ex-offender,” etc.) and sharing the results anonymously, reflecting on a poem about homelessness, and reading academic articles on poverty. The authors highlight the importance of having students analyze their own levels of awareness, which vary based on personal experience and prior engagement. A key objective of the preparation period, they state, is to “promote greater awareness for some students and to prompt others to reflect on the ways their prior experiences...will come into play during the course of their work on the project” (pp. 927-928). The authors also recommend building a sense of team among the participants by asking them to share ways they can support each other, so that “...the nature of the difficult dialogues shifts from tension and anxiety to risk taking, honesty, and vulnerability” (p. 931).

Other possible preparation points include didactic instruction on legal and ethical considerations, experiential learning activities, cultural identity development (Burnett, Hamel, & Long, 2004), as well as responsibilities and expectations for all stakeholders. In particular, students should know the impact their participation and also non-participation can have on stakeholders. In Jones’ and Abes’ (2003) study of a HIV/AIDS service-learning initiative, the authors note that a staff member at a site suggested that students need to “hear from those orienting them about ‘what happens when they’re not here. How detrimental that can be to the agency’” (p. 482).

It is also advisable at this point to engage students in LGBTQ diversity or cultural competency training, if the university offers it, where experienced leaders provide students with information about and explore issues unique to the community, while also helping them interrogate their preconceptions. Such training sessions often include a panel of peers who are able to answer students’ questions and offer a personal perspective on being part of the LGBTQ community. These sessions are crucial for preparing service-learning participants. For example, Gendron, et al. (2013) and Porter and Krinsky (2014) found

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that cultural competence sessions for elder-service providers working with LGBTQ populations resulted in meaningful gains for the providers in both understanding and “comfort levels” when working with members of that group.

Setting personal goals or thinking about the project ahead are also useful in preparing students to move from classroom to community engagement. Eyler (2002) notes that learning contracts, “where students identify learning goals and the evidence that will be needed to demonstrate their achievement” (p. 525), have been found to be effective. Eyler also recommends having students write letters to themselves about the upcoming experience, which they revisit at the end of the project and use in a comparison essay. The author of this chapter asks students to do a similar writing activity using the web site Future Me (futureme.org), where students can send an email to themselves that is automatically delivered on a predetermined date after the conclusion of the service-learning experience. Using this email from the past, students compare their predictions with outcomes and analyze what their predictions reveal about their anxieties about and hopes for the project.

Finally, it is critical to address professionalism and confidentiality: how students will discuss or write about their experiences respectfully and in a way that maintains the anonymity of the people with whom they interact during the project. Because confidentiality is crucial when working with LGBTQ community members, instructors must make clear the need for sensitivity when reflecting on interactions or discussing issues that arise during the course of the project. The author of this chapter, for example, shares with students exemplary journal entries from past projects that provide thoughtful details without revealing participants’ identities or incorporating too many identifying markers.

### **Mediating the Experience**

Just as preparation is key for a successful service-learning project that works with LGBTQ stakeholders, mediation and in-project reflection is important to help students process the experience. Across most of the studies the author analyzed for this chapter, the most popular mediation strategy is the use of personal journals. Many of the studies involve mandatory student journaling, both free-response and writing to a prompt.

Eyler (2001) offers a number of particularly useful reflection strategies, including a reflection map: a grid of analysis points before, during, and after service that students engage in alone, with classmates, and with community partners. Examples include writing pre-project personal goal statements, conducting a critical incident analysis, and making team presentations to classmates and/or community partners.

Toporek and Worthington (2014) ask their participants to write pre-, during-, and post-project papers. And, because their students work in pairs, the authors also ask the pairs to “identify at least two areas of partner strengths and two areas for partner growth” (p. 933). The partnership pairs share the reflections, using constructive language and receptive listening. Later, these strength and growth areas become discussion points for the post-project analysis.

Donahue (2012) advocates for using reflection to “question dichotomous thinking and embrace contradiction” (Practicing Queered Service Learning section, para. 3) and suggests that instructors should direct students to “consider how community partners are serving and learning along with them.”

The aforementioned learning contracts (Eyler, 2002) can also be revisited during the project, and students can update the instructor and their classmates on their progress toward those goals. Meeting or not meeting the goals may provide fruitful discussion points for in-class mediation.



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In addition to helping students reflect on their experiences, instructors should touch base with community stakeholders to gain their perspective on students' experiences. For example, Jones and Abes (2003) discovered from community partners that there were sometimes too many volunteers at the site at one time, which led to more peer socializing than interacting with constituents. Also, the authors note that staff at the site stated that some students were "really homophobic and insensitive" (p. 482). Comments like this may have been discouraging to hear, but they can also provide in-class discussion opportunities.

### **Following Up and Moving Ahead**

As important as preparing students to engage in service-learning with LGBTQ communities is helping them analyze and grow from the experience. Purposeful reflection approaches in the post-project period assist students in processing what they saw, did, and felt. As in the other two phases, reflection here can take many forms, but it is best used as a way of linking before-project thinking with post-project analysis. For example, instructors may give students a survey or questionnaire to follow up on the one they responded to at the start of the project, asking them to analyze and reflect on the results and offer a rationale for any differences they notice. In the case of the pre-project emails that the author of this chapter asks students to write to their future selves, students write back to their past selves, telling how the experience went, discussing the outcome of their past fears or anxieties and what they learned from participating, and sharing how they plan to work on perceived gaps in their cultural competencies and knowledge bases.

Burnett, Hamel, & Long (2004) have students complete reflective journals as well as evaluations of their site experiences. Additionally, they ask site supervisors to complete a similar evaluation for each student in the areas of beginning and end knowledge, sensitivity to gender and cultural differences, comfort level interacting with community members, and responses to feedback. Although the authors do not detail what they do with the supervisor evaluations, such analyses might be useful to share with students in order to have them compare their perceptions of the experience.

Toporek and Worthington (2014) follow up with their counseling psychology students by having them revisit readings and models from earlier in the course to compare their understandings and reactions through discussion and writing. They also revisit the partner debriefings and ask the pairs to share their growth experiences with the larger group. The instructors ask students to write about their insights, as well as moments they might have handled more sensitively. Using a fishbowl discussion approach, students discuss challenges they encountered and moments of power and privilege they experienced.

Having students involved in the assessment process is a critical piece of final reflection: "When students have been encouraged in monitoring their own learning and have participated in continuous reflection," Eyler (2002) states, "then the post-service reflection can be particularly satisfying..." (p. 530). Eyler suggests that students propose and devise their own reflective projects, rather than the instructor dictating them. Eyler also proposes that the final analyses and reflections should not be limited to presentations and papers but should also include options for performances such as debates or mock legislative hearings as well as artistic representations or videos. Lastly, the author recommends that instructors should facilitate student presentations to community partners, because "by incorporating the community into final reflective activities, engagement with the community is strengthened on multiple levels" and "produces tremendous pressure to do a professional job" (p. 530).

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Finally, educators who plan to repeat service-learning efforts must conduct follow-up surveys and discussions with all constituents, in order to learn from their experiences and make adjustments for the next project. Knowing what worked and what did not, what could have been better facilitated or communicated, and what goals were met or not met will help direct planning of future experiences. It may even be useful to have the students themselves conduct the interviews and make suggestions for revisions, as it may provide them insights about one day planning their own service-learning efforts.

## CONCLUSION

Donahue (2012) best sums up the potential for service-learning with LGBTQ communities:

*Students bring their whole selves to service learning, and their responses to service learning within LGBTQ communities will be affective as well as cognitive. Some students who identify as LGBTQ may feel great pride in fighting homophobia, while others may be reminded of painful experiences. Students who do not identify as LGBTQ may develop powerful new identities as allies, while others may grapple with trans/homophobia or struggle to reconcile with religious teachings. And students questioning their sexuality or gender identity may have personally transformative experiences. (Affective Outcomes section, para. 1).*

There is obviously a need for more service-learning initiatives that work with LGBTQ communities, based on the paucity of scholarship with this focus. It is the author's hope that educators will embrace the growth possibilities present in working with these communities, whether in the fields of K-12 education, social services, law, the health professions, or counseling. Students, community partners, and community members all stand to benefit from thoughtfully planned, well-mediated, and carefully analyzed engagement projects.

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### **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Cultural Competence:** Having an awareness of one's culture and how it intersects and interacts with other cultures.

**Homophobia:** Displaying negative or biased attitudes toward lesbians, gays, and bisexuals.

**Learning Contract:** A outline of student learning goals and how they will be assessed.

**Mediation:** Facilitating and guiding student reflection and analysis through curriculum, discussion, and pedagogy.

**Reflection:** The process of analyzing an experience in order to learn from it.

**Queer:** A contested term that has been used as both an umbrella term for the LBGT+ community and to refer to fluid identities within that community.

**Transphobia:** Displaying negative or biased attitudes toward transgender people.

# Chapter 15

## Refugee Families and Undergraduate Nursing Service–Learning: Thinking Globally, Acting Locally

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter describes a service-learning partnership between two refugee resettlement agencies and a school of nursing. The partnership has successfully completed its goals of both service and learning over many semesters to the present. This community-based learning opportunity has entailed a variety of health interventions with refugee families while the learning has involved essential competencies of cross-cultural nursing, insights into social determinants of health, and developing confidence in being able to problem solve in a complex mix of health, social systems, poverty, language, and cultural barriers. In addition, assignments connected with this community engagement have encouraged students to develop an awareness of global health issues while intervening locally with their assigned refugee family, thus thinking and acting globally. The authors will discuss lessons learned from this long-term relationship and suggested directions for future work.*

### INTRODUCTION

Through the past decades, agencies and institutions around the world have experienced a rapidly increasing globalization of goods, services, and people. Some of this has been motivated by economics. Sadly, major driving forces in the global movement of people have been wars, civil unrest, and persecution of one group by others. This chapter focuses on one particular category of people forced to flee their native

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homes by war, civil or otherwise, and persecution. When the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) officially recognizes a group forced to flee their homes for these reasons, they are given, by international law, the legal designation of “refugee” (UNHCR, 2016a). Schools of nursing are increasingly required to educate nurses able to adapt their approaches to people from diverse cultures and backgrounds. What follows is the story of how newly arrived refugee families in a southeastern U.S. city and a school of nursing collaborated to encourage healthier adaptation by the families to their new environment while enabling the nursing students to acquire essential knowledge and capacity in providing healthcare to people from diverse backgrounds.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **History of Refugee Resettlement**

The UNHCR was established by the United Nations in 1950 with the single purpose of assisting European refugees immediately following World War II. It was supposed to be a temporary agency with its work completed within four years. For the tragic reason that wars have continued with many millions of refugees from all over the world, the agency had its 65<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2015. Sixty-five years later, the refugee situation is more challenging than ever with each new war or persecution producing thousands and often millions of refugees (UNHCR, 2016b). Coordinated and funded by the U.S. State Department, a few of these refugees, after a long and rigorous process, are accepted for resettlement in the U.S. The actual resettlement is managed by private, not-for-profit agencies, usually associated with a church. Examples of these are Catholic Charities Refugee Resettlement (Catholic Charities of Tennessee, 2016) and World Relief Refugee Resettlement (World Relief, n.d.a). Refugees awaiting resettlement are selected and assigned to receiving nations and cities through a process which attempts to be fair and humane in the distribution of cost and opportunity to both the refugee families and the receiving resettlement communities. One such receiving community has been the major metropolitan area in the southeast U.S. which is the setting for this chapter.

Refugees range from single individuals, male or female, to large, multi-generational families with children of all ages. They come with both advanced university education and professional credentials or no formal education at all. They come from rural areas without electricity or from major cities such as Baghdad with all the technical amenities of modern life. Examples of refugee nationalities include Burmese, Bhutanese, Kurdish, Iranian, Iraqi, Syrian, Somali, Congolese, Sudanese, and even Cuban. Religions are diverse and do not necessarily reflect the dominant religion of any nationality. For example, some nursing students visit Burmese Muslims who are a small minority in Myanmar, which has a Buddhist majority. Other students will visit Burmese Buddhist or Christian families. Similarly, some students will visit Iranian Baha’i and Iraqi Yazidi families, tiny religious minorities in Muslim majority nations. Other students visit Muslim families, which can range from strictly observant to more moderate practices of Islamic faith. Languages are even more diverse since those from Burmese nationality, for example, could be Chin, Karen, or any number of smaller people groups, each speaking a distinct language or dialect. The same is true of Sudanese who may speak Sudanese Arabic as a common tongue in addition to tribally distinct languages. No single approach to a group this diverse would be justified but cross-cultural nursing education does include some basic principles to enhance student learning.



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### **Cross-Cultural Nursing Education**

One of the earliest nursing theories addressing cross-cultural nursing practice was that of Leininger, who founded the Transcultural Nursing Society (Transcultural Nursing Society, 2017). This organization promotes standards and scholarship in nursing across and with cultures. Many of the terms in nursing education which have “culture” or “cultural” as a modifier (e.g. “culture care,” “cultural bereavement”) were developed through Leininger’s work (Degazon, 2014, pp. 75 - 81).

The objective of cross-cultural (or the synonymous term “transcultural”) nursing education is to develop nurses who will be motivated and able to provide care which is respectful and adapted to the culture of those receiving the care (Andrews, 2008, p. 17; Spector, 2017, p. 9.) The process of acquiring cultural competence, which is long and complex, includes an awareness of one’s own learned beliefs, values, and behaviors which comprise culture (Purnell, 2009, p. 5). Students need to learn to recognize the differences within a group as well as the differences between groups. The ubiquity of mobile phone and Internet use around the world does not necessarily lessen these cultural differences. As Shaules (2007), states, “...an increased access to technology, higher levels of income and more education around the world have not led to a lessening of intercultural conflict, nor agreement on universal standards of human beliefs or behaviors.” (p. 15)

Students learn that nurses are obligated to provide care which is culturally appropriate and acceptable for their patients (Ludwig-Beymer, 2008, p. 199). They learn that practices of communication, gender roles, manners, modesty, diet, family and social organization, personal space and time are all formed culturally (Spector, 2017, p. 114). What eye contact and other non-verbal communication means will vary among cultural groups. People groups have different views of health, healing, and the role of various healers within their societies. (Andrews & Boyle, 2008; Purnell, 2009; Spector, 2017).

Published work in service-learning and nursing education in cultural competence includes study abroad in Central America (Amerson, 2012; Green, Comer, Ellicott, & Neubrandner, 2011) and service-learning with vulnerable populations whose social characteristics, including culture, place them at risk for poorer health outcomes (Gillis & MacClellan, 2010). Language and poverty both are barriers to accessing health information and health services even if the information and services are available in the community. As Gillis and MacClellan (2010) point out, these social determinants of health are also issues of social justice and health service inequity, concepts important to nursing and nursing education. Service-learning in nursing generally follows a community health nursing clinical model of engaging with community partners, performing a needs assessment, planning and implementing interventions, and evaluating outcomes, both of the service and the learning (Pijl-Zieber & Kalischuk, 2011). Community health nurses do “with” and not “to” their individual, family and group clients.

The role of critical reflection in nursing service-learning is congruent with experiential learning theory (ELT) such as that described by Kolb and Kolb (2012). Experience must be followed by critical reflection about the experience in order for learning to take place. Kolb, Boyatzis, and Mainemelis (2001) note that learning requires choices of capacities within each individual which often present themselves as contrasting pairs: to do or to think, to immerse and receive or to analyze and plan, to engage with the concrete or with the abstract. The authors have observed these varying capacities in both the students and the refugee families, noting that personality types and previous experiences result in patterns or habits of choices, otherwise known as “learning styles” (p. 228). Learning, of course, involves both the concrete and the abstract, the ability to think and to do.

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One of the learning strategies for this approach to service-learning is to encourage students to enter unfamiliar territory, embrace what may be a strange or uncomfortable situation for them, and delay drawing conclusions until their assessment is more complete. Having completed these activities, they then critically reflect through debriefing discussions, journaling, and an analytical paper. Such reflection involves learning in both affective and cognitive domains (Amerson, 2012).

## **History of the School of Nursing**

The school of nursing which partnered with the resettlement agencies has been in existence for over 40 years. It is part of an urban university which historically was surrounded by low-income housing neighborhoods. Early in the development of its Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN) program, the faculty teaching the required community health nursing course noticed that many international families were living in the housing which bordered the university. She worked with the resettlement agency to determine their needs which resulted in a partnership, and that is how this particular service-learning course was created. It has continued without interruption for several decades since then. This chapter will focus on the developments during the past six years when the authors worked together to continue the strong tradition of this service-learning course while seeking to improve it and also adapt to changes in communication technology and the ebb and flow of various refugee groups into this community.

## **Cross-Cultural Nursing Theory for Students**

The course textbook has an intensive chapter on “Cultural Influences in Nursing in Community Health” (Degazon, 2014) which the authors assign to students for theoretical instruction in cross-cultural nursing. Students are instructed in concepts such as “cultural competence,” “cultural preservation,” “cultural accommodation,” and “cultural re-patterning” (pp. 73-78). In addition to the textbook chapter, students are directed to web sites such as ethnomed.org (2016) which has in-depth cultural information about some of the largest refugee groups to enter the U.S. Students also receive an unpublished orientation booklet based on materials used by the resettlement agencies which include significant cultural content (World Relief, n.d.b) These materials provide a wealth of information about many obvious cultural beliefs and practices and some not so obvious such as cultures which are goal-oriented as contrasted with those which are relationship-oriented. There is also a strong distinction made between refugees from urban areas and those from rural areas. These groups can have significant cultural differences between them even when from the same ethnicity and nationality. Learning goals for the students include adapting their approach based on assessed qualities and traits of their family’s actual culture.

## **MAIN FOCUS**

### **Preparing for Student Placement**

A service-learning partnership for schools of nursing begins with a clinical affiliation agreement between the institution and community agency. This agreement or memorandum of understanding stipulates terms of the student placement with the agency. These terms include continued compliance with educational accreditation bodies by the institution, the nature of the communication between agency and institution,

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and the qualifications of the students who are being placed with the agency. They also stipulate compliance by the students and the faculty with information privacy laws and liability insurance coverage. The affiliation agreement used by a nursing program of study will be similar whether students are completing clinical rotations in hospitals and clinics or engaged in service-learning with community agencies. The agreement establishes the legal framework within which nursing students can act as such with any agency.

About six weeks before each semester begins, the authors contact each agency to inquire about the numbers of students which the agency can accommodate. The numbers of refugee families entering a community will fluctuate. Agencies also experience changes within their staff and workflow which can impact how many students they can receive. The numbers of students registered into the relevant courses are already known. Once what each agency can accommodate is known, the faculty begin the process of dividing the student groups among the agencies. Faculty are also assigned with the students to each agency.

Each community agency has its own requirements for student placements and its own orientation which students must complete prior to working with client families. Some agencies require background checks. Some require that students fill out a volunteer agreement form which may include appropriate management of refugee family information and reporting protocols for problems and issues which arise during the course of student interaction with the families. The faculty assigned to the agency is responsible for supervising student completion of all these requirements. These requirements must be completed before the first day of class and involve necessary administrative work by the faculty, the students, university staff, and the agency. Some agencies have much simpler requirements; regardless, fulfilling both the school and the agency requirements are part of what the faculty need to attend to before the service-learning can begin.

The type of service the students will provide has been discussed with the agencies in the process of obtaining the affiliation agreements. Nursing students in this particular service-learning assignment provide home visits with refugee families. The general goal of the service is to promote the healthy adaptation of the family to the new living environment of the host community. The specifics of the service will depend upon the students' assessed needs of their assigned family.

Student assignments are made and sent to the students by email before the first day of class. The resettlement agencies have sent lists of families based on the numbers of students each agency has indicated it would be able to accommodate. The students are placed in pairs or sometimes a group of three. Any special request for a car-pooling pair is honored if at all possible. The students have access a few days before classes begin to a complete online learning platform (Blackboard in this case) which has the course syllabus, course calendar, course orientation agenda, and all documents, links, and assignment descriptions they will need for the course. Students who have special language proficiency are assigned to a family who speaks that language if possible. Note is also taken of geographical aspects of the assignments to limit the driving students have to do to make their visits. Car-pooling is always encouraged.

### **Orienting the Students**

Although they are senior nursing students, some students come to this service-learning course with a variety of pre-conceived ideas about the community, the refugee population, and the role of nurses in the community setting (Gillis & MacClellan, 2010). In addition, most students have no prior experience with refugee resettlement and have little or no idea what agencies dedicated to this role actually do. For

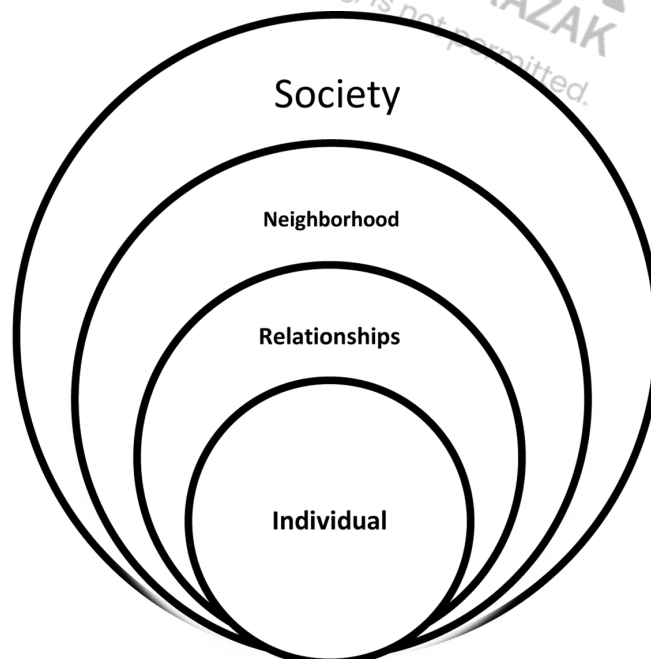
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these reasons, the authors have learned that careful orientation of the students is necessary for optimal outcomes in both the service and the learning.

A full day is spent orienting students to the course, the service-learning component, and refugee resettlement. An important learning outcome for this course is that students will be able to identify when a population-focused assessment tool would be appropriate and what tool or tools would be most effective in gaining the necessary information to design an intervention with the population in question. One of the earliest points made in the course orientation is what it means for a “population” or a “community” to be the client or the recipient of nursing care. A simple example is given first (taking a blood pressure compared to assessing the percentage of people with hypertension in a given population) followed by a more complex example: an ecological model of violence. An ecological model of a health phenomenon is displayed in a series of nested ovals, with the smallest one the individual and individual traits or risk factors and the largest one the society as a whole. Two middle ovals represent “family or relationships” and “neighborhood” respectively (See Figure 1). The major paper in the course requires the students to analyze both the situation of their assigned families and the situation of the refugee group each family represents. Orientation introduces these concepts which are reinforced and elaborated upon throughout the course.

A second part of orientation is to address some of the misconceptions about public health or community health nursing and groups as clients or patients. A scrolling PowerPoint has a “top ten” countdown of these for students to view as they wait for the orientation to begin. The top ten includes the perception that the presence of clinics and hospitals guarantees the availability of healthcare. Another perception is that having many sources of health information guarantees that people will have access to the information they need to make healthy choices. A sentence in Arabic is displayed with “What does this say?”

*Figure 1. Ecological Model*



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on the slide to make the point that just because health information is available doesn't mean that all persons can access it (See Figure 2). Asking questions which challenge misconceptions is a way to begin encouraging the students to open their minds to alternative ways of thinking about the learning at hand.

Another misconception is that if a group is vulnerable, it is their own fault.

Addressing this misconception begins with a simple photograph of a Syrian child looking at war-demolished buildings in his community. The orientation then proceeds with detailed information about the nursing students' assignments, tips for interacting with persons for whom English is not a first language or who do not speak English at all, and expectations of professional conduct in their interaction with the families and with the resettlement agencies.

The students are often confused as to what their role will be and why they are asked to do home visits with refugee families in a nursing course. During orientation, the instructors introduce key concepts for the course: nursing of vulnerable populations, cross-cultural competency and cultural considerations in nursing, preventative care of well patients, and social determinants of health. The focus of this clinical experience is very different from the hospital-based clinical experiences they have had earlier in the nursing program, where their focus is caring for sick patients. In this course, the experiences they have are designed to help them understand these key concepts. They will be acting in a dual role: resettlement agency volunteer and nursing students. They will be eyes and ears for the agency in identifying problems the families are having, helping the families acclimate to life in the U.S., and assisting them with activities that will help the families live healthier, longer, happier lives.

Students are told in general terms that they will complete health assessments of their families and do a variety of interventions based on the assessed findings for their specific family. They are likely to do health teaching of a wide variety from basic nutrition and safety to management of chronic diseases and medication instruction. Some students will engage in advocacy or simple case management if members of their family have specific health needs. This can include helping the family to make clinic appointments or assisting the family to report broken plumbing in their housing. Most families will need ongoing coaching in English language proficiency.

Orienting the students to communication tips with non-native English speakers or non-English speakers is extremely important (See Figure 3). Some students find this the most intimidating part of this clinical. The instructors try to support them as they learn, encouraging more empathy with their non-English speaking refugee families' situations. Specific communication tips are to speak a bit more slowly and clearly, use simple language, and avoid jargon or figures of speech. "Getting your ducks in a row" would be taken literally by most non-English speakers who might start looking around for the ducks if this phrase were used in conversation. If one statement is not understood, re-state it using different words. Do not speak more loudly: it is a language difference, not a hearing problem. The use of gestures, pantomime, and pictures is encouraged (Andrews, 2008, p. 29; Spector, 2017, p. 11). Students also have found interpretation applications on their smart phones and have become adept at using this

*Figure 2. Arabic Script "Always Wear Your Seatbelt" using Google Translate*

دائماً ارتداء حزام الأمان الخاص بك.



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*Figure 3. Tips for Communicating With Non-English Speakers*

1. Speak slowly and clearly.
2. Do not use jargon or figures of speech.
3. If not understood, re-state using different words.
4. Do not speak more loudly: it is not a hearing problem.
5. Use gestures, pantomime, or pictures.
6. Use smart phone interpreter applications.
7. Do not count on an interpreter being present.

technology to facilitate communication. It is possible an interpreter may be available, usually a family member or friend who lives nearby, but the students are encouraged not to depend on this possibility.

Basic personal safety, as well as professional conduct, is reviewed with the students, and “street smarts” are encouraged. They are to dress professionally in the required white and navy scrubs as nursing students. University-issued photo identification must be worn at all times. They are to know where they are going and must always be in pairs. They are to keep all valuables out of sight. Their mobile phones must be kept on and with them at all times. They are encouraged to keep an observant but confident attitude. If they observe anything which makes them feel unsafe, they are to leave immediately and phone their instructor. In the history of this service-learning course, no student has ever been threatened or had to leave a home visit because of feeling personally at risk for injury. Given that students often visit families in neighborhoods with which the students are unfamiliar, it is important to address safety concerns in orientation.

Following the general orientation, students and their instructors drive to the agencies with which they’ve been assigned families. The agencies orient the students to agency specific policies and protocols. The students then have opportunity to review the refugee family files. They confirm names, address, ethnicity and nation of origin, and some basic health information such as tuberculosis and immunization status. Students are instructed that the task of the first visit is to find the address, identify themselves to the families as volunteers with the refugee resettlement agency, and for the families to expect them back the following week on the same day and usually about noon or 1:00 P.M.

### **The First Day**

On the first day in the afternoon and following orientation, students travel to their refugee family’s address by themselves and experience the awkwardness of knocking on a stranger’s door with the likelihood that

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they will not be able to explain why they are there. On rare occasions, no one is home, so those students are likely to feel a mixed reaction of relief and disappointment. The students then return to the university where they debrief about their experiences with their peers and their instructor.

The tasks for the first day are simple: find the address, introduce themselves, and let the family know when they will return. However, the range of experiences even from these simple interactions can be dramatic. Some families open the door and welcome the students with warm hospitality. Some families open the door a crack, peer suspiciously through it, and show a cold face to the students. Rarely, family members will peer through a front window at the students and refuse to open the door at all. The English proficiency of the families does not seem to be related to the degree of warmth or coolness with which the students are received.

Reports of these differing receptions are discussed in the debriefing which follows each of the six weekly home visits. A topic of discussion which develops over most of the six weeks is the quality of trust and what factors contribute to the degree of trust, if any, which flows between a patient and the nurse. The instructors note that within a clinic or hospital, the nursing staff has borrowed credibility from the agency, and trust is generally assumed since patients recognize their role within those institutions. In a refugee family home setting, the family may or may not see them as nurses, and “nurse” is likely to be perceived differently by different people groups. The family, in fact, may have no idea who the students are, and their reception of strangers showing up at their front door is going to be shaped by their previous experiences. The instructors with the students discuss the many experiences the families may have had to shape their initial reception to the students. Some families may have had very positive experiences with Americans; others may have had indifferent or negative experiences.

Trust-building strategies include maintaining a friendly, professional interest in the family regardless of the initial reception. It is important to show up for the next visits when the students have said they will show up. Identifying something important to the family on the early visits, such as photographs or pictures on the wall or other items of culture or art displayed within the house are good conversation starters. Sensitivity to family practices such as removing one’s shoes and leaving them by the front door is important. Cultural competency begins with small practices such as this. How to respectfully interact with cultures which have varying standards of appropriate interaction between genders is also discussed. Because the students are mostly females, for example, and many of the families are strict Muslims, the female students are cautioned not to offer to shake the hand of a Muslim man unless he offers his hand first (Adair & Salah, 2009, pp. 354 - 355).

The students’ refugee orientation booklet (World Relief, n.d.b) has important information about the cultural differences even within a nationality between rural and urban dwellers. People from rural areas tend to have lower educational levels, more traditional practices and beliefs, and less consistent access to electricity, and they must begin the adaptation to an urban environment with less knowledge of what that entails. People from urban areas tend to be the opposite: more education, usually bilingual or multilingual, fluent with the technological amenities of modern life, and generally less bound to strict traditions. The use of cell phone technology, however, has become nearly ubiquitous, with many people even in remote villages around the world using mobile phones for communication, so the differences between rural and urban in this regard are becoming less and less. Students learn not to generalize about ethnic or national groups as they reflect on the within group differences represented by their families as a whole.

Each day of visits has journaling for the students with prompts intended to elicit reflection relevant to that day. The first day asks them to describe the challenges they faced and what knowledge, skills and attitudes they used to meet the challenge. Typically, the challenges will entail finding the address,

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knocking on the door not knowing what to expect, and then initiating an interaction with strangers from a different culture and language. For most students, this is awkward and intimidating. They generally describe the altruism and courage they must engage in order to do things which are uncomfortable for them. The important professional character-building effects of being challenged in this way are highlighted in the discussions on the first day.

One strategy for building positive, trusting relationships is to play games with the families. A favorite game which is practically universal and requires no language skill is dominoes. One instructor witnessed the transformation of a cool, awkward family-student encounter to a group of people suddenly laughing and chattering, each in their own language, but somehow communicating through the mediation of the game that they were all glad to be there together. The remaining student visits were shaped by this positive turn in trust for which the game of dominoes was a powerful catalyst. If any children are present, playing with the children often achieves the same kind of trust.

Another example of a game faculty members have observed students using with refugee families was "Head, Shoulders, Knees and Toes," a simple song and dance used to teach children the English words for body parts. The laughter and comradery which came from this exercise set a positive emotional climate for all the visits which followed. Although instructors make suggestions and give examples of such activities, the students themselves are responsible for planning and following through with building trust. Faculty members have noted a marked variation in the comfort level of students to take such initiative. Not only do faculty members instruct students to begin with their families where the families are developmentally, but the instructors must also begin teaching each student where that student is developmentally.

Instructors make a short visit with each pair of students with their families in order to meet the family, thank them for allowing the students to visit with them, and intervene if any issues come up which need the instructor's expertise to help problem solve. When students are engaged in service in the community, while it is not possible for the instructor to be present for each visit, the instructor needs to be available at all times by telephone. The students need to know that their instructor is close by and will come with a call if needed. The agency also needs to be able to contact the instructor if any issues come up (such as the family not being home) which the instructor then needs to relay to the students. Communication which flows in all directions – students with instructor, students with families, agency with instructor, families with agency – is one of the factors which encourage positive experiences for all involved.

### **Agency Partnership**

In addition to each day's journal prompting critical reflection on their experiences, each journal also contains a brief report of the encounter and any family needs the students identified. The students are also required to document their round-trip mileage from the university to the refugee home as well as the travel and visit time. This part of the journal is copied and pasted by the instructor into a report for the agency. Since funding for the family resettlement is provided by the U.S. State Department and includes a Match Grant dependent on donations in kind from the community, any volunteer hours and mileage can be documented as a donation in kind. The students are encouraged to think about the stewardship of material and human resources as they document this aspect of their visits.

One question that always comes up is whether the students are allowed to give any material goods (for example, clothing or food) to the refugees. It is a good opportunity to discuss how good intentions can sometimes cause harm. The expectations between people are discussed. Many refugees have come

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to see people with resources as a sort of “supply truck” and so will often state needs to whomever they encounter in the hopes that someone will eventually meet those needs. These are legitimate survival behaviors learned in refugee camps. Students are told not to ask open-ended questions such as, “Is there anything you need?” or “What can we do for you?,” because “We need a car, a computer, a new apartment, a job,” will often be the response to such questions, none of which the students can provide. This will start the relationship between the students and the family on a negative note, and the students’ role is more likely to be perceived as a supplier of goods than an encourager of self-sufficiency and healthy adaption.

Still, the poverty of many of the refugee families is apparent to the students, and their instincts to help are strongly aroused. The instructors encourage them to delay giving things until the last visits so that a healthier relationship has a chance to be built before the giving of goods alters it. When items are given, these need to be documented with the agency who keeps accounts of all such donations in order to credit them for the match grants.

Regular communication with the agencies is essential and is usually done by the instructor, as agency personnel could be overwhelmed with multiple student emails or phone calls. The instructor also edits the communication for clarity and relevance before sending it as a compiled report from the students. There is a designated agency coordinator who is the contact person and who receives all communication from the instructor. Alternatively, an agency may have an online system to log volunteer hours and visit reports, which the students are responsible for completing.

#### **Service Provided**

Measuring the actual improvement in the lives of the recipients of service-learning, aside from obvious benefits such as a newly painted house, has historically been a challenge (Dunlap, 2015). Without some real benefit, the recipients are likely to feel exploited for learning or altruism gains by those providing the alleged service. This is especially true when students are sent repeatedly to the same neighborhood. This particular service-learning example does not usually visit the same families unless there is some compelling reason to do so, such as the presence of chronic disease which needs additional monitoring and health education. In fact, most of the families the students visit have just arrived in the country. It is still the case that the burden of demonstrating what the services actually accomplish is on those providing the service and needs to be confirmed by the agency partner.

The overarching goal of the refugee resettlement agency is to support the family for a short time, usually three to nine months, until they are fully self-sufficient, employed, and paying their own bills. This occurs for the majority of refugee families brought into the U.S. A few families, for a variety of reasons, require extended case management for up to five years and then are likely to end up on public support indefinitely. The primary reason for this happening is that the physical or mental health of members of the family precludes adults from working. Another reason may be that the employment skills of the adults do not match any job which could afford a living wage; these individuals become indefinitely locked into entry-level jobs which provide insufficient income for a family.

The agencies welcome the entry of nursing students for six weeks into the lives of both the newly arrived refugee families and also a few families who are on extended case management. The nursing students provide additional eyes and ears to assess the status of the family and its members. The weekly reports are important to the caseworkers: “I love those nursing student reports,” said one caseworker enthusiastically. “They have such good information” (Personal communication, September 14, 2016).

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This information helps the resettlement caseworkers prioritize their services to the families. For example, students will find unfilled prescriptions for essential medicines or health problems which need to be addressed soon. Students find families with little or no food in their apartments. All these unmet needs are identified, described in a report, and sent to the agency contact, who, in turn, distributes them to the families' caseworkers. This alone is viewed as "value added" by the refugee resettlement agency and by the families who express appreciation for the additional advocacy.

In addition to this monitoring and reporting service, students actively engage in coaching and encouraging the self-sufficiency of each family. They are instructed to begin with each family where it is and see how far they can assist the family in skills and knowledge needed for self-sufficiency. Some families need basic English language instruction, and the students with those families begin with simple English such as "This is my nose." The students are instructed that health literacy—the ability to know when and what type of health information is needed, how to acquire and understand the health information, and then how to apply it—must often begin with basic language skills.

Some family members have chronic health problems whose management in the U.S. may be different from how they were managed in the country of origin. These chronic health problems include diabetes, hypertension, gastric reflux, and migraines, as well as a host of other disorders such as infectious diseases and parasites. Refugee family members may also experience a variety of mental health disorders as well as disability from congenital conditions and injuries. These disorders are in the context of many families coming from areas of active conflict. Refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo or Sudan have been subject, for example, to the ravages of civil war in a confusing mix of ethnic and tribal hostility. Depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder are natural consequences of some of the horrific experiences these families have survived. Nursing students offer empathy and knowledge of resources for disorders like these.

While no ongoing formal log is kept of these services beyond what they record in their journals and what is reported to the agencies, students provide a wide range of health teaching, including nutrition, physical activity, medications, and disease management, as well as coaching in English language skills. Many refugees come from areas where medications normally requiring a prescription in the U.S. are available without one in the country of origin. The students have a teaching tool with color photographs of common over the counter (OTC) medications available in the U.S. and the typical condition for which it would be appropriate to use that medication.

Students help in coaching families how to prepare household budgets and review the manual for getting a driver's license with those anxious to begin driving (legally). They coach on common safety practices such as always wearing one's seatbelt, protecting small children from inserting objects into electrical outlets, and the safe storage of perishable food. Students help families fill out forms such as maintenance requests for their apartments. They help refugee children in school readiness play with educational games that encourage learning the alphabet and numbers.

While all this varied service is being delivered, relationships are forged and much cross-cultural awareness is fostered on both sides. Students end their six weeks, moving from that initial awkwardness to mixed emotions of loss and a sense that they are abandoning their families. This is where the professional nature of their service is important to reference: for any nurse, there is a small window of engagement with any patient which eventually comes to an end. Nursing students must learn to let go of their families and understand that their families must continue to live out their own lives with a mix of challenge and support just like human life everywhere. Refugee resettlement agencies will continue the case management of their client families.



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In summary, while the course instructors do not keep a running log of specific instances of “services rendered” beyond the weekly journals, the fact that the service is significant and valuable to both the agency and the families is apparent.

### **Learning Acquired**

In addition to the weekly journaling and debriefing discussions with their peers and their instructor, students write a major paper in this course based on this service-learning experience. The paper is the primary document of their learning from the service and requires critical analysis of the major concepts for which the service is designed to teach them: community as client, vulnerability, preventative health-care, cross-cultural nursing, and the social determinants of health.

The paper requirements are reviewed in detail during debriefing on the first day. These requirements are also detailed in the course syllabus along with a summary grading rubric. A sample of an exemplar paper is provided in Blackboard (with identities removed and with permission of the student who wrote it).

The first task for the students consists of constructing appendices for the paper in which data are compiled and organized. Students may work together to collect and organize the data. These data include maps of a two-mile radius around the refugee family’s current residence and as close as the students can find for the residence either in the country of origin or the refugee camp where the family lived prior to coming to the U.S. Another appendix contains selected health indicators placed side by side in a table which compares the health status of the country of origin with the state in which they currently live. In addition to the requirement of infant mortality rates, students may choose any other indicators they wish. Typically, they will choose longevity rates, rates of tuberculosis, and similar health status indicators.

A second set of appendices contains data from “windshield surveys.” This is what can be observed about the neighborhoods where their families currently live by driving around and noticing environmental features which could impact health positively or negatively, for example, the presence of sidewalks, proximity of grocery stores, nearest fire station, and so on. Whether children have safe outdoor play areas, how well the apartment buildings are maintained, and access to other services are also included. Types of people (for example, race, ethnicity) walking about the neighborhood, any indicators of religion or politics, and presence of media most commonly used by residents of the neighborhood are other parts of a windshield survey. The students with families in the same apartment complex can share their observations with each other.

The students are asked to do a “virtual windshield survey” by using online images of the country of origin and locating as closely as they can the same features of the original neighborhood as they did when directly observing through their own vehicle’s windshield. They may choose the refugee camp or the actual country of origin since many refugees end up being born and living in a camp for decades. There are some young adult refugees who have known no other kind of life but the refugee camp. The students need to acknowledge explicitly in their papers that the virtual windshield survey has limitations both in scope and in accuracy but, for the purposes of comparison, does give some idea about the two neighborhoods.

There is an in-depth family assessment which each pair of students working with a family must complete as closely as possible. This assessment details information about the family, its members, its health, its capacity, and its challenges. Students with families who have good English language skills or who have an available interpreter naturally are able to get more detailed information than students whose families speak no English at all. In that case, students are instructed to get tentative data from reliable web sites such as [ethnomed.org](http://ethnomed.org) (2016). The family assessment is another important appendix.

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Finally, the students must construct an ecomap, a graphic representation of the family that depicts the family members' connections with people, groups, resources, and institutions in the community, specifying whether each relationship is positive, negative or tenuous. This graphic functions as a quick, summary visual representation of how each family is situated within its current community. Students work together to compile all these data and organize them into correctly formatted appendices.

Each student individually must write an analysis of the data. Requirements are specific statements about how the accuracy and relevance of the data collected were protected. Comments there can include checking one's observations and conclusions with one's partner and using reliable web sources. The importance of being transparent about one's efforts to guard the accuracy of data is linked to the trustworthiness of the nursing profession and each individual's personal integrity.

The paper criteria require the student to identify positive and negative factors for health in both the country of origin and current state. Students learn that the move has trade-offs, many of them significant. For example, students observe that families have left friends, culture, language, and other family members for a place which may offer more security and more opportunity but at the cost of losing that familiar lifestyle and social network. Students also discover in their reflection on the refugee situation that, ironically, some refugees may have better health in their countries of origin than they have in the U.S. where they are often obliged to become more sedentary and have diets which encourage obesity.

Students also note that, while healthcare in the U.S. places emphasis on prevention, people in many parts of the world either cannot afford or do not value "going to the doctor" when they are not sick. While preventive health is certainly much more than accessing healthcare, the concept of regular checkups and screenings are not routinely practiced in many resource-challenged parts of the world from which most of the refugees come. Immunization rates, on the other hand, are likely to be close to that of the U.S., especially for children.

Students generally are able to discuss vulnerability and the social determinants of health without difficulty in their papers. They have observed in the lives of their refugee families, for example, the impact of language, income, transportation, and education on the ability to access healthcare and those goods and services which promote health. An exercise instructors do as part of the debriefing on the last day and which is included in their journal prompts as well is to imagine a best-case and worst-case scenario five years in the future for their family. This exercise highlights both vulnerability and social determinants of health as students reflect in debriefing and in both journals and their papers on what factors place their families at risk for a worst-case scenario and what factors encourage a more optimistic future. They are able to step back and take an overall view of their work with the family and identify the ways they have reduced the risk for a worse outcome and encouraged the possibility of a better outcome. Students will sometimes incorporate this exercise in their papers; if not there explicitly, the thinking behind it is almost always in their analysis implicitly.

Students regularly remark how this service-learning has "opened my eyes," a comment to gladden any instructor. Their written work supports this report. Most of them will not choose community health nursing as their specialty, but any nursing role they choose will be the richer for having an awareness of culture, social determinants of health, vulnerability, and prevention-mindedness which this service-learning gives them.

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### **BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter has identified some practices which strongly contribute to the success of the service-learning:

1. Establishment of a strong partnership supported with clear, ongoing communication between the community agency and the institution of learning is the first key to success.
2. What the students will actually do and what learning is to be derived from their service needs to be clearly described and understood by agency, school and students.
3. Students need to be thoroughly oriented to what they will be doing including personal safety and professional conduct.
4. Expectations of clear and regular communication need to be established and reinforced while students are out in the community for their service-learning.
5. Instructor supervision and post-service debriefing are essential to safe and effective service and the learning the service is intended to foster.
6. The service needs to be meaningful and significant and recognized as such by all constituencies: agency, recipients of the service, students and school.
7. Debriefing discussions, journals, and an assignment which elicits analytical thinking will encourage and reinforce the learning intended by the service.

### **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

How students carry over the learning they acquire in this experience to their nursing practice is unknown. Amerson (2012) found that cultural competence, which included cognitive, practical, and affective elements, learned in an international service-learning course, persisted after the students had graduated and were in practice. Similar studies of other service-learning courses in a variety of settings are needed. Since nursing education is intense, the experience might get buried in the students' memories with only superficial recall capacity. Students often do not know what they know and, conversely, may assume more cultural competence than they actually have. The optimal timing of measures of learning which have become naturalized or part of the individual's habitual outlook is another important area for inquiry. The need for cultural competence and nurses who can address population-focused health issues is clearly stated in contemporary standards of nursing education and practice (AACN, 2008; ACEN, 2013; CCNE, 2009). To what degree service-learning courses such as this one contribute to an ongoing ability of these skill sets is unknown. Course level questions of how to improve the depth and significance of student learning are also important to consider as future research. Faculty in semesters following the one in which this course occurs report that students frequently comment on how life-changing interacting with refugees was for them (Personal communication, September 14, 2016). While that is gratifying, to what degree this service-learning experience impacts the students' professional practice remains an open question.

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### **CONCLUSION**

This chapter has described the history of a successful service-learning course in a baccalaureate nursing program in a southeastern U.S. city. The background of the refugee and of the institution's early connection to refugees is explained. The service-learning itself is described in detail. What service is delivered and potential impact on the service recipients is discussed. Assignments which elicit analytical thinking from the students about their experiences are also described in detail. That this service-learning has continued successfully for more than twenty years is a witness to the soundness of the practices discussed in this chapter.

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## ***Refugee Families and Undergraduate Nursing Service-Learning***

### **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Cross-Cultural Nursing:** Nursing care which is intentionally adapted to the culture of the recipient of the care.

**Cultural Competence:** Culturally specific knowledge, skills and attitudes of the clinician which are used to enhance health outcomes of diverse populations.

**Ecological Model:** A way of organizing health phenomena for analysis purposes which takes into account the relationships among the individual, family or relationships, community and society that contribute to the health phenomenon of interest.

**Experiential Learning Theories:** Learning theories which explain and predict the relationships among experience, reflection on those experiences, and learning.

**Health Literacy:** The ability to identify the need for health information, acquire the information, understand the information and use the information.

**Preventative Healthcare:** Healthcare intended to keep people from becoming sick or injured, identify and treat persons with sickness early in the history of the disease, or mitigate the impact of a chronic health disorder, reduce complications of that disorder, or support death with dignity.

**Population Focus:** The knowledge, skills, and attitudes which will equip an individual to assess, analyze, plan, implement and evaluate health programs and policies intended to improve the health status of a group of people.

**Refugee:** Individuals who are forced to flee their home country for fear of war, civil unrest or persecution for ethnicity, religion, race, or political affiliation.

**Refugee Resettlement Agency:** Private agencies which are authorized and funded by the U.S. State Department to provide resettlement services to refugees who are selected to enter the U.S.

**Social Determinants of Health:** Factors such as economics, education, transportation, language, culture, healthcare systems, access to goods and services and more which impact health status.

**Vulnerability:** State of being susceptible to health risks worse than the average population because of poverty, social status, education, age, gender, national origin, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation and others.

# Chapter 16

## Engaging Vital Older Adults in Intergenerational Service–Learning

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### ABSTRACT

*The population of older adults within the United States is growing rapidly, which calls for increased understanding of that population. However, ageism is pervasive and one of the most engrained forms of prejudice. Intergenerational service-learning may be one way to reduce negative stereotypes and ageism. The Co-Mentoring Project is an intergenerational service-learning project that matches undergraduate students and vital older adult volunteers. Students meet with their partners at least four times over the course of the semester to conduct a life review and gather information to begin the older adults' memoirs. This chapter provides a rationale for intergenerational service-learning and information about its theoretical underpinnings. The chapter also offers information about service-learning best practices, including structured reflection, and how the Project's methodology is consistent with them. The multi-modal assessment conducted for the Project and its outcomes are discussed. Finally, directions for future research are described.*

### INTRODUCTION

The older adult population within the United States is growing exponentially. In 2012, the older adult population was believed to number 43.1 million (Ortman, Velkoff, & Hogan, 2014). That total will rise to an estimated 83.7 million in 2050 (Ortman et al., 2014). To provide additional context for these numbers, in 1970, 9.8% of the U.S. population was 65 years of age or older, and in 2010, 13% of the population was. In 2030, more than 20% of the U.S. population will be an older adult (Ortman et al., 2014). Hence, there is a demographic imperative for greater understanding of the older adult population.

Ageism is stereotyping of and discrimination against people due to their age (Butler, 1969). Despite substantial growth of the older adult population, ageism is pervasive (Achenbaum, 2015) and profoundly

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rooted in society (Butler, 2005). Ageism is manifested in stereotypes, avoidance of contact, and discriminatory practices (Butler, 1989). It continues to be one of the most entrenched forms of prejudice, as most people do not consider stereotypes about older adults in the same way as the harmful stereotypes about racism or sexism (Nelson, 2016b). People may not recognize ageism as a prejudice or form of discrimination when it occurs (Nelson, 2016a). A primary solution to the negative effects of ageism may be more education about the myths and stereotypes about aging directed toward younger generations (Nelson, 2016b). Growth of the older adult population and focus on youth, indicates a need to address ageist attitudes and intergenerational relations (Levy & Macdonald, 2016). Intergenerational service-learning can provide such an educational experience and the opportunity for intergenerational dialogue.

This chapter presents the Co-Mentoring Project, an intergenerational service-learning experience, hereafter referred to as “the Project.” It engages undergraduate lifespan developmental psychology students with vital, older adult volunteers. A primary course goal is for students to more effectively understand lifespan development. The Project, through intergenerational interaction and service-learning requirements, helps students work toward this goal. Through review of this chapter, the reader will become more familiar with a rationale for the use of intergenerational service-learning between undergraduate psychology students and older adults; foundational theories for intergenerational service-learning; detailed information about the Project and how it brings distant age groups together; best-practices for service-learning and how the Project’s methodology manifests them; and, multi-modal assessment for service-learning (Jacoby, 2015) and how this type of assessment has been utilized for this Project. The chapter includes information about effective service-learning reflective practices and how the Project’s methodology demonstrates them.

### **INTERGENERATIONAL SERVICE-LEARNING IN LIFESPAN DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY**

High impact practices are techniques and designs for learning that are beneficial for student engagement and successful learning among students from varied backgrounds (Association of American Colleges and Universities, n.d.). Service-learning has been identified as a high impact educational practice (Kuh, 2008). According to Bringle and Hatcher (1995), service learning is,

*A credit-bearing, educational, experience in which students participate in an organized service activity that meets identified community needs and reflect on the service activity ... to gain further understanding of course content, a broader appreciation of the discipline, and an enhanced sense of civic responsibility (p. 112).*

Academic service-learning focuses on the synergy of service and learning (Howard, 1998). Similarly, Jacoby (1996) described the hyphen in service-learning as symbolizing the “symbiotic relationship” between service and learning which bear equal weight in the experience (p. 5). Service and learning are reciprocal- service experiences enlighten and transform academic learning, and academic learning enlightens and transforms service experiences (Howard, 1998).

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One of the most consistent outcomes of service-learning is a decrease of negative stereotypes (Eyler & Giles, 1999). In a survey of gerontology educators, Karasik (2013) identified two primary reasons for including service-learning in gerontology courses. Seventy-six percent of respondents indicated they included service-learning to increase student learning about aging, whereas 58% did so to decrease student stereotypes about aging (Karasik, 2013). Similarly, in a recent review of the intergenerational service-learning literature, Roodin, Brown, and Shedlock (2013) indicated that college students, after participating in service-learning with older adults, showed greater understanding of aging and issues faced by older adults. Students also reported a decrease in negative stereotyping and increase in positive views of older adults (Roodin, et al., 2013).

A recent systematic review of pedagogical interventions that address ageism among students indicated that knowledge tends to improve when the intervention includes information; attitudes appear to change when the intervention includes an experiential component (Chonody, 2015). However, Chonody (2015) also reported that information alone appears to change attitudes. Finally, strategies intended to decrease ageism aided in decreasing young adults' concerns about intergenerational interactions and their own aging (Drury, Hutchison, & Abrams, 2016). Hence, the service and learning components of intergenerational service-learning may positively impact students' views of older adults, their understanding of aging, and their concerns about intergenerational interactions.

Another consistent outcome of service-learning is an increased acceptance of diversity (Butin, 2010; Eyler & Giles, 1999). Service-learning exposes students to people and experiences that are new to them, which may result in them being more receptive to diverse perspectives and ways of being (Felton & Clayton, 2011). Similarly, students may cultivate a more comprehensive understanding of diversity (Mintz & Hesser, 1996). Roodin et al. (2013) reported that service-learning students experienced increased confidence in their abilities to communicate with older adults, positive personal growth, and increased empathy.

According to Altman (1996), service-learning should be an essential component of the undergraduate psychology curriculum. Service-learning fits well with the American Psychological Association's (APA) goals for the undergraduate psychology major, particularly those of developing a knowledge base in psychology, and ethical and social responsibility in a diverse world (APA, 2013). Likewise, Chew et al. (2010) noted that service-learning is a strategy that encourages sociocultural awareness within the undergraduate psychology curriculum.

A recent APA book (Bringle, Reeb, Brown, & Ruiz, 2016) provided a thorough discussion of the integration of service-learning into the psychology curriculum. A chapter in this book was devoted to integrating service-learning into developmental psychology courses. To date, however, only a handful of empirical studies have utilized this pedagogy in a lifespan development course (Lundy, 2007; Zuccherro, 2008, 2009, 2011). Most research about intergenerational service-learning involving older adults has occurred in the context of a course that is focused on older adulthood, such as adult development and aging or, most typically, a gerontology course. These courses are more likely to attract students who are interested in learning about older adults, since the course may be an elective (e.g., adult development and aging) or part of the student's major or minor (e.g., gerontology). At the author's institution, lifespan developmental psychology is required for psychology majors and minors, and occupational therapy majors; consequently, the Project described in this chapter reaches a broader audience than it would in a more specialized course.

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### **Theoretical Underpinnings of Intergenerational Service-Learning**

Several reviews of research identified theories that frequently serve as a foundation for intergenerational programs (Jarrott, 2011; Kuehne, 2003; Kuehne & Melville, 2014). Each review article recognized contact theory as a primary underlying theory. Kuehne and Melville (2014) also discussed intergroup contact theory, which is similar to contact theory. The theory of social distance (Jarrott, 2011) is the final underpinning theory.

Jarrott (2011) described how the theory of social distance (Kidwell & Booth, 1977) lays the foundation for intergenerational programs. According to Kidwell and Booth (1977), it is likely that the relationship between age groups is socially distant. Moreover, the authors noted several indicators of social distance including perceived barriers to interactions between age groups, age categories that are identified as a minority group (e.g., older adults), and widespread age group stereotyping. Jarrott's (2011) results indicated that social distance exists between different age groups; the greater the age difference between the respondent and another age group, the greater the social distance. Participants who did not have contact with people in certain age categories felt more socially distant from those age groups than those who had such experiences. According to Fruhauf, Jarrott, and Lambert-Shute (2004), instructors develop courses with intergenerational service-learning options to increase students' understanding of course material and to decrease social distance. Instructors expect that increased contact and instruction will improve attitudes toward older adults and the aging process. Research supports the value of increased contact in promoting positive attitudinal and behavioral change (Fruhauf, et al., 2004), which is consistent with contact theory.

According to contact theory (Allport, 1954), under certain conditions, social contact between segregated groups can encourage more accurate perceptions and reduce prejudice. Erickson (2009) described the minimum conditions under which intergroup contact reduces prejudice. The interaction occurs between parties of equal social status, the contact involves a pursuit of common goals, and intergroup cooperation is essential. Also, authorities, customs, or laws must support positive contact with out-group members. Contact under these conditions usually leads to even greater decreases in prejudice; however, these conditions are not essential for prejudice to decrease (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). Additional intergroup contact conditions have been recommended. Erickson and O'Connor (2000) suggested that reconsideration of previous outgroup specific stereotypes should occur and that intergroup contact contradicts stereotypes. Erickson (2009) recommended long-term contact, in either intensity or duration, or both, without which service relationships can increase attitude entrenchment.

According to Kuehne and Melville (2014), Pettigrew's intergroup contact theory (1998) offers four interrelated processes that occur through contact: learning about the outgroup; changing one's behavior; developing emotional ties and in-group reappraisal; and highlighting that individual differences and societal norms can affect intergroup contact efforts. Pettigrew and Tropp (2006) conducted a meta-analysis of intergroup contact theory which suggested the theory can be extended beyond race/ethnicity intergroup contact (e.g., to intergroup contact related to age). Moreover, that intergroup contact typically reduces intergroup prejudice. These contact effects generalize to the entire outgroup and across a broad range of outgroup targets.

The social distance, contact, and intergroup contact theories serve as a foundation for the Project. The social distance between traditionally-aged undergraduate students and older adults can serve as a barrier to spontaneous and more informal intergenerational interactions. Under certain conditions, intergroup



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contact encourages more accurate perceptions and reduces prejudice. For example, the Project engages people of equal social status, in cooperative activity, toward a common goal. Involvement of vital older adults contradicts frequently held stereotypes held by a socially distant younger age group. The Project requires long term contact. Finally, students learn about older adults and develop emotional ties with this outgroup.

### **Positive Education About Aging and Contact Experiences (PEACE) Model**

Related to foundational theories for intergenerational service-learning, Levy (2016) proposed the Positive Education about Aging and Contact Experiences (PEACE) Model to reduce negative stereotypes, aging anxiety, prejudice, and discrimination directed toward older adults. The PEACE model focuses on two main contributing elements that are likely to decrease negative ageism, which reflects negative attitudes and behavior directed toward older adults. Conversely, positive ageism reflects the use of positive stereotypes of older adults (e.g., kind, cute, or wise; Chonody, 2016). The first element of the PEACE model is education about aging and positive older role models that dismiss negative and inaccurate images of older adulthood. The second element is positive contact experiences with older adults that are consistent with five prevailing and ideal conditions for nurturing positive and mutually beneficial intergenerational contact. Contact experiences should be individualized (i.e., one to one interactions), promote equal status during the interactions, involve working toward a common goal, and involve sharing personal information (e.g., life lessons and significant events). Contacts should also be sanctioned by authority figures. Interestingly, several conditions of the PEACE Model are the same as the minimum conditions under which contact reduces prejudice according to contact theory.

The Co-Mentoring Project is consistent with the proposed features of the PEACE Model, which may result in decreased negative ageism (Levy, 2016). Students are educated about aging through the course components (e.g., textbook review and class discussions); students also engage with a positive older adult role model which is counter to stereotypical images of older adulthood. Students meet individually with their partners and maintain an equal status with them. The dyads act in a collaborative manner in conducting the comprehensive life review and developing the older adult's memoirs. The older adult provides the necessary information for the student to complete Project requirements (i.e., life history paper and memoirs). Finally, the Project is sanctioned by the author, her home department, the University, and the recruitment sources for the older adults.

### **THE CO-MENTORING SERVICE-LEARNING PROJECT EXPERIENCE**

As previously indicated, the Project is an intergenerational service-learning experience that matches undergraduate lifespan developmental psychology students with vital, older adult volunteers. Students conduct a semi-structured life review with their partners. Using information gleaned from the life review, students develop a life history paper that grounds their partners' life histories in developmental theory. Students also begin their partners' memoirs. The name "Co-Mentoring" Project conveys the author's hope that students and older adults are both invested in and benefit from Project participation. Emphasis is placed on the reciprocal and collaborative nature of the relationship.

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### **Course Orientation**

The Project is interwoven into the fabric of the course. On the first day of the semester the process begins with the course syllabus review. This review includes a discussion about how this course section is different than others as it includes service-learning. Students are strongly encouraged to participate in the Project, since it is sewn into the fabric of the course. Nearly universal participation allows for conversation related to the Project to organically emerge in the context of regular class discussion. Spontaneous dialogs would be less likely to occur if fewer students were engaged in the Project. Service-learning is a common currency in the classroom. Thereafter, a Project orientation, centered on reviewing a detailed Project assignment sheet, occurs on the second day of the semester.

### **Course Structure**

#### **Preparation**

Several Project-related discussions are scheduled throughout the semester (i.e., two interview skills, one memoir-development, and one developmental theory discussion). The purpose of these discussions is to convey information and facilitate development of student skills necessary to successfully engage the volunteers and complete Project-related assignments. The interview skills discussion provides basic information about how to conduct an interview with an older adult. Students generate their own interview questions and pilot test the questions during class. The memoir-development discussion introduces students to the process of memoir development. Finally, in the developmental theory discussion, students consider the way in which life history and developmental theory are integrated in greater depth, into the life history paper.

Written reflection commences at the beginning of the semester with a reflection that is due on the day of the first interview skills discussion. After the second interview skills discussion, students are provided with contact information for the older adult with whom they are paired; dyads are thereafter referred to as partners. Partners establish mutually convenient meeting times and locations.

#### **Engagement**

Students meet with their partners at least four times over the course of the semester. The first two meetings are focused on the semi-structured life review. In the third meeting, students gather specific information to develop the memoir episodes. Students give the memoirs to their partners in the final meeting. For varied reasons, many dyads choose to meet more than four times. If the older adult has lived a longer life (e.g., 80 years or more), one or more additional meetings may be necessary to sufficiently review the older adult's life. Likewise, an additional meeting may be necessary to verify the accuracy of the memoir content. Finally, sometimes the student and older adult enjoy one another's company; therefore, they meet more frequently.

The life history paper is based upon the life review students conduct with their partners. The paper, along with the journals described below, represents a primary academic component of the Project. Students describe their partners' life histories broadly and ground them in developmental theories and principles (e.g., Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, Schaie's theory of cognitive development, Holland's career theory, types of childhood play, homogamy, sandwich generation), which are

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the focus of the course. Students also develop a section of the paper about the influence diversity has had on their partners' lives and how their experience of diversity has been different than that of their partners. Finally, the paper includes a personal reflection in which students contextualize their learning; they discuss what they learned cognitively and intellectually, and what they learned from their partners about life (i.e., life lessons).

The memoirs are a unique aspect of the Project. Students document four or five of their partners' life events in significant detail. The student and older adult mutually agree upon the episodes that will be documented in the memoirs, which usually take a written form. These stories are told from the first person perspective, which can be a difficult, but helpful, shift in perspective for some students. The memoir text is typically set in a scrapbook or photobook. Hence, the memoirs include a creative component (e.g., photos, mementos, scrapbooking materials) that supplements the written component.

### **Reflection**

Students engage in reflection regularly after these meetings through structured journals. In the Project journals, students connect their partners' life histories to developmental theory and are challenged to think about lifespan development, older adults, and their diversity, differently. Students include a personal reflection in their life history paper, in which they contextualize their learning. Group-based student reflection occurs as a part of in-class discussion. This reflection involves students tying the older adults' life histories to developmental theory or sharing lessons learned from their partners.

Preparation of students helps set the tone for a positive service-learning experience. Authors have identified several aspects of preparation that are consistent with best practices (Bringle, et al., 2016; Howard, 2001; Roodin, et al., 2013; Schmidt & Zaremba, 2015). Faculty should communicate the purpose of service-learning activities, discuss specific service-learning objectives for the course, and prepare students for the population with which they will be working (Schmidt & Zaremba, 2015). Students should also be prepared for community-based activities (Bringle, et al., 2016) and to learn from the community (Howard, 2001). Students need to be aware of appropriate activities and conduct, as well as what constitutes inappropriate behavior (Bringle, et al., 2016). Instructors need to be thoughtful in orienting students to a different set of expectations for their behavior and their roles in the classroom and community (Bringle, et al., 2016). Bringle, et al. (2016) noted, "Asking students to be responsible for their learning, to be active rather than passive, and to be reflective can be sources of surprise, frustration, and disillusionment for some students" (p. 66). Finally, Schmidt and Zaremba (2015) recommend creating a learning community.

The preparation provided for the Project is consistent with service-learning best practices. As previously mentioned, the Project is woven into the course, beginning with introducing it the first day of the semester. In fact, the orientation and interview skills discussions occur prior to conversation about any course content. Students are also provided with a detailed Project assignment sheet that provides information about the project, including a section entitled "Instructor's Notes about the Project;" this section includes information about how to proceed if they have project-related concerns and the demands of the project. Additional detail about the assignment sheet is provided later in this chapter. Consistent with Bringle, et al. (2016), the author establishes "higher" standards for student Project performance by emphasizing active student involvement in the interview process along with life history paper and memoir development. The Project service-learning experience requires more active student involvement in the community and classroom learning roles.

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The syllabus for a service-learning course is different than a syllabus for traditional pedagogy course in some key ways. The service-learning syllabus includes the definition and rationale for service-learning (Jacoby, 2015). This rationale clearly conveys how the service-learning activities contribute to and enhance academic learning, civic learning, and personal growth (Bingle, et al., 2016). Additionally, a service-learning syllabus includes information about the nature of the service experience, student responsibilities, and logistics, plus a detailed description of the service-learning experience, readings, and assignments (Jacoby, 2015). The syllabus describes the negative consequences of not fulfilling service responsibilities and importance of fulfilling them (Jacoby, 2015). It is also helpful to specify transportation options, potential safety concerns, appropriate dress and behavior, and other logistical issues, and how service and reflection will be graded. Finally, the role of critical reflection in service-learning and the course should be emphasized (Jacoby, 2015).

The course syllabus includes a discussion of the student learning outcomes for the course and how the Project and its associated features contribute to academic learning. In addition, students are provided with a detailed project assignment sheet (seven pages single-spaced) that contains many of the syllabus features described above. A separate assignment sheet is provided, rather than including the information in the syllabus, so students know to consult that document when they have questions about the service-learning project. Moreover, if the information were included in the syllabus, the syllabus would nearly double in length, which decreases the likelihood that students would consult the document. The assignment sheet includes a definition of, nature of, and rationale for service-learning, information about logistics, and student responsibilities associated with the Project. The required structure of the journal entries (including reflection) and life history paper are described in detail, as well as the grading criteria for students' papers and memoirs.

Service must be relevant to content of a service-learning course. Service should be a central course component and help students engage with, strengthen, and extend its content (Butin, 2010). The primary goal of the course and of the Project is increased understanding of development across the lifespan. Gathering information about an older adult's life history and application of theory to that life history encourages students to engage more actively with the course content. Finally, the service-learning experience is integrative, linking student activities in and out of class, and connecting perspectives and knowledge from their participation (Felton & Clayton, 2011).

The Project has evolved over eleven years (twenty-two semesters). It began during the author's first semester of teaching the course, as a result of reflection upon her own learning experiences as a student and consideration of the Catholic Jesuit identity of the University. It seemed that active engagement might be a more effective way through which students could learn about older adults, rather than passively receiving information through a lecture or reading a textbook. Additionally, a key feature of a Jesuit education is service to underserved and marginalized populations, such as older adults. Intergenerational service-learning is well-aligned with these considerations, as it involves more active student involvement and fits nicely with the Jesuit ideals.

For the first four semesters, students conducted a life review which yielded the life history paper and a poster presentation about their partners' lives. However, upon additional consideration, it seemed that the students benefitted more from the Project than did the older adults; the author subsequently replaced the poster presentation with the memoir component. A key to the Project's success is its mutual benefit and reciprocity. Students and older adults, the University and community organizations, and the faculty member all benefit from and contribute to the Project's success.

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To date, the Project has engaged approximately 475 students and volunteers. Students are traditionally aged undergraduate students ( $M= 19.9$  years,  $SD= 3.2$ ) who are primarily psychology and occupational therapy majors or psychology minors. Older adults are recruited from senior centers, churches, retirement communities, and through word-of-mouth. The mean volunteer age is 77.38 years ( $SD= 10.08$ ), ranging from 61 to 99 years. Participants are primarily female, including 67% ( $n= 228$ ) of volunteers and 70% ( $n= 267$ ) of students. Most participants self-identify as white, with 94% ( $n= 322$ ) of older adults and 86% ( $n= 289$ ) of students reporting this race. Three percent ( $n= 11$ ) of older adults and 5% ( $n= 18$ ) of students self-identify as Black/African-American, 4% ( $n= 14$ ) of students self-identify as Hispanic, and 2% ( $n= 6$ ) as Asian; two percent ( $n= 7$ ) of older adults reported their race to be Hispanic, Asian, or “other.”

The author intentionally engages active older adults. Working with this population instead of frail or sick older adults increases the likelihood of having the desired effect of decreasing ageism (Chonody, 2015). Volunteers have many additional years of life experience than the students. A strength of this population is their eagerness and ability to share their life history with the students, which, in combination with the academic components of the project, assists the students in understanding development across the lifespan.

However, most students report having limited experience with older adults prior to beginning the course. Therefore, the author provides the students with some basic information about older adults to facilitate more effective intergenerational interactions. For example, a frequent stereotype of older adults is that they experience significant hearing loss. While it is true that many older adults experience hearing loss, a student speaking loudly (i.e., yelling) when conversing with an older adult may not be an effective way to communicate. Therefore, to increase the likelihood of more effective communication with their partners, the author encourages students to speak slowly, articulate their words carefully, and speak so the older adults can see their faces. Additionally, because the project involves interaction between traditionally aged college students and older adults, there are notable cohort differences. First, students are encouraged to be respectful of standards for appropriate behavior, language, and manner of dress of the older generation. Second, students are encouraged to consider the impact of their partners' cohort on their life experiences and the resulting differential impact of history-graded influences (e.g., influences associated with historical events). For example, the impact of Barack Obama's election in 2008 is likely to have been experienced differently by the older and younger adult cohorts.

### **Challenges Associated With the Project and Related Solutions**

Challenges associated with conducting the Project are similar to those reported in the literature and include logistics, faculty challenges, pedagogical challenges, and student-behavioral challenges; these often overlap. First, and foremost, service-learning must not reinforce old stereotypes and maintain the division between the groups (O'Grady, 2000). Additionally, it can be a challenge to find suitable organizations that are willing to partner with the instructor on the Project (Jacoby, 2015; Karasik, 2013). To overcome this challenge, the author works with already existing contacts to establish connections with other organizations. Similarly, the initial set up and ongoing coordination of work with those organizations requires significant faculty time and attention (Karasik, 2013). Moreover, there is an enduring challenge of recruiting and collaborating with a sufficient number of volunteers. The author intentionally works with organizations to recruit volunteers during the summer months when she does not teach, which reduces the time required to do so during the academic year.



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Student transportation to locations in the community can be problematic (Jacoby, 2015; Karasik, 2013). The author pairs students who have access to transportation with older adults who are not able to come to campus. Likewise, she pairs older adults who are able to travel to campus with students who do not have access to transportation. Risk management can also be a concern (Jacoby, 2015). To this end, students complete liability waivers required by the University, and it is recommended that they meet with their partners in a public location. Obtaining materials to complete the service can be difficult (Jacoby, 2015). In this case, the cost of developing memoirs can be of concern to students. The author recommends students plan ahead, purchase materials when they are on sale, and share materials when appropriate.

There are challenges that a faculty member faces in the process of implementing service-learning (Karasik, 2013). The instructor may feel overwhelmed by the project demands, such as time spent coordinating the service experience (Karasik, 2013), and increased time for class preparation, evaluation of service-learning assignments, and time spent mentoring students (Karasik, 2013). The author regularly considers the positive outcomes of the Project as a way to manage feeling overwhelmed. "One of the most difficult challenges for faculty is to provide the interaction necessary to offer both challenge and support to students" (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 185). It is the author's intention that students are challenged by the experience (both service and learning components) but feel supported by the faculty member and other students enrolled in the course. Finally, Eyler (2002) notes that it is necessary to find ways to balance the need for continuous reflection with time constraints, covering course content, and multiple student assignments. She recommends these demands may be more effectively managed by maximizing reflection by individual students outside of class.

Pedagogical challenges overlap with faculty challenges. For example, the faculty member must balance service and class time (Karasik, 2013). Again, in the context of the Project, the service-learning serves to provide examples of developmental theories and principles that are discussed in class. Service-learning often enlivens the content discussed during class. Creating and evaluating students' service-learning and reflection can be a pedagogical challenge (Karasik, 2013). Structured reflection provides some direction for evaluation of student journals; a list of grading criteria are also provided for the life history paper and memoirs. Finally, Villar, Celdran, and Fabà (2014) recommended that other large assignments be deleted from a service-learning course due to the significant demand on students. The Project is the largest course assignment and is weighted similarly to two tests.

Karasik (2013) identified several student behavioral challenges associated with service-learning, such as motivating students to commit time and effort. Simply, service-learning requires more effort from students than a traditional pedagogy course. The author emphasizes the importance of students' work during the project orientation. For example, the memoirs are the students' project; however, they are presented to the volunteers at the end of the Project. Ultimately, those memoirs may be the primary documentation of the older adults' life histories; they have a greater degree of importance than other course-related projects because they matter to real people. Karasik (2013) also noted difficulties with student procrastination in starting or completing service requirements. Likewise, at times, students develop projects that are of lower quality. To overcome these challenges, the author instituted a drafting process for the memoirs and encourages students to utilize their journals as a resource for developing the life history paper. Again, emphasis is placed on the importance of the Project outcome (i.e., memoirs), which seems to increase student investment in developing a higher quality memoir.

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### **Potential Benefits of Intergenerational Service-Learning Involving Life Review for Older Adults**

The literature on intergenerational service-learning involving older adults generally focuses on the benefits to the younger generation. There is a limited body of literature that addresses the benefits of such an experience for older adults, especially vital older adults. Springate, Atkinson, and Martin (2008) reviewed the United Kingdom's intergenerational program literature, noting three outcomes for older adults: those related to health and well-being, reduced isolation, and a renewed sense of worth as they contributed to the lives of young people. Similarly, intergenerational interaction increases positive feelings, self-esteem, and life satisfaction among older adults (Kessler & Staudinger, 2007).

More generally, a considerable body of literature supports the benefits of volunteering for older adults (Anderson, et al., 2014; Morrow-Howell, Hinterlong, Rozario, & Tang, 2003; Wheeler, Gorey, & Greenblatt, 1998). Older adults who volunteer report higher levels of well-being (Morrow-Howell, et al., 2003) and older adults' sense of well-being is significantly strengthened through volunteering (Wheeler, et al., 1998). Psychological benefits of volunteering among older adults include increased life satisfaction (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001; Van Willigen, 2000), happiness (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001), self-esteem (Thoits & Hewitt, 2001), and reduced symptoms of depression (Anderson, et al., 2014; Lum & Lightfoot, 2005; Musick & Wilson, 2003; Thoits & Hewitt, 2001).

The structure of the Project intergenerational experience is focused on life review. Meuser (2011) stated, "The power of story lies in the acting of telling and the human interaction that surrounds it" (p. 188). Life review appears to have positive effects on well-being and meaning in life (Westerhof, Bohlmeijer, & Webster, 2010) and improves emotional and psychological health and self-esteem (Butler, 2009). Two meta-analyses have also assessed the effects of reminiscence on older adults (Bohlmeijer, Roemer, Cuijpers, & Smit, 2007; Bohlmeijer, Smit, & Cuijpers, 2003). Bohlmeijer, et al. (2007) found a moderate influence of reminiscence on life-satisfaction and emotional well-being. In addition, reminiscence had a significantly greater effect on community-dwelling adults than those living in long-term care (Bohlmeijer, et al., 2007). Similarly, Bohlmeijer, et al. (2003) found a clinically significant effect of reminiscence and life review in reducing depressive symptoms in older adults. Hence, it is possible that older adults who volunteer for the Project may experience psychological benefits and an increased sense of well-being.

### **Features of the Project Consistent With Service-Learning Best Practices**

Implementation of best practices for service-learning are intended to improve the service-learning experience and outcomes. Commonalities of service-learning best practices will be discussed in the context of the Project, including reciprocity, collaboration, diversity, and reflection. Emphasis will be placed on best practices related to reflection.

Reciprocity requires that all participants learn from and serve one another (Bringle, et al., 2016; Butin, 2010; Erickson & O'Connor, 2000; Mintz & Hesser, 1996; Rosenberger, 2000; Sigmon, 1979). Jacoby stated that (1996) reciprocity creates, "a sense of mutual responsibility and respect between individuals in the service-learning exchange" (p. 8). According to Clayton, Bringle, Senor, Huq, and Morrison (2010), partnership describes a type of relationship that is characterized by closeness, equity, and integrity. Based

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upon these descriptions, the relationships established between students and older adults in the context of the Project are reciprocal partnerships. Moreover, Bringle, et al. (2016) noted that the nature of the relationships involved in service-learning (i.e. reciprocal partnerships) is a central, defining element of the pedagogy. In addition, instructors can improve reciprocity by making the service-learning relationships more interdependent, engaging community partners as co-educators (Bringle, et al., 2016). The author engages volunteers as co-educators of the students.

Collaboration is vital to service-learning relationships (Felton & Clayton, 2011; Honnet & Poulson, 1989; Mintz & Hesser, 1996). According to O'Grady (2000), service-learning involves *real* collaboration with the community. Real collaboration challenges the partners to develop a trusting environment and establish a common goal or purpose (Mintz & Hesser, 1996). The Project involves the development of a trusting relationship between the student and older adult, in which they work toward a thorough life review and development of accurate and creative memoirs. Service-learning best practice engages people in responsible and challenging actions for the common good. Service and learning goals are clearly articulated, and the responsibilities of all involved are elucidated (Honnet & Poulson, 1989). Collaboration with older adults is relatively new in the intergenerational service-learning field (Roodin, et al., 2013). Through the author's interactions with students and volunteers, the service and learning goals and responsibilities of both groups are clearly identified.

As previously mentioned, students who participate in the Project consider diversity in their life history paper; they contemplate several diversity markers, including age, gender, race, sexual orientation, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion, and physical/mental abilities. Although a diversity factor that is present in each student's partner is age, many students do not readily include this factor in their writing until the instructor notes it. It is possible that students view their partners as like them by the end of the Project experience, which results in students not spontaneously discussing this factor. This may also be a manifestation of students and/or their partners not recognizing ageism in the same way we might recognize other forms of prejudice and discrimination. Students are encouraged to consider how their experience with diversity is similar to or different than their partners' experiences.

### **Reflection**

Reflection is commonly referenced as a service-learning best practice (Bringle, et al., 2016; Butin, 2010; Honnet & Poulson, 1989) and is arguably one of the most important. Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede (1996) refer to reflection as the "glue that holds service and learning together" (p. 16). Reflection provides context and meaning to students' experience (Butin, 2010). Moreover, there is some evidence that service-learning that links service experience and learning through extensive reflection may contribute to a more profound understanding of social problems and to cognitive growth that makes it possible for students to grapple with challenging social problems (Eyler, 2002). Ash and Clayton (2009) encourage the use of "purposeful" and "strategic" reflection that is "carefully" and "intentionally" planned (p. 28). Finally, guided written reflection (i.e. structured journaling) is considered a best practice (Bringle & Clayton, 2012; Bringle, et al., 2016; Sanders, Van Oss, & McGeary, 2016). Karasik (2013) noted that although journaling is the most common form of reflection, the majority of gerontology educators continue to use free-flowing rather than structured reflection.

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### The Five C's

Eyler and colleagues (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, et al., 1996) identified five elements of successful reflection: it is connected, continuous, contextualized, challenging, and involves coaching. Connection links service to students' intellectual and academic pursuits and operates on two levels. It illustrates theories and concepts, and adds a "big picture" context to personal encounters of each service experience. "Connected reflection builds bridges between content learning, personal reflections, and first-hand experiences" (Jacoby, 2015, p. 28). Finally, service-learning connects people (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Continuous reflection is an ongoing part of the learner's education and service involvement; reflection occurs before, during, and after the service experience (Eyler, et al., 1996). Service-learning students should reflect after every service experience (Sanders, et al., 2016). In reflecting before the service-learning experience (i.e. prelection), students note expectations, outlining what they expect to see and hope to learn (Eyler, 2002). They also reflect on their current knowledge, previous personal experience, attitudes and values, and expectations and stereotypes (Bringle, et al., 2016). By reflecting during the service experience, students document their observations. They can also consider the connection between theory and practice and the difference between their expectations and their experience (Jacoby, 2015). Reflection following service-learning can help students better understand what they learned, how the information relates to previous thinking and experiences, and what it might lead them to investigate and do in the future (Jacoby, 2015). Eyler and Giles (1999) stated, "Knowledge and skills are contextual; we learn in ways that prepare us for using knowledge by using it on real problems in the real world" (p. 184). Contextualized reflection involves service-learning students in activities and with issues that have meaning in their situation and are developmentally appropriate (Jacoby, 2015).

Reflection challenges students to engage issues in a more significant way (Eyler & Giles, 1999) and encourages students to think in new ways, generate alternate explanations, and question their initial ideas (Eyler, et al., 1996). Eyler and colleagues (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, et al., 1996) emphasize the importance of establishing a balance between challenging students and providing support. This relates to the fifth "C": coaching (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Students need a great deal of encouragement and reinforcement when they serve in novel circumstances or with new populations.

The reflection associated with the Co-Mentoring Project is consistent with the five C's. It connects student service and learning. The reflection occurs continuously and in the context of students applying the course content to their partners' life histories. Students are often challenged to think differently in their reflection; the instructor coaches students by encouraging them to do their best work and by supporting and mentoring them.

### **Multi-Modal Service-Learning Assessment**

Jacoby (2015) described several possible methods for assessing service-learning, including surveys, content analysis of student work, and focus groups. These assessment methods have been utilized for the Project. The author engages both students and volunteers in a post-project evaluation of their experience. These surveys represent self-report data; however, results overwhelmingly support the value of the experience. Moreover, there is a high response rate for both student and volunteer evaluations (i.e. better than 90%). Item responses for student and volunteer evaluations utilize a 5-point Likert-type scale (1= strongly disagree, 2= somewhat disagree, 3= neutral, 4= somewhat agree, 5= strongly agree).

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Since the fall of 2007, 88% ( $n = 331$ ) of volunteers reported they were glad they participated in the Project, and 92% ( $n = 346$ ) enjoyed participating. More than 91% ( $n = 326$ ) disagreed with a statement indicating participation was not worth the time commitment. Overall, these results indicate that Project volunteers are satisfied with their participation. Sixty-five percent ( $n = 247$ ) agreed with a statement indicating that they learned something new about their life or thought about something differently as a result of the project, supporting the idea that most older adults learned from their Project involvement. Since the fall of 2008, almost 80% agreed with the following statement: “My student partner and I developed a close relationship as a result of working together on this project.” This finding supports the significance of this service-learning relationship. Finally, in response to a question about the memoirs being a central reason for participation, 63% ( $n = 226$ ) were in agreement. As previously mentioned, the author instituted student development of volunteers’ memoirs to make the experience more mutually beneficial. The majority of volunteers agreeing with a statement that the memoirs are a primary reason for their participation may underscore the author’s reasoning.

Similarly, since the fall of 2007, 96% ( $n = 357$ ) of students indicated that the purpose of the Project (i.e. learning about lifespan development) was accomplished (yes/no response). Likewise, nearly 94% ( $n = 341$ ) agreed that the Project was a helpful way to learn about lifespan development, and 92% ( $n = 335$ ) indicated agreement with the following item: “As a result of this project, I better understand how to apply developmental theory and integrate the different stages of life to a real person’s life.” Eighty-seven percent ( $n = 319$ ) agreed that the Project was a helpful way to learn about the process of aging. Since the fall semester of 2011, 82% ( $n = 152$ ) indicated that they better understood how individuals’ diversity can influence their life course and/or development. Additionally, 82% ( $n = 299$ ) disagreed with the following item: “This project was NOT intellectually challenging.” This result is consistent with the importance of service-learning being intellectually engaging for students. The results of these evaluation items support the academic learning value of the Project, as reported by the students.

The evaluation results verify the students’ investment in the Project. For example, 77% ( $n = 281$ ), disagreed with an item indicating that the project was not worth the time commitment; 95% ( $n = 348$ ) indicated that it was important to them to develop a high-quality memoir for their partner. Eighty-three percent ( $n = 304$ ) indicated they enjoyed the Project. The evaluation results also support the intergenerational value of the project, as 65% ( $n = 237$ ) of students since the fall of 2011 agreed that they felt more comfortable interacting with older adults. Likewise, since the fall of 2013, 55% of students ( $n = 69$ ) agreed with the following item: “After participating in this project, I would consider a career working with older adults.”

Students regularly complete a pre-/post-test evaluation of their knowledge of older adults using the Facts on Aging Quiz (FAQ; Palmore, 1998). The FAQ is a 25-item, true-false questionnaire that assesses knowledge of the physical, social, and psychological aspects of aging and stereotypes of older adults. There are two forms of the FAQ: FAQ1 and FAQ2. The author utilizes FAQ1 scale, which Palmore (1998) reported to be reliable and valid. The FAQ has been used with a variety of populations, including undergraduate students, graduate and medical students, and non-student populations. A paired-samples  $t$ -test of FAQ pre and post-tests indicated there was a statistically significant increase in FAQ scores from pretest ( $M = 15.13$ ,  $SD = 2.99$ ) to posttest ( $M = 17.30$ ,  $SD = 3.04$ ),  $t(329) = 11.21$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .24$ , representing a large effect size (Cohen, 1988). Hence, students displayed a significant increase in knowledge about aging and stereotypes about older adults, which also supports the intergenerational value of this service-learning project.



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Content analysis of Project personal reflections has previously been reported (Zuccherro, 2008, 2009, 2011). Several themes were consistently identified across the studies, which clustered in several areas: relationship, interpersonal, and intrapersonal factors, and cognitive development. As previously noted, best practices for service-learning include a reciprocal and collaborative relationship, which is consistent with the identified theme of mutuality of the relationship (Zuccherro, 2009, 2011). Likewise, students described experiencing communication and intimacy (Zuccherro, 2009) and bonding (Zuccherro, 2011) which reflects service-learning being a partnership. Students indicated that they were inspired by their partners (Zuccherro, 2008, 2009, 2011) and their partners served as role models (Zuccherro, 2009, 2011). After having equitable contact with older adults in the context of service-learning, students reported experiencing similarities between generations (Zuccherro, 2009, 2011) and identifying positive qualities of their partners (Zuccherro, 2008, 2009), as described by Eyler and Giles (1999). Students also indicated that they admired their partners (Zuccherro, 2008, 2009, 2011).

Students consistently reported cognitive/ learning themes including decreased ageism (Zuccherro, 2009, 2011), a changed view of aging (Zuccherro, 2009), and admitting to previous ageist attitudes (Zuccherro, 2011). These themes reflect reduced ageism, a desired outcome of intergenerational service-learning. Students also reported learning from applying developmental theory to their partners' lives (Zuccherro, 2011), which is related to the connection that occurs in reflection (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, et al., 1996). Similarly, students reported engaging in introspection (Zuccherro, 2008, 2009; 2011), which may be related to Project-related reflective activities.

Finally, focus groups comprised of older adult volunteers also explored their Project experience (Zuccherro, 2010). Consistent with the students' experience, the older adults described a mutual and reciprocal Project relationship. And, similar to reduced ageism reported by the students, volunteers reported having transformed expectations about the younger generation. Participants also reported that the memoirs were an important part of their Project participation, which is congruent with results of the volunteer post-project evaluation. Older adults reported experiencing the students as genuinely listening to their stories which is congruent with student themes of communication and intimacy. Likewise, they reported feeling like a role model for their students, like the role modeling reported by students.

The results of the multi-modal assessment support the richness of this service-learning experience for both student and older adult participants. The results converge around several Project outcomes. This convergence underscores the value of self-reported Project outcomes. The relationship, specifically the mutuality and reciprocity between student and volunteer, is a pivotal aspect of the Project experience. Inclusion of the memoir was likely a significant and meaningful change. The memoir is completed by the student in consultation with the older adult. It encourages an increased level of student investment and older adult participation. The pre-post change in perceptions between generations is a foundational piece of an intergenerational program. Students report changed perceptions of older adults and decreased ageism on several outcomes (post-project evaluation, pre-post FAQ assessment, and the content analysis). This transformation is corroborated by the older adult post-project evaluation and focus group results that indicated transformed expectations of students.

## **FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

The field of intergenerational service-learning research is growing. The author recommends several directions for research in this area: use of longitudinal and stronger research designs, and a focus on the older

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adult experience. Service-learning studies almost exclusively focus on changes revealed within a single semester. Therefore, important changes may emerge long after the service-learning course experience has ended (Roodin, et al., 2013). Likewise, Schmidt and Zarella (2015) noted the importance of future research assessing the long-term impact of service-learning on students. Longitudinal research presents a primary logistical challenge of successfully recruiting participants after the semester and course are complete. Researchers must overcome this barrier to successfully implement a longer term study about the impact of service-learning.

Roodin, et al. (2013) identified several weaknesses in the intergenerational service-learning literature. Studies rarely use control groups, include baseline assessments, or contain comparably matched students participating in similar classes without a service-learning component. These methodological flaws challenge the rigor of many service-learning studies and the strength of the results and conclusions drawn from such studies. Therefore, future intergenerational service-learning research should utilize control groups, matched participants, and pre-post assessments to strengthen the research design and increase the quality of the results.

Finally, most of the intergenerational service-learning research focuses on service-learning outcomes for young people (i.e. students or children) who are service providers. Additional research is needed to increase our understanding of the older adult experience of intergenerational service-learning, with older adults. As the U.S. population continues to age, such research is increasingly needed.

## **CONCLUSION**

Due to continued exponential growth of the older adult population, it is imperative that there is growth in our understanding of that population. Yet, ageism, stereotyping of and discrimination against people due to their age (Butler, 1969), is one of the most entrenched forms of prejudice (Nelson, 2016b). Intergenerational service-learning, like the Project described in this chapter, may be one way to reduce negative stereotypes and ageism. The Project matches traditionally aged undergraduates with vital, older adult volunteers. The Project's goal is to increase student understanding of lifespan development. It is founded on the Jesuit ideal of service to underserved and marginalized populations, like older adults. Students meet with their partners at least four times over the course of the semester to conduct a life review and gather information to begin the older adults' memoirs. The author engages vital older adults for this Project with the intention of decreasing ageism among the students.

The Project is fully integrated into the course, and includes several planned Project-related discussions, and more spontaneous group discussion and reflection. Project-related challenges include logistics, faculty and pedagogical difficulties, and student-behavioral challenges. Over the years, the author has identified varied solutions to these challenges. The Project methodology is consistent with service-learning best practices, such as, reciprocity, collaboration, diversity, and reflection. Moreover, students are prepared for the service-learning experience and their service is relevant to the course. Finally, course documentation (i.e. syllabus and Project assignment sheet) reflects best practices.

Multi-modal service-learning assessment (i.e. surveys, content analysis of student work, and focus groups) underscores the utility of the Project. Results from these assessments support the robustness of this service-learning experience for students and older adults. A mutual and reciprocal relationship is a fundamental component of the Project experience. Likewise, the memoir engages older adults and

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students in the Project. Finally, students and older adults report changed views of the other group, consistent with a decrease in ageism.

In sum, the Project serves to link two socially distant groups, college students and older adults to increase student understanding of lifespan development. The Project leverages service-learning best practices to achieve this outcome. Through the service-learning partnership, students also experience a decrease in ageism; older adults experience a change in their perspective about younger adults. It is a mutually beneficial, transformative experience for students and vital older adults.

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### **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Ageism:** Stereotyping and discrimination directed toward people because of their age.

**Collaboration:** Two or more people working together to successfully achieve a goal.

**Lifespan Development:** Human development that occurs across the lifespan, from pre-conception to death.

**Memoir:** An historical account of someone's life that has limited structure and describes selected events rather than providing a comprehensive description of the entire life history.

**Multi-Modal Assessment:** Assessment that involves gathering different types of data or information from varied sources.

**Older Adult:** An adult who is aged 65 years and older.

**Reciprocity:** A mutual or cooperative relationship from which all parties benefit.

**Reflection:** Serious thought or careful consideration; in the context of service-learning, it involves thoughtful analysis and consideration of one's experiences.

# Chapter 17

## Empowering Undergraduate Students Through Community-Based Research

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### ABSTRACT

*Community-based research (CBR) is a powerful pedagogical tool for actively engaging and empowering undergraduate students in their research endeavors. This chapter explores how CBR facilitated undergraduate researchers' transformative learning and the development of their civic skills when collaborating with alternative schools. Using the undergraduate researchers' reflections, focus group interviews, and a survey, this case study reveals how developing relationships with young, underserved community members was essential in changing their perspectives regarding the educational system and themselves. Furthermore, the undergraduate researchers' obstacles in collaborating with the community and within their team cohorts became critical sources of civic learning. The challenges of working with various partners fostered their capacity to navigate ambiguity, develop flexibility, and determine which experiences to communicate to community partners. CBR compelled the undergraduate researchers to maneuver through the unforeseen challenges of real life collaborations.*

### INTRODUCTION

In this fast-changing world, “college success” requires students not only to earn a degree but to thrive and deliver in a highly demanding, diverse, and global community (Kuh, 2008). Policymakers, educators, and the public are concerned that college graduates may not be prepared to be civically engaged

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in their communities or be able to collaborate with others from diverse backgrounds in a socially and emotionally skilled manner (Deardorff, 2009; Willis, Peresie, Waldref, & Stockmann, 2003). Compared to previous generations, millennial college students are exposed to more cultural individualism—from TV shows, music lyrics, and language use—and have a more pronounced self-focus (Twenge, 2014). This individualistic trend conventionally leads to less empathy and concern for others (Reynolds & Branscombe, 2014). Consequently, millennials may have difficulties earning workplace respect and credibility from generationally different co-workers who hold negative perceptions of them (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). A national survey found that 30-47% of employers described college graduates as unprepared in their global knowledge, writing, critical thinking, and adaptability skills (Kuh, 2008).

It is within such a context that over the last years, higher education institutions have displayed growing support for service-learning and community-based research (CBR) (Polanyi & Cockburn, 2003; Sclove, 1997). The literature on service-learning, which does not include CBR, has shown reasonable evidence that when service-learning is embedded in the course curriculum—and the service is well developed and implemented in the community—it has positive effects on students' academic learning outcomes. It improves their development of new perspectives on social issues, and facilitates a greater tolerance and ability to work well with different individuals (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Swaner & Brownell, 2008). Historically, underserved students have been less likely to participate in community engagement practices despite deriving just as much benefit, if not more, than mainstream students (Kanwischer, Lilgreen, & Saralampi, 2015; Kuh, 2008).

This chapter explores the role of CBR in engaging undergraduate students in the community through encouraging civic engagement and enhancing their research skills. It aims to expand on the sparse literature regarding the role of CBR in students' learning, and the role of diverse communities in fostering the aforementioned skills (Lichtenstein, Tombari, Thorme, & Cutforth, 2011). To support underrepresented students' involvement in community engagement practices, this chapter focuses on the learning experiences of twelve undergraduate students who participated in a CBR course between their university and four alternative schools. The undergraduate students were considered underrepresented based on their self-identified statuses of being first-generation college students, students of color, or having low socioeconomic status. The four alternative schools of the CBR project served Somali students, adult learners, or students who had not been successful in traditional public school settings. This chapter employs a case study design with a twofold objective: to explore what characteristics of CBR are the most powerful in explaining undergraduate researchers' learning; and how, specifically, CBR fosters undergraduate researchers' transformative and civic learning (Mezirow, 1978; 1991)—which are generally defined as a shift in previously taken-for-granted assumptions and beliefs, and the capacity to work in a diverse community respectively. In addition, to illustrate the benefits of collaborative research among underrepresented students, this chapter is Co-authored by a faculty member and two of the underrepresented undergraduate researchers who participated in the CBR course.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Principles of Community-Based Research (CBR)**

The following literature review illustrates how CBR is a community engagement practice connected to the asset-based and social justice principles of service-learning. Students' participation in service-learning



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courses has been highly studied (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Swaner & Brownell, 2008), but research on the impact of CBR on students' learning is scarce (Lichtenstein et al., 2011). CBR has been considered a "separate but equal" branch of service-learning. However, DeBlasis (2006) and Porpora (1999) considered CBR as a maturation of common service-learning approaches toward higher levels of collaboration between community members and universities, and an enhancement of learners' problem solving skills.

Service-learning and CBR projects are pedagogical tools that universities and colleges are increasingly incorporating into their programs. "Service-learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience [...]" (Fayetteville State University). On the other hand, community-based research (CBR) is where community knowledge and university knowledge come together to solve, through collaborative research, the community-identified issues. Research on academic service-learning has pointed out the diverse array of community-engagement projects that are commonly called service-learning but with different goals, agendas, and measures of learning. For instance, service-learning traditionally focused on enhancing students' learning through experiences (Chupp & Joseph, 2010; Petkus, 2000). It lacked an emphasis on the community impact, and this shortcoming led Chupp and Joseph (2010) to stress how service-learning had to develop mutually-beneficial relationships between students, academics institutions, and the community.

In addition, Mitchell (2008) incorporated a critical stance and asked individuals involved in service-learning projects to do more than merely engage with the community, fostering social justice. Critical service-learning pedagogy, unlike the traditional approach, aims to push service-learning towards the redistribution of power and the development of authentic relationships (Mitchell, 2008). Critical service-learning does not encompass a deficit view of communities in which the community members are viewed as deficient and disempowered. Such a deficit approach promotes students and faculty to adopt a "feel good" and paternalistic approach to their service. Furthermore, it perpetuates stereotypes, reinforces assumptions, ignores structural causes of inequality, and fosters a view of communities as deficient and dependent on outside resources (Eby, 1998; Hess, Lanig, & Vaughan, 2007). On the other hand, critical service-learning focuses on the community assets to "develop[ing] long-term interactive relationships between faculty, students, and communities [and] acknowledges that each individual comes from a culture that has a significant number of assets and/or strengths" (Hess et al., 2007, p. 34).

Focusing on the relationship between community-based research and service-learning, CBR embraces the tenets of critical and asset-based theories. Under these principles, Johnson (2016) stated the three most common aspects of CBR projects:

1. They are collaborative in nature. Research members are seen as equal partners. Leadership is shared and there are opportunities for discussion and dialogue.
2. They have researchers who are critical. Researchers challenge status quo narratives; provide representative voices; and connect what is happening in the communities with larger societal conditions.
3. They are transformative. The research project changes the perspectives and practices of research group members. Researchers engage in transformative pedagogies in which all members of the research team are "both capable of sharing expertise and acquiring new knowledge and skills" (p. 26).

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In congruence with asset-based approaches, CBR does not aim to improve a needy and powerless community but to validate the knowledge of its members through collaborative practices. This is in fact one of the core values of CBR, as Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker & Donohue (2003) stated: the goal of working together is to use each other's assets to improve the community based on the community-identified needs. The knowledge, experiences, and skills that community members have are key in the development of a CBR project, which recognizes that research without the input of community members leads to skewed findings that benefit academics rather than communities. Therefore, the factors that dramatically distinguish CBR from conventional academic research is its focus on meeting community needs and "improving the lives of those living in the community" – rather than fulfilling personal research agendas (Strand, 2000, p. 85). Unfortunately, community members' knowledge is commonly ignored and devalued, when in reality, community members and families harbor knowledge that is rich, essential, valuable, and should be made accessible to researchers (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992). CBR makes this important exchange possible between universities and communities (Johnson, 2016).

### **Community-Based Research and Students' Learning**

The vast majority of undergraduate students are not being prepared to work in our diverse and global world (Deardorff, 2009). CBR presents opportunities to engage undergraduate students in the larger community by conducting research in the real world, which brings, "the unexpected, unpredictable, and uncontrollable" and thus potentially, the development of intercultural and problem-solving skills, and a tolerance to ambiguity (Strand, 2000, p. 89).

Service-learning, collaborative projects, and research are "high impact practices" that help students engage in "deep approaches" to learning, earn higher grades, along with retain, integrate, and transfer information at higher rates (Kuh, 2008). Currently, some case studies have explored the relationship between CBR and students' academic and personal growth (Chapdelaine & Chapman, 1999; Fair, 2007; Ferrari & Jason, 1996; Kowalewski, 2004). For instance, Ferrari and Jason (1996) investigated the experiences of students' attitudes through an anonymous survey after doing independent CBR projects. The students clearly indicated how the service-learning involving CBR resulted in personal growth, an enriched education, and had an impact on their career goals. Kowalewski (2004) also found through course evaluations how her research course was a powerful learning experience for the students.

The aforementioned research studies used course evaluations and surveys, but did not include qualitative data to inform how students learned in CBR projects. Furthermore, while CBR projects involved students in the research process, a minimal amount of academic articles were written and published by the same undergraduate researchers (Willis, Peresie, Waldref, & Stockmann, 2003). Thus, a novel aspect of this chapter is using the researcher's reflections and a focus group interview to analyze their learning, as well as having two of the undergraduate researchers, who were involved in the CBR course project, participate in the writing of this chapter. The goal of this case study is to analyze the transformative impact of CBR on the underrepresented undergraduate researchers who collaborated with alternative schools on research projects. In particular, this study aimed to answer: How do underrepresented undergraduate researchers show transformative and civic learning in a CBR course? What characteristics of CBR are the most powerful in explaining the undergraduate researchers' learning?

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### **GUIDING THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

Transformative learning (Mezirow, 1978; 1991) and civic learning (Steinberg, Hatcher, & Bringle, 2011) overarch the analysis of underrepresented undergraduate students' learning in a CBR course. Transformative learning is defined as "a deep, structural shift in basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions" (Transformative Learning Centre, 2004). It is a learning process that leads participants to experience significant change in the ways they understand their identity, culture, and behavior (Mezirow, 1978; 1991). Mezirow found that the process is typically initiated by a disorienting dilemma; a critical incident or event that makes the student reassess or change previously taken-for-granted assumptions, values, beliefs, and lifestyle habits. However, this transformation requires certain conditions such as reflection, dialogue, and/or openness to change (Kiely, 2005; Mezirow, 1991). The essential role of critical reflection or self-reflection in transformative learning is supported by several researchers (Kiely, 2005; Kitchenham, 2008; Springfield, Gwozdek, & Smiler, 2015). Springfield et al. (2015) indicates that reflective accounts involve intellectual and emotional connections to learning that strengthens a person's analytical capabilities. Kiely (2005) states that reflection without students' strong engagement to a project limits the potential of its transformative power. Thus, transformative learning needs reflection and student engagement.

From a civic perspective, Kirlin (2003) defines civic learning as the skills "required to effectively participate in civic and political life" (p. 2). Steinberg et al. (2011) developed a conceptual framework for civic mindedness that focused on individuals' knowledge (on community opportunities and issues), skills (needed to work on a diverse community), and dispositions (towards serving others). The characteristics of the civic-minded skills based on Steinberg's team are the following:

1. **Communication and Listening:** ability to communicate (written and oral) with others, as well as listen to divergent points of view.
2. **Diversity:** understanding the importance of, and the ability to work with others from diverse backgrounds; appreciation of and sensitivity to diversity in a pluralistic society.
3. **Consensus-Building:** ability to work with others, including those with diverse opinions, and work across differences to come to an agreement or solve a problem.

In fact, based on the definition of civic learning, transformative learning has the potential to develop civic skills when the individual changes previous assumptions and beliefs of others and develops empathy, intercultural sensitivity, and reduces prejudice. This case study investigates how undergraduate students show transformative learning and develop civic mindfulness through critical incidents and challenges they faced during the course of the CBR project.

### **CONTEXT OF THE STUDY**

The CBR project on which this case study is based took place in a small four-year health science university located in a mid-sized Midwest city. The racial makeup of the city in 2010 (Census Bureau) was 82.0% White, 6.3% Black, 0.3% Native American, 6.8% Asian, 7.2% Hispanic. During the spring of

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2016, a CBR course was implemented after receiving a grant from YouthPrise and Campus Compact to develop a CBR project and reward the students involved. During the development of this course on educational barriers of underrepresented young adults, the lead instructors contacted four alternative high schools/adult learning centers to invite them to participate in the CBR course. The four alternative schools served Somali students, adult learners, and students who had not been successful in traditional public schools; the school principals agreed to participate in this collaborative research project. In order to understand the role of the diverse community in the undergraduate researchers' learning in their CBR projects, it is important to illustrate the characteristics of the four schools (the names of the schools have been modified).

TOLC is a charter high school that describes itself as "more than just a school. TOLC is a community of learners that understands that every student is different" (quote from the real school's website). The student body is composed of high schoolers whose academic and emotional needs were not met by mainstream schools. Many of them experience mental illness or addiction. In 2016, the high school had 100 students: 74% White, 11% Hispanic, 9% Black, 4% Asian, and 3% American Indian. The graduation rate of the school in 2015 was 18.5% (8 students). Also, 52% of the students received free/reduced lunches, and 3% were homeless.

TAC is an alternative learning center with a day and night school. Similar to TOLC students, this high school is attended by students who did not fit in mainstream schools. The school has daily living accommodations for its students like a day care, a clinic, laundry, and shower facilities. In 2016, the school had 350 students: 54% White, 20% Black, 15% Hispanic, 8% Asian, and 1% American Indian. The graduation rate of the school in 2015 was 44.3% (85 students). Also, 71.1% of the students received free/reduced priced lunches, and 12.3% were homeless.

Science Academy is a charter high school. This school aims to have a high percentage of their students in Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO). PSEO is a program that allows 10th-, 11th-, and 12th-grade students to earn college credit while still in high school through enrollment in and successful completion of college-level courses. In 2016, the high school had 92 students, 100% Black, in particular ethnic Somali students. The graduation rate of the school in 2015 was 94.4% (17 students). Also, 91.3% of the students received free/reduced priced lunches. None of them were homeless.

Roosevelt Education Center is an adult education center. This school is primarily a center for adult learners, GED seekers, and those continuing education. It is well-known in the community for its support to adult immigrants in their educational needs. It also has a free day care and clinic accommodations. The demographics of the school consist of 44.4% Black, 23% White, 15.3% Hispanic, and 2.5% other students.

Flyers explaining the focus of the CBR course were displayed at the University during the Fall 2015 semester asking undergraduate students to submit a letter of interest. Twelve undergraduate students were selected to enroll in the community-based research course based on their underrepresented background (first-generation college students, students of color, or students of low socioeconomic status) and interest in doing research in education.

The course consisted of four groups of undergraduate students doing research *with and for* an alternative school. In groups of three, the undergraduate researchers designed and implemented an educational study with the support of the school staff and learners to better understand the obstacles the alternative students faced towards high school graduation and college attendance. For this purpose, the undergraduate researchers developed and ran surveys and focus groups with the alternative learners. In the university classroom, the undergraduate researchers read current literature on education, CBR, and reflected on their own educational experiences. In addition, the course required them to reflect on their

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research experiences as well as develop, analyze, and write a report on the research study, findings, and recommendations that were presented to the school staff and learners at the end of the spring semester. Initial relationships were established and trust was built, which generated a continued interest in the schools to continue doing CBR projects with the university.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

A case study design was utilized to understand the impact of the CBR project on researchers' personal and academic experiences. A case study is an effective approach for providing an in-depth and contextual look at complex research phenomena while "retain[ing] the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events" (Yin, 2003, p. 2). It becomes a valuable strategy "to develop theory, evaluate programs, and develop interventions" (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544). A case study does not seek to be representative of the population and make theoretical generalizations; however, when "two or more case studies are shown to support the same theory, replication may be claimed" (Yin, 2003, p. 31). This case study aimed to describe the transformative experiences of the undergraduate participants and explore how CBR affected their learning and professional growth. A case study framework enables the integration of multiple data sources and the use of interviews, survey, observational data, and contextual anecdotes to illustrate a panoramic view of the research (Baxter & Jack, 2008).

This study's sample consisted of twelve undergraduate researchers, ranging from first-year students to seniors, who had completed the CBR course at the university. The participants shared similar backgrounds regarding low socioeconomic, minority, and first generation college student statuses. Furthermore, the ethnic composition included White (5), Somali (3), East Indian (2), Hmong (1), and Hispanic (1) participants.

This case study focused on qualitative data to answer the research questions, as it allows the researchers to interpret rich descriptions of the participants' learning experiences (Patton, 2002). Qualitative data was periodically obtained from the undergraduate researchers through bi-weekly reflections on their research experiences, pre- and post-course educational autobiographies, a post-course survey, focus group, and interview. The four reflections consisted of approximately a page and a half analysis of the participants' progress, challenges, and overall experience of CBR with the alternative schools. The autobiographies constituted a retrospective analysis of the participants' educational barriers, support, and its impact on their education. Participants had the opportunity to revise their autobiographies after their research experiences to reflect on whether their views had changed regarding their educational experiences. After the CBR course's conclusion, survey data was collected, a focus group was conducted with eight of the twelve participants, and a separate interview was completed with another participant.

The aforementioned qualitative data was examined using a qualitative content analysis approach (Patton, 2002). The data was coded based on emerging themes and analyzed individually by each of the three authors. Through periodic meetings, they presented their individual finding to each other and searched for common emerging themes. Once identified, those themes were used as the basis upon which the researchers supplemented with qualitative quotes from the focus group, reflections, and autobiographies to illustrate the role of CBR in engaging undergraduate researchers in the community and enhancing their learning and research skills. For the CBR project and this case study, two IRBs were submitted and approved.



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### **FINDINGS**

This case study aims to illustrate how underrepresented undergraduate researchers showed civic growth and transformative learning in a CBR course, and what characteristics of CBR are the most powerful in explaining the researchers' learning. This section will illustrate how most undergraduate researchers' learning did not occur in isolation but in connection with others. A series of critical incidents and challenges the undergraduate researchers faced in the CBR project were fundamental in explaining their transformative learning and the development of their civic skills. This section will focus on how the undergraduate researchers' interactions with students were transformative in their perspectives of the alternative school communities and themselves. The undergraduate researchers' civic growth will be also explored through the challenges they experienced in their CBR projects, challenges that occurred when collaborating with school staff and their undergraduate peers.

### **Transformative Learning**

The qualitative data from this study illustrate the power of focus groups in transformative learning. The connections the undergraduate researchers built through developing meaningful questions, facilitating a series of focus groups, and listening to the alternative students' personal experiences and perspectives, impacted them significantly. The undergraduate researchers began the focus groups with the intent of obtaining the qualitative data needed to help answer their research questions, but through the process of connecting with and learning from the students' stories, their perceptions began to change. Thus, the focus groups were a crucial component in transformative learning. The undergraduate researchers indicated in their reflections and end-of-semester focus group how they learned analytical and critical skills through their teamwork and data analysis. However, the researchers' involvement in the community, building relationships with the alternative schools, students, and staff, fostered the most transformative learning.

Becky, a Hispanic student, pointed out the value of interacting with community partners:

*It was the personal interaction with the students that I found to be critical because it was not only a turning point for my assumptions but it exposed me to a whole other side of research that I had never done before (Reflection).*

Therefore, as Becky explained, the interaction with the alternative students was the "critical incident" (Mezirow, 1991) or "turning point" necessary to initiate the reframing process on one's views, attitudes, and behavior: in other words, the process of transformative learning.

Most of the undergraduate researchers were familiar with quantitative research and lab work, but this qualitative and collaborative work offered novel perspectives regarding research, themselves, and the diverse community surrounding them. Interacting with the community members and reflecting on those experiences enabled the undergraduate researchers to develop empathy and question the assumptions and biases they brought into the schools. Although the researchers came from underrepresented backgrounds, they still held assumptions about the alternative learners as their lived experiences differed from those of the alternative learners. The following subsections will depict the undergraduate researchers' shift in perception of the alternative learners, schools, and themselves through their reflection testimonies.

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#### **Change in Perceptions of the Alternative Schools and/or Students**

Based on the reflections, most undergraduate researchers initially held similar assumptions about the alternative learners: they were low-performing students in low-performing schools. This perspective was illustrated by school statistics and annual reports, which revealed lower than average state graduation rates and standardized test scores. Furthermore, the researchers pointed out in their reflections how discourse in the larger community accentuated the underperforming identity of these schools and learners.

Hoda, a Somali undergraduate researcher, collaborated with Science Academy, the school whose student-body was 100% ethnically Somali. The following description demonstrates her past and present understanding of the Science Academy students and school:

*The assumptions that I had about this school and its students were particularly shaped by the data we received from the Minnesota report card, my experiences working with some [Science Academy] students, and the rumors about this school in the Somali community. I had a perception that this school was only attended by students who were deemed deviant in the Somali community... [and] was not an academically rigorous school....These assumptions changed drastically when I met with the students during the focus groups...many of the students I met were individuals I knew in the community and they were very much like any other Somali teenager...I think Science Academy does a tremendous job at producing Somali youth advocates who empower themselves and their peers to challenge themselves and their communities (reflection).*

Hoda's reflection highlights why her assumptions were skewed. It also illustrates how school reports have a high impact in the community, as academic metrics are institutionally considered to be the primary factor in evaluating a school's success. Another Somali researcher, Abdi, reflected on his experiences at TAC. He thoughtfully described the shift he experienced in understanding the school and its learners:

*I wasn't really expecting a lot of good from the students because when I was in high school I heard of a few students who transferred to TAC and they were not really good students. Throughout our partnership with TAC, I learned many things about the school academically and personally.... When I heard about the problems that the students in the focus groups overcame, I was surprised and my entire perception of them changed....it was evident that the students in our focus groups were head and shoulders above their peers at adjacent high schools, because they were supporting their families on top of going to school (Reflection).*

Becky, a Hispanic undergraduate researcher who worked with Abdi, contributed another view on TAC students. She initially thought that dropping out from a previous school was "because of their [learners] own doing." Once she met the students, she noticed that she had missed how "their family and home life could have also been a reason that they had problems in the mainstream school system" (Reflection). Therefore, she realized how mainstream schools might not be well-suited to support some students the way TAC did.

Following a similar thought process, Brooke, Nikita, and Chloe worked as a team with TOLC, a charter school with a 2015 graduate rate of 18.5%. They all described their initial struggle with understanding the purpose of a school where academics did not seem to be a priority.

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Chloe, a White, first-generation undergraduate researcher with a learning disability, described the analytical and lengthy process of her team trying to reconcile their understanding of success and whether the school fit that definition.

*...[D]efining success, we as a group, we really struggled with that because Brooke, Nikita, and I, we all define success as succeeding in school and for those students that was not their success (transcript). ...TOLC is based on the idea that success emotionally is far more important than academically.... [S]uccess isn't based on test scores, so when they [high school students] look back on previous high school experiences it won't be just this idea that something was wrong with them, but that maybe something is wrong with the public school system. The idea is that the public school system doesn't work for every student and that's okay (Reflection).*

In fact, the undergraduate researchers in this study were able to shift their views on the students and the educational system: from seeing the alternative learners as “misfits” or “outcasts” who were responsible for their academic struggles, to perceiving an educational system responsible for ensuring educational progress for all of its students.

In short, the undergraduate researchers' view of the alternative learners was altered, and they developed key civic skills: empathy and intercultural sensitivity. The undergraduate researchers started the CBR research with preconceptions about the schools and learners based on preliminary research from school report cards, media, and community discourses. These sources tended to portray a negative image of the schools, due to their “academic inferiority” in relation to the surrounding mainstream high schools, and ignored the role that the schools played in the social and emotional development of students. Although the same researchers came from underrepresented backgrounds, and many of them struggled in the mainstream educational system, they were able to overcome their barriers and achieve academically in ways the alternative learners had not. Therefore, their CBR projects, particularly the focus groups and community interactions, were transformative in helping them reframe their views on alternative educational institutions and reflect on their own barriers and privileges when contemplating their own academic trajectory.

### **Undergraduate Researchers' Personal Growth**

Interacting with the alternative learners became a “critical incident” that influenced undergraduate researchers' self-perceptions and awareness. Most researchers revealed a new awareness of their past and present academic experiences and new insights on their career paths. CBR inspired them to reframe their views of other community members and also instilled a change in the career aspirations of some researchers.

Abdi, the Somali researcher who worked with TAC, illustrated how CBR and the interactions with the students gave him a new insight on his own academic experiences:

*My experiences with the students at TAC reminded me of my struggles and joys as a high school student. I was fortunate enough to assimilate with class instruction at a traditional high school when many students who are born here could not. I also remembered some of the classes I struggled with in high school and the individualized learning at TAC would have definitely helped me (Reflection).*

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Abdi, recognized that he, as an immigrant student, was *fortunate* to assimilate into a mainstream school in a way that others could not. Hoda, who worked with the Science Academy team, also stressed the role of luck and a good support system to explain her academic trajectory rather than her intellectual capacities to succeed academically:

*Listening to their stories and reflecting on how far I have come along reminded me of a quote that President Obama said at the Howard 2016 graduation speech. He said that “you may have worked hard but you were also extremely lucky.” I think that what separates the students I worked with and my past self is not sheer hard work or just intellect but luck. Like some of the students I worked with, I was blessed with a supportive family and lucky to find some amazing mentors. If every student had these resources then many of the educational inequities we face today would not exist (Reflection).*

Abdi and Hoda compared their stories with those of their alternative learners and questioned the role of intelligence and hard work in defining their academic trajectories. Nikita pointed out how she “had a pretty smooth educational journey” without facing “as many barriers to the extent that our students had,” again accentuating the role of external factors rather than her academic skills to explain her educational achievements. This was an awareness all undergraduate researchers expressed.

The undergraduate researchers working with the adult learners at Roosevelt were also able to question their own resilience by learning the compelling stories of the adult immigrants and refugees who had mustered the strength to build a new life for themselves and their families in the United States. Those realities were humbling for the undergraduate researchers. Nick, a White, first-generation college student felt inspired. Naavarasi, who also worked with the adult learners stated how

*These [adult] students have seen so much in their lives but still have the ability to see the good in people and make a difference. They inspire me to do my best... I hope to work with the immigrant population and globally in other countries. Meeting people from different places and hearing their stories helps put everything into perspective (Reflection).*

Naavarasi illustrates how getting to know the adult learners better was transformative beyond feeling empathy and changing one’s views on others. She felt inspired to follow a career path in which working with immigrant population would be her central focus. Chloe, who worked with TOLC, also indicated how the CBR experience changed her view and consolidated the idea that she wants “a career working and making connections with people” (Survey). She also realized that research was not just working in a lab and analyzing specimens without much communication with individuals. She was surprised to say, “I actually like research...I want to continue being involved in the community and do research” (interview transcript). CBR transformed the undergraduates’ understanding of research. It opened doors to new research paradigms that had previously been overlooked in their science fields. Individuals like Chloe and Becky who did not like lab research discovered “another aspect of research” (Becky), namely qualitative community experiences, that was highly appealing to them.

Most undergraduate researchers experienced hands-on qualitative research for the first time. Eleven out of the twelve undergraduate researchers indicated in the course survey that the CBR experience motivated them to continue community involvement through research and/or mentoring K-12 students. The undergraduate researchers developed empathy, reevaluated their views on the schools, the alternative

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learners, the educational system, and approached their own academic and potential career experiences with a new frame of reference.

### **Civic Learning**

The occurrence of communicative challenges experienced throughout the CBR project represented educational events that facilitated the undergraduate researchers' civic learning: (1) communication and listening skills, (2) ability to work with people from diverse backgrounds, and (3) develop consensus-building skills (Steinberg et al., 2011). The civic learning mostly occurred during collaborative practices at the schools and during the undergraduate researchers' teamwork. Although the communicative challenges were critical incidents, they did not primarily initiate transformative learning, but fostered personal and professional learning. This learning included the undergraduate researchers ability to work with others, effectively communicate, and improve adaptability.

### **School Collaboration**

Each team of three undergraduate researchers had different experiences establishing initial contact and maintaining communication with their respective alternative schools. A common issue was the communication, or lack thereof, regarding research expectations between the schools and undergraduate researchers. Some schools had misguided perceptions regarding the undergraduate researchers' roles and viewed them as possible peer mentors or advocates for advertising the school in the community. An integral part of CBR is doing research *with* the community, not merely *on* them (Strand, 2000), and it appeared that some schools were not expecting the undergraduate researchers to involve them in the process. For example, Hoda explained her first visit to the school:

*When we went to our first meeting at Science Academy we were quickly asked to meet with a group of students, staff and xxx [the principal]. It seemed like their expectations were that we already knew what questions we wanted to ask the students and what expectations we had for this experience... we met with all the juniors and seniors that attend the high school. I asked students to help us determine what types of research questions they would like to address. I was left in shock and frustration when the students were unable to identify any questions that they would be interested in exploring (Reflection).*

The quote illustrates one of the challenges of clarifying expectations with community partners. The undergraduate researchers learned how to adapt to the situation and re-communicate the project details as well as doing their best to include community partners in their research process and diligently update them as the project progressed. As Hoda reflected on that experience, she discovered "the ambiguity that comes along with doing qualitative research and participatory research in general." She learned from this experience "that being flexible is the most important skill a researcher needs" (Reflection).

Another salient communication issue that the undergraduate researchers encountered was how to convey sensitive information and critical observations to the schools during their final presentation to the school's staff/administration. The schools the undergraduate researchers worked with did not necessarily have highly regarded reputations within the community. As seen in the previous section on transformative learning, the researchers became conscious of how to present information so as not to further stigmatize the schools, instead dispelling some of the misconceptions surrounding them. Fur-



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thermore, the undergraduate researchers did not want to offend the schools and compromise the trust they had built. This challenge is illustrated by Samantha when she states how during the presentation “I did not know how they would react to us sharing what they said. I did not want them to feel uncomfortable, or to regret sharing what they did with us.” Hoda mentioned how “we had a few slides about what is not working out [in the school] and we felt a bit hesitant presenting about this.” Brooke discussed how she did not feel prepared to give constructive criticism, particularly in-person, and refrained from saying how the school had a drug problem to avoid leaving that image in people’s minds. Even more compelling was Hoda’s detailed example of the “black criminalization of boys [as she] witnessed it.” She explained during the focus group how the undergraduate researchers who worked at the ethnically Somali school gave gift cards to all the students in the classroom, but just one male student got stopped by a White teacher and asked, “where did he get that?” The teacher brought him to Hoda to confirm he had not stolen the gift card. Hoda, a Somali student herself, was particularly disconcerted, because “the boys in our community are targeted by everyone.” When the faculty advisor asked Hoda whether she documented the need to recognize and work on staff biases in the recommendation section of the report, she responded “no, of course not.” This delineates the difficulty that the undergraduate researchers faced with feeling comfortable and confident enough to discuss sensitive topics like race with administration and the paradox that the undergraduate students face as young researchers having an obligation to inform the school of problems, yet at the same time building consensus and being cautious not to jeopardize the community relationship. Thus, at an early stage in their research careers, the undergraduate researchers had to learn how to navigate effectively communicating and censoring information; they recognized the latter as something they should avoid doing, despite the complexity of sustaining positive relationships with the community partners. Although becoming critical of issues present in communities is important and learning to discern what and how to communicate is a powerful civic skill to develop, these examples also illustrate how CBR can have some inherent challenges that can limit its potential for community improvement.

#### **Researchers’ Group Work**

The undergraduate researchers collaborated with their peers, university professors, school staff, and alternative students from diverse backgrounds. However, communicating with their peers was a particularly challenging process as they had to learn to agree and find common ground on deciding the research questions, creating surveys, focus group questions, analyzing the data, and deciding what to present to the community. Some undergraduate researchers felt comfortable in their groups without experiencing tension, while other group members had to negotiate their given or adopted roles. As Hoda puts it:

*One problem that we have run into our team is that it is difficult for one person to take charge...This position usually is filled by me but I am hesitant to take this role. I know that as a leader, I can be a little over-demanding or forget to include everyone. Knowing this, I have tried really hard to make sure everyone has a choice and opinion before the final decision is made (Focus group).*

Hoda’s account illustrates the learning process of working with various group personalities and the process of becoming a valuable team member. Ultimately, it shows how the group experiences compelled researchers to reflect on their strengths, weaknesses, and learn how to balance those dynamics within their group. Brooke’s group particularly struggled finding balance in their collaboration:

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*Nikita and I are both very strong-headed people...and for the presentation, it was like something I thought was really important about TOLC, for her it was not so important... Aahh, you know finding that balance, it is difficult because it is all relevant, and what you feel the world needs is based on your perspective....When our visions didn't line up, the conflict would rise, because we only knew how to be the leader and having two leaders is not efficient, we didn't really see that that was a problem until too late in the game. (Brooke, focus group)*

However, conflict was in and of itself a source of learning, as Nick recognizes: “we would not be academics if we did not challenge each other. If we just followed the leader that is not fun, that is not research.” The undergraduate researchers’ growth in communication and listening skills, as well as on building consensus stemmed from the challenge of developing a functional team unit and accomplishing their tasks--especially when the researchers had to find common ground with their peers’ different points of view and communicate effectively with their own perspectives. Learning to negotiate, be flexible, and “swallow one’s pride a little” (Brooke) were skills the researchers gained from the conflict and challenges of teamwork. Unlike other projects the undergraduate researchers had worked in teams at the university, in the CBR project “we put a lot of ourselves into it, and we are very passionate about it,” Brooke indicates. The opportunity for undergraduate students to work through the aforementioned peer and community interactions, in a low-risk environment, was a valuable transformative civic learning experience that impacted them emotionally and will hopefully benefit them professionally.

### **Undergraduate Authors’ Stand From Participating in CBR and This Case Study**

In this section, the two undergraduate co-authors reflected on their experiences of being researchers and authors, their reflections are included to illustrate how transitioning through various roles, from working on CBR research to analyzing their learning through this chapter, fostered a change in their perspectives.

#### **Chloe’s Reflections as an Underrepresented Undergraduate Researcher and Author**

As a student who struggled with a learning disability and being a first generation college student, I always felt subpar to normal students. I felt I was always behind this barrier where I tried to reach the other side but there wasn’t a level playing field. This CBR research opportunity really reminded me that everyone struggles to overcome barriers, some more than others, but it is the fight and willingness of individuals to overcome those barriers that matters. Currently being part of academia, I feel again subpar to other researchers, but then I am reminded of how far I have come with the help of so many people. Through the CBR project and being an author of this chapter, I have learned I am capable of pushing through obstacles and of being part of great academic work.

Connecting and learning from the students, writing my own autobiography, and participating in the analysis and writing of this chapter allowed me to look at my educational experiences differently. I gained a greater understanding of the roles my teachers and family played in my own success. I have gained a new understanding of the barriers I had faced but had never critically analyzed. I have grown to appreciate truly the support I had from teachers and my family in becoming a first generation college student and to recognize this support as a privilege.

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#### **Nikita's Reflection as an Underrepresented Undergraduate Researcher and Author**

As a student from a minority background, with a first generation college student status in the U.S., my family and I had to be proactive about learning and navigating the American educational system. Fortunately, I had a very strong support system from my involved family to teachers and peers who motivated and believed in me throughout my K-12 years. The CBR experience helped me reflect on, and recognize the privilege and support that I had, which allowed me to reach the stage where I am currently. It also made me realize that, despite us researchers having similar backgrounds/barriers to our participants, the way we experienced the barriers and the resulting consequences varied greatly. Listening to the stories and experiences of the student participants really put into perspective the idea of how “there is much more than meets the eye.” It makes you realize how quick we are to judge people by their appearance, behaviors, and choices, however we fail to understand what caused and catalyzed those things. It made me think twice about the students that I may have categorized as deviant in my own high school when I was a student there. After the CBR experience, I cannot help but wonder what those students' stories were, if my teachers and peers played a role in further stigmatizing and labeling those students when all they may have needed was the emotional support that the participants at our alternative schools received. Additionally, this CBR project also made me realize the value of providing different educational options. Having been fortunate enough to successfully endeavor through the mainstream high school system, I think it's easy to succumb to the thoughts that if you just work hard enough you can make it too. When in fact, that is not the case, not all of us have the same learning styles, support, backgrounds, or challenges. Through collaborating with the alternative schools, I realized how we cannot label them as better or worse than mainstream schools, they are merely different, just like private or charter schools. They have characteristics that make them unique and help them cater to the population they are serving, and that is perfectly acceptable. As a researcher, CBR inspires me to understand at what point in our educational journey should we acknowledge the barriers that students face and intervene to support them either in the mainstream system or through providing alternative options. Should better programs be offered within mainstream schools or should we allocate our resources towards improving the availability and quality of alternative options? These are complex questions to ponder but ones that have been stimulated as a result of CBR. My role as an author has provided a platform to analyze, reflect, and articulate my thoughts and experiences.

#### **DISCUSSION**

This case study supports past research in which CBR fostered individuals' academic and personal growth (Chapdelaine & Chapman, 1999; Ferrari & Jason, 1996; Kowalewski, 2004). However, previous CBR literature has not focused on the impact of CBR on researchers' transformative learning and did not use reflections or interviews to better understand what aspects of CBR were most important in fostering learning. In fact, this case study illustrates how CBR is an excellent pedagogical tool in achieving transformative and civic learning (Johnson, 2016). It demonstrates how CBR can highly engage undergraduate students in research and the community's well-being; an engagement that Kiely (2005) refers to as essential for learning.

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In particular, this case study highlights how transformative learning is strongly connected to building close relationships between undergraduate researchers and community members, and how civic learning is particularly connected to navigating the challenges of collaboration in the community and among peers. Focus groups and interactions with diverse community members became the main sources of *disorientation* (Mezirow, 1978) among student researchers. These relationships forced the researchers to question their own misconceptions about the alternative schools and learners, and discover that state reports do not provide a holistic view of the learners' experiences and schools' priorities. Consequently, this case study shows that community members are fundamental in fostering a change in researchers' perspectives and practices, supporting the three most common pillars of CBR projects (Johnson, 2016):

1. A CBR project is transformative and rejects a deficit-view on disadvantaged communities by asserting that the community partners are assets in providing knowledge (Shalowitz et al., 2009; Strand, 2000).
2. The CBR project is as collaborative as possible among all stakeholders, in this case embracing school administration, teachers, and alternative learners.
3. The undergraduate researchers are critical and question status quo narratives—as they did due to the valuable relationships they established with the alternative learners.

Based on this study's findings, CBR can foster empathy and reduce prejudice towards others. Although contact with another group can sometimes exacerbate prejudice (in situations of power imbalance or lack of openness), Allport's (1954) theory on intergroup contact states that to reduce prejudice some characteristics need to be present in intergroup contact—characteristics that seem to nicely fit to the CBR principles:

1. **Equality:** Members of different groups have equal status,
2. **Goals:** Members of different groups have common goals,
3. **Cooperation:** Members of different groups have cooperative attitude
4. **Policy Support:** If institutional authorities support intergroup contact (Allport)

Comparing the principles of intergroup positive contact with community-based research, CBR projects demand community organizations to partner with researchers as equals--based on an asset approach on community members rather than a deficit view that would foster inequality. Also, both community members and university researchers must work together towards a common goal that benefits the community, and must cooperate and be open-minded to learn from each other. Finally, institutions that partner up in the CBR project need approval from key stakeholders of each institution and the IRB. Therefore, the principles of positive contact theory are also principles in CBR and thus (well-developed) CBR projects should promote intergroup contact that reduces prejudice.

This study also stressed how *collaboration* (with school learners, staff, and peer researchers) brought moments of discomfort to the undergraduate researchers. As Strand et al. (2003) indicate, CBR reveals the real world and brings “the unexpected, unpredictable, and uncontrollable” (p. 89). In this case study, unexpected situations within the schools, the ambiguity of the research projects, as well as conflict and misunderstandings with their team members put researchers' out of their comfort zone and forced them

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to develop their civic skills: effective communication and listening, the capacity to work with people of diverse backgrounds (intercultural sensitivity), and the development of consensus building (flexibility, creativity, problem solving skills) (Steinberg et al., 2011). The undergraduate researchers had to be mindful of the community's interest in improving the lives of the community members (Strand, 2000), to be aware of what could damage the relationship with the university, and keep their own interest and curiosity second. This illustrates the challenges of pursuing CBR from conventional academic research and the inherent challenges present in this powerful instrument. The undergraduate researchers of this study had to present and report their findings to the community and decide whether to present results that revealed negative attributes of the schools (drug use, racial incidents). This was a decision that student researchers had to navigate "successfully." They decided to focus on the research questions and what was most important to the community – the dismantling of stereotypes of their alternative schools. The challenges of participating in a CBR project showed undergraduate researchers that "there is no right answer" (Hoda), just different experiences and perspectives when analyzing qualitative data and CBR; thus it prepared undergraduate researchers to work and participate in an ambiguous, complex, diverse, and global world (Deardroff, 2009).

## **CONCLUSION**

In this case study, we focus on the undergraduate researchers' experiences rather than the experiences of the diverse students from the alternative schools. However, we do not mean to suggest that what the undergraduate students gained from the experience is the most important to develop a CBR course. In fact, several high schoolers indicated that the CBR project allowed them to reflect and put into words their own academic experiences and barriers. They felt cared, understood, respected, and interested in learning about college from undergraduate researchers who looked like them. The CBR process can develop positive outcomes for university researchers as well as community members while working on community's identified needs. However, this case study aims to encourage more faculty members and academia to embrace this excellent pedagogical tool. In fact, CBR is not yet included as a high-impact practice by the American Association of Colleges and Universities as service-learning is (Kuh, 2008). This indicates how this research design has not been a common practice in most colleges and universities and how its benefits have not been fully researched. DeBlasis (2006) and Porpora (1999) state how CBR seems the natural evolution of service-learning; however, more research needs to explore the benefits of CBR beyond the common use of students' self-reported methods. Pretest-posttest surveys, control groups, and comparing students' learning in a service-learning course with a community-based research one are strategies that need to be implemented. Furthermore, the benefits of service-learning and CBR to the community may highly differ, and more research is needed to document what the community actually gains from these community-engagement practices. This case study though, clearly indicated the powerful benefits of CBR to undergraduate students in reference to transformative learning and civic learning skills. In addition, alternative learners and school staff expressed high satisfaction with the project and the researchers, and consequently stated their interest in continuing collaboration with the university.



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## **Empowering Undergraduate Students Through Community-Based Research**

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## **KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS**

**Alternative Schools:** Schools that serve Somali students, adult learners, or students who had not been successful in traditional public school settings.

**Civic Learning:** The development of skills and knowledge to be able to effectively participate in the community and collaborate with individuals from different backgrounds, points of view, and opinions.

**Community-Based Research:** Research conducted in partnership between university researchers and community members in which all partners contribute knowledge and decision making in the research process. It focuses on researching *with* the community members rather than *on* or *in* the community.

**Transformative Learning:** A type of learning in which, due to critical experiences, individuals shift previously taken-for-granted assumptions, values, beliefs, and/or life style habits.

**Underrepresented Youth:** Undergraduate students who are first-generation college students, students of color, or of low socioeconomic status.

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### **About the Contributors**

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### **About the Contributors**

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