


2013

Casa de la Solidaridad: A Pedagogy of Solidarity

Kevin Yonkers-Talz
kyonkerstalz@scu.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://repository.usfca.edu/diss>

 Part of the [Bilingual, Multilingual, and Multicultural Education Commons](#), and the [Educational Assessment, Evaluation, and Research Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Yonkers-Talz, Kevin, "Casa de la Solidaridad: A Pedagogy of Solidarity" (2013). *Doctoral Dissertations*. 55.
<https://repository.usfca.edu/diss/55>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, Capstones and Projects at USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. It has been accepted for inclusion in Doctoral Dissertations by an authorized administrator of USF Scholarship: a digital repository @ Gleeson Library | Geschke Center. For more information, please contact repository@usfca.edu.

The University of San Francisco

CASA DE LA SOLIDARIDAD:
PEDAGOGY OF SOLIDARITY

A Dissertation Proposal Presented
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
International and Multicultural Education Department

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

By
Kevin Yonkers-Talz
San Francisco
December 2013

THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

Dissertation Abstract

Casa de la Solidaridad: A Pedagogy of Solidarity

Casa de la Solidaridad has been recognized as an innovative and effective educational model within Jesuit higher education yet, until now, there have only been verbal presentations of the unique attributes of the Casa de la Solidaridad model. In addition, there has been a lack of information regarding the influence of the Casa experience on the lives of alumni. The purpose of this study was twofold: 1) to thoroughly describe and document the unique attributes of the Casa de la Solidaridad model, and 2) to provide some insight into how the Casa program has influenced the lives of Casa alumni. This mixed method study gathered both qualitative and quantitative data in order to answer the research questions. A qualitative case study was conducted in order to document and describe the unique attributes of the Casa de la Solidaridad educational model. Survey research investigated qualitatively and quantitatively how the Casa experience has influenced the lives of Casa alumni. This research demonstrated that the Casa de la Solidaridad educational model fosters well-educated solidarity. This was evidenced not only by the students' written responses but also by how they are living their lives. In addition, the findings demonstrated that the Casa model successfully supported students' exploration of their spirituality, something that is vital to Jesuit higher education, and influenced their vocational decisions in ways that kept students connected to people suffering from the effects of poverty. It is recommended, therefore, that leaders in Jesuit higher education explore ways they can leverage the large and

robust international network of Jesuit colleges and universities and create a sustainable network of Casa programs.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

Kevin Yonkers-Talz
Candidate

August 27, 2013

Dissertation Committee

Shabnam Koirala-Azad, PhD
Chairperson

August 27, 2013

Emma Fuentes, PhD

August 27, 2013

Gerdenio Manuel, SJ, PhD

August 27, 2013

Acknowledgements

Salvadorans have taught me many lessons over the last 14 years. One of them is the importance of taking time to give thanks to God for all the gifts in our lives. With that in mind, it is especially important for me to be able to acknowledge the people who have supported me in this academic journey and who have participated in development of Casa de la Solidaridad.

I give thanks for Trena, my best friend and lifelong companion, and for our wonderful daughters – Sophia, Grace, Hannah and Emma. I'm so grateful for our family and for the love we share. The pursuit of my doctoral studies was a family effort and one that required sacrifice. The semesters that I commuted to USF from El Salvador, for example, Trena had to balance raising the girls and directing Casa. There were times I had to miss key events in the girls' lives, which was hard for all of us. Through it all, we clung to the hope that the degree and the dissertation would, in some way, contribute to the promotion of justice and faith in Jesuit higher education.

I give thanks for my mom and dad and for all the love and support they have shown me throughout my lifetime. They are remarkable parents and I'm so grateful for their loving presence in my life.

I give thanks for all our Salvadoran partners. Their lives give witness to their deep and authentic faith and I'm grateful to continually learn from them here in El Salvador.

I give thanks for our friends from the U.S. who have helped create Casa de la Solidaridad. Steve Privett, SJ, Sonny Manuel, SJ, Dean Brackley, SJ, Charlie Currie, SJ, Paul Locatelli, SJ, Mark Ravizza, SJ, Dennis Gordon, Barbara Colyar, Gene Palumbo,

Mike Engh, SJ and all the Community Coordinators we have had the privilege to work with over the years. Without these folks, Casa simply would not exist.

I'm very grateful to my academic advisor, Shabnam Koirala-Azad, who has supported my academic journey since day one. Without her guidance and encouragement, I never would have completed the degree. I want to also give thanks in a special way for Sonny Manuel, SJ. Without Sonny's support and encouragement, I never would have embarked on this academic journey.

I'm especially grateful to Gene Palumbo who served as primary proofreader for the dissertation and to Ben Baab, who helped me think through the conceptualization of this dissertation. I also give thanks for Marcia Baxter Magolda who was my first professor in graduate school and introduced me to college student development theory and the joy of research.

Lastly, I give thanks for all the Casa students we have had the privilege to accompany during their time at Casa.

My hope is that the doctoral degree and this dissertation somehow contribute to the promotion of justice and faith within Jesuit higher education.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	1
Purpose of the Study.....	3
Research Questions.....	3
Significance of the Study.....	3
Conceptual Framework.....	5
Definitions of Technical Terms.....	12
Personal Background / Context.....	13
 CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE.....	 15
Jesuit Higher Education.....	15
Jesuit Higher Education in El Salvador.....	18
International Immersion Programs at Jesuit Colleges and Universities...	24
Context of Casa de la Solidaridad.....	28
 CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY.....	 33
Introduction.....	33
Research Design.....	33
Overview of the Case Study Project.....	34
Field Procedures.....	34
Guide for the Case Study Report.....	36
Survey Research – Casa de la Solidaridad Alumni.....	37
 CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS.....	 39
Case Study Report.....	39
Inspiration.....	39
Accompaniment.....	41
Academics.....	52
Community Living.....	53
Spirituality.....	63
Integration.....	66
Challenges / Complexity.....	71
Survey Research.....	73
Ways Casa Influenced Person You Have Become.....	74
Accompaniment.....	83
Academics.....	88
Community Living.....	92
Spirituality.....	97
Integration.....	100
Quantitative Data.....	101

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
108	
Discussion.....	108
Case Study.....	109
Survey Research.....	109
Quantitative Findings.....	113
Implications.....	114
Recommendations.....	116
REFERENCES.....	118
APPENDIXES.....	122
Appendix A: Survey.....	122

CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

Casa de la Solidaridad (Casa), a praxis-based model of education rooted in the Jesuit tradition of higher education, was founded in 1999 to commemorate the lives and commitments of six Jesuit priests, their housekeeper and her daughter, all of whom were brutally murdered at the University of Central America (UCA) in 1989. The Jesuits had been outspoken advocates for justice and peace in El Salvador. The Casa model integrates accompanying the poor, rigorous academic study, living simply in community and spirituality rooted in the Ignatian tradition. Over the last 14 years, Casa has welcomed U.S. students who come to immerse themselves for a semester in “la realidad” of El Salvador. The students’ experience in accompanying the poor is integrated into rigorous academic reflection, which in turn is supported by a carefully structured web of spiritual and communal accompaniment. Over the years, Casa has been recognized as an innovative and effective educational model within Jesuit higher education (Brackley, 2006; Currie, 2009; Gallo, 2008; Gordon 2003; Ravizza, 2010; Yonkers-Talz, 2004). Indeed, some have argued that, except for the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Jesuits, the Casa is perhaps the most powerful pedagogy available to effectively educate the whole person (Privett, personal communication, January 25, 2010). In short, over the last 14 years, the Casa model has evolved into a successful and replicable pedagogy of solidarity within Jesuit education.

In April of 2010, the presidents of the University of San Francisco, Santa Clara University and the Ateneo de Manila University signed a memorandum of understanding

in Mexico City effectively creating Casa Bayanihan, a new academic program based upon the Casa de la Solidaridad model. The hope of the presidents was to successfully replicate a Casa program in the Philippines. An agreement was reached between the universities to allow Trena Yonkers-Talz, my wife and fellow co-director of Casa, Mark Ravizza S.J., a Jesuit who had been on our staff in El Salvador for three years, and me to move to the Philippines for a year to help establish Casa Bayanihan. This opportunity enabled us to draw from the wisdom and knowledge we had acquired in founding and directing Casa de la Solidaridad and apply it to the development of Casa Bayanihan in the Philippines. In the Fall 2011, Casa Bayanihan successfully received the first group of students.

In July 2012, Loyola Marymount University decided to launch the third Casa program in Córdoba, Argentina in the Fall 2013. This time, however, Trena, Mark and I were unable to move there to help get the program established. Herein lies the first research problem. To date, there have only been verbal presentations of the unique attributes of the Casa de la Solidaridad model; the need now is to describe and document that model in writing. This would assist institutions like Loyola Marymount University, Universidad Católica de Córdoba and others who desire to replicate the model.

The second research problem concerns a lack of information regarding the influence of the Casa experience on the lives of alumni. In a major address to representatives of the 28 Jesuit colleges and universities, Peter-Hans Kolvenbach (2008), ex-Superior General of the Society of Jesus, said, “The real measure of our Jesuit universities lies in who our students become.” Ten years later, at the first international gathering of representatives from every Jesuit institution of higher learning in the world,

Adolfo Nicolás S.J., (2010) Superior General of the Society of Jesus, echoed Kolvenbach saying, "...the meaning of change for our institutions is 'who our students become,' what they value, and what they do later in life and work." According to these Jesuit leaders, and as confirmed by the presidents of all the Jesuit colleges and universities in the United States (Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, 2010), our success in Jesuit higher education will be measured by who our students become. To date, however, there has been no systematic attempt at understanding who our alumni have become as a result of the Casa experience.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is twofold: 1) to thoroughly describe and document the unique attributes of the Casa de la Solidaridad model, and 2) to provide some insight into how the Casa program has influenced the lives of Casa alumni.

Research Questions

1. What are the unique attributes of the Casa de la Solidaridad educational model?
2. How has the Casa experience influenced the lives of Casa alums?

Significance of the Study

This study will be significant in a number of ways.

First, an extensive description of the Casa de la Solidaridad educational model will be useful to those universities such as the University of San Francisco, Loyola Marymount University and Fordham University who desire to create Casa-like programs. Although the Casa model evolved in the context of El Salvador, certain aspects may be relevant to other programs in other cultural contexts, especially given that students

participating in these programs all come from a U.S. context. Of course, any new program must be adapted to the local culture and customs.

Second, a systematic documentation of the Casa educational model will be a historical marker of this type of education within Jesuit higher education.

Third, the survey administered in this study will provide greater understanding of the influence the Casa program is having on Casa alumni. This understanding will assist directors of Casa-like programs to be more conscious of areas in which students may be affected by the experience. This, in turn, may help them more effectively administer their programs.

Fourth, results of the survey will be useful when explaining the Casa to outside audiences especially in regard to the influence that the program is having in the lives of the students.

Fifth, the survey will also serve as a historical marker of students' perceptions of the Casa experience. These findings could, in a variety of ways, be a point of departure for future research. For example, these same alumni could be surveyed again in the future to see if and how perceptions change with time, or alumni from other Casa programs in other countries could be given the survey in order to compare responses.

Lastly, the biographical data collected will enable us to better understand both the makeup of Casa alumni (gender, ethnicity, etc.) as well as the educational and professional directions they have pursued. This information could assist us in areas such as curriculum development and alumni relations.

Conceptual Framework

The primary framework undergirding this research is the mission of Jesuit higher education as expressed by Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J. and Adolfo Nicolás, S.J., the two most recent Superior Generals of the Society of Jesus. On October 6, 2000, at Santa Clara University, Kolvenbach (2008) gave a major address, “The Service of Faith and Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education” to representatives from each of the 28 Jesuit colleges and universities. Over the past decade, Kolvenbach’s bold vision has inspired a new sense of purpose for Jesuit colleges and universities around the world (Locatelli, 2005). On April 23, 2010, Nicolás (2010) delivered an unprecedented address, “Depth, Universality, and Learned Ministry: Challenges to Jesuit Higher Education Today,” to representatives from Jesuit colleges and universities around the world. In this address, Nicolás reflected on how our current global context influences the mission of Jesuit higher education. Taken together, these two addresses provide the most useful conceptual framework for this research.

Other frameworks exist. For example, Savard’s (2010) investigation of the impact of immersion programs on undergraduate students of Jesuit colleges and universities utilized the Ignatian Pedagogical Paradigm (IPP) created by the International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education (ICAJE, 1994). While this framework is similarly rooted in Ignatian spirituality, it was created primarily to make the principles and orientation described in the ICAJE’s *Characteristics of Jesuit Education* (1986) usable for teachers in secondary education. Since *Characteristics of Jesuit Education* was created over 25 years ago and evolved out of a secondary education context, this framework was not best suited for the current study.

Another framework is the document entitled “The Jesuit, Catholic Mission of U.S. Jesuit Colleges and Universities,” published by the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities in October 2010. Essentially, the presidents of the 28 Jesuit colleges and universities developed a consensus statement defining the character and apostolic rationale of the Jesuit colleges and universities in the U.S., as well as their manner of governance and collaboration (AJCU, 2010). This framework was not chosen because the statement is limited to the U.S. context, whereas the Casa de la Solidaridad model is international in nature.

Taken together, the two major addresses by Kolvenbach and Nicolás establish the most appropriate conceptual framework for considering both Casa de la Solidaridad and this research. Both addresses are rooted in the General Congregation (GC) Decrees. A GC is one of the means of uniting the members of the Society of Jesus, and is the highest legislative body in the Jesuit order (Beirne, 1996). One of the functions of the GC is to produce a set of decrees, which will serve to orient the entire Society of Jesus.

Kolvenbach’s (2008) address, for example, referred often to the historic GC 32, and Nicolás’ address relied primarily on GC 35. A review of these addresses, and of how they are connected, follows.

Peter-Hans Kolvenbach, S.J.’s Address at Santa Clara University

In his address, Kolvenbach (2008) posed a question: How can the Jesuit colleges and universities in the U.S. express faith-filled concern for justice 1) in their existence as Christian academies of higher learning, 2) in what their faculty do, and 3) in what their students become? He reflected on what the emphasis of faith and justice has meant for

Jesuits since 1975, and suggested what justice rooted in faith could mean for American Jesuit higher education.

Kolvenbach (2008) recalled that since its origins in 1540, the Society of Jesus has been officially charged with “the defense and the propagation of faith” (p. 147). In faithfulness to the Vatican Council, the 32nd General Congregation “wanted our preaching and teaching not to proselytize, not to impose our religion on others, but rather to propose Jesus and his message of God’s Kingdom in a spirit of love to everyone” (p. 148). Kolvenbach recalled how GC 32, in response to the deep transformation of Church life launched by Vatican II, decided that the overriding purpose of the Society of Jesus, namely, “the service of faith,” must also include “the promotion of justice” (p.147). Highlighting the significance of this connection, Kolvenbach (2008) said, “So central to the mission of the entire Society was this union of faith and justice that it was to become the ‘integrating factor’¹ of all the Society’s works, and in this light ‘great attention’² was to be paid in evaluating every work” (p. 146).

On the subject of the ministry of education, Kolvenbach quoted from Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J., martyred Rector of the Jesuits’ Central American University (UCA) in El Salvador. In his 1982 convocation address at Santa Clara University, Ellacuría (1982) advocated the promotion of justice in the educational apostolate:

A Christian university must take into account the Gospel preference for the poor. This does not mean that only the poor study at the university; it does not mean that the university should abdicate its mission of academic excellence—excellence needed in order to solve complex social problems. It does mean that the university should be present intellectually where it is needed: to provide science for those who have no science; to provide skills for the unskilled; to be a

¹ GC 32, d. 2, no. 9.

² See GC 32, d.2. no. 9, and d.4, no 76.

voice for those who do not possess the academic qualifications to promote and legitimate their rights.

After a historical review of the Jesuits' mission since 1975, Kolvenbach turned his attention to American Jesuit higher education and highlighted ideal characteristics in the following three dimensions: 1) formation and learning; 2) research and teaching; and 3) how universities are to proceed. Here Kolvenbach (2008) introduced "well-educated solidarity" as the new standard for Jesuit education for the 21st century: "Tomorrow's 'whole person' cannot be whole without an educated awareness of society and culture with which to contribute socially, generously, in the real world. Tomorrow's whole person must have, in brief, a well-educated solidarity" (p. 155).

Furthermore, Kolvenbach (2008) highlighted the importance of direct contact with the poor as central to the development of any pedagogy aimed at fostering this well-educated solidarity. "Solidarity is learned through 'contact' rather than through 'concepts'... Personal involvement with innocent suffering, with the injustice others suffer, is the catalyst for solidarity, which then gives rise to intellectual inquiry and moral reflection" (p. 155).

Adolfo Nicolás S.J.'s Address in Mexico City

In April 2010, representatives from Jesuit colleges and universities gathered in Mexico City to participate in a conference -- the first international one of its kind -- entitled *Networking Jesuit Higher Education: Shaping the Future for a Humane, Just, Sustainable Globe*. The GC 35 (2008) saw interconnectedness as the new context for understanding the world and discerning the mission of the Society of Jesus. The question Nicolás addressed was this: How does this new context challenge us to re-direct the mission of Jesuit higher education? His talk highlighted three areas: 1) promoting depth

of thought and imagination; 2) re-discovering and implementing the universality in Jesuit higher education; 3) renewing the Jesuit commitment to learned ministry.

Nicolás (2010) began by highlighting the hazard of what he referred to as a “globalization of superficiality.” Immediate and painless access to information, the ability to instantly and unthinkingly publish reactions on blogs, the ability to “cut and paste” without the need to think critically, the flood of consumer products on computer screens, the ability to shut out unpleasant sounds of the world through MP3 players, the ability to friend and unfriend without the hard work of encounter all contributed to Nicolás’ concern that “...our new technologies, together with the underlying values such as moral relativism and consumerism, are shaping the interior worlds of so many, especially the young people we are educating, limiting the fullness of their flourishing as human persons and limiting their responses to a world in need of healing intellectually, morally, and spiritually” (p. 2-3). He suggested that “the globalization of superficiality challenges Jesuit higher education to promote in creative new ways the depth of thought and imagination that are distinguishing marks of the Ignatian tradition” (p. 3).

In response to the globalization of superficiality, Nicolás (2010) highlighted a strength of the Ignatian tradition, namely encouraging “depth of thought and imagination.” He said:

In other words, depth of thought and imagination in the Ignatian tradition involves a profound engagement with the real, a refusal to let go until one goes beneath the surface. It is a careful analysis (dismembering) for the sake of an integration (remembering) around what is deepest: God, Christ, the Gospel. The starting point, then, will always be what is real: what is materially, concretely thought to be there; the world as we encounter it; the world of the senses so vividly described in the Gospels themselves; a world of suffering and need, a broken world with many broken people in need of healing. We start there. We don’t run away from there.

According to Nicolás, this engagement with the real – especially with the reality of those who suffer most – is the starting point for encouraging depth of thought and imagination in the Ignatian tradition.

The second challenge to Jesuit higher education highlighted by Nicolás (2010) is universality. He said, “To be concrete, while regional organizations of cooperation in mission exist among Jesuit universities, I believe the challenge is to expand them and build more universal, more effective international networks of Jesuit higher education” (p. 7).

Like Kolvenbach, Nicolás, cited Ignacio Ellacuría S.J. in his talk. He said, “...in different ways, every Jesuit university is striving to become what Ignacio Ellacuría, the Jesuit rector of the Universidad Centroamericana Simeón Cañas, who was martyred 20 years ago, called a *proyecto social*. A university becomes a social project” (p. 7). Nicolás also used Ellacuría’s language to highlight the value of leveraging the international Jesuit higher education network, saying “If each university, working by itself as a *proyecto social*, is able to accomplish so much good in society, how much more can we increase the scope of our service to the world if all the Jesuit institutions of higher education become, as it were, a single global *proyecto social*” (p. 8).

Nicolás’ (2010) last challenge to Jesuit higher education concerned the function of research – the search for truth and knowledge. He highlighted how “globalization has created new inequalities between those who enjoy the power given to them by knowledge, and those who are excluded from its benefits because they have no access to that knowledge” (p. 10). He (2010) asked, “who benefits from the knowledge produced in our institutions and who does not? Who needs the knowledge we can share, and how

can we share it more effectively with those for whom that knowledge can truly make a difference, especially the poor and excluded” (p. 10)? Referring specifically to faculty and students, he asked “How have they become voices for the voiceless, sources of human rights for those denied such rights, resources for protection of the environment, persons of solidarity for the poor” (p. 10)? Nicolás said research at Jesuit institutions of higher learning should be aimed at making a positive difference in people’s lives – especially the lives of those who are excluded.

Employing the pedagogy he advocated in his address, Nicolás (2010) concluded his talk with a thought-provoking question: “What kind of universities, with what emphases and what directions, would we run, if we were re-founding the Society of Jesus in today’s world? I am inviting, in all my visits to all Jesuits, to re-create the Society of Jesus, because I think every generation has to re-create the faith, they have to re-create the journey, they have to re-create the institutions. This is not only a good desire. If we lose the ability to re-create, we have lost the spirit” (p. 12).

In sum, Kolvenbach’s and Nicolás’ addresses provide the most appropriate conceptual framework for this research. Kolvenbach (2008) held the assumption that Jesuit education should strive to form a “whole person of solidarity for the real world” (p.155). He also provided important concepts for the development of a pedagogy aimed at fostering a “well-educated solidarity” that focuses on exposing students to the “harsh realities” of this world (p. 155). In light of an increasingly connected world, Nicolás (2010) built upon the assumptions held by Kolvenbach and addressed what he saw as a challenge for Jesuit higher education; the growth of a “globalization of superficiality” (p. 2). Nicolás underscored the importance of drawing upon our Ignatian tradition that

encourages promoting depth of thought and imagination. This, Nicolás assumed, is most effectively achieved through profound engagement with reality and, more specifically, when we encounter the realities faced by people in our world who suffer most. Both addresses assumed that the success of Jesuit higher education lies ultimately in who our students become.

Methodological Framework

In addition to the framework mentioned above, it is important to highlight a primary methodological assumption of this research. As Creswell (2009) highlighted, every methodology springs from a certain worldview, a paradigm based upon certain assumptions. The methodology used in this study embraces the social constructivist worldview, which assumes individuals seek to understand the world in which they live and that they actively construct meaning out of their experiences. This methodological assumption is consistent with the framework based upon the work of Kolvenbach and Nicolás.

Definitions of Technical Terms

Praxis-based learning: Intellectual inquiry and moral reflection rooted in direct contact with innocent suffering and injustice with the aim of fostering a well-educated solidarity, especially with the disadvantaged and oppressed. This understanding was synthesized by Ravizza (2010) and is based on Kolvenbach's address at Santa Clara University.

Praxis sites: Economically poor Salvadoran communities where Casa students learn about Salvadoran reality.

Personal Background / Context

Trena and I co-founded Casa de la Solidaridad in 1999 and have co-directed it ever since. We are both U.S. citizens from the Midwest and have Master's degrees in college student development (Miami University) and religious education (Boston College). While we were in graduate school, we coordinated short-term (10 days) immersion experiences for college students to places such as Appalachia, Belize and the Dominican Republic. During these experiences, we learned the importance of creating safe spaces where students could reflect on and make sense of their experiences. After graduate studies at Boston College, we worked for two years with Jesuit Volunteers International in Belize City, Belize. While we were in Belize, we hosted short-term immersion student groups from the U.S. It was during these years that we learned of the damage that can be done to local communities when visiting students from the U.S. are not well prepared for the experience especially in terms of cultural sensitivity.

Being from the U.S. and co-directing Casa de la Solidaridad in El Salvador presented many challenges - especially in the early years. Our time in Belize gave us an appreciation of the inherent challenges involved in entering other cultural contexts. As well intentioned as Trena and I were when we landed in El Salvador, we know that we made many mistakes. Fortunately, our Salvadoran partners were patient with us and, over time, educated us about their reality and culture. Examples of some of the challenges we faced are described in chapter IV.

One significant advantage we had was our connection with the UCA. Casa was officially launched in El Salvador during the activities commemorating the 10th anniversary of the killing of the UCA Jesuits. Charlie Currie, SJ, the then President of

the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, gave a talk at the UCA which was attended by family members of the slain Jesuits, dignitaries from El Salvador and U.S. Congressman Joseph Moakley and his aide Jim McGovern (who is now a Congressman). During Currie's talk, he announced to the audience the creation of Casa de la Solidaridad as a collaborative initiative on the part of the Jesuits in the U.S. and El Salvador. This relationship with the UCA provided us with credibility in the eyes of Salvadorans as well as access to knowledge about Salvadoran society and culture.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The nature of the current research requires a review in four main areas: Jesuit higher education in general, Jesuit higher education in El Salvador, immersion programs at Jesuit colleges and universities in the U.S. and the context of Casa de la Solidaridad. Together, these areas provide a sufficient background to understand the purpose of this study, which is 1) to thoroughly describe and document the unique attributes of the Casa de la Solidaridad model and 2) to provide some insight into how the Casa program has influenced the lives of Casa alumni.

Jesuit Higher Education

The Society of Jesus (Jesuits) administers over 180 institutions of higher learning in over 50 countries, making it one of the largest international networks of higher education in the world (Brennan, 2010). Although Ignatius of Loyola, the founder of the Society of Jesus, did not initially imagine the influence the Jesuits would have in higher education, by the time of his death in 1556, the Society was administering 35 or more colleges throughout Europe and Asia (Rausch, 2010). By 1773, the Jesuit network, which included some 800 educational institutions, was the largest international educational system the world had ever seen (O'Malley, 2000). Over the last 470 years, Jesuit higher education has gained a worldwide reputation for its commitment to a humanistic education that stresses academic excellence. To this day, many Jesuit colleges and universities offer students the opportunity to receive the highest quality education in their respective countries.

Given this impressive educational history and extensive international network, it

is no surprise that there is a great deal of literature on Jesuit higher education. Thomas Rausch's (2010) book entitled *Educating for Faith and Justice* provides the most current overview of the topic, and much of this section is indebted to his work. In addition, George Traub S.J.'s *A Jesuit Education Reader* (2008) compiled 33 of the most significant short essays on the mission, challenge and state of Jesuit education, and is a useful resource. In the United States alone, there are a number of Jesuit publications that highlight topics related to Jesuit higher education. These include *America*, a national weekly journal of opinion; *National Jesuit News*, a news blog that reports news and analysis of American Jesuits around the world; *Theological Studies* and *Studies in the Spirituality of Jesuits*, both widely read journals; and *The Institute of Jesuit Sources*, which publishes important works on Jesuit history and spirituality. In addition, *Loyola Press* and *Loyola Productions* are Jesuit-inspired companies which publish books, films, and music related to Jesuit history and spirituality. Lastly, *Conversations in Jesuit Higher Education* is a journal that addresses current topics of interest to Jesuit higher education.

Focus is given to three relatively recent developments within Jesuit higher education. The first is the significance of the 32nd General Congregation (GC 32). In 1975, Jesuits from all over the world gathered for the GC 32 to consider how the Society of Jesus was responding to the transformation within the Church in light of Vatican II. In the 4th Decree, the Congregation declared, "The mission of the Society of Jesus today is the service of faith, of which the promotion of justice is an absolute requirement." (General Congregation 32, p. 411). This decree, in essence, transformed the identity and ministry of the Society of Jesus (Padberg, 1994). In the wake of GC 32, Rausch (2010)

noted that the union of the “service of faith” and the “promotion of justice” has not been easy, and that some Jesuits have struggled to integrate this emphasis not only into their personal lives but also into programs at their colleges and universities. Many others, however, have embraced this union, as is evidenced by the fact that over the last 40 years, more than 40 Jesuits have died because of their work for justice (Rausch, 2010). Most notable, perhaps, was the killing of the Jesuits in El Salvador, which will be considered in the following section.

Although a full treatment of the topic of Ignatian spirituality is beyond the scope of this dissertation, it is important to note that the General Congregations and, indeed, all works connected with the Society of Jesus are influenced in some fashion by this spirituality. For this reason, it is important to mention it here. The following is from the Society of Jesus in the United States (2012) under the heading Ignatian Spirituality:

This spirituality is deeply rooted in becoming more aware of what is happening in your daily experience — finding God in all things. You can then begin to discern where the spirits of light or darkness may be trying to lead you. We become more aware of God’s presence in our lives and more attentive to His desires rather than our own.

These are some of the hallmarks of Ignatian Spirituality. It is expressed in the arts, forms of prayer, interreligious dialogue, the Spiritual Exercises and the Constitutions of the Society of Jesus written by St. Ignatius and approved by Pope Paul IV in 1558. The Spirituality of St. Ignatius of Loyola animates all the works of the Society of Jesus — schools, parishes, centers of social justice, mission work, and spirituality centers — AMDG — to the Greater Glory of God.

A second recent development within Jesuit higher education was Kolvenbach’s raising the bar in his address (highlighted above) at Santa Clara University in 2000. There he insisted that Jesuit higher education must go further, must form students with a “well-educated solidarity.” Kolvenbach’s (2008) talk has inspired a new sense of

purpose for Jesuit colleges and universities around the world. Indeed, many are drawing from this standard to evaluate their missions, programs and pedagogies (Locatelli, 2005; Tellis, 2002). Kolvenbach (2008) suggested that “students, in the course of their formation, must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives, so they can learn to feel it, think about it critically, respond to its suffering, and engage it constructively” (p. 155).

The third and last recent development within Jesuit higher education was Adolfo Nicolás’ (2010) address in Mexico City to representatives from Jesuit colleges and universities throughout the world. He encouraged those working in Jesuit higher education to find creative ways “of promoting depth of thought and imagination, a depth that is transformative of the person” (2010). He also urged Jesuit universities to leverage their international network and make it operational in ways that address issues of faith, justice and ecology. Lastly, he encouraged creative ways for sharing significant research with those who have been historically excluded.

Notably, in their major addresses, both Kolvenbach and Nicolás referenced the influence of Ignacio Ellacuría, S.J. on Jesuit higher education. Appropriately, the focus of this review now turns to Jesuit higher education in El Salvador.

Jesuit Higher Education in El Salvador

Ellacuría was Rector of the Universidad Centroamericano José Simeón Canas (UCA) until his tragic death at the hands of Salvadoran military in 1989. The Jesuits founded the UCA³ in El Salvador in 1965, partly in response to a growing concern that

³ The most thorough analysis of the history, context and development of the UCA model in English is Charles J. Beirne’s (1990) *Jesuit Education and Social Change in El Salvador*. In Spanish, see Román Mayorga’s (1976) *La Universidad para el Cambio Social*.

the National University was too left-leaning (Beirne, 1996). The early years were concerned with obtaining adequate financing, establishing independence from both the local church hierarchy and the government, and setting up the university's campus. Over time, the UCA was transformed into a new and unique model for Jesuit higher education by becoming, in essence, a new way of being a Christian university (Sobrino, 1990). While characteristics of this model are discussed below, it is important, first, to recognize some broader movements that influenced its development.

Vatican II's Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, entitled *Gaudium et Spes*, began with the famous words, "The joys and the hopes, the griefs and the anxieties of the men of this age, especially those who are poor or in any way afflicted, these too are the joys and hopes, the griefs and anxieties of the followers of Christ" (Abbott, 1966, Pastoral Constitution, para 1). This statement characterized a shift in the way the Catholic Church approached the modern world. In contrast to a militant stance against the world, the church now "sought to be in solidarity with all peoples, especially with the poor" (Rausch, 2010, Church in the Modern World, para 4). This shift in imagination would reverberate both within Jesuits in Latin America as well as among the Latin American bishops.

In May of 1968, Pedro Arrupe, the superior general of the Jesuits, met in Rio de Janeiro with the Latin American provincial superiors (Beirne, 1996). Arrupe was committed to the needs of the poor and was an advocate for changes within the Society of Jesus (Tombs, 2010). In the meeting's final communication, which was sent to every member of the Society, the Jesuits affirmed their commitment to transform their institutions in ways that would more adequately address the situation of the poor

majority, and pledged to address the social realities of Latin America by considering them an “absolute priority in our apostolic strategy” (Hennelly, 1990, p. 78).

A few months later, the Conference of Latin American Bishops gathered in Medellín, Colombia. The final documents demonstrated how the bishops embraced the spirit of Vatican II and applied it in a Latin America context characterized by abject poverty and misery. The bishops wrote: “There are in existence many studies of the Latin American people. The misery that besets large masses of human beings in all of our countries is described in all of these studies. That misery, as a collective fact, expresses itself as injustice which cries to the heavens” (Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops, 1973, p. 40). In response to these realities, the bishops wrote:

We wish to affirm that it is indispensable to form a social conscience and a realistic perception of the problems of the community and of social structures. We must awaken the social conscience and communal customs in all strata of society and professional groups regarding such values as dialogue and community living within the same group and relations with wider social groups (workers, peasants, professionals, clergy, religious, administrators, etc.). This task of “*concientización*” and social education ought to be integrated into joint Pastoral Action at various levels. (p. 48).

As is evidenced by the statements above, both the Jesuits and the Latin American bishops committed themselves to aligning their institutions with efforts to respond more compassionately and effectively to the realities the poor majority in Latin America.

Although a full analysis of the Salvadoran context during this period is beyond the scope of this research, it is important to recognize broadly the conditions at the time.⁴ In *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America*, Stanley and Barbara Stein (1970) offer a

⁴ For a lengthy description, see Beirne’s (1996) second chapter entitled “The Salvadoran Context”

general description of Latin America, which also describes El Salvador during this period:

In Latin America political systems have long been designed and maintained to limit popular demands. In many nations, high levels of illiteracy (between 40 and 50 percent), weak peasant and industrial labor organizations, well-organized and highly influential landowning and business associations, the widespread use of political funds to influence voting, and finally the recourse to military force to destroy the results of elections – all have concentrated political control over national decision-making in the hands of a self-perpetuating elite or oligarchy whose decisions are governed by narrowly defined class interests rather than national considerations. (p. 197)

It was from within such a context, characterized both by social inequity and injustice, and by the broad movements that emerged after Vatican II and Medellín, that this new idea of a Christian university emerged in El Salvador. One of the main architects of this new idea was Ignacio Ellacuría, who joined the UCA board of directors in 1967 and later became rector (Beirne, 1996). He was a renowned philosopher and a prolific writer, even during El Salvador's civil war. Sheehan (1989), a theologian who knew him, wrote,

Ignacio was a man of extraordinary brilliance. When I once asked him how he managed to write so much and so frequently – weekly university lectures, biweekly political analyses, a steady stream of conferences, articles and books – he told me without a flicker of immodesty that he composed the drafts of his articles completely in his head and then sat down and wrote them out whole. (p. 7)

Beirne (1996) considered him an “extraordinary individual who became one of the major figures in late-twentieth-century Salvadoran history” (p. 11).

In 1970, Ellacuría and Román Mayorga, who would later serve as UCA's rector, wrote an address that was given at the signing of a major loan from the Inter-American Development Bank. According to Beirne (1996), this talk “crystallized the new vision and signaled the beginning of a new era” (p. 63). It said the mission of the university was to serve all people, not just privileged groups, and it called for a critical analysis of the

structures that would expose injustice. It also emphasized the need to raise consciousness on human rights issues by publishing studies that would have an impact (Beirne, 1996).

In 1975, Ellacuría (1991) wrote an article in the journal *Estudios Centroamericanos* (ECA) where he assessed the university model being developed at the UCA and concluded:

A university is a Christian university when its horizon is the people of the very poor who are demanding their liberation and struggling for it. Thus, it is a university whose fundamental commitment is to a change of both structures and persons with a view towards a growing solidarity; a university which is willing to engage in dangerous struggle on behalf of justice; a university whose inspiration for making ethical judgments of situations and solutions and for the means to use in moving from such situations to solutions is the inspiration of the gospel. It is also – some of us believe – the different university that our country needs. (p.207)

In 1982, in a commencement address at Santa Clara University, Ellacuría further outlined his idea of a Christian university.

A Christian university must take into account the gospel preference for the poor. This does not mean that only the poor will study at the university; it does not mean that the university should abdicate its mission of academic excellence--excellence which is needed in order to solve complex social issues of our time. What it does mean is that the university should be present intellectually where it is needed: to provide science for those without science; to provide skills for those without skills; to be a voice for those without voices; to give intellectual support for those who do not possess the academic qualifications to make their rights legitimate. (Ellacuría, 1982)

The UCA paid a high price for implementing this vision. In 1975, for example, as repression grew in El Salvador, so did the number of UCA protest statements. After government troops fired on demonstrators and killed several dozen people, the University Higher Education Council published an official statement in ECA (1975) that was translated by Beirne (1996) as:

In the first place, we condemn as unjust, the inhuman sinfulness against God which has roots in our society: the violence of tremendous inequality in the distribution of land and income and social and political power which favors a

small portion of the population and oppresses and pillages the majority of Salvadorans... (p. 129).

Even after the first bomb exploded on campus in the building where ECA was published, the Jesuits refused to let up. They went on to question the validity of the 1976 legislative elections in which only one party, the PCN, participated and called for a government that would get at the root of the country's problems and benefit the vast majority instead of the oligarchy (Beirne, 1996). Soon thereafter, a second bomb exploded, again in the building where ECA was published.

After 13 more years of bombs and persecution, on November 16, 1989, Ellacuría, his five Jesuit companions, their housekeeper and her daughter were brutally killed at the UCA by an elite, U.S.-trained battalion of the Salvadoran military. Jon Sobrino (1990), the renowned Latin American theologian and close friend of the martyred Jesuits, wrote that they were killed because they told the truth about El Salvador, analyzing the causes of the many injustices faced by the poor majority. Sobrino (1990) wrote:

They murdered these Jesuit academics because they made the university an effective instrument in defence of the mass of the people, because they had become the critical conscience in a society of sin and the creative awareness of a future society that would be different, the utopia of God's kingdom for the poor. They were killed for trying to create a truly Christian university. They were killed because they believed in the God of the poor and tried to produce this faith through the university. (p. 28)

Today, the Jesuits and their colleagues at the UCA in El Salvador continue to rigorously analyze the country's social, political and economic conditions. The lives and commitments of the UCA martyrs continue to impact people throughout the world. Some examples include: 1) the approximately 90 international delegations which come in pilgrimage to the UCA each year; 2) the international conferences based upon the work of Ellacuría (Philosophy) and Martín Baró (Social Psychology); 3) the all-night vigil,

every November, at the UCA in memory of the UCA martyrs; 4) the annual Ignatian Teach-In, sponsored by the U.S.-based Ignatian Solidarity Network, in memory of the UCA Jesuits.

It is this same legacy that inspired the creation of Casa de la Solidaridad in 1999, on the 10th anniversary of the killing of the Jesuits. The context of Casa de la Solidaridad will be considered after a review of the literature on international immersion programs at Jesuit colleges and universities in the U.S.

International Immersion Programs at Jesuit Colleges and Universities in the U.S.

Given the unique history and mission of Jesuit higher education in the U.S., it is no surprise that a variety of international immersion programs exist at Jesuit colleges and universities in the U.S. offering students opportunities for direct contact with the poor in developing countries. Information on specific programs may be found in the Resource Book on International Education at U.S. Jesuit Colleges and Universities (AJCU, 2012). Unfortunately, aside from home institution websites, not much has been written about these programs in books and journals. A review of the literature on both short-term and semester-long international immersion programs sponsored by Jesuit colleges and universities is offered here.

John Savard, S.J.'s (2010) doctoral dissertation offers the most recent investigation into the impact of short-term (1-3 weeks) immersion programs on undergraduate students of Jesuit colleges and universities. He designed an instrument that measured seven variables descriptive of Kolvenbach's (2008) "well-educated solidarity": values, spirituality, compassion, social justice, cultural sensitivity, critical thinking, and sense of vocation. He administered his survey to 316 students from 13

Jesuit colleges and universities before and after students' immersion experiences. Data showed growth in all variables. The least growth occurred in the spirituality and social justice subscales. Impressive growth was reported in the variables of compassion, cultural sensitivity, critical thinking and vocation. Findings indicated that immersion programs impacted nearly all of the students in terms of well-educated solidarity.

Plante, Lackey and Hwang (2009) conducted two experiments at a Jesuit university in which they examined the impact of short-term immersion trips (10 days) on the development of compassion in students. Results from their first experiment suggested students had higher post-trip empathy scores and less stress. The second experiment demonstrated a significant increase in compassion for those students who participated in the immersion suggesting that compassion is nurtured through these types of experiences.

In a review of Fairfield University's justice programs, Tellis (2002) reported that students' participation in immersion trips to Ecuador, Mexico, Haiti and Nicaragua impacted their sense of themselves and their sense of responsibility to the poor. This article, however, was not based upon systematic research.

Based upon his personal experience of accompanying student groups from Boston College to El Salvador on short-term immersions (7-10 days), theologian Stephen Pope (2010) described how these experiences contribute to the mission of Catholic universities. Pope highlighted four important points regarding immersion trips: 1) "...they proceed on the belief that person-to-person communication can be a special stimulus to learning and personal growth and, as John Paul II understood, that solidarity is best learned not only

through ‘concepts’⁵ but also through ‘contact;’” 2) “...immersion trips help students encounter the other to provoke significant personal transformation;” 3) “...personal encounters with people struggling with poverty and other forms of marginalization play a particular important role in education for faith and justice;” and 4) “immersion trips facilitate encounters with the poor in and through community” (Pope, 2010, Immersion Trips, para 6). He further argued that, when properly developed, immersion programs “...can affect our students both intellectually and affectively by promoting their integral social, ethical, and religious transformation” (Pope, 2010, Conclusion, para 1).

Little research has been conducted on semester immersion or international service learning programs at Jesuit colleges and universities. Fairfield University’s Crabtree (2007) encouraged critical reflection on the nature of international partnerships, especially in terms of the effects of students’ presence on people in host countries. Based upon her work in taking Fairfield students to developing countries, she raised important questions such as “how do we ensure that our work does not reproduce a history of dependency?” (p. 2) and “what impact does ISL [International Service Learning] have on our students?” (p. 1)? Crabtree (2008) offered a review of the literature around the theoretical foundations for international service learning with the intention of assisting others to more effectively design and implement meaningful international service learning experiences. Interestingly, she did not incorporate a review of the literature on Jesuit higher education.

Dennis Gordon (2003), in his assessment of the approaches and challenges of Jesuit international education, highlighted the need for more Jesuit schools to offer

⁵ See John Paul II, Address to Catholic University of the Sacred Heart, Milan, May 5, 2000, n.9., cited in Kolvenbach’s (2008) address at Santa Clara University.

semester programs that “provide experiences which lead [students] to choose solidarity with the poor and oppressed and to ‘serve faith and promote justice.’” Gordon (2003) wrote, “Ideally students would take part in exemplary experiences such as Casa de la Solidaridad in El Salvador” (p. 9). Gordon (2003) also referenced Creighton University’s Semestre Dominicano as a well-respected program that has been offering students a mixture of community involvement and classroom study in the Dominican Republic since 1977.

In *Higher Standards for Jesuit Higher Education*, Dean Brackley (2006) argued that Jesuit colleges and universities should create more programs like Casa in poor countries rather than sending more students to study in Europe. He wrote: “I am deeply impressed with the educational impact of semester-abroad programs for U.S. students, like the Casa de la Solidaridad in El Salvador. While semester-abroad programs abound in Europe for U.S. students, we need to open more such programs in poor countries” (Brackley, 2006).

It is worth noting that Stephen Privett, S.J. (2013), President of the University of San Francisco, is a strong advocate for creating immersion experiences for university leaders. In an article entitled “Immersion Experiences are Essential for University Leaders” he wrote:

Immersion experiences can open eyes, destroy prejudice, and change lives. I have watched countless students return from developing countries as changed persons, with renewed hearts eager to live as men and women for others. The University of San Francisco (USF) believes so strongly in the value of these immersion trips that we’ve expanded the concept: they’re now a regular part of leadership team formation.

Highlighting the impact of these experiences on university leaders, Privett concluded:

Direct involvement with human suffering gives rise to the rigorous inquiry and

serious moral reflection that are the soul of academic excellence that every college routinely claims as its hallmark. To stand amidst the world's poor—in a garbage dump, an urban slum, or a struggling rural co-op—and listen to their stories, if only for a week, is to see and experience reality as most of the world does. From that perspective, there is no more urgent work than ours—educating the minds and hearts of our students, staff, and faculty members so that they apply their knowledge, skills, and considerable talents to fashioning a more humane world where all people may claim their full human dignity and enjoy their fair share of the earth's goods. Ultimately, our full humanity cannot be realized apart from theirs, much less at their expense.

Privett's commitment to providing immersion opportunities for faculty and staff dates back to the early 1990's when he was at Santa Clara University and in 1999, when he co-founded Casa de la Solidaridad.

Context of Casa de la Solidaridad

According to Wolff and Manuel (2006), whose article documented the history and development of immersion experiences at SCU, a significant influence on the trajectory of immersion programs at SCU occurred when Jon Cortina, S.J., a Jesuit working with the poor in El Salvador, invited a group of California Jesuits to join a group of refugees in El Despertar in 1988. A number of Jesuits accepted the invitation and went to learn about the situation in the country and to provide an international presence, which would offer a degree of protection for the refugees. In 1989, immediately after the killings at UCA, Sonny Manuel and Steve Privett traveled undercover to El Salvador to smuggle out photos and videotapes of the murdered Jesuits (Wolff & Manuel, 2006). In March 1990, SCU's president, Paul Locatelli, led a faculty delegation to El Salvador to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the martyrdom of Archbishop Oscar Romero, and to accompany Jon Sobrino, S.J., UCA theologian who was returning to the country for the first time since the killing of the Jesuits – his housemates – in November 1989 (Wolff & Manuel,

2006). Given these powerful immersion experiences on the part of the leaders of SCU, it is no wonder that when Dean Brackley, S.J., a theologian who volunteered to continue the work of the martyred UCA Jesuits in 1990, was exploring the idea of starting an academic program in El Salvador, he found fertile ground for support at SCU.

Since 1999, Casa de la Solidaridad has welcomed students from the U.S. to El Salvador and offered them an integrated educational experience rooted in the areas of *accompaniment* of those who suffer most (economically poor), *rigorous academic study*, living simply in community and *spirituality*. The co-founders and co-directors have published a chapter and a few articles on their work, which will be briefly reviewed here.

In 2003, I argued that Jesuit higher education could play a leadership role in globalizing solidarity and that Casa de la Solidaridad was one effort in that direction.

Based on my experience of co-directing Casa de la Solidaridad, I wrote:

As educators at our Jesuit colleges and universities, we have a responsibility to respond, each in our own way, to our urgent global situation. Given the international scope of our Jesuit institutions and our mission, we are poised to become leaders in the effort to globalize solidarity – to globalize the practice of love. As we move in this direction, we will continue to discover new aspects of our own humanity and in turn become better equipped to educate for solidarity in the real world (Yonkers-Talz, 2003, p. 31).

In 2004, I briefly described the Casa program and shared insights from my two-year longitudinal research project. I wrote,

My experience in El Salvador has convinced me that engagement with poor people and their struggle to survive, when combined with personal and academic reflection, can help students become the authors of their lives and contribute to addressing the global situation” (Yonkers-Talz, 2004, p.152)

In 2007, Guardado, Perez, Reyes, Trena Yonkers-Talz⁶ and I wrote about the mutually beneficial interaction between the U.S. Casa students and the Salvadoran scholarship students in the Romero Program, which is designed to support at-risk Salvadoran youth.

Mary Gallo's (2008) dissertation focused on how college students' identity and vocational discernment was influenced by the Casa's medically focused summer program. She reported how "students found this way of learning extremely beneficial toward making vocational decisions from a standpoint of increased awareness about self and the other" (p. 106). One of her main conclusions stated: "It is imperative that universities seek out partnerships in other countries where programs like Casa can thrive. The Casa model should be used as an example of success for future development" (p. 108).

Over the years, the Casa model has been increasingly recognized by leaders in Jesuit higher education as exemplary in fulfilling the mission of Jesuit higher education (Brackley, 2006; Locatelli, 2005; Ravizza, 2010). On July 16, 2012, Michael Weiler, S.J., Provincial of the California Province of the Society of Jesus, wrote letters to Steve Privett, S.J., President of the University of San Francisco, Michael Engh, S.J., President of Santa Clara University and David Burcham, J.D., President of Loyola Marymount University, in which he expressed his support for and commitment to the Casa model of education: "The Casa Network remains a priority for the California Province because it embodies the vision, values and pedagogy that the Society of Jesus has set forth for its institutions of higher learning" (Weiler, personal communication, July 16, 2012).

Weiler, S.J. went on to highlight two reasons why this is the case:

⁶ Trena Yonkers-Talz is my wife and the other Co-Founder and Co-Director of Casa de la Solidaridad. She is referred to as Trena throughout the dissertation.

First, we continue to be called to educate students who are in solidarity with those most in need. As Fr. Kolvenbach said, “students in the course of their formation must let the gritty reality of this world into their lives... [so that they can] learn to perceive, judge, choose, and act for the rights of others, especially the disadvantaged and oppressed.” The Casa Network stands out as a premier example of how to integrate direct immersion experiences with rigorous academic analysis and Ignatian spiritual formation in order to produce the type of transformation Fr. Kolvenbach envisioned.

Second, our most recent General Congregation urged us to look for opportunities to leverage our global resources by collaborating on mission. The Casa Network not only creates such collaborative ties with partnering institutions in other countries, but also creates a unique opportunity for our three California universities and the Province to work together in new ways.

It is a signature program that exemplifies the best of Jesuit higher education, and I am grateful to see you support it (Weiler, personal communication, July 16, 2012).

Within the last five years, leaders in Jesuit higher education have increasingly requested information from Trena and me regarding the Casa model of education. Some have wanted to highlight the model in talks. For example, in May 2009, Charlie Currie, S.J., the then President of the Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, spoke of Casa in his commencement address to Le Moyne College graduates. He called it an ideal way for students to understand what it means to be in solidarity with the poor. Others have asked for information about the Casa model in order to replicate it in other countries. As mentioned above, three years ago the University of San Francisco decided to launch Casa Bayanihan in the Philippines and in the Fall of 2013, Loyola Marymount University hopes to launch a Casa program in Cordoba, Argentina. Other leaders at Jesuit colleges and universities have heard of Casa de la Solidaridad but have little to no understanding as to what the program entails. To date, the Casa model has only been

communicated through oral presentations. There is need, therefore, for an in-depth, written description of this model of education.

Context of El Salvador

An analysis of the historical, political and socio-economic context of El Salvador will be described as a part of this study via a survey of faculty members who are experts in the areas of Salvadoran history, politics and economics, and with Salvadoran community members. In order to fully understand the Casa educational model, an understanding of the students' educational context is essential.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to describe and document the unique attributes of the Casa de la Solidaridad model and provide some insight into how the Casa program has influenced the lives of Casa alumni. The research questions were:

1. What are the unique attributes of the Casa de la Solidaridad educational model?
2. How has the Casa experience influenced the lives of Casa alums?

Research Design

This mixed method study gathered both qualitative and quantitative data in order to answer the research questions. A qualitative case study was conducted in order to document and describe the unique attributes of the Casa de la Solidaridad educational model. Survey research investigated qualitatively and quantitatively how the Casa experience has influenced the lives of Casa alumni. Survey research was the most appropriate way to efficiently gather and organize data from all the alumni.

Case Study: Casa de la Solidaridad Educational Model

The case study methodology utilized in this research stems from the work of Stake (1995) and Yin (2009). Stake identified an effective way of studying educational programs. His approach is considered particularly adaptable in the fields of education and social services. The primary task in conducting a case study is to thoroughly understand the case and then convey that understanding to a wider audience (Stake, 1995). Yin's (2009) methodological protocol, however, is more current and will, therefore, be emphasized in this study. This protocol includes the following sections: a)

overview of the case study project, b) field procedures, c) case study questions (already mentioned above), and d) guide for the case study report.

Overview of the Case Study Project

The case under investigation was the educational model of Casa de la Solidaridad, a semester-abroad program administered through Santa Clara University and located in San Salvador, El Salvador. The model was studied in-depth during the months of March and April 2013. Given the nature of the research question pertaining to the Casa model, Yin's (2009) single-case embedded design was employed. Since the Casa model is based upon four main areas – accompaniment of the poor (praxis), academic study, living simply in community and spirituality - each of these areas, as well as their integration, was intentionally explored in the case study. Yin (2009) would describe these areas as “propositions,” or areas that direct attention to something that should be examined within the scope of the study. While attributes of the Casa model not connected with one of the four areas were also explored focusing on these four areas provided direction and structure to the study.

Field Procedures

In order to safeguard the physical, social and emotional well being of individuals from whom information is obtained by USF researchers, I sought and received approval for this investigation by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) at the University of San Francisco.

Evidence from three sources was gathered in the case study: documentation, interviews, and participant-observation. The documentation included the gathering of

internal policies, procedures, manuals, calendars, brochures, weekly reports related to the Casa model.

In-depth interviews of key informants were conducted and recorded during the study. These individuals included: a) coordinators from the current praxis sites, b) members of the Casa staff, and c) the director of the Romero Program.⁷ Conversations with informants began by asking them to describe the Casa educational context, which provided a picture of the students' learning environment. Informants were then asked to share their perspective on the attributes of the Casa educational model, and to give examples demonstrating those attributes. Faculty members, all of whom are experts in their fields, completed a questionnaire describing the Salvadoran reality, again to help understand the students' context.

The last source of evidence is related to Yin's (2009) understanding of participant-observation. In lieu of direct observation during the time of the study and in light of the fact that Trena and I are co-founders and have been co-directors of Casa for the last 14 years, we participate in three in-depth, recorded conversations focused on attributes of the Casa model and examples demonstrating those attributes. Prior to the second and third conversations, we reviewed the context of the previous conversation in order to build on what was previously discussed. Trena also reviewed and approved the final draft of the case study.

All the documents, recorded interviews and recorded participant-observation conversations were included in the case study database. According to Yin (2009),

⁷ Funded by Casa, the Romero Program supports Salvadoran scholarship students in their pursuit of higher education.

utilizing multiple sources of data and a case study database significantly contributes to the construct validity of the case study.

Once all the evidence was collected and entered into the case study database, it was analyzed and organized by the researcher into two main units of analysis: 1) attributes of the Casa educational model and 2) examples demonstrating the attribute.

Guide for the Case Study Report

The report begins with a description of the Casa educational context provided by the key informants, which describes the general context of El Salvador as well as the more specific context of the praxis sites where students are immersed. The report then weaves together the findings by describing the main attributes of the Casa educational model along with examples.

My Role as Researcher and Co-Founder / Co-Director of Casa de la Solidaridad

Since the ultimate aim of case study research was to thoroughly understand the case (Stake, 1995), it is essential to acknowledge my various roles in this study. This research focused on the educational model of Casa de la Solidaridad, a program I helped co-found and have co-directed since 1999. It is important to acknowledge the advantages and disadvantages of these roles. As co-founder and co-director, I had the advantage of having been intimately connected with the Casa program over the last 14 years. I have been instrumental in the design, implementation and development of the program since 1999. Each semester, I have taught Casa students the praxis seminar, a capstone-type course designed to help students process their experience. This history provided me with intimate knowledge of how the educational model is designed, how it works, and its limits, all of which will allow me to highlight the complexities of the educational model.

This intimacy with the historical development of Casa may also be a disadvantage. Being so immersed in any one setting inevitably creates blinders. It is possible that my vision was truncated because of my embedded position within Casa and that this affected my interpretations of the data. It is also important to note that I am an advocate of this type of education and have actively worked to replicate the model in other countries. All of this is important information for the reader to consider when reading the final report.

Survey Research – Casa de la Solidaridad Alumni

In order to document the influence of the Casa experience on the lives of alumni, a survey instrument (Appendix A) was designed to obtain the following information from them: a) biographical data including educational and work/volunteer commitments; b) perceptions of the general influence of Casa experience on their lives and c) perceptions of learned outcomes in relation to each of the stated pillars of the program – namely accompaniment of the poor, rigorous academic study, living simply in community, and spirituality (Appendix A).

Orcher's (2007) approach guided the development of the instrument. Based upon my previous research experience, I drafted a questionnaire that was reviewed by colleagues familiar with survey development. I made revisions based upon their suggestions. I also conducted cognitive interviewing, in which I had local participants answer the questionnaire out loud. The questionnaire was further revised in light of their feedback.

The survey was electronically administered to all 450 Casa alums via SurveyMonkey in March 2013. Alumni were given 2 weeks to complete the survey.

After a week, a reminder email was sent to alumni encouraging them to complete the survey.

The quantitative data was compiled with the help of SurveyMonkey. The qualitative data, however, required additional time to process. Questions such as “In what ways has the Casa experience influenced the person you have become?” solicited a variety of responses. In order to organize and better understand the data, I conducted a thematic analysis on the first 25 surveys in order to identify categories used by the alumni to describe their experience. The themes or categories then guided the analysis of the rest of the data.

Prior to conducting the survey, approval was granted by the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRB) at the University of San Francisco.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The intent of this research was to document and describe the unique attributes of the Casa de la Solidaridad (Casa) educational model and provide insight into how Casa has influenced the lives of Casa alumni. The research questions were:

1. What are the unique attributes of the Casa educational model?
2. How has the Casa experience influenced the lives of Casa alums?

In order to answer the first question, a case study was conducted. Survey research was utilized to answer the second.

Case Study Report

This case study report is the result of analysis and reflection on the essential characteristics of the Casa educational model as expressed by the co-directors, praxis site coordinators, Casa staff members and the director of the Romero Program, as well as a review of Casa policies, manuals and weekly reports. While incorporating the pillars of the program, the framework of the report consists of six major areas: Inspiration, Accompaniment, Academics, Living Simply in Community, Spirituality and Integration. Any information not specifically attributed to someone else (e.g., praxis site coordinator) can be assumed to come from the co-directors.

Inspiration

Casa was founded 10 years after the killing of six Jesuit priests, the housekeeper for a Jesuit community and her daughter. The killings took place at the Jesuit-run Central American University (UCA). Casa was seen as a symbolic way of commemorating their lives and faith-based commitments to working for justice and peace in El Salvador. The

history of the martyrs in El Salvador is powerful, moving and inspirational for many and especially for those who work at Jesuit institutions of higher education. Casa not only continues to be inspired and guided by this historic mission-based narrative but also actively incorporates it into its structure. For example, the first full day of the 10-day program orientation includes the viewing of a documentary about the Jesuits, the housekeeper and her daughter, and is followed by a visit to the rose garden where the Jesuits were slain. During the evening of the first day, students have an opportunity to reflect communally on the killings and what they mean for them. This activity gives students an understanding of what occurred in El Salvador as well as an orientation to the historic roots of the program. Throughout the semester, students hear testimonies about the Jesuit martyrs; about Monseñor Oscar Romero, the Catholic Archbishop who was martyred in 1980 for speaking out against the injustices suffered by the poor majority; and the countless other women and men who gave their lives struggling to bring peace and justice to El Salvador. These conversations occur during classes, at praxis sites and in exchanges with their Salvadoran peers in the Romero program. In this way, students are invited to integrate themselves into the ongoing story of people whose faith inspired them to work for justice and peace.

Casa is also rooted in and inspired by Ignatian spirituality, which encourages attentiveness towards how God is working in our own personal history and the histories of all people and creation. Casa collaborates in the mission of the Society of Jesus by animating, supporting and encouraging faith that does justice. Programmatically, this is expressed concretely in many ways. For example, students are invited to participate in weekly spirituality nights at the co-directors' home. The content of these gatherings is

mutually agreed upon by students and staff. These nights provide a safe, sacred place for students to reflect deeply about their faith and explore different ways of praying together. Students are also invited to participate in an Ignatian retreat, and in one-on-one spiritual accompaniment. More details of these activities will be provided in the Spirituality section below.

The grounding in Ignatian spirituality is infused throughout the program. Another example of this is how Casa treats staff and praxis site partners. Each summer, for example, there is an opportunity for staff members to participate in a retreat in the hope that it will support their own spiritual lives. Also, each year members of the Casa community participate together in candlelight vigils commemorating the Jesuit martyrs (November) and Monseñor Oscar Romero (March). These vigils help to ground the staff, students and praxis partners in the historical faith-based narrative of those who dedicated their lives to working for justice and peace.

Lastly, it is important to mention the late Dean Brackley, SJ, who had the idea of starting Casa. Dean was one of the Jesuits who came to the UCA in 1990 to help replace the martyred Jesuits. Although he died of cancer in 2011, he continues to be fondly remembered in the Casa community.

Accompaniment

The praxis site coordinators reported that their primary role in the education of Casa students is to accompany them as they are immersed in the reality of Salvadoran life. They also noted that at the praxis sites, the students' role is to accompany the communities.

The title of this dissertation, *A Pedagogy of Solidarity*, highlights the main thrust

of the Casa de la Solidaridad educational model. Broadly speaking, it is a way of educating that has as its focus accompaniment of those who suffer most as a way of cultivating a well-educated solidarity. We refer to it as an accompaniment-based educational model that emphasizes students walking humbly with and learning from our Salvadoran partners, and our Salvadorans partners walking with and educating our U.S. students.

We use the term “accompaniment” intentionally for a variety of reasons. The word stems from the old French word “compaignon,” which means literally “one who breaks bread with another.”⁸ This image of eating together accurately reflects our way of proceeding in that it highlights the mutuality that exists between students and our Salvadoran partners. It is a more accurate term than “service learning,” which inevitably implies that students are going to provide some sort of service to others. We know from experience, as do our Salvadoran partners, that the accompaniment-based educational approach is based upon mutual respect between students and people in the communities.

In addition, the term “accompaniment” better captures our rootedness in Ignatian spirituality. Ignatius of Loyola founded the Compañía de Jesus (Jesuits) and referred to the early Jesuits as his companions. More recently, Rutilio Grande, S.J., a Salvadoran Jesuit priest who was killed in 1977 for his pastoral work with rural farmers, gave a homily in which he spoke about everyone being included at the table of creation. His homily was the basis for one of the more popular songs in the Misa Salvadoreña entitled *Vamos Todos al Banquete*. The Casa community sings this song before every meal. It says:

⁸ New Oxford American Dictionary

Vamos todos al banquete,
a la mesa de la creación,
cada cual con su taburete,
tiene un puesto y una misión.

Hoy me levanto muy temprano,
ya me espera la comunidad,
voy subiendo alegre la cuesta,
voy en busca de tu amistad.

Dios invita a todos los pobres,
a esta mesa común por la fe,
donde no hay acaparadores,
y a nadie le falta el con que.
Dios nos manda hacer de este mundo,
una mesa de fraternidad,
trabajando y luchando juntos,
compartiendo la propiedad.

The English translation is:

We all go to the banquet,
to the table of creation,
each one with our seat,
each one with a place and a mission.

Today I awake very early,
the community is already waiting for me,
I go up the hill joyfully,
searching for friendship.

God invites all the poor,
to this common table of faith,
where there are no greedy people,
and no one lacks for food.

God sends us into this world,
to this table of friendship,
working and struggling together,
sharing what we have.

The image of everyone sitting and sharing a meal together poignantly symbolizes the idea of accompaniment.

When asked about unique characteristics of the Casa educational model, Anita

Landaverde, a longtime praxis site partner from the community of San Ramon, said:

I would say that one of the main characteristics of the Casa is that it gives honor to its name, *solidaridad*. This name isn't just a theory; it's put into practice. Another characteristic of the program is insertion – insertion on the part of the co-directors and the students into the reality of the people, the reality of how people are living and how they are feeling. The visits that the students make are really to accompany the people, to live together with them. So one of the characteristics is the friendship offered. The truth is that when one really touches the reality, solidarity grows. Yes, the program honors its name Casa de la Solidaridad.

Oti, another praxis site partner from Mariona said this when asked about main attributes of the Casa:

There are many characteristics. One that's very important to me is solidarity. The program is well named: Casa de la Solidaridad. And it's not just a name; it's put into action. The students don't come to be tourists and see the beautiful country. It's an experience of insertion into the communities. It's insertion into solidarity, a way of giving yourself with the desire to know and become part of a family. It's about accompaniment.

When asked to define solidarity, Oti responded,

For me it means to feeling with another person. To feel with her, to be with her, to talk with her. It's not like I actually experience the pain of the other person. For example, when someone is in bed dying of cancer. I don't feel it physically. But if I'm in solidarity, I'm going to feel with the other person pain and suffering. How do I move to solidarity? I need to be present. Accompanying. Supporting when I can. This is solidarity. It's not a big thing. They're simple things but they require presence.

The Casa pedagogy is one in which students enter marginal Salvadoran communities to accompany the people. When they do this, they are accompanied by the praxis site coordinators. Embedded in this dynamic is the hope of cultivating a well-educated solidarity.

Context of accompaniment. When asked to describe the reality in their communities, all praxis site partners commented on the lack of resources necessary to sustain a dignified life. Anita spoke about the lack of medical and educational services

for the people and mentioned how praxis site communities on the San Salvador volcano lack access to electricity and potable water. Hector, another praxis site partner, spoke of a lack of jobs that pay a just wage and how people scramble to find work selling things in the market. Cristina, a praxis site partner from San Antonio Abad, spoke about the insecurity experienced by the people in her community due to gang violence. Overall, the interviewees said that the praxis site communities are struggling to survive. When Pedro Garcia, who teaches the Political Science course in the Casa program, was asked about important characteristics of Salvadoran society that affect people in marginal communities, he wrote:

The whole history of El Salvador has been marked by a political, economic, social and cultural system that marginalizes and excludes the majority of the population. Today we see how poverty and other economic factors extend and perpetuate this cultural system that for decades has shown an idiosyncratic contempt for the poor. We have a political system that has denied the poor real participation in the ability to decide, reduced participation in the electoral process and, has not been a true exercise of democracy. We have a segregated social system that degrades the indigenous and poor. Above all we have a scandalous economic system in which the wealthy own most of the country's capital and resources.

Other professors highlighted poverty, insecurity and other factors, which our praxis site partners had described as primary issues facing the Salvadoran population.

The interview with Lolo Guardado, a praxis community partner from Mariona, provided both a concrete example of Pedro's analysis above and evidence of the fruit of the accompaniment approach.

Casa students come to our community to form a part of our lives in our condition of simplicity and poverty. This is moving to us. It's not as if they come to see these disgraceful poor people. It's not like they come just to make a documentary about the poor in El Salvador. Young men and women come and listen and learn from us. They make us concrete gestures of solidarity, accompaniment and hope. This make us feel like the human beings we are. Throughout our history, we've been told us that the poor are disposable, that we're garbage and have no voice. The Casa gives us hope that another world is possible. It's not necessary to bring

packages of money to the people. Accompanying them and being in solidarity with them are much more important. This is exactly what the program does.

The lives of Salvadorans in the praxis communities are characterized by struggle and marginalization, but students and visiting delegations repeatedly say they have been inspired by how these same Salvadorans, in the midst of such difficulties, show a gratitude for life's simple gifts and a commitment to struggle for justice for themselves and their communities.

The gift of the Salvadorans. Oti has served as a praxis site coordinator in Mariona since 2001. Each semester she has welcomed students into her family and accompanied them as they encounter the reality of life in Mariona. During our interview, I asked her if it was difficult for her to consistently invest in new relationships with the students. Her response was very Salvadoran and highlights a unique attribute of the Casa program: the gift of the Salvadorans themselves. Oti responded:

No, for me it is not difficult. For me it is all about sharing. It would be difficult to live a life of solidarity without sharing. And you don't just share food, you share everything: your faith, your life and your hope. We share our story. Our lives were very hard during the war. We have lived the experience of the martyrs and that hasn't been easy. But it's important to share this story with them. I know it's hard for the students who come here to leave their families, the comforts of their homes, their university and the things they enjoyed. But they come with an openness to pushing themselves. This isn't easy for them. I value this a great deal. They come with open hearts. When you have openness on both sides, you can create special bonds of friendship and trust and of a common search. We need to be sensitive on both sides. We need to be sensitive to where they're coming from. When they come, they're inserted directly into our hearts.

Trena and I are consistently struck by Salvadorans' generosity, their willingness to keep on inserting the students directly into their hearts.

As can be seen in the remarks by Oti, Anita and Lolo above, Salvadorans are exceptional at sharing their joys and struggles with students. This characteristic, this

willingness to share one's story even when it is harsh and raw, invites students to do the same in their own lives. More often than not, we have found that students carry around a weight that they have not shared with many people. It may be an eating disorder, an addiction, a strained relationship, a type of abuse, etc. The ability of the Salvadorans to talk about their own difficult history provides a model for students to do the same. Over the course of the semester, students often do come to share their burdens with the Casa community. Before doing this, however, they need to feel a high degree of trust or "*confianza*" with community members. The process of creating a community of *confianza* is highlighted below but a crucial first step is the Salvadorans' willingness to share their hard story with students; this willingness on their part invites the students to be open and honest about their own stories.

Another characteristic of the Salvadorans – and one that the students notice – is that their lives are motivated by faith. Most conversations in El Salvador end by saying, "*Primero Dios*" – that is, "God willing." At the praxis sites, Salvadorans talk frequently about their faith, the martyrs, and Monseñor Oscar Romero. They do not do this in a way that evangelizes or judges; rather they're simply demonstrating how they are motivated by a faith that does justice. Experiencing this inevitably invites the students to think about their own faith.

Orientation toward accompaniment. While our website emphasizes the accompaniment approach, many of our students come to El Salvador with the idea that they are going to be doing service in the communities. For that reason, we give further emphasis to the accompaniment approach during orientation and in the praxis seminar. At the beginning of the semester, students are encouraged to reflect on how they

approach the people at the praxis site. We explain to the students that we are not there to solve or fix anything, but rather to learn from the Salvadorans by accompanying them. During orientation, all of the students visit each of the praxis sites. In those visits, students introduce themselves to the large group and say what their praxis site is. During these introductions, students are encouraged to use verbs such as “accompany” and “be present to” rather than “work” or “volunteer” or “serve.” In the praxis class, students discuss issues such as privilege and how the “fix-it” mentality actually distances us from the reality and from solidarity.

Key relationships that support the accompaniment approach.

Casa-Students. In addition to the orientation, which begins the process of introducing students to the accompaniment approach, Trena meets with each praxis site team (2 to 3 student) prior to setting foot in the praxis communities. She gives students a quick overview of the history and context of the praxis site and a sense of what they can expect. This initial orientation helps to reduce any fears they may have about going to praxis. Once the semester begins, Trena invites students to see her at any time if they are concerned about anything at their site. After three weeks, she sits down with each praxis site team to check in and hear how they are doing. Mid-way through each semester, there is a praxis site evaluation where Trena, the students and the praxis site supervisors meet to discuss the semester. Changes are often made at that meeting. Trena spends a great deal of time earning the *confianza* of the students. Her aim is for them to feel confident that they can go to her with any problem or issue they are experiencing at their praxis site. As this explanation has demonstrated, the accompaniment-based approach is labor intensive for the Casa staff.

Casa – Praxis site partner relationship. Confianza, a term frequently used in El Salvador, signifies a deep trust within a relationship. A high degree of *confianza* is needed between the Casa staff and the praxis site partners. This aspect is so important that it is a major factor in determining praxis site placements. One of the reasons it is so important is that *confianza* translates into effective communication even when difficulties arise. It is also necessary given the importance of monitoring security issues in the country. We need to trust that praxis site partners will inform us if there are any issues with students, especially in regards to their safety and security.

It is important to note that the relationship is not solely focused on the education of the U.S. students. For example, during one semester there was major flooding in the country, and one of the praxis sites was hit hard. In response, Casa staff visited the shelter where people were housed to help with the crisis. This is an example of the degree of mutuality between the praxis site partners and Casa. It is important to note, however, that the Casa is an educational institution and not a social service agency. Casa does not directly participate in the areas of social work or community organizing.

Praxis site partner – Student relationship. As is evidenced by Oti's interview above, praxis site partners are experienced educators who understand that students are different and will respond differently to certain situations. Some students are overwhelmed – especially at the beginning – by the praxis site experience - while others want to dive right in. Early in the semester, praxis site partners assess the students' needs and try to respond accordingly.

As with any relationship, the one between students and praxis site partners grows over time. New students enter communities with an advantage: the people at the praxis

sites are favorably disposed toward them because of the *confianza* they developed with previous students in earlier semesters. When new students arrive to their praxis site, community members have a sense of why the students are there, and what the experience will be like. This transfer of *confianza* is a real benefit to the new students; we highlight it for them during orientation. If we didn't do this, there would be a risk that the new students would feel inadequate and insecure when they heard community members talking about past Casa students.

Challenges often arise. For example, students' experience of the praxis site may turn out to be different from what they had expected it to be, or the praxis site coordinator may feel that the students are not as engaged as they could be. Such issues often get resolved through communication between the students and the coordinators but sometimes Trena needs to intervene. For example, if we are aware that a student is struggling with the fact that a friend is dying of cancer in the U.S., we may need to communicate to the praxis site partner the reason the student may seem to have low energy. Or, Trena may have to confront a student and inquire into why they seem lethargic in praxis. At other times, Trena may have to gently remind the praxis site partner about a mutually agreed-upon schedule and about how important it is to the students that the schedule be followed.

Trena visits each praxis site community at least three times during the semester to ensure a quality experience for students and praxis site partners. This investment of time leads to deep *confianza* between Trena and the students and Trena and the praxis site partners. So, when conflicts occur in the student-praxis site partner relationship, Trena is usually contacted right away to help resolve the situation.

Programa Oscar Arnulfo Romero. The Romero Program is one of the most significant attributes of the Casa educational model and is probably the most easily misunderstood. Inspired by Monseñor Oscar Romero, the program supports 30 Salvadoran university scholarship students (in Spanish, *becarios*) by offering them room, board and a supportive formation community. The program is fully funded through Casa de la Solidaridad and is directed by three Salvadorans who at one point were *becarios* themselves.

Designed to support the students during their five years at the university, the Romero program is divided into stages. The first year focuses on developing a community of *confianza* and on assisting students with the huge transition to university life. Since most of the scholarship students come from poor rural communities, living in the city and starting at the university are tremendously challenging for them. During the second and third year, students continue to focus on community building but integrate social analysis and action into their experience. They conduct a social analysis of their home communities over the course of the year, and present their findings to the other *becarios*. This helps the *becarios* to stay connected to their home communities. In the students' fourth year, they live in community with U.S. Casa students, serving as peer educators. The fifth year is dedicated to supporting students in the writing of their thesis and in finding employment after graduation.

We decided to have the older *becarios* live with the U.S. students; we felt that, being more mature, they would be less likely to lose their Salvadoran identity as a result of this experience. The administrators of the Romero Program are responsible for the overall well being and development of the *becarios*. We spend a lot of time orienting the

U.S. students about how best to approach the relationships with the *becarios*. We emphasize, for example, how we do not want U.S. students pulling *becarios* into typically U.S. cultural activities -- going to nightclubs and bars or musical concerts. Rather, we encourage the U.S. students to enter into the cultural reality of the *becarios*. To facilitate this, early in the semester students travel to the countryside, visiting the homes of the *becarios* with whom they live in order to better understand what their lives have been like. The U.S. students come away from this experience with a greater sensitivity to and awareness of the family situation of the *becarios*.

Becarios are some of the most effective educators of our students. They are close in age to the U.S. students, yet come from very different socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. *Becarios* in their fourth year have a solid understanding of the mission and purpose of Casa, which enables them to be even more effective educators of our students. As part of their own formation, they meet regularly with a Salvadoran staff member to process the experience of living with the U.S. students.

It is worth noting that the entire budget of the Romero Program comes out of Casa's operational budget. The rationale for this is twofold: 1) the presence of the *becarios* is a fundamental aspect to the Casa educational model and 2) the Romero Program is a concrete and effective way Casa can contribute to Salvadoran society.

Academics

Casa de la Solidaridad grounds academic reflection in reality. Professors, who are either teachers at the UCA or professionals in their field of expertise, intentionally design courses that integrate the students' experience in the praxis sites with their academic work. This integration is achieved via the academic materials professors utilize, the way

the class is structured and the assignments given. Throughout the semester, students experience the integration of classroom-based and accompaniment-based learning. For a professor's account of the academic experience at Casa, I recommend Mark Ravizza S.J.'s (2010) chapter entitled *Praxis-Based Education*.

This integration is also fostered through the Casa assembly, which takes place at the beginning of each school year. Approximately 50 people - professors, praxis site partners, Casa staff and administrators of the Romero Program – attend the half-day session, with each of them explaining their role in the education of the students. The professors talk about the nature of their classes. The praxis site partners give updates on their communities and talk about the experience students will have there. In this way, professors and praxis site partners gain a better appreciation of what the students' overall experience will be like. It also gives the faculty a chance to come up with methods which will better integrate their courses with the students' experience in praxis.

While faculty members try to prepare classes that will promote this integration, their task is made more difficult by the fact that we cannot predict what the students will actually experience at their praxis sites. Thus, high degrees of openness and flexibility are required of the professors. We try to support professors by having gatherings where they can share pedagogical insights.

Community Living

Having accompanied students for many years, we recognize the importance of developing a life-giving community where students feel safe in processing their experiences and questions. The community living area strives to provide students with a supportive living community to assist them as they wrestle with the questions raised

throughout the semester. This section explains why community is such a priority and how we cultivate it.

Spending a semester at Casa is quite challenging. Developing relationships with people from a different cultural context who speak a foreign language can be difficult and, at times, draining. It can be jarring for students to be immersed in situations with different customs and traditions, especially when the coping mechanisms they rely on in the U.S. do not apply. In addition, as they accompany the people in the praxis sites, they are confronted with the harsh realities people face – injustice, poverty, and suffering. Experiences such as these inevitably raise many questions, such as: Who am I given all that I am seeing? What is my place in this world given that these kinds of realities exist? Why do these injustices exist? What kind of relationships do I want to have and with whom? What do I really believe about all of this? How does my faith inform all of this? And, what is this reality inviting me to consider vocationally?

In addition, students do not leave their personal histories on the plane when they arrive. Their formative experiences, whether life-giving or challenging, come with the students, despite the attempts of some to leave the past behind. Having intimately accompanied over 450 students over the last 14 years, we have come to see that, for the majority, their pasts have contained significant struggle and challenge. Examples include: issues with body image and food; lack of self worth; loss of either a friend or family member; experiences with depression; questions around one's sexual identity; conflicts with parents, etc. As mentioned in the accompaniment section, Salvadorans often model for students a willingness to share their hard stories. Encounters with the harsh realities experienced by the Salvadorans can elicit reflection on the students' own

painful stories.⁹ Therefore, these personal histories are the hidden challenges we hope to help students integrate into the experience of the semester.

These complex challenges require a comprehensive and flexible web of support. We often say in El Salvador that given all the challenges the students face, we cannot possibly support them enough. Therefore, cultivating a life-giving community of *confianza* is essential: it provides students with the support they need to encounter the Salvadoran reality and all the questions that stem from this experience as they relate to the students' own personal histories.

How is it done?

Orientation. At the beginning of the semester, students participate in a thorough orientation that provides them with information about the mission and history of the Casa and important policies and procedures. Students meet the staff members, visit the praxis sites, and begin to build community.

The process of developing a community of *confianza* begins on the first day of orientation. Students are given the opportunity to reflect individually on why they have come here and on what they hope to get out of the experience. Then they're invited to share their reflections with the community. Throughout orientation, students participate in other activities designed to foster relationships with one another (e.g., the nightly reflection sessions). Also, each evening there is a type of reflection activity, which also contributes to the formation of community.

During orientation, staff members are actively present to students and attempt to

⁹ This insight is credited to Mark Ravizza, SJ (2010) and is explained in Ravizza, M.A. (2010). *Praxis-Based Education*. In Rausch, T.P. (Ed.), *Educating for faith and justice: Catholic higher education today*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.

make them feel at home right away. Staff members, for example, place quotes underneath students' doors encouraging them and welcoming them to El Salvador. A group photo is taken of the students and distributed to faculty and staff to help them learn the students' names more quickly. During the semester, the staff tries to actively demonstrate its care for the students. It is worth noting that the entire staff prays for the students prior to their arrival and during the course of the semester.

Toward the end of orientation, Trena and I talk frankly to students about what we have seen as successful characteristics of past Casa communities. Here is some of what we share with them:

- 1) Creating a community of care with *confianza* is key! We need a space where we can feel free to share, express ideas, thoughts, emotions, questions. Believe it or not, this is one of the most important tasks of the semester.
- 2) Be attentive to the assumptions you make. Although we are all united in the fact that we decided to come to El Salvador this semester, we are all different. It is important not to make assumptions about people's sexual identity, religious beliefs, socioeconomic situation, etc. This includes Salvadorans.
- 3) Be careful not to compare praxis experiences. Each praxis site is different and unique. It is easy to make quick judgments at the beginning based upon little experience. We encourage you to go with the flow for 3 weeks before making judgments.
- 4) Spanish is not a competition – we are all on the journey of learning a second language and we want to create a community that supports us in that.
- 5) Be gentle with yourselves and with each other. We can't stress this enough. The experience can be challenging and you need to take care of yourselves.
- 6) Ask lots of questions. This place raises questions for all of us. Faculty groups come down each year and it raises serious questions for them. We most likely will have more questions at the end of the semester than right now.
- 7) Know yourself, your needs and your limits, and honor them. We want to strike a balance of challenge and support. Your participation in that is key.
- 8) We enter the praxis communities as learners and the Salvadorans, young and

old, are our teachers.

9) A good rule of thumb for community living is praise publicly and criticize privately.

10) We come from a culture where perfection is held in high esteem. But the truth is that none of us is perfect. In fact, most of us have real struggles, many that we haven't felt able to share with others (eating disorders, depression, addiction, etc). We encourage the development of a community of *confianza* so we can have a place to share our reality – warts and all. Doing this, sharing our true selves with each other, is one of the greatest gifts we can give to one another. When we share our vulnerability and struggle, it gives our neighbor the opportunity to do the same. This can be a real gift for all of us. Of course, this does not happen right away. But working towards a community of *confianza* is a step in this direction.

11) Recognize and celebrate the diversity among us. We come from different backgrounds. Hopefully we can create a community where we can celebrate those differences. It's also important to note that diversity also includes the way we process experiences. Some people, for example, are more introverted while others are extroverted. We want to encourage all of us to seek out all voices as we develop community. Also recognize diversity that exists in different people's comfort level with different types of reflection. Some people prefer large group reflections, others prefer small groups, and others prefer to reflect individually. At Casa we try to balance these reflection styles throughout the semester.

12) There is no right way to go through the Casa experience. Each semester is different.

The talk is based on our experiences throughout the years and our knowledge of the pitfalls that can arise as the community is being developed. Our aim is to fertilize the soil so the community may grow.

Reflection. Reflection is an important aspect of the entire Casa experience as it provides students with the opportunity to make sense of their experiences. When reflection is done in community, it has an added benefit: students have access to the reflections of others. When done in a community of *confianza* where people are being honest with one another, communal reflection can be very transformative because it

allows community members access to the core truths of what people are thinking and feeling. These communal reflections can then inform and transform students' own individual reflections. Of course, communal reflections where students do not feel safe will most likely be superficial and shallow.

Casa utilizes a variety of reflection approaches throughout the semester. Whether it is in the praxis seminar, spirituality or community nights, or on the Ignatian retreat, students encounter a variety ways to reflect: individually, in small groups and in large groups. Each of these approaches can be integrated with others. For example, we may start out with individual reflection and then move on to a large group reflection. Often times, art is used to give students access to another way of symbolizing and naming a particular experience. For example, in the evening, on the first day of orientation, students are introduced to the Tibetan tradition of making prayer flags, and invited to create a flag of their own which symbolizes a hope or desire for the semester. They work on this individually and then have the opportunity to share it later in the reflection. After working on their flags individually, they show them to others later in reflection. Flags are displayed publicly and used again at the end of the semester on the final retreat. This is one example of the many ways reflection is incorporated into the experience. It is worth noting that some groups have found one or another of the approaches (e.g., small reflection groups) to be preferable to others. When this happens, the staff responds accordingly.

It is worth sharing the ground rules we use for reflection. We have found these to be useful in developing a community of *confianza*:

1. Sharing of any kind is always an invitation and never an expectation. No one is ever put on the spot or required to share. That said, if no one shares, it is going

to be a boring semester. 2. Reflection time is not a space for dialog, discussion or conversation. It is a chance to share and listen to how we are making meaning of the experience. 3. Half-thoughts are welcomed. Sometimes we can start to reflect and not know where it is going. We do not need to share in complete, well-thought-out phrases or ideas. 4. Make sure everyone has had the chance to share once before anyone shares twice so as to make sure we include everyone's voice.

Community Coordinators. A Community Coordinator (CC) lives at each of the three student residences and is responsible for accompanying the students over the course of the semester and fostering a positive community experience. CC's are Casa alums who return to El Salvador for a year of service to help support students. Before the students arrive, the CC's are given an extensive orientation which includes both personal and professional components.

Throughout the semester, the co-directors dedicate a great deal of time and energy to supporting the CC's in their often challenging role of accompanying the students. This occurs at the weekly staff meetings, where space is provided for a check-in to see how people are doing, and at bi-weekly one-on-ones with the co-directors. In addition, the CCs meet with co-directors at least once a month for a staff development session.

As anyone who has attempted it will attest, living in an intentional community is not easy. Tension, conflict, passive aggressive behaviors inevitably crop up. These issues can be turned into educational opportunities if they are dealt with in healthy, constructive ways. Here the role of the CC's is key because, living with the students, they see first hand the dynamics of the community and are often the first responders to early signs of conflict or tension.

Weekly Staff Meeting. The content and process of staff meetings are worth noting given their importance to the Casa educational model. Each week, we gather with the

CC's and the administrators of the Romero program for an entire morning to check in with one another and to assess the situation of the students, both individually and collectively. Based upon this assessment, we strategize on how to be of greatest support to students. For example, one of the CC's may report that some students have approached her saying they are worried about a fellow student who they suspect is struggling with eating issues. We then discuss this situation and come up with a strategy to address it. Sometimes we try to read the pulse of the larger Casa community. For example, students may express to a CC a need to address certain topics such as gender dynamics, sexual orientation, body image issues in a large group. During the staff meeting we decide collectively on strategies to address the needs of the large group.

Check-in's are important for the CC's and the Salvadoran staff. The CC's, far from families and facing significant challenges in their work accompanying students, require the support of a community where they can process their experiences. The Salvadorans, all of whom come from poor communities, also require a space where they can reflect openly about their personal lives. This investment in the Casa staff takes considerable time, but we have found it to be an essential component, one which helps guarantee that the staff feels supported and works well together.

Life Stories. On Thursday evenings, students gather in their residences for what is called "Community Night." This is a time when students can check-in with each other and talk about how they are doing individually and as a community. The CCs facilitate these meetings. In most of the communities, during the course of the semester, the students take turns telling their life stories, often using family photos to give fellow students images to go along with the narrative. Usually only one person presents per

week and while the meetings usually last for about two hours, they can go for as long as the presenter desires. The CC's identify students who would be willing to present earlier in the semester, and help them to prepare. Sometimes students are nervous, so the CC's offer them a great deal of support in a variety of ways – for example, making the student's favorite dessert for all to share during the presentation.

The telling of students' life stories helps to develop a community of *confianza*. They usually begin doing this three weeks into the semester, after allowing some time for the students to start getting to know each other. Telling their life stories gives the students a chance to be vulnerable and real with each other as they share their personal history in a safe space. It also serves as a way for them to name and reinterpret their own personal narrative. Finally, it is also a place for the community to get a better understanding of the background and history of its members

Simplicity. Students live in simple, humbly furnished homes located in a middle-income neighborhood. The houses do not have hot water for showers. Students wash their clothes by hand and eat simple but nutritious food. There is also no internet in the houses. These are concrete expressions of the program's commitment to simple living. Each year, the staff discusses how we as a program can re-commit ourselves to value of living simply.

Each semester the concept is carefully raised during community nights without assuming any single definition of what it entails. We know that students are encountering situations of poverty in their praxis sites that will inevitably get them thinking about the question of living simply. At Casa, the goal is to create spaces for students to work out what it means for them. Challenges can arise when some students

want to live more simply, and judge those who do not adhere to their expectations.

Again, these types of conflicts can be educational and it is up to the CC to facilitate such dynamics.

Co-Directors. Over the years, people have given us enough feedback for us to realize that our family plays a role in students' experience of community. Since we began in 1999, we have been blessed with four precious daughters. Each semester, Sophia, Grace, Hannah and Emma look forward to welcoming the new students to El Salvador and spending time with them during the semester. As soon as students arrive, the girls bring them to our house and show them their animals – bunnies, chickens, turkeys, dogs, birds, turtles and goats. We have come to see that something as simple as holding a baby bunny can reduce a student's anxiety -- and sending a photo of the student holding the bunny to their parents can reduce their anxiety as well!

Trena and I receive a great deal of life from living in community. Our home is often filled with activity. Students, staff members, and praxis site partners frequently visit us at home. It is especially fun for the girls when the students come over to have hang-out time. In a way, our family grows each semester when students arrive. We recognize that for some families, this degree of communal interaction may not work, but for us it does. We should mention that we do have ways to signal to everyone that we need our private time for our family, and people are very respectful of that.

As our girls grow older, they have become increasingly helpful in the educational experience of the students. After a semester of developing such significant relationships and having such powerful experiences, it is often very emotional and challenging for the students to say goodbye at the end of the semester. One semester, Grace noticed that one

of the male students was getting choked up but holding back the tears at the going away party. Grace went up to him and whispered that it was okay to feel sad and even cry. What Grace didn't know was that this was the issue the young man had been dealing with all semester – acknowledging and embracing his feelings. Grace's words of advice made the young man smile and then he just lost it and started bawling. It was really a beautiful, graced-filled moment. During our large group reflections, students have also increasingly commented on how moving it is to see Sophia, Grace, Hannah and Emma so comfortable in the praxis sites. For us as parents, it is wonderful to see our girls, as they grow up, becoming knowledgeable about the realities that exist in the praxis communities. Indeed, many of our friends are from the communities. It is also interesting to see how the students view the girls in the communities. Their presence in the lives of the students is an under-recognized characteristic of the program. That said, I would add that, I do not believe that the presence of a family is imperative for the Casa educational model.

Facilities. As stated earlier, the students live in three houses located in a low-middle class, safe neighborhood within walking distance to the UCA. The co-directors' house is connected to the Casa offices and the Casa de Paz, a guesthouse for visiting faculty members and for Casa alums who have returned to visit. The houses are comfortable but simply furnished. In each house there is a community space where members can gather. Having comfortable community spaces for reflections, etc. is an important factor for community living.

Spirituality

As stated above, Casa collaborates in the mission of the Society of Jesus, a

religious order within the Catholic Church. As such, it seeks to support and encourage students in their spiritual journey in a way that gives them access to the richness of Ignatian spirituality. It is important to note, however, that there are no expectations or requirements that this tradition be embraced. As mentioned above, Ignatian spirituality encourages being attentive to how God is working in our own personal history, and the histories of all people and creation. Although Casa is rooted in and animated by this Ignatian tradition, it has no doctrinal agenda in regard to the students. It is one thing to offer access to the Ignatian tradition; it is another to impose that tradition or any other spirituality.

In this regard, an important distinction needs to be made with respect to Casa's understanding of a phrase common in Jesuit higher education: "promoting a faith that does justice." Programmatically, we embrace Sharon Daloz Park's (2011) understanding of faith as "the activity of seeking and discovering meaning in the most comprehensive dimensions of our experience." Our approach to spirituality, therefore, is to give access to the richness of the Ignatian tradition but in a way that ultimately supports students in their process of seeking and discovering deep meaning in all the dimensions of their experience. In this way, Casa encourages and supports students in the development of a faith that does justice. Below are some concrete ways this is actualized.

Spirituality Nights. In the second week of the semester, after orientation is finished and students have started the process of getting to know one another, they are invited to the first spirituality night. While this is optional, we strongly encourage students to attend the first two spirituality nights, since they can serve as another way of getting to know one another. Spirituality night takes place in the living room of the co-

directors' home. It is a comfortable space with a carpet, candles, and pillows for sitting on the floor. Before the students arrive, the CC's have ensured that the environment is conducive to prayer and reflection.

In our introduction to the first spirituality night, we recognize the diversity of ways in which people around the world pray and worship. We tell students that Casa is rooted in the Ignatian tradition but we emphasize that spirituality nights are co-created by all of us. At the first spirituality night, we invite students to share some of their spiritual journey with the community; at the second, we have an activity in which the spiritual space is co-created.

Acknowledging the diversity of prayer and spiritual traditions right at the beginning of the semester is very important because it reflects and honors the diverse experiences students have had in these areas. Our students have identified as: Catholic, disillusioned Catholic, Protestant, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Buddhist, non-spiritual and atheist. It is essential that all students feel welcomed to spirituality night and invited to participate in the co-creation of the space.

During the second spirituality night, students are invited to reflect individually about communities of faith that have been life-giving to their spirituality, and why they have been life-giving. They also reflect on communities that have not been life-giving. Then they reflect on how they would like to make use of the time during spirituality nights. After this period of individual reflection, students break into groups of three to share their experiences. A staff member accompanies each small group to help insure that all voices are heard. Students then reconvene in a large group and present their ideas for spirituality night with a staff member keeping detailed notes. These notes serve as a

reference point when the staff plans spirituality nights for the rest of the semester.

The content of spirituality nights is decided upon at the weekly staff meeting. When deciding, we consider a variety of factors: 1) what was raised in that second meeting? 2) How are things going in the large group and what would be most useful to the students? 3) What is happening in the country or world that should be taken into account?

Spiritual Accompaniment. Sometimes students desire to meet individually with someone to talk about their spiritual journey. Trena and I are available to meet with students in this way if they so wish.¹⁰ The content of these meetings varies greatly in accordance with students' experience and background. Some want another person with whom they can process their interior movements. Others wish to do more formal spiritual direction in the Ignatian tradition. There can be great benefit to the varying ways of processing one's experience with another individual during the semester.

Ignatian Retreat. Each semester students are invited to participate in an Ignatian silent retreat. This is an opportunity mid-way through the semester, to step back from the experience and reflect on it deeply and prayerfully. The actual content of the retreat varies, since we invite different people to do it each semester. The general thrust, however, is for students to be present to and mindful of how God / Life / Love have been and continue to be active in their lives.

Integration

The richness of the Casa educational model lies in the integration that occurs between the primary areas: accompaniment, academics, living simply in community and

¹⁰ Trena and I have Master's degrees in college student development and in religious education. In addition, we both made the Spiritual Exercises of Ignatius of Loyola.

spirituality. This integration is what makes the Casa model so transformative in the lives of students. Figure 1 depicts this integration. It was designed by Mark Ravizza S.J. for a presentation given to the presidents of the Jesuit universities in California.

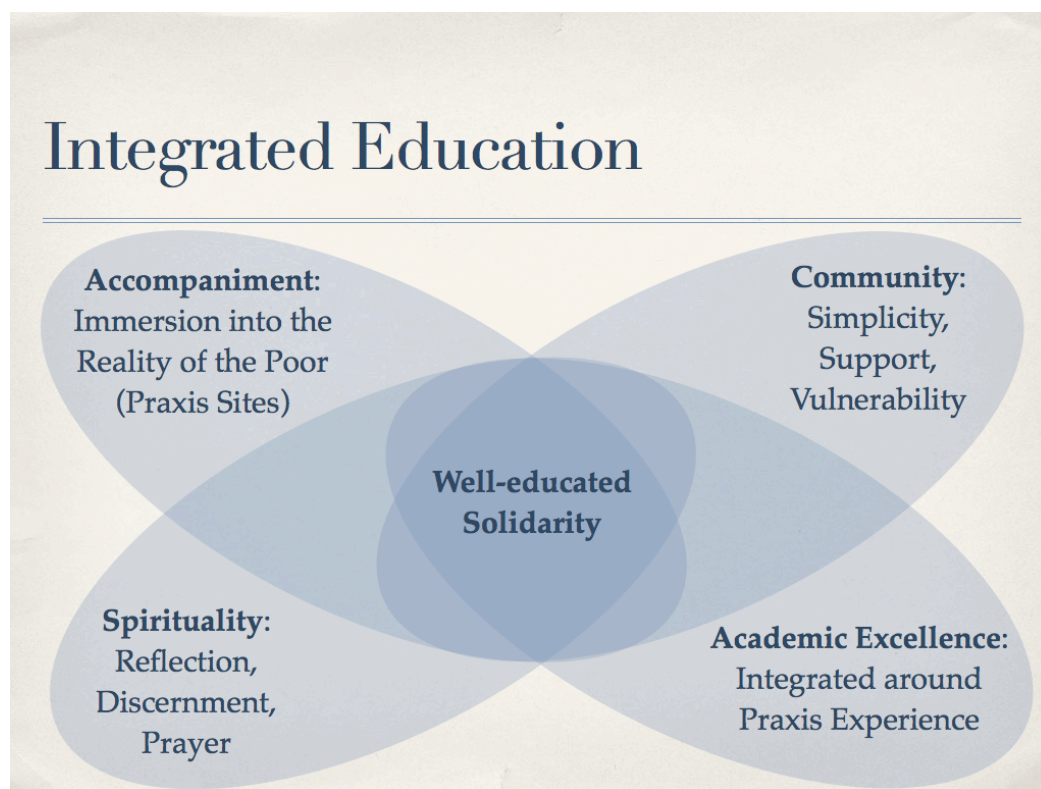


Figure 1. Casa de la Solidaridad educational model

Unlike college life in the U.S., where activities outside the classroom often do not connect with what happens inside the classroom and where students often attend classes with classmates they do not know, the Casa model seeks integration of classroom-based and accompaniment-based learning, all of which is supported by a web of communal and spiritual support.

The most effective way to exemplify how this integration occurs is to provide concrete examples.

Weekly Schedule. The weekly schedule is designed to help foster this integration. Students are at their praxis sites all day (7am – 4pm) on Monday and Wednesday. On Monday evening we have an assembly attended by students and staff, at which we pass along important information about the upcoming week's schedule, address any large community concerns and do more specific things such as celebrate birthdays. Classes are held on Tuesday, Thursday and Friday. Spirituality night, which is optional, takes place on Tuesday. On Thursday nights the U.S. and Salvadoran students have “pupusas” (stuffed tortillas) together at a neighborhood eatery. This is followed by a community night in the residences. Weekend activities vary depending on the semester schedule.

Semester Schedule. The semester schedule is intentionally designed to help the students integrate their experience. As mentioned earlier, orientation lasts for 10 days and is focused on Casa and life in El Salvador. It culminates in a day at the beach with the Salvadoran scholarship students (*becarios*). Three weeks into the semester, students spend a weekend at the homes of the *becarios* to help facilitate a better understanding of who they are and where they come from. A little over a month into the experience, students spend a week living with families at their praxis sites. We feel that, after three weeks at their praxis sites, students will feel less anxious about the prospect of spending an entire week there. The week is designed to deepen relationships between students and the Salvadorans. During this week classes are held in the praxis communities and not at the university. This is yet another way of integrating academics and praxis.

Other events in the semester include: spending a day in the homes of each of the Casa cooks; a three-day pilgrimage to Chalatenango, a province in the north, which was a conflict area during the war; a weekend visit, coordinated by the *becarios*, to the site of

the El Mozote massacre¹¹; and the Ignatian retreat, which takes place a little more than half way through the semester.

Each semester we invite the students' families to join us for a week. This is a time for family members to learn about the Casa experience first hand. It is held over Thanksgiving break in the fall, and during the week of activities commemorating Monseñor Romero's murder in the spring. Family week also gives us a chance to talk individually with parents about the Casa experience and how they can continue to support their children once they return home.

Dis-Orientation. The end of the semester concludes with a large "*despedida*" or going away celebration where professors, praxis site members, staff and students gather to celebrate what has been achieved during the semester, and to say goodbye to the students. It is always an emotional time for everyone. Afterwards, students participate in a two-day dis-orientation retreat, which strives to do three things: 1) give students a chance to take a deep breathe and to recall and reflect individually and as a community on the experiences of the semester, 2) reflect on the transition process and saying goodbye and 3) send students forth as a community.

Student Examples of Integration. Below are responses from Casa alums that highlight the integrated nature of the Casa educational model. These excerpts were taken from the survey instrument designed to answer the second research question concerning the Casa's influence on students' lives. This topic is addressed in depth in the next section but these responses provide concrete examples of the integrative nature of the

¹¹ This was the site of a brutal massacre in which hundreds of women and children were killed by the Salvadoran military. For a detailed account, see Danner, M. (1993). *The massacre at El Mozote*. Vintage.

Casa model.

I think the typical Casa week speaks for itself. I remember one week attending a funeral for a young mother who allegedly committed suicide in Cantón el Cedro, and being a part of the community as it prepared and served a meal after the service. The next night, I was able to reflect on this experience during spirituality night, as well as talk about it with other members of my living community. Finally, I was able to do an academic project that discussed mental health in Cedro, part of which included suicide. This integration helped turn a tragic event into something about which I could deeply reflect on and learn about in the context of particular social realities. This is but one of many examples. (Student #236)

In what ways are they not related!? That's the key here! The Casa seamlessly integrates all these pieces into a world-rocking experience. When I had a profound experience in a praxis site, I processed that experience together with my housemates in the context of our simple community, I learned about the socioeconomic and cultural factors influencing that situation in my classes, and I processed it on my own terms through the spirituality opportunities offered to me, all of which worked together to help me discern how my experiences were to shape me and my place in the world. (Student #229)

The Casa pillars were integrated in both formal, structured settings and in unplanned spaces. Regarding more formal settings, the classes themselves - particularly Liberation Theology, Praxis, and Philosophy of Suffering and Solidarity - welcomed and utilized all of our experiential knowledge from outside the classroom. These became spaces not only of academic reflection but also of spiritual and emotional processing in communal spaces. In addition, the class projects, for all courses, provided spaces to integrate what we were learning about the Salvadoran culture and society into an academic product. Weekly scheduled events such as spirituality night and community night also provided spaces where we could process our daily experiences. These created spaces provided opportunities to deeply learn about one another. This form of sharing often led to new realizations about spirituality, simplicity, and intentionality. The opportunity for weekly, one-on-one spiritual direction was an excellent resource for growth as well. This form of accompaniment offered an intimate space for integration of not only the Casa experience but also my personal, historical experiences. Scheduled weekend events, such as trips to the homes of Salvadoran scholarship students or to important historical sites, also provided opportunities for integration of what we were learning inside and outside the classroom. The Casa's unique way of structuring such trips, providing spaces of shared reflection as a component of the trip, also brought spiritual growth into these settings. In a less formal way, impromptu conversations over meals, to and from classes, and in the evenings became spaces of integration, as the dialogue often turned towards shared experiences in the country. I thoroughly valued these interactions and learned a great deal about others and myself through them. More specifically, dialoguing

with my praxis partner, during days in our site, in Praxis class, and informally throughout our time together, became an indispensable tool for understanding what we were experiencing in El Salvador. She became more than a friend and peer but someone to whom I could go in moments of deep confusion as I attempted to put together the new pieces of my experience. (Student #157)

For so many years (and sometimes still) I let society and culture dictate what I thought of as success; I let trends and the opinions of others dictate how I valued myself and what I viewed as important. Studying with the Casa changed all of this. Being in direct contact with the poor and being part of the kind of loving and supportive community that the Casa creates, I was able to learn my own self-worth and how to decide what carried true meaning in my life. Each pillar had its deep and lasting effect on me—the community who loved and supported me while gently challenging me to be better, to be more, the pillar of spirituality, which so deepened my sense and identity of faith and Catholicism, the academics that caused me, for the first time in my life, to be unspeakably grateful and moved by the privilege of education, and accompaniment of those on the margins, which became my absolute salvation. Accompanying marginalized Salvadorans saved me from my own insecurities, my inflated sense self-importance, and my own destructive and constricting ideas about what my life and success should look like. It taught me how to love and to accept love in return. The holistic educational model of the Casa formed me from all angles, and it is, thus far, the single most significant event in my formation. (Student #156)

As is evidenced by the students' reflections, the integration of the areas of accompaniment with the poor, living simply in community, spirituality and academics were influential in different ways to their own formation.

Challenges / Complexity

As mentioned in Chapter I, the creation and development of the Casa educational model over the last 14 years has not been without significant challenges. Two concrete examples are: 1) our programmatic approach to alcohol and 2) the development of the Romeo Program.

In the early years, our alcohol policy merely reflected the policies of Santa Clara University. Students who were of age could consume alcohol provided they did so responsibly, etc. That policy was fine until one night in 2001 when Trena and I visited

the students' house and found them having a keg party in the backyard. The worst part was that the Salvadoran scholarship students who were living in community with the U.S. students felt so uncomfortable with the whole scene that they were hiding in the bathroom reading the diary of Monseñor Oscar Romero. At that point, Trena and I recognized that we had a responsibility to change the Casa culture in regards to the role of alcohol. Since then, we have approached the role of alcohol very differently. We spend time during orientation explaining to the U.S. students the role of alcohol in El Salvador and how it is viewed culturally. We invite the directors of the Romero Program to share with U.S. students the reasons behind their no-tolerance policy in regards to alcohol. Our own alcohol policy is stricter than in the past, which is in direct response to the policies established by the Romero Program.

The historical development of the Romero Program offers an example of the complexity of an educational program involving people from different cultural contexts. This brief description is offered here to exemplify some of the challenges we have faced in the developing the Casa model.

In 2001, the first two Salvadoran scholarship students were invited to live in community with students from the U.S. In 2003, that number grew to six. During the U.S. student orientation, we invited the Salvadoran students to accompany the U.S. students to the praxis communities and to participate in evening reflections. One evening, we were surprised when four of the Salvadoran students became very emotional during the reflection. They shared how they had never seen the degree of poverty as they had in the praxis site of La Chacra and that they felt overwhelmed. The experience had raised many questions for the Salvadoran students. At that moment, Trena and I

recognized that we were not capable of accompanying the Salvadoran students well. While we felt very comfortable supporting students from the U.S., we recognized our inadequacy at effectively supporting Salvadoran scholarship students. After that evening, we began the process of co-creating the Romero Program. Today, three full time Salvadoran professionals direct the Romero Program.

Survey Research

The second research question addressed how the Casa experience has influenced the lives of Casa alums. The survey instrument (Appendix A) obtained the following information: a) biographical data including educational and work/volunteer commitments; b) students' perceptions of the general influence of Casa on their lives and c) their perceptions of learned outcomes in relation to each of the stated pillars of the program – namely accompaniment of the poor, rigorous academic study, living simply in community, and spirituality. The instrument was administered via SurveyMonkey to 460 Casa during the month of March 2013. Two hundred and seventy people responded which made for a 59% response rate.

The most accurate way to understand the survey's findings is to read students' responses. The responses to question one, however, extend to over 64 pages long. Therefore, in order to aggregate students' qualitative data, responses were analyzed and categorized. It is important to note that responses were not limited to one category. For example, in the first question, which asked students how the Casa experience influenced them, if a student answered that it opened their eyes to the reality of the poor and influenced them to choose a career in education, that response would be categorized both

as “expanded imagination” and “vocation.” This was intentional due to the fact that students’ responses often integrated various categories.

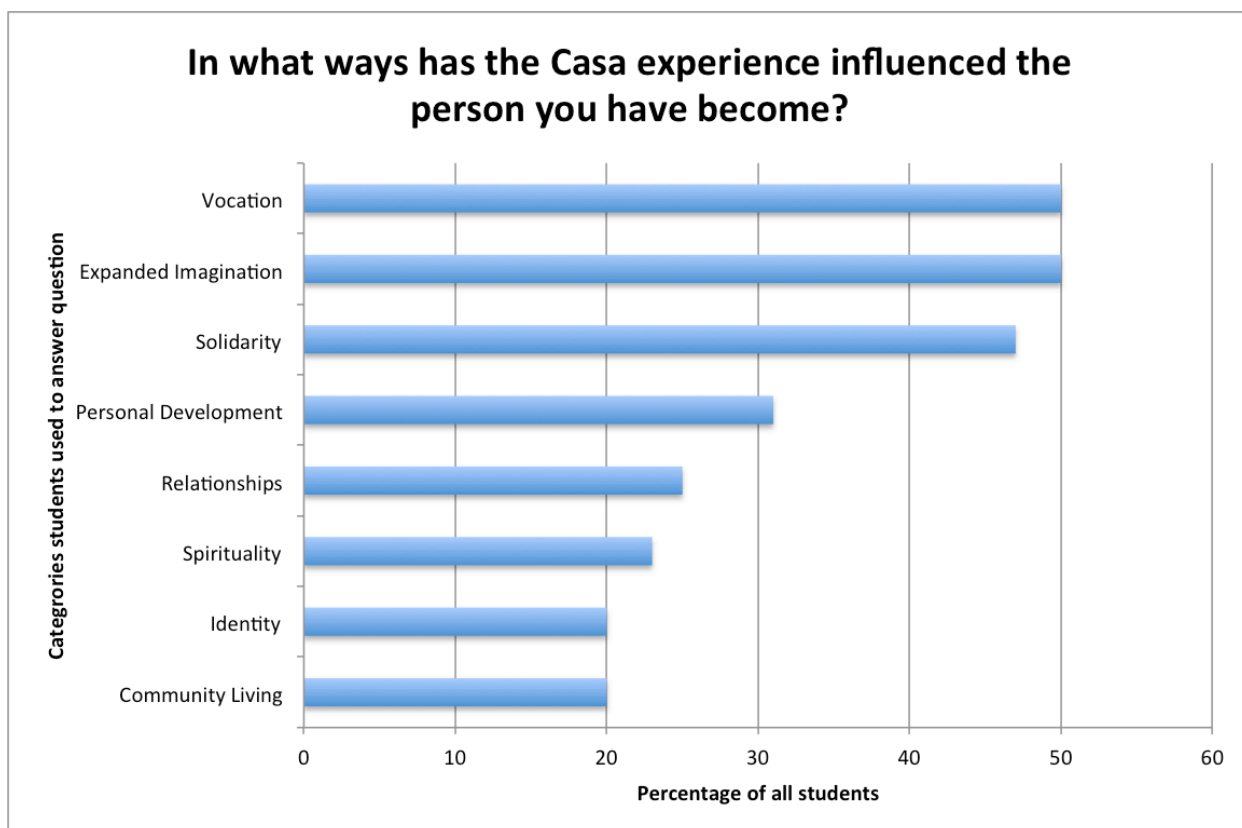


Figure 2. Ways Casa influenced the person students have become

The first question asked students how the Casa has influenced the person they have become. Figure two presents the main categories students used to answer the question. For example, 50% of all students responded in terms of their vocational pursuits. Fifty percent of all students described the influence in terms of having an “expanded imagination” etc. Fuller descriptions of the categories as well as three representative responses for each category are provided below in order that to give the reader access to the raw data behind the categories. Quantitative data is also presented graphically below.

Vocation. The “vocation” category was given to responses where students wrote of the ways Casa has influenced them in terms of their vocational pursuits. Here are three examples:

I now find myself working with Jesuit Refugee Service in Jordan where a Syrian refugee crisis unfolds and we still encounter great needs of Iraqi, Sudanese, and Somali refugees. I along with our team here in Jordan made up almost entirely of refugees themselves, remain committed to accompaniment with those left out as we seek to widen the circle of welcome for those fleeing violence in their home countries. My semester with the Casa nearly 7 years ago definitely played a role in cultivating a passion within me to walk with and share my life with the poor and oppressed. My time with the Salvadoran people and the rich history of the Jesuits mission of prophetic justice in that country continues to impact the direction of my life. (Student #265)

Casa was the first time I was exposed to the difficulties of the developing world. It gave me the viewpoint of those living on the bottom of global structures. It challenged me to think through how I should be living my life to correct global injustices. Holding a child dying of starvation, I not only realized that my life would be forever changed and devoted to those dying of injustices in the developing world, but I also changed the way I was called to carry out this mission. I arrived at the Casa thinking that a medical career was the right one for me, but during the casa experience I realized that I was actually called to reshape the social political and cultural structures that created injustice. After the Casa I decided to forego medical school and instead get my master's in Global Governance. I also underwent "spiritual direction" for the first time. This formation of my spirituality encouraged me to always pursue spiritual direction at every stage of my life. I can honestly say that the Casa experience influenced my life more than any other educational experience including my entire undergrad at SLU and my Master's at Oxford. (Student #187)

It was on the silent retreat in Guatemala that I discerned that I was going to become a nurse, which is my current profession. (Student #119)

As is noted above, 50% of all students wrote of the influence of Casa in terms of vocational pursuits.

Expanded Imagination. The “expanded imagination” category was given to responses that indicated that the Casa experience opened students’ eyes to a wider reality, broadened their worldview and/or encouraged them to think more critically. Here are

three examples:

My time living in community with my peers and being immersed in the Salvadoran reality has forever changed my imagination of the world. (Student #75)

The Casa program has allowed me to think much more critically about the world around me and of myself. It was one of the most formative experiences that I have ever had because I felt so supported by everyone involved in the program to learn and engage in the community. (Student #206)

The following example, which also represents the “expanded imagination” category, gives the reader an appreciation for the complexity of students’ responses as well as an understanding of how students’ responses often fell into more than one category.

The Casa experience was the first genuine experience I had with the 'reality of the poor.' As a white, middle class US citizen this reality was far from my upbringing. The Casa allowed me to not only experience the 'reality,' but it also provided the space to reflect on and digest the experience in a variety of ways. I think that second part, the space that was created to make sense of the confusing 'reality,' was what really influenced the person I have become. In a variety of ways the Casa allowed me to reflect upon my personal sentiments and understanding of what I was seeing and experiencing. Nearly a decade after my Casa experience I continue to live in Central America (Managua, Nicaragua), and continue to become closer to the 'reality' of the majority of the people living here. It has helped me become a simpler, compassionate and loving person. It has opened my eyes to the importance of time, thoughtfulness and sacrifice. It ignited the yearning inside of me to be a more reflective and intentional person in my daily thoughts and actions. The Casa for me was the most influential thing I did during university and continues to be a stimulus in my everyday life. (Student #270)

As the chart above indicates, 50% of all students wrote of the Casa experience in terms of it expanding their imaginations and worldview.

Solidarity. The “solidarity” category was given to responses that indicated that the Casa experience fostered solidarity with and compassion for those who are suffering.

Oh my. So when I read this question, my very first response was to tilt my head back and laugh—! To ask how the Casa has influenced the person I have become is akin to asking how a tree has been influenced by its relationship to the sun. My experience of the Casa is so thoroughly integrated into who I am and what I strive for that its effects are nearly impossible to parcel out. And even if I could, my

words would, I'm sure, fall short of the beauty and pain that I so long to express. But since you've asked, I will try! I recently came into possession of a poem by Meister Eckhart that I like very much. It's called "The Wind Will Show Its Kindness." I will copy it here: A man born blind can easily deny the magnificence of a vast landscape. He can easily deny all the wonders that he cannot touch, smell, taste, or hear. But one day the wind will show its kindness and remove the tiny patches that cover your eyes, and you will see God more clearly than you have ever seen yourself. In brief, the Casa is the wind that showed its kindness. It quite lovingly and unexpectedly removed the tiny patches that covered my eyes. I saw relationship, community, pain, struggle, brokenness, and the restorative power of love as I had never seen them before. I came to know myself, and my place in the world, in a far more complex and mysterious way. The Casa shattered my tiny former understanding and replaced it with a new foundation that included room for wonder and awe even at simple things, love and laughter even in pain, and a loving—and humorous!—acceptance of my own smallness. For the first time I realized the importance of vulnerability, and of remaining open to a world that broke, and continues to break, my heart. On a less abstract level, I have spent the past three years living and working in a therapeutic farming community for adults facing mental illness and developmental disability. The semester I spent in El Salvador provided my first experience with intentional community, and since then, I have not wanted to live in any other way! I love this work of accompaniment and life-sharing, and I am sure that it was my time at the Casa that began leading me in this direction. I believe that my most important work here is listening—not trying to change or fix, but quietly listening to what people express in their words and actions. I first learned the power of this in El Salvador. Listening was the only thing I could offer; I was powerless to do anything else. But that small act could provide such dignity, and help to build a reciprocal relationship. Now I am about to begin a master's program in social work, and again, it was the Casa that first planted this seed in my mind. In a most concrete fashion, the Casa helped me to develop not just an intellectual paradigm, but a whole way of being, of existing in the world, that brought me deep meaning, purpose, and understanding. I remain grateful for the Casa in a way that I cannot express because in truth I don't understand it fully, and maybe I never will. (Student #252)

Casa has been an invaluable part of my college experience. It has changed the way I see people and has helped me to realize what I want to do after I graduate. By experiencing solidarity and accompaniment not as concepts in a classroom but as values which can be demonstrated through our every action, I have come to better understand why these things are so much more important than simply being comfortable and making money. Through Casa I was introduced to the concept of simple living as a way to live out more fully a life of social justice which the Jesuit university I attend seeks to instill in all of their students. One of the most beautiful aspects of the Casa program is its simplicity and trust in its students to help them create their own unique experience. As a student I felt that I was co-creating my experience along with the staff and the people I accompanied in

praxis. I felt listened to and ultimately found that the people whom I came to "serve" at praxis were the people who taught me the most about what it means to love others by their incredible love and care for us. Casa opened my eyes to a world that is so much more real than anything I knew before in my sheltered life inside the States, and that reality is as often painful as it is beautiful and transformative. It continually challenged me to become a better woman with and for others while simultaneously providing the support I needed to meet that challenge. It put me in touch with the suffering of others as well as my own struggles and showed me a depth of joy which I had never before experienced which comes from living communally and in solidarity with others. Most importantly of all, Casa taught me and continues to teach me that we are not alone and that we need one another to live full and joy-filled lives, and that is so worth so much more to me than any amount of material things. (Student #56)

The Casa experience has influenced the person I have become in a number of ways. During my praxis experience, I spent time doing home visits and talking with families about the realities of life in their community. Hearing their struggles, the ways they were able to come together to find support in one another and also to come together to fight for change, has inspired me to spend the last 5 years working as a community organizer. The opportunity to learn Spanish by immersing myself in the experience and have it supported in an integrated way (speaking Spanish when Spanish speakers are present) helped me to connect with Latinos in the Boston area for my work. Learning the cultural cues has helped me to be more sensitive to language and cultural norms. My experience at the Casa has helped me to understand my spirituality and my faith as a Catholic. I feel closer to God in the struggles I experience in life and feel supported because I know there are others who are asking similar big questions, I know I am not alone in my search. My time at the Casa and in El Salvador helped me to see the feminine side of God and embrace the images of campesinos and pregnant women on the cross, as we are a crucified people. I have committed myself to a life serving the oppressed and marginalized. My time at the Casa helped me to put words to that desire and emphasize the importance of commitment, solidarity and justice. The late Fr. Dean Brackley spoke at the Casa reunion about how living a life of solidarity and doing justice to our experience and our connections didn't mean that we all needed to move back to El Salvador or live a life of poverty. Those words, the mentorship, the support of Casa staff and friends of the Casa are what has supported me to be the person I believe God is calling me to be and to embrace the ways my experiences have lead me to this place. (Student #213)

Forty seven percent of all students indicated that the Casa experience fostered a sense of solidarity with and compassion for those who are suffering.

Personal development. The "personal development" category was given to responses where students wrote of the ways Casa has influenced them in terms of their

own personal formation. Here are three examples:

Casa greatly increased my confidence in myself. It allowed me to recognize many of the values and beliefs that I hold and how I would truly and fully live them out. Casa helped me identify my own personal strength and independence but at the same time showed me that sometimes I rely too much on my independence and ignore the support of others. Casa has allowed me to recognize the good that comes from being in community with others. (Student #240)

Casa has made a huge impact on my life. Because it is a very recent experience, I am still currently trying to process how it is impacting my life. In terms of my worldview, being exposed to a reality so different from the one I was raised in has taught me so much. The struggles associated with war and poverty and systemic violence have become so personal to me. This quarter I have been taking many classes that have to do with war and violence, and I can't help but see the faces of the people I now consider family when I hear the stories of people suffering these injustices around the world. Whatever path my life takes, I know it will be one that works towards changing the systemic violence that creates so much suffering in our world. This has also impacted me because it has helped me realize how much excess I had in my life previously, and, despite living in a very materialistic society, it has challenged me to question and think more critically about the amount of "stuff" in my life. It has helped me take joy in humanity, friendship, love, emotions, and experiences rather than material things. I have found that these things give me a much deeper sense of fulfillment and joy. My experiences at the Casa have also helped me through a lot of internal and emotional growth. Before the Casa, I feel that I put up so many walls for myself. I was so self-critical and judgmental of myself, and therefore also of other people. Being at the Casa helped me realize my strengths. It gave me a sense of self-worth and pride in who I am. I also feel that the Casa has helped me open up to other people. It has helped me be more vulnerable, and this has made my relationships with people stronger, more real. I've never felt so comfortable with the person I am and I feel that my experience at the Casa helped me get to this point. I often think of the questions Juan Velasco posed at our silent retreat? "How long have you been living in exile?" Since the Casa I feel like I have finally allowed myself to live, free of constant insecurity and self criticism. It feels like I've finally allowed myself to live in love rather than in fear. I truly feel that I have the Casa program to thank for that. While it has been extremely challenging to bring these lessons back home, I feel that each day I get a little better at integrating the Casa experience into my life back here in the States. I feel like there's so much more but I'm still processing these emotions and these seem to be the most prominent in my life right now. (Student #197)

The Casa experience planted seeds in me to become a more open, more humble, more hopeful, and more loving person. I often compare my experience with the Casa to a serious romantic relationship. I entered into the experience because there was something about it that I knew I needed to explore; I would have

regretted it for the rest of my life if I hadn't explored that attraction. Once in El Salvador, and once I opened myself up to letting the experience affect me, I fell in love with the Salvadoran people. Even though they had been through so much, they were so full of hope in God's goodness, so humble, and so ready and willing to offer unconditional love. My heart broke when I had to return to the States—I had grown so much from this “relationship” with El Salvador, but how was I supposed to continue living as this new person after the “break-up”? Eventually, I came to understand that like any relationship that touches me deep in my heart, I would get “over” the Casa experience, but it would always have a special place in my heart and color the way I live my life, because I was a changed person because of it. (Student #94)

As the chart indicates, 31% of all students wrote of the Casa experience in terms of it fostering their own personal development.

It worth noting that 98% of all students utilized at least one of the above categories (vocation, expanded imagination, solidarity, personal development) to describe the way Casa has influenced who they have become. Four categories remain, namely: Relationships, Spirituality, Identity and Community Living. Almost 60% of all students used one of these categories to describe how they were influenced by Casa. It is important to remember that students' responses can fall into more than one category. Descriptions of each category along with two student examples are listed below.

Relationships. The “relationship” category was given to responses that indicated that the Casa experience either assisted students with the quality of their relationships, especially as it relates to vulnerability, or provided an area for students to cultivate new relationships. Here are two examples:

For me, the Casa experience opened me up in a variety of ways. Not only to more programs and experiences that have similar levels of immersion, but also to relationships with different types of people that I would not have necessarily thought of interacting with. In our praxis experience, I really came to understand the importance of stories, and how strong of a bond you can create with people just through a ministry of presence. I have since brought this mentality back with me to my relationships here. I have tried to be more intentional with my relationships here, based on the love and community that I developed with my

friends and praxis family in El Salvador. I think that my experience with the Casa program has made me a more loving and present individual. I have tried to make each of my relationships stronger since returning the states, including those I formed in my time abroad. (Student #237)

My time with Casa has instilled in me a desire to keep asking the big questions and grappling with the uncertainty that can follow. I feel as though I am someone who, having lived in community and accompanied a family in praxis, recognizes the centrality of human relationships in my life, and that it is key to be vulnerable and authentic in my own life. (Student #263)

One in four students described the Casa experience in terms of it having an impact on the quality of their relationships with others.

Spirituality. The “spirituality” category was given to responses in which the students wrote of the influence of the Casa experience in terms of their own spiritual formation. Here are two examples:

My Casa experience has influenced the person I have become in a very intentional and significant way. My experiences gave me many opportunities to grow as a person of faith and grow into a more confident and strong person. The Casa Program gave me the courage and opportunity to question and strengthen my relationship with God and live a life of faith and spirituality. I was able to face the reality of suffering in the world, in El Salvador, and question and embrace how grace, community and resilience can enter into that suffering in a very liberating, beautiful way. Hands down, I am the person I am today because of my Casa experience, because of my Casa community. I learned that my call is to be exactly what God calls me to be. Myself. I learned how to love and walk with others while having my heart be broken and open to embrace the darkness and grace of this world. (Student #125)

The program increased my awareness of social justice, and how little kindnesses done daily can mean more than one big gesture. The program strengthened my spirituality and belief that God is a community we create and immerse ourselves in. The program introduced me to a more simple way of living that does not involve collecting things, but experiences. I believe I am a kinder and more understanding person for having lived in the Casa. (Student #41)

When asked how the Casa experience influenced them, 23% of the students wrote in terms of their spiritual growth.

Identity. The “identity” category was given to responses in which students referred to the Casa’s influence in terms of the positive impact on their sense of themselves or their identity. Here are two examples:

My time in El Salvador gave me nurturing space to address some underlying tensions, pain and trauma that I was holding in. Since Casa, I have learned to express myself and address feelings that arise. My semester in Casa was also the first time that traveled to El Salvador, a country I am connected by blood. I was born in the United States and was adopted at birth to a loving family in Los Angeles, CA. These experiences have connected me to my biological roots and given me a stronger self - awareness and understanding. I feel confident in my body and my identity and now even feel encouraged to support others going through a similar process. (Student #189)

The Casa influence can't be overestimated. It helped form me into the person that I am, facilitating tremendous personal growth. It affected my emotional maturity, my sense of self, my confidence, my ability to empathize with others, and the way I see myself in the world. It influenced how i see the world and the people in it. It helped shape my priorities in terms of career goals, life plans, finances, relationships, current events, politics....the list goes on. Safe to assume my life would look very different without the Casa. (Student #229)

When asked how the Casa experience influenced who they have become, 20% of all Casa students responded by discussing the impact on their identity.

Community Living. The category of “community living” was given to responses in which students discussed living simply in community as an area of growth during their semester at Casa. Here are two examples:

I don't even know where to begin... Casa has been one of the most influential experiences in my life. The time we spent at our praxis site, the opportunity to really fall in love with people who are so marginalized by the world shifted my relationship to social justice. For the first time I "got" how to be not just a woman for others, but a woman with others, and I understood-- in my heart, not just intellectually-- why that distinction is important. The experience of living in community and living simply was also hugely transformational for me. On my college campus, I did not encounter many people who shared my values or a desire to live them out. Through Casa I realized that it actually is possible to live outside of the mainstream, that I had that choice, and that I could find community in that space. (Student #22)

The Casa experience has profoundly influenced the person that I have become.

Prior to participating, I was warned by a past Casa student that I would not be the same person upon my return to the US. At the time, I was actually quite petrified, because that seemed like a scary description. However, after participating, I am so grateful that I experienced it, and that it has so strongly impacted me. For one thing, it has influenced how I make decisions. In the face of uncertainty, I remember this earlier hesitation and truly believe that a risk taken with the intent of learning from others, bettering oneself by exposure to the unknown and immersing oneself in community will more than likely have a positive consequence. The Casa experience has also influenced me in very practical ways. As a result of Casa I find I continually crave cultivating community where I am. I joined JVC to further experience the shared tenets of community, social justice, spirituality and simplicity. I achieved dual masters degrees in social work and pastoral ministry as well, largely as a result of the path on which the Casa helped direct me. Friends met while I lived in El Salvador, and other past participants also remain a significant social support for me in the US. I am grateful for these relationships, and appreciate spending time with others who understand the value of learning from another culture and spending time in El Salvador. This program, in my experience, creates a community that extends beyond a semester experience. It offers the opportunity to be changed from one's previous comforts and routine and to live open to the challenge of remaining truly present with others. (Student #195)

As demonstrated in figure 2, 20% of all Casa students reported that living in community with their peers has impacted who they have become.

Accompaniment

When asked what they had learned by accompanying the poor, Casa students responded in great detail. Their raw responses provide the best understanding of the influence that the experience of accompaniment has had on their lives. An analysis of the data revealed that the four most common categories used by students to illustrate what they had learned from accompanying people living in poverty were: 1) encounters with the reality of poverty, 2) personal growth and transformation, 3) about the process of accompaniment, and 4) our common humanity. Each of these categories will be described below along with students' direct responses.

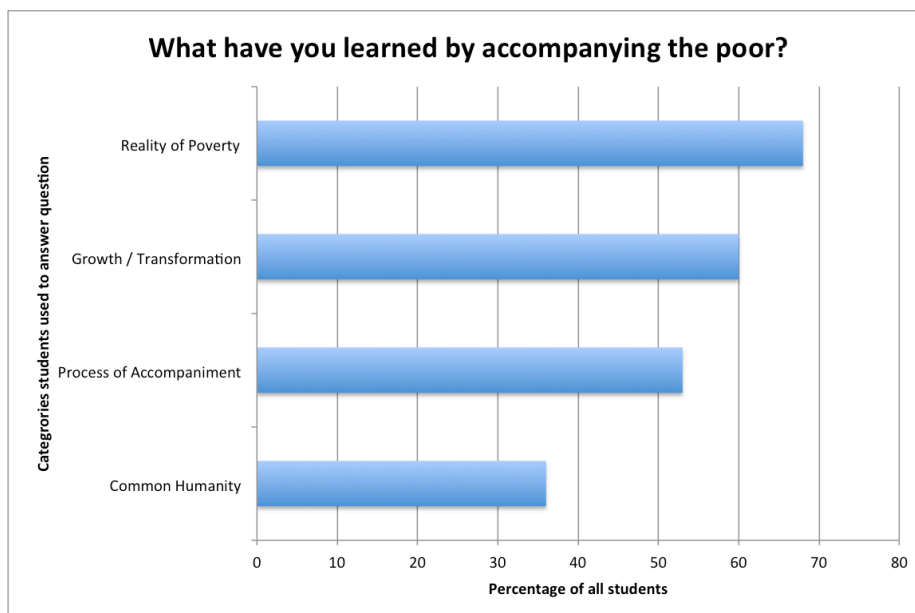


Figure 3. What students learned by accompanying the poor

Reality of poverty. The category “reality of poverty” is self evident, and was given to students’ descriptions of their encounters with people living in poverty. Here are some examples:

One day Gladys invited us over to make lunch. We cooked our soup in a trash can because she didn't have a working stove. No one had ever invited me to that table before, a table of poverty . I felt and still feel very humbled by it. I don't mean to sound cliché, but so many moments felt like the parable of the woman who puts her last two pennies into the church box. So many people gave more than they had, and it became apparent that the act of giving rather than the gift was the most significant. I arrived feeling indignant about the poverty and violence people were experiencing, but came to realize everything was so much more complicated than that, and rather than feeling upset on behalf of those losing out by our unjust systems, I should first listen. Being present to that reality became more important than my desire to "fix" that reality. (Student #34)

No matter what you read in books, see in pictures, hear on the news, or listen to other people describe about poverty, something changes about the way you understand the world when you come to love a person who also happens to be poor. Through relationships, the Casa program teaches lessons about humanity and humility that no other model can begin to rival. I will never know what it's truly like to live in poverty -- but the Casa has taught me a level of understanding and appreciation that I couldn't have gained any other way. It influences my work, my relationships, my political perspective, my life priorities, and my financial decisions. (Student #229)

I learned that accompanying the poor is one of the most heartbreaking, difficult experiences we can have, but it's also the thing that is most likely to help us understand what it means to be human. (Student #73)

Close to 70% of all students commented on experiences they had with people suffering from poverty when asked what they had learned from accompanying the poor.

Growth / Transformation. The category “growth / transformation” was given to students’ descriptions of how accompanying the poor had affected them. Examples are:

For me this was the biggest and most transformative parts of the experience for me. I learned a lot about faith and love. The people I spent time with had an abundance of both. They had so much faith in God and it was simple faith but it was very deep and very strong. It was very inspiring. The people we accompanied were so vulnerable with us and gave their love to us freely. They trusted us with their joys and sorrows. They taught me how to endure sorrow and death as well as celebrate joy and life. They taught me how to give myself more fully and truly love others and myself. (Student #85)

Accompanying the poor and the communities we interacted with was an integral part of my experience there, and although sometimes not easy or comfortable, it was necessary to understand how most of the world functions. I think I'm even more patient, understanding and forgiving than I was before because of this. (Student #159)

As I stated in the previous questions, accompaniment with the poor was one of the most transformative parts of the experience. "The poor" became my family, my aunts, second moms, sisters and brothers to a point that I will never be able to refer to them as "the poor" again. Spending two days a week with them opened up to the deep well of wisdom, love, faith and hope that they have that so many privileged people are missing out on. They exposed me to a vulnerability, genuineness and rawness of life that allowed me to be honest with my own pain yet at the same time feel joy on a whole other level. Being with them was heart breaking as I saw first hand the suffering they are forced to survive due to their poverty and existence on the margins of society. I began to understand how easy it would be for me to have been born in their place and live their life and become infuriated that so many at home were living with way too much while so many in Salvador and across the globe barely have enough to feed their families. The combination of love I felt for my community and growing understanding of how unequal the world is left me desiring to change and promote change while also giving me a family that I feel so much love and respect for and think of everyday. (Student #115)

Sixty percent of all students referred to their own personal growth / transformation as they described what they had learned from the accompaniment component.

Process of Accompaniment. The “process of accompaniment” category was given to students’ descriptions that highlighted the development of their understanding of the idea of accompaniment. Here are some examples:

Accompaniment of the poor is one of the most profound aspects of this program. Even the idea of "accompaniment " was new to me, let alone the accompaniment of the poor. The idea of walking with someone, being present in their everyday life, for the big stuff and the little stuff, listening, truly listening with your mind, body and soul, walking side-by-side instead of one person leading the other. These are the images and phrases that are evoked for me when I think about accompaniment. It sounds so silly to even write this, but those are just not things that I ever even considered to be worthwhile, in the larger concept of solidarity, but also within the context of my interpersonal interactions with people. I learned the value of listening and the value of silence. I learned the value of body language and I learned the value of graciousness. I learned how to open my heart to the Salvadorans around me and their unfamiliar customs and culture. I learned a new way to measure "success" and "growth." And most of all, I learned humility through my 4 month journey of accompanying the poor of El Salvador. (Student #31)

Entering Casa I had heard the word "accompaniment " with the poor and was very much of the mind frame being with rather than doing for. This experience of mutual accompaniment with those living in poverty was transforming. Without realizing it I was being taught profound lessons of being vs. doing. The experts were the women and children in the community who put up with my poor Spanish and accompanied my world and image of self being broken open. Through this accompaniment I learned the power of community; the power of a small group of people to transform a community; the strength and resilience of the human person. I entered into solidarity - my pain is your pain - in ways I had never been invited into before. Through the example of my praxis leader I was taught how to community organize, how to assess the needs of a community, and how to empower those closest to the reality to take action to transform. Ten years later I am still living into the word accompaniment and listening ever so closely for the voices of those I encountered in El Salvador to continue to guide and shape me. (Student #200)

There isn't enough time or space to adequately do justice to the impact that the Casa pillar of accompaniment has had on my experience of relationship with others. The most stunning aspect of this form of accompaniment is that it extends beyond any socioeconomic class. I can say with confidence that all of my

relationships, thanks to this pillar, are more genuinely centered in listening, patience, generosity and commitment than they were before my semester abroad. Since I was a sophomore when I studied in El Salvador, I was just getting my feet wet in regards to my academic program of occupational therapy. However, the remaining years of my OT program continuously revealed to me just how complementary my experiences of accompaniment with the poor were to the most holistic and authentic practice of OT. The gifts that I gathered in my praxis site and classes and from my community members expanded my understanding of client-first, whole-person care and the absolute need for understanding a client's deep historical, cultural, social, and spiritual background before providing intervention services. The utter power of listening, of the often undervalued necessity of simply being with another person, became the foundation for my future goals. Accompanying the marginalized in El Salvador revealed my own need for others, particularly when trying to understand a culture or life outside of the very one I have lived. Through inviting me into their lives, my friends in El Salvador revealed that vulnerability, when embraced, is the deepest form of strength. I no longer see myself as someone who can "fix" but rather as an individual who desires to listen first and then move forward with others. As a community, our strength, wisdom, and creative energy become exponentially more than the sum of our individual parts. (Student #157)

Over 52% of students responded that they had learned about the process of accompanying people.

Common Humanity. The category "common humanity" was given to responses that highlighted the shared humanity between them and those suffering from poverty.

Here are some examples:

It was for me the most influential part of the program. It taught me to value each person based on their humanity, not their 'ranking' in society. It taught me the value of acts of kindness that come at no cost other than thoughtfulness and time. It taught me that no matter how hard life can get, it's never too hard to maintain a kind heart and a positive outlook. It taught me that life is not fair, and the truth can be cruel, but that is still not reason enough to give up on life. It taught me to be a better person, to love greater, forgive more, be more patient with others and myself, and to always have compassion for others and their situations in life. It taught me to keep my feet on the ground, my heart the biggest part of my body and my mind reflective. Amen! (Student #270)

This really helped me take a step back to think about my own perspective and my own privileges in day-to-day life, but more importantly to simply recognize the humanity in all people. We may suffer from slightly different things, but we all suffer, and we all have a different story. Accompanying the poor and realizing

how much I have to gain and learn from them was such an integral part of my casa experience. (Student #1)

In accompanying the poor, I gained a greater understanding of humanity -- and realized how we are all bound up inextricably in the same destiny, same fabric of life. It significantly altered my worldview from one of liberal cynicism and pessimism into one of human compassion and understanding. While maintaining an open, loving heart is a daily and lifelong process, I look back to my experiences and relationships with the people of Las Nubes in El Salvador on a daily basis to remind myself of what it means to love unconditionally, live with love and hope, and to honor the despair we encounter in our lives. (Student #79)

Thirty-six percent of all students, when asked what they learned from the accompaniment component of Casa, wrote about their recognition of a shared humanity with people in the praxis sites.

Academics

Students were asked what they had learned specifically from the academic component of Casa de la Solidaridad. An analysis of the data revealed four predominant categories: Integration with Reality, Course Content, Academic Analysis and Academic Intensity. Categories and their representative examples are below.

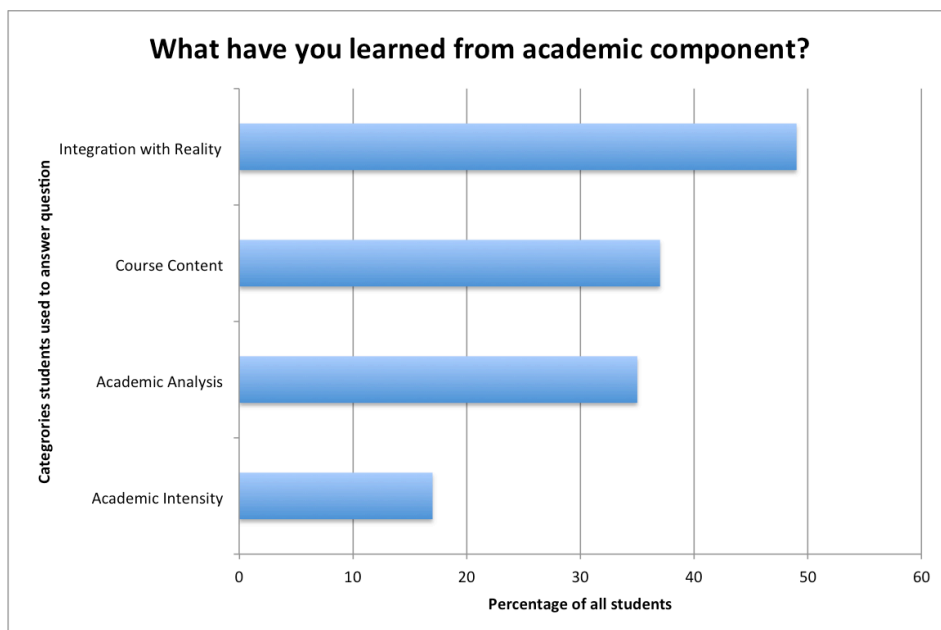


Figure 4. What students learned from the academic component

Integration with Reality. The “integration with reality” category was given to responses in which students wrote about integrating their academic studies with their experiences accompanying Salvadorans in their praxis sites. Here are examples:

In essence, the Casa’s unique pedagogy taught me that it is essential to integrate the often harsh realities of our world into academic settings. I learned that if I seek to study and know the world, then I must first learn to let the present realities guide how and what I study. Experiencing “class” both within and outside of a classroom rearranged my idea of what it means to be a student. Education gained new power and became more precious. It became so much more than the means to an end. I desired the very act of studying because this model revealed a deeper understanding of what I was seeing and experiencing everyday. I began to apply my academics to daily situations and daily encounters to my studies. This integration of daily life and academics fostered within me a deeper call to share from the fruits of education that have been gifted to me. The Casa model of academic study led me to a stronger conviction of the necessity of well-rounded education for all majors and professions. Through constant multi-disciplinary dialogue, it became apparent that this form of education leads to a mutual understanding of our responsibility to one another that can be missed when we spend time in isolated academic departments. After my semester abroad I began to seek out other sources of knowledge-from philosophy, literature, political science, sociology, and theology-in addition to my health science courses. (Student #157)

I loved the academic program, because while it was rigorous, it was fully integrated with what we were experiencing. The academic aspect of the Casa was very important, because it gave structure to our experiences and reactions. (Student #87)

The pillar of academics was one of the most important for me in my Casa experience. With the integration of our praxis experience into our academics, it gave every discussion, assignment, and text so much more life and urgency. For the first time, I was engaged in my learning in an entirely new way. I worked harder, longer, and with much more vivacity on my assignments, especially on my writing, because I finally understood the importance of the intellectual pursuit. The academics of the Casa provided cohesion for the whole experience, and three of my favorite and most challenging courses that I took in college, I took at the Casa. The academics in the Casa challenged me in new ways, but it was those four months at Casa that taught me to truly love learning and to invest more in my own education. (Student #156).

When asked what they had learned from Casa's academic component, nearly 50% of all students responded by writing about the integration between academics and their praxis experiences.

Course Content. The "course content" category was given to responses in which students wrote about what they learned in their classes. Here are examples:

I enjoyed all five classes I took, with Theology and History being the most impactful. Liberation Theology opened my eyes to an entirely new side of Christianity that I was able to relate to. History class was very challenging, especially the final paper, requiring a thorough integration of the entire semester's material. Studying one subject in-depth, in this case the Salvadoran Civil War, was very valuable. There is rarely time in a University class to devote towards one topic like that. In general, the classes were especially rewarding since we were studying about things that directly related to our lives in El Salvador, and the lives of those we were living and interacting with. (Student #262).

I learned a lot about liberation theology and a lot about the war and El Salvador's history. I knew very little before CASA. (Student #235)

I learned about the economics of the country from the President of the Salvadoran bank. We debated the benefit of using the dollar. I was challenged in my Sociology of Communications class to read deeper into what the newspaper and tv reported to find the real story. I was privileged to hear first hand accounts of the war from survivors and main actors. (Student #100)

In describing what they learned from Casa's academic component, 37% of students wrote about the content of their courses.

Academic Analysis. The "academic analysis" category was given to responses where students wrote about the role that critical analysis played in their academic experience at Casa. Here are some examples:

I remember doing the social analysis and really delving into Salvadoran history and economy prior to and after the civil war. This provided the context for me to understand what I saw in El Salvador: the shanties, the crime, and the patches of extreme wealth. (Student #172)

Without the classes I took to help me understand the context I was immersed in - nothing I was experiencing would make sense. Rigorous academic study helped me engage in reflective practice. It gave me the tools I needed to better understand and analyze the situation. (Student #221)

The academic component of the program was deeply enriched by the praxis portion -- each part made the other stronger and more meaningful. The Philosophy of Suffering and Solidarity challenged me to think critically about what I was experiencing twice a week in my praxis. Through readings, movies and discussions I gained a deep understanding of what suffering was and wasn't. I learned to write clearly and concisely in the one page weekly analysis. In Liberation Theology, my preconceptions of theology were broken down and I was challenged to envision a ground-up theology different from anything I had ever learned before. My Spanish was greatly improved through Salvadoran Literature as I was exposed to writing techniques, slang, syntax used in poetry, essays and stories. (Student #92)

As evidenced in Chart #3 above, 35% of the students wrote in terms of academic analysis when asked about what they had learned from the academic component of Casa.

Academic Intensity. The "academic intensity" category was given to students' response in which they described Casa's academic component as academically rigorous or of tremendous value to their intellectual life. Here are examples:

All my friends talked about traveling, drinking and fun when they discussed study abroad. While these were parts of my experience, it was much more academically rigorous than theirs. In the end, I am very grateful for the academic intensity.

(Student #6)

Before coming to El Salvador I was no stranger to books and academic study. I was, however, unfamiliar with using my day-to-day reality as a text. Reading about poverty in a seminar class is one thing, but the poverty remains a projection of the imagination. A report about malnutrition and its effects on children provides numbers and graphs, but seeing children in my praxis site stunted due to lack of food makes an otherwise nebulous issue tangible and real. Taking such lived experience back to the classroom and discussing it with peers experiencing similar situations is transformative. By learning how to learn from my daily reality, drawing examples from lived experiences and putting those experiences in conversation with written voices, I became a better student. Higher education needs more experiential praxis-based learning. (Student #260)

Casa redefined my idea of rigorous academic study. Before Casa, I would have pictured rigorous academic study as books up to my ears, drowning in papers, limited communication with the outside world, and lots of words I don't understand. By connecting theory with praxis, Casa rooted academic study in reality and relationships. What would have seemed unattainable and way over my head suddenly became incredibly accessible, relevant, and meaningful. However, such an education requires serious commitment, immersion, vulnerability, and willingness. Casa was the most challenging, life-giving, and inspiring education I have ever experienced. (Student #193)

Seventeen percent of all students spoke of their academic learning in terms of academic rigor or intellectual value.

Community Living

Students were asked what they had learned from living simply in community during their semester at Casa. Again, their raw responses provide the best understanding of the influence that this experience had on their lives. An analysis of the data revealed five categories, which students used to describe this. They were: 1) Receive Support, 2) Give Support, 3) Simplicity understood as availability, 4) Challenging, and 5) Friendship. Each of these categories is described below along with students' direct responses.

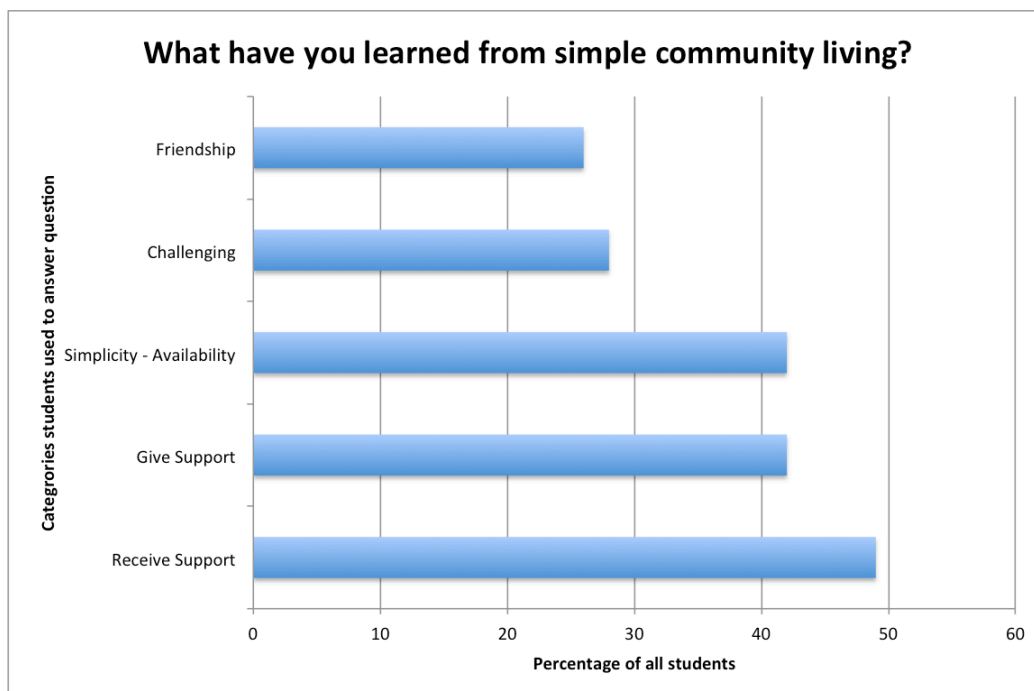


Figure 5. What students learned living simply in community.

Receive Support. The “received support” category was given to responses where students wrote about the support they received from living in community. Examples are:

Where to begin with this...I came here with 23 other students, and while we shared certain common desires that drew us all to El Salvador, we were quite a diverse bunch of kids. For as blessed as I have been throughout my whole life with incredible, nourishing relationships, my friendship and community with my peers at the Casa transformed my sense of just how deeply human beings are able to be in communion. I can remember sharing, in one of the most vulnerable moments of my life, how much despair I felt about my time in El Salvador, how inadequate I felt in the face of such tremendous suffering. And then, the most incredible thing happened: one by one, each of my community members unearthed desires and fears seldom spoken of out loud to anyone. From traumatic experiences in childhood, to things witnessed in praxis site... And we consoled each other that night, insisting after each person shared what light we knew in the other, in the world we were striving to love in the midst of its brokenness. I’ve never shared such close companionship with a group of people before, and five years later, these people continue to guide me in my struggles, to call forth the most vulnerable parts of myself, and to inspire me to be a better, more loving person. Sadly, sometimes much time goes by before I get in touch with my community, but even if it’s been a year or two, because of the depth of our trust and experiences together, we have a way of picking up where we left off. And that is an incredibly rare thing. At a more macroscopic level, living in community with my peers gave me a way to understand the Salvadoran reality better, to

understand the essential role that community plays in their daily lives and the way they understand themselves. It helped me to appreciate an understanding of reality as interdependent, that the self thrives and flourishes in lifting up the community. This was truly a turning point for me and my thinking of myself, because for as much as I loved people before the Casa, I didn't necessarily believe that others were a way of deeply understanding myself. I saw truth as much more of an individual pursuit, but in my time at Casa, and now five years later, my imagination of the world as a deeply human and relational place has completely changed my perspective, my very way of being. And as far as living simply goes, I look back and see how much space for joy was created by living a much more simplified life together. Whether bonding over washing our clothes, or just spending time chatting in hammocks when we might have otherwise been on our own on our computers...these moments in simplicity were often the source of deep joy and laughter with my community mates. It's difficult, being away from El Salvador, to live a simple life without a community of peers to share in this lifestyle with, but there are little choices I make to this day that have helped me to stay in touch with the most important things in life (student #75)

Living in community taught me the importance of supporting one another through challenging and grace filled experiences. I learned that if I am serious about committing to a life of accompaniment of the poor and faith, I cannot go the road alone. Since returning from Casa I have sought out or created intentional community in one way or another. Simple community living also taught me the value of support and challenge and finding balance and a way to live in a diverse community. (Student #269)

In regards to the component of living simply in community, almost half of the students responded in terms of having received a great deal of support from community members.

Give Support. The "give support" category was given to responses where students wrote about how they provided support to their peers, learning to do so during the semester. Here are examples given by students:

Community living was my favorite aspect of the program. I learned how to hold people accountable out of love. I learned to respect people's time and space. I learned how to truly support someone and I learned what it means to be truly supported. I learned that we can only survive in times of struggle, hardship, or frustration by sharing these feelings with community. I learned that even when we have extremely hard questions (beyond that which we can actually answer), having a community to talk with makes a huge difference in feeling at peace. (Student #240)

Simple community living is so difficult! The Casa influenced me to examine healthy boundaries between me and others, as well as recognize when I need to take care of myself and step back, and when I need to reach out to those around me. It didn't necessarily provide answers, but definitely created the atmosphere to practice. Simplicity continues to influence me in how I consider the resources I use- I continue to try and live a less-harmful lifestyle globally. As a result of the challenge of community living with the Casa, I also have continued to experiment with creating community where I've lived...certainly some dynamics have been better than others; however, I find that simplicity spent in shared time with others allows for a more genuine understanding of each other. Without common distractions, I have also found that we bond over attempts to find entertainment through perhaps non-typical means that aren't part of a more distracted lifestyle. (Student #195)

Forty-two percent of all students wrote of their experience in terms of either supporting or learning how to support fellow classmates through living simply in community at Casa.

Simplicity as Availability. The "simplicity as availability" category was given to responses in which students wrote about the value of simple living in terms of it freeing them up to focus on relationships or on being present to their surroundings. Here are examples:

I think the way that community is lived out at the casa is especially important to note. We are in the midst of a time of deep disconnection from our fellow human beings. Celebrity gossip and social media take up the bulk of our time, and in many ways, we have forgotten how to be with ourselves and with each other in a healthy and social way. The social life at college surrounds around cultures that are so negative for human formation. The drinking and drug culture and the hook up culture are just two examples of social life in college, but we learn at that stage in life to value certain kinds of people and to devalue others. Coming to the Casa, in my own experience and from talking with Casa peers, is often the first time where people feel safe and comfortable to truly be themselves. The distractions like internet in the home, facebook, and drinking copious amounts of alcohol are taken out of the equation, and it fostered the kinds of genuine relationships between myself and my Casa peers that I didn't even think possible. I felt like we were in true relationship with one another, paying attention to and dialoguing about what actually mattered for the first time in my entire life. Instead of resorting to surface conversations or gossip about those around us, we filled our time with genuinely intellectual and meaningful conversation, games and true group leisure, and healthy and fulfilling social outlets. Also, as I have alluded to

in previous answers, the pillar of simple, community living taught me much about myself and about how I approach and interact with others. My listening skills grew exponentially, and I became better and more honest about conflict, my own needs, and becoming aware of the needs of those around me (Student #156)

I learned how freeing and empowering it can be to release, let go, and focus on the simple things in life without the myriad distractions of the 2013 world. We live in a world that is unbelievably overconnected, with all of us glued to our phones and computers in an ever more all-consuming way. The Casa freed all of us from distractions, encouraging (forcing!) students to find ways to relate and build relationships free of technology, free of materialism, free of alcohol, etc. Those skills transfer in a huge way to my ability to refocus and reconnect with people in my day to day life all these years later -- and I often find that when I intentionally step back to enjoy life more simply, the way I did at the Casa, it's one of the surest ways to relieve stress, help me solve problems, and work on relationships. (Student #229)

When asked what they had learned from the living simply in community, 42% of the students wrote about simple living in terms of it encouraging availability and presence.

While students also saw simplicity as a reminder of those who live in poverty, only 15% of the students described it in those terms.

Friendship. The “friendship” category was given to responses in which students wrote about the meaningful relationships or friendships they developed through Casa’s component of living simply in community. Here are examples:

I loved the aspect of simple community living in Casa. It enabled our community to build some of the strongest friendships I have ever been a part of. When I think back on living in Romero, I think of taking our three minute freezing showers while shouting Disney song lyrics to keep us distracted from the cold, I think of playing the card game Spades from dinner until the wee hours of the morning, I think of talking to my housemates through the thin walls at night, I think of fiestas de limpieza and singing and dancing together, I think of the intimacy of friendship that could only be obtained without the distractions we are so overwhelmed with at home. It was truly a blessing to live in this community style. (Student #45)

I learned much about health and relationship building by living in an intentional community. I learned about eating right, cooking, privacy, and how to build lasting friendships. I learned how to get along with people I didn't necessarily see eye to eye with. I learned about living with people of the opposite gender. I

learned how to handwash my clothes the proper way! I learned how to give myself to others and how to let others give themselves to me. (Student #59)

Twenty six percent of all students wrote of their experience in terms of the meaningful relationships or friendships they formed through Casa’s simple, community living component.

Spirituality

Students were asked what they had learned from Casa’s spirituality component. Their responses were so diverse and complex as to not be easily categorized. I have identified three broad areas: Appropriated Faith, Introduction to Spirituality and Not Religious. Descriptions of these areas and representative student responses follow.

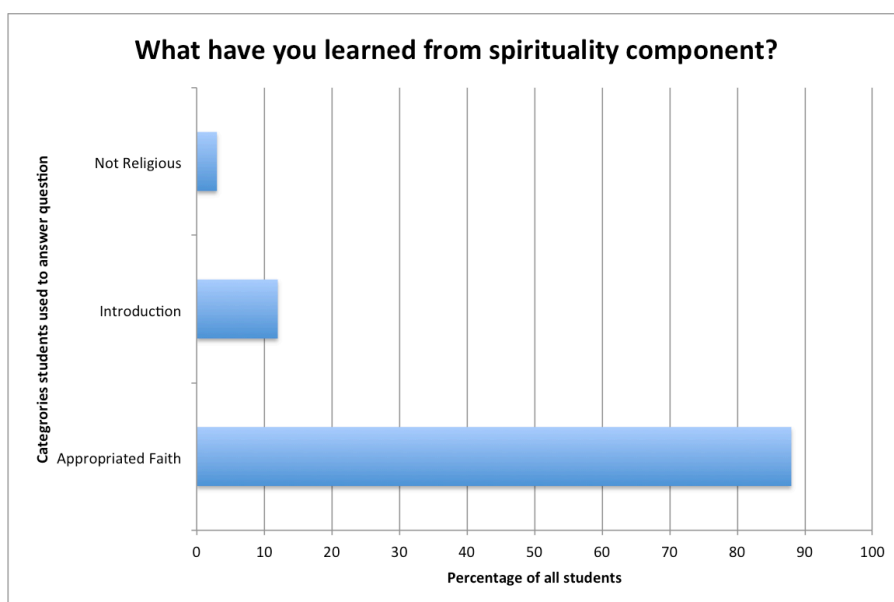


Figure 6. What students learned from spirituality component

Appropriated Faith. The “appropriated faith” category was given to responses in which students wrote about their faith and/or spirituality in a way that demonstrated an increased investment in or deepening of their faith / spirituality. It was also given to

responses that demonstrated a claiming or authorship of their faith / spirituality. Here are some examples:

I learned a theology of liberation which set me free from the binaries and strict chains of conservative Catholicism. I embraced the freedom for women and gays and people of color within the framework of a theology of liberation and a preferential option for the historically oppressed. to be quite honest it gave me great hope for ignatian spirituality and little hope for the current hierarchical Catholic Church. my faith life ebbs and flows but the hope of Christian based communities like el pueblo de dios en el camino gives me energy and optimism for rediscovering a rejuvenated faith and spirituality. this spirituality aspect allowed me much room for growth and thought outside of the traditional restricting teachings I learned as a child. (Student #264)

Throughout our weekly spirituality nights, my concept of who God is and how (s)he is present in our lives continued to evolve. I learned about how God can be present *through* suffering not *despite* it. My spirituality became much more integrated in my life during these months, I was living with an undercurrent of prayer and I learned how much richer my own openness and ability to participate and connect with those around me became as a result of a much more direct link to my creator. (Student #255)

It is OK be a liberal Catholic. More seriously though, the Casa's spiritual roots being firmly planted in Latin American liberation theology opened me up to a new way of understanding what it meant to be a person of faith in such an unequal society. I am now proud to call myself Catholic. Also, beyond the "Catholic" aspect of the program the Casa worked hard to show the value present in conscious reflection on daily reality. The Casa was where I began to develop as a person of prayer and reflection. I now see prayer and journaling as an indispensable part of my daily life. I'll admit I was not the best at keeping a journal while I was a Casa student, but since I have graduated and have come to live again in Latin America I journal as a way to maintain my mental health. I also light candles regularly when I pray, the calming light of a flame something I learned to appreciate as a Casa student. (Student #260)

I learned to be more comfortable with my faith. I gained a greater understanding of what spirituality means. Specifically, that living a life of faith and spirituality extend far beyond reading the bible. I learned that to truly live a spiritual life, action is also required. (Student #240)

When asked what they learned from the spirituality component of Casa, 88% of the students responded in ways demonstrating an appropriated faith.

Not Religious. The “not religious” category was given to responses where students indicated that they did not belong to any religious tradition or hold religious beliefs. Here are some examples:

I learned the importance of liberation theology. I personally am not religious, but the program gave me a very important perspective into what religion means to those who may, in many cases, have nothing else to believe in. It put into perspective the difference between those that use religion as a crutch, and those that use it as inspiration. (Student #248)

This was a component that I constantly struggled with. As an atheist, I initially found it difficult to be comfortable in a largely Catholic community. However, I never felt pressure to participate in anything that I did not want to, and found it to be a beautiful experience watching the spirituality of others evolve and flourish. (Student #110)

I didn't really participate in the spirituality nights. I know this is an important aspect for many, but for me I tended to focus on the other aspects of the experience. I did learn to be more tolerant of others whose justice work is motivated by their faith. (Student #212)

Three percent all students responded to the question of spirituality in terms that indicated they were not religious or spiritual.

Introduction. The “introduction” category was given to responses in which students wrote about a new experiences or movements in their spiritual life. Here are some examples:

I began my spiritual journey in life, upon starting the Casa de la Solidaridad program. I was a little cynical about organized religion before going to El Salvador, but living in a culture that completely surrounded me with varying forms of religion in nearly all aspects of life, combined with the open-minded way in which the Casa staff facilitated a space for us to question and reflect upon our own spirituality allowed me to lose a lot of this cynicism and begin to form my own religious beliefs. I am still very much on this journey, but for now, I believe that God is love, and that love (platonic and otherwise) is the most important aspect of life. (Student 261)

I definitely entered the program as someone who didn't feel that they identified as a spiritual person. I think I only relied on my faith in times of weakness. Today I feel that spirituality plays a role in my everyday life. I think this is very greatly

due to the inspiration i drew from Salvadorans as people of faith. It amazed me how life giving their faith is for them, and made me want to explore my own spirituality more. I feel that Casa gave me the support I needed to do that. While in the past I was very skeptical of religion, my experience at Casa made me realize that my faith is a personal journey. I ultimately have the last say in what I believe, not the Catholic church. Religion is embodied and interpreted. I feel that the Casa helped me interpret my spiritual beliefs based in, but not strictly conforming to a Catholic tradition. (Student #197)

Though I was raised a Catholic, had attended church regularly growing up and had chosen to go to a Jesuit college, the Church frightened and alienated me. My experience of spirituality at the Casa was very different and it helped me develop a relationship to spirituality that feels comfortable and is inclusive. (Student #226)

I grew in terms of my spirituality. Before the Casa, I did not have a spiritual life, and I did not care to have one. But after observing how strongly people's spirituality effects their day to day life in the casa made me want to explore my spiritual journey further. I am definitely still on my spiritual journey, as I think everyone is, but I can thank the casa for initiating that journey. (Student #204)

As said earlier, my time at Casa inspired me to become Catholic, something that is now key to who I am. (Student #202)

Before Casa, spirituality was not something that I had spend a lot of time exploring but Casa opened my eyes to the connection between faith and justice. (Student #38)

When asked what they had learned from the spirituality component of Casa, 12% of the students wrote of new experiences or movements in their spiritual life.

Integration

Students were asked in what ways the Casa pillars (accompaniment, academics, spirituality and living simply in community) were integrated and for concrete examples of this integration. Here are some of the examples they gave:

How weren't they integrated? We lived simply in order to be in solidarity with those we accompanied. Through community living, we understood the communal way in which Salvadorans live and understand themselves. We took courses in Spanish to better communicate with those we accompanied, and sociology and history courses to intellectually understand better the Salvadoran reality. We were encouraged in our philosophy class to talk about our praxis experiences, and this

was made the base of all the philosophy. In essence, the Casa program is built around relationships and learning about the Salvadoran's reality in the most holistic way possible. (Student #75).

Without the combination of all these components, my experience would not have challenged me enough and would not be as valuable. In order to accompany the Salvadorans I had to learn about their spirituality, and therefore also learn about my spirituality, I had to live simply so that I could understand how they live better, I had to challenge myself academically so that I could learn about the history of El Salvador and be able to communicate well in Spanish, and most importantly I had to learn what it means to be in a community. Salvadoran culture is very community-centric and I would not have been able to see the beauty in how they form communities without being a part of a community myself. I went into my Casa experience with preferences for some of these components and not the others, but I left with a deep understanding for the importance of all of them in my life and in the lives of others. (Student #243)

Every component of the Casa experience was integrated. The academic classes all focused on the reality of our experience and provided an intellectual perspective to the poverty we were experiencing. The spirituality aspect provided the personal space to express our emotional and spiritual reactions to the reality of our praxis experience. The community living provided the support of our peers along our personal journey and allowed us to understand the true meaning of community that defines the society within our praxis sites, our experience of accompaniment. Each aspect worked to reinforce our personal development through accompaniment mentally, emotionally, spiritually and socially. (Student #227)

Quantitative Data

The quantitative data obtained from the survey is presented in the figures below.

Students reported that their Casa experience was one of the most meaningful experiences they had had in college and that it assisted them in the discovery of their vocation.

Students also reported that they were very satisfied with their Casa experience and that it positively contributed to their spiritual formation as well as their overall personal development.

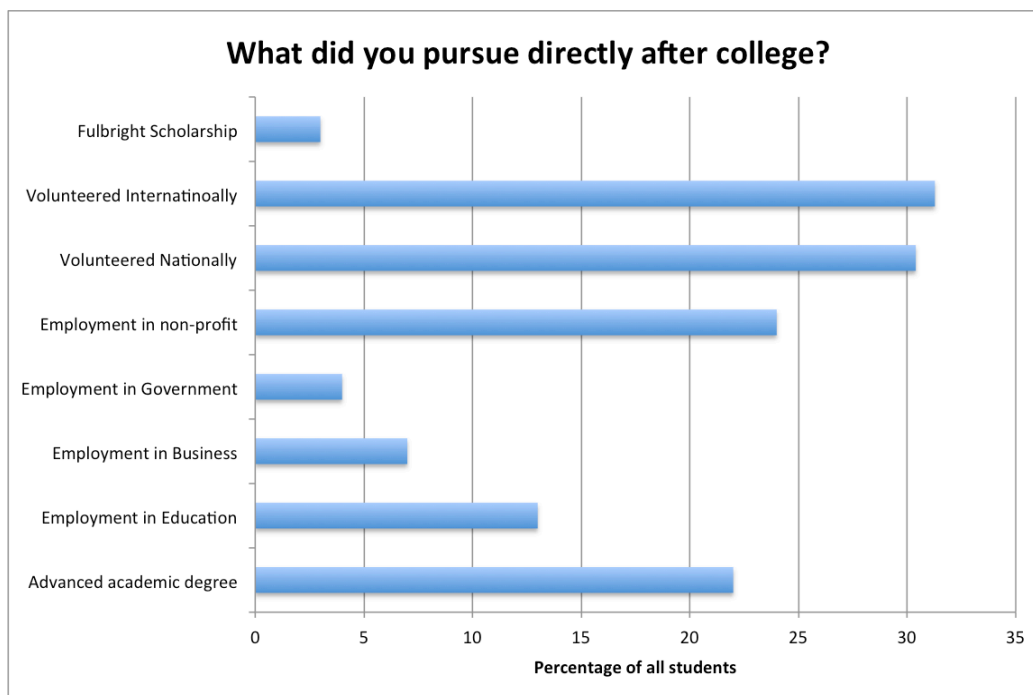


Figure 7. What students pursued directly after college

As depicted in Figure 7, over 60% of students volunteered either nationally or internationally directly after college.

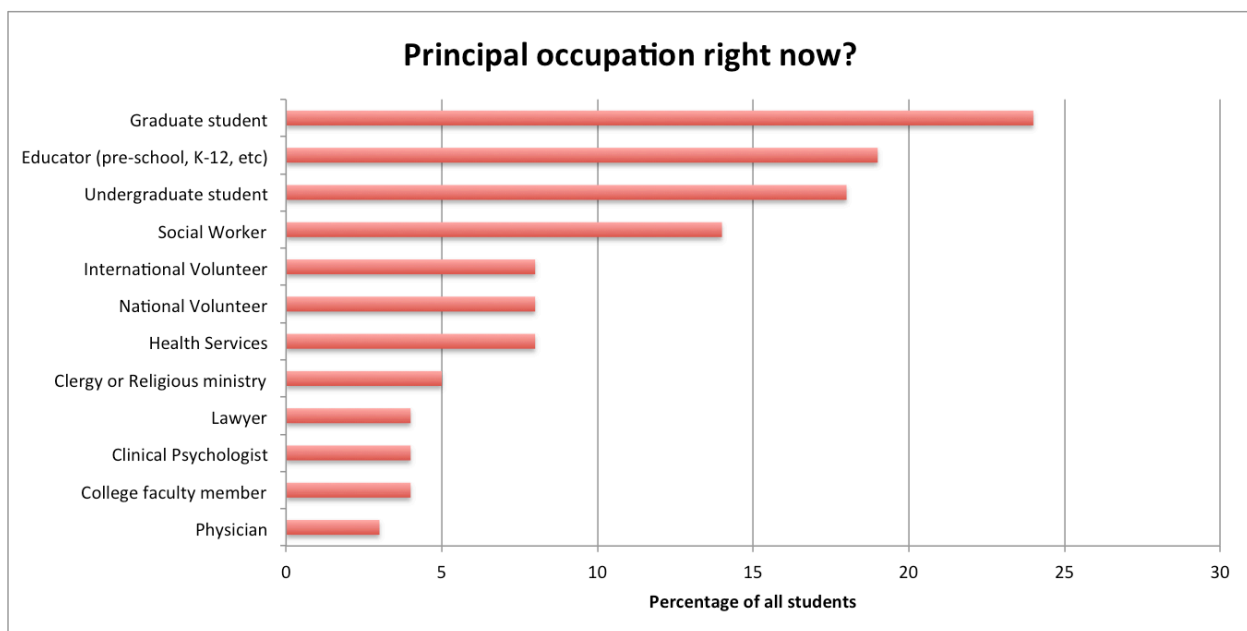


Figure 8. Students' current occupation

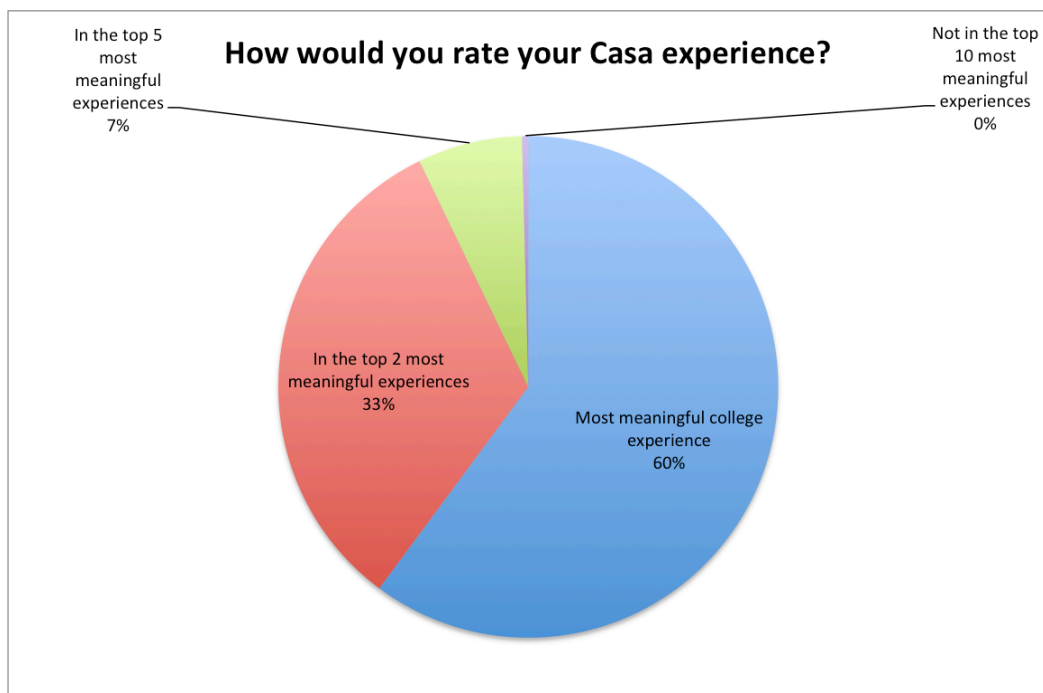


Figure 9. How students rated their Casa experience

As figure 9 demonstrates, 93% of the students reported that their Casa experience was in the top two most meaningful experiences they had had in college.

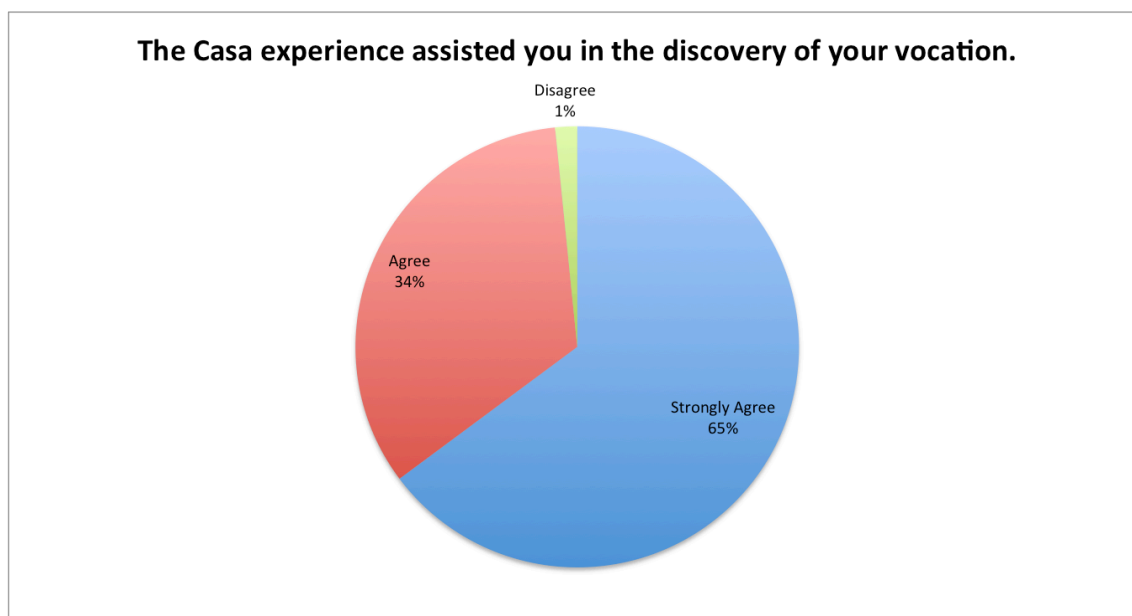


Figure 10. Casa experience in relation to students' discovery of their vocation

As figure 10 demonstrates, 99% of the students reported that the Casa experience assisted them in the discovery of their vocation.

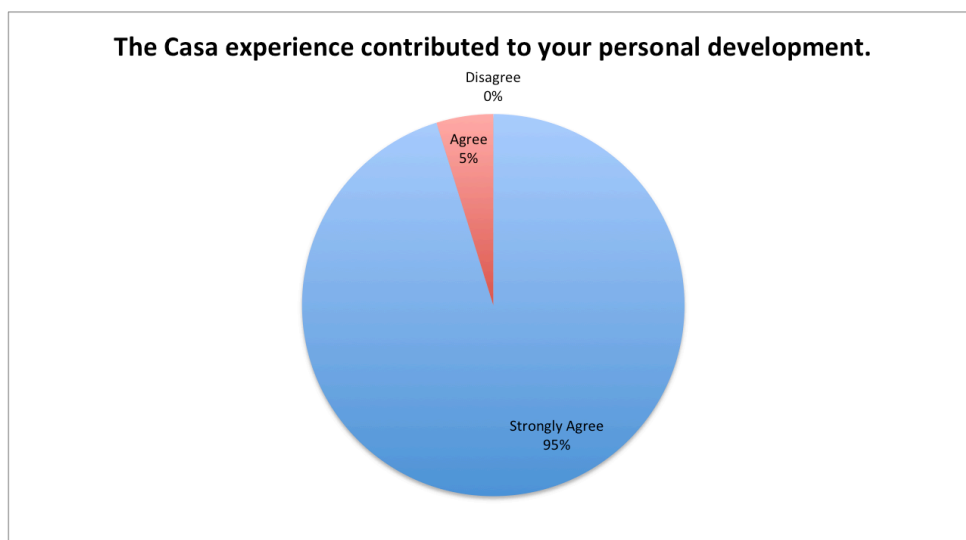


Figure 11. Casa experience in relation to students' personal development

One hundred percent of the students reported that the Casa experience contributed to their personal development.

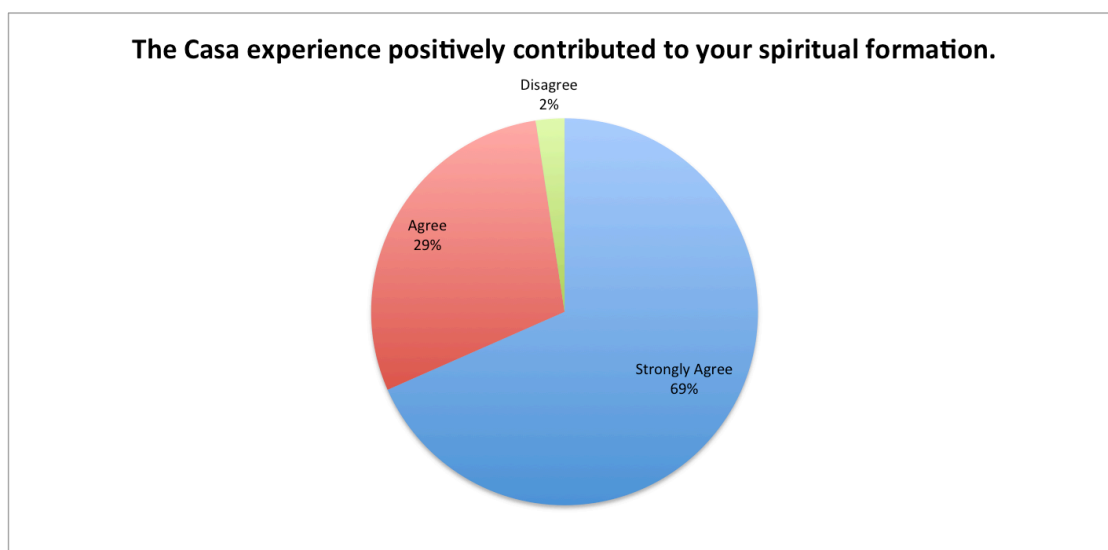


Figure 12. Casa experience in relation to students' spiritual formation

As figure 12 demonstrates, 98% of the students responded that the Casa experience positively contributed to their spiritual formation.

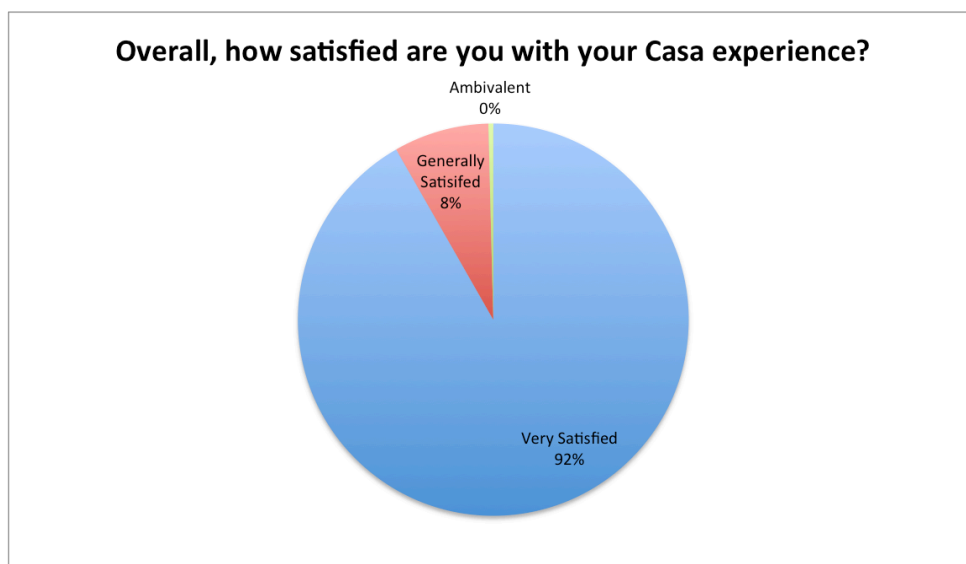


Figure 13. Students' level of satisfaction

As figure 13 describes, 100% of students reported being satisfied with their Casa experience.

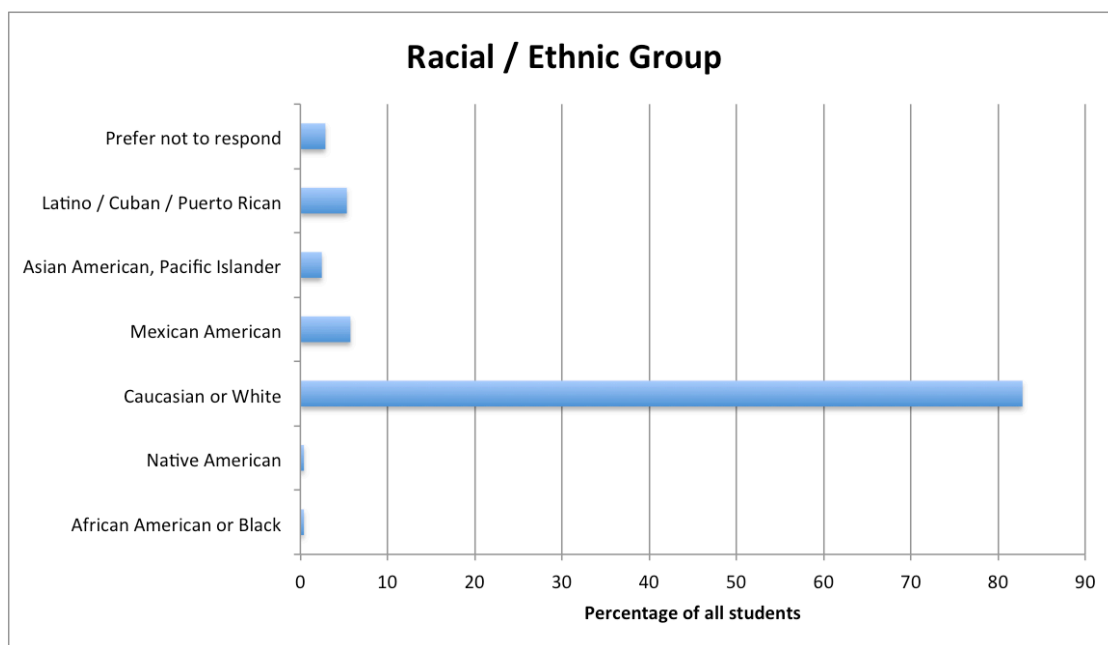


Figure 14. Racial / Ethnic makeup of Casa students

Figure 14 depicts students' racial / ethnic makeup. Over 80% of students identified as Caucasian or White; 5.3% as Latino / Cuban / Puerto Rican; 2.46% as Asian American / Pacific Islander; 5.74% as Mexican American; .50% as African American or Black; and .50% as Native American.

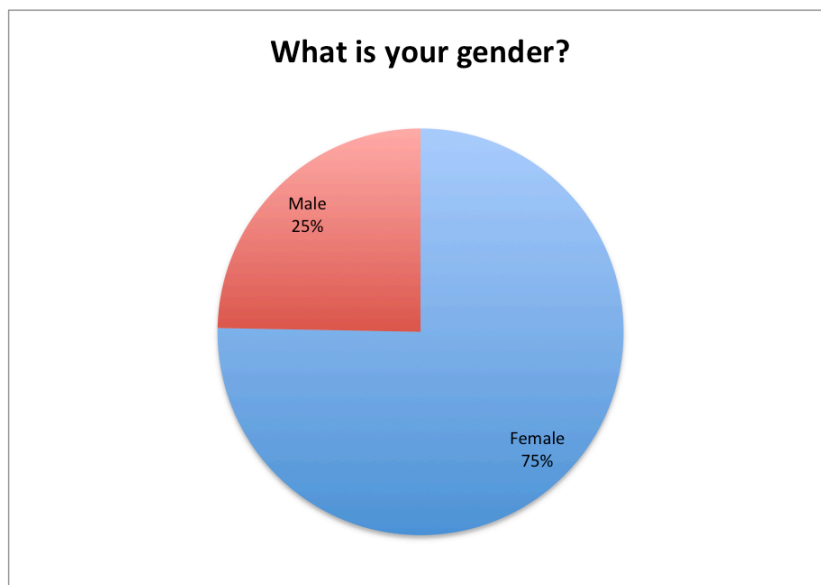


Figure 15. Students' gender

As figure 15 highlights, 75% of the students were female and 25% were male.

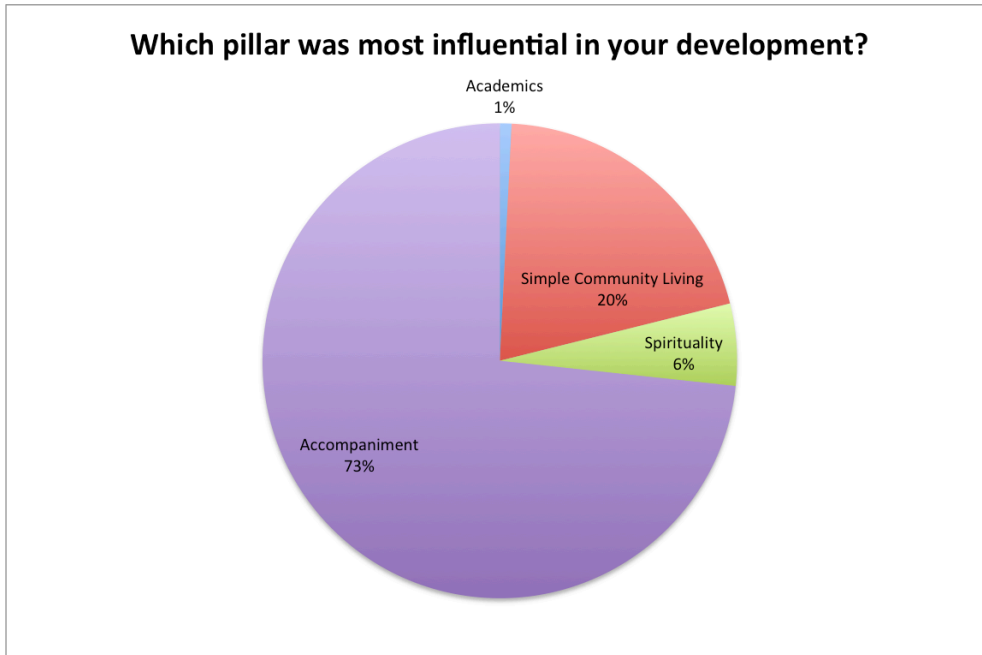


Figure 16. Most influential pillar

Figure 16 highlights that 73% of students found the pillar of accompaniment most influential in their development followed by community living (20%), spirituality (6%), and academics (1%).

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to document and describe the unique attributes of the Casa de la Solidaridad educational model and provide some insight into how the Casa program has influenced the lives of Casa alumni. The research questions were:

1. What are the unique attributes of the Casa de la Solidaridad educational model?
2. How has the Casa experience influenced the lives of Casa alums?

The first question addressed the need to thoroughly describe the Casa de la Solidaridad model, which has been increasingly recognized by leaders in Jesuit higher education as exemplary in fulfilling the mission of Jesuit higher education (Brackley, 2006; Locatelli, 2005; Ravizza, 2010; Weiler, 2012). Until now, there had only been verbal presentations of the unique attributes of the Casa model. The resulting case study draws from interviews with praxis site partners, staff members and co-directors as well as a review of Casa policies, manuals and program schedules. The case study describes the Casa de la Solidaridad educational model in depth.

The second research question addressed the need to better understand how the Casa program has influenced the lives of the students. This question was motivated by the desire to better understand students' perceptions of the Casa's impact on their lives and in response to major talks given by Kolvenbach (2008), ex-Superior General of the Society of Jesus, and Nicholas (2010), Superior Generals of the Society of Jesus, in which they proposed that the real measure of Jesuit universities lies in who their students

become. A survey was designed and sent to Casa alums in order to obtain data on their perceptions of the influence Casa had on their lives.

Case study

Rooted in the Jesuit tradition of education and inspired by the lives and commitments of the 6 UCA Jesuit martyrs, Casa de la Solidaridad integrates four areas - accompaniment with those who suffer from poverty, academics, living simply in community and spirituality. The case study presented here highlighted key attributes within each of these areas and discussed programmatic ways in which they are actualized. The strength of the educational model lies in the complex ways these areas are integrated.

The case study presents “accompaniment” as the most adequate way to describe the educational approach to Casa’s praxis-based education model. Accompaniment maintains a rootedness in the Jesuit educational tradition and infers mutuality and respect between students and community members – something that is not necessarily conveyed in the term service learning. For us, it is also significant that the term accompaniment is the word that the Salvadorans use to describe the educational activity with students.

Survey Research

Before launching into a discussion about the findings, I must confess that, as co-director of the program, it was quite moving for me to read students’ honest, thorough and thoughtful responses to the various questions. Students responded at much greater length than I anticipated. Reviewing the data was both consoling and confirming of the work we have been doing in El Salvador over the last 14 years. The data has also presented us with some important challenges such as improving the diversity of our student population and recruiting more male students into the program. On whole,

however, the survey data was extremely gratifying to review and will be very useful in our work at Casa de la Solidaridad.

The survey instrument revealed a great deal of information about the students and how they view the influence that the Casa has had on their lives. The following information was obtained: a) biographical data including educational and work/volunteer commitments; b) perceptions of the general influence of Casa experience on their lives and c) perceptions of learned outcomes in relation to each of the stated pillars of the program – namely accompaniment of the poor, rigorous academic study, living simply in community, and spirituality. Findings are discussed in the order they are presented in Chapter IV.

It is noteworthy that nearly 60% of all Casa alums responded to the on-line survey. The average response rate for on-line surveys is 30%, according to the Instructional Assessment Resources department at the University of Texas (2013). This high response rate may reflect the students' investment in the program and their gratitude for having had this educational experience.

The first question, which asked students to describe the ways in which the Casa experience influenced the person they have become, directly addressed the second research question and was intentionally open-ended so students could express themselves on their terms. In some ways, a full reading of all students' responses to this question most accurately answers the research question. In analyzing the data, I identified the following categories as a way of classifying the students' responses, listed by highest percentage to lowest: vocation, expanded imagination, experiences of solidarity with those who suffer most, personal development, relationships with others, spirituality,

identity and experience of community living. Given the nature of the educational experience, these findings make sense. It is striking to note that the students' responses and the Casa educational model have something in common: integration. The students' responses were extremely integrated, rarely containing one category and most often more than two. This parallels the Casa's design, which stresses integration.

The second question asked students to comment on what they had learned by accompanying the poor. As one may expect, given the nature of Casa, students responded by saying they learned about the realities of poverty and the subsequent effects it had on people. They also wrote about their own personal growth and transformation in light of these experiences. Interestingly, over 50% of the students said that they had learned about the process of accompaniment itself. This is important to note especially when considered with the fact that over 60% of alums volunteer either nationally or internationally in their first year after graduation. What they learned from the process of accompaniment at Casa could serve them well as they approach other marginal populations in their volunteer work.

The third question asked students to respond about what they had learned from the academic component. Interestingly, students wrote most frequently about integrating their classes with the reality they encountered in their praxis sites. In addition, students highlighted learning about the course material as well as how to think and analyze critically.

The fourth question asked students to comment on what they had learned from the component of living simply in community. The highest percentage of students responded that the community living aspect provided them with a great deal of support. They also

reported it gave them a chance to support one another. Interestingly, 42% of the students said that the simple living aspect enabled them to focus more intently on relationships and experiences. This was in contrast to 15% of students who referred to simple living in terms of maintaining awareness of those living in poverty. As students become increasingly more dependent on the internet as a way of relating to one another, it will be interesting to see if we find more students desiring to live simply, wanting to disconnect from cyber-relating and investing instead in face-to-face relating.

The fifth question asked students what they had learned from the spirituality component. These results require some discussion. Given the complexity and diversity of students' responses, three broad areas were identified as categories – appropriated faith, introduction to spirituality, and not religious. The appropriated faith category was given to responses in which students referred to their faith / spirituality in a way that demonstrated an increased investment in or deepening of their spirituality or faith. It also referred to responses that demonstrated an authoring or claiming of their faith or spirituality. Notably, 88% of the students responded in this manner. When we take this into consideration with the fact that 98% of the students reported that the Casa experience positively contributed to their spiritual formation, it seems irrefutable that Casa excels in providing students an opportunity to strengthen and deepen their faith life.

Students were asked to comment on the integration of the pillars and to provide examples demonstrating it. The theme of integration is worth highlighting here. As the case study indicated, Casa's educational model is intentionally designed to integrate the areas of academics, accompaniment with those living in poverty, living simply in community and spirituality. Student responses indicate that, although they had individual

preferences for one pillar over others, the integration of them all was fundamental to their learning. This research provides evidence that the integration of Casa's pillars is the engine that drives students' transformation.

Quantitative findings

The quantitative questions also produced findings worthy of discussion. One of the most striking results was that over 60% of Casa students volunteer for a year after college either nationally or internationally. As a basis for comparison, this past year only 5.5% of Boston College students went on to do a year of service after graduation (Armstrong, personal communication, July 11, 2013). After graduation, the majority of Casa students desire to stay connected with people who live in poverty. In this way, the Casa experience clearly impacts students' vocational commitments.

Currently, students are involved in a variety of careers. Forty percent are pursuing undergraduate or graduate degrees, 19% are involved with primary, secondary or adult education, 14% are social workers, and 5% are either clergy members or religious ministry workers.

Some questions were evaluative in nature. For example, students were asked to rate their Casa experience in relation to other meaningful experiences in college. The majority of students reported that their time at Casa was the most significant experience during their college years. 93% of all students rated their Casa experience as one of the two most meaningful experiences in college. In addition, 98% of respondents reported that the Casa experience assisted them in the discovery of their vocation and 100% responded that it contributed to their personal development. As mentioned above, 98% of students responded that the Casa positively contributed to their spiritual formation.

One hundred percent of the students reported being satisfied with the overall Casa experience. These results indicate that students found their Casa experience extremely meaningful.

It is important to address two statistics regarding the makeup of Casa alums. The first concerns the gender breakdown. Seventy-five percent of the alums that responded were female and 25% male. Nationally, 35% of students who study abroad are men and 65% women (Institute of International Education, 2009). Another national trend that could be at play is that women tend to volunteer more frequently than men (United States Department of Labor, 2012). The second important statistic concerns the breakdown of ethnicity. Eighty-three percent of students who responded self-identified as Caucasian or White while 6% responded as Mexican American, 5% as Latino (Cuban, Puerto Rican), and 3% as Asian American. Although according to the Institute of International Education (2009), this breakdown resembles national averages for study abroad; we can improve our efforts to attract and support underrepresented student populations.

Implications

Results from this research will be useful to those universities such as the University of San Francisco, Loyola Marymount University and Fordham University all of which want to create Casa-like programs. Although the Casa model evolved in the context of El Salvador, certain aspects may be relevant to other programs in other cultural contexts, especially given that students participating in these programs all come from a U.S. context. Of course, any new program must be adapted to the local culture and customs.

In addition to motivating leaders at Jesuit schools to replicate the Casa model internationally, these findings may encourage them to try to implement something like Casa at their home institutions. Students could, for example, live together in community in a low-income neighborhood located near campus and integrate academic classes with local praxis sites. Although Casa's model evolved in the Salvadoran context, there is no reason why it needs to be limited to El Salvador. As mentioned before, any replication of the model would certainly need to be adapted to and influenced by local culture.

It is worth noting at this point that while this dissertation describes the model's main attributes and provides examples, there is a difference in reading about the model and executing it. It would be a mistake, for example, for an administrator to simply give the case study to a young professional and ask them to implement it in another context. Understanding the model certainly could be useful to professionals who serve as liaisons between university students and marginal communities but knowing about the model and implementing it are two different things. For example, it is one thing to know we need to form *confianza* with people in communities and another thing to actually foster it.

A third implication is that the survey results will be useful to Casa co-directors in explaining to outside audiences the influence of the program on the lives of students. In addition, the data on the gender split as well as the percentages of students from different ethnicities will influence recruitment strategies.

A fourth implication concerns the use of language when describing immersion experiences. Currently, the term "service learning" is common at Jesuit colleges and universities. Casa's accompaniment approach is a better alternative. This research could encourage debate around how best to refer to these educational activities.

Lastly, this dissertation serves as a systematic documentation of the Casa educational model and the influence it has had on students and is a historical marker of this type of praxis-based education within Jesuit higher education.

Recommendations

In a speech he gave at Santa Clara University in 2000, Kolvenbach (2008), ex-Superior General of the Society of Jesus, introduced “well-educated solidarity” as the new standard for Jesuit education for the 21st century: “Tomorrow’s ‘whole person’ cannot be whole without an educated awareness of society and culture with which to contribute socially, generously, in the real world. Tomorrow’s whole person must have, in brief, a well-educated solidarity” (p. 155). This research demonstrated that the Casa de la Solidaridad educational model fosters well-educated solidarity. This was evidenced not only by the students’ written responses but also by how they are living their lives. In addition, the findings demonstrated that the Casa model successfully supported students’ exploration of their spirituality, something that is vital to Jesuit higher education, and influenced their vocational decisions in ways that kept students connected to people suffering from the effects of poverty. In essence, the research confirmed what Michael Weiler, S.J., Provincial of the California Province of the Society of Jesus, wrote to the three presidents of Jesuit universities in California – namely that Casa “...stands out as a premier example of how to integrate direct immersion experiences with rigorous academic analysis and Ignatian spiritual formation in order to produce the type of transformation Fr. Kolvenbach envisioned” (personal communication, July 16, 2012).

It is recommended, therefore, that leaders in Jesuit higher education explore ways they can leverage the large and robust international network of Jesuit colleges and universities and create a sustainable network of Casa programs.

In addition, more research needs to be done on the Casa model. For example, this study focused on students' perceptions of ways in which the Casa model influenced their lives. A longitudinal study is needed to better understand the how the Casa program impacts students' development. Also, research is needed to better understand the influence that students' presence has on praxis site communities. Lastly, there has been no research dedicated to understanding the experiences of the Salvadoran scholarship students in the Romero Program. A study focused on ways to promote their academic success would be especially valuable.

References

- Abbott, W. M. (1966). *The documents of Vatican II*. New York: The America Press.
- Armstrong, K. (2013). Armstrong, personal communication, July 11, 2013.
- Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities. (2010). *The Jesuit, Catholic mission of U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities*. Washington: AJCU. Retrieved from http://www.ajcunet.edu/Assets/Publications/File/The%20JesuitCatholic%20Mission%20of%20Jesuit%20Colleges%20and%20Universities_PDF.pdf
- Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities. (2012). *Resource book on international education at U.S. Jesuit colleges and universities*. Washington: AJCU. Retrieved from <http://www.ajcunet.edu/Resource-Book-on-International-Education>
- Beirne, C. J. (1996). *Jesuit education and social change in El Salvador*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Brackley, D. (2006). Higher standards, *America magazine*, 194(4).
- Brennan, F. (Ed.) (2010). *Shaping the future: Networking Jesuit higher education for a globalizing world*. Washington: AJCU. Retrieved from http://www.ajcunet.edu/Assets/Publications/File/Mexico%20City%20Report_07-11.pdf
- Creswell, J.W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.
- Currie, C. (2009, May). *Upon the commencement of LeMoyne College 2009*. Speech presented at LeMoyne College. Syracuse, NY.
- Daloz Parks, S. (2011). *Big questions, worthy dream: Mentoring young adults in their search for meaning, purpose and faith*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey Bass.
- Ellacuria, I. (1991). Is a different kind of university possible? In Hassett, J. & Lacey, (Eds.) *Towards a society that serves its people: The intellectual contributions of El Salvador's murdered Jesuits*. Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press.
- Ellacuria, I. (1982, June). *Commencement address Santa Clara University*. Santa Clara, CA. Retrieved from <http://www.scu.edu/Jesuits/ellacuria.html>
- Gallo, M. (2008). *Transnational engagement in international community-based learning in higher education: An El Salvadoran study*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of San Francisco, San Francisco, CA.

- General Congregation 32, (1977). *Documents of the 31st and 32nd General Congregation of the Society of Jesus*. The Institute of Jesuit Sources: Saint Louis, MO.
- General Congregation 35, (2008). Retrieved from <http://www.sjweb.info/35/documents/decrees.pdf>
- Gordon, D. (2003). Jesuit international education: Current approaches and challenges. *Conversations*, 23(3), 4-11.
- Guardado, O., Perez, J, Reyes, G., Yonkers-Talz, K., Yonkers-Talz, T. (Fall, 2007). Community-based learning in El Salvador. *Explore*, 16-19.
- Hennelly, A.T. (1990). *Liberation theology: A documentary history*. New York: Obris.
- International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education (1994). *Ignatian pedagogy: A practical approach*. In C.E. Meirose (Ed.), *Foundations* (pp. 237-71). Washington, DC: Jesuit Secondary Education Association.
- International Commission on the Apostolate of Jesuit Education. (1986). *The characteristics of Jesuit education*. Washington DC: Jesuit Secondary Education Association.
- Institute of International Education (2009). *Open doors: Report on international educational exchange*. Retrieved from http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d10/tables/dt10_233.asp
- Instructional Assessment Resources at the University of Texas in Austin (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.utexas.edu/academic/ctl/assessment/iar/teaching/gather/method/survey-Response.php>
- Kolvenbach, P. (2008). The Service of Faith and the Promotion of Justice in American Jesuit Higher Education. In Traub, G.W. (Ed.), *A Jesuit Education Reader* (pp. 144-162). Chicago: Loyola Press.
- Locatelli, P. (October, 2005). *The Catholic university of the 21st century: Educating for solidarity*. Speech presented at the Justice Conference at John Carroll University. University Heights, OH. Retrieved from http://www.loyola.edu/Justice/commitment/commitment2005/keynotes%20and%20panels/keynote_locatelli.doc. October 14, 2005.
- Nicolás, A. (April, 2010). *Depth, universality, and learned ministry: Challenges to Jesuit higher education today*. Speech presented at the conference entitled Networking Jesuit Higher Education: Shaping the Future for a Humane, Just, Sustainable Globe. Retrieved at:

http://www.sjweb.info/documents/ansj/100423_Mexico%20City_Higher%20Education%20Today_ENG.pdf

- O'Malley, J.W., (2000). How the first Jesuits became involved in education. In Duminuco, S.J. (Ed.), *The Jesuit ratio studiorum: 400th anniversary perspectives*. New York: Fordham University Press.
- Orcher, L. T. (2007). *Conducting a survey: Techniques for a term project*. Glendale, CA: Pyczak Publishing.
- Padberg, J.W. (1994). *Together in a Companionship: A history of the thirty-first, thirty-second, and thirty-third general congregations of the Society of Jesus*: St. Louis, MO: Institute of Jesuit Sources.
- Pope, S. (2010). Immersion trips. In Rausch, T.P. (Ed.), *Educating for faith and justice: Catholic higher education today*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.
- Privett, S. (2010). Personal communication, January 25, 2010.
- Privett, S. (Spring, 2013). Immersion experiences are essential for university leaders. *Connections*. Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities, Washington, D.C.
- Ravizza, M.A. (2010). Praxis-based education. In Rausch, T.P. (Ed.), *Educating for faith and justice: Catholic higher education today*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.
- Rausch, T.P. (2010). *Educating for faith and justice: Catholic higher education today*. Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press.
- Savard, J. (2010). *The impact of immersion programs upon undergraduate students of Jesuit colleges and universities*. (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of San Francisco, San Francisco.
- Second General Conference of Latin American Bishops (1973). *The Church in the present-day transformation of Latin America in the light of the Council, vol. 2, Conclusions*. Washington: Division of Latin America – USCC.
- Sheehan, T. (1989). Weep not for Ignacio Ellacuría but for ourselves. *National Catholic Reporter*, December 1, p. 7.
- Sobrinho, J. (1990). *Companions of Jesus: The murder and martyrdom of the Salvadoran Jesuits*. England: Russell Press Ltd.
- Society of Jesus in the United States (2012). *Ignatian Spirituality*. Retrieved from: <http://www.jesuit.org/ignatian-spirituality/>

- Stake, R.E. (1995). *The art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.
- Stein, S. & Stein, B. (1970). *The Colonial Heritage of Latin America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Tellis, W. (2002). In response: Integration of mission and instruction at Fairfield University. *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*, 21 (8).
- Tombs, D. (2009). Latin American liberation theology: Moment, movement, legacy. In Claffey, P. & Egan, J. (Eds.), *Movement or moment? Assessing liberation theology forty years after Medellin*. Germany: Peter Lang.
- Traub, G.W. (2008). *A Jesuit Education Reader*. Chicago: Loyola Press.
- United States Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics (2012). *Volunteering in the United States, 2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.bls.gov/news.release/volun.nr0.htm>
- UCA Editores (1989). Discurso de la Universidad Centroamericano José Simeón Canas en la firma del contrato con el BID. *Planteamiento Universitario*. San Salvador: UCA Editores.
- Weiler, M. (2012). Personal communication, July 16, 2012.
- Wolff, C. & Manuel, G. (2006). To fall in love and to be transformed: The history and development of immersion experiences at SCU. *Explore*. Santa Clara University: Ignatian Center, p. 5-11.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods, 4th edition*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Inc.
- Yonkers-Talz, K. (2003). Educating for International Solidarity. *Conversations on Jesuit Higher Education*: Vol. 23(6), 25-31.
- Yonkers-Talz, K. (2004). A learning partnership: U.S. college students and the poor in El Salvador. In Baxter Magolda, M. & King, P.M. (Eds.), *Learning Partnerships: Theory and Models of Practice to Educate for Self-Authorship*. Sterling, VA: Stylus Publishing, LLC.

Appendix A

Consent Statement

Purpose and Background

Kevin Yonkers-Talz, a graduate student in the School of Education at the University of San Francisco, is doing a study on the influence of the Casa de la Solidaridad (Casa) program on Casa alumni. The researcher is interested in obtaining information about Casa alumni as well as better understanding the influences the program had on students.

I am being asked to participate because I am a Casa alumnus.

Procedures

If I agree to be a participant in this study, the following will happen:

1. I will complete a survey about the influence of the Casa experience on my life.
2. I will complete a short questionnaire giving basic information about me, including age, gender, race, religion, and job history.

Risks and/or Discomforts

1. It is possible that some of the questions in this questionnaire may make me feel uncomfortable, but I am free to decline to answer any questions I do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time.
2. Participation in research may mean a loss of confidentiality. Study records will be kept as confidential as is possible. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Study information will be coded and kept in locked files at all times. Only study personnel will have access to the files.
3. Because the time required for my participation may be up to 1 hour, I may become tired or bored. Benefits

There will be no direct benefit to me from participating in this study. The anticipated benefit of this study is a better understanding of the influence that the Casa educational experience has had on Casa alumni.

Questions

If I have any questions or comments about participation in this study, I should first contact Kevin Yonkers-Talz at kyonkerstalz@gmail.com. If for some reason I do not wish to do this, I may contact the IRBPHS, which is concerned with protection of volunteers in research projects. I may reach the IRBPHS office by calling (415) 422-6091 and leaving a voicemail message, by e-mailing IRBPHS@usfca.edu, or by writing to the

IRBPHS, Department of Psychology, University of San Francisco, 2130 Fulton Street, San Francisco, CA 94117-1080.

Consent

PARTICIPATION IN RESEARCH IS VOLUNTARY. I am free to decline to be in this study, or to withdraw from it at any point.

By continuing this questionnaire, I give my consent to participate in this study.

Questions

1. In what ways has the Casa experienced influenced the person you have become?
2. As you know, one of the aspects of the program is accompaniment with the poor.
3. Please describe what you learned from this component of the experience.
4. Another component of the program is rigorous academic study. Please describe what you learned from this aspect of the program.
5. A third component of the program is simple community living. Please describe what you learned from this aspect of the program.
6. A fourth component of the program has to deal with spirituality. Please describe what you learned from this aspect of the program?
7. In what ways were these components (accompaniment, spirituality, simple community living and academics) integrated? Please give concrete examples
8. What did you pursue directly after college? Please describe.
 - Advanced academic degree
 - Employment in education
 - Employment in business
 - Employment in government
 - Employment in non-profit sector
 - Volunteered nationally
 - Volunteered internationally
 - Received Fulbright scholarship
9. What is your principal occupation right now? If you are not working for pay, what kind of work do you usually do or expect to do in the future? Please check box and elaborate below.
10. Compared to all your experiences in college, how would you rate your Casa experience?

Most meaningful college experience
 In the top 2 most meaningful college experiences
 In the top 5 most meaningful college experiences
 Not in the top 10 most meaningful college experiences

11. The Casa experience assisted you in the discovery of your vocation.
 Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree
12. The Casa experience contributed to your personal development.
 Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree
13. The Casa experience positively contributed to your spiritual formation.
 Strongly Agree
 Agree
 Disagree
 Strongly Disagree
14. Overall, how satisfied are you with your Casa experience?
 Very Satisfied
 Generally Satisfied
 Ambivalent
 Generally Dissatisfied
 Very Dissatisfied
15. Racial / Ethnic Group?
 African American or Black
 Native American (Indian, Alaskan, Hawaiian)
 Caucasian or White
 Mexican American, Mexican Origin
 Asian American, Pacific Islander
 Latino / Cuban / Puerto Rican
 I prefer not to respond.
16. What is your gender?
 Female
 Male
 Transgender or other
17. Which pillar was most influential in your development?
 Academics
 Simple Community Living
 Spirituality
 Accompaniment