

## COMMUNITY-ORIENTED SERVICE-LEARNING: A UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE FOR PREVENTING CANNABIS ABUSE IN VULNERABLE ADOLESCENTS AND YOUNG PEOPLE

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*Learning integrated into community action promotes a more active citizenry. More specifically, service-learning (S-L) embedded into higher education can represent a big challenge yet also an opportunity to involve the whole university community in social and community development. This paper addresses this teaching method by identifying and reviewing the different components that define S-L, that is: civic engagement, social responsibility, civic education, partnership, and reflection. The ways in which S-L can be introduced into the curriculum are explained, through detailing experiences already carried out in the teaching of psychology. Current available data on its efficacy in university education are analyzed. The focus now turns to a university experience involving Community Psychology students across Bachelor's and Master's degrees. During this experience, students on both programmes make their final-year projects to develop a prevention resource aimed at young people at high risk of problematic cannabis use. Ultimately, this program not only teaches students the principles of Community Psychology but also give them an opportunity to put them into practice.*

**Keywords:** *service-learning, higher education, community psychology*

### 1. Service-Learning Programs

Viewed from a broad perspective, Bringle and Clayton (2012, p.105) state that service-learning (S-L) goes beyond simply 'applied' learning. In fact, they define it as "*the integration of academic material, relevant community-based service activities, and critical reflection in a reciprocal partnership that engages students, faculty/staff, and community members to achieve academic, civic, and personal learning objectives as well as to advance public purposes*".

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Various concepts such as ‘*community-based learning*’ and ‘*learning that serves the community*’ (Deeley, 2016) make reference to this pedagogical approach that seeks to encourage students to utilize the skills learnt in the classroom while participating in activities alongside members of their community (Bringle, Reeb, Brown & Ruiz, 2016). As such, S-L is a methodology that combines teaching with community service. In line with this definition, it could be said that this educational tool not only seeks to train competent individuals in a particular area of expertise, but also intends to take things further by training competent citizens who are capable of changing the world and making it a fairer and more habitable place (Batlle, 2013).

Therefore, this learning process not only seeks to “serve the purpose of learning” but also seeks to “learn to serve” (Bringle et al., 2016a) and to engage with communities in different ways; for example, through direct service, political participation, and grassroots and non-profit organizations. This can be achieved through designing a wide range of activities such as providing homelessness support, mentoring children with special education needs, assessing the efficacy of services, promoting awareness of social problems, conducting research in support of social reform, and, in our particular case, developing an audiovisual tool to help prevent cannabis abuse amongst adolescents. From this perspective, S-L should be understood as a means to teach the objectives of civic engagement, civic education, partnership and critical reflection. Therefore, the components identified in S-L are as follows:

*Civic Engagement.* Bringle, Hatcher, and Clayton (2006) view civic engagement as one of S-L’s intrinsic dimensions, as it encourages students to become responsible citizens. Butin (2003) supports this idea by stating that the objectives underlying S-L in terms of global outcomes link the education system and the community. These experiences encourage a more active citizenry that helps us to achieve the ultimate goal of promoting a fairer, more equitable society. This makes universities more socially responsible. This social function is shared by European universities via the Bologna Declaration of 1999. The social responsibility of higher education should be ethical in nature and acknowledge the impact that staff and students’ skills and competencies can have in building our communities.

*Civic Education.* This teaching and learning methodology is not only intended to help students learn from experience; it seeks to take things further by teaching them how to serve and engage with the community by adopting certain values and embracing civic responsibility (Bringle & Hatcher, 2002). To paraphrase Ernest Boyer, the aim of education is not only to offer forward new knowledge, but also to channel that knowledge to humane ends, and help the students become citizens that can promote the common good. Thus, S-L is a suitable educational tool that prompts students to think about, critically examine, evaluate and analyze what their role in society is with regards to civic, social, economic and political issues, as well as to develop the skills and willingness to perform these roles.

*Partnership.* Working alongside other members of the community is another key aspect of S-L. The act of introducing community-oriented activities into curricula is a core, defining component of civic engagement in general and of S-L in particular (Bringle et al., 2016a). The community service with this methodology is geared towards establishing a reciprocal relationship between students and members of the community, guided by democratic principles such as equality, inclusion, and active participation (Saltmarsh et al., 2009).

*Reflection.* This is an essential component as it ensures that the combination of theory and practice satisfies the desired objectives (Bringle et al., 2016a; Deeley, 2016; Welch & Billig, 2004). To this end, reflection-based activities should be well thought out, making it possible to

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intentionally connect the service experience with the learning objectives based on the syllabus. These activities should be defined as well-structured (both parties fully aware of the tasks to be performed); repeatable over time (regular not isolated experiences); open to feedback/comments and evaluation; and receptive to the transfer of civic values (Bringle & Hatcher, 1999; Hatcher, Bringle & Muthiah, 2004). A good reflection practice can occur before, during and after service in the community and has the potential to generate new learning experiences for later assessment (Ash & Clayton, 2009).

### ***1.1. S-L Experiences in the Teaching of Psychology***

In recent decades, the emerging and active work of teachers and researchers has given rise to a variety of educational choices that provide flexibility in the pedagogical design of this educational method and they are applicable to diverse educational contexts. In fact, S-L methodology has been used across different university levels (undergraduate and postgraduate); it has been linked to specific subjects or offered for a group of subjects; and, finally, it has served as an introduction to the degree course and has enabled degree completion. Several typologies have been identified as a result of this range of experiences. Bringle et al. (2016a) distinguish between the types of programs according to: a) how they are introduced into the curriculum; or b) the type of activity the student pursues (pp. 57-59).

In the first case, there are several options that can be considered at different stages of the degree owing to the way in which they are embedded into the curriculum. For example, there are those S-L activities that are offered early on in the discipline (e.g., via introductory degree courses and university preparation seminars) or as part of specialized training which offers different subjects, this being the most popular option among teaching staff. There are also training activities that are implemented late on in the degree through work placements and end-of studies projects. Another very common option is the provision of specific S-L programs within the syllabus' optional subjects unit, which are mostly transversal across disciplines. Regarding the type of activity, they adopt established classifications system such as those of the Florida Department of Education (2009, cited in Bringle et al., 2016a, p.57) to indicate four types of activities (i.e. direct, indirect, research and advocacy). In the direct service activities, students get involved in the services that community organizations provide to their users. Indirect service activities are about providing the means and resources to support social and community initiatives led by project partners. Research activities are intended for making advances in knowledge and social action, whereas advocacy activities directly address the root causes of social problems, creating awareness of the programs as well as encouraging and committing groups and communities to initiate processes of change.

The past few decades have given us a varied and extensive literature with clear examples of S-L programs implemented in university settings in several possible ways. Therefore, a categorical analysis of these activities is welcome because it delivers a coherent description of the program and allows us to identify best practices. From this perspective, it is worth highlighting the work conducted by the research group heading the project 'Europe Engage' (Aramburuzabala et al., 2016), who have compiled and analyzed the experiences of ten European countries subjecting them, insofar as possible, to the scrutiny of 14 quality standards identified by this research group (Stark et al., 2016).

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As one would expect, S-L programs match with the professional skills inherent in the field of psychology, meaning that it would not be difficult to identify noteworthy experiences in the training of psychologists. We can see one such experience in the psychology degree offered by the Latin American University of Science and Technology (ULACIT) in Costa Rica, where S-L systematically constitutes one of the learning evaluation methods available to students. Campos and Chaverri (2015) acknowledge the progress made in the program across different psychology degree subjects. However, the authors also emphasized that it has required a major commitment from all parties involved (i.e. students, teachers and community organizations). This commitment represents a real challenge, something that has also been reflected in the work of Campbell and Oswald (2018), who designed an S-L experience as part of a home-visiting program for a graduate-level lifespan human development course aimed at promoting students' critical thinking skills. It has been shown that these experiences influence a student's choice of specialization when introduced in the earlier modules, and this especially occurs in psychology studies. Peterson, Wardwell, Will, and Campana (2014) embedded an S-L internship into a career preparation seminar for undergraduate psychology students. An analysis of the students' reflective journals revealed how this experience offered them the opportunity to put their skills and abilities into practice in a work environment, which added value to their experience. Therefore, an obvious advantage of these programs is that they give students a more realistic picture of their future career paths.

Other initiatives sign up to already existing programs, thus making them more integrated and sustainable. Lalueza, Sánchez-Busqués, and Padrós (2016) describe an S-L program that falls within the framework of a collaboration project, namely the Shere-Rom project. This initiative is coordinated by a UAB (Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona) research team by agreement with Barcelona City Council and mediated by the Municipal Council of the Gypsy Community of Barcelona. This project offers an S-L program across different instructional levels. The less experienced students access it via the practical content of four undergraduate degree subjects, namely Development Psychology, Cultural Psychology, Psychosocial and Community Intervention, and Children and Families in Difficult Situations. These students receive basic training before participating in the project. At a more advanced level, the participating students are those on degree work placements and postgraduate students working on research tasks. With regard to student self-assessment, the authors highlight a number of acquired learnings including awareness of social and cultural diversity and the need for intervention to enact social change; confidence in one's relational skills and conflict resolution; and better training in practice-related competencies corresponding to a degree in psychology. Davidson, Jimenez, Onifade, and Hankins (2010) also describe how they developed and modelled an S-L program based on a collaboration program known as the 'Adolescent Diversion Project', which was launched by a group of researchers from Michigan State University, Ingham County Juvenile Court, and the community of Ingham County, offering an alternative intervention for delinquent youth.

In another way, S-L usually exposes students to a genuine problem, forcing them to actively seek out solutions. In that regards, it is necessary that the students acquire specific skills and abilities to investigate a real case and identify possible solutions. Thus, it is no surprise to find examples of S-L combined with other methods such as problem-based learning (PBL). Connor-Greene (2002) describes in detail how she combines features from both methods in an undergraduate Abnormal Psychology course. In small groups, students were tasked with locating and evaluating information for a specific psychiatric disorder (problem-based component) and providing a service to the community through the creation of a resource guide with information

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on psychiatric diagnosis and treatment (service component). In order to draw up useful resources, the students paid site visits to mental health treatment facilities and documented what they observed. This experience introduced them to the challenges that mental health clients and their families and friends face.

In short, S-L adopts several approaches, and as argued by Bringle et al. (2016a), determining which is the most appropriate will depend on the objectives proposed and negotiations held with community partners. Depending on the circumstances, teaching staff and research groups can propose different options across specific courses and subjects. However, this can also be coordinated at a departmental level or the host university itself. Here we are talking about the institutionalization of service-learning. A clear example of this is the ULACIT experience, which also can be found in Froese, Vogts-Scribner, Ealey, and Fairchild (2003).

## ***1.2. Research on S-L***

Systematic reviews and meta-analysis studies have demonstrated the impact that S-L programs have across different student learning domains. It has been shown how the participation in S-L activities: a) enhances the acquisition of knowledge and skills inherent to the discipline that integrates the S-L methodology; b) contributes to personal development and interpersonal skills including critical thought, problem solving, self-efficacy, leadership, and communication in a variety of contexts; and c) encourages student commitment to active citizenship and social responsibility (Celio, Durlak & Dymnicki, 2011; Conway, Amel & Gerwien, 2009; Mc Menamin, Mc Grath, Cantillon & Mac Farlane, 2014; Novak, Markey & Allen, 2007; Stewart & Wubbena, 2015; Warren, 2012; Yorio & Ye, 2012).

Celio et al. (2011) conducted a meta-analysis to compare the effect sizes of S-L programs on several learning areas. The authors observed a significantly higher effect in academic achievement than in the other outcome areas under study such attitudes toward self, attitudes toward school and learning, civic engagement, and social skills. In addition, upper-level students tend to report greater gains compared with school-age students. They also found that these outcomes are more consistent if a quality measure is used. Thus, the authors concluded that better outcomes were obtained for those studies that included the four practices recommended by the National Service-Learning Cooperative. These practices are: (a) linking programs to academic and program curriculum or objectives; (b) incorporating student voice; (c) involving community partners; and (d) providing opportunities for reflection (National Youth Leadership Council, 2011, cited in Celio et al., 2011). Another factor under study has been the modality of access to the program, which is either optional or required; its moderating effect has been proven in students' cognitive development (Yorio & Ye, 2012).

It has also been shown how the outcomes of S-L programs are dependent on the method and the learning assessment instruments used, although the conclusions drawn from these studies have been varied. For example, Yorio and Ye (2012) were able to determine the moderating effect of the research design upon observing a differential impact on the learning outcomes depending on whether the studies included a pre-experimental design or whether they incorporated control-group designs. As for the measure used, Stewart and Wubbena's (2015) systematic review found reflective writing to be the most frequently used assessment method over other more objective measurements such as exams and performance tasks. Furthermore, better results have been obtained when the reflection is structured (Conway et al., 2009) and

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discussion-based (Yorio & Ye, 2012). When this more ‘subjective’ method is compared with other more ‘objective’ methods, they also observe its moderating effect on learning outcomes (Yorio & Ye, 2012). Conversely, some studies have not found any noteworthy differences between subjective and objective learning measures (Celio et al, 2011; Warren, 2012).

In summary, these studies have successfully demonstrated S-L’s efficacy in student outcomes. It seems that better learning outcomes are achieved when the needs of communities are addressed and action is embedded into the curriculum; they can also depend on the program’s features. However, we are still unable to draw definitive conclusions, meaning that we need to advance our understanding of the effects of this learning methodology on learning. In fact, all of these studies have highlighted the methodological difficulties they have come across, the main one being a lack of studies to draw on in order to conduct meta-analytical studies. It has also been difficult to draw any conclusions on the current state of knowledge in relation to learning, given that these reviews have employed different criteria when it comes to conceptualizing learning outcomes. Some studies have used specific learning-outcome categorization criteria (Celio et al, 2011; Stewart & Wubbena, 2015; Yorio & Ye, 2012) while others have used criteria previously defined in the literature (Conway et al., 2009; McMenamin et al., 2014; Novak et al., 2007).

Given the specificities of these programs, it would seem that, as Bringle and Steinber (2010) suggest, research in this field should be guided by theory and supported by an existing knowledge base. It is also important to take into account the specific characteristics of the context in which the program takes place. Here we can highlight the work of Bringle, Ruiz, Brown and Reeb (2016), who define S-L programs within the context of psychology teaching, and the results derived within the framework of the “Europe Engage” project, where universities from European countries have taken part to “*identify existing S-L practice, promote S-L as a pedagogical approach, and create a network in Europe, where much remains to be done in terms of civic engagement and S-L within higher education*” (McIlrath et al., 2016, p.4). Some reviews also argue in favor of higher methodological rigor through the incorporation of experimental designs. These would help give a clearer response to what constitutes the most effective program model (Stewart & Wubbena, 2015; Warren, 2012). In fact, this decision cannot rest solely on self-reports, despite their importance to analyze students’ reflective processes. However, incorporating these designs would clash with S-L’s own philosophy, having demonstrated that the most beneficial designs are those in which the student signs up on their own accord.

As can be seen, S-L programs have been implemented since decades, but they can still be considered as an innovative methodological strategy. In addition, research has devoted more effort to identify the benefits for students whilst overlooking both ones the education institution and the community. Below is a description of a program that aimed to incorporate the good practices highlighted by Celio et al. (2011) and that gives equal ownership to all stakeholders. This takes place within the teaching of Community Psychology, that share many of the values of S-L, and in the students’ final-year projects because it makes possible the incorporation of this methodology in a more flexible way. The S-L experience involves undergraduate psychology students who had received basic CP training and wished to continue in this specialty area as well as students who have chosen to specialize in this area of study by undertaking a Master’s degree in Psychology of Social and Community Intervention at the University of Seville.

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## 2. S-L Experience at the University of Seville

In October 2017, a group of lecturers from the University of Seville partnered with the Town Council of la Rinconada near Seville (Andalusia, southern Spain), to launch a S-L project. The purpose of which was to create a tool able to capture addiction narratives thereby preventing problematic cannabis use amongst vulnerable adolescents and young people. Using the terminology proposed by Bringle et al. (2016a), it intended to provide an indirect service that involves students with the institutional support of the University of Seville and aims to train future professionals to be more aware of social problems<sup>1</sup>. The proposal arose from the initiative of professionals working with the selected group of adolescents and young people who lacked specific cannabis prevention resources, acknowledging the social reality of this vulnerable group.

Given the characteristics of the project, it was decided that the best way to respond to this need and fit it into an S-L program was to embed it into the psychology end-of-studies projects. Therefore, the project responded to a community demand in a formal teaching context, providing students the opportunity to earn the required credits to complete their studies while encouraging a more sustained commitment from students and teacher tutors. The S-L project required considerable immersion in time in order to earn 6 ECTS in the case of Bachelor's students' final-year projects and 10 ECTS in the case of Master's students' final-year projects. These projects included coordinated research and intervention between students and psychology faculty staff. They tapped into the synergies from both groups whilst also introducing third actor, namely professionals who attend to the needs of the vulnerable population under study.

### 2.1. Method

#### 2.1.1. Participants

The program development required an involvement from the following actors and institutions:

- 1) The University of Seville through the Development Cooperation Office, which allocates grants for implementing S-L projects that have an impact on local development.
- 2) La Rinconada Town Council, through the community-based social services and the teams that offer treatment to families and minors in collaboration with the local outpatient treatment center, which addresses addiction issues in a coordinated manner. These professionals saw the need for a selective prevention intervention aimed at adolescents with problematic cannabis use which not only addresses predisposing factors of drug abuse, but also that identify protective factors against the trivialization that surrounds cannabis use, and within a more contextualized approach.
- 3) A group of researchers from the University of Seville who were at the time specializing in developing models and explanatory health behavior theories to better tackle the issue at stake. Specifically, they drew from addictive behavior theories and their experience in community intervention.

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<sup>1</sup> Program funded by the Vice-Rectorate of Social and Community Services attached to the University of Seville within the Development Cooperation Office (Call for Grants for Development Cooperation Activities and Projects 2016/2017) and developed within the framework of a collaboration agreement with La Rinconada Town Council (Seville).

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- 4) Students undertaking their final project to gain ECTS with the assistance of a supervising professor.
  - 5) Professionals from different entities (educational, health and community development) and potential beneficiaries, namely mothers and teenage students. These participants engaged in focus groups to assess the prevention tool developed by the project.

### *2.1.2. The Program*

The rationale for the project emerged from a combination of the knowledge, training, experience, and preventive intervention in the community. The next pages shall describe the service component and the learning component of the program.

#### *Service Component:*

This program adopted an analysis of the situation–problem and a context-centered intervention approach. The available statistical data indicate that cannabis is the most widely consumed recreational drug in Europe after alcohol and tobacco. It also ranks second as the substance people most request treatment for (European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, 2017). Data on health and social care compiled by Drug Addiction Centres of the Seville Provincial Council in 2015 revealed that 12% of people receiving care reported abusive cannabis use problems; with users who most sought help for this reason (40.4%) aged between 18 and 25. Thus, this makes it necessary to develop prevention campaigns that address harmful cannabis use and to provide tools that help control this behavior.

A contextual approach to social problems is based on the assumption that meanings and personal and community-based experiences are constructed in specific social and historic contexts. Storytelling as a narrative technique favors this contextualized treatment. Storytelling is considered a form of narrative communication in which any person (real or fictional) shares a significant life experience, and does so through oral testimony or by using digital media and resources. These stories are linked to our personal identity (McAdams, 2001) in that they create shared meanings of health and illness (Murray, 1999) as well as community values and culture (Andrews, Bentley, Crawford, Pretlow & Tingen, 2007). From an empowerment approach (Rappaport, 2000), narratives based on strengths and capabilities encourage active and positive development. Thus, the narratives can exert an influence on processes of change. The stories we tell have the power to shape and change current and future behaviors and have the potential to change who we are and who we will be. From a persuasive approach, narrative accounts need to be chosen and told in the right way to constitute a “good story”, precisely to reflect a desired community narrative (Strobbe & Kurtz, 2012).

The narrative technique helps to normalize certain behaviors, which in turn, can motivate people to seek help, treatment and recovery. As such, the characteristics projected by narratives can exert an influence on processes of change encompassing attitudes, beliefs and changes in behavior. Factors including the story’s appeal, the characters’ cultural roots, the events and language enable us to better identify with the character and narrator, leading to an increased readiness for behavioral change (Gubrium, Hill & Flicker, 2014). If the story being told strikes a cord with the listener’s personal story, this can create a greater responsiveness to other aspects of the program (Strobbe & Kurtz, 2012). As a prevention tool, this technique can be used prior to intervention to reinforce healthy messages (Gubrium et al., 2014).



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Within the framework of the project, the aim was to develop a prevention tool that incorporates the storytelling technique as a key component of change. To meet this objective, the following actions were considered: a) acquiring knowledge of the specific problem of cannabis use in adolescents and the resources available in the local context; b) analyzing life stories from people who have experienced these experiences; c) creating stories by applying the narrative technique to social communication (storytelling) to project them onto the adolescents and young people taking part in the prevention programs; and d) publishing a digital tool that provides a prevention resource for those working with this group.

*Learning Component:*

Student participation in the project was voluntary. Once the students were assigned to the teaching staff involved in this project, they were invited to take part. After the groups were formed, the students participated in a training session where they were instructed about the fundamentals of the project and its community-wide impact on preventing cannabis addiction in young people. The different subjects covered in the initiative, which had previously been allocated to the end-of-Bachelor's and end-of-Master's projects, were discussed. For the teaching organization of these final projects, each student had an academic tutor who was responsible for guiding and supervising their work as well as ensuring to meet learning objectives. In particular, the students of the Degree in Psychology had two tutors. One of them focused on the theoretical issues of the project and the second on methodological aspects. A total of 8 students and 7 tutors participated in the project. A collaborative learning model was adopted; the ultimate goal would be achieved if each individual project was developed properly and within schedule. The end-of-career projects supervised by the tutors were connected to each of the service component activities outlined above. These projects were as follows:

- 1) A systematic review based on empirical studies with populations aged 12 to 65 addressing possible sociodemographic risk factors that intervene in the cannabis user profile.
- 2) An analysis of females' life trajectories that have revolved around problematic substance use, with cannabis being the drug that started this harmful use. Here it was essential to liaise with the local outpatient addiction treatment center, under the provincial council, in order to gain access to the participating group. In fact, these professionals demanded that the tool be focused on the specific group of women in order to adopt a gender perspective in the analysis of the problem.
- 3) An analysis of the social and family and psychoeducational characteristics of individuals that use the outpatient treatment center and who receive some type of psychoeducational intervention. To undertake this project, it was important to collaborate with the regional government responsible for the database that compiles this information systematically and annually via the Reporting System of the Andalusian Plan on Drugs and Addictions.
- 4) A quantitative study of content on the social image of cannabis screened on YouTube.
- 5) The creation of an addiction narrative taking into account the progress of previous projects. The narrative tells the life story of a young woman from when she started to experiment with cannabis up until when she succeeded in overcoming her addiction, showing all the obstacles she had to face along the way.
- 6) The drawing-up of a guide for professionals and educators who want to handle this fictional story and incorporate it into their preventive interventions. This tool explains the psychological and narrative processes underlying the story being told.

The table 1 shows the phases of the program presented in sequence from phase 1 “acceptance of the order” to the phase 7 “evaluating the service”. Phase 5 shows the final projects, which were assigned to each student according to the competences required by their degree.

**Table 1. Phases of the Service-Learning Programme. October 2017 to October 2018.**

Phase 1. Acceptance of the order	Setting-up the working team of researchers-teachers and professionals. Development of previous work sessions for the setup of the project (needs and resources).
Phase 2. Formalizing the collaboration	Setting up a collaboration agreement and obtaining funding from the Development Cooperation Office of the University of Seville.
Phase 3. Involving students	Recruitment of volunteer students. Initial training session. Assignment of tutors. Determination of the subject of the Final Project according to their training (Bachelor's degree or Master's degree).
Phase 4. S-L developing	Supervised students carry out the work Whenever necessary, close collaboration with professionals was offered. Progress on individual projects was shared with the rest of the students to reach a global dimension of the project. The initial projects were fundamental for the development of the subsequent works.
Phase 5. Evaluating Academic Learning	Evaluation of the skills acquired by the completion of the Bachelor's and Master's final-year projects. A total of 8 projects were carried out: - In Bachelor's degree: 4 projects (a systematic review study of risk factors in the profile of cannabis consumption was carried out, as well as three other works that analyzed the life histories of women with addiction using narrative analysis). - In Master's degree: 4 projects (one student carried out the analysis of the content of the messages about cannabis consumption from the YouTube network; one student analyzed the profile of the young consumer population using the registration data of users of drug care services; another student participated in the realization of the audiovisual resource (digital storytelling); the last student participated in drawing-up the user guide for the resource geared to professionals.
Phase 6. Closing Reflection	Reflection with students on the achievement of academic learning objectives and personal growth.
Phase 7. Evaluating the Service	Study of the tool's acceptability and applicability. The project team carried out focus groups with target groups and professionals.

The Bachelor's degree students, with their final project, had to acquire all the specific competences that are described in the syllabus of the subject and specific to the program the following: to use different bibliographic sources on the chosen research topic; to organize and analyze research data; to use conventional techniques of data analysis; to write a research report with appropriate content and format, following the main guidelines by the American Psychological Association (APA). All projects at this level included research activities (Bringle et al., 2016a).

The Master's degree students, in addition to the basic competencies of the teaching program of the subject, had to acquire the following: to identify social problems related to addictions; to apply strategies of qualitative and quantitative analysis to the information obtained and to integrate its results; to make decisions in a critical way on the application and interpretation of the results derived from the psychosocial evaluation; to develop a global vision of the process of psychosocial intervention and of the interrelation between its different phases; to develop strategies that allow the beneficiaries of the intervention (cannabis users and professionals in the drug abuse care network) to be actively involved in it; to know and apply social competence

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strategies that promote the personal, group and community development of the drug abusers; to analyze the results; to acquire knowledge about the management and planning of social policies, together with the institutional dynamics involved in social and community intervention; to gain an ability to promote social and community change; to be able to plan and execute applied research work in the field of addictions; to design preventive campaigns of addictions in the media; to show respect and keep the confidentiality of information in communication with the different interest groups. The end-of-Master's projects included research activities and indirect service activities (Bringle et al., 2016b) that culminated in the development of the tool.

### *2.1.3. Evaluation Program*

The evaluation took into account both the learning and service component of the program. Within the learning component, two indicators were obtained. An objective indicator was calculated by the number of end-of-career projects carried out and a subjective indicator that was based on the students' reflection. At the end of their participation the students had to reflect in writing on the following aspects: What they had learned by participating in the service-learning project and by carrying out the end-of-career work; what were the strengths of the program; and, which aspects can be improved.

The assessment also included audiovisual tool based on storytelling as an indirect S-L resource provided to the community. Four focus groups were organized. The participant groups were formed partly by professionals who worked in the field of addiction prevention and who could use this tool for the development of their activities and partly by teenage girls and young women, and mothers of teenagers as potential beneficiaries of the activities. Each focus group consisted of 6 participants. In the case of the beneficiaries, access was gained through a middle school and prior signed informed consent. The focus groups were organized to determine the acceptability of the persuasive message that contained the audiovisual tool and its applicability in community, health and educational contexts.

## **2.2. Results**

All students participated in the activities in which they engaged. Only one of the students did carry out the activity but was not able to integrate it into his final degree project. All final-year projects had to be coordinated because their progresses depended on the results obtained in the projects that preceded them. These activities generated as a final product a prevention tool that contains an audiovisual display of the story of a young woman who tells her problems arising from the problematic use of cannabis since she was a teenager, how she was becoming aware of her problem with the help of people in her environment who served as support, and the steps and decisions she has been taking in her short life trajectory to feel independent and proud of herself. This audiovisual support is accompanied by a guide for professionals to be used in universal and selective prevention interventions.

From the analysis of the written reflection of the students, it emerged that the experience of carrying out a final project within the framework of SL, not only meant the consolidation of competencies and skills related to the studies they were pursuing, but also served them as professional enrichment. These students became aware of the seriousness of a problem such cannabis consumption in adolescents, because at the beginning of their participation they didn't

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appreciate it as problematic at this age, also acquired a gender perspective on the problem of drug use. They were able to analyze this problem through different techniques (e.g. systematic reviews, analysis of registration data and life histories) and to know and apply a narrative communication strategy as a preventive resource. On the other hand, they felt part of a team working with professionals and were satisfied that their contribution had been valuable. One of the limitations of this project was that each student acquired more knowledge of the topic for which he or she was responsible in their final-year projects and less the other topics assumed by the rest of the peers. For this reason, the initial training in the project and the cooperative work were important, so that they could have a global vision of the project.

Preliminary results from the focus groups can be used to determine the acceptability of the tool and its applicability in community, health and educational contexts. To assess the credibility of the story, adolescent girls and young women participated in the focus groups. They appreciated that the story, which they had just seen, was endowed with realism and even they identified with the protagonist: "I have felt identified because many things that are narrated in the video have happened to me" (young woman); "I see that my life can become like this, if I do what she does" (adolescent woman). Both groups also discussed the risks associated with the early onset problems associated with cannabis problematic use among young people, particularly how the latter affects the group of women. This concern about the risks and their early use among girls was one of the central themes among the mothers who watched the video. Among the professionals, the realism of the tool was manifested: "it tells a story that is identified with the patients who come to our center" (professional participant), offering indications on the best way to work with this tool in the interest groups.

To get here, the community coalition was fundamental. Since the beginning we have witnessed the commitment made by these stakeholders, who have provided the means and conditions to ensure that the expected results were successfully met. In addition to the collaborative efforts from both local authorities (town and provincial council), the cooperation from the Andalusian Agency for Social Services and Dependency turned out to be valuable. In fact, they provided access to the drug addiction indicators, whose data were required for one of the final-year projects. In this network, there were also people in charge of a secondary school who offered to collaborate. The collaboration was greater when they knew that students were involved in this project and that they were helping them to complete their final projects. To get their support and full ownership of the commitments made, it was fundamental to maintain open and ongoing communication with all of these organizations, keeping them informed of progress at every step of the project.

### ***2.3. Discussion***

S-L is about enabling people to help others by demonstrating social commitment and by placing their talent, know-how, skills and creativity at society's disposal (Batlle, 2013; Bringle et al., 2016b). To this purpose, S-L programs have many ways to incorporate community action into the curriculum. In this direction, the identification of the most appropriate learning style will depend on the objectives proposed and the agreements reached with community partners.

Our experience consisted of developing a tool based on narratives of addiction to prevent cannabis use in particularly vulnerable adolescents and young people. This tool bases its strategy on narrative communication. Under the guidance by experts, storytelling allows the beneficiaries

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themselves to participate and share their experiences of drug use while also turning them into learning stories about drug use and addiction. The program was embedded into the end-of-studies projects of undergraduate psychology students and into the final-year projects for those studying a Master's in the Psychology of Social and Community Intervention.

The University of Seville through its Development Cooperation Office provided the means for developing the project and successfully increased teacher involvement. Together with the institutional support and collaboration from La Rinconada Town Council, the Seville Provincial Council, and the Andalusian Agency for Social Services and Dependency, the program goals and objectives were met. Policy-makers and program managers showed support for the project's implementation and continuation by providing the means and conditions to ensure that the expected results were successfully met. Lastly, the students expressed their satisfaction of taking part in the project and the achieved learning outcomes. Furthermore, the active participation shown by professionals in the project will facilitate the acceptance of the tool as a resource which can be used alongside other preventive measures and initiatives.

A successful implementation of S-L must include at least the four principles outlined by Celio et al. (2011). In this experience it has been possible thanks to the fact that: a) the program has been linked to the psychology curriculum taking into account the competences of each level of training (degree or master), the specific projects (activities) in which each student was involved depended on the previous knowledge they had acquired; (b) the students participated with considerable autonomy in the projects for which they were responsible; (c) a community coalition was required; and (d) the students were able to reflect on their participation, although it would have been desirable to extend it to other interest groups.

Overall, this experience contributes to strengthen the S-L programs in the teaching of Psychology. The White Book of the Bachelor Degree in Psychology drawn up by the National Agency for Quality Assessment and Accreditation (ANECA, 2005) - which is a benchmark publication for devising psychology teaching curricula in Spain - features a number of areas among its objectives amongst which feature amongst others: ethical commitment, aptitude for teamwork, interpersonal skills, the capacity for taking on responsibility, and self-examination. These can all ideally be achieved by adhering to S-L methodology.

Psychology students are learning useful content and skills that can help improve the community, and the use of S-L methodology gives social meaning to the acquired learning outcomes. If we can prove that our initiatives lead to social improvement, then our motivation to learn and apply what we have learnt will increase. Also, there is no better way to learn skills relating to ethical values than to put them into practice. In short, students and staff attached to Psychology Faculties have at their disposal many acquired competencies that can positively impact on the communities in which they are immersed, and the University has a duty to contribute as many financial and human resources as they possibly can.

### **3. Conclusion**

It has been seen that the ultimate goal of S-L is to help students acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to become active citizens within their respective communities (Bringle et al., 2016a, 2016b; Deeley, 2016; Hart & Akhurst, 2017). For that, it is important that any S-L proposals in higher education are viewed as a teaching activity or strategy that teachers

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implement within the university's educational model. This should be underpinned by stable structures that enable the university to fulfil its social and ethical responsibilities (Martínez, 2010), while guaranteeing student learning and enabling teachers to implement it. The experience presented here received the support of the institution itself, but it was maintained as an additional experience and not integrated into the overall educational curriculum as ULACIT did. In this sense, there is still a long way to make progress.

In this regard, there is a clear need to create networks made up of local and regional entities that enter into agreements with universities in order to carry out their training programs. For that, it is important to strengthen collaboration and the sharing of learning experiences, disseminate educational and social projects based on this methodology, and promote research and S-L processes of institutionalization within universities by developing a culture of civic engagement through service-learning within higher education across Europe. To this end, 2017 saw the launch of the above-mentioned project 'Europe Engage', a European S-L network within higher education that stems from the project "Europe Engage - Developing a Culture of Civic Engagement through Service-Learning within Higher Education in Europe" (Aramburuzabala et al., 2016).

A fundamental aspect that has been appreciated throughout this article is that the S-L boasts a feature that sets it apart from other community-based interventions: all initiatives are carried out at a formal education level with the involvement of future psychology professionals and involve activities that address real problems affecting the community. This requires teaching and learning processes that tie in with the community's needs and offer opportunities for active and collaborative participation on the part of students in term of social and community development. This leads to the need to reinforce its transformative power, since certainly it can be defined as a key tool that enables universities to fulfil their ethical duty and responsibility in a diverse world, thus contributing to communities' positive transformation, who seek to benefit from these programs.

Precisely this new model has been questioned by pointing out the universities gives more protagonist to economic policies in the educational agenda than to social policies to train future professionals who can directly access the job market. Doubts have even been raised about what the communities involved can actually take away from this kind of approach. In an increasingly market-oriented environment (Hart & Akhurst, 2017) where the focus is more on human capital, putting S-L program into practice that break the charitable and welfare barrier is no easy endeavor.

For that reason, it is worth citing experiences like those of Asghar and Rowe (2017) and Mitchell (2007), which focus on the critical positioning of S-L and the relationship between S-L and social justice is more explicit. Their proposals lay the foundations of a critical S-L approach that strives to do more than just serve the community. It calls for critical awareness of the root causes of problems that communities face; it requires sustained commitment over time allowing students to question power relations inherent in situations of social injustice; it aims to bridge the gap between communities and curricula; and it seeks collaboration for drawing up initiatives geared towards social change. This approach more closely aligns with both the transformative paradigm proposed by Mertens (2007) and the concept of psychopolitical validity coined by Prilleltensky (2003), in that they defend the notion of emancipatory knowledge to protect human rights and social justice.

Social justice, as a core value in Community Psychology (CP) (Kloos, Hill, Thomas, Wandersman & Elias, 2012), shares traits with S-L. They also share other values including

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knowledge and action from a diversity perspective, collaboration and community strengthening, with the main objective which is to understand and improve the quality of life of people, communities and societies. Therefore, S-L represents a relevant pedagogical method in teaching CP values, and it can also positively impact on the development of CP making it more attractive to students.

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