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Laura L. Stachowski
Indiana University at Bloomington, utktrace@gmail.com

Aaron Bodle
utktrace2@gmail.com

Michael Morrin
utktrace3@gmail.com

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SERVICE LEARNING IN OVERSEAS AND NAVAJO RESERVATION COMMUNITIES: STUDENT TEACHERS' POWERFUL EXPERIENCES BUILD COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS, BROADEN WORLDVIEW, AND INFORM CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Laura L Stachowski

Aaron Bodle

Michael Morrin

INTRODUCTION

Student teaching is often described as the most valuable component in teacher education programs, affording fledgling educators consecutive weeks of real world experience in planning and facilitating lessons, managing large groups of pupils, evaluating progress, and developing the skills and dispositions that will launch them into their own elementary and secondary classrooms. Increasingly, student teaching placements are being developed and offered in culturally diverse settings both within the United States and abroad, giving prospective teachers the opportunity to develop their teaching proficiency *and* at the same time to broaden their knowledge and understanding of the world and of the ways in which others live and educate their children (Kissock, 1997). Consider now another twist – adding a service learning requirement through which the student teachers participate actively in their placement communities, working with community members to achieve shared goals while learning more about the lives, traditions, and values of those their schools serve. With service learning incorporated into the international/cross-cultural student teaching assignment, an entirely new dimension of student teacher learning emerges with endless possibilities for professional and personal growth and development.

It is well recognized that the relationship of schools and the communities in which they are located is a dynamic one, with the ways in which schools are perceived and operated usually reflected in the communities' interests and needs. Responsible educators strive to understand these dynamics, recognizing that with knowledge of the community's cultural and social patterns, they will more effectively meet the needs of the youth in their classrooms (Brown & Kysilka, 2002; Ramirez & Gallardo, 2001). Teachers best gain this knowledge,

according to Brown and Kysilka (2002), by “contributing to the community as concerned citizens.” They added:

Meeting local leaders and attending local events is one way to get involved. Another way is to become active in community projects or organizations as a volunteer. For preservice teachers, such volunteering provides valuable community background information not available through the typical classroom field experience. (p. 185)

Indeed, when student teachers are required to engage in community-based service learning projects, they move beyond the safety net of their classrooms and schools to develop connections with individuals and organizations they may not have considered otherwise. Further, when these student teachers are in placements far from the comfortable familiarity of their college campuses and home towns, the insights they gain through community-based service learning provide the background information Brown and Kysilka believe is vital for teachers’ success in the classroom.

The Cultural Immersion Projects at Indiana University offer teacher education majors the opportunity to be placed in culturally-diverse settings, where full-time student teaching, required community participation, ongoing reflection, and academic reporting combine to provide experiences that go well beyond the common foci of conventional student teaching assignments. The purpose of this article is to report the outcomes of service learning projects completed by student teachers in overseas communities and on the Navajo Indian Reservation, as reported by the student teachers themselves. Their service learning projects take them outside the walls of their classrooms and school buildings, and into the daily activities and special events of the people in their placement sites, where powerful experiences shape them in often profound ways.

THE CULTURAL IMMERSION PROJECTS

The Cultural Immersion Projects at Indiana University-Bloomington were developed in the early 1970s as optional alternatives to conventional student teaching placements. Today, two specific Projects serve nearly 150 elementary, secondary, and all-grades student teachers annually. The American Indian Reservation Project prepares and places student teachers for sixteen-week teaching assignments in Bureau of Indian Affairs, contract/grant, and public schools on the Navajo Indian Reservation, in the Four Corners area of Arizona, New Mexico, and Utah. The Overseas Project prepares and places student teachers for eight-week assignments in national schools of Australia, China, Costa Rica, England, India, Ireland, Kenya, New Zealand, Russia, Scotland, Spain, Turkey,

and Wales, following the successful completion of 10 to 16 weeks of student teaching in Indiana. Both Projects featured cultural and community involvement as integral components throughout the experience.

During the academic year prior to student teaching, participants in the Cultural Projects are required to undergo extensive preparation (including seminars, readings, written assignments, workshops, and sessions with consultants from the host cultural groups) for the cultural values, beliefs, lifestyles, and educational practices in the placement sites they have selected. These requirements not only familiarize the student teachers with the schools and cultures in which they will live and teach, but they also serve as an effective self-screening device in that applicants whose primary motivation may be to play “tourist” are discouraged by the intensive preparatory work. The preparatory phase, which may span as many as three semesters, receives ongoing review and evaluation by the Project director and staff, and feedback from Project participants is utilized in revising assignments to better fit the students’ preparatory needs.

While at their Reservation or overseas sites, participants are required to engage fully in all teacher-related functions of the school; foster friendships with members of the host cultural group in the school and community and become involved in their activities; plan and perform at least one service learning project in the local community; and submit reflective reports identifying local attitudes and perspectives, cultural values, important issues, and personal and professional learning outcomes and insights. In the Reservation Project, participants live in the placement school’s dormitory and provide academic tutoring, companionship, role modeling, and “life enhancement” activities for the young Navajo dorm residents, and they assist in the preparation and serving of breakfast and dinner in the adjacent cafeteria. In the Overseas Project, participants typically live with host families in the community and become an integral part of family life. Such dormitory, cafeteria, and home stay experiences enable the student teachers to interact closely with local people in a wide range of activities – from the ordinary tasks of daily life to special events and traditional ceremonies – and thus learn first-hand about the people and communities from which their school pupils emerge.

Contact is maintained with the Cultural Projects office throughout the on-site experience by telephone and correspondence. Staff members send detailed feedback to participants upon receiving their assignments and reports, and calls are placed when concerns arise or points require clarification. In the Overseas Project, a supervisory trip is made to at least one of the host nations each academic year; however, time factors and budget constraints prohibit every participant in every country from being visited. Still, these students will

have received close and thorough supervision from Project staff during the Indiana phase of the student teaching experience. In the Reservation Project, a site visit is made to each participant at the beginning of the semester, and midway through a staff member returns to “troubleshoot” with those student teachers who need the extra support and to conduct a daylong seminar for the entire group at a centrally located school. E-mail greatly facilitates regular communication between staff and student teachers in most of the placement sites, and all Overseas and Reservation Project participants know that the office is a phone call away should serious concerns arise.

The Reservation Project and Overseas Project are designed in such a way that emphasis is placed on *both* classroom teaching and community involvement experiences. Project participants cannot “just student teach” but also must immerse themselves into the lives and cultures of the people with whom they live and work. Consequently, members of the placement community, along with educators and supervisors in the placement school, become vital contributors to student teaching learning on many levels. Some of these learning outcomes and their sources are examined in Stachowski, Richardson, and Henderson (2003); Stachowski and Brantmeier (2002); and Stachowski and Mahan (1998).

THE SERVICE LEARNING PROJECT: DESCRIPTION OF THE ASSIGNMENT

One of the more popular on-site requirements in the Reservation and Overseas Projects is the service learning assignment, which must consist of a minimum of eight hours of planned work activity and a written report including both narrative and reflective sections. Parameters for this assignment include the selection of service learning activities independent of the placement school’s academic and/or extracurricular program; the completion of activities with supporting Navajo or host nation community members and/or agencies that are part of the placement community; and adherence to the “three R’s” in that their chosen activities should represent *realistic* tasks that serve the community, the activities should include a strong *reflective* component whereby the participants extend the learning derived from the experience, and the activities should be based on the premise of *reciprocal exchange* between equals.

A central goal of the service learning project is to encourage students to participate in novel activities outside of the comparatively familiar role of a teacher. The service learning project coaxes the student teachers to place themselves in social and cultural situations where they may likely feel somewhat vul-

nerable, out of place, or uncomfortable, and where they might not know how to act, what to say, or whom to turn to. In all cases, reflection is an integral component of service learning, for without it, the experience is simply an exercise without meaning. Silcox (1993) described reflection as “the process of looking back on the implications of action taken – both good and bad – determining what has been gained, lost, or achieved, and connecting these conclusions to future actions and larger societal contexts” (p. 102).

The student teachers’ write-ups of their service-learning activities are typically candid, insightful, and inspiring. They describe the procedures they followed to organize the activities and the events surrounding the actual performance of the activities, and they evaluate their success in terms of personal learning, services rendered to others, the reciprocity of the relationship, and things they might have done differently. Many student teachers remark in their write-ups that community people look favorably upon their involvement in service-learning activities, recognizing the students’ commitment to their Reservation or overseas communities and purposes for being there. Many also suggest that the experience has generated a desire to engage in service learning in the future, as a way of learning about and giving back to the communities where they are employed. Earlier reports examining the required service learning assignment in the Reservation and Overseas Projects may be found in Stachowski and Frey (2005) and Stachowski and Visconti (1998), respectively.

THE STUDENT TEACHERS AND THEIR SERVICE LEARNING ACTIVITIES

In the current report, 27 recent participants in the Reservation Project and 61 in the Overseas Project submitted write-ups of the service learning activities they completed in their placement communities. In both Projects, the student teachers were mostly of senior standing, ready to graduate at the conclusion of the student teaching semester and apply for their teaching licenses. A few already had bachelor degrees and were enrolled in “certification only” programs or “master’s plus certification.” Of the total 88 student teachers, roughly 75% were female and most were white, with three African-American student teachers and four of Hispanic ethnicity. For many of these student teachers, their experiences on the Navajo Reservation and overseas represented the first time they had stepped into other cultural settings for extended periods of time – not as tourists, but as educators in local schools and participants in the placement communities. For some, it truly was a stretch, taking them well outside of their comfort zones as they learned to navigate their way through new and different

cultural codes. In many cases, these student teachers were also experiencing, for the first time in their lives, what it was like to be a minority in terms of race and/or language.

The service learning projects in which these student teachers engaged represented an array of activities, from herding sheep with a local family on the Navajo Reservation to working with children in a Kenyan orphanage. Tables 1 and 2 list the service learning projects these 88 student teachers performed in the Reservation Project and Overseas Project, respectively. It should be noted that in some cases, student teachers engaged in the service learning projects in pairs or in small groups, especially in locations where they tend to be placed together, such as on the Navajo Reservation and in Kenya; thus there are fewer actual projects listed than the total number of student teachers whose reports are examined here.

The ways in which these particular service learning projects were identified and selected varied widely among the student teacher, and the local people who served as the cultural brokers, facilitating the student teachers' involvement in family- and community-based activities, varied as well. In both the Reservation and Overseas Projects, the school personnel with whom the student teachers interacted daily – teachers, school secretaries, bus drivers, and staff in the dormitory and cafeteria – suggested possible service learning projects in the surrounding community, oftentimes within their own families where assistance was needed in organizing an event or completing a major task. In other cases, the student teachers sought opportunities directly in their placement communities – churches, clubs, chapter houses, and other organizations where another set of helping hands is always welcome. In the Overseas Project, host families were commonly the referral for similar agencies. Lastly, a small minority of students found their service projects through personal exploration of their host communities.

In the Reservation Project, many student teachers sought to engage in service learning projects that would give them a strong sense of the kinds of responsibilities that the Navajo people have who live on the Reservation, including responsibilities that fall on the children in their classrooms. Thus, for example, Veronica eagerly seized the opportunity to help the cafeteria's head cook, Dolores, with the repair and reconstruction of a bridge over a wash leading to her father's home. She had forged a close relationship with Dolores, who provided impromptu lessons in the Navajo language while Veronica helped her prepare and serve dinner in the cafeteria, and Veronica was pleased to assist Dolores' family in this way while learning more about her life off the school campus. One or two student teachers "safely" chose service learning projects

that closely paralleled the kinds of activities they engage in at home, as in the case of Michelle who worked in a soup kitchen in her Reservation community. Unfortunately, she ended up working less with the local Navajos and more with the Anglo church members who ran the kitchen daily.

A few student teachers worried that their involvement with a particular service learning project may be misconstrued by members of the local community. Justin, for example, in organizing a “Walk in Beauty” clean-up campaign on his Reservation school’s campus and in the local community, expressed initial concern “that they would think we were picking up trash because we were better than them and we hated living in filth.” However, he later discovered that the community members were supportive of the initiative, especially when they learned the pupils residing in the school dormitory were also involved in the clean-up.

The student teachers’ descriptions of the events surrounding the actual performance of their service learning projects were revealing, sensitive, and often humorous, as they sought to contribute in meaningful ways while learning from their Navajo and host nation hosts about the things that are important in their lives. Sean, for example, was determined to herd sheep for a local family while he was on the Navajo Reservation, and when the opportunity arose through another student teacher’s classroom teacher, Mrs. Yazzie, he jumped at the chance to spend his spring break helping in this way. Together, Sean and Mark followed the unpaved, unmarked roads to the family’s property, where Mrs. Yazzie introduced the student teachers to her mother. There, Sean’s excitement gave way to nervousness as he realized that this was his first time at the home of a Navajo and that he knew nothing about herding sheep. He described the initial moments:

Mrs. Yazzie briefly showed us around. We then met the sheep, the herding dogs, and Mrs. Yazzie’s mother. Mrs. Yazzie’s mother was a little old lady who spoke only Navajo and carried a tiny walking stick as she cordially greeted us with a “ya’ateeh” [hello] and a smile. In the meantime, Mrs. Yazzie turned us over to her mother and went inside the house. Although her mother spoke no English, you could tell by the tone of her voice and the smile on her face that she was glad to have a couple of college guys herding the sheep for a week.

Sean quickly discovered that what he had assumed would be easy turned out to require much more skill and physical exertion. They were supposed to take the sheep to an old cornfield to graze, and while Mark was getting directions from Mrs. Yazzie, Sean went ahead with the sheep, thinking the herding dogs would know the way. Soon, they were well off course, and Sean’s efforts to turn the sheep around caused them to run even further off the intended path.

“It took us a good hour to figure out how to herd sheep,” he wrote, adding, “Looking back, it is quite humorous to think about just how much like ‘city-slickers’ we must have appeared to Mrs. Yazzie’s mother and anyone else who saw us.” One day later in the week, upon returning with the sheep to the corral, Sean and Mark were asked to help the family with the butchering of a cow in preparation for a traditional wedding ceremony, another opportunity that was filled with learning about Navajo customs and family traditions.

In the Overseas Project, as well, student teachers chose service learning activities that helped provide a new understanding of their local community. For example, April, a student teacher placed in Kenya, helped the young women who were hired to cook for her host family and the other volunteers living on the family’s farm. She wrote, “It began because Lily has the warmest smile standing over by the pump washing the greens.” When April asked one evening if she could pump for her, she was then invited into the kitchen to talk while Lily boiled the water and prepared the meal. Soon, April was actively involved in the preparations herself and looked forward to evenings with these young Kenyan women, sharing stories, secrets, and dreams as they prepared delicious meals from scratch. She described a typical evening:

I would enter the outdoor, mud-walled kitchen to be greeted by the girls, “Apreel!” with a rolled “r.” They would tell me everything being made for dinner that night and dictate which project I should work on, “just sift rice,” “just cut the greens,” “just roll,” “just stir,” or sometimes “just sit.” The clear-cut directions were given beautifully. Sometimes I felt like I could be a nuisance because I just kept coming and wanting to learn, but they kept welcoming me over and over again.

Later, April wrote, “I honestly cannot imagine my experience in Kenya without serving in this way. I was always excited to come home from school or town because I knew the girls would be ready for me in the kitchen, and we would spend the evening learning about each other more.” Indeed, for most of the student teachers whose service learning projects are described here, these experiences were often among the highlights of their placements in overseas and Reservation communities. Sean, for example, described his week of herding sheep for Mrs. Yazzie’s mother as “truly one of the most memorable and exhilarating experiences of my life up to this point.” However, it is only in reflecting on the service learning project and everything that was involved, including the actions taken, the knowledge gained, and the reciprocity shared, that it goes from being merely a memorable encounter with the host culture to a potentially powerful experience that impacts and informs in multiple professional and personal ways.

STUDENT TEACHERS' REFLECTIONS ON SERVICE LEARNING IN RESERVATION AND OVERSEAS COMMUNITIES

For every one of the student teachers who engaged in service learning projects in their communities on the Navajo Reservation and overseas, and subsequently reflected on their experiences working with while learning from others, there were unique insights and outcomes to be carried away – new ways of thinking about culture, communities, schools, children, families, and even themselves. For example, Sarah – in working with the school bus driver and several parents to assemble the school's float for the Shiprock Fair parade – learned much about symbolism and beliefs in Navajo culture as representations of traditional wedding baskets, yucca plants, and the sacred mesa behind the school were incorporated into the overall design of the float. On the other hand, for Jessica – who served as a soccer coach for the “under-12” program run jointly by the local hospital and the Arizona Youth Soccer Organization – an important outcome was the realization that when Indians and non-Indians work together on shared goals, so many stereotypes each group has of the other can be confronted and dispelled.

In yet another example taken from the Reservation, Jennifer and Brett both worked on the construction of a new, two-room home for an elderly war veteran, Kee Ike, and his wife, who had been living in a one-room structure built from scrap wood, with a dirt floor and no running water, heat, or electricity. Yet each came away with unique insights based on this experience. Jennifer felt she had finally been able to banish her “I'm here to save people” mentality and replace it with a desire “to make a difference” by educating and motivating others, while Brett struggled with the newly discovered feeling of being “very spoiled and materialistic” as she observed Kee Ike and his wife, who seemed “completely selfless and refreshingly satisfied with life” in spite of what many would describe as an impoverished living situation.

Similarly, student teachers in the Overseas Project came away from their service learning experiences with new ways of thinking about how they fit into their host cultures, communities, and schools. For many, participation in the service learning project helped them to better understand themselves, their host communities, and their home country as part of a larger global community. For example, Katie, who taught English as a second language to Costa Rican adults twice a week for six weeks, was better able to understand the culture of her small placement town as it related to other more cosmopolitan cities in Costa Rica:

[My host community] is such a small town with distinct cultural values and characteristics that are different from bigger Costa Rican cities.... I suspected

that people would want to learn English in more urban areas.... However, I am seeing that even in a small pueblo, people are seeing a need to acquire knowledge of the English language for various reasons. If the need is pouring into small communities, it makes me wonder how many people will be speaking English in 20 years.

By reflecting on her experience she was able to place her host community in a global context and better understand language dynamics in her host nation.

For April, on the other hand, her experience of cooking each evening with Lily and the other young women in the kitchen resulted in an examination of gender roles and expectations of women in Kenyan society. She wrote,

I have already mentioned that the preparation of meals was done solely by women (except one of the sons often cut the pineapple for dinner), it is clear that roles are fairly clear cut. At the same time there is a hierarchy with a chain of command within the women in the kitchen, as well. The head of these women is Mama Betsy who is (I am sure) directed by her husband. One day as Lily crumpled up the chapatti I had rolled, she explained that Richard, the father, had been unhappy with the last meal of chapatti. He said they were too tough, and we needed to improve this time. This kind of pressure put a bit of fear in the girls to make them just right, and made me get more serious about how I was rolling. I couldn't imagine this experience at home with my own father, but I know the reason why Richard was so serious is that guests are the very most important people, and that is who these chapattis were being served to.

Cooking with these women also resulted in deeply personal reflections as April struggled with her expectations of herself in U.S. and Kenyan contexts and found her perspectives of what it means to be an independent woman challenged. Whereas she felt the women in the village were "engrained to serve men," she realized her own upbringing encouraged independence:

Somewhere in my mind there is a relationship between serving and being inferior, and I realized what a shame it was to think of this as negative. To serve is to make yourself lower, and if we each did that for one another we would receive so much. I began to lose part of my pride as an independent woman; it was an incredible stretch, and incredibly refreshing. Now I love cooking and this activity, which I had never really explored, is now a part of my life and something I even get excited for. In my first week home I just wanted to cook for my family, meal after meal, and I had never had that urge before. I think I gained an amount of confidence in my skills while in Kenya also and so that plays a role in my desire to cook now

Along with the many unique and idiosyncratic insights and outcomes reported by the student teachers who engaged in service learning projects in their Reservation and overseas communities, a number of trends emerged as well. Three of these will be described here – the ways in which their service learning

experiences helped the student teachers to build stronger connections to their placement communities, to broaden their views of the world, to teach from a more informed perspective in their elementary and secondary classrooms.

Service learning helps build community connections.

Most of the student teachers reported that through their service learning projects, they felt much more connected to their placement communities – they felt they “belonged.” Sean, for example, believed that herding Mrs. Yazzie’s mother’s sheep was the “turning point” in his experience on the Reservation, “because,” he reflected, “it was the first time that I bridged the gap between cultures.” This thought was echoed in report after report, as student teachers learned more about their host communities through their service learning activities, and as they discovered that there is a place for *them* in those communities as well. Mark, who also herded sheep with Sean, felt that after completing the service learning project, “the community became a whole lot smaller and we had finally been accepted for what we were doing in the community besides just teaching.” Carmen, who helped on the bridge reconstruction project with Veronica, Dolores, and others, suggested:

With regard to my knowledge of the community and my place in the community, I would have to say that the two are inextricably linked. I feel like the more I know about the community, the easier it is to find things to do. The longer I am here, the deeper the relationships are that I form. Deeper relationships with people yield more information about the community. Moreover, deeper relationships with community members also help me feel like I am more a part of the community.... I actually feel like I am part of the community now, even though I am not Navajo, nor do I speak Navajo. I feel like the community is willing to accept a person if they are genuine and sincere.

Brett, too, believed that she had gained acceptance in her placement community, but that it did not happen right away, nor does it happen for everyone. In helping with Kee Ike’s new home, she initially felt “awkward and confused” as she stood aside and listened to everyone else speaking in Navajo. She reflected:

I really wanted to be accepted on that first day, but now I know what a ridiculous desire that was. After spending time with other people in [this community], I have a better understanding of their social process. It is as if they patiently observe and inspect people to understand their intentions. Once a trust is earned, there seems to be no limit to what they would do for someone.

Veronica discovered this, too, when an older child in Dolores’ family commented on the effort she was putting into the repair of the bridge over the wash. The child observed, “Veronica, you really surprised me. You’re a really hard

worker.” At first, Veronica thought she had created a poor image of herself, but later she learned “that it simply meant it was not a common view of visitors to the community to help out so much.”

In the Overseas Project, student teachers’ reflections included shifts from a flat, “tourist-like” view of their host community’s culture to a deeper understanding of the local cultural landscape. One participant’s experience volunteering in a hospice in Scotland exposed her to this understanding of her community through close interaction with local elderly citizens. At the hospice, Jena worked with several of the patients to create crafts that would be sold at an upcoming holiday bazaar. During their work time, she built strong relationships with the patients. She reflected, “This experience has helped to guide me from a more tourist-like familiarity with Scotland and its citizens to a much more personal experience. Through this I feel that I have become a more meaningful part of many Scottish citizens’ lives.”

In a similar vein, April believed that the evenings she spent cooking with Lily and the other young women more closely connected her with both her host family and other community members in her Kenyan village. “[It] led to more involvement in the village,” she observed, “because the girls would introduce me to their families. Since these people knew that I spent a large amount of time with these girls, they took me more seriously, I think, and we had great discussions.” April reported that occasionally Lily and the others would comment that their ways of doing things were not as good as the way things are done in the U.S., and she worked hard to dispel this notion. She wanted them to understand that she was there not only to teach in the village secondary school but to learn their ways as well, and she felt that “showing a desire to learn to cook as they do gives confirmation that we are not looking down on them.”

Furthermore, student teachers began to see the uniqueness of their community and its citizens; shedding their previously homogenous views of their host community and taking a new understanding of local diversity. This fresh perspective included a broadened sense of how cultural dynamics within the community are influenced by connections to the larger global context. Another student, Emily, comments on this new awareness of how the local neighborhood is more complex than she originally perceived:

I also learned a lot about [my community]. To me, everyone in [my town] looks “Spanish,” but I found out that there are many immigrants here from Africa, the Middle East, and South America. Some of the kids at the Red Cross were from immigrant families and the Red Cross was a great program that offered help to those students whose parents needed to work more hours to provide for their family. Through this experience, I learned that there is cultural diversity in

[this town] and problems that result from it. There are distinct neighborhoods were different classes of people live. I did not sense any prejudice between the students, but I think programs like that of the Red Cross are focused on helping children of lower classes in the community.

Lastly, this new perspective that the service learning project fostered led the student teachers to see areas of need within the local community. Jessica, for instance, was pushed beyond the beach front comforts of her affluent New Zealand placement community and into the areas of local need, outside of her personal “bubble.” She performed her service learning project with the Salvation Army, assisting social workers with filing and other office-related tasks. In observing the social workers assisting community members in need, Jessica discovered a new way of seeing her community.

I live [in a community on the coast] which is considered the million-dollar beach because it is comprised of mostly wealthy people and huge houses. I now know that just on the outskirts of this area are people that have no food or no jobs. There are people that have financial assistance from the government and struggle everyday to just get by. If I never would have done this learning project, I would not have realized that there are many people in need right outside of my backyard. I think a lot of residents [of her host community] do not even realize this. I feel like I experienced more of the New Zealand culture and understand the population of people better. I am basically living and teaching in a “bubble” compared to the rest of the country, and now realize that there is a completely different world right outside of where I am living.

Experiences such as these described above introduce student teachers to the complex connections that exist between citizens, their local community, and the global context, and pave the way for the student teachers to be active participants in this process. Further, fostering an understanding of these dynamics through firsthand experience informs their practice as citizenship educators not only in their home communities, but in culturally different settings as well. According to Banks (2005), “Citizenship education should also help students acquire the attitudes, knowledge, and skills needed to function in cultural communities other than their own, within the national culture and community, as well as within the global community” (p. 7).

Service learning contributes to a broader worldview.

Student teachers in the Overseas Project frequently reported on gaining a broader worldview through their experiences, coming away with a more developed understanding of the connectivity between local communities within nations and the greater international context. The student teachers often believed that during the two or three months they spent abroad, they

could make positive contributions that reached well beyond their own placement communities and host nations. For example, Jordan, a student teacher placed in a remote village in the Scottish Highlands, helped raise funds for a Habitat for Humanity project of building a home for a family in Romania. Of this experience, Jordan commented:

It [the service learning project] also gives the student a sense of actually making a difference on a global scale. That is at least how I feel now that I have helped out with the Global Village team. I really feel that I have made an impact on a global level. I have plenty of experience with volunteering, but it has mostly been in the Bloomington [university] area. But now, I have left a footprint in a project that transcends countries, borders, ethnicities, etc. One thing I feel I learned from the whole experience is that a small community can make a world of difference.

In considering the international impact of his contributions through this service learning project, Jordan reflected:

I think the most important footprints you can leave are not the ones on the beach down the road or in the snow outside your house at winter time, but the ones you leave miles from home where no one knows who you are. I know that in a month I will be sitting at home picturing in my mind all the pupils and staff actually building a house in Romania. And when they are done, I can say I helped them get there. I can say I helped build that house.

Gaining a broader understanding of what it means to be a citizen of local, national, and global communities was a common trend among participants in the Overseas Project. Many of the student teachers' experiences reflected a level of understanding that met Banks' (2005) criteria of global citizenship: "Citizenship education courses and programs should help students acquire a delicate balance of cultural, national, and global identifications and attachments. Students should develop clarified global identifications and deep understandings of their roles in the world community" (p. 7). Whereas Jordan reflected on the international influence of his service learning project, other students discovered cultural and global identity through their community-based service learning activities. Sonya, for example, found insight about race and privilege while cleaning up graffiti for her host community in New Zealand:

Working alongside many Pacific Islanders was a great experience for me. It felt so odd to be one of a few white people in a group. I did not feel unwelcomed in any way, the people I was working with were great, but I did feel like an outsider. The color of my skin made it obvious that I was different from the people I was working with. This was a valuable experience for me because I can understand the minority perspective better. If I end up teaching at a predominately white school, I think I'll be able to understand the feelings of minority students in that school. Just because people are nice to you does not mean you fit in.

Both Jordan and Sonya gained new perspectives from their service learning experiences; however, each viewed this experience from a different perspective. Jordan became aware of the potential to act on a global scale by looking outward into the community, while Sonya reflected inward, on the impact that her local community had on her global identification. Marie, on the other hand, while working with a micro-lending organization that provided widows with small loans in Kenya, found a balanced perspective; seeing a change in herself and how she could impact the world in which she lives. She wrote:

Each moment was a lesson in becoming myself. I realized the true nature of who I am now and the person I want to be in the future. It takes the experience of being in a country like Kenya, a country so raw and real, to really realize your place in the world; what it means to be American, what it means to be white, and what it means to be a woman in a first world country.... My service learning activity has made an extreme impact on me, and has undoubtedly changed the course of my life. I am now applying to volunteer in Kenya this upcoming fall, and plan to earn a master's degree in social work.

In the Reservation Project, fewer student teachers reported that a broader worldview resulted from their community-based service learning project. However, several of the student teachers believed they had a much better understanding of life within their own nation, citing examples of how American Indians are so frequently misrepresented and misunderstood in mainstream communities across the U.S. Many also suggested they had learned not to be so quick to make assumptions about others, but to take the time to understand their perspectives and to place actions and attitudes in the appropriate social and cultural context. Interestingly, many Reservation Project participants seek teaching opportunities abroad once they have graduated, while others explore the possibilities through the Peace Corps. Although they may not directly state that a broader worldview emerges from their Reservation experiences, it seems that living and teaching among the Navajos opens doors to new possibilities they may not have considered otherwise, makes the world seem more accessible, and provides proof that they *can* be effective as educators and community participants in cultures vastly different from their own. Overall, the insights shared by these participants in both the Overseas and Reservation Projects suggest that when service learning and reflection are combined with student teaching, we may be promoting the development of our student teachers' *perspective consciousness*, Hanvey's classic term for the "recognition that one's own view of issues or events is not universally shared; others have profoundly different worldviews" (in Merryfield, 1997, p. 3). Certainly, this should be a goal of teacher education programs everywhere, but it is less likely to happen unless

students actively connect with other people and places, and reflect on those experiences, as these student teachers have done here through service learning.

Service learning informs classroom practice.

A final trend to be reported here in the outcomes student teachers gained through their community-based service learning projects involved the impact these experiences had in the classroom. Relationships with pupils and teachers, insight into the lives of the children and teens whom they teach, and even topics studied in class and instructional approaches, were among the ways in which the student teachers believed the service learning projects they performed in the community affected what went on in their classrooms.

In the Reservation Project, a number of student teachers discovered that word typically spread quickly about their service activities, and they felt that perhaps other teachers in the school respected them a little bit more for the time they had spent helping members of the community with their tasks of life. The good-natured teasing that often followed was usually a sign of acceptance, and student teachers reported feeling more comfortable in the school and in their interactions with their teaching colleagues as a result. Similarly, they believed the pupils in their classes took them more seriously when they learned of their student teachers' activities, often resulting in better rapport and even improved discipline. Lauren, for instance, taught at a public school just off the Reservation, less than a mile from the Reservation boarding school where she lived. For her service learning project, she had helped a local family repair and extend a fence around their yard, and she used this experience in class the next week during a unit on volunteerism. She explained that her pupils, a mix of Indian and non-Indian, were always interested in what she did on the weekends, including her activities with people at the boarding school. In telling her pupils about her work on the fence, she reflected, "I think my involvement on the Reservation lends me credibility with the Navajo students in my class."

Justin, on the other hand, who had helped organize the "Walk in Beauty" clean-up campaign of the school campus and community, felt the pupils in his mathematics classroom understood that he was "trying to become a better teacher" through such activities. Several student teachers in the Reservation Project reported that their service learning projects seemed to serve as a segue to greater involvement with local people outside of school hours, as teachers and pupils alike sought to include them in various activities with their families and in the community, from things as simple as inviting them to help make dinner and in the process learn how to make some traditional Navajo foods, to

helping prepare for and participating in healing ceremonies, such as the Blessingway or Yeibechei.

Andrea, an Overseas Project student teacher placed in Australia, connected her experiences in the community with activities in her elementary classroom. For her service learning project, she worked in a nursing home in her placement community where she helped residents with crafts projects, ran basic errands in the community, and even assisted the staff nurses in writing activity plans. She also initiated an exchange of letters between the elderly residents of the nursing home, many of which suffered from dementia, and the children in her classroom. Of this letter-sharing, she reflected:

The dementia patients were again very blank, but I feel deep down they understood that the cards were something special. Many of them held them close to them, and the nurses set them up in their individual rooms. It only took the students a few minutes, but it means the world to people who do not really have a lot to look forward to.

Andrea made a connection with her classroom and a segment of her host community that would typically not have been made without the service learning requirement. Through this connection, Andrea gained valuable insights about the differences in opinion local people have regarding changes in modern Australian culture. She wrote,

Through volunteering I got to learn what the elder generation thought about the changing Australia. Often times they would refer to the “old days” and how Australia was changing from what they were familiar with. This insight shows that the older generation observes changes happening quickly. However, when talking to Australian youth it seems as though the changes are not occurring rapidly enough. This activity, in accordance with my student teaching and my social involvement with Australians my own age, has really showed me different perspectives of Australia. I have heard and observed the differing and similar viewpoints of the generations of Australia, and through this can see the progression of ideas that shaped the country.

Linking these generations led to valuable insights that improved Andrea’s understanding of both generations and helped to clarify her knowledge of Australian history and culture.

Another important insight gained from the service learning project with implications for classroom practice is that the student teachers developed a greater appreciation for and understanding of the circumstances surrounding their pupils’ lives. Perhaps those pupils who came to school tired or who did not have their homework finished were not merely neglecting their studies, but instead were busy with tending the livestock, helping chop wood, or engaging

in any number of other tasks expected of them after school hours. Mark, for example, had discovered just how tiring it was to herd sheep, yet it needed to be done every day. When he realized that this was a common chore required of many of the pupils in his middle school history class, he reflected,

They don't just go home and sit around. They have to do things I'm not accustomed to in Indiana, and I now understand how hard they work on the Reservation. These students are doing a lot of things outside of the classroom, and many of the things they are doing with and for their families are more important than the homework I give them.

Mark sought to modify his classroom practice by giving them more time in class to finish assignments, and giving much less homework on the weekends than he had previously. While he recognized that not everyone in his class herded sheep after school, he appreciated that in his particular community – more traditional than many on the Reservation – there most likely were a number of chores that these youth were expected to do once the school day was over.

Similarly, a student teacher in Scotland, Kai, worked with adults with special needs in her host community, helping to prepare dinner and clean up afterwards, while spending time conversing with residents as they ate. Through this service learning experience, she reported discovering the ability to empathize more with her own pupils while recognizing “that each individual I teach will have different backgrounds, strengths, weaknesses, and goals.” She then reflected on the ability of teacher education programs to prepare emerging educators for their multiple responsibilities in diverse classrooms:

For the past two years I have taken classes dealing with diversity and felt like I knew it all. Then when I was actually faced with diversity I was not prepared and I was uncomfortable. It helped me realize that diversity can be difficult to deal with even for those who think they are accepting of all people. I would encourage students to go through a service learning project like this to learn about someone who is different from themselves. I learned more about myself than anything through this experience and believe it would be beneficial to any [student teacher].

Finally, the student teachers identified ways in which their service learning projects influenced their classroom instruction as they sought to incorporate topics and employ approaches that resonated with the interests and values of the children and teachers in their host schools. Sarah, for example, in working with the bus driver and parents on the float for the Shiprock Fair, was mesmerized by their accounts of the meaning Navajo people applied to the various representations they incorporated into the float's design. She wrote,

This really helped me to understand their oral tradition and how stories were passed on orally and not written down like Anglos do. I think that this is why

the Navajo people are such good listeners; they have to pay attention to the stories to not only learn a lesson, but to pass them on to their family. As a student teacher, this experience helped me to be mindful of the culture within my classroom.

She then related how her elementary children wanted to tell stories about their families and what they were going to do in the weeks to come, and how she used to feel this was a disruption in her classroom. Following her service learning project, she implemented a “morning message” for the pupils as they arrived, explaining what they would do that morning and asking a question about their family or special future plans the family was making. Sarah reported that this new approach had worked out well, as everyone had a chance to speak and chatter was kept to a minimum. More important, she added, “It helps me to have a better understanding of the Navajo culture and what my students do when they are not in school.”

Also in the Reservation Project but at the secondary level, Joshua believed that the time he spent working with Dolores’ family and the other student teachers in rebuilding the bridge over the wash influenced how he taught social studies. He was struck by the contrast between the Navajo adults, “who were dressed like they were about to go to a country-western dance,” and the teenagers in the family there to help, “with their gothic-metal-type garb.” Yet, in spite of the difference in their appearance, the youth worked hard alongside their parents, “united by their Navajo values.” Joshua then reflected on the “traditional and mainstream” in Navajo society, and the enduring Navajo culture, from the earliest contacts of the explorers and later settlers, to the influences of other tribal cultures, to the ubiquitous mainstream culture. His epiphany: “Seeing the youth working with the old and expressing themselves in their own way while still upholding traditional values of family and hard work, led me to the understanding of Navajo cultural self-determination.” For Joshua, the implications for his social studies classroom were far-reaching as he sought to help his pupils understand that “the future of their culture is up to them.” He recognized that his social studies class was the perfect place for these youth to “learn from the past and use their education to do what is best for their people, to give back to where they have come from and not just think about leaving the Reservation as soon as they are old enough.” Interestingly, at the conclusion of his student teaching assignment on the Reservation, he and his fiancée – another participant in the Reservation Project – both signed contracts and plan to remain on the Reservation in the coming year. He wrote, “My place in the community is to help and support my students to become the future leaders of their culture and community.”

In the Overseas Project, Emily, who was placed in a village on Ireland's west coast, commented on how being knowledgeable of community resources provided insight into the lives and circumstances of the children in her host school. For her service learning project, she had coached a girls' soccer team, which afforded opportunities to interact with youth and teachers from a number of schools in the area. She was surprised to find that most of these other schools had indoor gymnasiums and that the communities in which they were located had after-school youth centers, neither of which her placement school and community possessed. She reflected, "I was struck with how, like in the United States, some youth have nowhere to go," recognizing that this was a contributing factor to the high drug problem youth faced in her placement community.

In another example, Howard, a student teacher placed in Wales, commented on how his community was portrayed in the local press as poor and uninvolved. His economically struggling host community had recently been voted the "3rd worst place to live in the United Kingdom" and had a reputation throughout the British Isles as being "rough." However, through his service learning project, he gained a fresh, new perspective on the civic involvement of his host community's citizens. In visiting a youth center near his host school, Howard recognized a need for increased funding to cover the cost of basic repairs and new materials for the aging center. Thus, he organized a balloon lift-off for pupils in the local schools and invited any interested community members to attend, including parents of his pupils. A grand total of 510 pounds sterling were raised for the youth center. Of this experience, Howard reflected:

I taught for eight weeks holding the idea that parents in the community were not actively involved and didn't have a lot of pride of their town. Finally, on the last day of my teaching experience my judgments about the parents were shattered. I made some wonderful connections with the parents at the event which would be beneficial as a full-time teacher. The event taught me an important lesson – the value of getting involved in the community. Parents will have a lot of respect if they see a teacher interacting in the community and it will certainly increase the parent-teacher relationship. Also, any preconceptions may be completely changed, as they were in my case.

Finally, Ryann, a student teacher in Spain, worked with the local chapter of the Red Cross, providing after-school instruction in conversational English for children in the community. Working with the children reinforced her passion for teaching people of all ages. Furthermore, she realized that her role as a teacher need not be exclusive to a classroom setting. She wrote,

Overall, I believe that my volunteer experience in [this community] reinforced my passion for teaching, for the Spanish language, and my passion to learn more

about the world around me and the people in it. I would suggest any future participant to perhaps work with children that might be of a different age than what they are accustomed to. Being a secondary teacher, I learned a lot from working with younger children. In addition, I learned that teaching is not just lecturing, assignment homework, or giving tests. We are all teachers to someone. We are teachers through what we do in our lives. We are models for someone whether for good or for bad. While at the Red Cross I felt both as a teacher and a student. I considered the staff and the children as teachers as well. They taught me many new things about myself and about the world in general.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The student teachers whose stories are shared here came away from their final field experience with new knowledge and important professional and personal insights that never could have been replicated had they remained in Indiana for a conventional student teaching assignment. They learned about the ways in which people of other cultures and nationalities educate their children and live their lives, and about the values that define who these people are and what they believe in. The student teachers also learned much about themselves, and, in the process, they explored who they are as emerging educators in both classroom and community contexts. Clearly, student teaching placements in such distant, culturally diverse settings as the Navajo Reservation and Kenya, Australia, and other international destinations alone will likely result in personal and professional growth of a magnitude greater than what one might expect in most conventional student teaching placements. However, the inclusion of structured requirements, *including a service learning component based in the local community*, can take these experiences to a new level by immersing the student teachers in the lives and activities of the community members who are served by their placement schools. The outcomes they achieve through the combined acts of serving, learning, and reflecting can indeed be powerful and priceless.

Hopefully, the lessons these student teachers gained as they engaged in such service learning projects as herding sheep on the Reservation and working with orphans in Kenya will not be lost as they return to the familiarity of the United States and go about their lives among their families and friends. An important follow-up study would be to examine whether these men and women have continued to participate in service learning activities, as many asserted they would. Have they involved the pupils in their elementary and secondary classrooms, and have they sought to become active participants in the communities where they are now teaching? Hopefully, they will recognize that responsible educators must indeed acquire knowledge of the community served by their school, and in doing so, they will build greater connections with

people in the community, broaden the ways in which they look at the world, and better meet the interests and needs of the learners in their classroom.

Sean summed it up well, reflecting on his week-long experience of herding sheep in a remote corner of the Navajo Indian Reservation:

I have never really been afraid to try new things, but when I was aimlessly leading a herd of sheep without knowing what to do, I found myself outside my comfort zone. This experience completely opened my eyes to the fact that teachers are life-long learners... it helped me shape my attitude about learning and growing as a teacher and as a person. I realize that I do not have all the answers. I also realize how fun and exciting it is to challenge myself and work through problems and take on new experiences rather than sit back and stick with what is comfortable. Most of all, this experience opened my eyes to the fact that “outsiders will be outsiders” until they choose to interact with the community.

Sean’s thoughtful observation could apply to student teachers in both the Reservation and Overseas Projects. Community participation is a must, if our student teachers are to gain the most from their experiences in culturally different settings. Stepping outside of their placement classrooms – indeed often stepping well beyond the boundaries of their previous experience in the process – and into the local community to engage in activities with and important to local people, builds a context that can only add value and meaning to the experience as a whole. Certainly, a required service learning assignment is a realistic, viable, and creative way to help make this happen.

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TABLE 1

Service Learning Projects Completed by Student Teachers in Reservation Communities

- Helped a local family with the care of their livestock, including herding sheep
- Helped a local family with butchering livestock in preparation for a traditional ceremony
- Organized a clean-up on the school campus and in the community
- Worked with community members to create the school's float for the Shiprock Fair
- Worked at a soup kitchen with members of a local Catholic church
- Helped with a "walk" to raise awareness of drug and alcohol abuse on the Reservation
- Helped a local family repair and extend a fence on their property
- Served as a coach for the community's "under-12" soccer program
- Helped a family in tearing down an old hogan on their property
- Helped a family repair and reconstruct a bridge over a wash, leading to a relative's home
- Assisted in the construction of a new home for an elderly war veteran

TABLE 2

Service Learning Projects Completed by Student Teachers in Overseas Communities

Australia

- Assisted an organization which is responsible for the beautification of parks, elderly care centers, and schools
- Worked with a group of Year 10 pupils on a week-long leadership camp
- Assisted with the planning and implementation of church functions/ socials

- Helped at a community soup kitchen
- Helped at an Outback rodeo event, cutting ribbons, organizing prizes, creating and laminating posters, and selling raffle tickets
- Tutored in an after-school homework club for Sudanese refugee children
- Assisted in a nursing home during mealtimes, kept residents company
- Assisted at a therapeutic horseback riding center for pupils with disabilities
- Worked on a communal horse farm caring for community members' horses
- Chaperoned a week-long astronomy camp for 15 Year 9 and 10 pupils
- Assisted a group in organizing a festival and parade in the community
- Worked at a Ronald McDonald House making crafts, face painting, and watching movies with children and their families who were staying there
- Helped in a nursing home by taking residents with dementia to local retail shops, restaurants and community events to improve their quality of life.
- Assisted the homeless in United Way and Salvation Army shelters
- Helped plan Buddha's birthday festival during the first weekend in May

China

- Taught English as a second language to Chinese youth

Costa Rica

- Taught English as a second language to adults and children outside of the school setting

England

- Ran a community quiz night to raise money for charity
- Decorated a fence of a nursery/community center with wooden cut outs of painted mini beasts
- Handed out flyers and asked people for donations of food for the local food bank
- Worked with a non-profit organization that created a theatre group for children with disabilities, most commonly autism
- Worked in a homeless shelter interacting with the men and women staying there
- Spent time with residents of a local retirement home

India

- Taught English in a first grade class

Ireland

- Coached a female youth soccer team
- Worked with disadvantaged youth in a community center
- Served as a chaperone at a youth center
- Assisted with coaching the boys hurling team and homework help after school

Kenya

- Assisted with HIV/AIDS education programs in the community
- Assisted with a mobile clinic and pharmacy
- Worked with local women in micro enterprise development-micro lending projects
- Cleaned and maintained village school
- Worked in local orphanages supervising and playing with children and assisting with upkeep of the facilities

New Zealand

- Coached 12-year-old girls basketball team
- Assisted welfare workers in various day-to-day activities
- Assisted in the food bank arranging food parcels for families
- Assisted with grounds maintenance at the area's visitor center
- Helped an organization that paints over graffiti
- Served as an instructor for an environmental program that tackles projects to improve the school's physical surroundings (gardens, murals, and sculptures)
- Assisted school staff with chores on their family farms
- Assisted with coaching three junior mini-ball teams
- Helped at a local church in the parish office and in teaching the youth Sacramental Program
- Spent the day planting trees on a nearby island
- Helped lead a group of children participating in Girl Guides

Russia

- Tutored pupils in the English Speaking Club
- Taught English at one of the local universities

Scotland

- Helped prepared meals for and spent time conversing with residents in a home for people with mental disabilities
- Served in a hospice setting to provide care for the elderly and terminally ill
- Organized a walk-a-thon and karaoke night for local youth to raise money for pupils traveling to a Habitat for Humanity effort in Romania

Spain

- Volunteered as a youth tutor with a Red Cross after-school program
- Assisted in an after-school program for children whose parents work late

Wales

- Organized a balloon send off to raise money for a local youth center
-