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A Critical Assessment of SPU's Urban Plunge: A Proposal for the John Perkins Center

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A Critical Assessment of SPU's Urban Plunge:
A PROPOSAL FOR THE JOHN PERKINS CENTER

by

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Abstract

This paper is written as an organizational report on the Urban Plunge Program for consideration by the John Perkins Center at Seattle Pacific University. I review Urban Plunge offering a critique and recommendations for re-imagining the program in its future development. I argue that the program needs to be clearly defined as an educational program, grounded in a conceptual framework, given a clarified and expanded mission, and guided by informed curriculum. Beyond critique, I create a proposal for programmatic content and organization to meet these identified needs.

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Re-Imagining "Urban Plunge": A Critical Review and Proposal

For consideration by The John Perkins Center at Seattle Pacific University

Introduction

Seattle Pacific University (SPU) is committed to a holistic education which is concerned as much with who students are becoming as with what they know. The purpose statements of the University reflect this value of transformation along with information in the vision of "engaging the culture and changing the world."[1]. Urban Plunge fits well in this paradigm. Rather than learn about homelessness in abstraction, students enter into the midst of it hopefully leading to increased understanding, compassion and action. The program holds the potential to catalyze the movement of a cohort of students toward the work of reconciliation and community development.

This is in fact part of my story. I took "the Plunge" as a freshman and the experience influenced a change of majors, increased volunteering, becoming a student leader in the John Perkins Center (JPC), and the pursuit of vocational service with those experiencing homelessness. However, as a sophomore I coordinated the program and this lead me to consider the program's potential limitations and pitfalls.

Urban Plunge has not been without its fair share of scrutiny. In 2009, the Seattle Times ran an article on Plunge, and the online comments were very harsh.[2] The criticism varied widely but generally either argued that people experiencing homelessness don't deserve compassion or that it is offensive for affluent college students to pretend to be homeless in a onetime experience which they will just chalk up as an adventure. While both lines of criticism could be faulty, they do reflect that the perception of the program in the community is not wholly positive. This is also the case with social service providers. Many organizations welcome Plunge participants to their services and on tours but a number of organizations ask that participants stay away. This is often due to a concern over lack of resources for those who truly need them or a view of the program as offensive or unhelpful.

This scrutiny gives reason to examine Plunge, but it can be difficult for an organization to step back and review its programs. Urban Plunge has largely continued on the basis of

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[1] Seattle Pacific University, "Mission, Signatures, & Vision"
[2] Perry, "Seattle Pacific students spend 5 days on streets to feel pain of homeless."

precedent from past years. Student leaders coordinate the program each year and base their

work on the notes from the previous student coordinator. The program has not been grounded in academic research.

The purpose of this paper is to re-imagine the program offering a critical review, proposed recommendations, and curriculum for its development into the future. I do so from the assumed stance of a practitioner. I have undertaken my project within the context of and for the benefit of an organization - the John Perkins Center. As such, I have attempted to consider the organizational context and stakeholders and integrate scholarship for analysis of this particular program.

The mission of SPU ought to encompass engagement with those experiencing poverty and injustice in our own city. Over 2,000 people sleep outside every night in Seattle.[3] This figure does not include those staying in shelters, in motels, doubled-up with family or friends, and all those living in poverty at-risk of becoming homeless. There are a number of pressing issues in our city and society, but homelessness is a stark, visible reminder that all is not well and whole in our community.

This reminder could serve as a beckoning call to SPU which is grounded in the Christian faith. Responding to injustice is not just a side interest in SPU's organizational commitments, but is central in the mission of God. Christ came to announce and initiate the arrival of the Kingdom of God, proclaim good news to the poor, and reconcile all things to God's self. The missio Dei is about the transformation of all things! And God's mission is carried out by God's people, the body of Christ. Christianity is much about much more than personal morality; it is a call to the way of Christ, joining in God's purposes in the world. As a Christian institution in the context of Seattle, SPU has much to offer (and receive) in joining God's mission in restoration of the brokenness that is evident in our community with thousands of people going without shelter.

Urban Plunge is one valuable program at SPU that seeks to move students toward engagement in social issues in Seattle. Experiential learning can be an impactful form of education and has a demonstrated ability to foster social justice knowledge and action.[4] Urban Plunge has the capability to be a transformative experience causing students to hear others' stories, challenge stereotypes, ask questions, gain compassion and pursue reconciliation and justice. The program may better fulfill this capability if it's re-established as an educational

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[3] 2014 One Night Count. 2,303 people were counted outside in Seattle out of a total 3,123 in King County.
[4] See Rockquemore and Scaffer, "Toward a Theory of Engagement" and Glennon, "Experiential Learning and Social Justice Action"

program, grounded in a conceptual framework, given a clarified and expanded mission, and guided by informed curriculum.

Context: History of the Urban Plunge Program at SPU

Any attempt to analyze and change a program necessitates an understanding of its organizational and historical context. While I term my effort a re-imagining, it is less re-creating the program from scratch, and more guiding its evolution into the future. A total overhaul of the program is not feasible or desirable. An examination of the context of the program will inform how to improve it for its next stage of life.

Urban Plunge began explicitly as an educational experience. In 1981, twenty-two students received Religion credits through spending five days on the streets, talking with people experiencing homelessness, finding food and learning from social service providers.[5] Additionally, students kept a journal and had to write a paper on an "urban problem." The program originated in the office of Campus Ministries under the leadership of its Assistant Director, Elizabeth Zarelli. The course was co-facilitated by Zarelli and an SPU alumnus.

The first Plunge would likely be characterized as extreme in comparison to the current program. The Seattle P.I. termed it a "class in survival training."[6] Students were forbidden from showering leading up to and throughout the experience. During the day students walked the streets in groups and were instructed to do activities intended to simulate what it is like to be homeless which included looking for a place to stay, trying to find a job as a high-school dropout, and scrounge a garbage can. Students either slept in the SPU gym on a cold hard floor or slept in shelters downtown.

The nature of the experience was framed not as an end in itself but as a starting point. Zarelli told *The Herald* that the goals of the program included giving students "a sense of empathy and understanding," challenging generalizations and sparking questions and interest about urban issues.[7] Students tried to experience "how the other half lives" in order "to question, to broaden their world views, glimpse what it means not to be middle-class… get a sense of wanting to be involved."[8] While students tried to simulate homelessness, it seems that

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[5] Zarelli, Memorandum re: Urban Plunge II
[6] Iritani, "Students pick up scraps of real life on Skid Road."
[7] Dardarian, "Seattle collegians take the Urban Plunge: 20 students do without for week to learn the ropes of street life first hand."
[8] Iritani, "Students pick up scraps of real life on Skid Road," and Gelernter, "Skid Road's lessons: S.P.U. students learn caring, involvement"

from the beginning Plunge has tried to avoid creating an experience just for experience's sake. The given goals above show that Plunge was not oriented around constructing an understanding of homelessness per se, but rather deconstructing preconceptions, challenging the way students see society and themselves, and creating a desire to learn and act more.

As the program evolved, it developed a more focused objective of seeing need so that students would later respond. In 1989, Marta Bennett (then in Zarelli's role) told Queen Anne News that "the point [of Urban Plunge] is to learn about the needs of the city and hopefully open their eyes about the ways they can be of assistance."[9] Students reported that the problem of homelessness had to do with a dysfunctional society. Again, it seems at least in the written records, that Plunge was viewed as something that would initiate change in students' lives.

At some point, Urban Plunge ceased to be a class and shifted toward a greater emphasis on constructing understanding from students' personal experience. In 1999, the Seattle Times reported that the plunge participants "said they wanted to feel what it was like to be homeless. This, they agreed, was it."[10] It is unfair to pin the whole program to this quote, and perhaps this was many participants internal motivation throughout Plunge's history, but it is significant that Plunge emphasizes the personal experience and observation of the student. The source of understanding shifts from those actually experiencing homelessness to the participant's own experience of pseudo-homelessness. A piece on the program in 2001 emphasized that "not revealing they were college students was one of the most difficult parts of the experience. But it was also an important part. The more they were able to put themselves in the role of a homeless person, the more they would get out of the experience."[11] In 2009, the focus (or, at least the perceived focus) was still on students "living as if they were homeless."[12]

There has been a recent de-emphasis on student immersing themselves in what they perceive to be the characteristics of homelessness due to concerns about stereotyping and pretending to be homeless. Students are no longer instructed to dress down and stop showering, and panhandling is not allowed. The program is currently framed as "a five-day immersion experience designed to give participants a taste of what it is like to be homeless and what resources are available to Seattle's homeless population."[13] This current manifestation is

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[9] Larsen, "Students plunge into life of the homeless."

[10] Robin, "Spu Program Provides Street-Level Life Lessons -- Student Assignment: 5 Days Of Homelessness For The Holidays."

[11] Simon, "Homeless in Seattle."

[12] Perry, "Seattle Pacific students spend 5 days on streets to feel pain of homeless."

[13] The John Perkins Center. "Student Leaders: Urban Plunge."

far-less extreme than the original and recognizes that student cannot really understand what homelessness is like, but it still is oriented around participants' personal experiences.

The primary means of learning from these experiences occurs through discussion led by the "Urban Plunge Coordinator." While staff originally led the program, a student now organizes and facilitates Plunge with staff advising. This collaborative leadership is reflective of the partnership between the University and ASSP,[14] and a student development model of student-staff partnership. The JPC was created in 2004, and Urban Plunge transitioned from Campus Ministries to the JPC in 2007.

The JPC situates Plunge within the work of reconciliation and community development. The vision of the Perkins Center is "to see generations of global urban leaders, organizations, and institutions engaging the culture and changing the world by modeling reconciliation and contributing to community health and wholeness."[15] Plunge, ideally, serves to move students toward fulfillment of this vision. Implicit in this vision is the need for both knowledge and action. That is, the work of reconciliation and community development requires both understanding of the issue at hand (sociologically, politically, etc.) as well as demonstrated attitudes, behaviors and skills. In higher education there can be a gap present on initiatives around social justice. Teaching in the classroom may fail to move students toward empathy and action while direct service may fail to lead students to proper analysis of the issue at hand.[16]

Establishing Urban Plunge Firmly as an Educational Program

Urban Plunge should be clearly established as an experiential learning program which is concerned with both information and transformation.[17] This would explicitly place Plunge within the educational purposes of the University allowing both students and faculty to connect the program to academics. Developing Plunge as an educational program will lend it legitimacy and place it on an informed foundation. Seeing and communicating Plunge as a co-curricular program (rather than an extra-curricular activity) requires situating it within an experiential learning pedagogy.

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[14] ASSP stands for Associate Students of Seattle Pacific and is SPU student government. Urban Plunge is a program of Urban Involvement when is one of SPU's ministry programs jointly supported by ASSP and The JPC.

[15] The John Perkins Center. "About the John Perkins Center at SPU."

[16] Russo, "Homelessness Immersion: Bridging the Gap Between Experience and Analysis."

[17] My view of a holistic education is influenced by Smith, *Desiring the Kingdom*. By "clearly established as an experiential learning program" I mean that Urban Plunge should be explicitly defined and communicated as an educational program and informed by academic research on experiential learning.

Experiential learning is oriented around praxis.[18] Kolb defines learning as "the process whereby knowledge is created through the transformation of experience."[19] It involves "experiencing, reflecting, thinking, and acting – in a recursive process that is responsive to the learning situation and what is being learned."[20] In such a process, the lines between theory and practice become blurred. Rather than conceiving of learning as the reception of ideas, experiential learning posits that "learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world" in which knowledge is constructed by the learner.[21] In the case of Plunge, the desired learning outcome is not simply that students would learn about homelessness but that students understanding and relationship to homelessness would be altered.

Experiential learning is of particular relevance to social justice issues where theory and practice cannot be separated because they are directed toward a particular end. The desired effect of the education is explicitly moral formation and action. Social justice education is a misnomer if it does not lead toward greater social justice.[22] Glennon notes that "all education is value-laden and political."[23] While Plunge does not seek to advance a particular ideological agenda, it is appropriate for the program to seek to move students toward acting for justice. Students should be asked to consider the values of their ideas about homelessness as well as their actions (or non-actions).

Teaching social justice through traditional pedagogies is difficult especially among privileged students. Bohmer and Briggs state that privileged students "find it difficult to go beyond individualistic explanations to a structural analysis of social stratifications"[24] and that

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[18] See Kolb, "Learning Styles and Learning Spaces." Experiential learning, here, is seen a broad category within the field of education. There is wide variation in the models, practices and domains of experiential learning. As a concept it has its roots in the writing of 20th century scholars, especially John Dewey. Experiential learning gained prominence in the literature in the second half of the 20th century and has since helped spur and gained attention within a movement toward "alternative pedagogies (see Firmin, "Religious Impact of a Poverty Immersion Experience, 131).

[19] Kolb, "Experiential Learning," 38

[20] Kolb, "Learning Styles and Learning Spaces," 194. It is important to note here that "experiencing" is not equated with "simulation." In the case of Plunge, I view the experience not so much being the experience of homelessness (which would be impossible to fully simulate) but rather the experience of engaging with those who are experiencing homelessness.

[21] Ibid.

[22] Social justice may be defined in the broadest terms as "an ideal state for society" (Lechuga et al, "Power, Privilege, and Learning," 230). Below I will explore homelessness as a social *in*justice and how it is very much not an ideal state for society. I turn to Corbett and Fikkert "When Helping Hurts" for a Christian perspective of poverty and injustice. In their view social justice could be describe as the restoration of right relationship within and between humanity, God, creation and self.

[23] Glennon, "Experiential Learning and Social Justice Action," 31.

[24] Bohmer and Briggs, "Teaching Privileged Students About Gender, Race, and Class Oppression," 154

they may respond with "guilt, anger or resistance."[25] Privilege is blinding and confronting the realities of stratification and oppression challenges the mythology of the American dream and meritocracy. Social justice education may be perceived as threatening because it challenges privileged students' worldview and identity. The difficulty the educator faces is prominent in a traditional classroom approach where stratification is disembodied and decontextualized.

Service learning has developed as a particular type of experiential learning for social justice education which has considerable support in the literature.[26] While privilege still presents a barrier to understanding stratification, service-learning in conjunction with classroom learning can lead to greater "cognitive, attitudinal and behavioral changes"[27] Programs such as Plunge can be seen as an off-shoot of service learning. In the literature they have been termed immersive learning experiences, encountered situations, vicarious experiential learning and similar.

Immersion programs, when grounded in a framework for social justice and with proper facilitation, have demonstrated an ability to foster positive change in students. Encountering the "cultures, attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of other individuals"[28] as well as the "environment, culture, social issues and social policies"[29] that affect those individuals, can "provide students with knowledge of privilege and oppression and can foster in students a desire to promote systemic social change."[30] Lechuga et al. consider several experiential learning programs, including an urban immersion program at Azusa Pacific University, and draw positive conclusions.[31] Additionally, Firmin et al. examined an immersion experience focused on homelessness at a Christian university in the Midwest and determined,

> *"no amount of didactic learning can match the power to imprint knowledge as does out-of-class and in-the-streets contact. Such exposure-based learning was said to have been essential in empowering students to grasp fully the state of homelessness and to connect their classroom instruction more intentionally to their personal lives"*[32]

It is outside of the scope of this paper to measure the effect of Urban Plunge on students. Nor am I attempting to consider the efficacy of immersion programs generally. Rather I am taking

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[25] Ibid.

[26] Firmin, "Religious Impact of a Poverty Immersion Experience, 131

[27] Ibid, 132.

[28] Lechuga et al. "Power, Privilege and Learning"235, 243

[29] Ibid.

[30] Ibid.

[31] Ibid.

[32] Firmin, "Religious Impact of a Poverty Immersion Experience, 136

it as a given that immersion programs *can* be powerful forms of social justice education (as substantiated in the literature), and considering how Plunge in particular can be grounded and re-imagined in light of relevant literature and its context to be such a program. There is a need for further research and specifically for a longitudinal study of the effects of social justice immersion programs on students' ideas, attitudes and behavior, but the literature I encountered on the whole was entirely favorable toward immersion experiences.

This is not to say that immersion programs are without their challenges, drawbacks and potential consequences. Some of these will be addressed in a section below considering key aspects in constructing a successful immersion program.

Immersion programs hold the potential to humanize disadvantaged populations, but they also can potentially objectify people by reducing them to a particular social category. The stigma and stereotypes associated with certain groups can subtly influence how students perceive others in immersion programs if these stereotypes are not brought to the surface. There also is potential that students make others an object to be observed and categorized in their own experience. In the Global South a phenomenon called "poverty tourism" has emerged in which affluent tourists visit poverty stricken areas on their vacation.[33] The voyeuristic impulse of such tours could manifest itself in immersion programs.

Immersion programs could also potentially devolve into self-centered "extreme" experiences. Seeking to learn about the experience of others in homelessness could easily become about my (pseudo) experience of homelessness. The experiential aspect of immersion programs should be framed not so much as the personal experience of students in immersion but rather the experience of encountering other people and perspectives through immersion. In the case of Plunge, the aspects of simulation in the experiences should be seen as a means rather than an end. If students are focused on their own experience trying to 'be homeless,' then they may fail to fully engage with the stories of others.

Immersion programs also face the challenge of multiple uncontrollable factors. Students come from a variety of backgrounds, perspectives and experiences all of which shape the experience of the individual student and group dynamics. The experience is also impacted by the interpersonal relationships among the students. These are challenges in any classroom but their impact is heightened by the cooperative nature of experiential learning. Also outside the control of the facilitator are the exact experiences that students will have on their immersion.

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[33] Rolfes, "Poverty tourism"

Even seemingly small things such as the weather may lead to wide variation in students'
experiences in immersion.

If a program is reliant upon the personal experience and observations of students then it
may fail to move students toward greater understanding of the social justice issue. Immersion
experiences can face the same limitation as direct service experience of failing to see the
underlying social condition and stratification leading to the issue at hand. A successful
immersion program will be grounded in a conceptual framework for the addressed social issue
and for how the immersion program moves students toward greater understanding of and
action toward that issue.[34] This is a particular challenge for Plunge because it is not connected
to an academic course unlike many other similar programs.

Giving the Program Conceptual Grounding

What guides the Urban Plunge program? By conceptual grounding, I mean the principles and
ideas which form the foundation of the program. The educational structure, activities and
content are built upon such a foundation. The current program lacks a firm foundation. I will
attempt to ground the program in a conceptual framework which draws upon resources from
within the JPC and SPU, informed by a sociological understanding of homelessness.

I have framed Urban Plunge as an educational program that can be both informative
and transformative. But what information exactly are students acquiring? What transformation
is occurring? The answers to these questions should shape the immersion experience rather
than the immersion experience determining the answers to these questions. The content and
structure of a lecture are driven by theory and learning objectives. This should be the case with
Plunge as well. A conceptual understanding of homelessness and model for how Plunge moves
students toward understanding and action on homelessness should guide the program.

However, this conceptual framework is currently lacking. As noted above the program is
oriented around students' personal experiences and observations. The element of personal
displacement and discomfort may make the program impactful and can create unique spaces for
conversation across social barriers. However, orienting the education around personal
experience may lead to skewed learning. Students bring preconceived notions to the experience
and there is much they may not see. Take substance abuse as an example.[35] It is highly likely

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[33] Rolfes, "Poverty tourism"

[35] "The general consensus… is that approximately twenty to forty percent of homeless persons experience
substance use disorders, and as many as ten to twenty percent are 'dually diagnosed' with an additional mental

that Plunge participants will encounter people using alcohol and drugs. What are students to ascertain from these encounters? It easily could reinforce a cultural narrative that individuals experiencing homelessness are moral failures, and their condition is resultant from individual choices.[36] This singular narrative is worth deconstructing. It fails to fully consider the nature of addiction as a social issue (Is it really a choice? Or fully a choice?). How does substance abuse intersect with other issues which lead to homelessness? How might the experience of homelessness exacerbate or cause substance abuse? If a person experiencing homelessness were able to control their substance use, would they be more able to exit the streets?

This is but one issue which demonstrates a need for a conceptual framework for homelessness which students could then line their experiences up against. A facilitator is needed who possesses an understanding of homelessness and can direct student toward greater understanding. This does not preclude cooperative learning, nor minimize the learning that can occur from students' personal experience, but rather that learning will be enhanced when context and informed content are offered. This heightens the role of the pre- and post-plunge meetings.

Understanding Homelessness Holistically

Humans exist in relationship to creation, humanity, themselves and God.[37] Homelessness distorts these relationships physically, mentally and spiritually. For those experiencing homelessness both the natural and human environment become hostile. Those experiencing homelessness are marginalized by broken human systems and then in turn are stigmatized, stereotyped, and dehumanized. Homelessness is an extreme form of poverty that afflicts persons' whole being as the foundational
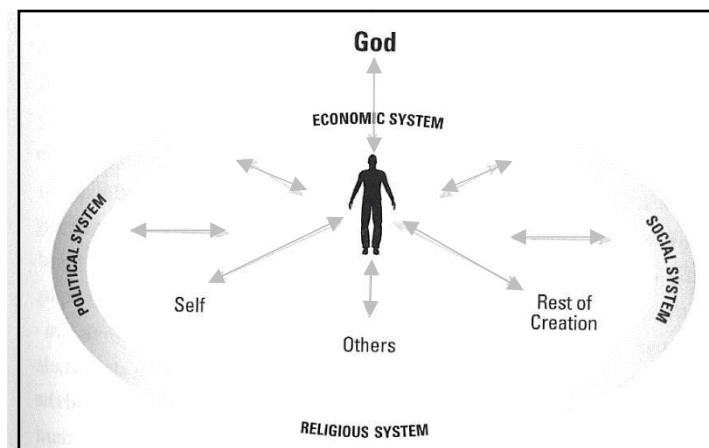
Figure 1 Foundational relationships of human personhood. From *When Helping Hurts* [38]

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health diagnosis. These percentages are consistently at least twice those found in housed population samples."

Zerger, "Substance Use and Homelessness," 110–111 in *Homelessness in America*.

[36] See Gowan, *Hobos, Hustles, and Backsliders* and discussion below under "Understanding Homelessness"
[37] Corbett and Fikkert, "When Helping Hurts," 57
[38] Ibid.

relationships of personhood are broken.

There are numerous narratives and analyses – based in fact and myth – of homelessness. Three primary discourses can be distinguished which give structured meaning to homelessness each of which present causal factors and corresponding strategies for response: "sin," "sickness" and "system."[39] Sin and sickness are the prevailing discourses in media and many charitable responses. Homelessness is understood to be resultant from an individual's immorality or

Constructions of poverty	Moral	Disease	Systemic
Discourses on homelessness	Sin-talk	Sick-talk	System-talk
Central cause of poverty/homelessness	Sin	Sickness	Characteristics of the social structure
Fundamental strategies for managing poverty/ homelessness	Punishment and exclusion	Treatment	Social change/ social regulation
Focus of causal narrative	Individual	Individual	Structural
Notion of agency	Strong	Weak	Weak

pathology. The response then becomes attempting to convert or treat the individual. These views of homelessness are directly related to stigmatization of those experiencing homelessness.[40] Homelessness become a marker of personal failure and leads to stereotyping, social exclusion and derision.

Homelessness is a systemic issue. The causes of homelessness can be conceived of in a framework of macro and micro level forces.[42] Macro level, structural forces "generate a population of poor people at risk of homelessness" while micro level forces

Figure 2 Social Construction of Poverty and Homelessness. From *Hobos, Hustlers and Backsliders*[41]

are the "personal vulnerabilities, institutional experiences, and inadequate buffers" which constitute "how certain members of that at-risk population become homeless"[43] Homelessness is fundamentally lack of housing linked to social stratification.[44] It cannot be extricated from poverty. "Sin" and "sickness" fit into this framework as forces which push certain people who are at-risk from systemic realities over the edge into homelessness. People in every social class may make poor decisions and suffer from addictions and other pathologies, but homelessness is far less likely to be a result for the affluent.

While homelessness is ultimately caused by structural injustice it also needs to be examined through its impact on individuals.[45] It causes physical, mental and spiritual harm as

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[39] Gowan, *Hobos, Hustlers, and Backsliders*, xxi

[40] See Snow, *Down on Their Luck*, 198

[41] Gowan, *Hobos, Hustlers, and Backsliders*, 29

[42] Lee, Tyler and Wright, "The New Homelessness," 509

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid., 502

[45] See Heurtz, Friendship at the Margins, "holding together the personal and structural is the most

the relationships between God, humans, creation and self are distorted.

Homelessness is a state of material deprivation that can do great bodily damage.[46] It puts people's health at risk. Without housing, people experience exposure outside both day and night which takes a toll on the body. Even for those who find shelter, they may experience a different form of exposure as they are often in close quarters leading to the spread of disease. Sanitation is an issue as many cities have few public restrooms and showers can be hard to come by. Depending on available social services, hunger and malnutrition can occur and at the very least food may be irregular and there is little control over one's diet. Healthcare is difficult to access. For the chronically homeless, all of these issues compound over the years.

The physical effects of homelessness paired with social stigmatization can lead to mental and emotional harm. Homelessness may cause or exacerbate depression, anxiety and other mental health issues. Trauma can put someone at risk of becoming homeless and experiencing homelessness can be traumatic. People experiencing homelessness are at greater risk for physical and sexual violence. Substance abuse and addiction are also prevalent though not as much as perceived by mainstream society. Homelessness may cause or exacerbate these substance issues. Isolation, exclusion and dehumanization are intermingled with and compound everything above. The acts required for mere survival can be humiliating. Due to homelessness' structural nature and all of the above listed effects it can be incredibly difficult to exit. Finding employment, housing and social support are huge challenges and as people become stuck they lose their sense of agency making it that much more difficult to exit.

The impact of homelessness on the body and mind cannot be separated from its effects on the soul, used here to refer to the spiritual dimension of one's self.[47] As discussed above homelessness is not a result of sin; social stratification is not correspondent to varying levels of virtue and spirituality. But in my view homelessness is no less than evil. It may distorts one's view of self, others and God. Homelessness oppresses and degrades people who are made in the imago Dei.

Homelessness, then, is a matter of reconciliation and justice. In the *When Helping Hurts* model of poverty the personal and social reality of homelessness can be seen as indicative of the fall. I see reconciliation as no less than God's total restoration of the whole of creation. God

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powerful combination."

[46] This and the following paragraph on the physical and psychological effects of homelessness are informed by Lee, "The New Homelessness;" Snow, "Down on Their Luck" and my personal observation through volunteering and working in two emergency shelters.

[47] This use of soul is not considering its ontology which is subject to considerable theological and philosophical debate.

reconciles the world to God's self, putting God, humanity and creation into right relationships. Causes and effects of homelessness are mediated by human systems in all of these relationships. Reconciliation involves human individuals, communities, cultures and institutions. We are all members of these systems. When our systems cause and perpetuate injustice this harms both those who materially benefit and those who materially lose because for both the foundational relationships of personhood are distorted from the way God intends them to be.

A Model for Urban Plunge as an Educational Program for Reconciliation

A conceptual understanding is needed not only of homelessness but also of Urban Plunge itself. How does Urban Plunge educate students on homelessness and move them toward reconciliation? Currently there is not an explicit answer to this question. No context is given to the pre-plunge meetings i.e. it is not clear what purpose they are serving, what role they play in the overall experience, and why the content that is there is included. There needs to be coherence in the content of the program. There is not a clear progression or educational framework. What is covered in the pre-plunge meetings should guide the plunge immersion, which should then be followed by post-plunge meetings that bring the learning experience to a close.

What is needed, then, is a conceptual model which can frame the purpose and content of every aspect of the program. Developing such a model serves the purpose of both analyzing the current experience and grounding it in the future.

I suggest adopting Dr. Brenda Salter McNeil's "Reconciliation Cycle" as a model to frame the Urban Plunge experience.[48] As a program of the Perkins Center, it would make sense for Urban Plunge to be grounded in a model of reconciliation. Adopting Dr. McNeil's model which is used in Reconciliation Studies would give the program legitimacy and coherency within SPU.

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[48] Salter McNeil & Associates, LLC. "Multi-Ethnic Resource Team Manual," 6

The Reconciliation Cycle

Identification

Preparation

Realization

Activation

Isolation/ Alienation

Reconciliation

Catalytic Events

preservation

transformation
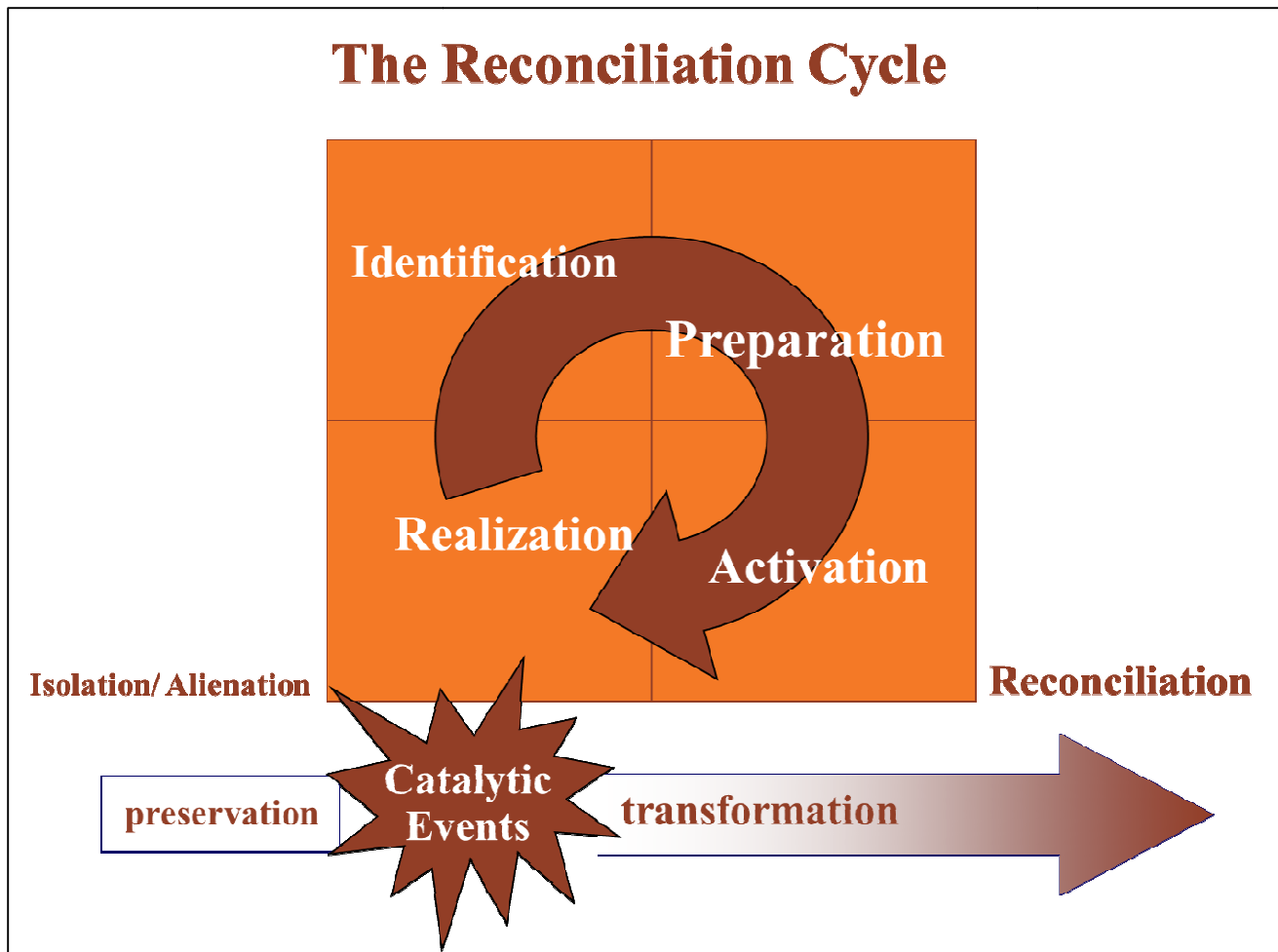
Figure 3 The Reconciliation Cycle[49]

While the cycle was developed originally to define the reconciliation process in facilitating "greater ethnic and racial diversity in an organization or institution," the model can be transferred to a number of issues of social division and stratification and different contexts. It can readily be adapted to Urban Plunge.

The reconciliation cycle is fundamentally a spiritual process. God is the ultimate reconciler. While the model is concerned with reconciliation interpersonally among people and structurally with economic, political and social systems, this all occurs within God's reconciling all things to God's self. The cycle is not a magic formula for reconciliation and justice, but can serve as a general model to be applied with discernment and prayer.

The overall direction of the cycle (and thereby Urban Plunge) is to move students from

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[49] Ibid.

"Preservation" to "Transformation." Students may be ignorant, passive or even hostile toward those experiencing homelessness. In this state, knowingly or unknowingly, students participate in an ongoing system of disconnection and injustice. Preservation is marked by "Isolation/Alienation." People experiencing homelessness are unseen, disregarded, or feared. The culture images of an individual experiencing homelessness include dirty, lazy, bum, drunk, etc. They are physically and socially marginalized such that that the social norm toward homelessness is at best disengagement. SPU students will have likely internalized some of these cultural views of people experiencing homelessness. Additionally SPU is largely geographical distanced from homelessness due to its location and wealth. Students from a suburban or rural context may have seen very little of people visibly affected by homelessness in person. A strong class separation likely exists between the average SPU student and someone on the streets. The aim of the reconciliation cycle is to model how students may move from this state of preservation toward personal and social transformation in the ongoing process of reconciliation.

Urban Plunge may serve as a catalytic event starting students on the reconciliation cycle. Through readings, discussions, engaging with people, being displaced, spending time on the streets, and encountering social services, students can have a profound "realization" of homelessness and its injustice. Homelessness is seen, or seen in new ways, such that it can't be ignored. Urban Plunge places students in a position to consciously look at people whom society ignores and castigates. Students' experiences and encounters on Plunge may lead them to reconsider the way they used to see things.

As students begin to see homelessness in new ways, they may move toward "Identification" with those experiencing homelessness. Urban Plunge guides students toward empathy and greater understanding. In "identification," students begin to connect with other's stories as well as recognize their own potential connection to those stories. That is, students may develop compassion for someone experiencing homeless and begin to see that that person's experience is not disconnected from their own social position. Plunge may facilitate identification by emphasizing listening to others and displacing students out of their own social context so that they are open to others' perspectives.

From identification, students may move into "preparation" which involves further learning and discernment before "activation" of this knowledge. Urban Plunge starts students on preparation through the learning about homelessness that is achieved and provides students

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with further resources, encouragement and direction to continue on the cycle. Urban Plunge should generate numerous questions for participants about society, faith and themselves. Hopefully, students will pursue these questions and begin to integrate the Plunge experience into their lives. Activation is the final stage of the cycle in which students actively engage and respond in pursuit of reconciliation and justice. This can look a number of different ways, potentially including: lifestyle choice, daily interactions, intentional relationship, professional vocation, voting, and/or advocacy.

The reconciliation cycle is, well, a cycle. It does not end at activation. Every aspect of the cycle is a part of reconciliation. Realization, identification, preparation and activation are interconnected in an ongoing process of transformation. The cycle may repeat itself around the same issue in new ways as well as expand to other issues.
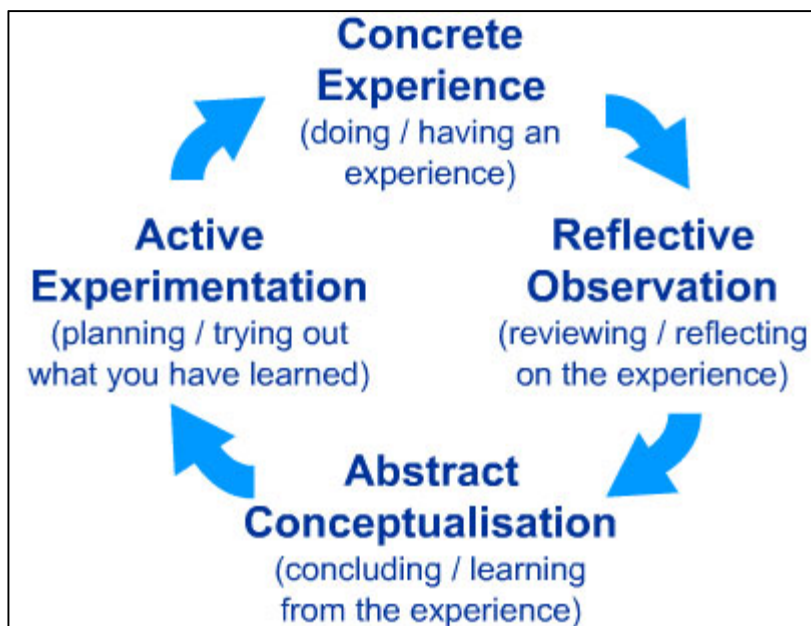
The journey to reconciliation is not always an easy path to take. As students are pushed out of isolation and alienation, they may experience fear, shame and/or anger. Dr. McNeil has identified these as three reactions which can shut down the reconciliation cycle. Recognizing one's own social privilege can be a trying experience. Social injustice as manifested in homelessness is a hard reality to face. Shame or guilt may be of particular relevance in the case of Plunge as students are shocked from the jump from life at SPU to witnessing life downtown on the streets. It is important for the Plunge facilitator to identify what students may be experiencing and help them own and walk through their reactions. Establishing trust, openness and confidentiality can foster greater discussion and honesty.

The reconciliation cycle offers both the facilitator and students a way to think about what they are experiencing. It places Plunge in its proper place as an introductory program which is to be part of a longer process. The tendency of many students is to jump from realization to activation but Plunge can help them move into identification and point them toward greater preparation before they step into greater action.

The reconciliation cycle is also a helpful conceptual model for Plunge because it is applicable to far more than just homelessness. Through Urban Plunge, students begin to become aware of class disparity and are offered a way toward engagement. This could serve as preparation to be more open to move toward racial, and gender reconciliation. Not all students are called to vocationally address homelessness, but all students are, I think, called to pursue reconciliation in their lives and in the world. Plunge may be most powerful then not in how much students learn about homelessness per se but in how they become better attuned to their

social position in society and cultivate the attitude, skills and desire to create justice. Some might argue that this renders Plunge unnecessary when students could do an internship or volunteer, however this fails to account for the experiences that move students toward such engagement. The program can spur students toward greater social justice action while also being bolstered in its learning outcomes.

Another helpful model for Urban Plunge which helps frame how learning is occurring within students' movement around the reconciliation cycle is Kolb's cycle of experiential learning. This helps to explain, for example, how having a conversation with someone experiencing homelessness may lead a student to greater identification and understanding. The student has a concrete experience of talking to the other person. Reflection upon that experience leads the student to a new conceptual understanding which potentially contrasts with previous conceptions. Perhaps the student equated homelessness with laziness but upon encountering some who works incredibly hard but is still stuck on the streets, comes to a new understanding of homelessness. The new conception can then be tested out for its validity and explanatory power of the new idea thus beginning the cycle again.

Figure 4 Kolb's Cycle of Experiential Learning[50] from www.simplypsychology.org

Urban Plunge may actively promote this cycle of learning by giving students opportunities and ways to process their experiences, fostering discussion which intentionally asks students to generate ideas (and challenge old ones) and questions, and encourage students to see how these ideas and questions line up against further experiences. Kolb's cycle, then, fits within the Reconciliation Cycle presenting one way to understand how the experience of the Plunge program serves as a catalyst toward learning and action in the reconciliation process.

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[50] Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development*

Integral to my discussion above is the assumption that Urban Plunge is intended to move students toward reconciliation and justice. But the mission of the current program has not been explicitly connected to the larger work of reconciliation. It is not clear how Urban Plunge fulfills the vision of the JPC. If the conceptual model of the reconciliation cycle grounds Urban Plunge, then the mission and objectives frame the content and direction which are built onto that model. The program needs an expanded and clarified mission statement and established learning objectives.

The current mission and goals for Plunge are varied but generally center around students' personal experience. On the website there are several statements getting at what Plunge is all about:

> *"Urban Plunge is a five-day immersion experience designed to give participants a taste of what it is like to be homeless and what resources are available to Seattle's homeless population."*[51]

> *"The goal of Urban Plunge is to give students a personal experience that will equip them to engage the homeless population with empathy and compassion. We hope that students will leave with a better understanding of homelessness and its myriad of causal factors."*[52]

> *"Urban Plunge is a small glimpse of what certain aspects of homelessness are like, for instance, having no money, having to find your own food, and being ignored by mainstream society. The goal of Urban Plunge is empathy, compassion, and a desire to serve, not an "extreme experience."*[53]

I suggest reorienting the program from centering on students learning from their own experience in immersion to what they learn of others' experiences through immersion. That is, getting 'a sense of what it's like' should not be an end, but a means. The immersion displaces students from their own context so that they can learn about the experience of others in another context. The above statements put forth several desired outcomes of this learning including gaining empathy, understanding causes of and responses to homelessness, and pursuing service, but these are not coherently organized.

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[51] The John Perkins Center. "Student Leaders: Urban Plunge."
[52] The John Perkins Center, "Urban Plunge Frequently Asked Questions"
[53] Ibid.

An expanded and clarified mission statement to orient the program could be:

Urban Plunge inspires students for the work of reconciliation and justice through an immersive learning experience in which they encounter homelessness and poverty in Seattle and engage with their neighbors experiencing these realities.

This mission gives the program a direction which lines up with the conceptual model and situates it within the work of the JPC. The experience is framed within the larger movement toward reconciliation and justice. Because people living in homelessness and poverty are often reduced to these social categorizations and stigmatized, I separate the concepts from the people whom they affect.[54] This is not to deny that homelessness and poverty may create cultures and shape personal identities, but the dehumanization that is prevalent by viewing people through this singular lens needs to be addressed. Saying 'people experiencing homelessness' rather than 'the homeless' is an attempt at humanization.[55] It sets homelessness as social condition which can be analyzed as a structural force and system of injustice rather than a personal condition. The mission of the program is to see students move toward reconciliation and justice through this education program which involves understanding homelessness and poverty as concepts as well as seeing their impact on people.

I offer the following as more specific learning objectives to guide the program within this mission[56]:

- Cultivate empathy and recognition of the human dignity of all people
- Develop a deeper understanding of the experience of homelessness through conversations and relationships with those experiencing it
- Challenge stereotypes, assumptions, and myths surrounding homelessness and poverty
- Explore the root causes of poverty and injustice as well as potential responses on personal and systemic levels
- Learn about Seattle's social services, public policy and unique context
- Draw close to God's heart for the poor and marginalized and develop a passion for service
- Become inspired and better equipped for the lifelong journey and work of reconciliation and justice

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[54] See Freeman, "Urban Plunge and Homelessness," 31

[55] There is parallel here with the people-first language movement in discourse on people with disabilities, e.g. "people with disabilities" vs "disabled people" in order to challenge implicit dehumanization in language. See Snow, "People First Language," and Feldman et al., "The effects of people-first language"

[56] Lechuga et al. emphasize the importance of a conceptual model and learning objectives: "Instructors should clearly define the pedagogical and theoretical frameworks underlying their encountered situation as well as the learning objectives of the exercise to ensure that the activity produce the desired learning outcomes," 241

These objectives are given with the intention toward both information and transformation. If implemented, they would shape the content of the program as well as potentially shape how participants understand the program. These objectives attempt to make explicit what are already implicit goals and values of the program.

A common concern raised about Plunge is whether learning objectives such as these could be achieved through an internship or service experience. In addition to my comments on the value of experiential education above, I would add that these objectives are oriented not around mastery or even action but around introduction. Urban Plunge may spur people on to pursue internships, service opportunities or further educational opportunities.

It is also important to view Plunge as an introduction because homelessness is a complex issue and a feeling of completely "understanding homelessness" after Plunge could inhibit productive engagement.

Facilitation

The facilitation of the Urban Plunge is critical to the learning that is achieved. The facilitator guides the program, creates the learning environment, fosters discussion and self-reflection, connects with students, and presents social justice knowledge. There is space for greater staff involvement in facilitation alongside the student leader.

While a core tenet of experiential education is student-centered learning, a facilitator is needed to direct this learning.[57] Kolb writes that "making space for students to take control of and responsibility for their learning can greatly enhance their ability to learn from experience."[58] The facilitator creates this space and its boundaries guided by the mission and objectives of the program. The facilitator should try to ensure that the content, activity, and reflection in the program all align.

Facilitation is a skill which requires both knowledge and practice. The facilitator discerns the "appropriate levels of challenge and support"[59] students need and relates to

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[57] Glennon, "Experiential Learning and Social Justice Action," 32, writes "the learner should be actively involved in shaping the purpose and direction of the learning that takes place." I suggest that a facilitator is need to direct the learner to take this ownership and shape it within the mission and objectives from the program. However, this would be contested it the literature if Plunge was to be viewed as a strictly experiential learning program. Estes, "Promoting Student-Centered Learning in Experiential Education" seems to hold student empowerment as the highest value in education arguing that learning is more effective when students facilitate their own experiences.

[58] Kolb et al., "Learning Styles and Learning Spaces," 209

[59] Lechuga et al., 240

students prior experiences, understanding and values. This allows for openness from students and for the experience to impact them wherever they are at.

A volunteer student leader likely does not possess this level of skill. The staff advisor can take a greater role in training the student leader and guide them through the facilitation of the program. Due to organizational capacity, it is not feasible for the program to be entirely staff run (though this should be discusses as a potential long-term alternative) and there is benefit in having a student leader, but the staff presence should be increased. It also may be worth exploring ways to attract student leaders of a high caliber e.g. through means of developing the position as one which could count as an internship for relevant disciplines.

Programmatic Elements

Urban Plunge currently consists of three "pre-Plunge" meetings, "the Plunge" and "post-Plunge" activities which have varied and been inconsistent. This basic structure makes sense for an experiential learning program, but I suggest reframing the experience as "Preparation," "Immersion" and "Debriefing" in order to emphasize that pre- and post- plunge components are integral to the program. This structure aligns well with the necessity of an immersion program to include "knowledge, activity and reflection."[60]

Preparation gives students knowledge to line their experience up against (and vice-versa) and provides the opportunities for students to have the reflective space to cultivate self-awareness in the experience. Preparation can include:

> *"knowledge and background about the area to be visited and the related social issues, a discussion about those specific issues, and an introspective exercise in which students record their thoughts, feelings, expectations, or anxieties about the forthcoming experience and issues."*[61]

The pre-plunge meetings currently offer some of this, but fail to provide much in-depth knowledge about homelessness as a social justice issue. Students will be better able to learn from the experience by being able to test out and apply this knowledge.

Immersion is the activity where the knowledge and experience can be evaluated against each other. The immersion is not one experience but rather an ongoing series of experiences involving gathering information, evaluating, acting and revaluation. Each day of the experience could mirror the overall structure of the program and include preparation, immersion and debriefing. Reflection and discussion on the situations that occur throughout the experience are

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[60] Ibid.

[61] Ibid, 239

necessary for learning to occur.

Within the immersion I believe there is room for greater direction for participants. How time is spent during the day is largely left up to participants. This allows student to direct their own learning, but it could be beneficial to give more framework for this. Rather than saying "go out there and see what it's like," it would be more beneficial to say "go out there and try to answer the questions you have about homelessness through observation and engaging with people."

One element of the immersion which is controversial is how students dress. In my perspective, "dressing down" is not an important element to the program and in fact can stereotype people. Dressing "like homeless people" would reflect a particular viewpoint of homeless people and center the attention on the participants own personal experience. Dressing down should not be necessary if the intent is to engage in the story of another. However, on the other side, there is some need for students to be displaced from their own context and some discomfort may spur them to engage with others more. And dressing down may allow students to get a glimpse of how people who are experiencing homelessness are treated by the housed population. Perhaps, there is a middle space of dressing down but with critical awareness and reflection on the stereotypes that are being played into.

The basic structure of the immersion, including placing students in groups, visiting social service organizations, walking the city, engaging with people on the streets and concluding with debriefing, makes sense. Placing students in small groups allows for "interaction and communication" through the experience which promote learning.[62] The activities in the immersion line up with many of the objectives I have created and could be explicitly connected and guided by the mission.

In addition to debriefing within the immersion, there should be a debriefing after the immersion as a whole. Current efforts at post-plunge activity have been heavily reliant upon participants' interest and ideas rather than being conceived as a key part of the plunge program. Debriefing in the weeks following the immersion may help students to integrate the experience into their life and provide direction on moving toward action.

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[62] Ibid, 242

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In order to address the critique above, I have created the following new content for consideration by the JPC for implementation in Urban Plunge program. The content is not all encompassing and very much open to modification but hopefully could serve as an initial foundation in redeveloping the program. It builds upon and could incorporate much of the current structure and materials of the current program. The curriculum immediately below is intended for use by the Urban Plunge coordinator and advisor and could also be used in all communications and publicity. Following this section, I have created and collected initial materials that could be given to each Urban Plunge participant in a binder that parallels this proposed curriculum.

Mission

Urban Plunge inspires students for the work of reconciliation and justice through an immersive learning experience in which they encounter homelessness and poverty in Seattle and engage with their neighbors experiencing these realities.

Learning Objectives

Through Urban Plunge students will:

- Cultivate empathy and recognition of the human dignity of all people
- Develop a deeper understanding of the experience of homelessness through conversations and relationships with those experiencing it
- Challenge stereotypes, assumptions, and myths surrounding homelessness and poverty
- Explore the root causes of poverty and injustice as well as potential responses on personal and systemic levels
- Learn about Seattle's social services, public policy and unique context
- Draw close to God's heart for the poor and marginalized and develop a passion for service
- Become inspired and better equipped for the lifelong journey and work of reconciliation and justice

Overview of the Urban Plunge Program

Urban Plunge is an educational program put on by Urban Involvement (a ministry of the John Perkins Center and ASSP). Rather than learning about homelessness and poverty abstractly in a classroom setting, Urban Plunge provides students the opportunity to immerse themselves in the city to learn from those experiencing these realities. Through Urban Plunge students can both become informed on social justice issues in Seattle and be transformed for social justice action. There are three components to the program:

Preparation

Urban Plunge is much more than just "the plunge." Students prepare for the immersion experience through four pre-plunge meetings which include presentations, discussions and readings. Through these meetings and short assignments students will be oriented to the experience, meet their fellow Plunge participants, reflect on their preconceived notions of homelessness, and begin developing a sociological and theological understanding of homelessness, reconciliation and justice. In short, the preparation component of Plunge puts the immersion experience in context. Student come to "the plunge" with information and self-reflection which allows them to ask deeper questions, evaluate their experiences in light of prior learning, and explore how the experience relates to their personal knowledge, story and actions.
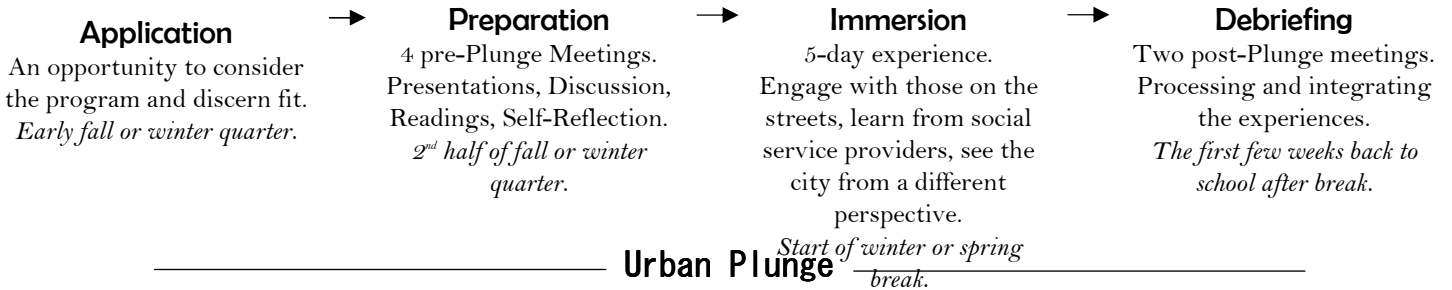
Immersion

Students take "the plunge" spending five days on the streets of Seattle hearing the stories of those who are experiencing homelessness, getting a glimpse into their daily life and observing the environment. Students experience a small aspect of some the challenges of homelessness as they are constrained to only the physical belongings they can carry with them, must find food in the city, and are out on the streets from 7am-9:30pm. Nights are spent sleeping in a downtown church on the floor. Additionally, students tour multiple social service agencies hearing and learning from social service providers and seeing multiple responses to homelessness. Every day concludes with a time of facilitated debriefing and space to journal and reflect. Throughout the immersion students are in groups for the purposes of safety and the ability to process the experience.

Re-imagining Urban Plunge

Students are not experiencing homelessness on Urban Plunge (it would be impossible to simulate the social, mental, and physical realities of homelessness). Rather, the Urban Plunge immersion displaces students from their own context in order to better see social injustice and learn from those who are actually experiencing homelessness. The focus of the immersion is ultimately not about the personal experience as much as it is about engagement with others. The element of experiencing some of the hardships of homelessness for a limited time is to serve as a catalyst for asking questions of one's self and others. The immersion, then, is not an "extreme experience" in which students are pretending to be homeless. It should also be noted that it is not a missions or service experience. It is primarily intended to be a learning experience, but a powerful one which might just transform students' understanding of the world, God and themselves.

Debriefing

In addition to the debriefings which occur each day during the immersion, two "post-plunge" meetings are held which help students to further process the experience and begin to integrate it into their lives. Space is given for discussion and discernment in addition to the provision of resources and connections to learn more and act. Debriefing could be structured to work towards an Urban Plunge forum in which participants can share stories and reflection with the SPU community.

Application	→	**Preparation**	→	**Immersion**	→	**Debriefing**
An opportunity to consider the program and discern fit. *Early fall or winter quarter.*		4 pre-Plunge Meetings. Presentations, Discussion, Readings, Self-Reflection. *2ⁿᵈ half of fall or winter quarter.*		5-day experience. Engage with those on the streets, learn from social service providers, see the city from a different perspective. *Start of winter or spring break.*		Two post-Plunge meetings. Processing and integrating the experiences. *The first few weeks back to school after break.*

Urban Plunge

Re-imagining Urban Plunge

The Urban Plunge Immersion occurs twice annually during the first five days of winter and spring break. Applications for the program are generally due around the mid-point of the quarter. Selected applicants will attend weekly pre-plunge meeting in preparation for the immersion during the second half of the quarter. Two post-Plunge meetings for debriefing will be scheduled early on in the quarter following the immersion.

Application & Selection

Urban Plunge is open to all undergraduate students who are currently enrolled at SPU. Due to limited space an application process is used which also allows for discernment in considering the program. The application invites students to reflect on their current understanding of homelessness and poverty and why they are interested in doing Plunge. Selections are made by the student and staff co-facilitators of the program. Priority is given based on seniority and 2ⁿᵈ time applicants to help ensure interested students can participate in plunge during their time at SPU. The primary consideration in selection is given to student's interest in the program and openness to learn.

Cost

Urban Plunge costs $25. This cost goes toward reimbursing agencies for meals eaten by program participants during the immersion, covering the cost of staying in a church and providing honorariums to social service providers for their time. Scholarships are available if needed.

Re-
imagin
ing
Urban
Plunge

The Reconciliation Cycle

Identification

Preparation

Realization

Activation

Isolation/ Alienation

Reconciliation

preservation

Catalytic
Events

transformation
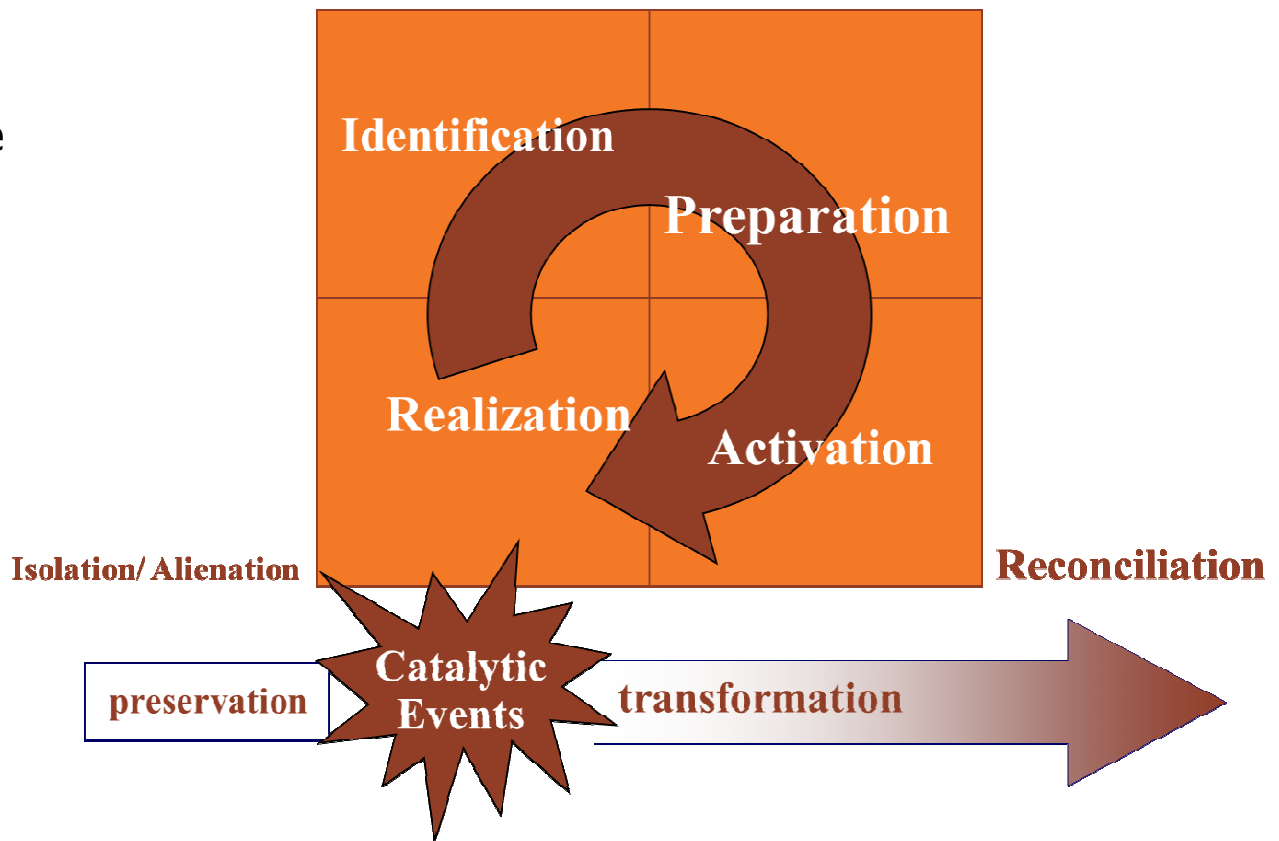
See discussion above (p.13-17) for details on how the model might inform Urban Plunge and itself by informed by Kolb's model for experiential learning.

Preparation

Meeting 1 Lesson Plan
Introduction to Urban Plunge
Purpose:
Orient students to the experience, create healthy space for discussion, and facilitate self-reflection among students on their reason for participating, expectations, and understanding of homelessness

Re-imagining Urban Plunge

Welcome [3min]
- Introduce self, welcome everyone to the meeting and provide a brief overview of what the meeting is for (i.e. the objectives above)

Introductions [20min]
- Ask for their name, year in school, major, why they are doing Plunge, and a fun question

Distribute Plunge Participant Binders [2min]
- The binder provides all the materials participants will be using throughout the experience, additional resources and a place to journal

Self-Reflection Writing Activity (in binder) [5min]
- How would you define homelessness?
- What are your biggest questions about homelessness?
- What are your expectations for the Plunge experience?

Presentation on group ground rules [5min]
- Confidentiality, invitational listening, withholding judgment, using 'I' statements, being fully present, etc. Ask the group if they would like to add any ground rules

Discussion with big group [5min]
- Share answers to self-reflection activity, look for common themes

Overview of the Program [15min]
- Mission and Goals
  - Include what Plunge is not
    - It's not: a missions/evangelization activity, a service project, a simulation of homelessness, an extreme experience, a research project/investigation
- The Model – Reconciliation Cycle
- The Program – Preparation, Immersion, Debriefing
- Allow space for questions/comments throughout
- Emphasize the importance of post-plunge debriefing as a part of the experience

- Emphasize that Plunge doesn't have an agenda – it will be shaped by participants' goals, conversations, etc.

Assignment [3min] (will not be collected)
- Further self-reflection
- Reading on sociological perspective of homelessness

Logistics [2min]
- Collect money, have waivers signed

Close in Prayer

Meeting 2 Lesson Plan
Homelessness and Seattle
Purpose:
Generate further reflection and discussion on understanding of homelessness (i.e. causes, associations, assumptions). Explore the unique context of Seattle and homelessness in the city. Form teams and foster team-building.

Welcome and re-introductions [5min]
- Provide brief overview of this meeting, have people re-introduce themselves to work on getting names down.

Small group discussion [10min]
- Divide participants into their respective Plunge teams.
- Discuss assignment one
  - What were your thoughts about homelessness before the reading?
  - What did you take away from the reading? Was anything challenging or confusing?
  - How did the article explain the causes of homelessness? What did you think of their framework?
  - What questions did the reading generate?

Big group discussion [10min]
- What did your group discuss?
- Guide conversation around what participants bring to the surface, connect back to reading
- What does homelessness mean?
- What questions do you have?

Presentation on Seattle [20min]
- Statistics on homelessness in Seattle
- Overview of geography, populations and service providers
- The Ten-Year Plan and Seattle's Public-Private response

Small group discussion [10min]
- Based on prior experience and what you are learning in these meetings, start to discuss what you might hope to get out of the immersion experience
- What have been your prior experiences in regards to homelessness? What's your familiarity with Seattle outside of SPU?
- What are your expectations for the Plunge experience?
- What do you hope to learn?

Assignment [2min]
- Reading on theological perspective on poverty/homelessness
- Reflection questions

Logistics [3min]
- Email list for family and friends to follow your experience
- Collect any waivers and money still needed
- Sign up for rides to the airport, etc.

Close in Prayer

Meeting 3 Lesson Plan
Homelessness and Reconciliation
Purpose: Explore homelessness through a theological lens and as a reconciliation issue. Discuss the root causes of homelessness and how these might frame responses. Address potential barriers to reconciliation.

Welcome and Recap [5min]
- Welcome everyone to the meeting and provide a recap of where you've been in the previous two meetings, where you are ultimately going and what you will cover in this meeting

Re-imagining Urban Plunge

Small group discussion on assignment two [10min]
- Potential questions for discussion:
  - How do the authors define poverty? How might this contrast with how poverty is usually defined?
  - What causes poverty? How might this contrast with what/who is usually viewed as the cause of poverty?
  - How does this model apply to homelessness?
  - Has how would you define homelessness changed?
  - What questions did the reading generate?

Big group discussion [5min]
- What did you talk about in your small group?

- Does the author's relational model of poverty make sense?

Presentation on relational view of poverty and reconciliation [15min]
- Further explain *When Helping Hurts* model of poverty
- Present the reconciliation cycle
- Address potential barriers: fear, anger, shame

Self-reflection writing activity [5min]
- Where do you stand in relationship to those experiencing homelessness?

Assignment [2min]
- Reading on ways of responding to poverty/homelessness
- Reflection questions

Logistics [8min]
- Address safety, dress, and what to bring

Re-imagining Urban Plunge

Meeting 4 Lesson Plan
Preparation for Immersion
Purpose:
Consider various approaches to responding to homelessness/poverty which may generate ideas and questions for site visits. Confirm all logistics are in place. Lead participants through generation of questions they want to explore in the immersion related to the goals of the program and what has been discussed so far.

Welcome and recap of previous meetings [3min]

Summary and presentation on relief, rehabilitation and development [15min]
- Connect to Christian Community Development principles and the work of the JPC

Small group discussion and brief sharing with large group [5min]
- Is homelessness a relief, rehabilitation or development issue? Why?

Big group discussion on guiding questions for the immersion [20min]
- Based on the goals of the program and the previous meetings what questions do participants want to pursue in the immersion
- The immersion is an opportunity to test out ideas and form new ones

- Potential questions to help generate questions:
    - What do you hope to learn?
    - What are you confused by in the readings? What have the readings made you curious about?
    - How do you want to engage with those experiencing homelessness?

Assignment [2min]
- Reading on how poverty/homelessness relates to faith, Jesus and the mission of the Church
- Reflection questions

Revisit and finalize all logistics [15min]

Immersion

The immersion experience should mirror the overall Plunge program. Each day should begin with a time of preparation, followed by the immersion itself, and end with debriefing.

Components of each day of the immersion experience:
- Wake up
- Devotional from coordinator
- Guiding question for the day   } preparation
- Prayer for the day
- Out on the streets
- Short reading for the day   } immersion
- Site Visit (or Church visit on Sunday)
- Return to church
- Debriefing   } debriefing
- Prayer to close the day

The content of each of these components should be developed by the Plunge Coordinator and staff advisor and be responsive the participants' interests and group dynamics.

A short devotional at the start of the day can get participants thinking as well as be of support to them through what can be a trying experience.

A guiding question prompts the participants to consider various aspects of homelessness and be actively engaged in their experience.

The whole Plunge experience will benefit from being covered in prayer.

Out on the streets participants have the opportunity to engage with those experiencing homelessness and learn from them. Hearing and embracing the stories of others is at the center of the Urban Plunge experience. Participants should be encourage to actively seek to learn more, talk to more people, see different areas of the city, etc.

Providing participants with a short reading can further the learning in the program and provide more ideas and context to inform what students are experiencing in immersion. A potential series of readings and questions could be:

> Day One – Read "Life Chances" from "The New Homelessness Revisited"
> > What are the effects of homelessness? How does it impact people's lives? What are the challenges you see people encountering and maybe experiencing yourself?
> Day Two – Read "Coping Strategies" from "The New Homelessness Revisited"
> > How do people survive homelessness? How do the people you have met respond and cope with homelessness?
> Day Three – Read "Public and Media Views" from "The New Homelessness Revisited"
> > How are those experiencing homelessness perceived and represented? Do the people you have met confirm or challenge stereotypes? How have the stories you heard changed your view of homelessness?
> Day Four – Read "Taking Action" from "The New Homelessness Revisited"
> > What are some ways of responding to homelessness? What is effective? What do you think of the community responses you have witnessed on Plunge?

The questions here could be directly or indirectly tied into the guiding question for each day. Perhaps the guiding question at the start of the day is more oriented toward personal reflection and discernment whereas the questions accompanying the reading are more focused on homelessness as a social issue.

Site visits allow participants to see various responses to homelessness in Seattle and ask questions of social service providers who are engaged with homelessness on a day to day basis. Site visits should be selected as to see a diverse range of social services (e.g. faith-based vs secular, different demographics of service recipients, different approaches to addressing homelessness, etc.)

Debriefing is important to help participants process their experience as a group and individually. Questions will vary based on the group's experience but ideally will connect to the preparation materials both from pre-Plunge and the start of the day. The conversation may be guided as to address the questions which participants generated in the final pre-plunge meeting. Through debriefing students may connect their experience to prior conceptions and then begin generating new ideas and further questions. The bulk of debriefing will be semi-structured conversation, but it is also good to give space for people to journal who may not process verbally. The coordinator and advisor may develop specific questions and greater structure ahead of debriefing. It is also beneficial to take notes from each debriefing that will allow for generating questions in following debriefs and intentionally building upon each day in the experience.

Debriefing

Debriefing is an important part of the Plunge program and should be considered a required component (as far as is possible in a volunteer experience). It can be difficult to integrate the Plunge experience into one's life. This is especially true for those students who might not feel directly called into work that obviously relates to homelessness or poverty. How can the Plunge experience impact students' day to day lives as students and in the various vocational paths they are pursuing? Debriefing helps students to process their experience and see how it can be a first step in a journey rather than a complete or closed experience in and of itself.

Debriefing Meeting 1
So what? Personal Response

Give space for people to reconnect

Frame how it can be difficult to integrate the Plunge experience into your life. Debriefing is the space for beginning to explore what Plunge meant to you and continue on the reconciliation cycle

Big group discussion
- How was sharing the experience with family and friends?
- What are the lessons that are sticking with you from Plunge?
- Has the experience impacted how you view those experiencing homelessness?
- Has the experience impacted how you view yourself?
- Has the experience impacted how you view God?

Individual reflection writing activity
- How might you pursue reconciliation and justice in your own life? This could be in regards to homelessness but is by no means limited to that.
- What questions did Plunge generate for you? About homelessness? About yourself? About society? About God?
- What might be one next step you want to take to integrate the Urban Plunge experience into your life?

Small group discussion
- Share individual reflections with your group

Point participants toward the resource list

Introduce the post-Plunge forum and invite feedback on ideas to shape what it could look like

Debriefing Meeting 2
Advocacy – Community Response

Re-imagining Urban Plunge

This meeting can explore what advocacy looks like. Consider bringing in a local advocate to provide a training. What role can students play in addressing the systemic issues of poverty?

Continue to plan the post-Plunge forum – get commitment from people to be involved.

Post-Plunge Forum

This could be a space in which participants could act upon their experience by sharing it with the SPU community which is a small but significant act of advocacy. The forum could be a place of sharing stories through multiple mediums (i.e. verbally, artistically). It could potentially involve people actually experiencing homelessness in addition to Plunge participants. One option would be to link this event to Tent City 3's presence on-campus in Winter 2015.

Program Evaluation

All participants will complete an anonymous program evaluation to receive feedback on whether the learning objectives are being achieved and garner input on how the program might be improved.

Re-imagin.ing Urban Plunge

Application & Selection

The application for Urban Plunge will offer a summary of the program including its mission, goals, basic structure and time commitments.

Application questions will get at why someone is applying for Urban Plunge and their initial expectations. The application is as important for the applicant in discernment and reflection as it is for the selector. There is not necessarily a "right applicant." Openness and desire to learn may be the biggest qualifiers. A selection of a diverse (in all respects including varied interests and experiences) group can be good to foster discussion and mutual learning.

Selection of the participants is made by the Coordinator in conjunction with the advisor.

Organization

Urban Plunge will be maintained as a program of the JPC within Urban Involvement (which is funded and supported by ASSP). Plunge will be shaped by the vision and work of the JPC and maintained as a co-curricular program. However, there may be points on connection and the potential for greater integration with academics.

The Program is organized by the student Urban Plunge Coordinator in collaboration and with support from a staff advisor.

The Coordinator will be the point person on logistics. S/he will work with the advisor in filling in content for the program and facilitating the program.

The coordinator should ideally be an upperclass student who has done Urban Plunge before. Students with relevant coursework (such as Global and Urban Ministry, Reconciliation Studies, Sociology, Global Development, etc.) can be intentionally recruited. If the program continues to develop, it may worth considering compensating the position and/or making it an internship position.

Re-imagin.ing Urban Plunge

Training for the Coordinator

Programs like Plunge would typically be run by faculty or student affairs professionals. It is therefore imperative that the student coordinator receive adequate training and work alongside the staff advisor.

Training may include subjects such knowledge of homelessness, Seattle, Christian Community Development principles, skills in facilitation, process of event planning, communication skills and behaviors, teaching etc.

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Plunge Participant Binder

Materials for Urban Plunge Participant's Binder

_____

(front cover)

URBAN PLUNGE

2014 | 2015

Plunge Participant Binder

This binder will serve as a guide and resource throughout your Urban Plunge experience – from preparation, through the immersion itself, to debriefing and beyond. The included materials are designed to provoke thought, encourage reflection and help you to integrate the experience into your life. Feel free to write in it and utilize it as best suits you.

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(title page)

URBAN PLUNGE
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OVERVIEW OF THE URBAN PLUNGE PROGRAM

Urban Plunge is an educational program put on by Urban Involvement (a ministry of the John Perkins Center and ASSP). Rather than learning about homelessness and poverty abstractly in a classroom setting, Urban Plunge provides students the opportunity to immerse themselves in the city to learn from those experiencing these realities. Through Urban Plunge students can both become informed on social justice issues in Seattle and be transformed for social justice action.

Mission & Goals (*the why*)

Urban Plunge inspires students for the work of reconciliation and justice through an immersive learning experience where they encounter homelessness and poverty in Seattle and engage with their neighbors experiencing these realities.

Through Urban Plunge students may:

- Cultivate empathy and recognition of the human dignity of all people
- Develop a deeper understanding of the experience of homelessness through conversations and relationships with those experiencing it
- Challenge stereotypes, assumptions, and myths surrounding homelessness and poverty

- Explore the root causes of poverty and injustice as well as potential responses on personal and systemic levels
- Learn about Seattle's social services, public policy and unique context
- Draw close to God's heart for the poor and marginalized and develop a passion for service
- Become inspired and better equipped for the lifelong journey and work of reconciliation and justice

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The Model (*the how*)

Urban Plunge is a holistic educational experience designed to both provide information and prompt transformation. The aim is not simply to learn about homelessness, but rather to move toward greater engagement with those on the margins. Dr. Brenda Salter-McNeil's "Reconciliation Cycle" provides the conceptual model for how Urban Plunge seeks to do this.

The Reconciliation Cycle

Identification

Preparation

Realization

Activation

Isolation/ Alienation

Reconciliation

preservation

Catalytic Events
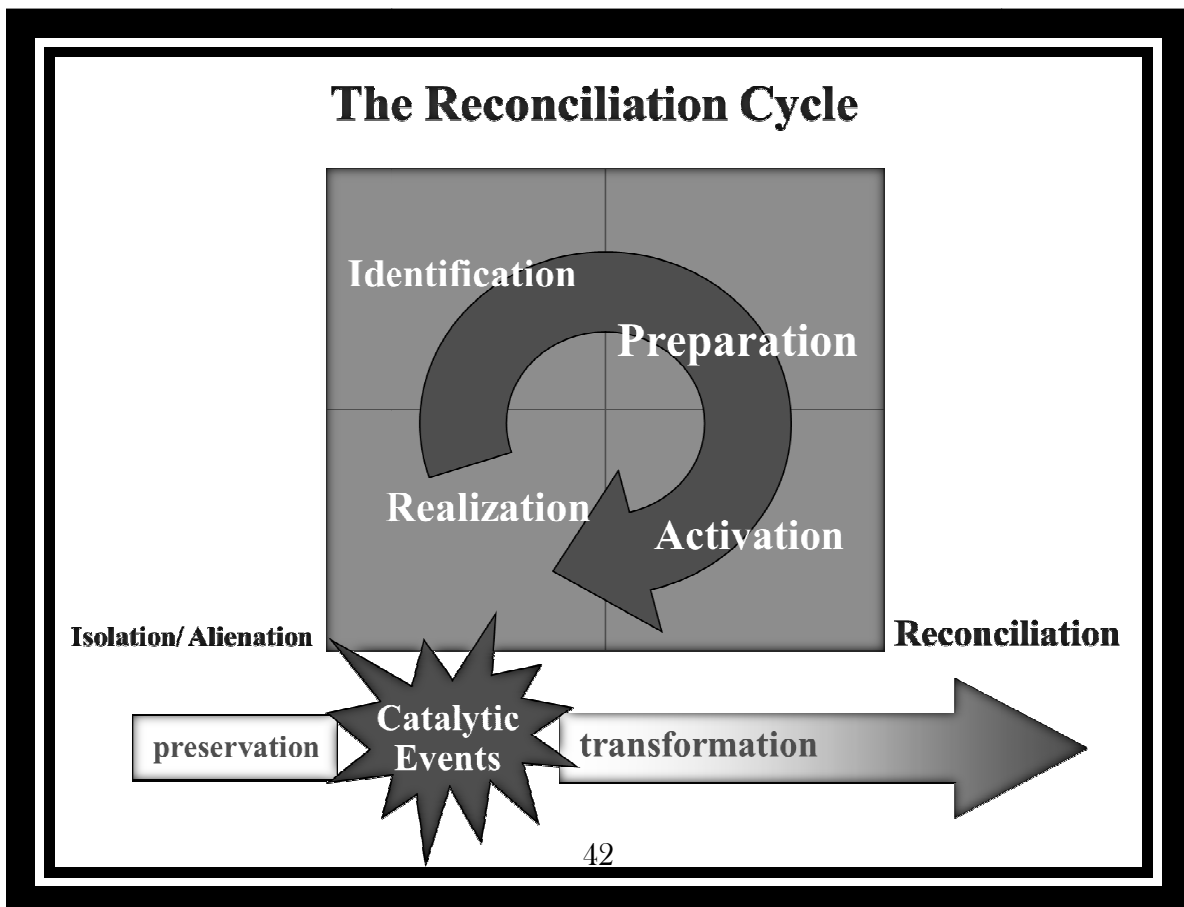
transformation

Throughout the program we will explore how homelessness is a reconciliation and justice issue.

The hope is that Urban Plunge may be a catalytic event in your life taking you from a state of preservation to one of transformation. Preser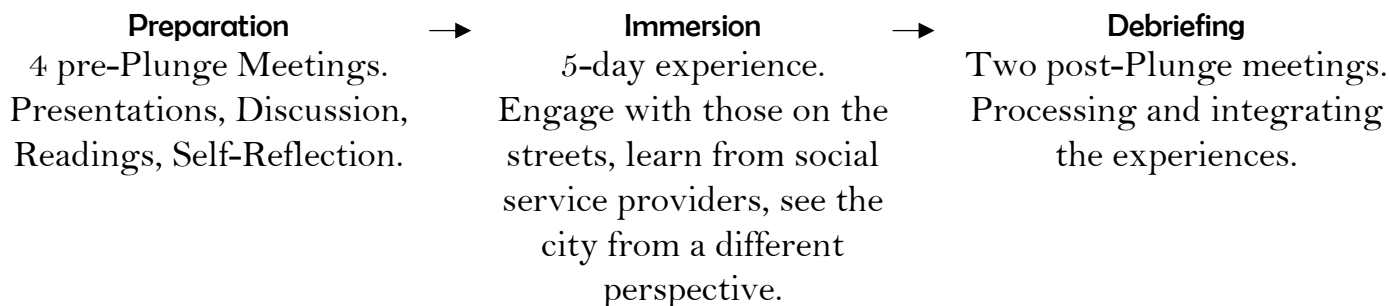vation is marked by isolation and alienation where the Other may be distant, feared, unknown, ignored, etc. In this case, you may hold certain stereotypes and preconceptions about homelessness and those experiencing it. Plunge allows you the opportunity

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to move into a stage of realization where you may see homelessness for the first time or in new ways and begin to break down the division which stand between you and those experiencing homelessness. From realization, you may move into greater identification through hearing people's stories and empathizing with their experience. Plunge by no means gives you a thorough understanding of homelessness, but it gives you the space to explore social injustice and begin to engage with others. This experience likely will generate more questions than answers. Thus Plunge seeks to point you toward preparation which involves further learning and discernment before moving into activation of your empathy and experience in the work of reconciliation.

The Program (*the what*)

The program consists of three components which are all intended to facilitate learning and transformation guided by the reconciliation cycle.

Preparation	→	Immersion	→	Debriefing
4 pre-Plunge Meetings. Presentations, Discussion, Readings, Self-Reflection.		5-day experience. Engage with those on the streets, learn from social service providers, see the city from a different perspective.		Two post-Plunge meetings. Processing and integrating the experiences.

Preparation

Urban Plunge is much more than just "the plunge." You will prepare for the immersion experience through four pre-plunge meetings which include presentations, discussions and readings. This will allow you to come to "the plunge" with information and self-reflection so that you may ask deeper questions, line your immersion experience up against something, and explore how the experience relates to your personal knowledge, story and actions.

Immersion

You will take "the plunge" spending five days on the streets of Seattle hearing the stories of those who are experiencing homelessness, getting a glimpse into their daily life and observing the environment. You will experience a small aspect of

some the challenges of homelessness and tour multiple social service agencies to learn from social service providers and see multiple responses to homelessness. There will be daily facilitated debriefing and space to journal and reflect.

You are not experiencing homelessness on Urban Plunge (it would be impossible to simulate the social, mental, and physical realities of homelessness). Rather, the Urban Plunge immersion is intended to displace you from your own context in order to better see social injustice and learn from those who are actually experiencing homelessness. The focus of the immersion is ultimately not about the personal experience as much as it is about engagement with others. It is primarily intended to be a learning experience. But a powerful one which might just transform your understanding of the world, God and yourself.

Debriefing

In addition to the debriefings which occur each day during the immersion, two "post-plunge" meetings are held to further process the experience and begin to integrate it into your life. Space is given for discussion and discernment in addition to providing resources and connections to learn more and act.

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PREPARATION

Meeting One – Introduction to Urban Plunge

Writing Activity:
- How would you define homelessness?

- What are your biggest questions about homelessness?

- What are your expectations for Urban Plunge? (i.e. hopes, fears, what you want to learn, etc.)

Notes:

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Assignment One – What is Homelessness? A Sociological Perspective

This is assignment is intended to get you thinking more about your current conceptions of homelessness and consider a perspective out of the social sciences.

Please take some time and write down your thoughts in response to the following questions:

- What is homelessness? Make a list of words that come to mind when you think of homelessness.

- What do you think causes homelessness?

- Who do you think is most likely to become homeless? Why?

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Reading: "The New Homelessness Revisited" by Barrett A. Lee et al.

"The New Homelessness" is a term used by sociologists to describe the contemporary manifestation of homelessness in American society. This article provides a comprehensive review of research on homelessness from a sociological perspective.

Could make copies of reading to include in binder.

Please read the following sections: Introduction, Conceptualizing Homelessness, What Causes Homelessness

Questions for reflection:

- What stood out to you from the sections of the article you read?

- Did the reading challenge your preconceptions of homelessness? Would your answers to any of the pre-reading questions now change?

- What questions did the reading generate?

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Meeting Two: Homelessness and Seattle

Notes:

Could create an outline for presentation on Seattle

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Assignment Two: What is Homelessness? A Theological Perspective

Reading: *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert

Please read chapter two, "What's the Problem?" which provides a conceptual model for poverty informed by Christian theology.

Questions for reflection:

- How do the authors define poverty? How does this definition apply to homelessness?

- How does the theological perspective on poverty/homelessness line up against the sociological perspective you've read about? Do they agree? Conflict? Inform each other?

- What role do systems play in poverty/homelessness?

- What role do you play in relation to homelessness? What is your involvement in systems? How are you complicit in broken relationship and in working for reconciliation?

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Meeting Three: Homelessness and Reconciliation

Notes:

Writing Activity:
Spend five minutes writing in reflection on the following question (you can use the back of this sheet as well)
- Where do you stand in relationship to those experiencing homelessness?

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Assignment Three: Responses – Relief, Rehabilitation and Development

This assignment is intended to get you thinking about how we (you and the community) might respond to homelessness and offer a framework for thinking about responses which you can use to evaluate social service providers.

Please take some time and write down your thoughts in response to the following question:

- Based off our conversations and your reflections on the causes of homelessness, what do you think a good response would look like?

Reading: *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert

Please read chapter four, "Are We There Yet?" which explores varying approaches to poverty relief.

Questions for reflection:

- Do you think homelessness is a relief, rehabilitation of development issue? Why?

- What systems might by unjust and oppressive to people experiencing homelessness?

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Meeting Four:

Notes:

What are the questions you want to explore on the immersion?

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Assignment Four: Homelessness and the Church

This assignment is intended to get you thinking about how homelessness relates to your faith and the Church.

Please take some time and write down your thoughts in response to the following questions:

- Why did Jesus come to earth?

- For yourself, what role does social justice and service play in your faith?

Reading: *When Helping Hurts* by Steve Corbett and Brian Fikkert

Please read chapter one, "Why did Jesus Come to Earth?" which explores Christ's mission and the corresponding mission of the Church.

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Questions for reflection:

- Summarize in your own words the author's view of Jesus' mission.

- Summarize in your own words the author's view of the mission of the Church.

- What is the good news of the Kingdom of God?

- Did the reading challenge your view of faith and mission?

- What questions did the reading generate?

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IMMERSION

Day 1

> Each day could include a Scripture verse that would be used in the devotional, the guiding question for the day, an optional challenge (e.g. visit an area of the city you have never been to before), a reading, questions for reflection on the reading, and space to journal

> An overview schedule should be handed out at the start of the immersion which could then presumably be kept in the binder by students

…

Day 2

…

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DEBRIEFING

Questions for reflection as you return home on break and then to SPU next quarter:

Where did you see God on Urban Plunge?

What did you learn about yourself on Urban Plunge?

What did you learn about homelessness?

What did you learn about God?

What questions do you now have?

How do you want to integrate the Plunge experience into your life?

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Resource List – Ways to Learn More and Engage

Programs at SPU:

The John Perkins Center
Urban Involvement – Weekly volunteer opportunities with a team in Seattle
www.spu.edu/ui

Latreia – Quarterly services day, volunteer opportunity database
www.spu.edu/latreia

 SPRINT – Short-term mission trips over the summer in 8 different countries
www.spu.edu/sprint

Multi-Ethnic Programs
www.spu.edu/mep

Intercultural retreat – engage with students from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds at a weekend retreat fall quarter

In-Context – a quarterly discussion series on privilege and race

Intercultural clubs – there a numerous clubs representing a range of cultures which meet and offer events open to all students

Relevant SPU Courses
THEO 2620: Intro to Global & Urban Ministry

THEO 2730: Introduction to Christian Reconciliation

THEO 3630: Holistic Ministry

SOC 2620: Urban Sociology

SOC 3320: Homelessness in America

SOC 4910: Seminar: Homelessness

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GEO 2207: Economic Geography

ECN 3231: Urban Economics

FCS 3710: Housing and Community

HIS 3600: History of the Pacific Northwest

POL 2464: State & Local Politics

POL 3677: That Nature of Cities

Books

When Helping Hurts: How to Alleviate Poverty without Hurting the Poor …and Yourself by Steve Corbett & Brian Fikkert

Friendship at the Margins: Discovering Mutuality in Service and Mission by Christopher Heuertz & Christine D. Pohl

With Justice for All: by John M. Perkins

Under the Overpass by Mike Yankoski

Tell Them Who I Am by Eliot Liebow

Rachel and Her Children: Homeless Families in America by Jonathan Kozol

Down and Out in America: The Origins of Homelessness by Peter H. Rossi

The Least of These: Lessons Learned from Kids on the Street by Ron Ruthruff

Reconciling All Things: A Christian Vision for Justice, Peace and Healing by

Emmanuel Katongole and Chris Rice

The Ragamuffin Gospel by Brennan Manning

The Hole in Our Gospel: What Does God Expect of Us? The Answer That Changed My Life and Might Just Change the World by Richard Stearns

The Irresistible Revolution by Shane Claiborne

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Organizations

New Horizons

Seattle's Union Gospel Mission

Mary's Place

Compass Housing Alliance

Operation Nightwatch

Downtown Emergency Service Center

ROOTS

Share/Wheel

Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness

Washington Coalition for the Homeless

National Coalition for the Homeless

Urban Impact

Christian Community Development Association

Other

Purchase 'Real Change'

Check out Seattle's Ten-Year Plan to End Homeless

Stay abreast of local politics which impact people on the margins

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Debriefing Meeting One

Notes:

Writing activity:
- How might you pursue reconciliation and justice in your own life? This could be in regards to homelessness but is by no means limited to that.

- What questions did Plunge generate for you? About homelessness? About yourself? About society? About God?

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- What might be one next step you want to take to integrate the Urban Plunge experience into your life?

Debriefing Meeting Two
…

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Program Evaluation

Urban Plunge Evaluation

Qtr./Year:_____

We commend and thank you for participating in Urban Plunge. We are continually looking to improve the program. We need to know what about the program works well and what needs improvement so that participants will get the greatest benefit from the experience. Thank you!

1. How did you hear about Urban Plunge?

2. Why did you apply for Urban Plunge experience?

3. What did you learn from the Urban Plunge?

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4. Please rater you agreement with the following statements on a scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)

Through Urban Plunge I…
"Cultivated greater empathy and recognition of the human dignity of all people"

"Developed a deeper understanding of the experience of homelessness through conversations and relationships with those experiencing it"

"Had stereotypes, assumptions, and myths surrounding homelessness and poverty challenged"

"Explored the root causes of poverty and injustice as well as potential responses on personal and systemic levels"

"Learned more about Seattle's social services, public policy and unique context"

"Drew closer to God's heart for the poor and marginalized and developed a passion for service"

"Became inspired and better equipped for the lifelong journey and work of reconciliation and justice"

5. What aspect/s of Urban Plunge facilitated learning for you?

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6. What aspect/s of Urban Plunge hindered learning for you?

7. What would you change in the Urban Plunge Program?

8. What questions did the program generate for you?

9. Would you recommend other SPU students do the Urban Plunge program? Why or why not?

10. Any other comments?

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APPENDIX

Include the most recent contact information for the Urban Plunge coordinator and advisor and any other emergency information the participants may need

Include the most up to date safety guidelines for the program

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As noted above, this proposed content is not comprehensive. This is intentional. I have offered critique, but I also have made an initial offering of creativity in conjunction with that critique. My hope is that this will be a springboard for the further development of the program and begin a process which can incorporate, refine and build upon what I have offered here.

Thank you for your consideration of this review and proposal!

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Appendix: Integration of Faith and Learning

I enjoyed studying the Urban Plunge program because of the opportunity it presented for me to bring together my faith, studies, and personal experiences. I believe that engagement with the poor is a Biblical mandate. My studies of development have helped me begin to learn how to do this holistically. I went on Urban Plunge my freshman year, and it played a formative role in renewing my faith as well as shaping my studies and vocational calling. However, somewhat ironically, my studies led me to question the efficacy and organization of the Plunge program. I believed that the program could benefit from a critical examination, which I have sought to offer in this project. More than critique though I also attempted to create structure, organization and content that could benefit the program. This project has provided a tangible outlet to integrate my faith and scholarship in re-imagining Urban Plunge, a ministry program at SPU.

I desire my whole life to be lived in following Christ bound by the common thread of loving God and loving people. To me, scholarship ought to be intimately connected to worship and service. It should not be done in an "ivory tower," disconnected from the reality of living.

Scholarship is a means by which I may seek to utilize my intellectual gifts to pursue my calling to the work of justice, ultimately seeking to love God and others more fully.

I am only interested in scholarship as far as it helps me love God, love people and go where Christ is leading me. While I think education and knowledge are tremendously important, I do not see them as an end in themselves. I have no desire to be only a scholar. I desire to be a Christ-follower and if scholarship may be of service in that (which I most certainly think it can be) then I will engage in it. Scholarship ought to be purposeful.

In my life I see scholarship as means to better love the other in the pursuit of justice. I have always had a desire to help people. I want people to belong and be well. But our world is a very broken place and there are a lot of hurting people. I have seen that I am broken too and that injustice harms me even when I am in the position of the oppressor. I pursued Global Development Studies so that I might join with people in suffering and support their efforts to put things to rights. If Christ is the why and love is the what, then scholarship helps with the how. There are many people affected by homelessness in the city. Many look at them with scorn, but I see Christ in them and so I desire to respond in love (at least when I am at my best), but how do I do that?

Coming to SPU has connected my faith and education and helped me to find purpose in both. My time here has renewed a thirst for knowledge and a thirst for God. Urban Plunge played a significant role in this. In my life, it marks both a return to God and a turn toward pursuing justice with my whole life. My senior year of high school I was in very dark and uncertain place, and I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life. Freshman year was a year of healing, renewal and new direction. On Urban Plunge I experienced God afresh and alive, and I felt confirmation toward pursuing global development studies. I do not know if I would have pursued the studies I did, interned at the Denver Rescue Mission, been on ASSP core or

planned on joining the Jesuit Volunteer Corps NW next year if I had not done Plunge. At the very least, Urban Plunge has been a symbol of transformation in my life.

However, my studies led me to a number of questions regarding the Urban Plunge program. Is it really transformative or does it just build upon people's previous conceptions? What are the unintended consequences of such a program? What does engagement look like with the homeless and poor if you are not going to do urban ministry and development work full-time? Could the time, energy and money put into Plunge be better utilized elsewhere? Some of these questions formed the foundation of my project. I hope that my project can be of benefit to the John Perkins Center in further developing Urban Plunge so that more students may pursue reconciliation and justice with those marginalized by homelessness.

To take a step back again, global development has joined faith and scholarship together for me in this pursuit of Christ. One of the clearest themes in the Bible is care for the poor. This theme resonates with me, and as I said I have always had a desire to help people. Growing up, though, care for the poor seemed like merely a side-activity. To pursue justice was to volunteer once a week, support a child in a foreign country and give a couple bucks to the person on the street corner. Of course I knew there were missionaries, not-for-profits and development organizations, but that never connected for me as a viable career path. The Global Development Studies major presented itself as a way to tangibly tie my education to a career that would serve to help me live out my faith.

While I have enjoyed my development studies and have found them on the whole to be practicable, there is some tension in pursuing them. I sit in a classroom learning about homelessness when just miles away there are people outside freezing in the pouring rain. I'm paying $140,000 for four years of education to learn how to work with people on the margins and this seems ridiculous at times. There also is a tension in development studies because

education is a privilege and it affords great power. My college education which is to help me serve people also creates a divide between me and the people I want to come alongside. At the end of the day, I value the education because it has only increased my passion to serve and shown me how to do that well without hurting others or myself, but it is heart-wrenching at times.

Scholarship in development is also complicated by the fact that it is widely multi-disciplinary. For example, to holistically understand homelessness will require knowledge from sociology, anthropology, political science, economics, history, psychology and medicine. Development is oriented toward practice and integration, but scholarship and the modern university have become increasingly specialized.[a] Faith grounds my studies in the pursuit of justice, but the further I go in my studies the more I feel pressured to narrow my focus. I understand this pressure as a necessity for scholarship, but it seems to me there is a tipping point at which the scholarship of development becomes disconnected from the practice of development.

I desire not so much to be a scholar but to be a scholarly practitioner. The Jacobsens define scholarship as "disciplined and creative reflection on the natural and humanly constructed world disseminated for the benefit of others and judged by appropriate standards of excellence."[b] While I certainly think that is important, it has no appeal to me. To be fair, they include "intervening, encouraging certain outcomes and discouraging others" as a part of scholarship, but it seems to me that academics rarely are the change makers in the field of development. There is a disconnect between theory and practice in development work because the people coming up with the theories are different from the people employing the practices.

I find Boyer's model of scholarship to be helpful because I think it allows space for the scholarly practitioner.[c] He highlights four aspects of scholarship, and I am drawn particularly

to integration and application. Integration puts "isolated facts into perspective;" it gives context and seeks the larger meaning. Application puts those facts and meaning found to work to "solve problems" as "theory and practice vitally interact and one renews the other." Development work requires integration across disciplines and application of that integration. This application ought to be scholarly in this sense of being reflective and grounded and evaluated through theory. However, I think it may be rare that the development worker will do scholarship because they must integrate knowledge from so many fields that they will not develop within their own "special field of knowledge."

Paul Farmer presents an interesting model because he is able to do both in *Mountains Beyond Mountains*. Farmer works in Haiti applying his knowledge of medicine to serve patients but at the same time is also integrating knowledge from anthropology of the local culture, history of the island, politics of the situation, and business to run a nonprofit. At the same time, he is doing novel research in medicine. He is a genius, but we cannot simply dismiss him as such. Kidder writes of Farmer "attempts at imitation would put the emphasis where it didn't belong. The goal was to improve the lives of others, not oneself." I admire Paul Farmer because he brought his whole life to bear on what he most passionately believes in. He held nothing back. I do not want to be Paul Farmer, but I want to be Scott Jackson and bring my whole life, all that I am, to love God and love people.

I have been blessed with a good intellect and so scholarship is a way to steward those gifts and use them to pursue justice. I pursue justice because it is the tangible way to live out the call to love God and love people. I see engagement and relationship as the first step to justice. I saw my review of the Urban Plunge program as a way to pursue Christ and move toward this engagement. This project was a way to draw upon my faith, passions and taught me to navigate the tension of development scholarship.

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[a] Roberts and Turner, *The Sacred and Secular University*

[b] Jacobsen and Jacobsen, *Scholarship and Christian Faith*

[c] Boyer, *Scholarship Reconsidered*

[d] Farmer, *Mountains Beyond Mountains*