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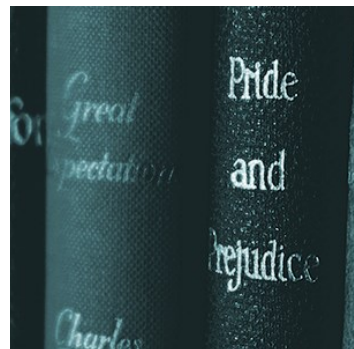
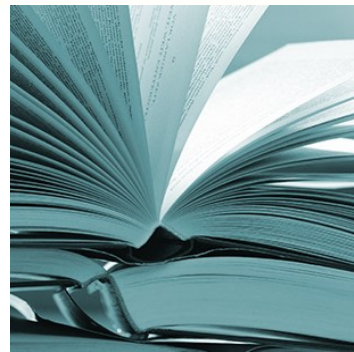
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Boston University

IMPACT

THE JOURNAL OF THE CENTER FOR INTERDISCIPLINARY TEACHING & LEARNING



VOLUME 8, NUMBER 2, SUMMER 2019

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ABOUT US

Impact: The Journal of the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning is a peer-reviewed, biannual online journal that publishes scholarly and creative non-fiction essays about the theory, practice and assessment of interdisciplinary education. *Impact* is produced by the [Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning](https://citl.submittable.com/submit) at Boston University College of General Studies. *Impact* accepts submissions throughout the year and publishes issues in February and July. Please submit your essays for consideration at <https://citl.submittable.com/submit>.

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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

Dear Readers,

Many of us look for ways to help students forge concrete connections between their academic studies and the real world. Universities encourage professors to develop community-based learning, allowing students to contribute to the community beyond their campus in a way that enhances their academic studies and enables them to create these connections.

Scholars have theorized the many benefits of community-based learning, but professors have many questions about *how* to implement community-based learning in practice. What does a successful community-based learning assignment look like? What are the different ways to assess students' learning experiences in community-based learning assignments? How can one build effective partnerships with community organizations?

In these pages, you will find practical advice, theoretical framework, and firsthand accounts of community-engaged teaching across disciplines. Learn from professors who have designed assignments allowing students to complete community projects with refugees, prisoners, veterans, elementary school children, science museums, nursing homes, public libraries, and ESL populations. Students in an Anthropology course, for instance, conduct oral history interviews with refugees, and provide written transcriptions of the interviews that the refugees can then use as a learning tool in ESL classes. In a Science Methods class, students collaborate with an aquarium to produce meaningful exhibits that educate the public. First-year writing students work with veterans to create autobiographical films and write papers related to the project.

I hope you enjoy these provocative, informative, and inspiring essays.

Best wishes,

Sheila Corder
Senior Lecturer of Humanities
Boston University College of General Studies
Guest Editor

ABOUT THIS ISSUE'S AUTHORS

Roberta D. Baer is a professor in the anthropology department at the University of South Florida and specializes in applied medical and nutritional anthropology. She has been conducting dietary and other studies among refugees in west central Florida for eight years. She also serves on the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force, and has co-edited a book of oral histories of local refugees (*American Stories*, Hillsborough County School Board), currently being used nationally and locally in refugee ESL classes.

Janet Blair is a regional community liaison for the state of Florida's Refugee Services program administered through the Department of Children & Families. In this role, Janet facilitates the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force, an umbrella coalition that brings together non-profit service providers, university faculty and students, faith communities, civic organizations, and local, state and federal government agencies to create collaborative networks that serve newly arriving refugee populations. This Task Force has been recognized locally and nationally for excellence in programming and partnerships. Janet holds a B.A. in Human Development from Eckerd College, an M.A. in Sociology from the University of South Florida, and is currently completing her Certificate in Public Management through Florida State University.

Sheila Corder teaches in the Humanities Division of Boston University College of General Studies. Since 2009, she has incorporated community-based learning into her classes. Her students have partnered with organizations such as the Prison Book Program, Hale House Nursing Home, 826 Boston, Boston Public Library's Adult Conversation Circle, Boston Public Schools, Hearth (Ending Elder Homelessness), and an educational program for Sudanese refugees. She has been invited by Boston University Center for Teaching and Learning to give workshops for faculty and to develop university-wide guides on community-based learning. Her passion is to share her love of the classics with a broad audience. She has written a book on authors' innovative ideas about education, *Exclusion as Innovation: Education in Nineteenth-Century British Literature* (Routledge 2016), and has presented her research at national and international conferences. She believes we are never too young—or too old!—to appreciate great works of literature, and bring diverse new ones to light. Her forthcoming children's book *Who's Hiding in This Book? Meet Ten Classic Authors!* (Pierce Press, September 2019) aims to spread this message.

Ronald Cruz has been an educator for the past 16 years. He started as a physics teacher at the University of the Philippines Integrated School and migrated to the United States to teach Mathematics at Gaither High School in Tampa, Florida. In 2003, he was awarded the title of PRISM Teacher of Excellence in Secondary Mathematics. He then continued his work to serve students as a peer evaluator, conducting over 1,000 observations of math, science, and adult education teachers throughout the district. His work allowed teachers to receive feedback on how to improve their craft, increase engagement, and boost their students' performance. In 2013, Mr. Cruz was appointed coordinator of the CARIBE Refugee Program, where he was charged with managing federal funds to serve the educational needs of over 15,000 adult refugees and asylees in Hillsborough County. His work with CARIBE focused on improving the quality education for refugees and accelerating their career pathways through teacher empowerment, relevant curriculum and a student-centered learning environment. His tenure as coordinator inspired CARIBE teachers, staff, and students to earn many recognitions from the district and the state, making CARIBE the highest performing adult education program in Hillsborough County.

Shlomit Flaisher-Grinberg is an assistant professor of psychology and co-coordinator of the Interdisciplinary Neuroscience Minor at Saint Francis University in Loretto, Pennsylvania. She teaches classes such as "Biological Psychology," "Learning," and "Psychopharmacology," and maintains an active research lab which investigates the biological basis of anxiety and mood disorders. Her research has been published in various peer-review journals, and presented in local, national and international conferences. She is a member of the "Society for Neuroscience" and a reviewer for multiple journals and book publishers. In 2018, she was awarded the Saint Francis University's "Honor Society Distinguished Faculty Award" for her distinguished model classroom teaching; the "Gerald and Helen Swatsworth Award," which recognizes excellence in teaching, research, and service; and the "Become that Someone" Community Engagement Award for her work with the community in the context of partnership and reciprocity. She is passionate about service learning and community engagement, avenues which allows her to invite the community into her classroom and take the students out of the classroom – and into the local community.

Kristi Girdharry is an assistant professor of English at Johnson and Wales University in Providence, Rhode Island where she teaches courses on writing, research, communication, and digital literacies. Stemming from her dissertation research on archival work following the Boston Marathon bombings, she is currently piloting an oral history project titled "Community Resilience and Homicide in Boston" in collaboration with the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE'S AUTHORS— CONTINUED

She is also a series editor for *Best of the Journals in Rhetoric and Composition* (Parlor Press) and serves on the board for the Boston Rhetoric and Writing Network.

Emily Holbrook is a master's student at the University South Florida in the Department of Applied Anthropology. She is pursuing a degree in applied medical anthropology with a concentration in bio-cultural medical anthropology. Emily received a B.A. in interdisciplinary anthropology from the University of Akron. She is a member of the Society for Applied Anthropology, Society for Medical Anthropology, and the American Anthropological Association. Her research interests include the health and nutrition of resettled refugee populations living in the United States and the development of ESL educational curriculum for these populations. Other research interests include food and foodways, migration, policy, and community-based research and programming.

Charisse S. Iglesias is a PhD student at the University of Arizona studying rhetoric, composition, and the teaching of English. Her research interests include: critical service learning, community-based research, and program assessment and design. Applying her Peace Corps community-oriented background, Charisse's current project examines how institutions of higher education support their service learning initiatives. She was just selected as one of ten first-time presenter recipients of the 2019 CCCC Scholars for the Dream Travel Awards.

Alex Knott joined the Omprakash team in 2017. Her assortment of academic studies, work positions, hobbies, and life experiences in general might be considered "eclectic." Growing up between England, South Africa and Singapore, movement and exploration became her default mode from a young age. Since leaving home, she has taught English in Cambodia and China, conducted ethnographic research in Mexico and Greece, studied in Turkey, supported local NGOs in Kenya and Argentina, and worked with IOM in Costa Rica. After completing her self-designed BA at UBC in Vancouver, she returned to England for her MA in anthropology of development at SOAS, University of London. Her thesis focused on how everyday interactions between international volunteers and asylum seekers in refugee camps on the Greek Aegean Islands can unintentionally reinforce macro-level structures and racialized hierarchies. Besides thinking about international development and volunteering, she enjoys learning about languages, quantum and astrophysics, and spiritual or religious beliefs and practices.

Cyndy Leard, PhD is an independent science education consultant. She has been involved in the science education enterprise for more than thirty years. Her experience spans both formal and informal education institutions. She has a broad range of experience including classroom teacher, outdoor education program director, university curriculum specialist, science center education director and business owner. Her experience also includes acting as a liaison between scientists, educators, and the general public for both publicly and privately funded programs. Her current research interests involve scientist and educator communication and community engagement models.

Willy Oppenheim is an educator, a researcher, and the leader of a social enterprise working to make international volunteering more ethical and impactful. Willy came up with the initial idea for Omprakash (www.omprakash.org) at the age of eighteen, after serving as a volunteer English teacher in northern India in 2004. The basic premise was to create a platform connecting volunteers with social impact opportunities around the world. He then attended Bowdoin College in Brunswick, Maine, where he completed a self-designed major in religion, education, and anthropology. In 2009, he received a Rhodes Scholarship and went on to earn his doctorate in Education from Oxford University. His PhD research focused on demand for girls' schooling in rural Pakistan. His broader research interests concern the ways in which ideas and norms pertaining to justice and 'development' are produced and contested through formal and informal processes of education. Willy has worked in classrooms in the United States, India, Pakistan, and China, and in the wilderness as a faculty member at the National Outdoor Leadership School. He currently teaches at the University of Washington and continues to lead Omprakash and its newest initiative, Omprakash EdGE, which is an online pre-departure volunteer training program intended to help university students enrich their international learning and impact.

Melanie Ramsey is the director of youth and children's services at the Hollidaysburg Area Public Library in Pennsylvania, a position she has held for the past eighteen years. She researches, schedules and supervises programming; connects and partners with community organizations; and provides outreach to under-served populations in the Hollidaysburg area. Melanie is certified in education K-12 in the state of Pennsylvania and has five years of public-school teaching experience. Through library programming, Melanie promotes a love of learning and a strengthening of community. Her poster session presentations at PA Library Association Conferences have included the topics of NASA Educational Programming, YMCA Community Partnerships, Conservation District Partnerships, Financial Literacy for

ABOUT THIS ISSUE'S AUTHORS— CONTINUED

Children, and most recently Ukuleles In Your Public Library, a topic on which *Smithsonian.com* and *Ukulele Magazine* specifically mentioned the Hollidaysburg Area Public Library and its programming. She serves on local public boards including the Altoona Symphony, Pennsylvania Rural Arts Alliance, and the Saint Francis University Community Advisory Board. Melanie has twice been nominated for WISE Women of Blair County (nonprofit category) and is the author of a published book chapter, "Rooted in the Community: Small and Rural Library Outreach" with co-author Michelle A. McIntyre (2012).

Barbara S. Spector, Fellow of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and Fellow of the National Institute for Science Education, has been a consultant to federal, state, and local education agencies, professional associations, and business/industry. Recognized as a pioneer in the science/technology/society interaction reform movement (now STEM) and leadership in marine education, she has tested variations of flipped classrooms while teaching preservice and inservice K-12 teachers of science for three decades. She introduced constructivist approaches for online platforms in hybrid and distance learning classes and pioneered the use of qualitative research in science education. Her recent book titled *The Unorthodox Professor Surviving and Thriving as a Change Agent in Education* (Brill Sense, 2017) describes her experiences, many of which were supported by 72 grants for more than 7.5 million dollars.

Debbi Stone is vice president of education at The Florida Aquarium. Starting her career as a middle school educator, she transitioned to informal science education at Mystic Aquarium (CT) before relocating to Florida in 2000. Endorsed by the National Association of Interpretation (NAI) as a Certified Interpretive Guide and Trainer (CIG, CIT), Debbi is a frequent speaker at local, state, and national conferences. She serves on the Advisory Committee for Tampa Bay STEM Network (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics), community leaders who expand, enhance, and promote STEM learning. Debbi was selected as one of 21 national LEAD STEM Fellows in 2018, engaging in leadership development for National STEM Learning Ecosystems. A Past-President of Florida Marine Science Educators Association and current Vice Chair of the national Association of Zoos and Aquariums Conservation Education Committee, she is active in the community through Little Kids/Big Minds (early childhood literacy), Boards for AMIkids Tampa and Tampa Bay Arts and Education Network, and is Past President of Learning Gate Community School Board.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Latest Announcements

Please refer to CITL's website for our latest announcements: <http://www.bu.edu/cgs/cit/>.

IMPACT ESSAY COMPETITION

Every December, the editors of *Impact: The Journal of the Center for Interdisciplinary Teaching & Learning* invite submissions of scholarly and creative non-fiction essays between 1,000 and 5,000 words on any aspect of interdisciplinary teaching or research. The author of the winning essay will receive a \$250 award and publication in *Impact*.

Essays should be readable to a general, educated audience, and they should follow the documentation style most prevalent in the author's disciplinary field. Essays for this contest should be submitted by the first Monday in December to <http://CITL.submittable.com/submit>. See our general submission guidelines in Submittable.

CITL reserves the right to not publish a winner in any given year. Faculty and staff from the College of General Studies are not eligible to submit to this contest.

Disrupting Social-Educational Spaces: Reflections on a Community-Based Learning Project

By Kristi Girdharry, Johnson and Wales University

One of the major challenges of intertwining “the community” with “the classroom” is the perception that community is denotative of “outsider” rather than as an integral part of the university itself: the community can become exoticized and difficult to talk about without falling into an “us/them” dichotomy. When I first came up with the subject of this article—a digital storytelling project with local veterans—I admit that I, too, faced this falsification. I created a sequence of writing assignments, and I researched veteran organizations, eventually reaching out to an organization that works on behalf of reintegrating soldiers into civilian life. When they mentioned something about how I’d “probably already reached out to the student veteran group on campus,” my palm went to my face. How could I overlook this detail?

In the following essay I reflect on other surprising ways the educational space of this course was disrupted by assigning a community-based project in a first-year writing course at Northeastern University in Boston, Massachusetts. I draw from my own course documents and experiences as the instructor as well as, more importantly, insightful student reflections (all names are pseudonyms and reflections are used with students’ permission). In the end I argue for examining how engaging with communities outside of the classroom can impact student authority both as thinkers and as writers: this project gave students the space to critique their own positions as members of the university and also provided a new rhetorical situation where the composition guidelines were not as structured as the more traditional research and writing assignments my students had been used to.

Because I had never taught a course with a “community engagement” component before (service-learning and community engagement are the terms used by my program), I “warned” my students weeks before the course started, disguising my email under the subject of not buying the required textbook: “I won’t have you start thinking about our course yet, but I will send out another email to remind us not to buy the book and to give a little background on how/why this section is different in case you’d like to switch sections to a more ‘traditional’ first-year writing course; however, if you’re curious now, I have no problem sending you a brief introduction. Feel free to email me back if that’s the case.”

What is it about a community project that compelled me to take this action? In “The Irony of Service: Charity, Project, and Social Change in Service-Learning,” Keith Morton relates students engaging with a community to moving from “charity to advocacy” but furthers the implication of this in a way that, as writing instructors, may feel a little out of our comfort zones: “Most commonly, a service continuum is presented as running from charity to advocacy, from the personal to the political, from individual acts of caring that transcend time and space to collective action on mutual concerns that are grounded in particular places and histories. Charity emerges on this continuum as giving of the self, expecting nothing in return, and with no expectation that any lasting impact will be made.... The risk inherent in charity is the risk of caring for another human being” (118).

While I do not equate my course’s community engagement project with that of “charity”—in the way volunteering at a soup kitchen or tutoring underserved populations works as charity—I do take special interest in Morton’s last line: “the risk of caring for another human being.” Perhaps my warning came from a personal insecurity of my role as the authority figure for this group. In traditional writing courses, my goals have been completely student-writer focused: I aimed to develop confident, competent writers who would have a base knowledge of academic writing that would prepare them for their other courses at the university; however, while I felt that moving into the community would enhance my students’ perceptions of academic writing as a public, social activity, I was interfering with my students politically with an additional agenda disguised as just part of a writing course.

While all community engagement projects inherently have political agendas, Nancy Welch offers an explicit representation of this in her book *Living Room: Teaching Public Writing in a Privatized World*. I am especially drawn to her discussion of “rhetoric from below,” which she quotes from Arundhati Roy’s book *Power Politics*, and I align my project more with Welch and Roy than I do with Morton’s representation of charity. In her discussion of activist rhetoric, she explains rhetoric from below as being “not from official policy makers but from those who feel the daily effects of official policy” (Welch 71). To me, this project was a way to rethink social conceptions of “veterans” by engaging in their stories rather than by only listening to how such stories are mediated to us by various outlets (television, movies, and so forth). Although this might not be as openly political as an “activist rhetoric” would suggest, this did mean directly

ESSAYS—CONTINUED

interfering, and potentially greatly disrupting, my students' conceptions in order to alter their social consciousnesses of those in the military, and this hegemonic move led to a feeling of discomfort; thus, a "warning" was sent to my students.

The warning of my community engagement project took two forms on that first day of class through my orientation and on the first page of the syllabus. As I reflect on my syllabus, I have noticed something different from my past syllabi in that I cite directly from the Writing Program's website, and I reiterate the idea of representing the university:

From Syllabus Section I. Course Overview > I. a. Community Engagement

This course will also include a project which engages with members from the community (veterans). **As stated on the Writing Program's website**, Community Engagement sections of [first-year writing] "involve one or more projects in which students will work with a community- based agency or organization. These projects allow students to connect their learning in the classroom to meaningful writing and reading activities in a particular space outside the university" The goal of this project will be to investigate what stories/truths veterans want to share... and to produce short videos that they may want to share with those in their lives.

From Syllabus Section II. Course Policies > II. c. Class Participation and Professional Courtesy

You are required to come to class carefully prepared, and all students are expected to participate in one way or another. It's reasonable to expect this participation to be thoughtful and respectful of all the class members.

The same courtesy expected in the classroom is also expected outside of the classroom. Absences or tardiness during your scheduled meetings with community members is not only inconsiderate but will severely affect your grade. **Remember that you are not only representing yourself as a student, but you are representing yourself as a member of a shared community and of Northeastern University.**

Citing from the Writing Program's website positions our small class amidst larger parts of the institution; this is only furthered by emphasizing expectations for students as they represent themselves as part of a "shared community" and the university. Instead of viewing this course as a closed-set of ideals and expectations, drawing attention to the university as a piece of a larger puzzle disrupts the imagined ideal of a writing classroom and requests that students see themselves as socially situated in larger spaces of the Writing Program, the University, and the community in a way that works to both collapse and open up binaries in a critical way.

Through reading my students' reflections on this project and discussing it in context of the whole course on the last day of class, this disruption of what a writing course entails seemed welcomed by most students as they were able to draw on other literacies that were seen as important to their lives both in and outside of the classroom. As thinking about "writing" and "composition" as dynamic and changing terms was another goal of this course, this disruption to the social space of the writing classroom was epistemologically important; however, I believe the project itself—leaving the classroom to interview veterans—affected the type of thinking that was able to be produced by my students as it worked to keep opening up their conceptions of writing as a social activity. To understand what this change of physical space meant for my students, let us turn to two different students who reflected on the location of their interview:

Mary

We chose to meet [the veteran] at [our university's library] and we conducted our interview in one of the group study rooms on the second floor. The room was very small so we sat around a table.... The fact that we were physically so close definitely had an impact on the interview.... I believe that it worked in our favor and helped [the veteran] feel that he could trust us.

Caitlin

[We chose] a cozy corner of [a chain sandwich shop] that had soft lighting and intimate booths. We hoped that our location choice would make [the veteran] feel comfortable.... [W]e pulled up two extra chairs and made a circle so he could look at all of us while he was speaking. This set-up made his interview feel less like an interrogation and more like a discussion.

ESSAYS—CONTINUED

In these two selections from the individual reflections that accompanied each video, we see that there had been some thought as to appropriate spaces. Most of the groups, like Mary's, met somewhere like the university library—essentially an academic space that can be thought of as an extension of the classroom. This was convenient for its centrality as well as its semi-private rooms. Although Caitlin's group decided to meet in a public space off campus, both students emphasize the physical closeness of meeting directly impacting the veteran's "comfort" and ability to "trust" these students. Students related their conceptions of psychological comfort to ideas of biophysical comfort and the ability to share stories.

It was not by one-sided convenience that my students met with their veterans on or around our campus: as mentioned, the veterans we worked with were also Northeastern students. When I explained that we would be working with other students, my class's mental conceptions—that is, of thinking of who a "veteran" is—were challenged. No matter how much my students thought of veterans as "old guys," their idea of "students" interfered with their thinking. The idea of "student" also became complicated in itself as the men my students interviewed were older than my traditional first-year students, and they clearly had different pre-university experience. No matter how much my students had interacted with war in their lives, none of them had experienced war as closely as the men they interviewed, and this disruption of conceptions made an impact on the lived experience of the project as we can see in the following representative selection from Mary:

Mary

The process of Interviewing [the veteran] was a very unique, powerful experience. When I heard that we were going to interviewing a veteran, I automatically assumed that he was going to be an older man with stories from Vietnam. However, [he] is only 24 years old and a student at the same school that I attend.... I do believe that him being so close to me in age made his stories even more powerful.

What is interesting about such sentiments are the emotional connections that students came to because of the disruption to their conceptions about the veterans themselves as physical beings. After viewing all of the videos, we thought about how a veteran's age affected the "trueness" of his war story: does the short temporal distance from their story make it any "truer" in that they remember things more clearly? Or does having distance from a story, like one of the older veterans did when discussing his role in the Coast Guard in New York Harbor during 9/11, allow one to reflect on an experience that makes it truer? Back in the classroom the action of restabilizing the disrupted social space of our course and its themes proved to be one of the most fruitful times for thought and discussion.

One of the most interesting projects came from a group whose conceptions of a veteran were not only disrupted by their veteran's physical appearance but also by the sentiments he spoke of:

Mike

[What we] heard from [the veteran] in that small room all caught us off guard. The stories carried a different notion and emotion from what we expected to hear from a war veteran. Instead of patriotic enthusiasm, [he] expressed resentment and hatred throughout his stories. He hated his experience during his time of service.

The image of the unconditionally patriotic veteran was disrupted for this group and, in turn, for our class when this group decided to take a humorous approach to their video. While it seemed perfectly logical for someone to hate their job, why were we surprised by this sentiment from a veteran? When our preconceived notions of veterans were disrupted, my class began to reconsider the idea of a "veteran" again in quite productive ways as they worked through what this meant for the lived experience of this person.

For some students, with this newfound authority came a sense of vulnerability. While we had talked about vulnerability as a class, the ways students talked about vulnerabilities in their reflections surprised me. Mike's group members both expressed vulnerability in different ways:

ESSAYS—CONTINUED

Rachel

Although this may have been one of the most challenging assignments I have taken on in my college career [Rachel was a transfer student], I think it has also been one of the most rewarding. This certainly brought up some feelings of vulnerability; creating something and sharing it brings up a lot of anxiety. It is human nature to want others to connect with what you are sharing.

Stephanie

I felt vulnerable also in the sense that we were meeting the works cited, the author, and the reason for why we were creating this movie in the first place.... With a text, I can say that this part was horrible and that part makes no sense, but when listening to a person tell his life story, I don't find it appropriate to show the emotions that I was feeling....

In general, it took more connected and emotional thought to create this project.

From these two reflections, and others like them, I gather that actually meeting with someone and hearing their story influenced my students' commitment to doing a good job on a much deeper level. While the repetition of the word "vulnerable" was understandable to me in terms of leaving the safety of the classroom, meeting a stranger, and sharing personal stories, I did not expect this term to show up in terms of the work produced for the project. Furthermore, I think that having a visceral reaction to a project does something for student authority in that when we *feel something* about a subject, we are more inclined to be careful in our thought and more prideful in the work we produce, and these types of sentiments were expressed by many of the other students as well.

More than just "caring" about a subject, perhaps there is something in this connection—in this disruption of spaces—that works pedagogically to foster student authority in ways traditional writing projects cannot always complete. This is not to say that we should do away with reading and writing activities, but community engagement projects allow us to take an authoritative role in our criticisms of texts we encounter because it opens up ideas of social space in that our roles as university students becomes part of our role as community members in much more explicit ways.

As we think about the risks and rewards of disrupting social space in community engagement projects, we should not forget the goals for writing courses or the goals our students have. It is not that the interviewers left their role as students outside of their interviews, just as they came to understand that veterans did not lose their identities as "regular people" just because they had served in the military. Caitlin drew my attention back to this fact:

Caitlin

Partially, I think we all worked so hard to make a video we were proud of was because we wanted a good grade. However, I believe the driving reason was the fact that we had met with our veteran, heard his story, and felt that it was something inspiring that deserved to be shared in an emotional and true way.

However briefly, this student was the only one to comment on the fact that this was a project for a course. This is where I see the greatest room for student development and the most apt examples of how the disruption of social space has influenced these writers. As Caitlin points out, just because one has an interesting, eye opening, or emotionally palatable community experience, it does not detract from the fact that this is work for a course. This also works to highlight roles for students, such as university member or researcher, because they are switching to a more active role in their learning.

In understanding the social-educational space of community-based learning projects, we can see how the work of positioning students this way allows them to begin to critique their understanding of their roles as members of the university. While much scholarship criticizes community engagement projects for "Othering" and dichotomizing universities and communities, there is something to be said for enhancing a first-year student's conception of what it means to be a member of the university. This is a space where authority for student-writers can manifest. In my classroom specifically, the break my students took from traditional writing gave them distance from their writing that seemed to allow them to internalize some of the conventions we had practiced all semester. Perhaps the "break" from traditional writing assignments, as well as the "new" practice of composing did something for their writing in its disruption

ESSAYS— CONTINUED

of spaces that allowed them to gain authority over their own positions as student writers. And pairing this with Morton's risk—"the risk of caring for another human being"—seemed to only offer rewards in terms of wanting to produce quality work.

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Serving and Learning: Faculty, Student, and Agency Perspectives on the Product-Based Project, “With—and for—Refugees”

By Roberta D. Baer, University of South Florida
 Emily Holbrook, University of South Florida
 Ronald Allan Cruz, Caribe Refugee Program
 Janet Blair, Florida Refugee Services

Introduction

Community-based learning is often referred to as service-learning. This paper addresses one of the longstanding concerns in the field: how to equally emphasize service and learning (Copeland et al.). We (the authors) include Roberta D. Baer, the faculty member who teaches the class; Emily Holbrook, a graduate student in the class and the co-editor of the book produced; Ronald Allan Cruz, the Director of the adult education program, CARIBE, which is part of Hillsborough County Public Schools; and Janet Blair, the leader of the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force. We discuss our perspectives on why this collaborative project is a good model of service-learning. The course, Oral History, taught in the Anthropology Department of the University of South Florida, enrolls graduate and undergraduate students. For the class project, students conduct oral history interviews with refugees in our area, transcribe the interviews, and re-write the material at fourth-grade reading level for use in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes for refugees.

Background

The question of who service-learning *really* serves has been raised by many evaluators of these classes (Vernon and Ward, Blouin and Perry, Ringstad et al., Redford). Stoecker argues that most service-learning focuses disproportionately on the student and what they learn, as opposed to the communities they endeavor to help. A move away from a model based on charity to one based on social change and social justice has been advocated (Ringstad et al., Mitchell). Stoecker feels that service-learning is “too safe,” and advocates more politicized, activist projects, focusing on transformative relationships (Stewart and Alrutz). Personal relationships between the community partner and the professor, and long-term relationships, are necessary (Stewart and Alrutz).

Considerable investments are made by community partners; thus projects must support the agency’s needs and mission (Rinaldo et al.). The project should be developed jointly (Miron and Moely), with the agency’s role clearly defined, and include precise written expectations and goals (Blouin and Perry). An understanding of the community partner’s perspective is critical (Sandy and Holland). The service should not be controlled by the university, nor should the community/agency be labeled in terms of their need for help; rather, needs should be determined by, and empower the community. An additional focus should be why those in the community addressed in the project are in need of help. An important part of the process is to be allies of those with whom they are working, being involved “as a human first rather than as a professor or as a student” (Stoecker 169). And students must bring skills and resources to the relationship, not only “hours” which must be clocked for class credit.

Links are easily made between applied anthropology and service-learning. Applied anthropology advocates training students for careers outside the academy, focusing on addressing contemporary social problems. So “service-learning and applied anthropology are natural partners [; ...] both involve learning or teaching through community partnerships” (Copeland et al. 232), stressing “collaboration *with* the community, instead of ‘serving it’” (Copeland et al. 232). Outcomes should be measured, not only for students, but also for community partners and participants (Copeland et al.). Copeland et al. and Stoecker describe service-learning classes which created actual products; this product-based, clear deliverable approach is what we have taken in the Oral History Service Learning class.

Our Project

This project began with a meeting in 2014 coordinated by Blair, to develop collaborative relationships between the university and the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force. The meeting was initiated by the Task Force because they were continually being approached by university students/faculty wanting to do research involving resettled refugees. The Task

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Force wanted to take a more active role in shaping university-community collaborations/partnerships and identify needs within refugee service agencies that might be met through true collaboration with the university. Cruz attended as the director of the ESL Program for Refugees, CARIBE. Baer had previously completed a number of service-learning research projects for the Task Force on the health, diets, and nutritional status of refugees from Burma.

At the meeting, Baer and Cruz discussed the possibility of creating curriculum materials for CARIBE, based on oral histories of local refugees, as well as what form the class and project would take. Baer has a degree in Remedial Reading and had developed materials for adult literacy and high school equivalency programs for Mexican-American farmworkers in Colorado.

The Oral History class was first offered in Fall 2016. Cruz developed the list of interviewees, with some additions from Baer. A new course development grant from the University of South Florida (USF) Office of Community Engagement and Partnerships (OCEP) covered many of the costs associated with the class, while CARIBE paid for background checks for the students who conducted the interviews. The goal of the class was to have students understand the situation of contemporary refugees in the US and elsewhere, and to engage the students in applied research on the topic. Class activities included visits to ESL classes for refugees, guest speakers from local refugee service organizations, oral reports, reviews of current news/media articles regarding refugees, practice in conducting oral history interviews, and completing reflective essays about their experiences and observations.

For the class project, students, in pairs, interviewed resettled refugees living in the Tampa Bay area from home countries including Iraq, Afghanistan, Burma, Yugoslavia, Haiti, Cuba, Ethiopia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Togo. The taped interviews were transcribed and then the students rewrote each at a fourth-grade reading level. The students were required to engage directly with people very different from themselves, culturally and linguistically. They had to contact the interviewees, set up appointments, conduct the interviews, and then review the stories with their interviewees for accuracy. They not only listened to the stories, but also in the process of their interactions, engaged more deeply with the experiences of the refugees. One pair of students called anxiously as their interviewee was 15, then 30 minutes late. They were told to wait. The person turned up about 45 minutes late. Not yet having a driver's license or car, he had to take three buses—one of which was late—to reach their meeting point.

The product of this course was a 144-page book, *American Stories*, published by the Hillsborough County School Board, the funding agency of CARIBE. This book is now being used in ESL classes for new refugees as a source of reading materials that are more relevant to them than the typical curricula. The USF students and interviewees were given copies of the final book. The pdf was made available free of charge to ESL and other educational programs, and has been requested by programs all over the US. In addition, hard copies of the book have been sold to raise money for projects with refugees.

The oral history class was taught again in fall 2018, with some modifications. Baer and Holbrook developed the list of interviewees, with the assistance of Blair, who contacted many people directly. Cruz asked that a pre-reading exercise and some comprehension questions be included, and requested that the reading level be third-grade, due to large recent influxes of refugees who have very little formal education. Funding for the project through USF was reduced, though OCEP provided a smaller grant to cover project expenses, and CARIBE again paid for students' background checks.

The Teacher Perspective (Baer)

From the instructor's point of view, this project worked out very well. I received very high student evaluations for the class in 2016, which had a positive impact on my annual evaluation and I could count the book as a publication. I also won an award from the university for Outstanding Community Engaged Teaching, and received a Welcomer Award for the Tampa Bay Refugee Task Force. However, teaching a class of this type is a great deal more work than a "regular" class. Numerous issues for interviewees conflicted with the tight semester schedule; at the last minute I scoured personal contacts to come up with a few last interviewees. Nevertheless, the entire project was part of my long-term commitment to refugee issues and to truly beneficial university-community partnerships.

The Student Perspective

While the class was a challenge in many ways, the course was successful in engaging students as 'whole people,' influ-

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encing not just disciplinary knowledge but also their sense of civic identity, empathy and personal growth. As comments below indicate, the experience was well received by the students.

“My perspective changed... Now I understand that it takes really special people to live in terrible conditions and start all over, sometimes without any connection to the people from their past and not knowing if their family members are safe or alive.”

“We created something with the refugees that gives voice to their experiences. For new refugees, it will be the voice of experience and welcoming. To Americans...who know nothing, or worse than nothing, about refugees, there will be the voices of truth and the human face of the humanitarian crises. I only hope my fellow Americans will listen to those voices.”

“I went into this class expecting a more traditional classroom structure, with lectures, discussions, and furious note-taking. What I got out of this class...was a chance to make a difference, to build a relationship, and to learn how to create change rather than just talk about it.”

Teaching Assistant Perspective (Holbrook)

This experience was meaningful for me as a student and teaching assistant for the class, and co-editor on the final product. I had the opportunity to build a lasting relationship with my interviewee; we still keep in touch. I fielded questions from students who had never met a refugee or knew little about what that label really means. We were also at the beginning of the new presidential administration and refugees were a popular media topic. I was able to teach students about the complex reality of refugees and the process these individuals must go through before being resettled in the US. This class gave us the opportunity to provide the details that the media does not. As co-editor of the book, I helped create a product I was proud of and continue my pursuits of helping empower the refugee community.

The Participant's Perspectives

Many of the interviewees had taken CARIBE classes when they first arrived, and were anxious to be able to give back to the program and to other refugees. Several of them commented on this in their interviews:

“I want to help people like CARIBE does...[My teachers] taught us everything, how I can study, how I can learn English, how I can talk with people. Everything in my life they taught me. So I am very happy to help with this book.”

“I told my story because I feel this way I could help others...that are dealing with these kinds of situations, newcomers to the USA...I hope that my story will be useful....I hope it helps my fellow refugees.”

In addition, we received some feedback from the families of the interviewees. The children of one interviewee enjoyed looking at the photograph of their father and reading about him, and were delighted to see his story in a “real” book.

The Agency Perspective (Cruz)

This partnership provided our program with tremendous resources capitalizing on the success and journey of former and current students. Our teachers were able to improve reading skills and incorporate these short stories in their daily instruction. Program instructors also provided helpful feedback to improve on the next publication. Current and former students truly felt proud about their published life stories. They understood how this work will shed light on the journey, struggles and successes of their fellow refugees, and possibly help improve the outlook on refugees across the nation. The students featured in the book also shared what they gained during the interviews. Several students mentioned that the experience helped them practice their English through conversations. Based on the results of this partnership, CARIBE plans to continue working with USF to develop future publications to support and advocate for local refugees. This partnership allowed us to accomplish goals of both improving English skills and promoting awareness about refugees.

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The Task Force Perspective (Blair)

This project assisted the Task Force and the local community on several levels. First, it serves as an example of how to build a truly beneficial university/community partnership. The project was based on an identified need of the adult education provider. Teachers had been hearing refugee students in classes talk about how little they could relate to the curricula being offered. Since adult learners do best when material is relevant to them, these ESL teachers and the CARIBE director determined that a curricula based on lived refugee experiences would be a welcome addition to the adult learners. Baer took the suggestion and built a course and product to meet this need. At every point in the development, implementation and completion of the project, Baer welcomed ideas, feedback and even criticism from the service providers. This is a rare level of collaboration, not often seen in service-learning courses. In our experiences, most service-learning courses are designed by the professor and ask the community agencies to meet the needs of the university. This example of a genuine partnership through the collaborative project with Baer has inspired task force member agencies to approach other departments/faculty at USF to suggest new possibilities for service learning, including one addressing the issues of refugee women.

In addition, and most importantly, this oral history project gave voice to what is often an invisible, marginalized population, at a time when the need to hear their perspective and their experiences is more critical than ever before. Refugees arrive here in their new country with the understanding that they have a great deal to learn about their new home. They leave behind their country of origin and start trying, from the very first day here, to acculturate to new norms. However, what we often forget and what they are rarely told, is that we here in the receiving communities have a great deal that we can learn from refugees. We can learn politics, history and culture by hearing refugee stories. We can also learn lessons about true courage and gritty resilience. When I visited the USF class at the end of the semester to hear the project presentations, most often the students told me how much THEY had learned by interacting with and interviewing refugees. In refugees, we have lived history all around us in our community, stories that will be lost if we do not take the time to listen. This project allowed not only the students but also each of the readers of the book to hear these untold stories.

Conclusions and Recommendations

We feel this project addressed many of the elements stressed in the literature for creating a good service-learning experience for both students and the community agency. The project was the result of a long-term relationship between refugee agencies and the instructor. Actual time required of the agency was minimal—one site visit and orientation to the goals and needs of CARIBE. The remainder of the student supervision was done by instructor. The students learned new skills and brought them to the project, and a unique product was created, something that others did not have time to do, but which served not only the agency, but also others beyond.

But is this social change in the way that Stoecker advocates? Did the project and product create any actual change? For the students in the class, the answer is yes. At a time in history when there is fear around refugee screenings and arrivals, these students were able to have their own lived experiences with local refugee families. Many became friendly with the people they interviewed and were invited to dinner at their homes. Others discovered their interviewees had problems getting jobs or benefits, and Baer forwarded this information to the refugee service organizations responsible to addressing these issues. Whatever their political stance, each student left the course with a better understanding of the refugee process abroad and in the US, and also the opportunity to have heard at least two refugee stories. Building relationships with those who are often marginalized is in and of itself an act of social change. Students involved in this project had the opportunity to sit and talk with the interviewee and, most importantly, to listen. This allowed for a human to human relationship as recommended by Stoecker (169).

Additionally, this project gave a voice to those who rarely are able to speak for themselves. In most of the mainstream media discourse on refugees, we hear from national officials and even local service agencies, but rarely hear the experiences of the refugees themselves. This oral history project allowed both newly arrived refugees and former refugees to speak their stories. Unlike most structured interviews, this process allowed the refugees themselves to choose what they wanted to share. It also allowed them to see the transcribed interview and make any edits or additions they deemed necessary. This shift in power is the type of transformative relationship called for in the literature (Stewart and Alrutz).

We also received feedback from the task force member agencies, ESL teachers and refugee students, and determined

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that some changes needed to be made in the next edition of the book. While the stories were well received, they were often too long and needed to have some curricular components built into the text to make them more useful for classroom teachers and students. In light of this, the next edition will separate individual stories into shorter, more digestible installments and include pre- and post-discussion questions and some vocabulary words. We also determined that there was a need for a youth voice, and are seeking out young adults for the next book.

Finally, we heard from task force members that the book continues to serve as a model of effective university/community collaboration. This project empowered the providers who serve refugees and are often short staffed and underfunded to see that they can identify projects within their service realm, and reach out to the university for faculty expertise and student implementers.

Acknowledgements

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Service-Learning in a Science Methods Course: A Retrospective Case Study

By Barbara S. Spector, University of South Florida
 Debbi Stone, The Florida Aquarium
 Cyndy Leard, Sustainability Education

Introduction

Previous research indicates that teaching science methods classes for prospective teachers in an Informal Science Education Institution (ISEI), e. g., an aquarium, helps to mitigate resistance to the paradigm shift from a didactic to a holistic teaching approach, the cornerstone of effective science teaching K-16. However, it is difficult for teachers to step out of the box they have known as school due to numerous restrictions and emphasis on standardized testing. Further complicating this issue is their college experience, driven by the extrinsic motivation of grades earned through the completion of assignments following a specific set of parameters.

Informal Science Education Institutions (ISEIs), also known as free-choice institutions, provide a novel setting for learning in which the paradigm shift happens naturally as attendees voluntarily engage in learning, because the available activities are attractive to them. An individual's intrinsic motivation (desire, interest, curiosity) drives the learning. Giving prospective teachers the opportunity to learn in these settings helps them to broaden their perspective of effective science teaching and recognize that learning opportunities designed as those in free-choice settings can be tailored to a classroom setting (Spector, Burkett, & Leard 51-61).

Service-learning (S-L), a community engagement strategy, can be used by a university to partner with an ISEI to benefit both partners. Such S-L provides a novel setting, experiential learning, and adds authenticity to prospective teachers' learning when applied in a science methods course. It furthers the mission of the ISEI partner and adds to its resources.

Case Study

This case study demonstrates a service-learning model incorporated in a science methods class. The course focused on combining the previous research, in which prospective teachers learned in a novel setting, with the university's desire to promote service learning.

The community partner in this study, The Florida Aquarium, was chosen because I, the class professor, and Debbi Stone, the Vice President of Education, have a personal relationship. Debbi was a previous student and a community partner in developing a graduate certificate program. We had common education values and vocabulary with which to communicate. I gave her a brief overview of the objectives in the methods course, thus providing insight to the assets I expected the students would develop and apply to the S-L task as the semester progressed.

The expectation was that prospective teachers learning to employ characteristics of free-choice venues would be willing and able to make school science more attractive to middle school youngsters, thus increasing youngsters' interest, ownership, and learning success. The aquarium would benefit by adding new learning opportunities that preservice teachers would devise and help to forward its mission.

The initial S-L plan resulted from a university workshop I attended. In the S-L model I learned, the professor identified the community partner and the partner determined the problem to be mitigated. I committed to test this model, new to me, in the middle school science methods course for prospective teachers beginning two weeks after the workshop. Here is the S-L plan for the course syllabus approved by workshop leaders:

You will receive credit on your transcript for service-learning.

Step 1

The Vice-President of Education for The Florida Aquarium will be the guest presenter in one class session to share the aquarium's mission, culture of the organization, and introduce options for involvement

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in newly developing projects. (One is a new shark-learning center. The other is developing a model for a middle school-scientist-aquarium partnership).

Step 2

The full class will explore the aquarium to ascertain onsite learning assets and the way they match middle school science education requirements. Specific procedures and tasks will be assigned to foster maximum benefit from the exploration.

Step 3

Methods students will interact with the decision-makers in the aquarium project(s) on site for a minimum of (# of hours TBA) and in class for a minimum of three hours. Additional contact time will be via other communications vehicles, such as Skype and email. (This is subject to modification based on students' outside work schedules and the availability of aquarium personnel.)

Keep an ongoing log of impressions and interactions with aquarium personnel on and off the site. Post this log in your bi-weekly journal as appropriate.

Final project options:

- Create a scenario (script, paper, video, or other medium) describing an ideal continuum from formal to informal science education of a middle school youngster. The class will develop criteria for evaluation as a group based on your experience with the aquarium.
- Create a miniature-learning center for your future (or current) middle school science classroom based on your learning opportunity in the aquarium. The designs for miniature learning centers will be given to the aquarium for use as they see fit. The class and the aquarium personnel will develop criteria for evaluation as a group based on your experience in the aquarium.

Reciprocity

The aquarium acquires multiple perspectives and expertise from prospective and in-service teachers as input to their decision-making and building of two projects they are beginning to develop. ... This expands their working development team.

Students' assets developed in this course useful to the aquarium include, but are not limited to, knowledge of

- a) the national and state science education standards,
- b) characteristics of middle school students,
- c) ability to design age-appropriate learning experiences,
- d) understanding scaffolding needed for specific knowledge in the projects, and
- e) ability to create a continuum from formal to informal science learning.

They also serve as a critical public audience responding to ideas for the projects being designed for use by the public.

The service-learning project with the aquarium is intended to provide a sense of urgency to learn much of the fundamental material in this course. The course is front-loaded with input material in the Virtual Resource Center (VRC) on Canvas, a computer-based course management program. These materials will serve as references for decision-making with the aquarium team.

Students learn firsthand:

- a) how decisions are made in this informal science education institution (ISEI), which exemplifies many other regional ISEIs;

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- b) ways to use the assets of an informal science education institution to attain scientific and technological literacy while teaching in a formal school setting and the thinking process to create hands-on, active learning environments in a classroom;
- c) ways to work collaboratively with other professionals as a team developing learning opportunities (a skill essential in a middle school); and
- d) to value the role of service-learning in a formal learning institution. (Spector 1-4)

Course Structure

This middle school methods course was structured as a flipped classroom (Perkins, et. al. 89-123) in which classroom time was devoted to discussion and new information was delivered via a class website containing a VRC with multiple materials. While students completed assignments including a service-learning project, they were expected to analyze and synthesize data from the VRC with in-class discussions and write open-ended journal entries bi-weekly describing their thought processes, how they were making sense of information, and conclusions in Canvas. Further, they kept ongoing logs of impressions and interactions with their service-learning partner and shared them via Canvas. They also responded to each other's journals and log entries to establish a dialogue extending or revising their thinking as they attempted to implement the skills necessary to teach middle school science through project-based service-learning. Class members advised and coached each other in this community of practice during each class. At the end of each face-to-face session, students wrote a brief exit memo indicating their immediate reactions to that session.

Course Participants

Participants were prospective middle school science teachers. Thirteen learners were enrolled; six for undergraduate credit and seven for credit in a Masters-of-Arts in Science Teaching degree. They were either Biology or Chemistry majors. Three students had some previous experience teaching in a school. Participants ranged from those who had never been to The Florida Aquarium, to those who went as children, to one who frequented it to educate her own children.

Data Sources and Method

Ideas in this narrative are extracted from an in-depth case study (Spector, Stone, & Leard 1-35). The first author was the primary course designer and instructor, the second the community partner in S-L, and the third a critical friend analyzing and interpreting data. The retrospective emergent design qualitative case study was in the tradition of symbolic interaction (Jacobs, 1-50). Data sources included students' reflective bi-weekly journals and responsive dialog, their service-learning logs, emails, in-class comments, and the authors' participant observation.

Plan Meets Reality

Students introduced themselves during the opening class meeting, examined the syllabus, and did activities highlighting the paradigm shift. I surveyed students for available times they might work with aquarium staff. It became obvious students' outside commitments would prohibit establishing a set number of hours and times to interact with aquarium staff.

Week two of class, Debbi provided an overview of the structure of The Florida Aquarium, its operations, its funding, its various programs, what she hoped for from the partnership with our class, and engaged learners in open-ended discussion. Week three, hurricane Irma came bearing down on Florida. Announcements of organizations' closings and roads filled the airwaves. The plan again met reality and changed significantly. The thirteen intrepid class participants met me at the aquarium after it closed to the public. Students had only met once and did not have time to develop working relationships. I assigned work groups to encourage discussion as they began their exploration. Each group had a Chemistry and a Biology major and a person with experience teaching. Individuals were not required to stay with the initial group after the first half hour.

Specific tasks were assigned to foster maximum benefit from the exploration. For example, "Make notes about what's visible in a particular exhibit that could provide clues to the diet of the organisms present. What anatomical structures provide insight to the niche each specimen fills in that habitat? How does the habitat in one exhibit differ from the habitat in the next exhibit? Be observant scientists, find patterns, etc." They spent about three hours exploring the setting to as-

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certain the onsite learning assets, the way they matched middle school science education requirements, and asking questions of two staff people who accompanied them. We then retired to a room where the staff members identified areas of concern with which they hoped the class would assist by developing products for the aquarium's use, such as evaluation and laboratory activities. Students were invited to explore the aquarium and talk with staff any time.

Students posted initial ideas for aquarium projects in Canvas to stimulate each other's thinking. I intentionally did not indicate whether people were to work individually or in groups on the projects. I thought the process would let people identify common areas of interest, and then they could elect to work together or individually, which they did.

In class the following week, students were tasked with identifying several areas of the aquarium's concerns that were of interest to them individually. Then small groups brainstormed ideas for projects they might do to assist the aquarium and shared those with the class. Students expressed concern because of lack of preset parameters for their projects, subsequently their grades. I told them they would collectively set the parameters for their own evaluation after they devised projects they thought would be useful to the aquarium. This did little to mitigate their concerns about their grades.

Before mid-semester, students sent their initial ideas to Debbi for her to choose the products she thought would work best. She responded with suggestions on which projects to expand via email. Students worked together in and out of class to further their projects. They presented their final projects to the full group for advice and refinement before submission to the aquarium two weeks before the semester's end.

During the last class session, Debbi came to class and provided overall feedback. The class discussed the process we used, their reflections on it, and suggestions for how it might be enhanced. The students were delighted when Debbi committed to using all the products. The students indicated they wanted to list their projects on their vitas. Debbi agreed to send them acknowledgement letters to back up their vitas.

Findings

Two factors emerged influencing the course design. First, the S-L project drove most of the activity and all of the learning about how middle school students learn science for the entire course. Through the flipped classroom structure, the VRC materials were assigned weekly for journals and accessed "as needed" while learners' solved the real-world problem of designing products for the aquarium's use with its middle school audience. The VRC materials served as references for decision-making with the aquarium team.

Second, not surprisingly, time was a constraining factor. Time was the key to changes in the S-L plan: Time devoted by the aquarium personnel and students to prepare for hurricane Irma and its aftermath; time Debbi had to juggle to meet her vice-presidential obligations and STEM grant obligations; and lack of common times students had available beyond the established class meeting times. A late October deadline was necessary to submit a final project before classes ended in early November. The need for schedule modifications based on Irma and its aftermath compounded the problem of setting intermediate S-L progress deadlines. Due dates emerged based on the actual progress made by the class. Students perceived the emergent deadlines were stressful, even though they were established based on actual progress.

Additional findings are listed below as benefits to the partners, because reciprocity is key to success in service-learning. Considerations noted by the ISEI partner and the professor follow benefits.

Preservice teachers

Lack of expectations in the novel setting made it easier to shift paradigms and conduct an open-ended full inquiry resembling scientific inquiry conducted by science researchers. Lack of testing constraints enabled students to think out-of-the box and apply their imaginations to designing learning and evaluation activities. Because their products were to be used in the aquarium, a professional setting, they increased their confidence in their ability to plan learning opportunities and stimulated interest in use of other ISEIs for teaching and learning. They recognized the importance of and enhanced their abilities to interact with colleagues while functioning as a community of practice.

Professor/University

The professor gained insights into: sources of students' motivation and discomfort with open-ended learning opportunities, the way grading hampers students' productivity and creativity, and ways to help students embrace holistic learning

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approaches. In addition, the professor acquired a new service-learning strategy that helped the university reach its engaged scholarship goals.

Aquarium

The aquarium increased its capacity to fulfill its mission to entertain, educate, and inspire stewardship of the natural environment by spreading awareness of it as a learning resource for teachers and school children. The partnership contributed intellectual credibility validating the high quality of the aquarium's multiple functions of education, scientific research, and behavioral change initiatives and its integral role in the education community of the region. It enhanced the capacity of the aquarium's education department by providing more learning opportunities for middle school youngsters and enhancing staff's ability to design effective learning opportunities.

Considerations

In order for this partnership to be successful, the community partner identified some things to consider throughout the process. Initially be aware that students developing products for the aquarium have varied knowledge about the aquarium and supply them with enough information to help them be successful. Information about the collection and functioning of the organization can prime the pump for students to envision possibilities. The aquarium staff need to provide ongoing communication through a point person who is available to answer questions and maintain a delicate balance between conveying the aquarium's real-world limitations to students while enthusiastically encouraging their imaginations to design products. Finally, the aquarium needs to be aware of the capabilities and limitations of schools in order to keep expectations reasonable.

Conclusion

Data indicated that incorporating a S-L project into a science methods course is an effective way to broaden prospective science teachers' understanding of the holistic paradigm. Their firsthand experience working with this context increased self-efficacy and encouraged incorporating free-choice projects in their classrooms. All participants (the professor, the students, the community partner, and the university) benefitted from this model.

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“We Just Want to Feel Useful”: Making Sense of Student Frustration as an Outcome of Critical Service-learning Experiences

By Willy Oppenheim, University of Washington and Omprakash
Alex Knott, Omprakash

Introduction: Critical Approaches to ‘Doing Good’ Across Difference

In the burgeoning research and practice related to critical service-learning, it is increasingly commonplace to point out the pitfalls of superficial ‘voluntourism,’ and to strive for pedagogical and programmatic approaches that push students to think more critically about their own positionality and the root causes of the social issues that they seek to address. This paper explores the lived experiences of students engaged in a program that seeks to cultivate this sort of critical consciousness, and highlights two particular challenges that emerge from such an approach. First, students who engage in deeper reflection on the implications of their intentions to ‘help others’ often report feeling a sense of frustration, alienation, discomfort, and deflation rather than a sense of success or satisfaction at having ‘helped.’ Second, in some cases students end up directing their frustrations towards the work of their own host organizations, especially when they perceive these organizations to be providing ‘band-aid’ solutions rather than addressing the root causes. How are we to regard such outcomes? Are these frustrations a reasonable—and perhaps even necessary—outcome of critical reflection in service-learning, or have these students missed the point?

In this paper we explore these questions by focusing on three examples of students volunteering in particular thematic and geographic contexts, but our aim is to provoke broader insights relevant to a wider range of educators who aim to encourage reflexivity and uncertainty in their students. We draw our examples—as well as our broader orientation in this field—from our work as research-practitioners within a non-profit organization that connects students with volunteer and internship opportunities around the world and explicitly aims to encourage critical reflexivity amongst these students before, during, and after their field-based experiences. The organization, Omprakash, provides students with online pre-departure training and mentorship via its ‘EdGE’ (Education via Global Engagement) platform, and enables them to browse and apply for internships within a network of 180+ social impact organizations in 40+ countries around the world. While our cases may seem specific to the work of this organization or to the particularities of students engaged in service-learning activities, our deeper pedagogical and existential questions are relevant to a much broader array of situations in which people cross significant differences of power and culture with an intent to ‘do good,’ and with an accompanying critical awareness of the difficulties of doing so.

As critiques of volunteering and service-learning have grown more prominent (see, for example, Mostafanezhad, 2014; Crossley, 2012), program administrators and participants have increasingly emphasized the importance of student learning and ethical global partnerships rather than ‘service’. Scholars and practitioners have worked to define ethical standards and pedagogical best practices for global service-learning (e.g., Crabtree, 2013; Hartman et al., 2018; Hartman & Kiely, 2014; Lasker, 2016), but there is a lack of substantive literature exploring how such learning actually occurs (or doesn’t) within the messiness of everyday experience.

More specifically, scholars have seldom considered the ironies that emerge when volunteers trained with a more ‘critical’ perspective—that is, a perspective attentive to questions of power and positionality—focus their critical lenses upon the work of their host organizations and are concerned or disappointed to find that these organizations are entangled with some of the same problematic narratives, power dynamics, and incentive structures that volunteers have (hopefully) sought to avoid. This sort of honest critique sometimes seems like a refreshing improvement upon sentimental narratives about ‘local organizations making a difference,’ but can also risk creating perpetuating stereotypes and colonial hierarchies. Our ultimate question is not a normative one about whether these critiques are apt or warranted, but rather a pedagogical one about how to channel these moments of tension and frustration into opportunities for mutual learning and reflection.

‘Corruption is Deeply Cultural’: Student Conflates Structural Violence and Cultural Difference

Our first case study involves a gap year volunteer at an organization in Cambodia that focuses on natural resource management in rural communities. Like many international development organizations, the work of this particular organization is dependent on grants, and a significant amount of their resources go towards donor relations and the documenta-

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tion of their projects. At the time of the volunteer's arrival, several projects had recently been concluded, and the organization's focus had shifted towards monitoring and evaluation, as well as research and grant writing.

After one month at her host organization, the student reached out to her EdGE Mentor with the following email:

This organization is corrupt... There's barely any program work (at all, not just for me to do), there's no leadership, and there's not any accountability to the communities that the organization is trying to serve. ... I've been sitting here in an office in Phnom Penh for a month, and I haven't seen anyone work on anything besides reports to donors. I know that it might be cynical, but I think that everyone is in it for the money. The organizational structure isn't built around program work, it's built around funding for the admins.

In this case, the student's primary critiques of her host organization were related to the bureaucratic nature of the organization's work—a common critique of non-profit organizations. The volunteer was frustrated by the time taken for the organization to move forward on projects, and by what she saw as an excessive focus on donor relations. She was surprised to see the amount of the organization's funding that went towards their human resources, as opposed, presumably, to project materials. However, rather than critiquing the larger system in which the organization was embedded and upon which it was dependent, the student explained her observations in terms of a 'culture of corruption,' attempting to make the link back to material from the EdGE online pre-departure curriculum:

It reminds me of that last slide that I was looking at with regards to cultural differences with women's rights and gender inequality. Corruption is deeply cultural in Cambodia, but does that make it right? Appropriate to be intervened in?

The student is referencing a section of the EdGE pre-departure curriculum that aims to complicate the concept of 'culture' by inviting students to consider possible limits and justifications for cultural relativism. However, a key cautionary point of this section, and one that this particular student may have missed, is that reifying the idea of 'local culture' can obscure important internal differences and distract from broader contextual factors and power dynamics. While this student apparently internalized the discussion regarding cultural relativism, she still ended up interpreting issues with her host organization through the pejorative and reductionistic framework of a 'culture of corruption,' rather than pursuing a more nuanced understanding of the context in which this organization was situated.

Part of the student's frustration also stemmed from her disappointment at there being 'nothing to do.' By her own admission, this was in part because she did not feel qualified to do the sorts of tasks that would be most useful to the organization, such as grant writing. But she had also anticipated doing more 'program work in the field,' rather than office-based tasks such as report editing and grant research. Indeed, when speaking to an Omprakash admin after returning from a field visit, she remarked that "it was nice to see what the [organization] actually does."

While the volunteer remained frustrated with her organization throughout the duration of her internship, she did acknowledge that her experiences working with this particular organization were linked to broader trends within the field of international development:

This experience, though, really highlights the core problem of NGOs: they are not responsible to the people whom they serve. Even at an organization whose stated values are community-based work and transparent leadership, poor people in rural communities take a backseat to donor reports and proposals for funding.

In this case, the volunteer was able to realize some potentially problematic trends within international development—inflated bureaucracies, the need to cater to donors—but rather than exploring the ways in which the organization sought to work within these structures, and supporting their efforts to do so, she reverted to explaining what she saw in terms of 'corruption,' and wrote off her internship altogether.

“Outsiders”: Student Reflections on Positionality and Local Authority

Our second case study involves an EdGE student volunteering with an organization focused on education in Costa Rica. This student was a professional teacher in the United States, with a particular interest in equity issues in education. What is notable about this particular case study is that both the volunteer and the staff members of the organization came from the same country—the United States—but differed in their positions of privilege within that society, and this

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became a point of contention as the volunteer considered her own positionality in relation to her host organization and their local constituents:

The stark differences between the lives of Ticos and gringos in Samara was sometimes too reminiscent of the way things were at home. As a black woman from California, I already knew that the people who would have the biggest houses, the most leisure time, and the most access to travel were almost always fairer skinned, and not from Samara.

During the EdGE pre-departure program, this volunteer had reflected on the idea of “learning service” (Papi, 2012) and had written that she “[intended] to spend a majority of [her] initial experience observing, reflecting, and gaining an understanding of the structure and mission of [the] organization.” However, about one month after her arrival in Costa Rica, the volunteer reached out to a program administrator with several concerns about the organization. She prefaced her concerns with the following reflection on her own perspectives:

I've been trained in Sociology and have spent most of my academic years grappling with social issues and issues of power, racism, and poverty for a long time. I realize that I have a tendency to see things that not a lot of people see or understand the effects of. So, what to me seems like an obvious solution, feels like a sanctimonious attack to others.

The volunteer's concerns were related to topics discussed in the EdGE pre-departure program, including a lack of consultation and involvement of the 'local community,' and a privileging of 'outsiders' perspectives. This volunteer was particularly concerned with the macro trends she observed in the inequality in the Costa Rican education system, and was frustrated that her organization was “not addressing these issues.” The administrator encouraged the volunteer to spend some more time asking questions, listening, and observing from staff members and various community members, and entering into respectful discussions about these issues as seemed appropriate.

Several weeks after the initial complaint, it seemed that things had improved: the volunteer had found what she perceived to be worthwhile projects, and she voiced a conscious effort to “[manage her] expectations, while staying vocal and keeping a critical but empathetic eye.” However, tensions between the volunteer and the host organization persisted throughout the remainder of her stay. The following is an excerpt from a blog post written by the volunteer towards the end of her stay in Costa Rica:

I struggle to write this piece because I in no way want to undermine the work of this organization or the positive impact they have had on the lives of students in Samara. But as a trained social scientist with a specialization in education, as someone who wants to tip the scales...what I will lay out are the issues I personally witnessed... The organization had been in the community for 5 years. The connections between the organization and the community felt like thin rope bridges over a large dark chasm.

In this case, it seems that the volunteer's critical orientation enabled her to productively question the positionality of her host organization. However, she was unfortunately unable to get beyond criticisms of her host organization and their status as 'outsiders' in order to explore how the organization, working within this particular set of constraints, might be able to improve their relations with the community in which they worked.

“Just Filling in the Gaps”: Student Reflections on Organizational Sustainability and Efficacy

Our third case study involves several university students volunteering with an organization working to support refugees on a Greek island. It is notable that, in this case, volunteers were working within the context of an extended 'crisis' situation, or what has been called a 'crisis in response' (Tayyar, 2018). Given the specific challenges when volunteering within this context (see Knott, 2017), the volunteers were briefed by an Omprakash team member about the effects of the crisis on the island, and the need to be adaptable when working with mobile populations within a constantly changing situation.

Prior to their arrival, volunteers generally seemed unconcerned about the instability and challenges of working in this context. While volunteers' individual motivations were varied, their primary motivator was a desire to work with and support refugees. The following excerpt from one volunteer's Response to Unit 1 of the EdGE pre-departure program provides an example of volunteers' hopes for their work with this organization:

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I want to understand the needs and desires of the people in [the camps], and I want to grasp how this organization goes about meeting that need.

Volunteers imagined being able to connect with refugees, provide them with support, and understand their situation. In reality, many of the volunteers left feeling overwhelmed by the extent of the crisis, disappointed with the organization's response to the crisis, and deflated regarding their ability to 'help' in this context. While some volunteers explained their frustration and disappointment in terms of the political situation on the island or feeling personally overwhelmed, others aimed their criticisms at their host organization. Volunteers' critiques of the organization varied; some questioned the importance of specific projects, while others were critical of the organization's lack of 'consistency' in their response:

There were multiple projects running during the month I worked with [the organization]; however, many of these fell apart due to inconsistency and lack of proper coordination. I do not feel comfortable supporting or working with an NGO that cannot maintain consistent work that is sustainable. I completely understand the difficulty of maintaining and receiving funds; however, every organization should be able to understand their limits and their purpose, and to provide services that are well out of the organization's limits is irresponsible.

The organization itself admitted that it was unable to follow through with certain projects for various reasons. In one case, local people voted to block their opening of a community center. In another case, one volunteer's actions meant that volunteers were banned from operating in a certain government-run camp. As events occurred on the island, the leadership sought to shift priorities, with mixed responses from the volunteers caught up in these changes. One particular volunteer perceived these shifts as evidence that the organization lacked an "identity" as, unlike other organizations that stuck to one project, this organization was just "filling in the gaps." This volunteer admitted that the organization's willingness to adapt to changing needs was what attracted him to the organization in the first place, but that, as a volunteer working in that context for months, it became "too hard." He suggested that after several weeks of doing boring and inconsistent tasks that did little to bring about sustained improvements to people's circumstances—after all, as he pointed out, people just want to leave the island, and volunteers weren't able to help with that—he and other volunteers just wanted to do something that made them "feel useful."

In this case, EdGE-trained volunteers realized the inadequacy of attempts to improve the circumstances of mobile populations on the island, which caused many to feel dissatisfied with their own attempts to 'help.' While, for some, this led to a realization about the ineffectiveness of current immigration policies and the need to advocate for political change, others criticized their host organization for delivering what they saw as a piecemeal response in the face of an extended crisis situation. Regardless of the merits or demerits of this critique, what is worth emphasizing here is an ironic tension between the goals of critical pedagogy and ethical global partnerships founded in mutual trust and respect for local knowledge. One volunteer explicitly suggested that EdGE-trained volunteers tended to be more critical of the organization than volunteers that had not engaged in the pre-departure training: in his experience, while non-EdGE volunteers generally left feeling satisfied that "they had done their part," EdGE-trained volunteers tended to leave feeling unsettled about the organization, their own role on the island, and the situation in general.

"We Just Want to Feel Useful": Embracing Discomfort Alongside Good Intentions

Rather than providing volunteers with answers, solutions, and a self-congratulatory opportunity to 'give back,' critical service-learning demands that students ask more questions, challenge themselves, and realize the shortcomings of attempts to 'help others' without a radical change to global structures of power. To some extent, such a perspective, if internalized, is bound to leave volunteers feeling unsettled. While rigorous pre-departure training and scenarios may provide a test run of sorts for the kinds of ethical ambiguity volunteers may encounter, the realities of volunteering abroad may make it more difficult to invoke a critical lens, and particularly one that is directed inwards. Amidst this newfound ethical complexity, volunteers may grasp for clarity and a reassuring sense of having done something to 'help.' When they do not feel that this has occurred through their work with their host organization, volunteers with a more critical perspective may be inclined to look for issues with the host organizations themselves, rather than reflecting inwards on the limits of their own perspectives, or searching outwards to learn more about the contexts within which these organizations work. This sort of dynamic should raise concerns for program administrators who seek to help students and host organizations build relationships founded in mutual trust and respect—but at the same time, it would seem naïve and inauthentic to tell students that their frustrations are misguided or that their host organizations are infallible. Instead, we must remain comfortable wading into the complexity, and attempting to do so with humility and open-heartedness.

Although it is tempting to want to prevent or protect students from feelings of disappointment, alienation, frustration, and

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confusion, we submit that the student emotions we have explored in these case studies are to be expected and even celebrated when they emerge through students' engagements with difference. These sentiments may even be considered evidence of students' learning, especially insofar as our aim as critical educators is not to help students feel that they have 'done their part,' but rather to encourage them to realize the limits of their ability to create meaningful change without challenging dominant structures of oppression and inequality. This realization is rarely comfortable, but we contend that a healthy sense of discomfort about the shape of one's world and one's role within it is in fact a worthy learning outcome in and of itself. The bigger existential question, then, is how to help students work through this sort of discomfort with love and lightheartedness rather than allowing it to metastasize into bitterness and antagonism.

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The Neuroscience of Fun! Creating an Avenue of Public Education Through Academia-Community Partnership

Shlomit Flaisher-Grinberg, Saint Francis University
Melanie Ramsey, Hollidaysburg Area Public Library

Abstract

The field of neuroscience offers exciting, yet complex, insights into the human mind. In recent years, the need to improve dialogue between neuroscientists and the public has been recognized, and an emphasis has been placed on the generation of public-based programs which reach outside the academic environment and into the community. One promising avenue includes public libraries, which offer a reliable, educational and social atmosphere. The current project was designed to generate a partnership between the Department of Psychology at Saint Francis University and the personnel at the Hollidaysburg Area Public Library, Pennsylvania, to allow the generation of a neuroscience-based outreach program. It was envisioned that the program would serve to improve the communication of neuroscientific data to the general community, involve faculty and students in community-engagement activities, and support the library's goals of offering attractive, fun and informative educational opportunities to its members. The analysis of feedback collected thus far suggests that the program attracts public interest and is perceived as mutually beneficial for both the academic and community partners.

Introduction

The field of neuroscience is an interdisciplinary field which aims to study human development, cognition and behavior via the exploration of the structure and functions of the brain and the nervous system (Schacter et al.). Utilizing some of the greatest technological advancements of the last few decades, research within the field has dramatically improved our ability to understand, treat and restore many aspects of human behavior. For instance, brain-computer interface technology has been successfully used to promote the performance and recovery of paraplegic patients who suffered spinal cord injury (Gui et al.; King et al.). Novel strategies utilizing gene and cell therapies are being consistently developed and tested for the treatment of diseases such as Alzheimer's and Parkinson's (Loera-Valencia et al.; Pardo et al.). "Mind reading technology" is now closer than ever, given that neuroimaging technologies can be used to decode the content of visual information directly from human brain activity (Huth et al.), and optogenetic techniques have the potential to modify memories [thus far in rodents (Liu et al.)].

In addition, a range of neuroscientific methodologies is currently being used for the study of the neurobiological mechanisms that underlie some of the most mysterious human conditions. These conditions include the "Alien limb syndrome," a phenomenon in which the individual perceives a limb as estranged/controlled by aliens, since it performs involuntary movements (Gallant et al.), "Cotard's syndrome", a condition in which the individual denies his existence/the existence of body parts (Sahoo and Josephs), "Capgras delusion", in which the individual believes that familiar persons have been replaced by impostors (Jedidi et al.), and "Synesthesia", a condition in which stimulation of one sense causes an experience in a second sense (Hubbard and Ramachandran).

Due to the use of complex technical terminology, the dissemination of neuroscientific knowledge to the vast public meets some obstacles. Traditional peer-reviewed articles are not always accessible to the non-scientific population, and media summaries of neuroscientific articles have been shown to misrepresent data and lead to misleading conclusions (Gonon et al.). With the recent proliferation of predatory, sham scientific journals, which lack proper peer-review process or editorial supervision, non-scientific data reach publication (Klyce and Feller). Thus, it is not surprising that the gap between neuroscientific facts and public knowledge has allowed the generation of unestablished myths, such as the idea that we only use 10% of our brains or that humans can be divided into left vs. right "brain thinkers" ("Neuro-Hit or Neuro-Myth?").

In recent years, the need to improve the communication of neuroscience research to the public has been recognized (Illes et al.; Robillard and Illes). Many organizations have attempted to bridge the neuroscientific gap between academia and the public using outreach programs and educational websites. For instance, the Society for Neuroscience offers various resources to educators, and operates a "find a Neuroscientist" program which allows educators to

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arrange a classroom visit by a neuroscientist (*Society for Neuroscience*). The Dana Foundation supports a wide range of brain-health programs for diverse audiences, and provides instructional materials and funding for the globally celebrated “Brain Awareness Week” (*Dana Foundation*).

The attempt to create new avenues for public-oriented neuroscience-centered educational programs can reach into public spaces that are open to a population of diverse ages, backgrounds and interests. Among these, public libraries offer an inclusive learning environment that integrates knowledge-seeking principles with a stimulating social setting. Outreach programs, designed to introduce the public to the exciting and intriguing wonders of the brain, can be integrated into the curriculum offered by public libraries, and serve to improve the experience and engagement of the public with the field. To pursue this goal, the current project was designed to generate an academia-community partnership, which will mutually explore the needs of the community, and enable both partners to create, promote and deliver informative and enjoyable programs. It was hypothesized that this avenue would receive community interest, support library turnout, improve the public comprehension of neuroscientific data, and create novel opportunities for community-based service learning.

Methods and Procedures

The Hollidaysburg Area Public Library, a 501(c)3 organization, has been identified as a community partner for the project. This Pennsylvania library has been in existence for nearly 70 years. It provides the Hollidaysburg area community (approximately 24,000 people) with recreational reading and listening materials, research and educational materials, reference resources, internet access, child and adult programs, and life-long learning opportunities. It is classified as a suburban library in an area in which the high school drop-out rate is 1% and the poverty level is 11.3%.

Following the formation of an academia-public partnership between the Department of Psychology at Saint Francis University (SFU) and the Hollidaysburg Public Area Library at Hollidaysburg PA, both partners focused on identifying common goals to generate a unified definition of the program, mutually engaging in program design and marketing (see Picture 1), and establishing the procedures required to support neuroscience-focused, academia-based teaching within the library curriculum. The success of the program was evaluated using feedback (testimonies) generated by the public, involved students, and the community partners. Additional parameters included the approximate number of attendees at each event, as well as indirect measures of community interest in the program.



Picture 1. Event advertisements generated by Ms. Melanie Ramsey, Hollidaysburg Area Public Library (left), and Adonte Haddox, President of the SFU Psychology Club (right)

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Results

The program was established in April 2016, and has been successfully delivered since, with 1-3 “Brain Awareness” talks and one “Brain Awareness Fair” per year. Talks receive a steady attendance of 40-50 individuals (children and adults), and the Fair receives an attendance of over 80 individuals. The program draws much attention from the public (in the form of inquiries) as well as the local media (newspaper and TV coverage). Informal evaluations of the project, generated by the public, library personnel and involved students are very positive, and interest in the continuation of the partnership is mutual. Specific description of the program is indicated below.

Brain Awareness Talks

Various neuroscience-related topics have been included in the talks delivered thus far. For instance, the April 2016 program focused on the biological and psychological processes implicated in learning and memory. The introduction of brain areas which participate in learning and memory was supplemented by hands-on activities which focused on the training of live rats (running in a maze), and generated much excitement and engagement (see Picture 2).



Picture 2. Talk attendees train live rats to find food treats in a T-maze

The April 2017 program focused on the various human senses (sight, sound, taste, smell, touch), and included numerous fascinating perceptual illusions. The July 2018 program focused on the anatomy of the brain, and was accompanied by the dissections of sheep brain specimen (see Picture 3).



Picture 3. Talk attendees inspect and dissect sheep brain specimen

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The April 2018 program (“Brain Awareness Fair”, see Picture 4) included 10 college students operating various educational tables from a brain & eye dissection table to an area where the effects of alcohol on the nervous system were demonstrated using microscopes and a water flea specimen known as the “Daphnia Magna”. Another table helped the attendees to create taste maps of their own tongues, and another demonstrated a variety of perceptual illusions. A section of the fair was dedicated to rat training, and another to puzzles, coloring, and a variety of gifts provided by the Dana Foundation (brain-shaped erasers, stickers, and so on).



Picture 4. “Brain Awareness Fair” events. Bottom-right (from the left), standing: Adonte Haddox, Amber Rogers, Ms. Melanie Ramsey, Director of Youth and Children’s Services at the Hollidaysburg Area Public Library, Cecilia Garza, Dr. Shlomit Flaisher-Grinberg, Christine Geiger, Julia Kuehn, Emma Starkey, Alexander Romeo, Julia Kreidinger. Sitting: Kristin Enders, Metztlí Enriquez

Community Partner Testimonies

“We were immediately interested in a partnership to bring neuroscience to our library users, and were eager to participate in planning and designing a public program with Dr. Flaisher-Grinberg. The programs were successful and well-attended from the very first, and different concepts were explored based on public interest and input. Together, we considered the audience and the possible ways learning could be organized in a library setting. In a public library, the approach must be a little more flexible since the presenter has no way of knowing how many people, and of what ages, will attend. The activities were appropriate, interesting, informational, and entertaining, and allowed individuals of all ages to meet and talk personally with students and scientists. Some of our participants have shared that they are now interested in learning more about neuroscience, considering neuroscience as a possible career, or starting a new neuroscience-based hobby due to this partnership. We are very proud to partner with Dr. Flaisher-Grinberg and SFU.” (Ms. Melanie Ramsey, Director of Youth and Children’s Services at the Hollidaysburg Area Public Library).

“We are proud to offer free neuroscience programs at our library through this partnership. Our library patrons of all ages have attended the programs with great interest, and have especially enjoyed the hands-on aspect, which provides a learning opportunity that could not be possible without a professional partnership of this kind. Some families have attend-

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ed multiple events, realizing an interest in the topic which cannot be covered in only one or two sessions. There is much scope for future programs! This partnership would not be possible without the hard work and initiative of Dr. Flaisher-Grinberg and the students of the SFU Psychology Department.” (Janet Eldred, Director of the Hollidaysburg Area Public Library).

Public Testimonies

“We loved the interaction with the college students, they were all extremely knowledgeable, outgoing and interesting. There were many different stations, but my boys were most intrigued by the brain illusions and tuning forks. I couldn’t get them away from that station, they were having so much fun trying to decipher what each card meant! Wonderful program put on by a great group of students and their professor.” (Melissa Garrity).

“My family has attended two of the Brain Awareness events hosted by Dr. Flaisher-Grinberg and her students. It’s truly hard to summarize the great benefits of this program for my family. My children, Ben, age 10, and Chloe, age 11, have been so inspired by the program that both have decided to pursue science fields in their future education. For our children, who attend a small school, this hands-on experience with goggles, scalpels, and dissections may not otherwise occur until college. Our school system simply can’t afford these opportunities. The partnership between the SFU Psychology Department and the Hollidaysburg Area Public Library offers such a benefit to our rather oppressed socioeconomic community. I wholeheartedly thank SFU for this amazing and educational opportunity for my family.” (Jennifer and Dave Wagner).

Student Testimonies

“I really enjoyed the Brain Awareness event. Watching young kids enjoy the brain activities and learn about the brain was awesome. I thought teaching young children about the brain was a wonderful experience to be a part of.” (Amber Rogers).

“I thought the event was great because it was bringing kids closer to science. Watching them get excited to hold a brain or a rat is simply wonderful!” (Christine Geiger).

“The brain awareness event allowed me to break out of my comfort zone and help young kids get excited about learning. This event not only made me like my field of study more, but it allowed kids to learn more about something they probably did not know much about”. (Cecilia Garza).

Discussion

The field of neuroscience has experienced accelerated growth in recent years. Newly acquired neuroscientific knowledge has advanced the understanding of the biological processes that underlie human behavior, and created new avenues for the treatment, attenuation and prevention of various neuropathological conditions. The field of neuroscience impacts financial, pedagogical and legislative decisions, and has the potential to stimulate philosophical, moral and ethical debates. The accurate representation of neuroscientific methodologies, findings and implications is not always available to the public, and when conveyed via semi-scientific journals, concrete data can be misrepresented and thus misunderstood. For these reasons, programs which aim to improve neuroscientific comprehension and engagement in the general public are of value. Curricula which invite the community into the academic environment can be successful (e.g., science days, lab tours, etc.). However, outreach programs, which extend into the community setting, offer efficient, kid/family-friendly opportunities for public education. Libraries are open to individuals of various ages, backgrounds, needs and interests. They offer an informative as well as a social environment, and many aspire to design stimulating public-targeted programs.

The Hollidaysburg Area Public Library is among these libraries. It aims to attract attention, and create a steady stream of public visitation, by hosting various programs, clubs and interest groups. For instance, the library hosts the weekly meetings of the local Girl Scout troop, Canasta club, Knitting club, Lego club, etc. It offers classes designed to educate the community on subjects such as computer literacy, technology and taxes, art, music, health and science (engineering), and its personnel are always looking for new avenues to enrich the library’s monthly curriculum. These

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properties make the Hollidaysburg Area Public Library into a mutually engaged partner, which takes equal part in the design, organization and public dissemination of the program described above. Specifically, the content of the talks is decided based on public interest, dates are scheduled based on the library curricula, and material constraints are subjected to the library's safety concerns and regulations. The library personnel communicate with the public via various media channels (newspapers, webpage, Facebook), and thus increase public awareness of the program. On the other hand, SFU personnel (faculty and students) gain the opportunity to bring the neuroscience of fun out of the classroom. Students gain the opportunity to practice instructional skills, communication skills, organizational skills, and enrich their personal and professional development. Faculty gain the opportunity to increase public awareness and knowledge regarding neuroscientific principles, and support the recruitment efforts of their institution, and the public gains an opportunity to experience fun and exciting educational activities.

An analysis of testimonies collected thus far indicates that the partnership between the Department of Psychology at SFU and the Hollidaysburg Area Public Library is perceived as mutually beneficial. Both partners are enthusiastic about the program, are proud of its success, and are interested in the continuation and development of this partnership in the future. Both partners feel that they share responsibility for the design, marketing and implementation of the program, and the ability to work together towards a shared goal is a source of satisfaction between both parties. Moreover, the benefits to students involved in the program and to the public are clear. Student comments indicate that they perceive the program as enjoyable and engaging, and public comments indicate that the program succeeds in its goal of drawing interest and attention and is perceived as an appealing and unique opportunity to develop the entire family's interest in neuroscience.

It is important to mention, however, that among the limitations to the project is the current lack of evaluation of direct measures of community partner satisfaction, students' skill acquisition, and impact on public comprehension of neuroscientific data. It is recommended that future projects will employ valid surveys and questionnaires to assess the multimodal impact of the project on all parties involved, and its ability to reach its designated goals. It is also suggested that additional avenues for scientific outreach via community partnerships be explored.

Acknowledgements

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Measuring Expressions of Reciprocity in Institutional Resources of Service Learning

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As a fairly new service learning (SL) practitioner, I did what any inexperienced educator might do and went online to find resources on best practices. I knew that SL needed to be critically examined and implemented and was an “ethically tenuous territory” in which my students would struggle to explore (Jagla 74). I am not exempt from sometimes floundering in the “ethically tenuous territory” through my own community partnerships, especially as I am currently delving into my first, fully developed SL project partnering my first-year composition class and an eighth grade class. My community partner and I have made strides to incorporate best practices of SL since we first started our partnership a year ago. Cultivating reciprocal partnerships requires a lot of trial and error and acceptance of the limitations of myself and my community partnerships, which propels this study on examining expressions of reciprocity in SL resources: how can SL practitioners hope to improve upon their community partnerships if they are not properly trained to do so? As an advocate for SL practitioners, especially inexperienced ones, I am driven to continue finding ways to improve SL resources for both university and community partners. This study gives a booming voice to the silenced community partners that are not being consistently framed as co-creators of knowledge in a co-intentional education.

My search for best practices was disappointing, yet fruitful. The resources I had come upon from my online search were inconsistent, being both vague yet too prescriptive. My bewilderment of SL practice fostered my drive to study the resources, specifically SL handbooks, for their expressions of reciprocity and how they might contribute to disjointed implementation in the classroom. SL handbooks are lengthy documents that are locally authored and institution-backed, and are how-to manuals on SL development. They range from 15-70 pages and describe best practices, complete with vignettes and sample lesson plans. SL handbooks boast proficiency; however, the practice is still problematic by often positioning university partners as the knowledge givers, and community partners as knowledge receivers (d’Arlach et al. 6). Consequently, dangerous power imbalances manifest when community voice is marginalized, not prioritized (Flower and Heath 43), suggesting that current SL design is problematic, and functions as obstacles to community voice by failing to cultivate self-awareness and critical consciousness. Analyzing SL handbooks for their expressions of reciprocity informs the practice of implementing reciprocity in SL classrooms. This study holds resources accountable for modeling appropriate and robust strategies for the SL practitioner.

Considering that SL handbooks may be the only resource instructors use to design, the purpose of this small corpus study is to examine how reciprocity is expressed in SL handbooks. The theoretical framework that informs this study is Paulo Freire’s critical pedagogy, which suggests politics and education are intertwined, and “co-intentional education” frames the relationship between university and community partners as co-creators of knowledge (69).

What Does Reciprocity Look Like?

Reciprocity, where partners share “authority in and responsibility for knowledge creation,” is a major tenet in SL pedagogy (Harrison & Clayton 31). However, expressions of reciprocity vary in SL classrooms, suggesting that expressions of reciprocity also vary in the resources made for SL design (Dostilio et al. 18).

SL research has demonstrated reciprocity in a variety of ways. Rosenberg argues that an integral part of building reciprocal partnerships is engaging difficulty (66). The power relations between university and community partners are “fluid, unstable, and constantly changing” (Rosenberg 66). Therefore, we must be mindful of our roles as SL practitioners and explicitly guide stakeholders by shifting and redefining our methods to further cultivate meaningful partnerships.

Furthermore, in their reflective essay on community writing and sustainability, Cella et al. argue that “relationships must come before projects” (41). Additionally, Cushman advocates for SL initiatives that actively involve the researcher and instructor by conducting informal interviews with the community to ensure that goals are consistent with the community’s, and by regular interactions between undergraduates and community youths (43). The need for a “consistent, reliable presence of university representatives” in the community was paramount to the quality of the interactions and future projects (Cushman 57).

ESSAYS—CONTINUED

Furthermore, d’Arlach et al. studies the “recipients of service” through qualitative interviews with nine community members who participated in a mutual language exchange program (5). Results showed “cliquey” behavior by university partners suggested to community members that the university partners did not take the program seriously and participated merely because it was required (13). However, community partners found the reflective practices about the “cliquey” behavior empowering and humanizing, providing them a voice of influence. This form of reflection and strategies described above helps to ensure community voice and reciprocity by making sure the community partners do not undergo an experience through SL that resembles a “hit and run” (Bickford & Reynolds 234).

Measuring Reciprocity in Service Learning Handbooks

The eight SL handbooks in this study are PDFs, open access, and from four different types of institutions: Community Colleges (CC), Private Research Universities (PRR), Private Liberal Arts Colleges (PRLA), and Public Research Universities (PUR) (see Table 1). This corpus was a convenience sample of the first SL handbook that appeared from a Google search of “Community College Service Learning Handbook,” and so on. I chose to find two SL handbooks from four different types of institutions for greater variety, and all are from the continental US. Reflecting back on the narrative that began this essay, the convenience sample models the process that inexperienced SL practitioners would use to find open access resources online.

Using Ant Conc, an open access concordance program, I converted all eight SL handbooks into TXT files and used Ant Conc to measure expressions of reciprocity by locating:

1. Word occurrences of “Reciproc*” and “Community Partner*”
2. Reflection practices that problematize the relationship between university and community partners
3. Explicit sections that promote reciprocity

I conducted a critical discourse analysis of the small corpus to locate reciprocity expressed in three different ways as explained above. Critical discourse analysis of a small corpus, using the critical pedagogy framework, unveils the inconsistencies and injustices about language on a wider scale (Wodak and Meyer 157), which best serves this study’s purpose of locating the discrepancies of expressions of reciprocity, an agent of cultivating co-creating partnerships.

Words that Describe Reciprocal Partnerships

The table below shows the instances of “reciproc*” and “community partner*,” which is not an exhaustive list of words that determine if reciprocal partnerships are achieved. However, the instances of those words and their variations (e.g. reciprocity, reciprocal, community partner, community partnership(s), community partnering, etc.) help determine the overall tone of each handbook. If, for example, “reciproc*” occurs two times in one handbook and 10 times in another, the handbook that has 10 instances is more likely to express it thoroughly.

Table 1: Key of Institution Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Institution	Abbreviation	Institution
CC1	Community College 1	PRLA1	Private Liberal Arts College 1
CC2	Community College 2	PRLA2	Private Liberal Arts College 2
PRR1	Private Research University 1	PUR1	Public Research University 1
PRR2	Private Research University 2	PUR2	Public Research University 2

ESSAYS—CONTINUED

Table 2: Occurrences of Words that Describe Reciprocal Partnerships

Institution	#Pages/#Words	Instances of "Reciproc*"	% of "Reciproc*"	Instances of "Community Partner*"	% of "Community Partner*"
CC1	30/12,649	0	0.00%	8	0.06%
CC2	56/14,435	2	0.01%	8	0.05%
PRR1	40/8,615	1	0.01%	12	0.14%
PRR2	15/3,241	3	0.09%	7	0.22%
PRLA1	66/20,924	4	0.02%	61	0.29%
PRLA2	74/20,896	2	0.01%	70	0.33%
PUR1	31/12,174	2	0.02%	31	0.25%
PUR2	86/23,054	11	0.05%	136	0.59%

The following are concordance plots to show where these words are positioned in the handbooks, and what that suggests about positionality and importance. *Instances of "Reciproc*"*

HIT FILE: 1 FILE: PRR1.txt



No. of Hits = 1

File Length (in chars) = 66543

HIT FILE: 2 FILE: PRR2.txt



No. of Hits = 3

File Length (in chars) = 23877

HIT FILE: 3 FILE: PUR1.txt



No. of Hits = 2

File Length (in chars) = 82768

HIT FILE: 4 FILE: PRLA2.txt



No. of Hits = 2

File Length (in chars) = 148719

HIT FILE: 2 FILE: CC2.txt



No. of Hits = 2

File Length (in chars) = 101950

ESSAYS—CONTINUED

There is one instance of “reciproc*” in PRR1, and 11 instances in PUR2. Also, consider the placement: the one instance in PRR1 occurs in the last third of the handbook, and the 11 instances in PUR2 occur most dramatically in the first third. Typically, concepts that are taught first in a classroom help form the foundation for the rest of the class term. Placing heavier emphasis in the first third of the handbook suggests that PUR2 values reciprocity and intends that concept to be fully comprehended by both instructors and students before the service component.

Instances of “Community Partner”*

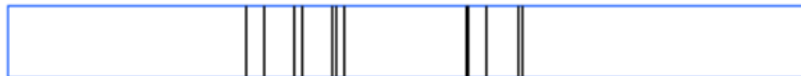
HIT FILE: 2 FILE: CC2.txt



No. of Hits = 8

File Length (in chars) = 101950

HIT FILE: 1 FILE: PRR1.txt



No. of Hits = 12

File Length (in chars) = 66543

HIT FILE: 2 FILE: PRR2.txt



No. of Hits = 7

File Length (in chars) = 23877

HIT FILE: 3 FILE: PRLA1.txt



No. of Hits = 61

File Length (in chars) = 139478

HIT FILE: 4 FILE: PRLA2.txt



No. of Hits = 70

File Length (in chars) = 148719

HIT FILE: 3 FILE: PUR1.txt



No. of Hits = 31

File Length (in chars) = 82768

HIT FILE: 4 FILE: PUR2.txt



No. of Hits = 136

File Length (in chars) = 159234

HIT FILE: 1 FILE: CC1.txt



No. of Hits = 8

File Length (in chars) = 77372

ESSAYS—CONTINUED

Again, PUR2 has the most instances with a total of 136 instances of “community partner*” whereas PRR2 has only seven instances. Most of the handbooks mention “community partner*” within the first third of the handbook, suggesting that working with a community partner is understood as a high priority. However, PRR1 and PUR1 have no instances until the very edge of the first part. There is a slight absence in the very beginning, suggesting that working with and co-creating knowledge with community partners is also absent in the beginning. The sections on reflective practices and co-creating knowledge will be more described in detail below.

Reflective Practices (Fail to) Problematize Partnerships

The following three examples are sample questions outlined by three handbooks from different types of institutions: CC2, PRLA1, and PRR1. When evaluating reflective practices, the higher rated ones stimulate critical thought on the social, reciprocal, and logistical challenges working with an underserved community through open ended and follow up questions. This section and the section on explicit sections of reciprocity help to contextualize the quantitative data of word instances.

CC2: What do you think will be the most valuable service you can offer at your site? How do others view you at your service site? Has this perception changed over time? If you were the supervisor of your service site, what would you identify [as the most difficult aspect of your service experience] and how would you attempt to solve it? **Have you changed any of your attitudes or opinions about the people with whom you have worked?** What would you change about your service assignment that would make it **more meaningful for you or other service-learning students?** How **effective did you judge** your service to be? [my emphasis]

CC2 adequately addresses the social issues that arise between university and community partners; however, there is no follow up when asking about evolving perceptions and attitudes toward each other. Additionally, they are phrased as closed ended questions, suggesting that further reflection is neither required or prioritized. Second, the student is asked what they would change about the service assignment to make it more meaningful for the student and other students. There is no mention of how the community partners could have a more meaningful experience. Last, the effectiveness question presumes the service was effective. There is no prompt to ask if students thought their service was effective or ineffective. Questions like these presume the service work is going to be a success at the very least.

PRLA1: Think back to your interactions with the child you are working with in the classroom or a child you have observed. Identify and describe specific examples of the cultural traits in oral communication you have seen. Now that you have a better understanding and awareness of that communication behavior, **how might you respond or engage** in an oral communication exchange with someone of that cultural or ethnic group in the future? What was your behavior or interpretation of a similar situation in the past? How do you think an individual from a different cultural or ethnic group feels when they are orally communicating with a **dominant group?** How would you feel if the situation was reversed and you were the **minority** attempting to communicate with others? [my emphasis]

Right away, PRLA1’s sample prompts help stimulate discussion about the cultural and social issues by suggesting that communication styles may differ depending on culture. The prompts ask students to reflect on past experiences working with this demographic or another demographic different from the student’s, and hopes to promote empathy by placing the student in another person’s perspective.

PRR1: What do you **expect will be the impact** on the service recipients of this service activity? What do you think about the population being served by this activity? Do you think the **service recipients are benefiting** from this service? Was the community problem addressed through your service? How have your views about the population served changed? **Did you benefit** from participation in this service activity? [my emphasis]

PRR1’s sample questions revolve around the server-served mentality that plagues SL pedagogy. Right away the community partners are referred to as “service recipients” and those that are “served” rather than partners and co-creators. The struggle with these sample questions is that the questions are asking what is needed to be asked: impact level on community, social issues, and evolving perceptions. However, these questions are all framed around the concept that university partners serve and community partners are served.

ESSAYS—CONTINUED

Co-Creating Knowledge

The following three examples are sections highlighting the reciprocal co-creating knowledge partnerships from three different types of institutions: PRR2, PRLA2, and PUR1. When evaluating sections of co-creating knowledge partnerships, the highly rated ones demonstrate explicit parameters of what constitutes equitable partnerships. Unlike reflective practices, which are implicit, these sections are explicit in (not) promoting reciprocity.

PRR2: Community partners provide organizational orientation and training for the position, providing a clear understanding of what is expected of the students. The site supervisor will guide and evaluate the students, and **may be asked** to provide a brief evaluation at the conclusion of the service. [my emphasis]

PRR2 suggests a lack of partnership with community members due to the phrase “may be asked to provide a brief evaluation.” Partners create, implement, and evaluate together. If community partners are relegated to a contingent or optional role, there is no partnership.

PRLA2: Keep in mind that the community and the clientele are not a teaching or research laboratory. The notion of **community as laboratory assumes a false hierarchy of power** and perpetuates an attitude of institutional superiority. Basic goals of service learning include community development and empowerment. For these goals to be realized, faculty and community must be **equal partners and view themselves as co-educators**. [my emphasis]

PRLA2 is explicit in its call to treat university and community members as equal partners. This section describes the consequences of treating community partners as anything but partners, and reminds readers the purpose of SL.

PUR1: **Once you have identified an authentic need**, you must work collaboratively with the community partner to determine how your students can meet this need. [my emphasis]

PUR1 positions community partners as partners only after identifying an authentic need rather than co-creators at the very beginning. Authentic community needs are identified with community partners, not before the collaboration. This section forgoes the collaboration and instead, positions the university partners as actors of privilege and power “fixing” a problem they have identified within a community, further reinforcing the server-served mentality.

SL handbooks are confusing, inconsistent, and insufficient. As a whole, they do not prioritize community voice. What does this mean for (in)experienced instructors or instructors who, as Cushman argues, are “overworked, transitory, and underpaid” and are not provided enough time, resources, or funding to create in-depth SL experiences for their students and community partners (50)? Due to this inconsistency with SL handbooks, reciprocal partnerships are not always being achieved, reducing the SL experience to disjointed interactions that should be assets in strengthening communities, promoting civic engagement, and empowering all stakeholders in uncharted learning potential.

Action Items for the Service Learning Classroom

Since SL handbooks range from helpful to hurtful, I have compiled a short list of takeaways in no specific order that will help me stay consistent as an advocate for reciprocal partnerships, providing commentary as it applies to my current SL partnership.

1. Dialogue: Talk with your community partner. Develop a rapport and mutually agreed upon expectations.

Nicole (name changed) is my community partner in the SL project partnering my university students and her middle school students. I made a focused effort in getting to know her because good partnerships need good chemistry.

2. Define Relationship: Set expectations for which goals each partner will fulfill during the service learning project.

ESSAYS—CONTINUED

Nicole and I set boundaries for what was expected of each other once we identified an authentic community need. She is more big picture (concepts and themes), and I'm more little picture (logistics).

3. Address Authentic Needs: Authentic needs should come from the community. University partners shouldn't impose solutions to perceived problems.

Nicole and I had weekly meetings where we talked about her middle school students and what they needed most in life. We also discussed the general demographic of my students (they change each semester). A partnership between my students with their advanced research skills, and her students with their budding SL projects would be the best fit.

4. Make Timeline: A flexible and attainable timeline should be created collaboratively by both university and community partners.

Since Nicole and I met each week, we made sure to check in to ensure that tasks got checked off, expectations met, and open communication continued.

5. Assess Together: Community partners should be a part of the design, teaching, and assessment process. Community voice should be heard.

We would discuss the strengths and weakness of every interaction between the middle school and university students. We constantly thought about how our students could be more supported. How could we tweak the next lesson plans to address those concerns?

6. Reflect on Relationship: Is your relationship with your community partner working? How could it be improved to better promote community voice?

Since I'll be teaching at my institution for the next four years, we made a commitment to continue SL projects between our two groups of students as long as it was helpful and made sense for each of our groups of students' personality and intentions.

Plans for Further Service Learning Research

As a SL researcher, I am always looking for more effective ways to approach reciprocity in SL classrooms as well as shed light on factors that prevent (in)experienced instructors from successfully cultivating reciprocal partnerships. I plan to examine the following research questions:

- How does an institution's service learning handbook change depending on its institution's evolving social context?
- How are institutional mission statements reflected in service learning handbooks?
- Based on instructors' interpretation of service learning handbooks, how is reciprocity applied in the curriculum?

“Ethically Tenuous Territory” Needs More Exploration

SL is an “ethically tenuous territory” that deserves critical attention (Jagla 74). This small corpus study has shown that SL handbooks are inconsistent. Gee believes “the fact that people have differential access to different identities and practices, connected to different sorts of status and social goods, is a root source of inequality in society” (30). By helping to ensure the collaborations between university and community partners are co-intentional, despite differentiated funding, opportunities, and departmental backing, we can try to make navigating the “ethically tenuous territory” of SL more explicit, equitable, and reciprocal.

ESSAYS— CONTINUED

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ESSAYS—CONTINUED

Learning the Liberal Arts through Service: Service Learning in General Education Humanities Courses

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Overview

Relentless about pursuing his education, Thomas Hardy's eponymous hero in *Jude the Obscure* conjures up a way to study the dictionary while driving a cart selling baked goods, "fixing open" the book "by means of a strap attached to the tilt" (Hardy, 1999, p. 28). In the introductory Humanities courses for non-majors I teach at Boston University, I try to encourage my students to become more like Jude, who insists on *living* the life of the mind.

Since many of my students enter the course skeptical about whether the Humanities play an important role in their own lives—or an important role in society—I often make this one of our central course questions: what role(s) do the Humanities play in society? This question helps to give the survey course I teach—on literature from the nineteenth century to the present with art history and film components—a more cohesive theme. During the first half of the semester, students study how audiences have responded to works of Humanities at different moments in history, and how this changes over time. As students approach the course's conclusion, the service-learning projects—which allow them to put the texts discussed in class in a real-world situation—give them an opportunity to reflect on how audiences today respond to works of Humanities. In their feedback about the assignment, students explain the ways that the project "opened [their] eyes to how far the Humanities reach." I will share how the service-learning project and related written reflection contributes to opening students' eyes about the value of the Humanities.

While there are many helpful definitions of service learning, I use the definition recently put forth by Laurie Grobman and Roberta Rosenberg: "service learning is a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service, in many and diverse forms, with classroom instruction, textual study, literary theory, student writing, and reflection" (Grobman and Rosenberg 1). Although in the past, service learning has been more common in professional and occupational fields, I agree with Scott Seider and Jason Taylor that service learning "can play an equal role, and perhaps even a larger one, in humanistic disciplines ... In order to thrive, these fields need to demonstrate their relevance to a new generation of young adults, and community service learning represents an important vehicle for doing so" (Seider and Taylor 211). The recent work by Grobman and Rosenberg, as well as by Kristin Lucas and Pavlina Radia, offer insight into the value of service learning in the Humanities, explaining why service learning is gaining traction specifically in English studies.

Overview of Assigned Projects

In my courses at Boston University, I give students a choice of several service-learning projects, which they can choose based on their interests and schedules. In the Spring 2017 semester, they participated in the Prison Book Program; led a discussion of Dickens at Hale House, a nonprofit nursing home in Boston; and facilitated a discussion of Impressionist Art at the Boston Public Library's Adult ESL Conversation Circle.

At the Prison Book Program, which sends books to people in prisons across the United States, students read letters from prisoners, select books from the program's book room that best match the prisoners' requests, and package the books to send. Some prisoners request works by classic authors covered in class such as Dickens or Melville. Others ask for popular fiction and religious books; many request educational materials, self-help and how-to books, and dictionaries. My students pointed out that the prisoners seemed to rely on books not just for entertainment but for "survival" because it was often their only contact with the outside world. Many of the students remarked on how this made them realize that they take books for granted.

For the Dickens discussion at Hale House, my students brainstormed topics that might appeal to the diverse population of residents, in consultation with the nursing home's Activities Director and with me. After deciding on the topic of "Dickens," my students developed discussion questions and ideas from our course lectures and discussions to share with the residents, and I served as the liaison between the students and the nursing home's Activities Director. On the day of the discussion, we met in the living room of the home, and the ten residents and ten students sat in a large circle. My students asked the residents if they were familiar with Dickens; what they remember learning about Dickens;

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and in what ways they had encountered his work.

Many of my students were surprised that everyone was familiar with Dickens and still thought he was very important, including one resident who remembered reading *Great Expectations* sixty years ago, and another resident who immediately quoted lines from *Oliver Twist*. The students shared material they had learned from the course such as Dickens's critique of rote learning and his depiction of industrialization in *Hard Times*. The students then asked the residents why they thought Dickens's legacy is so strong today. One resident, for example, explained how she grew up in poverty and argued that Dickens' depiction of the tough circumstances of his working-class characters can be considered universally relatable.

Since the Humanities course I teach incorporates an art history component, another group was assigned to lead a discussion of Impressionist Art at the Adult ESL Conversation Circle at the Boston Public Library. In preparation for the discussion, the ten students decided to divide themselves into pairs; each pair prepared a slide that contained one Impressionist painting along with information about the painting as well as a description of what appealed to each student personally about it. At the Boston Public Library discussion, they presented paintings such as Claude Monet's "Impression, Sunrise" and Auguste Renoir's "Dance at Le Moulin de la Galette" and then broke off into smaller groups for further discussion. For Renoir's painting, for example, the Humanities students gave some biographical background on Renoir and analyzed his style, but also commented on how the depiction of people socializing made them feel happy. This opened up a discussion in which many of the participants shared what emotions the paintings evoked for them. In the last portion of the program, the students and participants from countries such as China and Thailand came together as a large group and discussed how the study of art—and the Humanities more generally—is under debate.

Past projects have included discussions of Langston Hughes or the literature of war at nursing homes in Boston; screenings and conversations about American films such as "The Searchers" and the Western genre with international students; and workshops for youth at 826 Boston and Boston Public Schools.

Simple Logistics

The image of Jude reading a book while driving a cart is inspiring as well as simple. One of the most important features of the service-learning projects I assign is the simplicity of the logistics. Unlike other service-learning projects, this assignment requires that students make a one-time visit to their project site. Because of this, I have found that the project can be portable. I have modified it for a variety of classes since 2009, including the gateway course to the English major, a World Literature course, and an introductory poetry course.

Before the project begins, I facilitate a discussion of the differences between "community service" and "service learning." The project has straightforward requirements: 1) Participate with a group in one of the service projects, 2) Report back to the rest of the class—through a film or group presentation—on the experience of doing the service project, and 3) Write a reflection relating the experience to course content and class discussions.

In the process of developing these projects with a one-time site visit, I have found that it is important for me to build ongoing partnerships with organizations. Even though I only send one group of students to an organization one time in any semester, I have developed a continuous relationship with the organizations and grow increasingly aware of what we can do to benefit them. I often invite successful students from previous classes to come talk to my current students about what has worked well in the past and to further inform them about the population of people with which they will be partnering. Some of my former students have continued visiting the programs in which they participated.

Student Reflection

Through their written reflections, I witness students' realization that their own education, like Jude's, extends beyond the walls of our classroom. In my assessment, I paid particular attention to the ways students gained a more in-depth understanding of the course material and the ways that these non-majors acquired more insight into the value of the Humanities. Although initially I thought I would assess these two areas separately, what I noticed in the written reflections was that students' understanding of course material was closely linked to developing a more in-depth understanding of the value of Humanities. Gaining a deeper understanding of Humanities' value paved the way for a more nuanced understanding of course themes and texts.

I observed a deepened understanding of course themes and texts in students' reflection papers. Participants in the Pris-

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on Book Program gained more understanding of the roles that literature plays in our society—something we had been discussing all semester. One student commented that through the project, he “could see the purpose of Humanities (to raise awareness, to distract, to delight, to teach) being put into action.” Students made insightful connections to specific course texts—including poetry ranging from Phillis Wheatley to William Wordsworth—and often incorporated quotations and ideas with more ease than in previous writing assignments. Many student participants in the Dickens project connected the discussion to Dickens’s exploration of education in *Hard Times*, especially after hearing some of the residents discuss their own education in terms of rote learning. Through the discussion of Dickens, students came away with a fuller understanding of his influence. “This opportunity to get out of the classroom,” a student writes, “and hear about the impact Dickens had on people’s lives decades ago and compare it to the way Dickens is impacting students’ lives today was an incredible experience.”

In addition to the more in-depth understanding of course themes and texts—as well as an understanding of the value of the Humanities—students gained insight into their own privilege. For the Prison Book Program group, many of the students were struck by how the prisoners, who “don’t get the luxury of having a library filled with books and have a very limited exposure to literature” were so excited to get just one book, reminding them of their own privilege as students with unlimited access to university libraries as well as the Internet. “Reading letters from the prisoners,” one student writes, “really showed me the true value of literature in people’s lives.” Other comments reflected this realization about privilege, such as “working with the Prison Book Program made me look at books and literature as a privilege” and “it was only when I read these letters that I was able to understand how important it is to have access to literature. I take this for granted because my access is almost limitless.”

At a time when many students enter a Humanities survey course with skepticism about how this material relates to their academic, professional, and personal lives, these projects help them leave with a sense of how others have depended on the Humanities in their lifelong learning. They begin to understand how a liberal arts education contributes to their education as individuals in society. When I read the students’ reflection papers, they remind me how the Humanities can bring together people of different generations, classes, races, genders, sexualities, and nationalities. Ultimately the projects help students realize the connections between the required Humanities general education course and their own lives. These experiences remind my students that there exists no barrier between their studies on campus and the learning that happens—like Jude’s—outside of university walls.

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