Making Diversity Tangible:
Assessing the Role of Service-Learning in Teaching Diversity & Social Justice

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Abstract

There is a growing need for students to be able to work within diverse environments, yet there is little evidence to suggest that they are more prepared or ethically grounded to work with diverse populations, specifically protected groups. This study examines a course that was designed to specifically to prepare student to lead in diverse work environments by examining issues of diversity and social justice. A service-learning pedagogy was used to help link critical in-class discussions and course content to the lived experiences of the protect groups by working in the community. Findings suggest that the service-learning is an important component to increasing awareness and understanding of diversity and social justice. Suggestions for improving similar courses are provided.

INTRODUCTION

As a result of an increasingly globalized and interconnected world, college students need to be prepared to work in diverse environments and with diverse populations. With the expanding availability of information, it is assumed that there has been an increase in student awareness of social justice issues facing certain social groups such as race, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability, religion, economic class, age, political affiliation, and veteran status; yet, there are no indications that students are indeed more aware or ethically grounded in working with diverse populations or issues related to social injustice (Katz & Ryan, 2010).

The course being investigated in this study was initially designed to help link diversity to civic engagement, and thus prepare students to work as agents for social justice. Learning objectives for the class focused on raising awareness of the students about understanding diverse populations while preparing them to be able to work and to lead in environments that are supportive of diverse groups. The course operated from a perspective that diversity extends the effort of affirmative action which brings equality and equity to historically discriminated groups (Regents of the University of California v. Bakke, 1978). Whereas affirmative action recognizes these groups as legally configured categories of citizens, diversity recognizes the deeper differences of those groups and the reality that most U.S. citizenry can be represented by the classification of "protected class" (Peterson, 1999). Protected classes are then given protection by either federal law or presidential executive order, with the exception of sexual orientation which is not protected by federal legislation. Specifically, this course approached diversity as the equitable access and provision of resources to protected groups of people (including sexual orientation); equity is at the heart of the historical critique and social action of social justice (Allison, 2000). Equitable access and provision are fundamental rights as a citizen and human being, and the involvement of conscious instructors ought to be in aiding students in their understanding this right (Bartolomé, 1996). Consequently, the course involved critical dialogue during class and individual discussions, readings that elucidated perspectives to provoke critical thought, and experiences that gave students the opportunity to navigate lived experiences and realities of some of the groups discussed (Katz & Ryan, 2010).

A service-learning pedagogy with a civic engagement orientation was integrated into the course in order to provide experience and direct contact with diverse populations that represent some protected classes (Colby, Beaumont, Ehrlich & Corngold, 2007; Darder, Baltdano, & Torres, 2003; Meiners, 2004; Prentice, 2007). According to Banks (2004), "when we teach students how to critique the injustice in the world, we should help them to formulate possibilities for action to change the world to make it more democratic and just" (p. 291). Connecting diversity discussions with service-learning experiences can become an "important way to create such experiences [of negotiating dialogue across difference], since it asks participants to forge communicative and collaborative relationships in pursuit of shared goals" (Jay, 2008, p. 257). However, it remains unclear if a service-learning strategy strengthens students' understanding of course content, assists in the achievement of the learning objectives related to diversity and social justice, or if service-learning experiences better prepare them to operate in diverse environments. The importance of students understanding the ideas of diversity and social justice is underscored by Castinia (2006) who stated that a better understanding can prepare us to "eliminate discrimination from our personal and professional

lives, learn to be in more authentic relationships with members of other groups, and ensure that we are inclusive, rather than exclusive in all that we do" (p.1).

Purpose and Research Questions

To make diversity an applied practice, service-learning has been integrated into the course and this study attempts to assess the impact and relevance of the service-learning experience in teaching and learning diversity and social justice. The questions being asked are:

- What are the changes in student attitudes towards diversity and social justice?
- Does the service-learning component help achieve the learning objectives of raising awareness of students on the matter of understanding diverse populations while preparing them to be able to work and lead in environments that are supportive of diverse groups?
- What recommendations can be made to improve the student learning experience when teaching diversity and social justice?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The importance of preparing students for working with diverse populations has become more apparent as calls from academics, practitioners, and government officials have increased. Banks (2004) advised that, "[c]itizens in this century need the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to function in their cultural communities and beyond their cultural borders" (p. 292). In this regard, service-learning is a pedagogy that is well suited for achieving the goals of civic engagement and social justice for communities, in addition to academic and personal development goals. Further, service-learning creates an appropriate context for the development of cognitive capacities required for problem solving and critical analysis of complex social issues (Eyler, 2002).

By nature of the pedagogical practice, service-learning involves students being exposed to different populations in the community in which there is cross-cultural interaction. More recently, there have been service-learning courses developed with the focused attention of teaching diversity, social justice, and developing awareness of working in diverse environments. For example, service-learning and experience-based learning have been used in health education (e.g. Flannery & Ward, 1999) and teaching programs (e.g. Banks et al. 2001; Bell, Horn, & Roxas, 2007; Hill-Jackson, Sewell, & Waters, 2007) to help prepare students who will go on to work with diverse populations in their respective fields. The notion of diversity continues to be subjective and complex, includes both individual and group differences, and extends to also reflect the value placed on these differences. These different values can subsequently create varied realities, many of which are

identified by the protected classes that exist in the U.S. In this regard, social justice refers to the notion of moving towards equality, fairness, and support of diversity among protected classes (Lakey, Lakey, Napier, & Robinson, 1995, as cited in Warren, 1998). However, learning about the issues of power, oppression, and social justice, as they connect to diversity, can be overwhelming for U.S. students – suggesting that great care should be taken when selecting appropriate pedagogical methods for teaching diversity and social justice.

Research has shown that service-learning experiences with students working in environments with individuals different from their own background can have a number of effects on students; for example, service-learning experiences may increase awareness towards social justice/injustice issues (Moely, Mercer, Ilustre, Miron, & McFarland, 2002; Simons et al., 2012); increase awareness of racism or racial/white privilege (Kernahan & Davis, 2007; Simons et al., 2012); lower measures on the modern racism scale (Myers-Lipton, 1996); challenge assumptions or reduce prejudices of ethnic and racial differences (Brody & Wright, 2004; Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997; Quaye & Harper, 2007; Simons et al., 2012); improve multicultural attitudes (Simons et al., 2012); and strengthen commitment to social justice (Sax & Astin, 1997). Service participation gives students the ability to understand and recognize the slow, complex process of social change. It also allows them an opportunity to compare their own personal experiences with those experiences of members of discriminated groups. .

However, not all attitudes are positively changed, and further, service-learning experiences can reinforce preconceived notions towards issues of diversity and social justice. Baldwin, Buchanan, and Rudisill (2007) and Dunlap, Scoggin, Green, and Davi (2007), both found that stereotypical attitudes and beliefs were retained in some circumstances. Similarly, it has been noted that service-learning often operates from a deficit model where students see themselves as providing a good service to those in need. As such, some have suggested that the "current models of service-learning reinforce the idea of privilege and power within our society and sustain the hegemonic power of the elite" (Hess, Lanig, & Vaughan, 2007, p. 33; also see Rosenberger, 2000; O'Grady, 2000). This is particularly important when working with protected groups; "…when members of a marginalized community serve as text, teachers, students, and collaborators in a course that espouses social justice, the instructor must facilitate relationships that do not reinforce existent societal constructs based on inequity and Othering" (Tilley-Lubbs, 2009, p. 75).

In order for a service-learning pedagogy to be effective in the process of understanding diversity and social justice, it is important to connect the service experience to the academic and reflective aspects of service-learning (Eyler, 2002). Interaction with diverse groups, along with time spent to reflect on those experiences, can be a continuous transformative process (Baldwin et al., 2007; Ey-

ler, 2002; Sperling, 2007). However, instructors should be cautious in expecting transformation from students, or outwardly suggesting changes in attitude will be an outcome of the experience, as students may continue the pattern of writing and saying what they think the instructors want to hear (Tilley-Lubbs, 2009).

Further, changes in preconceived stereotypes may only happen after there is connection between the experience and course content (Bell et al., 2007; Hill-Jackson et al., 2007). Material used as course content should be selected and organized with care and purpose, and further, "the teacher does not need just to know the contents but also to know how to teach the contents. To know the history of the content and not exclusively the content" (Horton & Freire, 1990, p. 108). Courses that focus on issues of diversity, social justice, or multicultural awareness have the opportunity to break down deep-seated attitudes and beliefs about differences in society (Dunlap, 1998; Green, 2001).

Course Description

The course under study was an eight-week, three credit hour, 300-level under-graduate class situated within the Department of Recreation, Park, and Tourism Studies at Indiana University Bloomington. Parks and recreation programs across the U.S. are generally accredited professional programs through the Council for Accreditation of Parks, Recreation, Tourism, and Related Professions (COAPRT), which aims to prepare students for providing recreation and leisure services within the public, private, or not-for-profit sectors. Because of the service nature of the field, learning and understanding the notion of diversity is imperative. However, as reflected in unpublished enrollment documents, the course also attracts many non-majors as the enrollment has averaged 50 students per offering with recreation and leisure students representing only 5% of those enrolled.

The course aims to heighten the awareness of the student by introducing relevant background information on each protected class and the issues that the class encounters. With an emphasis on how policy is developed and implemented, as well as incorporated into organizations' practices, the course aims to raise awareness that organizational responses to diversity should move away from celebratory festivities such as "ethnic potlucks," t-shirts with slogans, or calendar days devoted to learning about another culture or group, towards more impactful solutions.

Course Learning Outcomes

The course consists of both global and unit specific learning outcomes. According to the course syllabus, the global learning outcomes include: 1) Developing an understanding of the variety of definitions and theories of both diversity and leadership, and the benefits and issues that are associated with both terms; and 2) Developing an understanding of how social interaction and the existence

of 'difference' impacts the relationship between a student and others, and the role that this understanding can play in the development of ethical leadership. The unit specific learning outcomes include: 1) Delineating the definitions used in describing each of the nine protected class that efforts in diversity should seek to empower or support; 2) Developing a model diversity plan (policy, procedure, or curricula); 3) Developing a concrete understanding of how an effective leader can foster and nurture an environment of diversity for the ideal purpose of achieving individual and group potential; and 4) Developing an ability to examine and evaluate the extent of diversity in an agency, and the issues that impact the extent of diversity in an agency.

Service-Learning Component & Agency Descriptions

This course required 10-hours of service-learning at pre-determined sites. In keeping the needs of the field and the students in mind, service-learning offers a pedagogical approach that could assist the field of leisure studies/recreation in being more reflective in working with diverse populations with practically-based activities of direct contact as opposed to theoretically discussed case studies (Allison, 2000; Gladwell & Stone, 2005; Glancy, Henderson, & Love, 1999). Working with an agency can assist students in realizing the complexities of issues that diverse groups encounter and the process of negotiation in seeking employment and advancement, requesting services and access, or having some semblance of quality of life (Fine, Roberts & Torre, 2004; Prentice, 2007).

Direct contact with service populations is vital to have cross-class (with protected classes) interaction with adults different than the background of the students enrolled in the course. According to Brody and Wright (2004), student placements should include social interaction because these experiences would more likely bring about self-expansion, which is in part a goal of creating deeper understanding. Additionally, interaction with adults rather than children will challenge students to engage in dialogue that inhibits the apparent superiority with a younger and less knowledgeable or experienced individual and offer learning situations rather than problem solving (Jay, 2008).

According to the Campus Connect 2012Annual Member Survey,, "Housing/homelessness" and "multiculturalism/diversity" have been among the top 10 issues addressed through student service on member campuses between 2008 and2012 (Campus Compact, 2013). With this in mind, service-learning enables learning "about the social forces that produce and sustain poverty, illiteracy, discrimination, and injustice" with the action of civic engagement (Herzberg, 1994, p. 309). The three agencies selected for inclusion can be described as follows:

1. Agency A provides affordable childcare, basic needs, and emergency needs assistance for residents in the community. Students at this agency worked in with the childcare facility that provides subsidized daily child-

care, or the students worked in the emergency services where they assisted in sorting and distributing non-perishable food items to individuals in need. In 2012, the federal poverty guidelines used to determine eligibility for government assistance programs was $19,090 for a family of three and $23,050 for a family of four (*U.S. Department of Health and Human Services*, 2012). Still, research from Kinsey Dinan (2009) of the National Center for Children in Poverty has shown that nearly double these amounts have traditionally been needed to cover the basic needs for a family.

2. Agency B strives to encourage self-education among those incarcerated with a philosophy towards rehabilitation rather than punishment. The organization serves as a book share program where volunteers receive book requests from prisoners and try to find books that match their request to send back along with a personalized letter. High rates of recidivism continue to plague the U.S. with almost two-thirds of all incarcerated individuals returning to prison within three years. McKean and Ransford (2004) of the Center for Impact Research have shown that increased attention to educational programs, as well as substance abuse treatment and employment service programs, is key to reducing recidivism in this disenfranchised group.

3. Agency C seeks to relieve the experience that homelessness brings to people of all backgrounds. This agency offers shelter, meals, financial assistance, and hygiene upkeep to families suffering from homelessness, and works to provide employment opportunities to those in a homelessness crisis. According to the National Alliance to End Homelessness (2012), 643,067 individuals experience homelessness each night, with the leading reason for homelessness being that people cannot find affordable housing. In January 2009, through a point-in-time homeless population count, there were 239 people experiencing homelessness within Bloomington, IN (174 in shelters and 59 unsheltered; Bloomington Department of Housing and Neighborhood Development, 2010).

To handle a course with an average enrollment of 50 students, partnership with three agencies was important to ensure that the activities could be completed during the course period with varying scheduled opportunities throughout a given week. For assessment purposes, activities were predetermined for students to engage within their selected agency (i.e. Soup Kitchen duty, food pantry stocking, prisoner correspondence).

Course Structure &Assessment

The course is structured in two parts with readings, lecture points, and course assessment techniques used to guide students through understanding the various protected classes (part one), followed by development of a practical diversity plan (part two). Assignments used for learning assessment included seven weekly reflective papers, "Diversity Reaction Writing Assignments," which included prompted questions that the students responded to with regard to their experiences at their agency. Additionally, the students were required to develop a cohesive diversity plan (policy, procedure, or curricula) for an agency, organization, or department. The plan was to include both theoretical and practical guidelines that could be provided to the selected agency or organization in order to promote greater diversity. It also had to include a philosophy of diversity, as well as concrete steps for implementation and evaluation.

In addition to the weekly reflective papers and diversity plan, at least one required one-on-one meeting between the instructor and student during the course was required. The meetings were to gauge the student's progress and cognitive processing of the student's experiences. Finally, a class focus group and reflective debrief was led by a facilitator from the Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning.

METHODS

Important to this study were the changes in attitudes of students who were participating in the course offering, particularly related to their attitudes towards issues of diversity and social justice. In order to examine the changes in student awareness of diversity and issues of social justice, the final reflection assignment (i.e. Diversity Reaction Paper #7) was qualitatively analyzed. In this final paper, among other questions, students were asked for examples of when they acknowledged a connection between course content and their experiences. They were also asked, 'What did you gain from the experience in regards to your understanding of diversity, social causes, managing agencies, or influence in your career plans/ purpose?'

Student selection was limited to those students enrolled in the second eight-week course in Fall, 2011. During the second week of classes, a researcher visited the class to introduce the study, collect consent forms, and explain the procedure. If the students volunteered to participate, their final course assignment was de-identified and provided a pseudonym for the purpose of discussion. The responses were thematically analyzed to focus on identifiable themes and patterns. Analysis was conducted independently among the researchers and then converged to identify overlapping findings.

DISCUSSION

Overall, 23 students were enrolled in the class during the time of this study, which is lower than the average enrollment rate for previous course offerings. Of those 23 students, 18 completed the final reflection paper used for qualitative analysis. Table 1 provides demographic information of the students who had papers analyzed for this study.

Table 1. Student Pseudonym and demographic information

	Gender	Name*	Grade Level
1	F	Amanda	Freshman
2	F	Beverly	Junior
3	M	Chris	Freshman
4	F	Diane	Senior
5	F	Emily	Junior
6	F	Fay	Senior
7	F	Gwen	Senior
8	M	Henry	Sophomore
9	M	Isaac	Senior
10	F	Julie	Junior
11	F	Kathryn	Senior
12	M	Luke	Junior
13	F	Mandy	Senior
14	M	Nelson	Senior
15	M	Owen	Freshman
16	M	Seo	Junior
17	F	Rachel	Sophomore
18	F	Tammy	Freshman

*Pseudonyms have been given to protect identity.

The researchers found evidence of how the service-learning experience, while linked to course content, had an impact on their attitude and awareness of diverse populations and social issues facing protected classes. The students' reflections of their experiences showed that their existing beliefs and assumptions towards the ideas of diversity and social justice were indeed challenged in a number of ways. The discussion will begin with a dialogue on the deeper understanding of diversity, followed by evidence of greater appreciation for social justice issues and expe-

riences of protected groups. Subsequently, additional examples that demonstrate the effect of the service-learning component on student learning will be provided. Finally, recommendations and suggestions for course structure and management in order to increase achievement of learning outcomes will be provided.

Diversity

Part of the course content is directed to help recognize and understand the complexity and multifaceted nature of diversity. Banks (2004) stated that, "citizens in this century need the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to function in their cultural communities and beyond their cultural borders" (p. 299). Further, Nussbaum (2002) posited that, "to be a citizen of the world one does not need to give up local identifications" (p. 2). It is hoped that students will be aware of the various types of group and individual differences, and how diversity can be understood as an accumulation of experiences created from these differences. The course was aimed at understanding difference in an institutional/agency setting thus finding similarities were never emphasized. In addition, past iterations of the course did discover the attention to "false" similarities that students attributed to the populations they worked with. This inhibited the students from seeing diversity in a broader context and the systemic issues that create the need for diversity and social equity. Thus, it is hoped that students find a deeper appreciation for these interactive experiences and how the experiences affect them.

The reflections showed that by the end of the course, most students' understanding of diversity had evolved and suggested a deeper understanding of the concept. At the start of the course, students saw diversity as being the simple differences in people, or "factors that make the human population different," as Beverly had originally expressed. By the end of the class, for example, another student, Henry, stated that he, "… noticed that diversity doesn't just mean race, sex, etc… it also means experiences in one's everyday life." Henry reflected on the idea that it is not only the differences between groups that matter, but how those differences create different experiences. Isaac said that his service-learning experience had shown him, "that poverty and hunger are experiences, not titles", and he now had a "deeper appreciation for what it means to be experiencing these horrible things".

Similarly, Gwen examined the experience of poverty while working at a homeless shelter: "I also felt poverty is a cyclical experience. Some of the people were attempting to gain employment but their lack of knowledge held them back" (Agency C). Instead of labeling the people they encountered, students began referring to the experience the people were having (i.e. the experience of poverty, homelessness, incarceration, unemployment, etc.). In shifting to an experience-based understanding of diversity, some students began to compare their experiences to what they were seeing. For example, Mandy said, "I grew up living a

privileged life and although I had seen hardships of others, I never really saw what issues some people face on a daily basis". From her time at Agency A where she worked in emergency services, she said she was able to see how others lived and acknowledged her own privileged life experiences.

Social Justice

Challenging Stereotypes. Many students had preconceived notions towards some of the social issues addressed in this course (i.e. homelessness, poverty, incarceration). Many of these attitudes subsist through group stereotypes. The interaction during the service-learning experience created a context in which the students could have their stereotypes challenged or reinforced. For example, Kathryn noted that she has in the past fallen victim to the mindset of "they deserve it," a common stereotype towards those incarcerated, but indicated that after spending her time writing to prisoners at Agency B, she became knowledgeable and frustrated with the injustice in the current prison system: "We incarcerate non-violent offenders for long periods of times; then releasing them with no tools to properly engage in society upon their release," (Kathryn). Nelson, who also spent time replying to prisoners book requests, had many of his preconceived notions about the group challenged as well:

> It also kind of surprised me how intellectual a lot of these prisoners are and how upbeat and appreciative they are. It really showed me that you cannot make assumptions about a certain group of people like people in correctional facilities. I think people generally think of people in prison are very mean or awful people but you really would never think that after reading these letters. All the letters were very polite and grateful for what Agency B does. (Nelson)

Further, this encounter with the "Other" should not only assist students in empathizing with their experiences, but also to see the macro-level forces that play out in both their lives and those they have encountered in their service-learning activities. The interactions also created situations where the students had to confront the idea that the "Other" may not be so different from themselves. Simpson (2006) raised this as an issue in social justice education, as:

> It is inevitable that instructors, after careful thought and conversation, will arrive at different ideas from each other about what constitutes justice in regard to any given situation or issue. This does not mean that we should understand justice as fundamentally relative, as inherently shifting and subject to unbounded interpretations. Rather, justice must be defined by and grounded in the material realities of how people live, of the distribution of resources, and of access to power and the ability to make choices about one's own life and the communities in which people live. (p. 86)

Reinforcing Stereotypes. However, sometimes these stereotypes are reinforced. Seo, who volunteered at the homeless shelter said,

Overall, my work at [Agency C] affirmed my preconceived notions of a homeless man/woman: one who negatively takes advantage of the resources given to them to try and improve their life. Although there was a minority who truly seemed to use [their] services for good, a vast majority seemed to eat and use the common area to play cards or dominoes. My experience made me to think twice about even donating to a homeless organization.

Seo later goes on to say that until they had a stricter policy, "… exploitation of services will be a continuous problem." Another student, Owen, observed at Agency A that, "… some of the parents were taking advantage. I saw one mother pick up her child in a $45,000 dollar SUV. Someone that is in 'distress' as the [Agency's] organization clearly states, does not drive a $45,000 dollar car". Simpson (2006) also warned that student-learning on matters related to such things as race, diversity, and social justice cannot be oversimplified. She believed that classrooms must create a "culture of questioning" that never settles on "seeking awareness simply for the sake of knowledge acquisition" (p. 80). The instructor must focus on:

Location, context, and the ability to make choices, classroom learning directed at transformation [that] is fundamentally focused on how students' and the instructor will use their knowledge, both in and outside of the classroom. While students grapple with the limitations, possibilities, and implications of what they know, the instructor must insist on providing context, unflinching attention to material realities, and a framework for ethical accountability and change that considers institutional power and responsibility. (Simpson, 2006, p. 80)

In the case of Owen, he brought up the luxury car example that had reinforced his feelings towards a stereotype during the final in-class reflection. Fortunately, this allowed for an opportunity for students and the instructor to discuss inherent assumptions being made of the situation and question his interpretation.

Service Provision & Management. In addition to seeing many stereotypes challenged, some students had preconceived notions of how effective the organizations are that provide the services to protected classes, such as food banks, discounted childcare, or emergency shelters. It is not uncommon to hear rhetoric that questions the selection process for those who receive services paid for by tax payers or private donations. Beverly said that,

… I went in thinking government and non-profit programs are not helpful to low income families but rather a crutch for them to lean on and not make any progress of their own… I had my perspective of how effective the programs can be, changed.

Like Beverly, many students were not expecting strong management practices and protocols that these agencies used. Another student, Mandy, had the opportunity to sit in on an interview with a woman applying for emergency food services and noted, with surprise, how strict the criteria was to be selected for service. Fay stated that, "[i]t is very hard to get their services because you must go through an extensive requirement process so that they know you really need it." Likewise, Isaac reported that,

> the managerial aspect of the agency was also quite interesting in my reflection, as it surprised me to see that these people were not only compassionate to the situation, but that they operated like a well-oiled machine, strictly following protocol in all situations.

Tammy said that, "[b]y ignoring the problem we are denying the poor the right to live. Every person deserves food on their table, and I admire the fact that [Agency A] is active in recognizing that." Perceptions towards the agencies changed and students tried to comprehend and understand the complexity of the situations, a definite step towards social justice. The agencies selected were as intentional as the purpose of having the service-learning experience. This in turn reinforced Howard's (1993) fourth principle of establishing criteria for the selection of the service-learning site that stated,

> Requiring students to serve in *any* community-based organization as part of a service-learning courses is tantamount to requiring students to read *any* book as part of a traditional course. Faculty who are deliberate about establishing criteria for selecting community service placements will find that students are able to extract more relevant learning from their respective service experiences, and are more likely to meet course learning objectives. (p. 5)

Moreover, we found that the community partners were an important part of an effective experience. Students reflected on how their supervisor responded to certain situations, which likely impacted their own interpretation of certain experiences. For example, Diane who was at Agency A, learned this from her community supervisor:

> If you believe in your cause then you have to do what you can with what you have. Even though the room is so small and there are things all over the ground, the main guy didn't seem concerned and just went in and tried to get as much done as he could.

Thus, having selected a good agency partner, with qualified staff or volunteers, is important in achieving learning outcomes related to working through social justice issues in an organizational structure.

The Experience

This study aimed to find evidence that the service-learning experience was an important factor in the learning course content and raising awareness. Many of the students found this to be the most elucidating part of the class as indicated by their written reflections. Some are continuing their volunteer efforts at their respective agencies, like Emily, Henry, Julie, and Nelson, even after the course is over. This potentially counters the findings of previous studies on service-learning experiences that indicated students' enhanced compassion and attitudinal changes about social issues did not consistently translate into changes of behavior (e.g. Perry & Katula, 2001). When justice is coupled with the service-learning experience, reciprocity becomes a fundamental part of learning and the "take-away" for students (Prentice, 2007). For some, having the experience to work with a nonprofit spurred enough interest to want to continue a career in the sector. Fay said,

> This experience has definitely influenced my plans and purpose in life. I think I want to continue to work for a food pantry of some sort, because if I have the time to help those who need it, why shouldn't I give up that time?

For Henry, we can see what a profound impact the experience had on him:

> When I would see parents drop of the kids in my classroom I would get chills down my spine (as a good thing). I got chills because I saw how happy they were to have a place for their children to go to and how grateful they were to have it…. I got to first handedly see the impact that [Agency A] had on the parents because they were so grateful every time they dropped their kids off (I got thanked a couple times from random parents)!

Finally, a reflection of a particularly powerful experience came from Gwen who had never worked with a population affected by homelessness before. Her reflection indicated deeper contemplation of larger social justice issues.

> In participating in the service-learning I noticed that it is very easy for people to fall into several different protected classes. It seems that lower educated people can also very easily be in a poverty class. It almost seems like as soon as a person is repressed, it is easy to feel powerless and therefore even more repressed. For example, one of the women in the shelter was extremely happy and pulled me aside to tell me that a year ago she had been raped [and] her test results for HIV were negative. Someone took advantage of her and took power away…. Also working here made me think about politics and how this population is never fully represented by and representative, yet they have feelings and ideas just like any other human being.

All things considered, this was a desirable outcome for integrating a service-learning experience in this course: a 'powerful' experience that led to a personal critique of social structures. "Students can move from resisting difference to cel-

ebrating difference to critiques of the social construction of difference, giving them the intellectual, emotional, and practical skills that they will need in trying to make a difference" (Jay, 2008, p. 279). In this notion, the service-learning experience provided the platform that students were able to link the critical classroom dialogue to the lived experiences of those in marginalized groups for the opportunity of deeper insight (Katz & Ryan, 2010).

Course Recommendations

Shumar's (2000) *Self-Assessment for Service Learning,* a self-reflective assessment tool, was used as a guide to evaluate and improve service-learning initiatives. While this assessment is often applied on a curriculum, program, or school district level, this study evaluated each area for ways to improve the course. In addition, there were also course practices that worked-well that are worth mentioning here as recommendations. In this regard, below are suggestions and recommendations for future courses that aim to teach students to work with diverse populations. This paper has provided evidence that the application of service learning pedagogy is a useful tool in teaching service-learning. However, Jay (2008) provided another important observation related to the benefits of service-learning with classes discussing social justice issues:

> Teachers of courses in…disciplines focused on inequality and social injustice know that, at some point, students are going to ask: "What can I do?" Having been brought to a realization that something should be done, they rightly feel frustrated and logically look to the teacher for an answer. After all, you were the one who raised their consciousness in the first place. This moment can be a very frustrating one, but if students have been doing service-learning all semester they are likely already to have begun to learn the answers (p. 279).

Facilitating non-hierarchical relationships. It is imperative that students avoid looking through a deficiency lens. Relationships should not be formed as a helper-helpee situation, but in a way that gives both the sense that each person has something to give the other (Jackson & Smothers, 1998). In student reflections from this study some students were positioning themselves as the helper to the helpee; for example, both Henry and Fay who indicated they wanted to continue their career in the non-profit sector stated they felt like they were providing a much needed service. While this raises concern about the dynamic of the relationship, it is still hoped that the experience will move students to not only be aware of social justice issues but have the agency to take action. Including course content and readings that call attention to the deficiency model and the negative impacts this has on marginalized groups is a good way to approach the issue. For example, Tilley-Lubbs (2009) used Michael Nava's (1998) story about Charity, a boy who realized he was considered a charity case by a local Lion's group and not

thought of as an individual, as a way to encourage a reflexive self-check of her students.

Course Structure. Check-ins for students completing a set percentage of their service hours should be evenly dispersed throughout the semester.. This allows for the classroom discussions and readings to be incorporated more thoroughly and evenly into the service experience. With this in mind, the guided questions for reflection papers can be aligned to the weekly completion of time at the agency. Also make sure that the course schedule incorporates time throughout the semester for reflection and debriefing. Moreover, it is important to ensure enough time to allocated to connecting course content to the service-learning experience (Bell et al., 2007; Hill-Jackson et al., 2007).

Training & Supervision. In order to ensure optimal experiences, relationships needed to be carefully developed with the agencies involved. Successful meetings to setup the placement, as well as check-ins with the agency members to address questions or concerns could go a long way in improving the service-learning experience. Even with open lines of communication and meetings with the agencies prior to student involvement, some students still ended up "mostly in the back room", not benefiting from direct contact with the serviced population. In teaching diversity, the interaction is vital. Thus, including check-ins may safeguard against this. In addition, on both the part of the students and agency supervisors, providing an overview of the aims and goals of a service-learning pedagogy could help focus the experience to meet the desired outcomes.

Genuine Needs and Actions. According to Shumer, Duttweiler, Furco, Hengel, & Willems (2000), service-learning initiatives that are undertaken should be both challenging and responsible, and actions should be aimed towards a common good. In other words, the experience should have value and impact in order to have a satisfying experience. This is a particularly important notion when teaching social justice because the hope is not only to make students more knowledgeable about the social issue, but also to provide them with a desire and commitment to social justice issues.

Individualized and Group Debriefing. Establish individualized methods for service-learning debriefing to better understand students' continued cultural bias, conflict, or ongoing negative attitude towards a population. Student-teacher discussions can be crucial for processing not only their experiences but also their reflections of themselves and the theories that they formulate (Katz & Ryan, 2010). In addition to one-on-one meetings, reflection papers (whether formally or informally structured), and/or student writing portfolios, can be instituted to allow for individual self-reflection (Paoletti, Segal & Totino, 2007). Students also need peer-to-peer reflection, which can garner different traction with students than student-teacher reflection because of the peer social dynamics. Moreover, instructors should maintain a "culture of questioning," to allow for opportunities

for peers to challenge their own and each other's inherent assumptions, attitudes, and beliefs. Through these various reflection techniques, it is critical to try and help students grow an explicit awareness (e.g consciousness) with regard to issues of diversity and social justice. In this regard, Banks (2004) cautioned that,

> …cultural, national, and global identifications are interrelated in a developmental way, and that students cannot develop thoughtful and clarified national identifications until they have reflective and clarified cultural identifications, and that they cannot develop a global or cosmopolitan identification until they have acquired a reflective national identification. (p. 302)

CONCLUSION

Diversity is an often touted aim for most universities within the U.S. and instructors are typically encouraged to integrate learning outcomes related to diversity and social justice to their respective courses and curriculum. However, diversity is also conceptually vague to most students as they attempt to grapple with understanding and how to integrate it within their repertoire of perceptions and behaviors. As Katz & Ryan (2010) noted,

> Researchers and practitioners…work the dialectic [of theorizing the relationship of inquiry, knowledge, and practice] when we generate knowledge and build theory through our own research and experiences. We continue to work the dialectic when we adjust our practices based on what we are learning and then we analyze those practices to adjust our theoretical approach. (p. 129)

Receiving pamphlets from student affairs or lecture points from professors may confound them further as they have little to tangibly make sense of social issues facing underrepresented populations. Likewise, it can be uncomfortable for professors to raise such questions about diversity and social justice. Yet, within our courses is the "place in which we must ask hard questions and practice difficult dialogues" in order to challenge students' perceptions and behaviors (Simpson, 2006, p. 77). Service-learning presents a teaching and learning strategy to "deploy" students in a field experience where they encounter people that may be quite different from themselves as well as agencies that engage those populations with programs and services.

The experience places them in direct contact with those populations where the people who are receiving services can communicate to the student who they are (Meiners, 2004). Further, the experience places them in direct contact with policies and practices that seek to go beyond "dropping change in a hat" but aiding those populations in improving/resuming previous standards of living (Bigelow, Christensen, Karp, Miner, & Peterson, 1994; hooks, 2003; Stinson,

Bidwell, & Powell, 2012). Service-learning deserves further attention specifically in relationship with diversity education as the experiences provide a space outside of the classroom to question their own beliefs and presents models for their future career actions.

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