

# Developing a Service-Learning Minor: Its Impact and Lessons for the Future

Scott J. Myers-Lipton

## Abstract

*This study explores a comprehensive service-learning program at a large metropolitan, western university that is attempting to develop a service-learning minor. The study examines the effect of the program on students and the university community. The qualitative data were gathered from twenty-five students over a period from December 2001 to December 2002. The results demonstrate that students in a comprehensive service-learning program became a strong community, developed leadership roles and skills, and increased their understanding of diversity. The study explores challenges that a service-learning program faces and the lessons learned from such an endeavor. The study also explores the lessons learned from developing a comprehensive service-learning program for other metropolitan universities interested in replication.*

Service-learning research has generally focused on the effect of a single service-learning course on students' moral, intellectual, and civic development. Recent scholarship has demonstrated that service-learning has a positive effect in these areas (Eyler and Giles 1999; Astin and Sax 1998). Yet, some scholars argue that service-learning would have even a stronger effect on values and knowledge if students enrolled in service-learning courses throughout their college experience (Giles and Eyler 1994). This belief has led some college campuses to develop "public service" programs that include multiple service-learning courses (e.g., Mills College, Providence College, and the University of Colorado).

There are several differences between a service-learning program and a service-learning course. First, the length and intensity of the experience is different. Instead of just one service-learning course, students involved in a service-learning program are engaged in a series of courses. In addition, these programs may contain intensive experiences where the students are together in a cohort experience for several weeks at a time. The amount of time the students do service in the community is also different in a service-learning program. Generally, a service-learning course asks students to perform no more than one to two hours of service a week, whereas in a service-learning program it might be as high as six hours a week. Students in a service-learning program may also receive federal work-study support for their community work, and the type of service the students do may be different in a service-learning program. While many service-learning courses promote direct service, a service-learning program encourages students to be involved in social change as well (Morton 1995). Finally, service-learning programs generally have a leadership component, whereas a service-learning course most likely does not.

An initial study conducted on a service-learning leadership program at the University of Colorado, where students can obtain a minor, demonstrated that the program increased students' civic responsibility and international understanding, and it reduced racial prejudice in comparison to students performing community service and students not performing service (Myers-Lipton 1994). This current study is designed to add knowledge to this new development in the service-learning field.

## **A Service-Learning Minor**

This study examines a service-learning program that is attempting to become a minor at a large metropolitan, western university. The minor is entitled Service Learning and is being developed as a way to integrate the fragmented efforts of the university and present students with a comprehensible plan to organize their community service-learning experience. The original plan was to have two tracks to the Service Learning minor. The first track was to be a general track composed of 18 units of service-learning courses. According to the proposal of the minor, students would be required to take Social Problems (when taught with a university approved service-learning designation), Community Involvement and Personal Growth, and Community Action and Service. These courses would provide students with an interdisciplinary understanding of the social issues underlying community service agency goals; tactics and strategies for social change; the connection between student culture, social class, gender, and ethnicity; and a hands-on service-learning experience. As part of the general track, students would also be required to take three other service-learning courses that are relevant to their major or area of interest.

The second track was for students wanting a more focused leadership training and community organizing emphasis leading to jobs in social justice and non-profits. The second track, which was launched in Fall 2000 as a comprehensive service-learning program, is designed to develop "scholar activists" who are trained to analyze and solve community and global problems. Through action in the community and analysis in the classroom, students participate in a developmental process that begins with themselves and moves on to local, national, and international social justice concerns. The program, which is entitled International and National Voluntary Service Training (INVST), includes four upper division courses and service-learning labs, six hours of community work per week, and two summer service experiences.

The INVST program begins with a domestic summer service experience, which offers an immersion into the ideas and situations that students will face in their community work. The summer service experience starts with a five-day program orientation. The students then travel in university vans to Utah for a weeklong, 71-mile canoe trip on the Green River designed to build environmental ethics, community, and cooperation. Next, the student cohort travels to the Navajo (Diné) nation in Northern Arizona and New Mexico where they spend ten days working on various community projects. On return to the campus, the students spend one week living at the Family Shelter, where they explore the causes of homelessness and perform community work. Students receive three units of credit for the summer trip by enrolling in Social Action. In all of

these experiences, the overall philosophy is that the students are going to learn, and that the service provided to on-going community projects plays a secondary role. The students and staff go with humility, aware that previous groups have gone to the Navajo nation and homeless shelters and have tried to “help” them by trying to change them or by viewing what they see through a dominant cultural perspective. This service-learning program attempts to avoid these problems by providing an extensive analysis of U.S.-Native American relations and of homelessness before the trip, and to analyze critically all they are observing and doing. Moreover, the program has many social justice activists come talk to the students throughout the one-month trip, so the focus is on dialogue and learning, rather than on service.

In the fall semester, the students enroll in Small Group Processes, which focuses on facilitation, consensus decision-making, multicultural awareness, and group dynamics. In the spring semester, INVST students enroll in Social Change. This course explores the history of community activism, strategy and tactics for social change, and the role of institutions in the struggle for social justice. As part of the fall and spring courses, students work in the community for six hours a week, and meet in a one-unit service-learning lab to reflect on how their community work experience relates to the academic concepts. What is unique about these courses is that the group dynamics and social change analysis that the students are learning about in the classroom is directly applied not only to the organizations they are working with, but also to their own cohort experience. During the service-learning labs, students are also involved in skill building (i.e., goal setting, time management, fundraising, and conflict resolution).

During the summer, students enroll in Poverty, Wealth, and Privilege, which starts with a five-day orientation on the historical, political, economic, and social issues of the country they will travel to. After the orientation, the students travel internationally where they perform three weeks of community work. The first cohort traveled to Kingston, Jamaica, where they taught computer skills to children, helped build a community development center, served children living with AIDS, and worked on police brutality issues. The second cohort traveled to El Salvador to work on earthquake reconstruction and tutor children in the schools. During the international experience, the students explore issues of globalization, child labor, third world debt, hunger and poverty, war and conflict, anti-systemic protest, and citizen activism.

In Fall 2001 and Spring 2002, several university committees approved this two-track approach. In late April 2002, the Curriculum and Research Committee of the Academic Senate, which was the last committee to vote on the Service-Learning minor, approved the general track, but asked that the second track be removed. The Committee made this decision because they wanted the initial offering of the minor to be a university-wide endeavor, and the course offerings in the second track were all in Sociology. The professors involved in this effort decided to accept this change to the process since they felt that once the minor was officially on the books, the second track could be easily added in the near future. Since the general track of the service-learning minor has just been implemented in Fall 2002, it is not yet possible to report

on the effect of the program. However, since a large number of students continue to enroll in the block of courses that compose the INVST program, and since the program will in all likelihood become a minor in the next year or two, the researcher feels that it is legitimate to analyze this track as if it were an already approved minor.

## **Theoretical Perspectives**

The theoretical orientation that guides the comprehensive service-learning program is critical education theory. Critical education theory comes from critical social theory in the subdiscipline of the sociology of education. This perspective focuses on how dominant socioeconomic groups maintain power over the educational process, as well as how subordinate groups resist this domination. It is interested in discovering the various types of curricula and pedagogy that allow teachers to become “transformative intellectuals” and students to become active, critical, and engaged learners (Giroux 1988). Critical education theory is best described as a perspective that has several common elements rather than a single shared theory. McLaren (1989) believes that what unifies this theory is the objective “to empower the powerless and transform existing social inequalities and injustices. . . to heal, repair, and transform the world” (160). This perspective has been influenced by macro conflict theory, interactionism, Antonio Gramsci, Paulo Freire, and the Frankfurt School (Bennett and LeCompte 1990).

Macro conflict theory, which developed out of Marxism, focuses its analysis on the social and economic inequalities of society. When conflict theory is used to examine the education system, the analysis focuses on how schools reproduce the existing social class structure. Within conflict theory, there are three models of reproduction: economic, cultural, and hegemonic. One of the key concepts in all three reproduction models is the belief that the masses are suffering at the hands of repressive economic, sociocultural, and political forces that are dominating their lives. However, critical theorists object to the overemphasis on the concept of domination. They assert that people are not passive receptors, but rather active agents of change (Giroux 1983). Here, critical education theory has been influenced by the interactionist tradition, which is a theory of production as opposed to reproduction. When British educational sociologists began using the interactionist perspective to analyze schools, they rejected the traditional sociology of education that was being practiced because the latter was atheoretical, descriptive, policy focused, and not concerned about what was being taught in the classroom. Advocates of the new sociology of education claimed the key questions that need to be analyzed focus on teacher-student interaction, the curriculum, and the categories that teachers use, with the central concern always relating back to the “management of knowledge” (Karabel and Halsey 1977).

Critical education theorists have taken the interactionist position that humans are active participants in the construction of social reality and apply it to how humans are active agents capable of resisting the oppressive forces of school and society. By integrating the microinteractionist and the macrostructural conflict approaches, critical education theory claims it can provide a fuller understanding of how structures impinge on

human action, and how through interaction between the dominant and subordinate groups meaning is created and resistance is produced (Bennett and LeCompte 1990). Seth Kresberg (1992) states that:

Early Marxist conceptions of schools as mere reflections of more fundamental economic class relationships have been replaced by a more subtle and complicated notion of domination and resistance, one that recognizes the interconnectedness of institutions, the possibilities for human agency, and the real but limited potential for action in any one place to spark social change.

The work that underlies the assumption that humans are active agents of change also stems from the work of Paulo Freire and Antonio Gramsci. Paulo Freire (1984; 1985) views education as a process of liberation. Freire argues that if people are provided with liberating situations in which they are actively engaged in their own learning, they can create their own salvation by challenging the repressive conditions of society. Thus, the educational setting can be a place where power relations are resisted and transformed, not merely reproduced. Gramsci views people as active learners who are capable of producing knowledge and culture during their interactions within institutions, including educational institutions. He believes that a subordinate group can resist and alter the hegemonic relationships that exist between themselves and a dominant group (Bennett and LeCompte 1990). Gramsci (1971) feels that "every relationship of hegemony is necessarily an educational relationship" and this applies to not only teacher-student relationships, but also to ruler-ruled and leader-follower relationships. He argues, as does Freire, for educational practices that allow for teacher and student relationships to be "active and reciprocal so that every teacher is always a pupil and every pupil a teacher." Lastly, critical theory in education has adopted the Frankfurt School's notion that the political and economic elite operate and control the cultural sphere (i.e., the arts, media, and schools) to legitimize their interests (Giroux 1983). As with Freire and Gramsci, the Frankfurt School holds that humans are active agents of change who make history. They also share the concern for finding a radical transformation of the existing social order that would increase human freedom and justice (Bennett and LeCompte 1990).

Because service-learning and critical education theory share several key assumptions, the program founders grounded it in critical education theory. Critical education theory hypothesizes that this new set of attitudes will develop because humans are active agents of change, that schools are agencies of change when the curriculum and pedagogy involve students in the process of correcting social and economic injustice, and that transformational change of the student and society is possible when the former questions the power relationships in society.

## **Research Methods**

The participants of the study came from a comprehensive service-learning program at San José State University. The first cohort, which was composed of fourteen students, started in Summer 2000, and the second cohort, which was composed of thirteen

students, began in Summer 2001. The first cohort was composed of ten Mexican Americans, an African American, a European American, a Filipina American and a Filipina-Mexican American. The gender split was ten women and four men. There were five seniors, five juniors, and four sophomores in the group. The second cohort was composed of five Mexican Americans, five European Americans, and three Asian Americans. This group had eight women and five men. There were four seniors, five juniors, and four sophomores in the group. The students were largely from the western United States and Mexico, and from working class families.

Several methods of data gathering were used in this study. First, semi-structured, open-ended interviews were conducted with all students in the program. In Fall 2001 and Spring 2002, in-depth interviews were conducted with all 27 students in the program. As with most qualitative research projects the focus of this research was not on drawing broad generalizations about all students and how they experience service-learning. Instead, this research was guided by an interest in exploring how students in a specific type of service-learning program create shared, as well as heterogeneous, meanings. The overall purpose in conducting interviews was to understand a comprehensive service-learning program from the perspective of students.

Through the open-ended interviews, the researcher explored how the comprehensive service-learning program shaped the students' identity and their relationship to the University, and how they socially constructed the classroom. The research agenda was loosely defined. In the interviews, students were asked to discuss the various program experiences. For example, they were asked questions such as, "What was a day in the life of the summer experience like?" "What was the most powerful experience that you have had in the program?" Of course, follow-up questions such as "What did that mean to you?" were asked to elicit greater depth. This interview process was rooted in the inductive "grounded theory" tradition (Glaser and Strauss 1967), as respondents were allowed to move in a variety of different directions.

In addition to the taped interviews, students filled out a survey. There were six questions on the survey. The questions asked students if the program had affected their group skills, leadership skills, understanding of diversity, and empowerment levels. Both the transcribed interviews and the survey were coded, with 15 different categories emerging initially. In the beginning stages of coding, patterns, key words, relative frequency, and exemplary statements were identified. As the codes began to develop inductively, attention was addressed to the number of times these codes occurred in the transcripts and surveys. After coding all the data, several of the initial categories were combined, leaving three categories distinct to comprehensive service-learning programs. The categories were: (1) leadership roles and skills, (2) an in-depth understanding of diversity issues, and (3) community. Let us turn to an analysis of each of the categories.

## 1. Leadership roles and skills

There is a great need in higher education to develop service-learning leaders. These service-learning leaders are needed to help run the emerging service-learning centers, develop new service and service-learning opportunities, and to provide the next generation of civic leadership as they enter the workforce as service-learning scholars, teachers, doctors, politicians, college counselors, and non-profit workers. Eyler, Giles, and Braxton (1997) have shown that students in one-semester service-learning courses demonstrate an increase in some citizenship skills, like political action (i.e., the ability to lead a group, knowing whom to contact to get things done), but show no increase in other citizenship skills, like communication (i.e., listening, communicating with others). Vogelgesang and Astin (2000) demonstrate that service-learning, when compared to community service, has little effect on leadership skills. One explanation they offer for this result is that most service-learning courses focus more on cognitive skill development than on leadership skills. This research adds to the service-learning literature by exploring what type of leadership roles students take in a comprehensive service-learning program and what type of skills they develop.

When the twelve students from the first cohort were asked if they had taken a leadership role in some way since joining INVST, eighty-three percent of the students answered affirmatively. Many of the students discussed that the leadership roles were undertaken at their service-learning sites. For example, students mentioned that they had facilitated a workshop for students of color at a local high school, provided art classes at a homeless shelter, coordinated an on-campus social justice organization, implemented a women of color conference, coordinated La Raza Day, led a multicultural sorority, and ran for president and vice-president of the student body. Hortencia, a Chicana, who ran for student body president said that it was the lessons she learned on the domestic summer experience which led her to take more leadership responsibility. She noted, "Taking that step and running a successful race for presidency was possible for me through INVST." Stacie, a Filipina student, spoke for many when she asserted: "I think I have taken up a leadership role since INVST because I recognize my initiative that I did not have before. I think INVST has motivated me by teaching me to take action and that is what I'm doing." This student is currently working as an organizer with an environmental justice organization.

When the students were asked if they had developed better leadership skills after joining the program, one hundred percent of the students answered affirmatively. The following two responses are representative of the students' comments. Stacie asserts, "INVST has provided me tools and allowed me to take those tools with me in different places that I am working." Omar, a Chicano student, maintained, "Well, I know I have the tools now. I have the basic groundwork of the theories and the issues that are out there." When asked what type of skills and tools they have learned, students responded that they had developed skills in conflict resolution, facilitation, organizing, communication, time management, and group dynamics. Joanne, a student of Mexican and European descent, discussed how she is using her conflict resolution skills in many aspects of her life, most recently in her sorority house. Just a night before the

interview, she helped 60 women from her sorority house resolve their conflict by having them move through the various steps of conflict resolution that she had learned in the program. One gets a sense of Joanne's competency when she states, "I just mentally went through the steps in my mind. Like, okay, are we able to talk right now or is it too emotional? Should we take a step back from the situation? And finally I helped to de-escalate things and everybody got rational."

Curtis noted that the greatest thing he learned in the program was facilitation. He discussed how he was a shy person and that he didn't like telling people what to do. But with facilitation, he found a leadership style that fit with his personality. Using facilitation, he could be a guide that helped to empower people rather than "a dictator." Curtis also realized that his Filipino culture and the order of his birth (the youngest) made him feel as if he was a servant to his family. He came to the realization that if he were to be a successful leader at his service-learning site, he would need to be more assertive and change this aspect of his socialization. Other students mentioned that their communication skills have improved in the program. Faviola, a Latina, gives voice to this perspective when she stated, "Since joining INVST I have seen my leadership improving, and my time management and organizational skills. The main improvement that I have seen after joining the program would be in my communication skills."

All of these skills have helped the students work better with groups. When asked whether they felt that they had developed better group skills, ninety-two percent of the students agreed. Stacie sums up the feelings of the students when she explained:

In the beginning of INVST I was not used to working in groups so much. I know how groups work; it has led me to join other groups and cooperate with them. I also learned that there are different styles of group work and ways to ease tensions and disagreements. I also learned that working with groups, one must not hold any biases or misconceptions because those lead to barriers that may affect the group in the long run. There has to be a lot of understanding and openness in group work. That is why it is difficult, but feasible.

Several students spoke about how INVST provided them tools to be a community organizer. We get a deeper understanding of this phenomena in the following comment from Tera, a Filipina-Mexican American student, who stated: "I know I want to go into grad school, and I know that it's sociology, and I want to have a concentration in social change. And I'm going to be an organizer and I have the tools now. I have the tools and the connections and the foundation to go out and effect change, like the way I want to see, the plan that I had in my head."

## **2. Diversity**

The service-learning literature asserts that it provides students the opportunity to explore multiculturalism (Rhoads 1998). Green (2001) moves beyond the abstract and ideal to explore the difficulties and challenges that white students face when they are

confronted with lived race and class differences. Adding to this body of knowledge, this study explores what happens to multi-ethnic students' understanding of ethnicity, racism, and privilege when they are together for a long and intense period of time.

When the first cohort was asked whether the students developed a greater understanding of people from different ethnic groups since joining INVST, seventy-five percent of the students answered positively. A common theme among the students was that they had developed more understanding and sensitivity. The lessons they had learned were to "not to assume or stereotype" and "to be more tolerant of other cultures." One student talked about diversity in terms of "a greater understanding of the experiences of oppression against different ethnic groups," while another student talked about developing "a better understanding of different viewpoints."

Several students discussed how the program changed their understanding of their own identity. Cecilia, a Mexican American student, discussed how she grew up in Los Angeles in a poor family, and how she "didn't feel right, didn't feel as good as a white person." However, no one in her family or at her school addressed this issue. When she entered the INVST program, she felt that this issue was finally addressed. She stated that:

It really gave me the opportunity to learn about societal structures and why things are the way they are. You know, that I wasn't just feeling them because I was weird or anything. That there is an answer, that there's a reason why this happened. There's a reason why people are not comfortable with their ethnic background.... You know, everything was explained to me, pretty much, I feel. And, it has allowed me to really just be comfortable with who I am.

Stacie discussed how INVST had helped her develop a much greater appreciation of her own ethnic identity. She noted that she never was in touch with her Filipino culture until she began the program. Once in INVST, she had the opportunity to learn about her own culture, as well as other cultures. She reflected, "There's so much I have learned from different cultures and at the same time I learned a lot about myself. So in the process of learning about different people, I got to learn about myself and my family."

Many of the Latino students mentioned how their service-learning trip to Jamaica was confusing for their ethnic identity, since the Jamaicans did not differentiate between Latinos and whites. Omar summarized this feeling for several Latino students when he stated, "It was kind of interesting because we were called 'whiteys.' I'm not white, I'm brown. Hey, Brownie, Brownie, come on. But we were called 'whiteys,' so it was like, wow, that's okay. I really didn't know how to take that." Importantly, Tera made the link between her being called "whitey" and her privilege as a U.S. citizen. At first, she wondered why the Jamaicans saw her as white. She was a woman of color, working class, and bi-racial; she was disadvantaged in many ways in the U.S. She didn't know how to relate to the Jamaicans calling her "whitey," and she wondered how she could communicate to them that she was a "down person." Finally, she began to realize that her U.S. passport in her back pocket was "one of the biggest privileges in the world."

She realized that she could come and go. She could view their reality, and the oppression and struggle the Jamaicans were facing, and then return to her house, bedroom, and material possessions. This gave Tera “a massive head trip” and she tried her best to reconcile her disadvantages in the U.S. and her privileges in Jamaica. She was not sure exactly how to do it, but she decided that she wanted “to feel the guilt. I want to understand what privilege I have, so when I come back here, I understand why I do the things that I do.” She also made a commitment to consume less and to travel to other countries at least once every six months to remind herself about the issues. She wanted to ensure that “we’re not working on this issue for novelty. This is like a very real struggle.” These insights about her privilege, in light of her ethnicity, social class position, and gender status in the U.S. demonstrate the depth that some students attain when engaged in an intense and long-term service-learning program.

Students also learned how diversity plays out in their group. Maurice, an African American student, felt that it was “... beautiful to be able to sit and listen and learn from people that have different experiences based on their ethnicity or their nationality.” He noticed while there were differences between different ethnic groups, there were many similarities. Maurice discussed that it was important to rise collectively, and not replace one oppressor with another, since there is the potential for conflict between two competing ethnic groups. He felt that the different ethnic groups in INVST had “risen collectively.”

Students in both cohorts struggled with how to make all students feel included. In the first cohort, with such a large Latino population, several of the Asian-American students felt that at times they were not included. Stacie noticed that a couple of times when the Latino students were discussing events that were going on at campus, they would mention that they were specifically for Latino students. According to Stacie, the students would then say, “Oh, but Stacie and Tera, you’re okay too. It’s okay for you.’ It’s like, okay, you know? Thanks. I can’t explain why that kind of makes me cringe, but it does.” On reflection, this made Stacie feel that she could not put forth an Asian-American or Filipino activity since she felt the Latino students probably wouldn’t be interested. Omar noted that some of the non-Latino students were feeling like the Latino students were exclusive, particularly when they were speaking Spanish to each another. However, Omar felt that the students should have the ability to express their cultural background. To counter this exclusivity, Omar believed that all people needed to be aware of what was going on in an environment, so as to ensure that people felt included.

Hortencia discussed how service-learning affects a multi-ethnic university. She noted that the metropolitan university she attended was a culturally pluralistic environment, but not a culturally interactive one. She reported that having a succession of service-learning courses provided her the opportunity to explore diversity in-depth, much more so than if she had a course with a study group attached to it. She thought that the program gave her the chance to really get to know the individuals in the program, the communities they come from, and the needs of their community.

This in-depth understanding of diversity also affects how students view the global community. Cecilia felt that being in a multi-ethnic group was “one of the best things that you do for yourself because it really opens your heart up to other people, other cultures, other experiences, so that you can look at the world in a different way.” She went on to say that if you just take your multi-ethnic group and magnify it exponentially, you end up with the world. This knowledge allowed her to empathize with people from all over the planet.

### **3. Community**

Generally, when the service-learning literature discusses community, it is in relation to civic action or social responsibility. For example, Moely, Mercer, Ilustre, Miron, and McFarland (2002) operationalize civic action by stating that it can be determined by examining whether a person plans to become involved in the community, or whether a person plans to become an active member in the community. Also, we know from the research literature that service-learning positively affects these types of civic variables (Astin and Sax 1998; Myers-Lipton 1998). However, we know very little about how service-learning students think about their connection to each other or to the larger university community.

The data suggest that an intense service-learning program that is long in duration greatly affects the students' sense of community. In particular, the domestic summer service-learning trip provides the students with a first-hand experience with community and appears to set the tone for the entire program.

Prior to their participation in the program, many students felt alienated from the university and the student body. Curtis, a Filipino American student, described his feelings of alienation toward the university by stating, “I guess I didn't feel connected to the University. It was more like I went to school and then I went back home.” Celia, a Mexican American student, told a similar story when she recalled, “I was so unconnected from the campus. I just went to class and studied, whatever, and I just wanted to leave.” However, during the first summer service-learning experience, the students developed “instant friends,” went through “intense bonding,” and developed trust and community through teamwork. Rachelle, a Chinese American student, stated, “I like how we had the summer experience first, because it threw us all together, and it burst our little comfort zone bubbles. It made me able to bond with people and tell them how I truly feel about my world, how I look at the world, and how I feel about it.” This new sense of community made students feel connected to one another and a part of something grander in scale.

This new understanding of community had an impact on the students when they returned to the campus. First, it made many of the students want to attend class more. Celia summarized this sentiment by stating that “it feels really comfortable to be around them and just to know that there's people on the same level here with me that I can confide in, that I can share experiences with. It just makes the whole school environment here much better. It makes me want to go to class more and want to learn

more and that type of deal.” In addition, their new community helped students become better connected to the opportunities on the campus. Since the INVST students were so engaged on the campus, students learned about a variety of opportunities that otherwise might not have been known. Celia noted that now she is on the campus all the time, and that she is finding out about the various opportunities the campus offers.

The students’ new sense of community also appears to help students in the classroom. Many times, quiet students do not feel comfortable speaking in class. As a result of the summer experience, some students began to see a change. Jennifer, a European American student, noted that “I think for maybe some of the quieter people in the class, having known people already might help people be more comfortable in an educational setting.” Jennifer went on to say that having a community helped the students improve their group dynamics. She stated that, “It makes it work a lot more smoothly in the classroom so that we can come together to accomplish stuff because we’ve already had the experience working together.”

## **Conclusion: Replication and Adaptation**

Sam Marullo (1999) argues that service-learning is a revolutionary force that has the ability to move the university away from the pre-professionalization of students and toward actively engaging students in solving the nation’s deepening urban, social, and economic problems. A comprehensive service-learning program offered as a minor takes us even closer to this vision, as it has the possibility of providing students with leadership skills, an in-depth understanding of diversity, and a deep sense of community. For those interested in adapting this comprehensive service-learning model to other metropolitan universities, there are several lessons to be learned from this program.

First, it is important when working in a metropolitan university that has a diverse student body to not be afraid to discuss the issue of racism. In a service-learning program that is multi-ethnic, the issue of racism is going to come up, and generally it comes up quickly, so the staff need to be prepared. To help students deal with the emotions that surround this issue, the INVST program conducts an active listening exercise on the second day of the program, and gets students talking about their backgrounds early on. For example, the program has all students tell their individual life story when they are driving in the vans to Green River, Utah. Another lesson we can learn from INVST is that they have attracted a multi-ethnic faculty to teach in the program. This is important to attract students of color to the program and to have them feel comfortable in the classroom. The program has had two African American instructors and a Latina professor teaching the courses and labs. Several students have commented that they felt that they related to these staff members in a powerful way since they had had similar experiences growing up and dealing with white racism. In addition, a multicultural curriculum is essential. If we are going to build a multi-ethnic democracy, all voices must be heard.

Second, consider the workload of students attending metropolitan universities before deciding on the length of the service-learning program. INVST has had to shorten its duration from two years to one year because of the fact that many of its students came from lower socio-economic backgrounds and were continually on the verge of dropping out. In the first cohort, the program lost three students to attrition, and in the second cohort, it lost four students. The Coordinating Committee decided that much of the reason for the attrition had to do with the fact that the majority of the students at this metropolitan university were struggling financially to stay in school. With the economy in a downturn, the students were put under increasing pressure to finish school as quickly as possible. The Coordinating Committee responded to this by altering the program design from two years to one year.

Third, try to become institutionalized as quickly as possible. The INVST program did not start as a minor, but soon realized that in order to have the financial and academic support of the University, the program needed to be institutionalized into its structure. Thus, in the first year of the program, one of the senior members of the faculty put forward a proposal to turn the program into a minor. By becoming a minor, the program has more legitimacy in the eyes of faculty, students, and administrators. It also makes it more possible to become part of a line item in the budget.

Fourth, a major challenge of any comprehensive service-learning program is fund-raising. While it may not be hard to raise initial funds for the program (e.g., grants from AmeriCorps or local/national foundations), it may be more difficult to get funding for the long-term. That is why it is imperative to become institutionalized as soon as possible. In addition, a comprehensive service-learning program must devise creative ways to raise funds. This past year, for example, the staff and students conducted a Serve-a-Thon that raised \$12,000.

Fifth, do not pit direct service and social change against one another. Some students are interested in direct service, while others are interested in social change. The INVST program takes the position of Morton (1995), which is that if done in an in-depth fashion, both direct service and social change have a role to play in the transformation of society. By emphasizing this throughout the program, INVST has avoided having the cohort divide into two camps, with one group supporting social change and the other supporting direct service.

Lastly, a comprehensive service-learning program may walk a fine line with the university administration. The students are involved in a variety of different service projects that the administration could possibly have trouble with. For example, one of the students is involved with a campus group trying to get the President of the university to sign on to the Worker's Rights Consortium. The WRC has a monitoring group that ensures that university clothing is not made with sweatshop labor, and that the workers in the factories have the right to organize. While it is unclear whether the President would take punitive action against the service-learning program if he connected the student with the program, it is possible that he would not be pleased. Thus, the program could at some point lose institutional support if it is seen as too

radical. It is recommended that other metropolitan universities interested in replicating this model work closely with the university administration, particularly on the summer service experiences. For example, the Dean of the College of Social Sciences is aware of every important decision that has to do with the domestic and international service experiences. The Dean's major concern has been safety, as she did not want anything to happen to the students and did not want to leave the university open to a lawsuit. A service-learning program must do everything possible to demonstrate that all aspects of the summer program have been thought out, from the safety of the service sites to an action plan if something does go wrong.

## References

- Astin, A. and L. Sax. (1998). How undergraduates are affected by service participation. *Journal of College Student Development* 39(3), 251–263.
- Bennett, K., and M. LeCompte. (1990). *The way school works: A sociological analysis of education*. New York: Longman.
- Eyler, J. & D. Giles. (1999). *Where's the learning in service-learning?* San Francisco: Jossey Bass Publishers.
- Eyler, J., Giles D., & Braxton, J. (1997). The impact of service-learning on college students. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 4, 5–15.
- Freire, P. (1984). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Freire, P. (1985) *The politics of education*. New York: Bergin and Garvey.
- Gramsci, A. (1971). *Selections from the prison notebooks*. Edited by Q. Hoare and G. Smith. New York: International.
- Giles, D. & Eyler, J. (1994). The impact of a college community service laboratory on students' personal, social, and cognitive outcomes. *Journal of Adolescence*, 17, 327–339.
- Giroux, H. (1988). *Teachers as intellectuals: Toward a critical pedagogy of learning*. New York: Bergin and Garvey.
- Giroux, H. (1983). *Theory and resistance in education: A pedagogy for the opposition*. New York: Bergin & Garvey.
- Glaser, B. & A. Strauss. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Green, A. (2001). But you aren't white: Racial perceptions and service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 8(1), 18–26.

Karabel J., and Halsey, A. (1977). *Power and ideology in education*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Kresberg, S. (1992). *Transforming power: Domination, empowerment, and education*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Marullo, S. (1999). Sociology's essential role: Promoting critical analysis in service-learning. In J. Ostrow, G. Hesser, and S. Enos (Eds.), *Cultivating the sociological imagination: Concepts and models for service-learning in sociology* (pp. 11–27). Washington, DC: American Association of Higher Education.

McLaren, P. (1989). *Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the foundations of education*. New York: Longman.

Moely, Mercer, Ilustre, Miron, and McFarland (2002). Psychometric properties and correlates of the civic attitudes and skills questionnaire (CASQ): A measure of students' attitudes of service-learning." *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning* 8 (2):15-26.

Morton, K. (1995). The irony of service: Charity, project, and social change in service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 2, 19–32.

Myers-Lipton, S. (1994). Effect of a comprehensive service-learning program on college students' level of civic responsibility, modern racism, and international understanding. Dissertation, University of Colorado.

Myers-Lipton, S. (1998). Effect of a comprehensive service-learning program on college students' level of civic responsibility. *Teaching Sociology* 26 (4):243–58.

Myers-Lipton, S. (2002). Service-learning and success in sociology. In C. Berheide, J. Chin, and D. Rome (Eds.), *Included in Sociology: Learning Climates that Cultivate Racial and Ethnic Diversity*, (pp. 197–212). Merrifield, VA: American Association of Higher Education and American Sociological Association.

Porter, M. & Monard, K. (2001). Ayni in the Global Village: Building relationships of reciprocity through international service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 8 (1), 5–17.

Rhoads, R. (1998). Critical multiculturalism and service learning. In R. Rhoads & J. Howard (Eds.), *Academic service-learning: A pedagogy of action and reflection* (pp. 39–46).

Vogelgesang, L. and Astin, A. (2000). Comparing the effects of community service and service-learning. *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 7, 25–34.

## Author Information

Scott Myers-Lipton is an Associate Professor of Sociology at San José State University. He is the co-founder of three service-learning programs. His teaching interests include race, class, gender, militarism, and community activism. His past research has focused on the effect of service-learning on civic responsibility, modern racism, and international understanding. His current research focuses on homelessness and poverty using participant action research.

Scott Myers-Lipton, Ph.D.  
Department of Sociology  
San José State University  
San Jose, CA 95192-0122  
DMH 210  
Telephone: 408-924-5761  
E-mail: [smlipton@sjsu.edu](mailto:smlipton@sjsu.edu)