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Engaging Scholarship with Communities

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ABSTRACT

Engaging Scholarship With Communities addresses higher education faculty, students, administrators, and community partners in a discussion on how to engage students and faculty with their communities to offset indifference and alienation in higher education. Engaged scholarship can take place through a number of venues, including Service-Learning, co-authorship and collaboration in grants and research projects, and via tenure and promotion guidelines that validate community-based scholarship. Through a *Pedagogy of Engagement*, students and faculty are encouraged to go beyond the classroom to generate meaningful and practical experiences, while working on projects that link academia to the needs and realities of our local communities. These community-oriented practices create a bridge between academia and the private, non-profit, and government sectors, while providing students with real life experiences prior to graduation. This engaged scholarship approach is further validated through research that indicates that students who are involved in the community, beyond their classrooms via service learning efforts, view these experiences as transformative in their academic growth and professional development. Engaged scholarship efforts that link students with community result in a number of positive outcomes, including: higher retention rates in undergraduate education, higher grade point averages, the development of cultural capital, social networks, and increased student confidence developed through tacit knowledge and experiences that further encourage civic engagement at a broader community level post-graduation. Students' personal and professional successes, as indicated by their degree completion rates and their acceptance into graduate/professional school, further confirms a commitment to cultivating excellence in higher education through engaged scholarship. This paper describes Pedagogy of Engagement approach with specific strategies for engaging students, faculty, and higher education administrators in community partnerships. This paper also includes a rationale for documenting participants' observations, reflections, and critical analyses through writing efforts that further contribute to the scholarship of engagement across the higher education curriculum. This work is based on seven years of engaged interdisciplinary scholarship at UT El Paso, a university located on the U.S.-Mexico border, where engaged scholarship efforts have been developed with community partners, and have resulted in co-authored publications with undergraduate and graduate students.

Table of Contents

	PAGE
Introduction	4
Engaged Scholarship and Institutional Commitments: University, Faculty, Students, Community Partners.	6
What does Engaged Scholarship look like?	8
Awareness of community needs and concerns	9
Documenting Engagement: Student, Faculty, Institutions	10
Benefits of Engagement for Students, Faculty, and Community Partners	12
Writing while Participating in Engaged Scholarship	15
The Mechanics of Ethnographic Field notes during Service Learning Practicums	19
The Role of Critical Ethnography in Engaged Scholarship	22
Revisiting the Intersections of Critical Ethnography and Service Learning	30
Benefits, Challenges, and Limitations of Service learning	32
Concluding Reflections on what we commit to when we are engaged scholars	35

Engaging Scholarship With Communities addresses higher education faculty, students, administrators, and community partners in a discussion of how to engage students and faculty in higher education with their communities. Engaged scholarship can take place in the classroom through interactive assignments and activities, undergraduate research, and through Service-Learning and opportunities. These engagement efforts generate opportunities for students and faculty to gain valuable experiences, while building relationships via face to face interactions and mentoring. Engaged scholarship is also significant in higher education as institutions are increasingly seeking to lower their attrition rates, increase graduation rates, and secure external funding in the face of budget cuts.

Through a Pedagogy of Engagement, students and faculty are encouraged to go beyond the classroom to generate meaningful and practical experiences, while working on projects that link academia to the needs and realities of local communities. As a Latino university student of Dominican descent at UT El Paso, indicated:

Engaged scholarship means more than just coming to class to get a letter grade. A letter grade is important in assessing one's intelligence, academic progress, and work ethic, but it is just one way of evaluating a person scholastically. Engagement to me is one of the most efficient ways that you can evaluate someone. It is how they participate outside the class, what projects they do, what extra assignments they become a part of. It shows their commitment to their academics, scholastic development, and their professional growth. The more they are involved, the more they become an asset versus someone repeating what they heard in class simply for a better letter designation.

Engaged scholarship involves significant learning experiences (Dee Fink 2003, 2009) that build on students' skills, experiences, and "funds of knowledge" (Moll, L., Amanti, C., Neff, D., & González, N., 1992; Vélez-Ibáñez, C., Moll, L.C., González, N., & Amanti, C., 1992). Rather than focusing on student deficiencies and lack of experiences, engaged scholarship seeks to identify and build upon students' assets and interests, so they can apply these towards the

development of strong human interactions that involve caring about themselves and others while developing critical knowledge and skills.

The scholarship of engagement has been part of broader debates on the role of higher education in society. Ernest Boyer's *Scholarship Reconsidered* work (1987, 1990, 1996) examines service from the perspective of engaged scholarship. When theory and practice come together, then engagement becomes scholarly. Information that is once discovered can then be applied responsibly to societal problems. Boyer has challenged universities to honor faculty contributions to research, synthesis, practice, and teaching. Institutions of higher education have mission and vision statements, strategic plans, and core values that address student success and commitments to their surrounding communities. Higher education administrators, who are invested in community-engaged partnerships and in research more broadly, should consider the broader implications and commitments involved in these collaborative efforts.

This work adds to the critical and emotional pedagogy espoused in Laura Rendon's work *Sentipensante* (2009, p. 2) in that it discusses the desire to bridge teaching and learning with the well-being of self and others through service. As a Mexican American university student indicated, "engaged scholarship has a strong meaning. It says I commit. I love. I enjoy what I do. I am started to connect with my emotions; feeling proud of myself. My behavior has changed since I am finding who I am." Another Latina student reflected "I have changed the way I think about the community. I used to think everything for granted and now I appreciate what I see." One Latino student who returned to school after a three year hiatus said "Coming to school again after three years out, make me feel scared and thought I was not able to make it. Now that behavior has changed. I think we need to spread these teachings to society so we can be better at what we do." Thus, without community, we as educators do not have students, without students,

we as faculty do not have jobs, without faculty and students; the community does not critical thinking professionals. How we view and carry out engaged scholarship requires that higher education policies, practices, and institutional evidence of sustained partnerships and commitments.

Engaged Scholarship and Institutional Commitments: University, Faculty, Students, Community Partners.

Engaging scholarship means implementing policies and procedures that support, promote, and value faculty and student participation in community-oriented research and practices. These links between academia and the private, non-profit, and government sectors, provide students with real life experiences and valuable relationships prior to graduation. By having a center on campus dedicated to engagement and service learning, students, faculty, and community partners can be matched up without the need for faculty to expend inordinate number of hours trying to secure service learning opportunities, training, and educational opportunities for students. At UT El Paso, the Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) has been existence since 1998, engaging over 12,000 INSTITUTIONstudents with over 100 partnering agencies and schools in the region. Over 100 university professors from various disciplines have engaged their students to contribute over 450,000 hours of service to the community. Most recently, INSTITUTION has gained recognition in the President's Higher Education Community Service honor roll list for 2013. Between June 2011- July 2012, INSTITUTION contributed 466,528 hours of service with an estimated worth of \$10,221,562. The honor roll program is part of the federal Corporation for National and Community Service, which recognizes best practices in campus-community partnerships and recognizes higher education institutions for exemplary community service programs.

The value of quantifying student and faculty service hours brings notable recognition of community-university partnerships as well as tools for measuring social impact. This “social impact” factor is increasingly more important particularly in securing grants at the national level. For example, the National Science Foundation now has a category requesting the “social impact” of nationally funded research efforts. For non-profit organizations, service can be quantified as “in kind donations,” which assist in leveraging additional financial resources to address needed services at the community level.

The institutionalization of centers for civic engagement in higher education institutions helps with the facilitation and coordination of services between community partners, faculty, and students. At INSTITUTION, the institutionalization process began with the founding of the Center _____ in 1998. With the support of two M.C. XXXXX Foundation grants, XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX became part of a campus-wide effort to mainstream student engagement as a critical and instrumental link to students’ academic success. The need for more equitable and reciprocal relationships between higher education institutions and their surrounding communities is long overdue. The findings and recommendations of how INSTITUTION and three other universities in the U.S. organized and implemented these centers for civic engagement are detailed in *Pursuing Opportunities through Partnerships: Higher Education and Communities* (2004).

The moral-economic imperative of engagement is critical for making higher education relevant in the recruitment, retention, and graduation of students of low-income backgrounds since they are less likely to graduate from four-year universities than students from higher income brackets. In *Poor Students are the Victims of College Discrimination*, Fisher (2012) cites a Postsecondary Education Opportunity report which indicates that 79% of students born into the

top income quartile in the U.S. obtain bachelor's degrees, while only 11% of students from bottom-quartile families graduate from four-year universities. That is about 55% of the bachelor's degrees awarded in the U.S. went to students from top-quartile families with 2010 income above \$98,875; 9.4% of those degrees went to students with family income below \$33,000. In a recent New York Times article, *Better Colleges Failing to Lure Talented Poor*, Leonhardt (2013) indicated that low-income students are not even applying to private and more prestigious universities. Although future research can seek an in-depth analysis of the factors contributing to students not applying, I would argue that many students will not apply, simply because of the wide disconnect between these institutions and students' lack of experiences, exposure, and confidence in feeling welcome and to successful at these institutions.

What does Engaged Scholarship look like?

Engaged scholarship can take place through a number of venues, including Service-Learning, co-authorship and collaboration in grants and research projects, and via tenure and promotion guidelines that validate community-based scholarship. A Pedagogy of Engagement contributes to students' experiences in developing: 1) critical thinking and writing skills; 2) a strong sense of purpose and accomplishment; 3) increased confidence/self-esteem; 4) experience in students' fields of interest prior to graduation; and 5) valuable personal-professional relationships that contribute to their success as future graduate students and professionals. Inside the classroom, faculty have a various strategies they can implement to engage students with content, with each other, and with their professors. I have shared strategies for engaging students in large classrooms at faculty orientation workshops. For the purpose of this work, however, I focus on the options my students have to choose from in deciding what to focus their research and service on. Choice is a significant element to engaged scholarship, primarily because

students are diverse and have multiple obligations at any given time. Students in my undergraduate courses have the choice of doing service learning, library-based research, or undergraduate research on any given project I am working on. These options are significant for encouraging students to choose what is significant and meaningful to them based on their needs, interests, and future career goals. The power of choice heavily determines what students commit to and want to do while enrolled and engaged, detaching from what is known and delving into the unknown lives of others. The idea of detachment and engagement outside one's comfort zones thus becomes an applicable lesson in everyday life. As a scholar preparing students to compete in academia and in the professional workforce in the 21st century, I also encourage students to purposefully make an impact in their communities while also building their professional work experience and social networks. Service learning has also strategically provided students with spaces or "communities" in which to conduct fieldwork such as schools, organizations, and agencies working with niche populations within the U.S.-Mexico border metropolis. Doing service learning in El Paso helps students tap into new social circles or networks that bring to light a partial aspect, or slice, of city life.

Awareness of community needs and concerns

Through a *Pedagogy of Engagement*, students and faculty are encouraged to go beyond the classroom to generate meaningful and practical experiences, while working on projects that link academia to the needs and realities of our local communities. What is particularly significant about my courses is that they incorporate service learning and other alternative research options for students to gain valuable skills and engage themselves in structured activities in the community. Students are able to learn by listening, observing, and empathizing with others, while exploring meaningful topics and places of interest throughout the REGION OF STUDY

community. These service learning experiences also prove valuable in contributing to the personal and professional growth of students and the cultivation of social networks. Former students have shared stories of how they have personally and professionally benefited by doing Service Learning as part of their undergraduate curriculum. Concrete examples of the benefits of service learning include students who have received summer and permanent employment in schools and in the organizations in which they have served. Other examples of my students' engagement include the Border poll crew, *TITLE OF PROJECT*, on campus/off campus – participating in conferences, doing research in other places, and getting training during the summer months.

Documenting Engagement: Student, Faculty, Institutions

This work also includes a rationale for documenting participants' observations, reflections, and critical analyses through writing efforts that further contribute to the scholarship of engagement across the higher education curriculum. *Engaging Scholarship with Communities* addresses higher education faculty, students, administrators, and community partners in a discussion of scholarship opportunities developed to engage students and faculty with their communities to offset indifference and alienation in higher education. Service learning has gained recognition among academics as a pedagogical approach and methodology that engages university students to transfer their skills, knowledge and commitment by interacting with members of their local community beyond traditional classroom settings. The exploration and analysis of socio-cultural phenomenon in situ makes ethnography highly compatible with service-learning efforts across the various fields in higher education. Present day cultural anthropologists conduct ethnographic research primarily through experiential fieldwork that allows for the study of social and cultural phenomenon in action (Ferraro & Andreatta, 2011;

Murchison, 2010). Ethnography is a qualitative research methodology that is applicable across the curriculum. As such, service learning programs that integrate ethnographic fieldwork methods contribute to a critical pedagogy of engagement that leads to meaningful participation of students in their local communities. One might even argue that service learning adds value to ethnographic field work as a contemporary method for examining the current hot-button issues related to engagement, service learning, and student retention and attrition.

Whether considering initiating a service learning program or evaluating one at an institution of higher education, it is important to discuss what engagement means for students, faculty, universities, and community. Reach out to faculty and include them in conversations regarding engaged scholarship. While actively engaged in a service learning project, invite students to seek opportunities for engagement through service and research. Remember that engagement involves commitment at multiple levels and it is one of the touchstones of building partnerships all while engaging and documenting the process.

Engaging students beyond the classroom involves an experiential approach to teaching with a historical trajectory in the United States' tradition of service to the community. In *Service-Learning: Applications from the Research*, Waterman defines it as “an experiential approach to education that involves students in a wide range of activities that are of benefit to others, and uses the experiences generated to advance the curricula goals” (1997, xi). Waterman (1997) cites educational philosopher John Dewey's (1916) belief in active student involvement in learning as an essential element in effective education in which students could be challenged to explore and discover ideas for themselves, as opposed to ideas they would merely receive from authority figures around them. Dewey saw the community as a critical part of the students' educational experiences, primarily as information learned in schools was expected to generate

advancements and improvements for students and for society. In 1990, the United States Congress passed the National and Community Service Act, which defined service learning as a method 1) for students to learn through active participation in organized service experiences; 2) that is integrated into the academic curriculum; 3) that provides students opportunities to apply new skills and knowledge in real-life situations, and 4) that expands what is taught in school beyond the classroom and into the community to foster a sense of caring for others.

Benefits of Engagement for Students, Faculty, and Community Partners

There are numerous benefits for students, faculty and community partners engaged in engaged scholarship experiences. Light (2001) indicates students who are engaged with their courses outside of the classroom tend to have more rewarding experiences. Students are likely to apply concepts learned in their classes to real life concerns and community realities. Eyler, Giles, Stenson, and Gray (2001) provide extensive evidence that indicates undergraduate students reap many benefits from engaging in service learning activities that enhance their college experience and classroom-based education. These benefits include improved interpersonal development, leadership, and communication skills, including improved writing and critical thinking skills, lower attrition rates, and higher student satisfaction throughout their academic experiences. Sharing research findings related to the benefits of service learning with students is important for encouraging students to become engaged throughout their undergraduate education.

The benefits of engaging undergraduate students in and out of class have significant benefits. In *How Undergraduates Are Affected by Service Participation*, Astin & Sax (1998), examined the results of 3,450 freshmen surveyed in five cohorts at 42 undergraduate institutions, including 2,309 who participated in service learning activities. Their results indicated that participating in

service during students' undergraduate years substantially enhanced their academic and life skill development as well as students' sense of civic responsibility. Astin and Sax (1998) indicate that despite the additional time required for service participation, students who participated in service related activities actually spent more time with studies and homework than did non-participants. Another study by Eyler and Giles (1999) indicates students engaged in service learning reported improvements in their learning, while gaining opportunities for personal development, applying knowledge, social responsibility, and interpersonal skills. Vogelgesang and Astin (2000) also indicate that participation in service learning enhances students' career choices and professional development, primarily as they gain valuable work experience, while expanding their social networks.

To gain first-hand knowledge of the benefits of student engagement, I asked students to reflect on engagement and what it meant to them. During the spring of 2013, I posed the following question to one hundred and twenty students, enrolled in two courses at UT El Paso. *"What does engaged scholarship mean to you?"* The responses were impressive and ranged from, engagement as a valuable experience prior to graduation, to taking on leadership roles in their communities such as; being a mentor, an example, a leader, a friend to someone or a group of people. Engagement also helped students recognize their own value as they became assets and stakeholders in their communities. Students also proclaimed that engaged scholarship meant, discovering skills that they didn't know they had gained, relationship building, more than just going to class for a letter grade, passion behind their actions, and an awareness of participating in a transformative experience. The compilation of student responses resulted in key themes that defined "Engaged Scholarship", they are as follows:

1. Allows for students to build relationships in the community (networking)
2. Helps in acquiring new skills and apply the ones that have been learned

3. Helps students become more confident and motivated in their education
4. Allows students to build work experiences that are better aligned with career goals
5. Helps in creating a professional portfolio of experiences not just a resume
6. Increases knowledge about the community
7. Encourages the student to engage in self-assessment and reflection
8. Contributes to personal changes of positive behaviors and diminishes undesired behaviors
9. Increases the self- esteem
10. Challenges the student to continue post-graduate education

Community engaged partnerships, such as those developed as service-learning experiences, provide a number of other benefits for faculty and community partners as well. Engaged scholarship such as service learning serves as a bridge between the “ivory towers” of academia and the community, providing opportunities for faculty and students to link what is taught in the classroom to what is taking in place in local communities (Boyer 1990; Hamner 2002). Faculty who use service learning in their curriculum observed improvements in their students learning and real world experiences (Eyler, Giles, Stenson & Gray, 2001). Faculty learn from their students’ insights and observations about the community’s needs, resources, and future opportunities for research and collaboration. This “real time” information serves as a “pulse- check” of a local community’s needs, interests, and concerns within specific sectors such as education, the non-profit sector, and government. Community partners also benefit from the energy, enthusiasm, and creativity of a consistent cohort of service-oriented university students who bring with them valuable technology skills, personal insights, and content knowledge from diverse majors and backgrounds. Ferrari and Worrall (2000) confirm that community based supervisors tend to view students as helpful to their agencies, sensitive to their clients’ needs, friendly, empathetic, compassionate and overall helpful. In El Paso, Texas local community organizations partners have particularly expressed satisfaction when working with students who express passion and enthusiasm in specific causes such as immigrants’ rights, literacy, Alzheimer’s, and homelessness. Every semester, I have observed that community partners will

hire university students who have conducted service learning or internships in their organizations for part-time, full-time and summer jobs.

The systematic documentation of student observations and reflections helps generate written records of the experiences that result from the student's interactions with community partners. These records are an important part of theory-generation and critical ethnographic analyses of social issues in local settings. Incorporating ethnography in engaged scholarship experiences mainly involves participant observation and the inscription of observations, analysis, and reflection via field notes, as valuable methods for the critical articulation of lessons learned in and out the classroom. Reflection and observation have been employed in community-based writing and cultural action. The critically engaged scholar documents is not solely actively involved in bridging academia with community, but is also critically analyzing structural inequalities in their local communities. The acts of documenting these experiences help students create the evidence of these observations, reflections, and efforts to address the social inequalities they witness during their practicums. The fieldwork methodologies, ideas, and narratives shared in this work are based on seven years of teaching undergraduate courses that incorporate service learning at the University of Texas at El Paso; a university located along the U.S.-Mexico border with a large Mexican and Mexican American student population.

Writing while Participating in Engaged Scholarship

While many undergraduate students may be involved in service learning opportunities, few will document their experiences as these are taking place in the field or soon after, unless they are instructed and guided to do so. Documentation of service learning experiences is critical for recording activities shared, lessons learned, and interactions that students have had through their participation in community schools and organizations. Capturing initial observations and

experiences in their service learning settings is critical, for these early experiences in the field often require students to navigate terrains that are unfamiliar to them. These early encounters lead to rich insights, new understandings, and deep learning. As they explore these new environments, students often document their fears, anxieties, and trepidations in their initial field note entries. Students report experiencing culture shock even in their own communities, particularly as they work in settings they were previously unfamiliar with.

In their field notes, students tend to articulate a sense of wonder about how their service learning experience will affect their lives. They wonder whether this service will provide them with valuable work experience, the development of professional networks, or simply become a line on their resumes. It is in this initial stage of entering the mythical anthropological research “field” that a window of opportunity is created to examine personal biases, fears, and passions. Common questions discussed by students in their field notes during the initial stages of their service learning experiences include: What do I want to dedicate my life to? Is this the kind of work I want to do in the future? What do the children I am working with think about me? I wonder if I made the right decision to go into this profession? Rather than waiting to reflect on the meaning of their lives until years have passed after having earned their bachelor’s degrees, students in service-learning experiences gain valuable opportunities to explore their academic and career interests while they are earning their degrees.

In Dubinsky, Welch & Wurr’s *Composing Cognition: The role of written reflections in service-learning* (2012), Welch indicates that reflection must be taught, as this process usually does not occur on its own. Reflexivity is part of service learning and parallels the role of this process has played in contemporary ethnographic research. To a great extent, service learning, much like ethnographic research, occurs more fluidly when relationships between the student-

researcher and members of the partnering organization are developed. Service learning relationships are based on collaborative experiences and dialogues that take place in micro-spaces and are part of great societal dialectics that involve larger structural issues. These shared experiences are centered on the orchestration of collective efforts between the student, the university (faculty, coordinators, etc.), the partnering community entity or organization, individuals, and society at large.

An important aspect of writing field notes involves the student ethnographer's efforts to inscribe real life into a written narrative, while seeking out what is meaningful for both the student and the participants or partners in the field. The process of capturing initial impressions and understandings of a place or social phenomenon in field notes requires that student researchers become aware of their inherent biases, rooted in their personal backgrounds, experiences, enculturation, religion, and education--these factors tend to influence and privilege what might be considered to be "important information" in the field. The act of reflecting upon personal observations also creates opportunities to reveal the meta-cognitive aspects associated with thinking about the ways in which we relate to the world we live in and the people we interact with. This process of seeking to understand where others (local people) are coming from is known in anthropology as the *emic* point of view. Combining the search for other people's understandings with the students' own experiences integrates both *emic* and *etic* representations of lived experiences, observations, and interactions that generate holistic representations of social life (Ferraro and Andreatta, 2011).

Charles Lemert notes there is significant pleasure and satisfaction in knowing and being able to describe one's place in the world. He asks: "If you cannot say it, how can you deal with it?" (1999, p.2). Lemert asserts that people coming from various backgrounds can and do contribute

to critical analysis and theories about social life. Lemert cites David Bradley's *The Chaneyville Incident* (1981) in explaining that "the key to understanding of any society lies in the observation and analysis of the insignificant and the mundane" (p.6). Bradley argues that the primary role of social institutions is to conceal the basic nature of society, so that individuals that make up the power structure can further their business of consolidating and increasing their power, untroubled by the masses. Lemert and Bradley indicate that social theory involves the mundane and the concealed aspects of social life that we encounter in the ordinary course of daily life including the minute differences that are waiting to be known and said. Thus, when students are challenged to see themselves as scholars of their communities, the rationale for writing field notes as a way of encoding their own observations and critical analyses becomes a critical step in a Pedagogy of Engagement. Students who write field notes can further triangulate the data they have inscribed of their observations and assumptions over the length of a semester to generate their own theoretical notions of the world they live in.

Field notes engage the mind, the heart, and the sensory processes associated with turning talk, observations, and experiences into social theories and written texts. By consulting their notes and filling in their gaps in knowledge, students are able to generate broader interpretations of events, people, and circumstances through critical observations and reflections. The process of re-examining previously acquired data helps students seek out additional information about their environment, and in clarifying or rectifying their assumptions and observations as time goes by. The writing of ethnographic field notes during service learning practicums provides students with a space and a process for reflecting upon events as ethnographic texts as "whole human beings capable of intelligent, social, emotional, and spiritual" interpretations and analyses (Rendón, 2009, p. 48).

The Mechanics of Ethnographic Field notes during Service Learning Practicums

The taking of field notes is significant for service learning participants to document their observations, experiences, and reflections of their practicums primarily because relying on memory alone does not suffice to record the nuances of everyday interactions in the field. In *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw (1995) emphasize the importance of capturing experiences by writing them down on paper, although the digital voice recorder is a contemporary tool that ethnographers now have at their disposal. Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw refer to the “24 hour rule” when emphasizing the importance of documenting observations, conversations, and experiences in a timely manner to capture the immediacy and the sensory details of an event or interaction before they are obscured and forgotten. Given the time constraints and pressures of “real life” settings, ethnographers are prone to write down field jottings in the form of key words or phrases that can stimulate their memories once they have access to a computer. Field jottings are then converted into field notes, which are more extensive, elaborate, and detailed descriptions of the researcher’s interactions in the field. Field jottings help ethnographers create a better recollection of quotes, emotional memories, and specific details about significant events. These jottings then serve as key pieces in weaving narratives of social life into full ethnographic texts in the future. Often, service learning involves intensive and ongoing interactions, which prevent students from documenting details as events are taking place in the field. For example, students who are involved in activities such as teaching English as a Second Language courses to immigrant adults or students who are involved in tutoring or mentoring youth might find it challenging to keep field jottings while doing their

service. In these situations, the jotting of simple key words that can be used to code key themes and can be developed into more developed field notes in the near future.

The systematic writing down of field notes is important for several reasons. The writing of field notes helps students develop critical thinking, observation, and listening skills, which can be learned and sharpened over time. Field notes also help maintain a chronological record of the students' participation-observation and service learning hours. These field notes can be read and made sense of at a later date as students prepare their final service learning-based research papers. The taking of field notes is much like keeping a diary or a personal journal, except that field notes written by students will have an audience, as these are read by a professor for a course grade, and perhaps also by the partnering organization. When students keep in mind that field notes have a potential audience, they are encouraged to keep more detailed and descriptive notes of their activities and interactions. For example, in 2006 and 2008, the service learning PROJECT at INSTITUTION, in which I served as a lead faculty mentor and instructor, student researchers were instructed to document their experiences while working as poll workers in local elections. Students' typed field notes and final research papers contributed to data that were used by our research team to generate policy recommendations made that were delivered to the El Paso County Elections committee and to the project's funders. Students who participated in this service learning project were also able to contribute to two scholarly publications: Title of Projects and authors' XX

There are a number of ways students can be instructed to write down their field notes as a way of generating primary data: 1) chronologically documenting experiences by the hour; 2) event based-documentation of experiences according to important events; and 3) through objective-subjective observations and reflections. Chronological notes focus on the sequencing

of events, whereas event-based field notes focus on key moments in the students' practicum. The objective-subjective format helps students differentiate what they observed and heard in the field versus how they interpreted their experiences and interactions in the field. Field notes may be recorded in "real time," as the events are taking place, or after the event or participation has taken place. The timing of when field notes are taken will vary according to the activity and location; however, students should be encouraged to write down details and reflections of their experiences within 24 hours of these events to capture nuanced details.

Objective Observation:	Subjective Reflection and Critical Analysis:
Describe with great details what you see, what you hear, and what is being communicated to you. Use direct "quotes" to record what people say and how they describe their own realities and environments.	Reflect upon what you think is taking place. Provide your interpretations of the people, places, and events you are observing. How is this experience relevant to what you are learning in class?

Example of a Field Notebook, organized using objective and subjective observations and reflections. Include date, time, place or event of service learning participation

Students participating in service learning projects who take ethnographic field notes to document their observations, experiences, and reflections are encouraged to write in a combination of first-person narrative and third-person styles. The first-person narrative mode provides a point of view of what the student experienced, heard, inferred, and learned from personal experiences and from talking and interacting with others. The third-person narrative mode describes what others were doing and saying during the practicum. The third-person point of view conveys others' words and actions, while using quotes to separate other people's words/views from the student's perspective. Students are encouraged to describe the people whom they participate with in the various spaces where they conduct their service, as well as to

introduce their research setting to provide a context for their experiences. The ongoing reflection and interpretation of their descriptions is part of writing field notes and doing ethnographic research. Field notes are also to be systematically documented, organized, and narrated to help generate rich ethnographic narratives. Students should be encouraged to revise their field notes to identify key patterns, specific themes, key findings, and observations while analyzing and discussing memorable and insightful events, interactions, and quotes to include in their final papers.

The Role of Critical Ethnography in Engaged Scholarship

In *Beyond Empathy: Developing Critical Consciousness Through Service Learning*, Cynthia Rosenberger (2000) critically examines the traditional tenets of service learning and questions whether or not this pedagogical approach is a way for those with power and privilege to name the problems and solutions of the less privileged (p. 24). Rosenberger cites Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1997/1970) and asks to what extent does service learning contribute to the creation of a more just and equitable society? Rosenberger explores a variety of studies on service learning, and in particular, reflects on the notion of "service" to engage faculty discourse on service learning while applying a Freirean lens to the politics of service learning in education. Issues associated with praxis, epistemology, balance of power, conscientization, and dialogue are all useful tools for engaging in critical reflections of service learning in the undergraduate university curriculum.

Notions of power can be examined during service learning practicums to examine structural inequalities that create the unjust conditions that generate the need for services. Students might not necessarily be able to alter the structures and processes that generate

oppressive and dehumanizing conditions, yet their awareness and analysis of these structures has potential for discussion and change through awareness. Rosenberger cautions participants in service learning practicums and partnerships from creating “inauthentic generosity,” based on service that perpetuate the status quo and further solidifies characteristics of the dominant culture. Freirian (1997) concepts of conscientization and authenticity serve to help develop students’ deeper awareness of sociocultural realities and their capacity to transform these. Freire’s definition of praxis as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it” (1997: 33) should also be emphasized as a process of creating change that liberates or empowers people comes with action that is combined with reflection. Van Willigen (2002) explores these Freirian notions as critical elements in cultural action within a critical social theoretical framework. Van Willigen indicates cultural action is an approach that reflects a specific view of the world and understandings about how the structures of the world can be changed (pp. 92-93). Service learning and cultural action involve constant critical reflection, analysis, and action.

In *Critical ethnography for communication studies*, Artz (2001) challenges the service-learning-as-charity framework and proposes a critical ethnography/critical service learning model. Artz contends that charity helps ameliorate some temporary yet urgent condition (p. 240), yet rarely does it challenge the systemic practices and relations that give rise to the injustices. Artz cites Freire’s (1999) critique of good deeds that undercut or interrupt the process of reflection and action by the oppressed, thus perpetuating social inequality and a social psychology of incompetence. Artz indicates a critical ethnographer-service-learner should inquire about the current language, metaphors, and symbols used to describe the communities involved in service-learning partnerships, such as “poor,” “at risk,” and other signifiers that detract from people’s human value. Artz employs Gramsci’s (1971) hegemonic framework in

viewing social service agencies as places where dominant classes recruit subordinate representatives to maintain social order, using service learning for charity to maintain patron-client relationships that defend the status quo rather than or as an intellectual effort for social justice and liberation (p. 242). Artz's critical ethnography/critical service learning model proposes a dialectic of resistance through a dialogue that seeks to move from service to advocacy by revealing the subtle expressions of social control. Thus, the processes of engaging, observing, asking, dialoguing, documenting, and reflecting contribute to a more critically engaged service learner that is conscientious of social justice that does not view working in the community as charity, but rather as an observer of symbols and behaviors that lead to oppression that can be transformed into liberation and social change (Artz, 2001; Earle & Simonelli, 2005; Oden & Casey, 2007).

Pressing students to engage in discourse, action, and reflection with their service learning partners is part of what makes ethnography so applicable to service learning efforts within a Pedagogy of Engagement. The reflection, however, is usually tasked to the students, and not so much on the people and organizations that partner with students in the delivery of services; this is an issue that can be addressed in the processes of cultivating new and ongoing partnerships at various stages of service-learning practicums. That is, reflection and action are processes that are fruitful and useful to the various partners in service-learning programs to create opportunities for Freiran (1997/1970) "problem-posing educational" programs, which challenge students and partnering organizations to think critically and creatively about their organizational cultures and modes of operating. Asking students to reflect upon specific times in which they helped solve a problem is part of what makes service learning particularly valuable to enhancing students' undergraduate education. Educators who offer service learning options in their courses can

provide creative, dynamic, and engaging learning experiences for students. Students should be encouraged to reflect on their experiences and be invited to discuss these with classmates throughout the semester and as part of final student presentations in small-group activities or larger classroom discussions. The reflection and debriefing sessions also help reinforce the importance of field notes and encourages the improvement of their writing and public speaking skills.

Engaged scholarship that includes service learning is not only about encouraging students to serve others, it is also about teaching students to write insightful and reflective accounts that document their intellectual, emotional, and academic growth as they engage their local communities. The writing of ethnographic field notes in service learning practicums requires that students participate in order to write. It is no surprise that one of the major outcomes of service learning is a significant improvement in students' writing. The systematic creation of an ethnographic record involves the inscription of chronological or key events, which can later be made sense of during the qualitative coding, analysis, and writing of final research papers. The process of converting the notes into a coherent narrative gives students more practice with the written word, thus increasing their ability to write more clearly or cogently. Through their participation, students are able to observe and experience key events, conversations, and complex realities in their communities. The writing of observations is based on the interactions students have during their field experiences. The more students do and interact with other people, the more experiences and reflections they have to write about and critically assess.

During a fall or spring semester, students may be exposed to a variety of issues affecting the local community, including domestic violence, education/literacy, immigration, and homelessness. Given the high costs and challenges of transporting an entire class of students to

conduct fieldwork in another country, service learning offers faculty the opportunity to consider their local communities as prime spaces for service learning-based research. Traditionally, many anthropological and archaeological field school experiences are offered in other countries during the summer months. However, studying abroad is not always an option to many students with family obligations and limited financial resources. Service learning thus provides students the opportunity to conduct fieldwork, serving while learning, while completing their regularly scheduled college courses within a given academic semester.

Reflexivity takes place at various stages of the service learning experience in my classrooms. First, students are exposed to a variety of partnering organizations, via classroom presentations by UTEP's Center for Civic Engagement (CCE) staff. The Center for Civic Engagement is a service learning entity of the University of Texas at El Paso that coordinates SL opportunities between students, faculty, and community organizations. Students are shown how to navigate the CCE website to evaluate and select from an extensive list of community partners. Students then assess if they consider service learning is appropriate for them or if they prefer a to an alternative research option. Mid-semester, students are asked to report during a "pulse check" as recommended by Dubinsky, Welch & Wurr in *Composing Cognition: The role of written reflections in service learning* (2012). During this time, I ask students to write short essays on their personal identities, backgrounds, and current life circumstances. I then inquire how they are doing in their service learning process. Since the fall of 2011, I have initiated Dubinsky, Welch & Wurr's ABC's (Affect, Behavior, and Cognition) of reflection as originally espoused by Welch (1999), which inquires on students' emotions, behaviors, and cognitive assessment of their progress in class and the linkages and applications of what they have learned in class, in their service learning practicums, and to larger societal issues. This process of mid-semester

reflection recommended by Dubinsky, Welch & Wurr (2012) has provided keen insights on students' integration of subject matter, particularly involving anthropological lessons of listening with empathy, seeking to understand others, exploring cultural differences, and understanding structural inequalities.

In their reflections of their service learning experiences documented in their field notes and final papers, students have shared insights such as "I used to be more closed minded, now I am not so quick to judge others who are different from me;" "I see other people differently now; knowing more information about their cultures and way of living is very interesting to learn about. "I'm beginning to question a lot of things now, including my choice in major/career;" and "I did not realize how strongly I feel about working with the elderly; I think this is what I need to dedicate my life to." Student reflections range from personal assessments about their study skills to choice in majors, to larger societal issues associated with health inequalities and our society's treatment of older adults and people with stigmatizing illnesses. These undergraduate research experiences are critical for motivating students to consider graduate programs and professional careers working with populations they have already been exposed to and have experience with.

The integration of ethnographic field notes with service learning practicums across the undergraduate curriculum can also help educators craft more creative, dynamic, and engaging learning experiences for students. For example, students can be asked to discuss their service learning experiences with classmates throughout the semester and as part of final student presentations in small group activities or classroom discussions, while also reinforcing better writing skills and peer consultation circles. As an applied cultural anthropologist, I have gained many insights and experiences by conducting my own ethnographic and applied collaborative research. I have learned about the significance and benefits of gaining personal insights and

experiences through active participation in the communities I work with. I have also sought feedback through mid-semester reflections and evaluations from my students and research partners. I have also taken on the tasks of observations, data analysis, and reflection to other projects beyond the classroom.

In 2006 and 2008, I worked with students in the PROJECT to engage bilingual youth in the electoral process working as certified poll workers and researchers in a service learning project. In 2006, my role was to provide research methods training in rapid ethnographic assessment procedures (RAP) to one hundred university and community college students to participate in this service learning project; some students were enrolled in my classes while others were enrolled in courses across the curriculum (AUTHOR, 2008). In 2008, my colleague XXXXXX (Political Science) and XXX (DEPT), developed and co-taught the “Help America Vote” class, with an enrollment of about seventy upper-division undergraduate students. COLLEAGUE focused engaging students in debating issues pertaining to youth, civic engagement, and politics, while I focused on teaching the research methods and the rationales for civic engagement. This project resulted in a number of benefits to students, the university, and to our local community. Bilingual student poll workers were able to assist Spanish-speaking citizens in their native language; while others were able to help voters with computer-assisted voting equipment. Among the unintended consequences, we found that students played a positive role in motivating their family members and other young voters to vote. Another positive outcome of this project was a strong sense of civic duty and intellectual stimulation, particularly as an active cohort of students involved in the 2006 and 2008 Border Poll Crew has gone on to pursue MA and PhD degrees, law degrees, military service, and leadership positions at the local and national level.

In 2011-2012, I joined an interdisciplinary health project titled XXXXXXXX, which focused on tuberculosis awareness on the REGION OF STUDY. This project had a public health education component involving the setting up and curation of a museum exhibit via a collaborative partnership coordinated by INSTITUTION Center XXXXXXXX and faculty, staff, and students from the sociology/anthropology, social work, and communication departments. As part of this collaborative research project, I presented a qualitative data coding and analyses workshop for undergraduate and graduate students and faculty. During this workshop, we spent time applied the ABC's of critical reflection and analysis (Welch 1999; Dubinsky, Welch & Wurr, 2012) to evaluate shifts in our research team's emotions, behaviors, and cognitive development after a couple of months of working together. The project itself had engaged a variety of audiences including health professionals, elementary/middle school students, nursing students, farm workers, health promoters (promotoras), and hundreds of museum visitors who became aware of the rise of tuberculosis on the REGION OF STUDY and the social-geographic inequalities associated with this stigmatizing disease in our region. The ABC's of reflection facilitate engaging students in assessing and reflecting on how their service learning experiences were linked to Affect (emotions), Behaviors, and Cognition. The ABC's of reflection can also be elaborated upon to gauge how these experiences relate to the student or individual, to the community, and to society at large—hence the ABC's 1-2-3's of reflection.

Revisiting the Intersections of Critical Ethnography and Service Learning

Service learning involves engagement, participation, and reflection. As such, this method has much in common with participant observation and ethnographic research in anthropology. While conducting Service learning practicums, students are involved in observing their surroundings, asking questions, and interacting with local community members much like

anthropologists who conduct fieldwork. Ethnographers are committed to going out and getting close to the activities and everyday experiences of other people; this concept of “getting close” requires a deeper immersion in other people’s worlds in order to grasp what others consider to be meaningful and important experiences for them (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

The ethics of building successful community-engaged partnerships is a theme to be explored with more depth in future research. However, it is important to briefly share insights about the ethical responsibility university faculty and students have to their community partners and vice versa. Students represent themselves, their professors, their majors, and their university; as such, they have the responsibility of conducting themselves with professionalism and integrity. Community partners should also keep in mind that university students usually carry a full load of classes, work part time or full time, and manage personal and familial obligations on top of their service learning obligations. It is common for community partners to expect students to give more of their time and energies to the organization’s mission. However, students cannot be expected to fulfill the same obligations as paid employees. The current financial crisis impacting many non-profit organizations, schools, and community agencies might influence community partners to seek out students as volunteers and as alternatives to hiring part-time and full-time staff members. This is where university service-learning coordinators and faculty members need to remind both students and their community partners of the limited expectations associated with these partnerships to avoid exploitative situations. Faculty are responsible for covering the expectations of the service learning agreement, for example, reminding students of the twenty-hours per semester requirement, while emphasizing that students keep a balanced perspective and focus on their studies, to avoid over-commitment and burnout.

While conducting service learning practicums, students are involved in participant observation with people of different backgrounds and diverse settings. There are a number of valuable life skills that students are likely to cultivate during their practicums, including active observation, listening, interacting with, and getting along with others. Learning to negotiate diverse cultural settings and environments is an important skill to learn prior to gaining a university degree. Students are often involved in give-and-take, reciprocal relationships such as working with others, and can offer their own professional skills and knowledge to a service-learning setting. Through the exchange of service learning experiences, students and faculty are also able to build stronger and meaningful relationships in and outside the classroom.

Students conducting service learning are often viewed as mentors and role models for younger adults in K-12 classrooms, in afterschool settings, and for immigrant adult learners—as was the case of Nora, a non-traditional older student who committed to teaching English to other immigrant women. University students are expected to carry themselves with respect and awareness as representatives of themselves, their professors, their professional fields, and their university. Students also need to be prepared for their community partners to have expectations of them as they fulfill their roles and responsibilities. Learning to negotiate these expectations is challenging for many students who must balance multiple obligations at home, at school, and in their field sites. Learning to establish and cultivate relationships with people is complicated for some, and easier for others. Negotiating personalities means students need to figure out how to work with different people, while recognizing their own personal quirks and biases.

Murakami-Ramlho, Nuñez, and Cuero (2010) argue that the rising cultural and racial/ethnic heterogeneity of the United States' population makes it ever more important to understand how individuals come to affiliate and identify with different cultural communities in

complex ways. The authors argue that for higher education institutions to evolve, they must recognize and affirm the complex identities and commitments of their faculty and students to engage in their communities. U.S. university students and faculty members and Hispanics in particular, are increasingly reflecting society's diversity and are pressed to respond critically to their communities' needs and interests.

Cultivating the student-community partner relationship entails recognizing that students are engaged in the learning process and are thus not expected to be perfect or to know everything. Conversely, students in the 21st century are usually well equipped with multiple experiences, including a wide variety of technological skills, which tend to be useful in conducting research, finding resources, and communicating with others quickly and efficiently. Given that every student is unique, it is important for community partners to also seek to get to know the students' backgrounds, career interests, and personal strengths. Engagement, interaction, and communication between students and community partners help people find commonalities and strengths that make service learning partnerships fruitful and meaningful.

Benefits, Challenges, and Limitations of Service learning

The process of participating in service learning experiences often involves a number of difficulties or "speed-bumps" (Weis & Fine 2000) that challenge students to negotiate conflict and resolutions. Working with others has its challenges. Participation in service learning projects entails commitment and dedication to a process of engagement with people of different ages, backgrounds, and experiences. As such, it is important to note that service learning is not for everyone. There are a number of expectations involved in conducting a service learning practicum, including patience, time, dedication, commitment to work and interact with others.

While preparing students to participate in service learning activities, faculty should consider recommending that students cultivate an open disposition to dealing with unforeseen circumstances and uncertainties associated with less-than-perfect conditions. One student enrolled in my Introduction to Cultural Anthropology course reflected on the personal and professional growth that resulted while mediating conflicts during his service learning experience as a tutor at an after-school program at a local high school. Saul noted “I did not realize that doing service learning would end up being so hard. I had to learn problem-solving skills and conflict resolution skills on the spot. Working with high school kids has its challenges; sometimes students would fight, and I had to figure ways for them to stop and get along. I felt really proud of being able to do this on my own.” In his field notes and final report, Saul described how he negotiated hostilities among teenagers despite feeling ill-prepared for this role. He indicated “Although I originally signed up to be a tutor, I often took the role of mediator and problem-solver.” Saul reflected on how this experienced would help him in the future as a future military officer. While working in hostile environments is not the ideal situation, learning how to negotiate and deal with conflicts and abrasive personalities is certainly a valuable skill in the 21st century.

There are barriers that challenge students who are interested in service learning but cannot do so primarily because they cannot afford to pay for their transportation to and from sites. It can be challenging to arrange time and dates of service that coincide with students’ work and school schedules and those of the partnering agencies or organizations’ operating hours. Students from poor and working class backgrounds who work to finance their education, may see service learning as a privilege and not as a easy-to-access opportunity. During the past seven years of teaching at UT El Paso, many students have told me: “I would really like to do service,

but I have to work and go to school to pay for my tuition, rent, and feed my kids.” In these circumstances, I encourage students to do alternative research projects, and recommend they seek service opportunities in their fields of interest to build relationships and work experience that will help them upon graduation; for many however, this is simply not a viable option.

Providing alternatives to service learning in the form of academic research or alternate projects is significant because it creates options for students to negotiate according to their personal time schedules, interests, and possibilities. Engaged scholarship should not be a barrier or a tool to further burden undergraduate students. On the contrary, it should be a pedagogical approach that can be used to support the students’ academic, personal, and professional growth and development.

Concluding Reflections on what we commit to when we are engaged scholars

Engaging students beyond the classroom takes effort and commitment on various levels, including students, faculty, and higher institutions who place a high value on community-engaged scholarship practices and on undergraduate research experiences. Engagement of students in and outside of the classroom is a critical step towards addressing the disparities in higher education attributed to a number of factors herein discussed, including a sense of alienation often experienced by low income and underrepresented minority students. Given the rising population demographics of Hispanics in the United States, engagement as a retention strategy for recruiting and retaining students in higher education is a moral imperative.

Participating in service learning and engaging students in the writing of field notes to document their experiences, observations, and reflections has a number of benefits in making education meaningful and in creating bridges between academia and the communities we are part of. As a growing number of anthropology students are deciding to enter applied professions, more are

wondering how they can potentially apply anthropological theories and methods to address social needs and concerns (Van Willigen, 2002; Ferraro & Andreatta 2011). Engaged scholarship increasingly involves moving beyond disciplinary boundaries to contribute towards addressing social concerns in a more collaborative and timely fashion by engaging students and colleagues across the disciplines in higher education.

Service learning has many applications across the higher education curriculum, particularly as students find that practice provides them with the opportunity to make positive contributions to their local and larger communities, while receiving valuable experiences and cultivating personal and professional networks. Faculty who implement service learning in their curricula can find satisfaction in knowing that they are facilitating these links between academia and the community, while exponentially providing benefits and opportunities for reciprocal relationships and friendships to develop based on mutual understanding, empathy, and appreciation. The development of a systematic record of service learning experiences is needed to account for the local and societal contributions academia offers when institutions of higher education are truly engaged with the communities around them. Service learning requires that relationships be established between partnering organizations, faculty, and students, as such, the impacts of these relationships can extend from individuals to larger societal institutions.

Students participating in service learning practicums should be encouraged to write about and reflect on how their participation in their projects has contributed to their personal and professional growth. Major outcomes of participating in service learning programs include: the development of leadership and communication skills, the cultivation of social networks, and, for many, work experience that leads to employment. Incorporating ethnography, and in particular, the documentation of experiences and observations in the form of field notes helps generate a

consistent record of the students' personal and professional development. Furthermore, the creation and generation of primary qualitative data is significant for analysis and for transforming this data into written texts in the form of final reports, conference presentations, and publications. For many students who have participated in service learning projects, the issues to which they have dedicated their time have become their life passions and the basis for developing future research agendas as they enter graduate school and their professional careers. Although service learning may not solve societal problems, it is certainly a bridge that helps prepare student scholars and researchers who are willing to develop expansive notions of higher education, service, cultural action, consciousness, and social justice in our communities.

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