Engaged Scholarship and Collaborative Service-Learning in Refugee Resettlement: Potential and Challenges

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Scholarly Inspirations

- Community Service Providers & Clients
- Anthropology of Refugees: B. Harrell-Bond, E. Colson, D. Haines, J. Holtzman, M. Agier
- Service-Learning in Anthropology: A. Keene
- My Students
Cross-Cultural Experiential Learning

- Language
- Pop Culture
- Food*
- Dress
- Dance
- Religion
- Politics

Cross-Cultural Lessons in Social Justice

- The Refugee Experience
- Human Rights and Morality
- Ethnocentrism & Racism
- Kinship & Gender Relations
- Assimilation & Identity
- Political Negligence
- Inequality & Poverty
Community Service Activities

- Befriending; cultural brokering
- ELL and homework tutoring
- Health care assistance
- Capacity building: employment assistance; cultural adjustment; agency internships; material needs
- Community engagement
- Awareness raising; advocacy

Awareness and Advocacy

- 661 blog posts; 285 comments
- Online educational videos
- Campus film & panel events (3)
- NIH Fellowship bed bug study
- Campus partnerships among affiliated social justice causes
- Linkages with immigrant and refugee rights organizations, & community service providers
Community Events
- World Refugee Day
- Holiday party events
- Free Market events

Pedagogical Goals
- Collaborative Learning
- Community Based
- Beyond Classroom
- Civic Engagement
- Learning to distinguish justice from charity
- Transformation

Audubon Elementary School
Lincoln Park Zoo
How Is This Experience Transformative?

- Best and most effective way to learn about oneself is to learn about other cultures and ways they differ so much from ours. (1)
- Learning about ourselves is a movement toward personal growth and development. (2)
- Cross-cultural encounters provide the opportunity for personal growth because disorienting experiences must be embraced and surmounted in the process. (3)


Mechanisms of Transformation

- Need for practical application of concepts: culture, cultural relativity, ethnocentrism.
- Partner and group collaborations.
- Exposure to cultural alternatives:
  - Focus on relationship vs. task
  - Focus on collective vs. individual
  - Polychronic, nonlinear view of time
  - Subtle, indirect means of expression
  - Concern with harmony & saving face
Engaged Scholar
Engaged Students
Refugee Clients

A

Engaged Scholar
Refugee Clients

B

Engaged Scholar
Refugee Clients
Engaged Students

C

Engagement Perspectives

Refugee Clients
Service Agency
Engaged Scholar

D

Opportunities for Engaged Scholarship

Academia
Service Agency

Vetting Collaborative Scholarship

- *igNation* Refugee Outreach Blog
- Central States Anthropological Society
- Chicago Area Undergrad Research Symposium
- Loyola Undergrad Research Symposium
- Loyola Focus on Teaching
- National Refugee and Immigrant Conference
- Loyola Community Engagement Symposium
- Society for Applied Anthropology
- International Association for Research on Service-Learning and Community Engagement
Main Challenges

- Linkage with pedagogy
- Topic interdisciplinarity
- Academic cycles limit program development
- Communication barriers
- Health and safety concerns
- Emotional connections
- Demanding clients
- Personality/Cultural conflicts
- Learning to distinguish justice versus charity

Seeking Sustainability

- Responsible action
- Dependence on faculty
- Monitoring student engagement

- Students Service Club
- Civic Engagement Class
- Community Partner

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<th>Exceed</th>
<th>3 mos.</th>
<th>6 mos.</th>
<th>9 mos.</th>
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Spring 2009 student volunteers bonding through fundraising activities.

N=72 student volunteers who participated during the first 15 months of operation.

Individual Participation During First 15 Months
Growth in Program Participation

- 152 students
- 84 families
- 10 internships
- Agency Volunteer Coordinator
- honors thesis
- Collaborative faculty/student research

Building a Micro-Nonprofit

- In-kind donations can assist Matching Grant cases
- 1000 hrs average per class (3 @ $13/hr = $39,000)
- Material donation values = $55,018 (estimated)
- Total financial revenue = $26,507 (2009-2010)
Estimates on used items based on the Salvation Army Donation Value Guide

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<th>Amount</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Value</th>
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<td>$26,800</td>
<td>Winter Clothing Drives (3) (coats, sweaters, hats, gloves)</td>
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<td>$18,300</td>
<td>Household Items (furniture, welcome packs)</td>
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<td>$5,925</td>
<td>Health Supplies (500 hygiene kits, OTC meds)</td>
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<td>$2,404</td>
<td>418 CTA Passes (one-day passes @ $5.75)</td>
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<td>$1,200</td>
<td>Community Events on Campus (seasonal holiday parties)</td>
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<tr>
<td>$389</td>
<td>ELL Tutoring Resources (workbooks, picture dictionaries)</td>
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Organizational Challenges

- Effects of shifting gov’t policies & VolAg resources.
- Dependence on faculty/staff availability.
- Lack of campus space for program activities.
- Structural organization.
- Communication: free agents; free riders; club members vs. enrolled students; Center for Experiential Learning.
Family Partner Program (FPP) Self-Study

- Assessment of befriending/mentoring component of this larger program.
- Ethnographic interviews of students, agency staff, and refugee clients.
- Goal: improvement of program delivery and effectiveness.

Resettlement Agency Perspective

- Good Agreement with FPP Participants:
  - How volunteers can play advocacy roles unavailable to the agency.
  - What kinds of activities should be conducted.
- Internal Disagreements:
  - How and what clients are told about the FPP.
  - What role the Volunteer Coordinator plays.
  - How volunteers are prepared for the experience.
Client Perspectives

- Value of program as a form of relocation adjustment.
- Critical role as ELL tutors.
- Length & frequency of visits.
- Duration of the program.
- Activities and roles that volunteers should play.
- Which family members should receive the most attention.

Student Perspectives

- Feelings of inadequacy in their role.
- Challenged by need for flexibility in their role in response to individual client needs.
- Problems dealing with relationship boundary negotiations & transgressions.
- Concerns about “structural negligence” in refugee services & social injustices.
Instructor’s Perspective

- Opportunity to integrate service, pedagogy, and scholarly research.
- Challenge of cultivating students with sufficient capacity with detachment needed to facilitate an accurate critical perspective.
- Challenging students to see the relationship of research to service.
- Increased demands of engaged scholarship.

Self-Study Conclusions

- Agency and university would benefit from more investment in program.
- Regular volunteer training is needed.
- Faculty and students need better understanding of locally available resources for refugees.
- Routine monitoring and assessment of student volunteers is needed.
- Family partnerships would benefit from making matches closer to time of arrival and for longer durations.