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Race-Focused Service-Learning Courses: Issues and Recommendations

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This article discusses the interaction between race and service-learning in the college classroom. The author found that students of color were more likely to choose the service-learning option in her courses when the incentive was higher and there was more latitude in site choice. The article then looks at factors that adversely affect the service-learning experience in courses that are specifically race-focused and suggests counterbalancing strategies.

With the renewed national call to service and volunteerism, service-learning programs are being implemented on more and more U.S. campuses.¹ Meanwhile, as the U.S. population continues to diversify, various race- and ethnic-focused courses and/or programs have concurrently proliferated at most colleges and universities. These two trends are most likely correlated in a number of ways, but the focus of this paper is with their interaction in the classroom.

For the past three and one-half years I have offered a service-learning option in all of my sociology classes at Marquette University, an urban Jesuit University located in downtown Milwaukee. As do many other faculty (see Coles, 1993; Fox, 1994; Lena, 1995; Miller, 1994; Reardon, 1994) who advocate the use of service or community involvement in their pedagogy, I integrate service-learning into the curriculum to help students test and apply their insights of course concepts, improve their integration of theory and practice, and grasp the intricate connections among social problems.

In particular, as a teacher of race and ethnic courses I have used service-learning with the goal of giving white majority students (who often are from small towns or suburban communities with little or no racial diversity) and racial minority students (particularly those who live in ethnic enclaves or who are first or second generation immigrants) personal exposure to individuals, families, and communities of (other) racial-ethnic minorities. The service-learning context is intended to provide students with an understanding of socioeconomic structures and processes that contribute to growing class and racial inequality and to help them step outside of themselves and see life from another's perspective.

In American society, race issues are controversial

and sensitive. Adding a racial component to a service-learning course can create difficulties. I have found racial differentials regarding which students choose the service-learning option in all of my courses. In addition, I have found that when race is a course focus, all students (white or minority) are more reluctant to choose the service-learning option.² Courses in which race is an explicit focus tend to engender discomfort both in doing the service and in the reflection on the service-learning. What follows is a discussion of these findings and suggested means to negotiate potential challenges while fulfilling the attainment of the aforementioned goals.

Encouraging Student Participation in Service-Learning

Background Statistics

Marquette University offers numerous opportunities for service to its students. In fact, the University has been ranked in the top ten among American colleges and universities in student activism by *Mother Jones* magazine several times.³ The University's commitment to community involvement is an integral part of its mission, and this commitment is well-known among alumni and incoming students, many of whom already have established records of involvement in their high schools and hometowns. Moreover, this reputation of service has been achieved without a mandatory requirement of service for graduation. Hence, while the decision to incorporate service-learning into courses is at the discretion of individual faculty, about 35 to 40 of Marquette's professors offer these kinds of courses, and most who do choose to offer it as an optional (though highly recommended) assignment.

Therefore, the number of courses and students who participate varies by class and semester. This past year more than 700 students participated. The service-learning program at Marquette does not record the race of its participants, so I cannot speak to the percentages of majority and minority students who participate in service-learning campus-wide.

Marquette is a predominantly white university; thus, as one would expect, most students who participate in service-learning are white. Marquette has a total student body of approximately 10,600 students. Slightly more than 13 percent is classified as minority: 4.3 percent Black, 3.9 percent Hispanic, 4.6 percent Asian or Pacific Islander, and .3 percent Native American. While 13 percent is higher than that found in the state university system, it is still under-representative of the nation's minority population, which in 1990 was about 25 percent. It is even less representative of the minority population in Milwaukee, a highly segregated city whose minority population stood at nearly 40 percent in the 1990 census.

Reasons for Differential Participation Rates

Because my courses focus on race and ethnicity, they tend to attract a disproportionate share of students of color. Overall, about 26 percent of the students in my courses are from minority groups. Of course, they are not evenly distributed throughout the six courses I teach. In my Sociology of the Family course, 5 percent to 24 percent of the students have been from minority groups. In my courses that are specifically race-focused, such as "Sociology of Minorities" or "Race and Family," the percent is higher — 22 percent to 50 percent. In terms of service-learning participation rates in my classes, in the first two and one-half years (five semesters) of using service-learning in my courses, 20.8 percent of the white majority students in all of my courses participated in service-learning, whereas only 6.6 percent of the minority students participated. Most of those minority service-learners were African American. Based on conversations, observation, and some informal survey data, I am in a position to speculate about this difference between whites and minorities in participation. Though more study is needed across our campus and other campuses, these observations and speculations may spark conversation and inform future research.

First, whenever I have surveyed my students as to why they passed up the service-learning option, the most common answers given, whether by majority or minority students, are that they were too busy and/or that the more conventional assignment option (that is, taking the midterm exam or writing a paper equivalent in length to the service-learning paper,

depending on the course) appeared easier, more familiar, and less time-consuming. Students of color are more likely than white students to respond that they are working full-time, and they are much more likely to say they have responsibilities to family, either to children of their own or to ailing family members.⁴

Second, to many minority students Marquette's service-learning program may look like another white establishment. Although a number of the student staff members at the Service Learning office are students of color, the administration is white and the majority of service-learners are white. That the Service-Learning Program is sponsored by a predominantly white university in the middle of a city with high proportions of people of color may establish it in the minds of many as a white *charitable* program. Being associated with Marquette University might give the program credibility in the eyes of whites; however, it may not have the same effect for minorities (see Edwards, 1990, for a similar finding in her research).

Third, many of the minority students have other avenues for service through their already established ethnic networks. Minority student organizations and Black fraternities and sororities, for instance, offer a number of service activities each year. Also, since many of the minority students at Marquette are from Milwaukee, many of them already are active in their local communities. One African American student explained to me that since Blacks have a history of service in their communities through their churches, schools, agencies, and other informal networks, he felt he had "been there, done that" and needed to focus his time on academic demands.

Fourth, in addition to voluntary service, national occupational distribution figures indicate that about 22% of all African Americans are employed in social work positions, which are often on the lower end of the pay scale. Many recent minority students are seeking employment in better paying careers (at Marquette, the majority of minority students are majoring in Dentistry, Professional studies, or the Health Sciences). Minority students, many of whom are the first generation college attenders in their families, may believe that, unlike their white counterparts at Marquette, they can rely less on friend or family connections or on relations with the predominantly white faculty (of whom I am one) to get them established in these types of careers. Thus, minority students may prefer to invest their time and effort in internships or to "making the grade," rather than on performing service. Finally, unlike many white students, students of color often think, not necessarily correctly, that they don't lack exposure to people of other races or ethnicities and to the effects of low

income. Therefore, in those respects they think that they can forgo the service-learning experience, particularly in race-focused courses (service-learning sites tend to be in low income communities consisting largely of people of color).

Pedagogical Interventions

To encourage more students of color to participate in service-learning, this past year I implemented two pedagogical changes in my courses. First, to increase the incentive to choose service-learning over the conventional assignment, I increased the weight of the service-learning option in the overall course grade. If the conventional assignment had been worth 20-25 percent of the final grade in previous semesters, I increased the service-learning option about another 8- 12 percentage points, allowing students to take the difference off their weakest exam score. Second, I allowed placement in sites that were not currently part of the official Marquette Service-Learning Program. This permitted students who were already serving at a church or community center, for example, to use that as the service component of the course, thereby avoiding the perception of service-learning as an additional burden. It also enabled them to continue service at places with which they were already familiar.

These changes appeared to have a significant impact on the proportion of students, particularly minority students, who chose to participate in service-learning this past year (see Table 1). For the 1998-1999 academic year, 38.6 percent of minority students in all of my classes chose to do service-learning. This represents an increase of almost 600% over the first five semesters. For white students, an increase also occurred, but it represents only about 5%.

Clearly the race gap between white and minority students in service-learning was reversed. It remains to be seen, however, whether the pattern will be sustained beyond this year. Moreover, it is unclear how much of that gain was due to the increased incentive and how much was due to the ability to choose independent sites. More research is necessary, not only to ascertain how much each factor may have contributed to the change, but also to determine how much of an increase in incentive is needed to create

TABLE 1
Total Service-Learning Participation Rates of Minority and White Students Before and After Pedagogical Changes to Encourage Participation

	1995-1998	1998-1999
Minority Students	6.6%	38.6%
White Students	20.8%	21.9%

the rise in participation.

The second participation-rate gap — that between non-race-focused and race-focused courses — was not reversed (see Table 2). While the rates of student participation increased, they increased in both types of courses, so that students of every color are less likely to choose the service-learning option in race and ethnic courses than they are in courses not specifically related to race. During the first five semesters of using service-learning in my race-focused courses, 5.4 percent of minority and 17.6 percent of white students participated in service-learning, but in my non-race courses, 7.8 percent of minority students and 21.8 percent of white students participated. (While the difference between race-focused and non-race-focused participation in the 1995-1998 period was small, it was consistent across all semesters but one.) The pedagogical changes implemented this past year (mentioned above) did raise the service-learning participation rates of students in race-focused classes to 33.3 percent for minorities and 20.8 percent for whites, but it also increased the participation rates in the non-race-focused courses to 43.5 percent for minorities and to 23.5 percent for whites. Hence the service-learning participation-rate gap between the two types of courses remained.⁵ Clearly, it is still more inviting to choose the service-learning option when the course is not specifically focused on race.

Once again, based on conversations with students, my own reflections, as well as those of other faculty of race and ethnic courses, I can speculate as to why this gap remains. Such speculation necessitates consideration of the nature of race and ethnic courses and the process of doing and reflecting upon service-learning.

Many teachers of race and ethnic courses report that these courses tend to have a distinct set of challenges (Chan & Treacy, 1996; Disch & Thompson, 1990; Higgenbotham, 1996; Tatum, 1992). For instance, faculty report more student resistance to

TABLE 2
Service-Learning Participation Rates between Minority and White Students in Race- and Non-Race-Focused Classes Between 1995-1998 and 1998-1999

Race-focused Courses	1995-1998	1998-1999
Minority	5.4%	33.3%
White	17.6%	20.8%
Non-Race-focused Courses	1995-1998	1998-1999
Minority	7.8%	43.5%
White	21.8%	23.5%

the material, inhibited student discussion, higher absenteeism, and complaints of bias or groans of "I've heard it all before." One might surmise then that resistance, inhibition, and discomfort would also be present in a service-learning class focused on race. When students realize at the beginning of the semester that their service-learning paper or presentation will require a specific focus on race issues, most of them are far-sighted enough to realize that this will very likely entail asking questions about race issues to people of different races whom they don't know very well. Conversations in class and at the site are more complicated and difficult to approach when race is an explicit focus of the discussion and when the people conversing are of different racial backgrounds. (I will return to this in more detail later.) These dialogue inhibitions are likely to affect service-learning participation in race-focused courses. Students may feel the course is emotionally demanding enough, without adding the anticipated challenge of the service-learning experience too.

In addition, in Marquette's Social and Cultural Sciences Department, in which I teach, the race-focused courses are upper division courses, which usually have more demanding reading assignments than the lower level courses. In that case, the service-learning option may appear as an added academic burden, rather than an exciting new experience.

Challenges and Recommendations for Race-Focused Service-Learning Courses

Site — Student Relationships

Early in the semester, many service-learning students in any course will report embarrassment, awkwardness, or shyness at their service sites. It's a new setting, often with people who are different than those with whom they usually associate. They may feel that they are the "lucky" (or some might think the "deserving") students going in to watch or minister to the "unlucky" (or "undeserving"). Because there are high numbers of people of color and levels of poverty in Milwaukee, at many service-learning sites the clients are predominantly racial minorities. The staff, on the other hand, is often predominantly majority. While some white students may say that they now have some idea of what it is like to be the only person of their race in a particular social setting, they also know (though they often do not overtly acknowledge it) that in more ways than not they still have more power and influence than the clients or community members. Resistance to acknowledging that power differential may limit their interpretations of what they observe (Bohmer & Briggs, 1991; Lual, 1996).

Race and class dynamics were made evident at one homeless shelter, for example, where several white students reported that the children at the shelter, who were mostly African American, seemed to cling to the mostly middle class white students. When the students would arrive for their service, the children would cheer and run to them, demanding affection and interrogating the service-learners about their lives at home and school. While the service-learners enjoyed the affection of the children, the students sensed jealousy on the part of the mothers, who would watch their children quickly leave them to go to the students. Students observed some mothers ignoring, yelling at, or hitting their children. At that point, still unable to see how persistent poverty might affect one's ability to parent in a public setting, many of the students felt no sympathy toward the mothers whom they saw as neglectful or abusive to their children. Responding in similar fashion to the mothers, the shelter dealt with the situation by making it policy that the service-learners could not pick up, hug, or give piggyback rides to the children.

Working with older children and adults has its own set of dynamics. They are often not as affectionate and responsive as young children, and the power relations are, in the case of older adults, sometimes reversed. In these situations, students often fear rejection by, or not being able to relate to, the clients or community members. One middle-class white student was assigned to work at a school for at-risk African American middle school boys, and they were not receptive to his presence. After about two or three visits, he confided to me that he was uncomfortable in the classroom, felt he could not share his feelings with the classroom teacher, and asked to choose another site.

Differing styles of communication and language, particularly between lower class African Americans and middle class whites, is a contributing factor and has been mentioned as a source of discomfort by at least two of my white students. One reported in her paper that she could not understand what the African American middle schoolers were saying: "I, as usual, was having a difficult time catching every word they said, and when they did speak directly to me, I felt bad because I was constantly asking them to repeat themselves." However, she also reported, "It really got me wondering how [these communication styles] affect their performance at school and how it determines the way in which they are perceived." Fortunately, this experience pushed her to seek additional resources on Black English. Another white female student, who was focusing her learning experience on childrearing by grandparents in the African American community, forfeited the opportu-

nity to interview the grandmother of the girl she was tutoring because the student feared she would not understand the grandmother.

Differences in shared experience can also create inter-minority communication difficulties. Interactions between African Americans and Asians or among Hispanic groups can also be exacerbated by stereotypes, differences in communication styles, lack of information about another minority group's experience, and intergroup political rivalries over perceived power differentials in American society. It is difficult in the course of one semester for students to overcome these barriers and establish relationships comfortable enough to address race issues.

Race-Focused Discussions and Assignments

To ameliorate these potential challenges, there are strategies for which the Service-Learning Center, individual faculty member, and/or site sponsors can and should be responsible. An orientation that includes diversity training is essential, and can vary in content from speakers to video documentaries to interactive group exercises. Marquette University's program did offer an optional cultural diversity training session each semester, but students complained that they had heard enough of this already and attendance declined. Instituting mandatory diversity training for service-learning is a possibility, but such a requirement may have a negative impact on participation rates. Service-learners at Marquette must also attend orientation sessions at each site, so on-site diversity training tailored to the specific ethnic groups at each location may be a better, or an additional, route. This might also counteract the assumption that diversity training is only for whites.

There are also strategies within the professor's jurisdiction that can be adopted and adapted to each class to help students manage diversity issues. First, acknowledging and addressing possible cross-cultural problems openly in class enables students to seek counsel from the instructor and classmates. An instructor might discuss power as a variable in the service-learning setting: What kinds of power are present? When are the times that students feel powerful or, conversely, powerless in relation to staff or clients? Which feels more uncomfortable? It is only natural that clients, community members, and organization staff may experience and perhaps express some resentment at being the object of study and observation, or at being perceived as only a receiver of services. Making the observations and interactions a more mutual endeavor can alleviate this. For instance, one service-learner whose site was a nursing home let it be known among the staff that she was taking a course on race relations. The nurses

began asking her questions about the course and race issues in general, and that freed her to ask them questions about the race relations between the predominantly African American nursing staff and the predominantly white patients. (I will address the topic of mutuality again in a later section.)

Second, instructors should introduce readings in class (or on a suggested reading list) that enlighten students to various differences in communication styles among racial-ethnic groups. For instance, Baker (1995) discusses the preference among many African Americans for using titles when addressing individuals. Bachman and O'Malley (1984), Hecht, Ribeau, and Alberts (1989), Kochman (1981), and Smitherman (1977) delineate numerous black-white differences in communication style, and a number of counseling and social work texts (Furuto, Biswas, Chung, Murase, & Ross-Sheriff, 1992; Pedersen, 1985; Ryan & Hendricks, 1989; Sue & Sue, 1990) address such differences among Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans. Though the instructor and the students may disagree with these readings, they make excellent springboards for talking about intercultural communication.

Third, instructors should be flexible and patient in their goals. Requiring students to choose community sites that would expose them to cross-race relationships is, in theory, a good idea. In practice, it isn't always so. Cross-race relations tend to take longer to initiate, tend to end more frequently on unfriendly terms, and are less likely to provide psychosocial support than same-race relations (Morrison & Von Glinow, 1990). This adds another layer to relationships that are already impacted by class, age, and, perhaps, gender differences as well. Before making cross-race experiences required (though sometimes they inevitably have to be), the professor should be informed, prepared to deal with possible conflicts, and open to the possibility that not every student-site match will work out. Disappointment or failure in cross-race relations can be a vehicle for further analysis of racial issues and perspectives.

Students' Reflections on Service and Learning

In my teaching experience, minority students often feel less free than white students to talk in classes in which their numbers are low. In predominantly white colleges and universities across the United States, this is typically the case. However, in my race-focused classes at Marquette, where the minority proportion is much higher, the opposite has tended to occur. Neither situation makes for good reflection on service experiences, but the latter case, in particular, creates frustration on the part of minority, particularly African American, students, who

sometimes perceive white silence as a refusal to join a dialogue (Kochman, 1982).

Whites often don't have to think about the impact of race in their lives, since in the United States at least, white is the norm (Nakayama & Krizek, 1995). When they are forced to think or talk about it, they frequently say that color doesn't matter to them; they claim they don't see the color of a person. By speaking this way, they believe they are being unprejudiced; they believe they are trying to find commonalities between themselves and people of color. (See Dalton, 1995, for discussion on whites and colorblindness.) Often, however, the effect is just the opposite. Ironically, by trying to universalize their experience or ignore it altogether, whites actually reveal that they don't share the same reality as their minority counterparts. Hence, much research (Edwards, 1990; Thompson, Worthington & Atkinson, 1994) on cross-race relations suggests that such relations work better when the white person acknowledges the differences in position, in race, and in lack of shared experience.

Some professors try to control class discussions by setting ground rules for dialogue (Cannon, 1990). That does not fit my style, and most of the time I am more concerned about getting students to discuss openly and inclusively than about keeping raucous discussions under control. I have found that student discussions work better if: 1) a pattern of frequent, though short if necessary, discussions start on the first day of class; 2) I address the existence of discomfort on the part of all, including myself, in the first week; 3) I share some of my own personal experiences with cross-race relations; 4) I ask on occasion, "Is this specific topic awkward to talk about? If so, why?;" and 5) I incorporate the content of relevant out-of-class conversations that I have with students without revealing the identity of the student.

In any class, oral presentations are a source of discomfort for most students. This is probably more true in race- and ethnicity-focused classes, where people are usually expecting but trying to avoid confrontation and desiring but fearful of learning new things about themselves and others. For instance, in one of my Race and Family classes, the service-learners prepared short presentations based on papers they were about to submit. After reading the papers, I realized that some of the students had modified their spoken observations by omitting references to the race of the people they worked with or by mitigating negative observations so as not to offend students of those particular races in the classroom.

One white student in that class reported on an interview she had conducted with a black woman. As a prefatory remark, she joked that the woman

was "a little strange." While she made that comment to explain that some of the things she was about to report probably were not reflective of most African Americans, she immediately worried that it might be seen as racist by the students of color in the class and so quickly added, "But she was a very nice person; I liked her a lot," a retraction that only worsened the situation.

Another student strategy is to avoid the race component altogether in their papers. For instance, although I meet individually with service-learners during the semester to discuss their experiences and the topics of their papers, a few still manage to hand in papers that have a general focus, such as "the effect of single parent families on teens" or "the effect of welfare policy changes on families." In other words, the papers reflect a legitimate topic and the students' service experience, but they have avoided the discomfort of the racial element. By doing so, they also miss the saliency of the racial factor. That is, by talking generally about single-parent families or about welfare, they mistakenly universalize these issues, giving the impression that all races experience single-parenting or welfare similarly. Or, conversely, if the people at their site were Latino, they mistakenly give the impression that single-parenting or welfare is only a Latino experience. In either case, omitting the race factor conceals the subtleties and variations among and between groups.

Written assignments/reflections should be periodically monitored by the instructor through discussion with individual students and perhaps by other service-learners or students through small group discussions. These may allow for more honest dialogue than large-group presentations. (See Dunlap, 1998, for more on the use of written journals and small-group discussions as a way of eliciting more open reflection on race issues.) The latter work if the class has been successful in establishing an effective discussion atmosphere.

Trying (and I mean "trying") to establish an open and safe place for discussion in the classroom is essential, but I have yet to fully achieve that. However, I have been impressed most of the time with the maturity of my students so that, although a number of discussions have been intense, none have been hurtful. However, a colleague of mine shared with me an in-class discussion in which a white student admitted to the class that she was afraid she might not be able to tell the African American people apart since she was not used to being around Black people very much. This precipitated a heated response from one of the Black students in the class, who had heard "they all look alike" one too many times. My class ended with my colleague feeling she had not managed the discussion well.

Addressing Unintended Service-Learning Outcomes

When I consider the resistance to confronting race issues, the maintenance of race and class power relations in the service-learning experience, and the difficulty and occasional disappointment with communication between and among people of various races and culture, I fear that incorporating service-learning in my courses occasionally has the opposite outcome of what I was intending. I use the face-to-face interactions of service-learning to dispel stereotypes and create awareness of the impact of social structures and forces on the lives of individuals, but at times the experiences alone merely confirm the stereotypes (see also Cohen, 1995) and camouflage the structures. As John Dewey (quoted in Giles & Eyler, 1994) said:

The belief that all genuine education comes about through experience does not mean that all experiences are genuinely or equally educative. Experience and education cannot be directly equated to each other. For some experiences are mis-educative. Any experience is mis-educative that has the effect of arresting or distorting the growth of further experience. (p. 79)

In a service-learning setting where most of the clients are minorities, the inequities are vivid, and the inequities or symptoms can appear to be the cause rather than the effect of underlying socioeconomic dynamics (Calderon & Farrell, 1996). When that is the case, they then become rationalizations for further discrimination and stereotyping. For example, a colleague reported that one white student, after observing a local school teacher having trouble getting a parent to come to school, concluded in her evaluation that "poor African American parents don't care about their children." The student had not been able to see that other factors, such as lack of transportation, work schedules, lack of education, and discomfort with school staff, might explain the lack of parental participation at the school. While her service-learning was a powerful experience, it still was only one slice of the whole picture.

To counteract this pitfall, I have been trying three strategies. First, I have been working with the Service-Learning Program to seek sites where racial minorities are not only clients or illustrations of social problems. Local churches, community centers, the Urban League, Fair Housing Authorities, and political organizations, are examples of places where people from the community are working cooperatively for social change and are good opportunities to gain understanding of social issues and structures without seeing minorities only as victims.

Second, at sites where the minority-victim rela-

tionship is reproduced among the clients (the usual focus of service-learning), I ask service-learners to also focus on the minority staff members. One white student had confided that it was a constant struggle to overcome her stereotypes while working at a homeless shelter for mostly African American women. I asked her to focus her reflections on the few African American staff instead of the residents for awhile. By focusing on the staff, who were more educated, of higher socioeconomic standing, and were experiencing less stress than the clients, she was able to realize the diversity among African Americans and to compare middle class blacks with their white counterparts on the staff (instead of comparing poor minorities with middle class whites, which frequently happens at these sites and confuses class effects with race). In fact, when she made this adjustment in her observations, she found that the African American staff was less concerned with hierarchy, treated her with more respect and confidence, and allowed her more responsibilities than the white staff.

Although it is necessary to make between-group comparisons to illustrate societal inequality, I emphasize within-group diversity as well. For instance, while the students may be working with low-income groups, I spend some time discussing or having them read about the middle-class experience in that group. I also require them to supplement their written reflections by reading and incorporating a few journal articles so that they can place their brief experience with a few individuals into a larger, more varied, context.

Finally, I charge the students with the task of finding the resources, adaptive strategies, or as Gonzales (1995) and others have called them, the "funds of knowledge," among the people they serve, rather than looking for the problems and deficits of the community. Instead of merely relying on their observations, I encourage my students to talk with and ask questions of staff, clients, relatives of clients, and others with whom they come into contact. It is important that problems be identified and defined by the community, not just "expert" outsiders (Burbules & Rice 1993, Fox 1994). In fact, if the service-learners are themselves residents of the local community, they might contribute to designing a service project that would benefit their community and in which other service-learners could participate. Having this focus and approaching clients from this perspective, students are more likely to come away with positive insights into the various cultures, more understanding of how originally perceived "deviant" behavior might in fact be very rational behavior, and more clarity of how "victims" may be receivers of goods and services in one regard but

also contributors in another.

Conclusion

The above discussion of the effects of pedagogical changes on participation rates of minority and white students and on all students in race-focused courses, along with the discussion of pitfalls and suggestions, should provide a plethora of ideas for further research. My participation-rate experiment was admittedly based only on several courses in one department. The effects need to be disentangled and replicated on a university- or universities-wide scale. Also for simplicity, I lumped all nonwhites into one "minority" grouping, but the participation rate varied among minority groups consistently as well. The discussion on explanations for participation rate gaps, although based on repeated and cumulative observation, remains largely speculative. The discussion on outcomes in regard to stereotypes and understanding of social structure effects is a rich area for future researchers. Are stereotypes or racial attitudes positively or negatively affected by service-learning? What variables, such as type of site, play a significant role in the outcomes?

The intent of this article was to inform those who use or intend to use service-learning in their courses of the ways in which race may impact their experience (and the experience of their students) differently than their colleagues who teach non-race-focused courses. While the use of the service-learning option in race-focused courses may pose additional hurdles to the goal of using the community as a teaching tool, the hurdles are not insurmountable. When professors anticipate these potential pitfalls and prepare for them by structuring incentives and building flexibility into the service options, encouraging diverse participation, monitoring reflection, creating an open classroom venue for discussion and analysis, and selecting sites that facilitate a diversity of perspectives, service-learning in a racialized context can be an effective learning tool.

Notes

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¹ See, Service learning: 'Community as classroom' gains currency across country. *Journal of Public Service and Outreach*, 2(1).

² The distinction being made here between race-focused and non-race-focused courses is not intended to imply that race issues should all be lumped into specific courses rather than permeating the curriculum. For purposes of this article, while non-race-specific courses may speak to race issues, they do not require that service-learners focus their learning on race issues. In my race-focused courses, however, service-learners are required to make race a focus of their observations and reflections.

³ Marquette University has made the *Mother Jones* top ten list of activist schools three of the five years the magazine published the list. See Wieczorek, 1998.

⁴ While I did not systematically keep records of my students' familial status, a retrospective perusal of my course rosters indicates that I have had about seven white students who have been married, pregnant, and/or parenting, and I have had at least eleven minority students with one or more of those statuses.

⁵ The gap between race-focused and non-race-focused courses actually increased for minority students, but not because their participation in race-focused courses decreased. Rather, their participation in non-race-focused courses increased at a much higher rate.

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