ABSTRACT

Title of Document:	"HAIKUS IN THE SUBWAY": UNDERSTANDING STUDENT MEANING-MAKING OF AN ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK TRIP
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The purpose of this constructivist case study was to investigate students' experiences on an Alternative Spring Break (ASB) trip and the meaning students made of the experience. The research questions guiding the study were: (a) What did students learn about themselves and others through their participation; (b) How did students' social identities interact with the contexts of the ASB immersion location and influence their experiences? In-depth data collection involved multiple sources of information, including post-trip semi-structured interviews, participant journals, and participant-observations. Data was analyzed through the constant comparison of data sources and analysis as themes emerged. Eleven participants and I traveled to Chicago during a week-long ASB experience focusing on affordable housing. Findings from this study include: (1) the intense immersion context of the trip and resulting disorientation and detachment; (2) the connections and complexities

uncovered through interactions with community members, peers on the trip, and new perspectives; (3) a more complicated view of race in relation to the social issue and peer interactions; and (4) the challenges of reentry upon returning home.

"HAIKUS IN THE SUBWAY": UNDERSTANDING STUDENT MEANING-MAKING OF AN ALTERNATIVE SPRING BREAK EXPERIENCE

By

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

There were haikus in the subway
Most of the pictures we took were down there
Most of our trip was spent down there
In the subway…
There were haikus in the subway
We went down there, to reach the southside where we
Were lucky enough to meet a beauty.
Beauty
A writer and a fighter
Beautiful Beauty took us on a tour
She showed us her lifetime lover
Robert Taylor
At least she showed us the grass that was
Robert Taylor…
We loved the haikus
We took pictures of them
We also visited the Coalition to protect public housing.
It was in the middle of blocks of rubble and
Abandoned houses,
Because the HOPE was that it would be upgraded
But even people who don't go to college know that
HOPE is fleeting
No promises came with HOPE
But that's ok
Because there's haikus in the subway…(Zeya, journal)

Most would assume that haikus belong in a book and that the subway is utilized for transportation. However, encountering haikus in the subway portrays the beauty and conflict of the atmosphere in which students experienced an Alternative Spring Break (ASB) trip. ASB is typically a week-long service-learning immersion experience during the university's spring break through which students travel in teams to different locations and engage with the local community about a particular social issue, such as hunger and homelessness. On the ASB trip to Chicago, the haikus in the subway were more than unexpected artwork in the city; the haikus captured the dissonance students experienced as they were confronted with a new way of understanding the world. Traveling on the

subway between community sites during the week-long trip was a contemplative time during which students would try to make meaning of what they saw, whom they met, and questions that were raised. Sometimes riding the subway involved catching a few winks, chatting with a fellow participant, or quietly staring off into space as the mind wandered. As eloquently captured by the student's poem, her experience on the ASB trip was filled with new sights, inspiring people, and questions of hope. The potential for these experiences to promote transformative learning warrants a deeper look at how students make meaning of short-term service-learning immersion experiences like ASB.

In this chapter, I discuss ASB trips as part of the increased focused on service-learning as a means for reaching the civic mission of higher education. First, I provide the context for the mission of higher education to foster civic leadership through experiential learning activities designed to encourage civic engagement. Then, I highlight the pedagogy of service-learning as a way of promoting civic engagement. Finally, I introduce ASB experiences as a form of service-learning, leading into an overview of the context and methodology of this study.

Increased Focus on Civic Mission in Higher Education

Educating for citizenship and civic leadership has long been a part of the mission of higher education in the U.S. and has gained increased attention and focus of research at colleges and universities (Campus Compact, 2007; Carnegie Foundation, 2006; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 2009; Musil, 2003). As the civic mission of colleges and universities became "better defined and more comprehensive, and as it took on a distinct civic renewal flavor, 'civic engagement' gained widespread acceptance as the encompassing conceptual framework" (Saltmarsh, 2005, p. 52). Campus Compact, a

national coalition of college and university presidents committed to civic education, noted a "strong five-year trend toward increased civic engagement….as measured by student service opportunities, community partnership and campus infrastructures to support service work" (Campus Compact, 2004, p. 2).

Saltmarsh (2005) suggested that there is a lack of clarity about the definition of civic engagement. Musil (2003) defined civic engagement as "applying knowledge…experiencing the challenge of deliberating across differences to achieve agreed upon ends…integrating what one knows with what one values in the service of the common good" (p. 8). The Coalition for Civic Engagement and Leadership at the University of Maryland expanded the definition to include "a wide range of activities, including developing civic sensitivity, participation in building civic society, and benefiting the common good," through which individuals "are empowered as agents of positive social change for a more democratic world" (Jacoby, 2009, p. 9).

Increasingly, higher education associations and organizations, such as the Association of American Colleges & Universities, Campus Compact, and the National Society for Experiential Education, have embraced civic engagement initiatives (Jacoby, 2009). Higher education scholars recognize the social and developmental benefits, such as working with others, breaking down stereotypes, and increasing self-knowledge, associated with connecting students to the community through "student-centered pedagogies that foster engaged, participatory learning dependent on dialogue and collaboration" (Musil, 2003, p. 5). Economic factors and interest in expanding access to colleges also have encouraged higher education institutions to focus on civic engagement and look to the community to meet their civic engagement goals by making a difference

in their local neighborhoods (Musil). Education scholars have identified experiential learning, particularly connecting students with the community, as a strategy for achieving civic engagement outcomes (Dewey, 1938; Kolb, 1984).

Experiential Learning for Civic Engagement

Dewey (1938) argued that education, "in order to accomplish its ends both for the individual learner and for society must be based upon experience" (p. 113). Dewey contended that genuine education occurs through experience, in which students better understand themselves and their role in a democratic society. Educators must recognize that experiences lead to growth when students are encouraged to understand the significance of the world around them (Dewey). Dewey's argument for connecting classroom learning and lived experience has been a focus of many educators. Kolb (1984) highlighted the connection between experiential learning and social change, which occurs through fostering "active exploration of the personal, experiential meaning of abstract concepts" (p. 16).

Rhoads (1997) used Dewey's writing on critical education to frame community service that creates lasting social change by exposing students to experiences in the community through which they "develop a complex understanding of the other, develop a more caring relationship, and thus think about the long-term enhancement of the other's life" (p. 227). Experiential education emphasizes the lived experience in the way in which it encourages students to reflect on themselves in the context of the larger society. Civic engagement outcomes, such as moral development and civic responsibility, can be achieved through experiential learning and service-learning pedagogies (Saltmarsh, 2005). Civic engagement literature indicates that service-learning, a form of experiential

learning, promotes civic engagement and serves as a strategy for meeting the civic mission of higher education (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 1996; Musil, 2003; Saltmarsh).

Promoting Civic Engagement through Service-Learning

A growing body of research demonstrates a relationship between increased civic engagement and the pedagogy of service-learning (Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Rhoads, 1997; Sax, 2000; Vogelgesang, 2005; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). Learning opportunities through service-learning create spaces in which "students can test and apply the values of a healthy democracy to some of the most complex and challenging issues of our time" (Corrigan, 2007, p. xiii). Jacoby (1996) defined service-learning as "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development" (p. 5).

Service-learning is burgeoning as a strategy for educators, politicians, and students to employ for meeting civic engagement initiatives (Kezar, 2002) because it "prompts students to understand their own culture in new ways, appreciate cultural differences, become more critically aware of social inequities and power relations, and envision a more democratic society" (Hayes & Cuban, 1996, p. 1). Service-learning involves a balance between service in the community and academic learning emphasizing the central role of reflection in the process of learning from the experience (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Student learning and development occur through "encounters with challenging ideas and people and active engagement with those challenges in a supportive environment," thus integrating "real-world activities and social interaction as

well as discipline-based instruction" (Carnegie Foundation, 2006, p. 3). Linking service-learning to civic engagement outcomes addresses the goal of developing empathy for others and a sense of empowerment to act as a member of the larger community outside the college campus (Rhoads & Neururer, 1998). Alternative Spring Break (ASB) trips, a form of service-learning, broaden students' understanding of being a part of a larger community by encouraging them to travel to domestic and international locations for a week of service-learning immersion.

Alternative Spring Break as a Form of Service-Learning

Alternative Spring Break (ASB) experiences, immersion trips during college and university spring breaks, are often designed as a form of service-learning and serve as an "alternative" to the traditional undergraduate spring break beach party and underage drinking experiences (Break Away Adventures, n.d.; Ivory, 1997). Students leave the comfort of their campus community, immerse themselves in the culture of a different location, and gain hands-on experience with a social issue. ASB trips can be viewed as a distinct type of service-learning because of the added dimension of immersion in which students, away from home for the extent of the trip, experience a new culture and new people, both at the service site and throughout the week's activities.

Research specific to ASB for college students has focused on the experiences as an example of service-learning, addressing service-learning outcomes, such as increased involvement in community service, connection to civic education, and multicultural competency (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 1996; King, 2004; Rhoads & Neururer, 1998). Little research has concentrated on students' experiences on ASB trips beyond measuring service-learning outcomes. ASB trips are

unique experiences in which students are separated from the comfort of home and the familiarity of their daily lives. Students participating in ASB are immersed in experiences that provide opportunities for them to cross borders with each other and with community members in a new setting, which influence students' understanding of self, others who are culturally different, and community (Cooks & Sharrer, 2006; Kambutu & Nganga, 2008; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Pompa, 2002; Rhoads & Neururer, 1998).

Although some research has been conducted on the impact of ASB experiences and supports the transformative learning potential of these programs (Boyle-Baise, 1998; Kiely 2004; Pompa, 2002; Rhoads & Neururer, 1998; Wessel, 2007), limited research exists on how students make meaning of these experiences. Wessel (2007) studied a short-term service-learning trip abroad in which participants reported having the most "life-changing" (p. 86) experience of their academic career. Rhoads and Neururer (1998) reported cognitive, interpersonal and affective outcomes of White students' participation in an ASB trip, through which students learned about themselves, values, and social responsibility through interaction with community members. Service-learning outcomes such as promoting intercultural exchange, fostering interpersonal skills, and developing critical thinking, self-knowledge, and citizenship provide insight into potential ASB outcomes (Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones & Abes, 2003, 2004; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Understanding what students learn about themselves, others, and the influence of their social identities from participation in ASB was a focus of this study.

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this constructivist case study was to investigate college students' experiences on an Alternative Spring Break trip focused on affordable housing and the meaning students made of the experience. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What do students learn about themselves and others through their participation in ASB?
2. How do students' social identities interact with the contexts of the ASB immersion location and influence their experiences in ASB?

Overview of Methodology

A constructivist case study served as the framework for this study to investigate students' perceived outcomes and the meaning they made of the ASB experience. Consistent with a qualitative case study approach, this study explored the bounded case of an ASB trip "through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73). Maximum variation and purposeful sampling occurred at two levels: selection of the case and selection of the individuals within the case (Creswell; Merriam, 1998).

Data collection for the study was drawn from multiple sources of information such as participant observations, documents, including participant applications and individual journals, and post-trip semi-structured interviews to provide an in-depth picture of the case (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995). Data was analyzed using procedures characteristic of case study method, involving four types of analysis: categorical aggregation, direct interpretation, correspondences and patterns, and

naturalistic generalizations (Stake). Analysis focused on the meaning students made of their experiences in relation to the context of the bounded case, which requires constant comparison between data sources and analysis as themes and generalizations emerge (Jones, Torres & Arminio, 2006).

Introduction of the Case

The ASB program at a large, public, mid-Atlantic university coordinates week-long, substance-free, community service-learning immersion trips. Participants travel in teams to different cities, engage in active service, and have the opportunity to gain new perspectives on social issues while meeting community needs. Participants for this study were part of a team of traditional-aged undergraduate students that traveled to Chicago during the spring of 2007. Two student trip leaders, ten student participants and I, serving in the dual role of staff advisor and researcher, spent eight days together learning and serving with community members and community agencies, focusing on the issue of affordable housing. A complete description of the ASB trip is provided in Chapter Three.

Significance of Study

Researchers suggest that service-learning has the potential to promote transformative learning and foster civic engagement outcomes in students (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kiely, 2004, 2005; Pompa, 2002). Given an increased focus on civic engagement in higher education, administrators and educators will devote more time and resources to programs and initiatives such as service-learning and ASB in order to meet the civic mission of institutions. Understanding students' experiences on ASB trips will provide greater insight into what these outcomes actually are and help identify best practices.

Unique aspects of ASB, such as students' travel to and immersion in unfamiliar locations, may foster outcomes that cannot be accounted for by current service-learning research. Students will benefit from further research on their experiences, which will highlight the complexities and possible areas of improvement for ASB programs. The communities with whom students interact on ASB trips will also benefit from investigation of students' experiences by uncovering students' perceived impact on and learning from the community site. Generating greater understanding about students' experiences on an ASB trip will help illuminate the influence of programmatic characteristics and identify potential challenges in achieving the desired outcomes from ASB.

Summary

Alternative Spring Break programs, designed as a form of service-learning, have the potential to meet higher education's civic mission. This case study was informed by literature on experiential education, civic engagement, and service-learning, which will be explored in greater depth in Chapter Two. The purpose of this study was to investigate students' experiences on an ASB trip and the findings that emerged from the case study methodology will contribute to the dearth of research on ASB experiences.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

In qualitative inquiry, the use of previous research serves to enhance emerging findings and inform the research problem through "larger theoretical constructs" (Jones, Torres, & Arminio, 2006, p. 25). The purpose of this study was to investigate college students' experiences on an Alternative Spring Break (ASB) trip, and this chapter is a review of literature that informed my conceptualization of the research project.

Alternative Spring Break (ASB) experiences, of increasing interest on college campuses, typically involve a week-long trip to an off-campus location to engage in service-learning focused on a particular social issue such as homelessness, poverty, HIV/AIDS, or environmental restoration (Boyle-Baise & Langford, 2004; Break Away Adventures, n.d.; Ivory, 1997). Limited research exists on ASB programs; however, most ASB experiences are designed as service-learning programs. Literature on service-learning characteristics and outcomes provides useful insight into possible ASB outcomes. Furthermore, Break Away, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting Alternative Breaks programs, describes ASB experiences as students immersing into new cultures, which invites them to confront unfamiliar social issues in diverse communities. Exploration of additional key components of ASB as service-learning, such as immersion, intercultural interaction, and dissonant experiences further enhances my conceptualization of ASB as service-learning.

In this chapter, I provide a broad overview service-learning characteristics, outcomes, and challenges, which provide insights into possible ASB outcomes. After exploring the limited research that exists on ASB, I will review literature exploring several key elements in ASB designed as service-learning, including immersion,

encounters with others, dissonance, border crossing, racial identity and White privilege, intercultural interaction and dialogue, and reentry.

Characteristics of Effective Service-Learning

Service-learning literature on the characteristics and outcomes of effective service-learning deepens the conceptualization of ASB as a form of service-learning. The Council for the Advancement of Standards (CAS) in Higher Education for service-learning programs, using Jacoby's (1996) definition, characterized service-learning as engaging students in "experiences that address human and community needs together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development" (CAS, 2005). CAS further determined the necessary criteria for service-learning programs to include responsible actions to meet community needs in which the needs of all participants are met, articulating service and learning goals, educating students on the philosophy of service-learning, engaging students in reflective practice, and encouraging students to deepen their understanding of themselves, the community, and complex social issues (CAS).

Eyler and Giles (1999) conducted a national study of 1100 students engaged in service-learning, which focused on students' assessment of their learning and the impact of service-learning on achieving higher education's complex learning goals. Eyler and Giles found that program characteristics make a considerable difference in fostering service-learning outcomes, such as critical thinking skills and social perspective transformation. Students who participated in the study stressed the importance of the nature of the service work in the community, the relationship building with community members and peers, and the challenge of integrating learning through reflection. Key

characteristics identified as most central to effective service-learning included placement quality, application, reflection, diversity, and community voice (Eyler & Giles). These characteristics were predictors of service-learning outcomes such as tolerance, personal development, interpersonal development, closeness to faculty, citizenship, learning and application, problem solving and critical thinking, and perspective transformation (Eyler & Giles).

The Wingspread Principles for Good Practice for Combining Service and Learning are a seminal resource for identifying best practices in service-learning (Honnet & Poulson, 1989). The principles include: engaging in actions for the common good, reflecting critically on the experience, articulating learning goals, community identifying the needs, clarifying responsibilities, sustaining commitment, and committing to program participation by diverse populations (Honnet & Poulson). Within these ten principles, several characteristics of effective service-learning practice emerge, including the importance of reflection, reciprocity, and placement/duration (Eyler & Giles; Jacoby, 1996; Jones, 2002b; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). In the following pages, I look in more depth at these characteristics of effective service-learning and include some programmatic challenges associated with ASB.

Reflection

Reflection, well-integrated into these experiences, is a critical aspect to attaining service-learning outcomes, such as applying knowledge and personal and cognitive development (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hatcher, Bringle, & Muthiah, 2004). Reflection encourages the learner to examine the relationship between service involvement and academic knowledge, thus broadening and deepening students' "social, moral, personal,

and civic dimensions" (Hatcher, Bringle & Muthiah, p. 39). Combining service and reflection promotes awareness and understanding of complex social issues (Kahne & Westheimer, 1999). The attention to reflection in service-learning stems from the field's connection to the experiential learning theories of Dewey (1938) and Kolb (1984). Reflection that connects students' real-world experiences with concepts and theories promotes personal and cognitive development.

Eyler and Giles (1999) found that participation in service-learning classes that integrated meaningful service and reflective components led to increased complexity in analysis of social problems. Structured reflection encouraged students to connect their experiences with concepts and theories in order to generate concrete, applicable knowledge (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 1996; Kiely, 2005). Kiely (2005), in a longitudinal study of a transformative learning model for service-learning, found that reflection played a critical role in fostering students' perspective transformation. The contextual influence of the service-learning partnership between community and college influenced the reflections students made on their experiences (Kiely).

Rhoads (1997) suggested that service without reflection did not challenge students' perceptions about social inequality and that action and reflection must be engaged together in the service-learning setting. The reflective components challenge students to learn about the complexity of social issues and also promote an understanding of how the students themselves are inextricably linked to the larger social context.

Reciprocity

Reciprocity in service-learning emphasizes cultivating sustainable partnerships in order to deepen the learning about a social issue (Jones & Abes, 2003). Service-learning

experiences that have been defined by the community foster relationships that exist with interdependence rather than one-sided dependence (Enos & Morton, 2003). Rhoads (1997) discusses reciprocity or "mutuality" (p. 137) as an exchange of giving and receiving between the server and the people being served. Mutuality in the service-learning relationship has the potential to bridge differences by focusing on how students and community members connect through a shared concern (Rhoads). Eyler and Giles (1999) found that student engagement with community voice as the basis of the community partnerships encouraged cultural appreciation, valuing a continued service, and recognizing that the community members are "like me" (p. 31). Reciprocity in service-learning fosters an exchange that takes personal relationships to a societal level by linking trust and social responsibility (Keith, 2005).

In their study investigating how students and community partners understand diversity through service-learning, Jones and Hill (2001) defined reciprocal relationships as "those in which all partners are involved in the design of the activity, all learn from the relationship, and all benefit as a result" (p. 214). Through contact with others and social issues, students and community members came to understand more about themselves, others and their connection to social issues. Such relationships were essential to fostering service-learning outcomes, yet, Jones and Hill questioned whether reciprocity was possible without burdening the community or ignoring community voice, and they placed significant obligation on those designing service-learning to clarify interests and maximize community voice. Placement quality, like reciprocity, is an essential aspect to consider when planning and implementing service-learning experiences.

Placement Quality

Program characteristics, such as quality of placement, must be thoughtfully implemented to create experiences with sustained community engagement and intellectual stimulation (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Service is a crucial element of the service-learning experience and is the greatest source of learning (Eyler & Giles). Service-learning educators must be attentive to the quality of the service site and the strength of the relationship with the community partner. The placement quality provides the environment in which students take initiative, act responsibly, and work collaboratively with community members (Eyler & Giles). A quality service-learning partnership exists beyond the initial contact and develops into "full immersion into many aspects of the life of the community agency" (Jones, 2003, p. 158).

Enos and Morton (2003) provided a typology framework for developing campus-community partnerships that incorporates duration of time and depth and complexity of the experience. Eyler and Giles (1999) found that intensive, longer-term service-learning placements impacted personal and interpersonal development, critical thinking, and perspective transformation outcomes. In order to highlight outcomes that are possible through well-designed service-learning, I move to a discussion of broad service-learning outcomes, including civic, cognitive, interpersonal, and personal outcomes.

Service-Learning Outcomes

Pascarella and Terenzini (2005), whose work reviews and synthesizes research on the impact of college on students, noted conclusively that "community service in general, and service-learning in particular, has statically significant and positive net effects on students' sociopolitical attitudes and beliefs" (p. 304). Many researchers have identified

positive outcomes, including civic, cognitive, interpersonal, and personal outcomes of student's participation in service-learning (Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones & Abes, 2004; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 2005; Vogelgesang, 2005; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). In the following sections, I discuss a few highlights among the many service-learning outcomes, which relate to potential outcomes of ASB.

Civic Responsibility

Researchers identified service-learning as a predictor of students' engagement in social activism and civic engagement (Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Sax, 2000; Vogelgesang, 2005; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). Researchers also indicated that participation in community service activities has positive effects on civic values, skills, and attitudes (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Rhoads (1998) studied participation in community service as a form of "citizenship education" (p. 277) and reported that service-learning promoted community involvement in the future and commitment to measures of civic responsibility.

Astin and Sax (1998) studied first-year students and follow-up data focusing on the impact of community service participation on undergraduate development and found that participation in community service increased civic responsibility, including commitment to participate in a community action program and influencing the political structure. In her study of 2004 Freshman CIRP data, Vogelgesang (2005) reported that students participating in community service demonstrated a future commitment to volunteering and increases in citizenship behaviors and sociopolitical attitudes.

Cognitive Dimensions

Service experiences, particularly when integrated with structured reflection activities, have the potential to foster knowledge acquisition and contribute to the development of students' general cognitive skills and intellectual growth (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Astin and Sax (1998) reported that community service positively influenced students' grades, retention, and aspirations for educational degrees. In a longitudinal study of over 22,000 undergraduate students, of whom 76% participated in some form of community service, Vogelgesang and Astin (2000), demonstrated that service-learning had positive impact on students' academic achievement. In addition to academic and intellectual growth, researchers have identified increases in cognitive complexity associated with participation in service-learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Vogelegsang & Astin, 2000; Wang & Rodgers, 2006).

Eyler and Giles (1999) conducted two national studies and found cognitive and affective dimensions of service-learning in the learning process, including a deeper understanding of social issues and application of subject matter and the development of critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Students recognized complexity in social problems and thought critically about the problems as a result of service-learning, particularly when structured reflection was emphasized. Increases in students' critical thinking ability translated into a perspective transformation, which moved students toward a more complex and systemic view of social issues and the role of political action (Eyler & Giles).

Personal and Interpersonal Development

Connecting with the community through service-learning frequently involves students coming into contact with people different from themselves, particularly in social identities, such as race/ethnicity and social class. Service-learning researchers indicated that these interactions change students' awareness and attitude toward others (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Service-learning increases students' ability to learn from others about social values and promotes racial understanding (Astin & Sax, 1998; Pascarella & Terrenzini, 2005). Eyler and Giles (1999) found that participation in service-learning encouraged personal and interpersonal skill development, such as reducing stereotypes and increasing self-knowledge and ability to work with others.

Cooks and Scharrer (2006) advanced a social approach to assessing the process and outcomes of service-learning and emphasized the importance of learning from and communicating with others through the social approach to learning, as found in service-learning. Students' learning from service-learning was connected to the social dimension of the experience through which students are in communication with others, thus evaluating identity and social and cultural roles (Cooks & Scharrer).

Rhoads (1997) incorporated six years of research on college students' participation in a variety of community service projects in order to "better understand the 'self'" (p. 3). Though not labeled as ASB experiences, many of the projects took place as week-long intensive activities over winter and spring breaks. Rhoads found that service-learning increased understanding of self and community, as well as promoted the development of a caring self. Emphasizing the importance of effective program characteristics, Rhoads found that fostering mutual relationships based on equity and

collaboration, community-building, and combining action and reflection were important aspects of the service-learning experience. Rhoads developed a critical service-learning approach, which focused on creating opportunities that challenge students to think more deeply about service, how service shapes themselves and others, and the potential to build caring communities.

Challenges

Among the many positive and transformative outcomes from service-learning, there are several challenges that are important to note. Jones, Gilbride-Brown, and Gasiorski (2005) cautioned that service-learning has the potential to result in going to a new place in order to "see" the poor or those affected by social issues. Clark and Young (2005) suggested that service-learning practitioners must carefully tend to the power, privilege and positioning of individuals within the service-learning setting. They view service-learning as a complex task of "changing place," which can create tension. Jones (2002b) discussed the potential "underside" of service-learning in which privileging conditions put college students in relationship with communities. Jones noted the importance of analyzing the many dynamics present in such an interaction, such as racism and oppression.

There remains little research on community participants' experiences with service-learning and what impact service-learning may have on communities (Jacoby). The possibility of burdening or harming the community with whom service-learning partnerships are formed is important to consider. Given the differences in power and privilege, the question of whether reciprocal and equitable partnerships can be formed between universities and communities through service-learning is a critical one (Jacoby,

in press; Jones, 2003). Service-learning educators must avoid forging community partnerships with the sole goal of meeting desired student learning outcomes rather than seeking to address the root cause of the social issue (Jacoby, 1996).

Henry (2005) wrote of the complexity of the service-learning binary between "privileged server" and "underprivileged recipient," which strikes an "us/them" (p. 45) dichotomy and masks the identities of the students involved. Relying on such a dichotomy runs the risk of educators failing to see the influence of students' social identities on the relationships students make and experiences they encounter through service-learning (Henry). This is particularly a danger for students of color who may resonate with the situation of the community with whom the students are working. Dacheux (2005) also noted that difference is often emphasized in service-learning and students learn the "'plight' of those they might help," which sets them up to "'judge' those they might help and place them in the same binary" (p. 70).

Jacoby (in press) also noted that there is little research on how students of color or students of different economic classes experience service-learning. Gilbride-Brown (2008) is a notable exception. Butin (2006) commented that service-learning may be a luxury that many students, particularly underrepresented students may not be able to afford because of financial situations or time. There are also challenges for students who may, through service-learning be working in communities much like the ones in which they are from. Jacoby urged that service-learning educators "respect and support students' current realities and engage them starting with where they are in their own development" (in press).

Often missing from service-learning outcomes research is consideration of more heterogeneous samples and attention to the distinctive context of the service-learning site. Research on service-learning outcomes, however, demonstrates the potential for learning about self, others, and complex social issues (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones & Abes, 2003; Rhoads, 1997). Broad service-learning outcomes literature offered insight into potential ASB outcomes. I will now turn to the limited research on ASB, which offers additional insight into possible ASB outcomes and challenges. Later, I will focus in greater depth on the additional key components that emerge from ASB as service-learning.

ASB Outcomes and Challenges

The majority of literature on ASB experiences focuses on the intercultural implication of students' participation on the trips. Rhoads and Neururer (1998) studied 24 White college students on a week-long ASB trip to a rural, African American community. Rhoads and Neururer suggested that students emerged with an increased commitment and understanding of values, social responsibility, and community. The service projects were shown to influence student development and understanding of community and self through intentional interactions with different cultures. Rhoads and Neururer highlighted outcomes, such as identity, interpersonal and affective dimensions from the students' perspectives; however, they did not account for the homogeneity of their White college student sample. Although the case was framed as an ASB trip, the researchers focused more on the experience as cross-cultural engagement through service-learning than on the unique aspects of an ASB trip, such as the context and immersive nature of the students' experiences.

Though not labeled as an ASB trip, Wade and Raba (2003) found that a one-week intensive practicum assisted White pre-service teachers in learning about the inner city, but that critical reflection and longer-term programs were necessary for unlearning racism and promoting multicultural competency. Wade and Raba suggested that although the experience on an ASB trip is more intensive than other types of service-learning, a week-long program may not be long enough to sustain long-term implications. Wade and Raba focused on White participants' reactions to a culturally diverse, low-income context and incorporated the metaphor of "border crossing" (p. 153). A limitation of this study is the narrow focus on White participants' experience with border crossing and the limited data collection sources. Data was drawn exclusively from short, credit-bearing reflection papers from 49 student participants. This study emerged from a curricular requirement and did not account for the influence of the mandatory nature for participating in the program. As with Rhoads and Neururer's (1998) study, little research has been conducted on the experiences of students of color on ASB trips.

In another credit-bearing ASB study, Boyle-Baise and Langford (2004) studied an ASB trip as a part of a justice-oriented, service-learning course. The researchers explored what students thought about service-learning for social justice through observations, interviews, and analysis of student reflection papers. Outcomes of the study highlighted several challenges in coordinating an ASB experience. Challenges included students struggling to integrate their own experience with their knowledge about social forces, tension within the group inhibiting large group reflective discussions, and community informants emphasizing community deficits rather than strengths. The study was

connected to a credit-bearing course, which may have unintended influences on students' motivations for participation and their experiences with service-learning.

Research on international service-learning or ASB experiences are another source of relevant literature. Kiely (2004) affirmed that service-learning immersion programs produce transformative outcomes on undergraduates' worldviews and lifestyles. Focusing on participants on an international service-learning experience, Kiely found increases in students' "intercultural competence, language skills, appreciation of cultural difference, tolerance for ambiguity, and experiential understanding of complex global problems related to their academic program" (p. 5).

Wessel (2007) conducted a case study on the integration of service-learning and a study abroad trip to Mexico. Focusing on the service and classroom course, participants reported having the most "life-changing" (p. 86) experience of their academic career. The duration of this study, an academic quarter, is longer than an ASB program; but still provided insight into programmatic implications of service-learning immersion experiences. Wessel highlighted problem areas of the case, including the need for an intercultural community course, challenges with culture shock, and difficulties from group friction.

A limitation of Wessel's (2007) study is the focus on curriculum and planning issues in coordinating the experience. Additionally, the study lacks depth in exploring how students made meaning of the service experience. Wessel also did not examine what factors, program characteristics, or components were influenced by combining study abroad and service-learning. Boyle-Baise and Langford (2004) and Wessel (2007) highlighted challenges for coordinators and for students on ASB trips. The challenges,

particularly with culture shock, group dynamics, and returning home, indicate additional key components of the ASB experience, which require further exploration.

The limited literature on ASB experiences suggested that the immersive nature, intercultural exchanges, programmatic design, and reentry are central components of the experiences. Research also indicated that ASB programs are potentially transformative, through which students think differently about themselves, others, and complex social issues. Kiely (2005) developed a transformative learning model for service-learning, which offers greater insight into students' experiences on an immersive service-learning trip, similar to ASB.

Transformative Learning Model for Service-Learning

Kiely (2005) conducted a lon*g*itudinal case study of the transformative learning process and outcome from an international service-learning immersion trip. This study was based on a curricular service-learning course and not labeled an ASB trip; however, components of travel and service-learning immersion are similarly to an ASB experience. The study focused on the participation of seven cohorts of 57 students from two and four-year colleges over 11 years in a service-learning immersion program in Nicaragua. Kiely found five categories (contextual border crossing, dissonance, personalizing, processing, and connecting) that describe students' transformational learning experience.

Kiely (2005) used Mezirow's (1991) transformational learning process model as a theoretical framework for the study. Mezirow developed a transformational learning model in which students experience significant "perspective transformation," a process of becoming critically aware of their assumptions, the way in which assumptions constrain

their understanding of the world, and the impact of perspective on actions. The phases of transformation begin with a disorienting dilemma, which is:

> A critical incident or event that acts as a trigger that can under certain conditions lead people to engage in transformational learning whereby previously taken-for-granted assumptions, values, beliefs, and lifestyle habits are assessed and, in some cases, radically transformed. (Kiely, p. 7)

Kiely (2005) highlighted the service-learning immersion experience as a disorienting dilemma, during which students questioned their previous assumptions and reflected on their identities and views of the world from their new understanding. Disorienting dilemmas often emerged from immersion and border crossing experiences, which prompted students to reflect on themselves and others and how such differences were integrated in a complex world.

ASB programs typically involve week-long service placements, which may allow time for the students to become immersed in the organization and community. Students encounter dissonance as they interact with different people and perspectives that challenge their understanding of self and others. Kiely's (2005) work and the ASB literature reviewed above highlighted key components of an ASB service-learning trip to explore, including immersion, encounters with others, dissonance, border crossing, racial identity and White privilege, intercultural dialogue, and reentry.

Immersion

Palmer (1993) noted, "We do not learn best by memorizing facts about the subject. Because reality is communal, we learn best by interacting with it" (p. xvii). Immersion in real-world experiences allows students to consider the world from a new

context, which focuses on those who live in that context (Pompa, 2002). An immersion experience involves a direct connection to the complexities of a particular context in which individuals communicate with each about their lives through their exposure to one another (Pompa).

Pompa (2002) explored a service-learning immersion experience inside a prison, which highlighted questions about power in the setting, the impact of context and the use of liberatory pedagogy. In her study, the power of service-learning was seen through the dialogic exchange between the students and prisoners, which resulted from the immersive nature of the experience. Immersing students in unfamiliar cultures limits their ability to remain in or return to familiar, more comfortable contexts (Pompa). Service-learning typically provides students with a total immersion that exposes them to new contexts and fosters deeper interactions (Pompa).

ASB experiences often reflect intensely the immersion component of service-learning because students are immersed in a new location and a new culture, where they learn about social issues within the context of others' lives. The website of Break Away explained the immersion component and its influence on student learning:

> Being completely immersed into diverse environments enables participants to experience, discuss, and understand social issues in a significant way. The intensity of the experience increases the likelihood that participants will transfer the lessons learned on-site back to their own communities even after the alternative break ends. (Break Away Adventures, n.d.)

Through the immersion interactions, students cross borders from the familiar to the unfamiliar and across social identities.

Encounters with Others

Service-learning brings students into a direct relationship with others and challenges students to consider issues about themselves and their assumptions about others (Rhoads, 1997). Rhoads found that students confronted their assumptions and stereotypes about others as they personalized an understanding of the lives of people experiencing homelessness during a service trip to Washington, DC. Students crossed cultural borders and began to learn about themselves and others. Cooks and Scharrer (2006) also noted service-learning students were challenged to explore their identity and understanding of self as it relates to or conflicts with the social issue being addressed. Students recognize social and cultural identities, their position within the social structure, and their role in working toward positive social change (Cooks & Scharrer).

Similarly, Dunlap et al. (2007) defined personalization as a process through which students communicate intimately with individuals at the service-learning site and consider who they are with respect to the new people and experiences they are encountering. In this way students humanized the people impacted by social issues, such as homelessness, and reflected on their previously held stereotypes and assumptions (Dunlap et al.). Fostering strong interpersonal connections for students with each other, with community members, and with faculty is a valuable component of personalizing the service-learning experience (Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Kiely (2005) found that meaningful and direct interactions with people and situations different from their own led students to personalize their understanding of social issues, which previously may have been abstract or detached. Often, students displayed an emotional response in personalizing social issues as they encountered

dissonant situations (Kiely). Students responded by reexamining personal values and privilege. Students also developed an increase in self-efficacy to take action to address the social issues students encountered (Kiely).

In addition to personalizing social issues, encountering others different from oneself in the service-learning setting has an impact on identity development. Jones and Abes (2004) explored the influence of service-learning on identity development and self-authorship. They found that service-learning had an enduring influence on developing greater complexity in thinking about self and others, identified as a more "integrated identity" (p. 149). Service-learning created situations in which students engaged in a greater focus on others in relation to self and emerged with an openness to new ideas and social responsibility (Jones & Abes). Understanding self and relationships to others emerged through an increased sense of efficacy and empathy for others (Jones & Abes). The influence on self-authorship and intrapersonal, interpersonal, and cognitive growth was linked to the influence of ongoing reflection and reframing of their experiences (Jones & Abes).

The nature of the relationship with the community influences the development of new understandings about social identities. Jones and Hill (2004) investigated the influence of service-learning on students' and community partners' understanding of diversity. Through interpersonal connections, students and community members developed new understandings of themselves, others, and their social identities, particularly when community partnerships were forged with reciprocity (Jones & Hill). Through service-learning, students encountered situations in which they interacted with people whose backgrounds and perspectives were different from their own. Through this

encounter, students began to see the person as "like me" and experience internal conflict and dissonance in the differences that existed, which challenged students to shift their worldview to accommodate the dissonant experience (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 143).

Dissonance

Through service-learning experiences, students encounter contexts that challenge their assumptions and previous experiences, thus, creating situations necessary for growth (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Eyler and Giles identified these dissonant experiences as ill-structured problems through which students came to see the complex social system in which the problem existed. Students were then compelled to evaluate conflicting information on the ill-structured problem, for which there was no simple solution (Eyler & Giles). The cognitive dissonance students experience must be accompanied with support for students to confront the challenge and obtain further information and insight to work through the ill-structured problem.

Jones and Abes (2003) investigated students' understanding of a particular social issue, HIV/AIDS, and found that connecting with the clients and staff caused students to reevaluate their assumptions and understanding of the experience of people living with HIV/AIDS (Jones & Abes). Many students were challenged by the unfamiliar context in which they confronted their knowledge and attitudes about HIV/AIDS. Working through dissonant experiences such as this, students developed greater tolerance and fostered critical thinking skills through the service-learning setting.

In Kiely's (2005) study, students experienced varying types and levels of dissonance, which related to the incongruence they experienced between their previous contextual understanding and the new culture in which they were immersed. Low-

intensity dissonance included difficulties with communication and high intensity dissonance resulted in emotional confusion, through which students reexamined their assumptions about the world (Kiely). Students repositioned the way they saw themselves in the world, explored their own identity, and crossed borders in relation to the context of their experience.

Border Crossing

Through service-learning, students engage in dissonant experiences, which are an opportunity for students to cross social and cultural boundaries, thus critically engage in a new context (Pompa, 2002). In making sense of new contexts, students cross borders between the familiar and unfamiliar (Kambutu & Nganga, 2008). Students cross boundaries that are emotional, physical, intellectual, and socioeconomic. They consider the subject matter from the context of those living within the context. The "interplay of content and context" (Pompa, p. 68) provides a stimulating, deeper education process. Service-learning immersion experiences create contexts founded on boundary-crossing in which real-world issues and academic knowledge combine, thereby, allowing students to engage directly with social issues, new people, and diverse cultures (Cantor & Schomberg, 2002).

Giroux (1988) discussed the concept of border pedagogy, which offers an opportunity for students to engage with multiple cultural codes and experiences. They learn the limits of their own frame of reference, particularly frames they used to construct their understanding of the world (Giroux). Borders do not merely exist as lines on a map but reflect particular identities, experiences, and perspectives (Giroux). These borders or boundaries have been built around class, status, race, ethnicity, and gender, which

privilege some and marginalize others (Giroux, 1992). Students' knowledge and experiences are confirmed and critically challenged as they "author their own voices" (Giroux, 1988, p. 175) and explore their social identities.

Keith (1998) studied how community service can contribute to community building and illuminated that community service had the potential to be a borderland space that facilitated the bridging of borders or boundaries, which have been constructed through power, wealth, and background. Kiely (2005) found that contextual border crossing explained how personal, historical, and programmatic components of the context in the service-learning experience influence transformational learning. Through contextual border crossing, students use the context of the service-learning setting to critically reevaluate their previous frame of reference (Kiely). Border crossing literature addresses the exploration of new ideas, and reevaluation of identities (Giroux, 1988; Hayes & Cuban, 1996; Pompa, 2002).

Hayes and Cuban (1996) studied how service-learning experiences foster greater critical perspectives on common assumptions in adult literacy tutors. The tutors crossed physical borders by leaving campus and entering different classrooms; social boundaries, as they redefined their relationship with the literacy students; identity borders as they adopted the role of the tutor and learner; marginalized and privileged borders; and cultural borders (Hayes & Cuban). Hayes and Cuban focused on how border crossing informed the students' experiences through the adult literacy tutoring program and can be used to strengthen curriculum in teaching and learning. Service-learning was viewed as a critical text from which students interpret, critique, and become more aware of power inequities, their social identities, and their voice.

Hayes and Cuban's (1996) discussion of border pedagogy is helpful in understanding the impact of service-learning and ASB experiences on students, particularly as students' perspectives on themselves, others, and the world shift. Service-learning influences students' understanding of self and others, and challenges them to explore their identities, as they relate to the service-learning context (Jones & Abes, 2004; O'Grady, 2000; Rhoads, 1997). Students are placed in situations that challenge them to assess and confront their membership in identity groups, such as race, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, and their relative power and privilege (O'Grady).

King (2004) studied four students on a cultural immersion and service trip to Mexico, with the goal of understanding students' engagement with critical reflection. King found that during the trip, the students reexamined their assumptions about poverty and reevaluated their own worldviews in recognition of their privilege, of which they were previously unaware. In this way, students "crossed borders" through engaging in experiences and learning new perspectives that were different from their own. Students were not only physically immersed in a culture different from their home community; they were immersed in a process of shifting their understanding of their own lives (King). ASB provides similar immersive contexts in which students live, work, and learn in a different context and are provoked to cross physical, emotional, and identity borders, particularly racial.

Racial Identity and White Privilege in Service-Learning

As evidenced in the discussion of border crossing and encounters with others, one of the complexities of service-learning is the interaction of racial identity between the

students and community. Helms (1998) developed a White racial identity stage model focusing on the racial attitudes of White people toward self and others. Helms identified six statuses toward a more complex, integrated view of race, including contact, disintegration, reintegration, pseudo-independence, immersion/emersion, and autonomy. Helms also developed a people of color (POC) model of racial identity, which focuses on the primary task of overcoming internalized racism (Helms & Cook, 2005). The POC model includes conformity, dissonance, immersion, emersion, internalization, and integrative awareness (Helms & Cook).

Gilbride-Brown (2008) addressed the lack of critical understanding about racially underrepresented students' experiences in service-learning. Students described service-learning as working "within" community, and evidence suggested that the experiences were an important reason for the college students and their high school mentees' academic persistence (Gilbride-Brown). Findings also indicated that students of color were less inclined to participate in community service because it was perceived as a White, do-gooder activity. The majority of service-learning research, however, focuses on the experiences of White students (Butin, 2005; Eyler & Giles, 1999).

Green (2001) argued that incorporating the implications of White privilege in service-learning is crucial particularly when most of the students are White engaging with mostly communities of color. Green reflected on a service-learning class she taught in which predominantly White students engaged in service with predominantly African American children and the steps she took to address the racial dynamics through course design and implementation. The possibility of replicating imbalanced power and injustice in the service-learning setting underscores the importance of talking about the

intersections of race, class, and service as a part of that experience (Green). Green noted that racial majority students were unable to avoid discussions of race when students of color were a part of the experience. The White students were able to connect and learn from the community site; however, the most productive way to get White students to recognize the factor of race in the service-learning setting was to engage the group of students in discussions about Whiteness and White privilege (Green).

Coles (1999) discussed the interaction between race and service-learning from experiences in her service-learning courses and identified race-focused factors that adversely affected service-learning experiences. Coles noted that different styles of communication between lower-class African Americans and middle class White students in her class contributed to a source of discomfort for the White students. Coles commented that White students frequently claimed that color does not matter, which further emphasizes that they "don't share the same reality as their minority counterparts" (p. 102).

Dunlap et al. (2007) developed a theoretical model from analysis of reflections of students engaging in service-learning that illuminated the "process relatively privileged white students go through as they become more aware of their own socioeconomic and other advantages and come to terms with these within their community service learning placements" (p. 19). Trigger events, similar to dissonance discussed in the previous section, occurred when students communicated with the "other" (Dunlap et al., p. 22), thus stimulating recognition in the concept of White privilege and challenging White students' understanding of what it means to be White. Dunlap et al. suggested that

students' racial identity stage influenced the way in which they process these trigger events.

Depending on a student's status of racial identity development, awareness, and acceptance of social and economic privilege may be difficult to accept (Tatum, 1992). Similarly, Butin (2005) noted that White students often resort to ignorance or avoidance when issues of privilege and equity arise. Butin defined student resistance as the "rejection of one's own complicity in the culturally contentious issues under discussion, specifically in relation to one's privilege of Whiteness" (p. 116). Butin reconceptualized student resistance as an attempt to maintain a particular identity through refusing to see themselves in an alternate identity. Ortiz and Rhoads (2000) encouraged educators to advance students' understanding of White privilege through helping students "explore and deconstruct White racial identity, both among Whites and non-Whites" (p. 82). In service-learning, students must be made aware of the role of White privilege in service-learning, particularly for White students who engage with communities of color (Warren, 1998). Literature on racial identity and White privilege in service-learning suggests that more attention needs to be paid to the role of cross-cultural dialogue.

Cross-Cultural Dialogue

Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin (2002) posited that developing intercultural citizens with an understanding of global interdependence and ability to work with diverse perspectives is increasingly an educational focus of postsecondary institutions. King and Baxter Magolda (2005) developed a multidimensional framework focused on the development of intercultural maturity. Developing cognitive complexity, which encourages students to accept difference and offer positive regard to others of a different

race, class, gender, or sexual orientation is the foundation for cultivating intercultural skills (King & Baxter Magolda). The three developmental levels proposed by King and Baxter Magolda include a cognitive dimension, which denotes the way people think about and understand diversity; intrapersonal dimension, which informs how people come to understand diversity; and interpersonal dimension, which involves the ability to interact effectively with people of diverse backgrounds.

Given the focus in service-learning and ASB literature on interactions with diverse others, understanding the development of intercultural maturity through interpersonal contact is particularly salient. King and Baxter Magolda (2005) suggested that developing intercultural maturity involves shifting from an individualistic perspective to a perspective that appreciates and recognizes the ways in which social systems affect interaction between social groups. Students experience dissonance in the process of developing intercultural maturity when aspects of their identity are called into question by an external authority (King & Baxter Magolda). Through this process, students are confronted with the realization that "all knowledge is not certain" and thus "come to question their reliance on others for self-definition" (King & Baxter Magolda, p. 582).

Chang, Denson, Saenz, and Misa (2006) conducted a study examining the implications of cross-racial interaction at the peer and institutional level for producing increased openness to diversity, cognitive development, and self-confidence. They reported that the more a student interacted with someone of a different race, the greater the education benefits to the student. Peer cross-racial interaction was significant and positive for achieving openness to diversity (Chang et al.). Students who did not engage

in cross-racial interaction, but attended an institution in which there were high levels of peer cross-racial interaction reported greater gains in openness to diversity (Chang et al.).

One method for enhancing cross-cultural interaction is intergroup dialogues. Zúñiga (2003) defined intergroup dialogue as a "face-to-face facilitated conversation between members of two or more social identity groups that strives to create new levels of understanding, relating, and action" (p. 9). Intergroup dialogues involve direct contact and exchange of perspectives on social identity issues (Zúñiga; Zúñiga, Nagda, & Sevig, 2002). Through this process, students explore the meaning of social identities and the systems of power and privilege that oppress social groups and shape intergroup relationships (Zúñiga; Zúñiga et al.). Students engage with diversity through interactions and learning across differences (Zuniga et al.).

Zúñiga et al. (2002) advanced a four-stage intergroup dialogue design, which is built upon three interconnected processes: sustained communication, critical social awareness, and bridge building. Sustained communication emphasizes listening and sharing across difference over an extended period of time, which could span several weeks or several months. Consciousness raising encourages participants to recognize and challenge "individual, cultural, and institutional beliefs and behaviors that perpetuate estranged and oppressive relations between groups" (Zúñiga et al., p. 9). Provocative conversations between social groups can occur when highlighting interconnected and political factors that impact group differences (Zúñiga, 2003). In bridge building, students make connections across difference and form a commitment to social justice through developing empathy and fostering collaboration (Zúñiga et al.).

Students' exposure to cross-cultural interactions and intergroup dialogue during ASB trips and service-learning experiences has the potential to bring students into contact with diverse perspectives and encourage them to challenge their assumptions and stereotypes. Cross-cultural interaction and intergroup dialogue literature suggested that these experiences can foster greater understanding of diversity and learning across difference (Chang et al., 2006; King & Baxter Magolda, 2005; Zúñiga, 2003). Returning home from an ASB trip after experiencing the dissonance of developing intercultural maturity (King & Baxter Magolda, 2005) may be challenging and requires further understanding.

Reentry

Challenges upon return home from ASB trips is another key theme that emerged from the limited ASB literature. Ivory (1997) studied the experiences of 42 participants going to four locations for week-long service-learning immersions. The study focused on interviews with 17 of the 42 participants about their experiences upon returning to their home institutions. Ivory found that students experienced social and psychological difficulties and a sense of alienation as part of reentry from the ASB experience. The study is useful in exploring the distinctive immersion and returning home aspect of ASB. Though there is little research on service-learning or ASB reentry, literature on study-abroad or sojourner reentry provides greater insight.

Martin (1986) presented a theoretical approach for understanding the role of communication in reentry relationships among student sojourners. Crucial factors in a sojourner's reentry are interaction with friends, family, and communication with others in three cultural contexts: "the home environment before the trip, the foreign culture, and

the reentry environment" (Martin, p. 3). Martin viewed reentry as a process of negotiating and interpreting changes through communication and interactions with others. Some relationships, particularly family relationships, are not as problematic for reentry as friend relationships. Participants reported that they saw friends less or not at all, and that changes in friend relationships were more complex. The challenge of negotiating changes in relationships, particularly with friends, connects to Ivory's (1997) finding that students experienced feelings of alienation upon return from the ASB trip.

The concept of reverse culture shock captures some of the struggles of readjustment and reattachment upon returning from a sojourn. Adler (1981) defined culture shock as "the frustration and confusion that result from being bombarded by unpredictable cues" (p. 343). Reverse culture shock is similar in definition yet focuses on the difficulties of readjustment to the home environment after return from a sojourn (Gaw, 2000). Gaw examined whether reverse culture shock influenced personal adjustment and willingness to seek services in returning student sojourners. Gaw addressed the understanding that reentry was often associated with a sense of confusion and alienation, academic problems, cultural identity conflict, and interpersonal difficulties.

Sussman (2002) explored the relationship between cultural identity and repatriation experiences. Recognizing that identity changes may influence the return to one's home, Sussman used the degree to which sojourners identify with their home cultural identity to predict cultural adjustment. Sussman found that sojourners who had a weak cultural identity had more difficulty returning home. Another finding illustrated that sojourners who moved toward a more "global identity" as a result of their sojourn

experienced high satisfaction with their lives (p. 404). Related to ASB and service-learning literature, Sussman recognized that sojourners may attribute the distress in reentry to the home environment and disparage their home community. Similarly, ASB students who experience significant dissonance and perspective shifting in relation to racial identity and privilege may view the home community as an environment that did not previously support discovery of this new understanding and result in feelings of detachment.

Summary

Service-learning literature on characteristics, outcomes, and challenges offers insight into ASB programs, which typically are designed as service-learning experiences. Limited literature on ASB and ASB-type experiences uncovers additional components of the experience to explore. Often students are immersed in contexts through which they cross borders and confront dissonance about their lives as they personalize social issues and empathize with diverse others. The research on students' experiences in ASB highlights the importance of interpersonal interaction and the potentially transformative influence of the experience. Key components of the experience also include confronting racial identity and White privilege and the challenges and potential benefits of cross-racial interaction and intergroup dialogue. The purpose of this study was to investigate the experiences of and meaning made by students on an ASB trip. In the next chapter, I discuss the methodology of the study.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Purpose of Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this constructivist case study was to investigate college students' experiences on an Alternative Spring Break (ASB) trip focused on affordable housing and the meaning students made of the experience. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What do students learn about themselves and others through their participation in ASB?
2. How do students' social identities interact with the contexts of the ASB immersion location and influence their experiences in ASB?

Methodological Approach

A constructivist case study served as the framework for this study to investigate the meanings students made of the ASB experience. Consistent with a qualitative case study approach, this study explored a bounded case "through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information" (Creswell, 2007, p. 73).

A constructivist approach attempts to understand social actions through interpretation (Jones et al., 2006). This is appropriate because the aim of this study was to understand and reconstruct from the participants' words, the meaning they made of their experiences. Furthermore, constructivism requires a relationship between the researcher and participants in which the participants can convey their stories in their own terms (Charmaz, 2000). The researcher must listen with openness to the feeling and experience of the participant (Charmaz). This constructivist study emphasized a relativist ontology, which assumes multiple and sometimes conflicting social realities, which individuals

naturally generate, but that may change as the individual constructors of the social realities become more informed (Guba & Lincoln, 2001).

Case study methodology is distinguished from other qualitative approaches because of the focus on a bounded system, which might include an individual, program, institution, or process (Jones et al., 2006). Case study assumes that a significant understanding can be learned from a single case, focusing on a phenomenon within the real-life context (Stake, 2000; Yin, 2004). The bounded system in case study methodology is a crucial focus and requires thorough description to situate the case in the larger context. Jones et al. defined a case as bounded "if and only if it is clearly identifiable and limited in scope" (p. 55). Merriam (1998) suggested that to determine the bounds of a case, one might assess how finite the data collection is, whether there is a limit to the people and time for observations.

Case study was an appropriate methodology for this study because the phenomenon of students' meaning-making on an ASB trip is "not readily distinguishable from its context" (Yin, 2003, p. 4). The relationship of the phenomenon to the bounded system is crucial and must be situated in the larger context by describing the context in depth (Jones et al., 2006). This study is a descriptive case study because it seeks to present a rich, detailed description of the phenomenon within its context (Merriam, 1998; Yin).

There are three types of case study: intrinsic, instrumental, and collective case studies (Stake, 1995, 2000). In an intrinsic case, the case itself is of interest. In an instrumental case, the case is "examined mainly to provide insight into an issue or to redraw a generalization" (Stake, 2000, p. 437). Multiple cases are selected to illustrate an

issue in a collective case study (Creswell, 2007). This case study is a combination of intrinsic, which focuses on a specific case, and instrumental case study, in which understanding of the case is used for increased understanding of a broader issue (Stake, 1995). I focused on the specific case of a particular ASB trip and the meaning the participants made of the experience. As an instrumental case study, I use findings of the specific case to increase understanding of ASB experiences as a form of service-learning.

Context of the Case

> There were haikus in the subway
> Most of the pictures we took were down there
> Most of our trip was spent down there
> In the subway…
> Not everyone gets to walk up steps in public housing
> And look at the reality of what is
> And have it register
> They are not scary…(Zeya, journal)

Traveling across the city, underground, through different neighborhoods in safe subway cars. Traveling from the Eastside to the Southside to the suburbs and back downtown. Traveling from senior centers to homeless shelters to a high-rise public housing complex. Traveling from anger to fear, through stereotypes and confusion. Participants in this study were part of a team of 12 traditional-aged undergraduate students who traveled to Chicago. The team of students focused their learning and service on the issue of affordable housing, particularly the impact of HOPE VI legislation, which seeks to transform and "eradicate severely distressed public housing" (Housing and Urban Development, n.d.).

The case was part of the ASB program at a large, public mid-Atlantic university, which coordinates week-long, substance-free, community service-learning immersion trips. Participants traveled in teams to different cities, engaged in active service, and had

the opportunity to gain new perspectives on social issues while meeting community needs. Each trip focused on a specific theme, such as homelessness, hunger, disaster relief, HIV/AIDS, prison reform, the experiences of Native Americans, environmental conservation, or affordable housing. Participants learned more about the theme while working with community agencies in the specific location. Trip locations were urban and rural, throughout the United States, and in one international location.

On this trip, our group learned from community members and volunteered with community agencies, including an adult day center, a homeless shelter, and an immigrant/refugee support organization. In addition to volunteering at the community agencies three to ten hours per day for five days, our group met with six individuals from various community and city agencies in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the variety of perspectives on the issue of affordable housing.

Several times throughout the week and one full day at the end of the week, the group was free to explore the city or attend cultural events. Nightly group reflections were held at the hostel, where we all stayed, and were facilitated by a different pair of participants each time. The student facilitators chose a variety of reflection techniques, including writing, drawing, and discussion. Each participant was given an individual journal, although no formal requirement was made regarding its usage.

Procedures

The procedures followed for carrying out this study correspond to work completed as a part of a multi-site case study on the meaning students made of short-term immersion trips, including three ASB trips and one international leadership trip.

Sampling

In case study inquiry, the unit of analysis can be an event, a program, an activity, and one or more individuals (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). The unit of analysis for this case is the affordable housing ASB trip, which was studied through the perspectives of the student participants and my role as participant-observer and staff advisor. The case is bounded by the particular immersion location and timeframe of the trip, as well as by the student participants.

Consistent with case study methodology, sampling occurred at two levels, selection of the case and selection of the individuals within the case (Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998). Purposeful sampling and maximum variation were used to select this case. Purposeful sampling in case study methodology involves finding a "maximum variation," atypical, or "extreme" case or cases (Creswell, pp. 120-121). In purposeful sampling, the researcher is focused on gaining insight and, therefore, selects a sample from which the most can be learned (Merriam). The underlying principle of purposeful sampling is "selecting information-rich cases—cases from which one can learn a great deal about what matters of importance and therefore worthy of in-depth study" (Patton, 2002, p. 242). Maximum variation focuses on fully describing multiple perspectives about a case and seeks participants that are differentiated by some criteria (Creswell).

In sampling this trip as the case unit of analysis, factors such as location were used to support purposeful and maximum variation. The trip was selected because it was an ASB experience that focused on a specific social issue in a location that was new to students. The student trip leaders for the Chicago ASB trip selected me from the staff advisor applicant pool to serve as staff advisor for this particular trip, which provided a

unique opportunity to be an integrated member of the team and researcher as a participant-observer. As a domestic location, this trip was less expensive than other trips, reducing some of the financial barriers that may limit a broad cross-section of students from participating in the immersion experience.

Selection to participate in the ASB program involved an online application with short essay questions about how the applicant defined service and why the applicant was interested in ASB. Students applied to participate in the ASB program as a whole and then were given the opportunity to rank their preference for each of the 14 trips. As stated previously, the trips focused on various social issues in different areas in the country and in Peru. All of the participants in this study ranked the affordable housing trip in their top five trip preferences.

In sampling for the student participants, the primary investigator of the multi-site case study sent a letter of invitation to all students involved in the trips on which the study focused (Appendix A). In addition to the electronic information sent to participants about the study, I talked with the group of students on this particular trip and answered any questions they may have had prior to their decision to join the study. All of the students on the trips were invited to be take part in the study in order to maximize the diverse perspectives and backgrounds of each participant. Once students committed electronically to participating in the study, a consent form (Appendix B) and an interest survey about demographic information (Appendix C) were sent to and collected from the participants prior to leaving for the ASB trip. On the day of the trip, prior to departing, I collected consent forms and interest surveys and answered any lingering questions about participation for the students. All students on the trip who were interested in participating

were included in the study. Of the 13 students invited to participate in the study, 11 volunteered, one chose not to participate, and one did not go on the trip.

Introduction of the Participants

Of the participating students, nine were women and two were men. A diverse range of majors was represented including chemical engineering, journalism, economics, and art history. One participant was in her fourth year, three in their third year, four in their second year, and three in their first year at the university. From the interest survey information collected at the beginning of the study, seven participants identified as White, and four identified as students of color. Understanding the background of each participant is important, particularly because of the influence of intergroup interaction and the ways in which social identity impacted (or not) the students' engagement with and learning from the community, each other, and the social issue of affordable housing.

- Angela is an Asian woman who is a fourth-year education major. Angela is also one of the student trip leaders for the trip.
- Alex is a White woman who is a second-year business major.
- Andrew is a White man who is a second-year government/politics major.
- Becca is a White woman who is a first-year business major.
- Candace is a West Indian woman who is a first-year psychology major.
- Coral is an Asian woman who is a third-year biochemistry major.
- Joseph is an Asian man who is a third-year engineering major.
- Julia is a White woman who is a second-year journalism and sociology major
- Kaitlyn is a White woman who is a first-year government/politics major.
- Stephanie is a White woman who is a third-year English major.

- Zeya is a White woman who is a second-year education and math major. Zeya is also one of the student trip leaders for the trip.

Prior to joining the Alternative Breaks program, the two student trip leaders, Angela and Zeya, did not know each other but worked together for seven months to plan the trip. With the exception of Angela and Stephanie, none of the participants knew each other prior to the ASB trip. The year prior to this trip, Zeya was a participant on an ASB trip to Philadelphia focusing on the justice system. None of the other participants had been on an ASB trip before.

Data Collection

Consistent with data collection for case study inquiry, I collected data extensively, drawing on multiple sources of information to provide an in-depth picture of the case (Creswell, 2007). In this study three types of data sources were utilized: participant observations, documents, including participant applications and individual journals, and post-trip, semi-structured interviews.

Participant observations. During the week-long ASB trip, my primary research tasks involved observations as a participant-observer. I spent extensive time with the group and participated in all activities as a participant-observer. My general observation protocol (Appendix D), adapted from Glesne (2006), consisted of descriptions of the setting (e.g., at the work site, during reflections, travel and meal times), group dynamics (e.g., affective dimension, who participated in the activities and who did not), interactions with others (e.g., community partners), rich descriptions of the participant reactions and mood, and reflective memos about my role as participant-observer in order to guard against preconceived opinions.

As a participant-observer, I sought to participate fully in all of the activities and share as closely as possible in the experience with the participants in order to develop an "insider's view" (Patton, 2002, p. 268) of what was happening. In developing an emic perspective, I not only saw what was happening but felt what it was like to be a part of the context of the experience (Patton). In my observation field notes during the trip, I focused on generating rich, thick description (Glesne, 2006; Patton; Stake, 1995). The importance of focusing on thick description in the data collection process corresponds to the intended outcome of case study inquiry:

> Case study research shares the burden of clarifying descriptions and sophisticating interpretations. Following a constructivist view of knowledge does not require the researcher to avoid delivering generalizations. But a constructivist view encourages providing readers with good raw material for their own generalizing. The emphasis is on description of things that readers ordinarily pay attention to, particularly places, events and people, not only commonplace description but "thick description." (Stake, p. 102)

I made field notes to record observations that described the setting, the group interaction, events and activities, dialogues, and students' interactions with others to build an in-depth description of the case and keep track of my personal biases. I recorded my observations at least twice a day, once at night and once during a break in the middle of the day. Several times I was able to record field notes during activities or when traveling on the subway, depending on the appropriateness of doing so in the moment. Field notes from the organized nightly group reflections represented a large portion of the observational data.

Document analysis. Another strategy for data collection was document analysis. Merriam (1998) noted that documents are "nonreactive and grounded in the context" (p. 133), which enables the researcher to uncover understandings and discover meaning about the research topic. The documents analyzed included the participants' applications to the ASB program, which contain two short answer questions about their motivations for participation and their definition of service, and individual participant journals. Each participant was given a journal at the beginning of the ASB trip. I suggested that the participants use their journals as a space to record thoughts, feelings, and experiences, emphasizing that the journals would not be graded or evaluated. No other instructions or requirements for use of the journals. Additional documents included papers used during the nightly group reflection if the student facilitators chose to conduct a written reflection. Students used group reflection papers on two occasions and provided useful insight into their reflection on the day and into their understanding of organized reflection.

Interviews. A third strategy for data collection was one post-trip, in-depth, semi-structured interview with each of the 11 participants. Interviews are "one of the most common and powerful ways we use to try to understand our fellow human beings" (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 645). More structured interview protocols are designed by researchers who give careful consideration to the wording of questions, and probes are placed to reduce the interviewer's judgments during the interview. Additionally, structured interviews are easier to analyze because responses are easy to find and compare (Patton, 2002). However, highly structured interviews are rigid and limit access to uncovering participants' understandings of the world (Merriam, 1998). Less structured

interview protocols are based on the concept that individuals define the world in a unique way (Merriam). Using a semi-structured interview protocol, the interviewer has flexibility to probe and explore certain responses in greater depth or pose new questions that were not anticipated in the original design (Patton).

The interview protocol (Appendix E) was developed in collaboration with four other researchers on the multi-site case study team, and was pilot tested for the protocol's applicability for the case, using the research questions as guiding criteria. During interviews, I asked the students to reflect on their ASB experience, specifically the location, fellow teammates, community members, their own identity, and their future plans as a result of the experience. I used the same interview protocol for each participant and conducted all of the tape-recorded interviews in a campus office.

At the beginning of each interview session, which took place after the trip's conclusion, I provided overview of the study, orally reviewed the consent form, and reiterated the use of a digital recorder as the data collection tool. I informed participants that I would be taking notes and consulting their journals and applications as additional data. I then gave participants the opportunity to select a pseudonym to protect their confidentiality. I interviewed each participant once for approximately 45 minutes between two to six weeks after the immersion experience. Each interview was transcribed verbatim after completing all 11 interviews.

Data Analysis

Data collection and analysis in qualitative inquiry occur simultaneously, beginning with the first interviews, observations, and documents collected, which inform the initial emerging insights and then direct the next phase of data collection (Merriam,

1998). The purpose of data analysis for case study methodology is to communicate understanding across the multiple data sources through "examining, categorizing, tabulating, or otherwise recombining the evidence to address the initial propositions of a study" (Yin, 2004, p. 102).

In this study, I analyzed the data by focusing on the meaning students made of their experiences on the ASB trip to Chicago, which required me to be immersed in the "data corpus," searching for evidentiary evidence, and then conducting "a systematic search…looking for disconfirming and confirming evidence, keeping in mind the need to reframe the assertions as the analysis proceed[ed]" (Erickson, 1986, p.146). Data analysis for case study methodology can use various analysis techniques, such as ethnographic, narrative, phenomenological, or grounded theory (Jones et al., 2006). In this study, I used the constant comparative method, characteristic of grounded theory, through which the researcher constantly analyzes data throughout the many stages of data collection and interpretation, resulting in the identification of specific codes (Charmaz, 2000; Jones et al.). Merriam (1998) observed that the strategy of constant comparative is "compatible with the inductive, concept-building orientation of all qualitative research" (p. 159).

Stake (1995) advocated four types of data analysis for case study: categorical aggregation, direct interpretation, patterns, and naturalistic generalizations. Categorical aggregation is a collection of instances from the data through which meanings about the issue emerge (Creswell, 2007). In direct interpretation, I analyzed the data for emerging themes and categories, which involved encouraging greater meaning by pulling apart the data and putting back it back together (Creswell). I then compared the themes for patterns between instances and among multiple sources of data. Doing so enabled me to make

naturalistic generalizations among the similarities in order to apply the findings to the larger phenomenon in a way that the readers could learn and experience for themselves (Creswell; Stake). Generating rich, thick description of the case and analysis was important so that readers could transfer the findings to their own lives (Merriam, 1998; Stake).

Data analysis began as soon as I initiated my participant observations during the trip. My reflections on what I was experiencing began to paint an initial image of emerging instances. Transcripts of post-trip interviews and participants' journal entries, though only six of the eleven participants submitted journals, were a primary focus for developing initial themes and categories through line-by-line coding. The constant comparative method, particularly line-by-line coding, helps the researcher to remain attuned to the participants' view of their realities, rather than assuming that they share the same worldviews (Charmaz, 2000). From the line-by-line coding, I collected emerging themes and categories, reflecting participants' words as closely as possible, into a code book, which delineated codes from each participant, allowing me to look for patterns across experiences.

Enriched by analysis of the participants' applications to participate in ASB programs, my participant-observations, and continually returning to participants' words in their journals and interview transcripts, I compared patterns between instances by searching for "disconfirming and confirming evidence" (Erickson, 1986, p. 146) of the emerging patterns. Participants' applications were not a rich source of information, particularly because they were written before the trip and did not capture the participants' experience or meaning-making. My participant-observations were sources that enhance a

deeper picture of the context for the case and the situations participants spoke in their interviews. Gradually, I expanded and grouped the emerging patterns into larger concepts and analyzed areas of interconnection, continually returning to participants' words.

Trustworthiness

In this study, trustworthiness, an alternative to the positivistic use of reliability and validity, was assured by using member checking, triangulation, peer review, and rich and thick descriptions (Arminio & Hultgren, 2002; Creswell, 2007; Merriam, 1998; Stake, 1995, 2000).

Member Checking

Member checking is a technique that is crucial for establishing credibility, checking researcher subjectivity and ensuring that the findings resonate with participants (Jones, 2002a). In this study, member checking was performed by sending a narrative of my interpretations to each participant and asking them to respond with feedback on whether my interpretations made sense (Merriam, 1998; Stake 1995). Seven of the eleven participants responded to the member check essay and expressed excitement in being reminded of "things I've forgotten about the trip." One participant did not remember what the study was about and, therefore, did not resonate with the essay.

Triangulation and Peer Review

Trustworthiness is also established through the triangulation of multiple sources of data, including field notes, interviews, and observations, which yielded several perspectives on the case (Creswell, 2007). Triangulation involves multiple points of view to clarify an observation or interpretation (Stake, 2000; Yin, 1994). In analysis, data was triangulated across multiple sources, including post-trip interviews, participant

observations, and participant journals. Additionally, triangulation of data took place across multiple researchers serving as peer reviewers. Researchers from the multi-site case study served as peer reviewers through ongoing collaboration and evaluation of data collection and analysis. Researchers on the multi-site team looked at data across several cases, one of which was this case. Two different members of the research team analyzed post-trip interviews from each of the cases. Findings indicated areas of overlap between the multi-site study and this single case study.

Rich and Thick Descriptions

Rich and thick descriptions help to assure trustworthiness because the descriptions allow the reader to enter into the research context and transfer the information to other settings (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2006). Generating rich, thick descriptions of the case throughout data collection and analysis was an important aspect of establishing trustworthiness.

Ethics

Ethical considerations are particularly important in qualitative research because human relationships are engaged throughout the process (Jones et al., 2003). I followed ethical research standards to address confidentiality and inform participants of potential risks. An informed consent was discussed and signed prior to the start of the trip or data collection. Confidentiality was maintained using pseudonyms for participants, which they selected. The unique relationship I shared with the participants in my dual role as researcher and staff advisor required that I integrate ethical considerations throughout the planning, data collection, analysis, and writing processes (Magolda & Weems, 2002). I monitored and reflected on balancing the ethics of the experience as a researcher, the

responsibilities for the group in my role as staff advisor, and my investment in the success of the trip as a program coordinator. Ensuring the safety and well-being of the participants as a staff advisor was a priority.

Role of the Researcher

During the trip, on which this case is based, I served three roles: a participant-observer/researcher for the study, the staff advisor for this specific trip, and a coordinator for the larger ASB program. Access to the short-term immersion experience and student participants was facilitated by my work in the campus office that coordinates the Alternative Spring Break program. I am the Graduate Coordinator for the Alternative Spring Break program and have extensive contact with the student trip leaders and with the ASB trip planning.

At the trip leaders' request and for logistical reasons, I was selected to serve as staff advisor for the affordable housing trip. As staff advisor, I was responsible for managing the money during the trip and providing support for the trip leaders throughout their planning and leading the trip. With the exception of managing the money and being prepared in case of emergencies, the role of the staff advisor during the trip most closely resembles that of a student participant. I participated in all activities and reflection meetings, which easily facilitated my role as participant-observer researcher. The students on the trip knew that I was making observations for the research project, but also felt comfortable coming to me for advice as the trip staff advisor.

Researcher Reflexivity

Qualitative researchers should examine their subjectivity and biases in relation to the context, phenomenon, and meaning made of the data (Torres & Baxter Magolda,

2002). Peshkin (1988) advocated for formal and systematic self-monitoring to enhance one's awareness of biases. In my multiple roles as researcher, participant, coordinator, and staff advisor, inherent power dynamics were a factor in my approach to the trip. My proximity to the ASB program as the ASB graduate coordinator made me biased toward the success and effectiveness of the program. My proximity was also an advantage in the access I had to students and the rapport I built prior to the study. The proximity of my age to the participants also facilitated rapport with the participants.

As a participant-observer, I was immersed in the experience but also needed to remain observant for the research study, by accounting for my own behavior and emotions throughout the process. As the staff advisor, I was challenged and sometimes became frustrated by the within-group conflict and the complaining that I mediated. As a participant, I was often emotionally drained by the stories that community members told us and the intense service experience we shared, particularly in the homeless shelter and during our tour of the high-rise public housing complexes. Writing memos about my personal experience and recognizing the tension between being a participant and researcher was an important part of ensuring that I remained open and observant throughout the trip.

In reflecting on my interest in the topic of ASB experiences, I am greatly influenced by my own past undergraduate experiences with service-learning and ASB trips. These experiences, serving as a participant and a leader, were meaningful and transformative in shaping my understanding of the work that sparked my interest in the field of student affairs. Throughout the process, it was important for me to continue to reflect on the influence of my own personal experiences in college and identify when I

was drawing expectations or findings from my college experiences versus my experience as a participant-observer on this particular trip.

Summary

For this study, I employed constructivist case study methodology to investigate students' experiences on an ASB trip to Chicago and the meaning they made of the experience. I used purposeful and maximum variation sampling to identify participants on the ASB trip during which we traveled to Chicago and learned from and served with community members affected by the social issue of affordable housing and homelessness. In analyzing the post-trip interviews, documents, and participant-observations, I used constant comparative analysis to develop categorical aggregation, direct instances, patterns, and naturalistic generalizations. Through this process, I sought to create a detailed picture of the context of the case and a deeper understanding of students' experiences on the ASB trip. In Chapter Four, I present the findings of the study.

CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS

I don't know how everyone else viewed this trip
It wasn't as moving as I wanted it to be
But I hope that it will lead people to strive for a Life Uncommon.
Because not everyone gets to walk up the steps in public housing
And look at the reality of what is
Meet the people that live there
And have it register
They are not scary
I hope at least people won't be scared anymore
And at the end of everyday they knew they would
Safely get on the subway
And ride through the darkness…
…There are haikus in the subway. (Zeya, journal)

The day after we arrived, we took our first trip down to the subway station near our hostel, on our way to our first service site. The group stood clustered together on the platform absorbing the new sights, sounds, and smells. The participants looked at the advertisements, the mosaic tiles on the wall, and the Chicagoans' clothing style. They commented on how cold it was and that it "doesn't smell as bad as I thought." Participants whispered "Look at that graffiti!," "Which way are we going?," "Check out her boots," "Is that a haiku? Let's take a picture!" Haikus written on the walls of the subway were a source of awe, amusement, and picture-taking among the group of ASB trip participants. Seeing haikus in the subway captured some of the excitement and confusion of the students' experiences on the trip to Chicago. In her poem, Zeya's hope for what she and others in the group gained on the trip captures multiple dimensions of the students' experiences: peers, community members, new realities, emotions, changes, fears, and hopes.

Throughout this study, "haikus in the subway" have come to represent the beauty and conflict of the students' experience on this ASB trip. Participants were exposed to

new sights, people, and information through the context of the trip, which included service placements, community tours and conversations, and group reflections. Immersion in a new context was disorienting and intense as participants moved out of their "comfort zone" and in some cases sought to withdraw their emotional involvement with the experience. Participants made connections to community members and peers, and new perspectives, which made their understanding of the world more complex. Another area of complication was race, in which participants made connections and, in some cases, disconnections with their race in relation to others and the social issue of affordable housing. Bringing home their intense immersion experience and new complications in worldview was challenging and frustrating for participants.

Through my presentation of findings in this chapter, I will illuminate the context and connections through the students' words. To enhance an understanding of the findings, I begin with a description of the case through students' words and my vantage point as a participant observer. I will then present in greater detail the four main themes of the study: intense immersion context of the trip; connections to community, peers, and multiple perspectives; race (dis)connections; and challenges bringing it home that capture the students' experiences on the ASB trip to Chicago.

Context of the Trip: Life Outside the "Bubble"

The "best part of ASB" according to Angela was "taking a group of college students out of their bubble, placing them in a different place for a week that they've never been, that they've never experienced, learning about something that they had no idea about." Leaving the "bubble" was symbolic of the physical distance we traveled and the new sights, sounds, people, and culture we experienced. On the day of our departure,

we met at 6:00 a.m. in a cold rain outside the student union. Bags were loaded and bagels prepared as we waited for the remaining team members to arrive. One student called to say that she was too sick to go on the trip. By 6:30 a.m. all but one student had arrived. The two trip leaders woke the missing student with repeated phone calls, and we went to pick her up at her residence hall on our way out of campus.

We were scattered among three vehicles—two minivans and one sedan—for the 12-hour drive to our destination. With the exception of Kaitlyn and me, none of the participants had been to Chicago before, and the air of excitement as we neared our destination was palpable. As we drove into the city, cameras emerged to take pictures and videos from the car windows. After some confusion locating the hostel among the one-way streets of downtown Chicago, we unloaded the vehicles and checked into the hostel, which would serve as our "home" for the next seven days.

We parked the vehicles in a long-term parking lot near the hostel, where they would remain until we left the following Sunday. Angela and Zeya had arranged the schedule for the week and printed directions for taking take public transportation, even if it involved multiple bus and subway transfers to all of our community partner sites. They also assigned different pairs of students each day to be in charge of leading the group on the public transportation to our destination using directions they had printed. In this way each student would have to learn the layout of the city, negotiate the public transportation, and share the responsibility of leading the group.

After checking in, we settled in our two rooms—large bunk rooms with eight beds and one bathroom and shower. Zeya, Candace, Julia, Kaitlyn, Becca, and another student who was not a participant in this study stayed in one room. Angela, Stephanie, Andrew,

Joseph, Alex, Coral and I stayed in another room down the hall, which was slightly larger and was frequently used as a meeting place for nightly reflections and team meetings.

We explored the large hostel, including the spacious kitchen where we would cook meals and fix our takeaway lunches. We met several other large groups, including church youth groups and college groups, who were visiting the city on spring break, in some cases also with the purpose of engaging in community service work. During mealtimes we would interact and talk with other groups about where we were going and what we were doing. However, the majority of our interactions were within our group, particularly because each day we were busy with activities and often only returned to the hostel to sleep. Daily activities included service with community partners, speakers from the community and local university, and structured reflection activities.

Service Placements: A Springboard for Learning

We worked with three service placements: a senior center, a homeless shelter and an immigrant/refugee support organization. The work, people, and experience at each site were different but related to the issue of affordable housing.

The senior center. On the first day, we worked with a senior day care center for relatives of residents who lived in the surrounding low-income area and could not pay for home health care for aging family members while they were at work. Before arriving, several participants talked with apprehension about working with seniors because it made them "uncomfortable." As we walked from the bus stop to the organization, two participants asked, "Mei-Yen, are we in the 'hood?" I asked them to clarify what they meant, and they responded that they were wondering if the eastside of Chicago was the

"bad side." I asked them what they thought when looking around, and they both commented how it just looked like a "regular" neighborhood.

At the senior day center, clients and staff talked to us about the high costs of housing, as well as other daily living expenses that low-income families must balance, such as food, day care for elderly relatives or children, and utilities. As a volunteer group, we helped with daily tasks at the center such as serving snacks and lunch, leading exercise games, providing entertainment, and organizing files. Our group of 13 volunteers was larger than the agency was accustomed to hosting, and often there were not enough tasks for us to do. Volunteers who did not have tasks were asked to "entertain" the group of seniors by reading from a book of knock-knock jokes.

Participants appeared uncomfortable through our time at the shelter, particularly because some of the tasks we were asked to do involved serving lunch and guarding the door so none of the elderly clients could leave. Zeya commented, "I'm uncomfortable with old people…they were so helpless." Participants later complained that "it was boring" because there was not enough work for all us to do, and despite being thanked for our help, they felt like the group was a burden on the organization. Very few journals or post-trip interviews discussed this service site.

The homeless shelter. The group spent two days and two nights at a homeless shelter in the city. We had been in the city two days by this point and the group was increasingly more comfortable using the public transportation system and more at ease with each other. Arriving at the homeless shelter after dark, the sense of apprehension, which had slowly dissipated over the previous two days rose immediately. We were unable to find an open door of the church where we were supposed to meet the volunteer

coordinator. The area was predominantly dark street corners with a few neon lights of Dunkin Donuts and McDonalds. Whereas the area around our hostel had more tourists and business people, the residents of this area were predominantly low-income, African American. A heavily intoxicated woman yelled, "Hey, you tryin' to get in, too?!" She tried to show us a different door to use but it was locked as well. A couple participants thought we should leave, "maybe this isn't the right place," "this doesn't seem safe." Finally, Angela called the volunteer coordinator and found the correct door. It was clear from the silence and strained faces of the participants as we entered the building that this was an uncomfortable start to our work with the organization.

During our orientation session at the shelter, we talked with the coordinator about the factors influencing the number of people using the night shelter, particularly the impact of displaced jobs and dismantled low-income housing complexes as a result of HOPE VI legislation. The shelter, sponsored in a local church, had two facilities, one for men and one for women. The men and women slept on fold-out cots in the basement of the church. The basement was cold with sterile linoleum flooring, though it was warmer than the snowy weather outside. No children were allowed at either shelter. Many shelters in the city give priority to women with children; however, this shelter was established to meet the needs of single people experiencing homelessness.

We volunteered at the shelter for two days, during which half the group went to the men's shelter and half the group went to the women's shelter. Each day we spent several hours cleaning and reorganizing the supplies, preparing dinner and breakfast, and helping with any other tasks the coordinators identified. We spent the night at the shelter, sleeping on mats in a separate room from clients. No men were allowed to work at the

women's shelter, though women could volunteer at the men's shelter but not spend the night. Because our group had ten women and two men, both men spent both nights at the men's shelter, but only half of the women spent the night at the women's shelter. The other half went back to the hostel after helping clean up dinner. The next night the two groups of women participants switched so that everyone spent two days working at the shelter and at least one night sleeping there.

One reason for sleeping at the shelter was that our work in the evenings did not end until after 10: 00 p.m. and we needed to start cooking breakfast at 5:30 a.m. the next morning. We interacted directly with the clients and had the opportunity to hear stories from each person as we prepared dinner and breakfast and before "lights out" when clients, particularly at the men's shelter, played card games. The atmosphere was more jovial during and after dinner. By the morning, there was an air of anxiety as everyone prepared to face the day and the cold weather. The shelter, only open at night, closed at 7:30 a.m. and clients had to pack up all their belongings and find another place to stay until the shelter reopened at 6:00 p.m.

In journal entries and post-trip interviews, the shelter stood out for all the participants as the most profound and challenging experience. Participants described their experience at the shelter as "shocking," "mind-blowing," and "like nothing I've ever seen," and "actually enjoyable." At the men's shelter, participants were moved when talking to the men. One reason is that the men at the shelter were so "willing to open to college students" (Joseph). Several participants talked about one individual in particular who told them his life story, which included going to medical school and becoming homeless after suffering a stroke. At the women's shelter, participants were challenged

by the caustic environment and personalities of the women they met. The environment was different from the men's shelter in part because there was less space. At the men's shelter, round tables allowed participants to interact with the men after dinner as the men played their nightly card games. At the women's shelter, there was no space for tables, and immediately after dinner the women began to set up their personal space and cots. Where the men at the shelter readily engaged the participants in conversation, the women at the shelter yelled at each other: "you put your stuff there," "where's my shoe?!" I'm first in the shower, bitch!" The women mostly ignored our group except to ask for more salt or juice. When working at the women's shelter, we stayed in the kitchen or storage room where we cooked dinner and breakfast and tried to stay out of the way of the women in the main room, which was crowded with cots, belongings, and people. We slept in a separate room in a part of the church where the women were not allowed.

Immigrant and refugee support agency. For our last service project we worked with an immigrant/refugee support organization, cleaning and preparing a home in the suburbs to which a new family of refugees would be moving. The experience did not incorporate direct interaction with the clients of the organization, but the group accomplished many important tasks for the organization and learned from the staff about the challenges that immigrants and refugees face when looking for housing and creating a new life in the city.

The house we were preparing was in a middle class, suburban neighborhood. It had been donated to the organization and was used as a transition home for families when they first arrived in the United States. The two volunteer coordinators, one a former client of the organization, spoke movingly of the challenges new immigrants and refugees face

when they arrive. The last family to live in the transition house had not known to keep meat in the refrigerator. Instead they kept the meat in the cupboard and were all rushed to the emergency room one night because of salmonella. Due to language and cultural barriers, many clients have a difficult time upon arrival meeting basic needs such as housing and food. This agency sought to make that transition easier, though they were experiencing increased difficulty finding low-income housing for their clients.

Though participants commented that there was not enough direct interaction with the clients of the immigrant/refugee support organization, this service placement involved the most physical labor and provided the greatest visible results from our work. As it was our last placement, some participants commented that it was nice to end the week with a project involving a lot more team work. However, as with the senior center, the participants made few journal entries or post-trip interview comments about this service site.

Community Tours and Conversations: Questions, Answers and More Questions

Conversations with different constituencies and tours of other parts of the city offered a broader picture of the impact and expanse of the issue of affordable housing in a large city. We took tours of low-income public housing complexes and met with grassroots housing protection coalition members. By visiting residents in the public housing complexes and residents of former complexes, that were notorious for gangs and violence we learned new perspectives on affordable housing issues that are often left out of the media and governmental messages.

Cabrini-Green. We visited the Coalition to Protect Public Housing in Cabrini-Green, a low-income housing complex, known for gang violence especially in the 1980s

and 1990s. We met Mr. Price, an engaging speaker wearing a neatly-pressed, pin-striped suit and gold jewelry, who was a community leader for many years. He had moved away from the area but continued to be a part of the fight to protect the few remaining residents from being kicked out of their homes by the encroaching gentrification. Big Henry commented, "Mr. P, he comes back…even though he moved away and doesn't have too, he still cares." Big Henry, a large man with baggy jeans and oversized t-shirt was one of the community organizers who had been raised in the area and was one of the Coalition leaders. He told us about his childhood in the neighborhood and the Coalition's fight to keep the community together. Pointing to the expensive high-rise condos, Big Henry asked, "See those condos? Would you like to live in them? Shoot, I'd like to live in them but all I can do is look at them take over my neighborhood."

We brought pizzas to share for a lunch conversation in the small Coalition office in the heart of Cabrini-Green. Afterward, Mr. Price and Big Henry took us for a tour of the neighborhood, told stories of the way things once were, and tried to paint a picture for us to imagine that the rubble and debris we saw was once a vibrant neighborhood. Mr. Price pointed out all the bullet holes and recounted stories from his time as a community leader, "That's where some gang thug shot out of that window and hit a little boy when he was walking with his mom to the school that used to be in that field over there. The force of the shot blew him clear across the other side of the street." The neighborhood had been abandoned by landlords and suffered from lack of maintenance. Tall, high-rise, high-income condominiums, the result of gentrification, formed a wall around the five remaining blocks of Cabrini-Green. Participants were silent but enthralled with Big Henry and Mr. Price. On the tour, the group kept as close as possible to the two men so as

not to miss a word of what they said. People we passed on the street would smile and yell "hey" or cross the street to shake Mr. Price's hand. There was a sense of pride in our group because we were being led on a tour with such a well-respected man.

G.H.E.T.T.O Bus. On the G.H.E.T.T.O. (Greatest History Ever Told To Our People) bus tour with Ms. Beauty Turner, a self-proclaimed "writer and a fighter," we heard the stories of residents who lived in the area for multiple generations and struggled to maintain family and community connections after being displaced by the new HOPE VI housing structure. Community residents opened their homes in high-rise low-income complexes to us and we crowded into their tiny apartments to listen to their stories and struggles. We saw the stairwell where a pipe burst, flooding the stairs and then freezing. The elevator had been broken for several years and the stairs were the only way to travel in and out of the eight-story building. Participants quietly shuffled between homes and the big yellow school bus that drove us around the southside of Chicago as a group, trying not to convey the extent of their curiosity and nervousness.

Going into the low-income Dearborn complex, the tour group was accompanied by "escorts," young Black men who worked with Beauty to serve as "security" in case anyone tried to "pick on" our group of predominantly White college students entering the all-Black, low-income neighborhood. Beauty and the residents told us about the use of "contact cards," which police kept on every person living in the area. The cards had each person's address and description, such as height, weight, and eye color. If a crime occurred in the area, the police would refer to their contact cards and decide on the person they thought most closely related to the description of the perpetrator and then go arrest that person. If you were in the area and the police did not have your contact card,

you would be arrested. Beauty asked, “Do the police in your neighborhood keep contact cards on you?” Zeya leaned over and whispered to me, “Sounds kind of like Jews wearing the yellow star.”

We also talked to residents of the new mixed-income neighborhood. We saw the lower-income, poorly-made structures that had flimsy walls, ineffective plumbing, and bad designing, such as placing the furnace next to the only exit. We witnessed the difference in resources and land-value between the low-income and high-income houses in the mixed income community. Some students were appalled at the disparities, while others were a little more skeptical saying “I feel like they’re trying really hard to convince us or something.” Each day brought new questions and new complexities to the issue of affordable housing and our understanding of the interconnected factors impacting low-income people.

Pre-arranged speakers. A contact Angela and Zeya made at the University of Illinois-Chicago connected us with a doctoral student, Beth, who was studying HOPE VI legislation from a political and historic perspective. We met together in the lounge of the hostel where she shared her knowledge of the history and politics of Chicago and asked us to share what we had been seeing and hearing from the community. From this conversation, we became more attuned to the political structure and motivations for the HOPE VI legislation as another factor in our understanding of affordable housing.

Homelessness was another aspect of the issue of affordable housing about which we learned and worked with the community. Many residents, after being displaced by HOPE VI with the promise of being given new homes in the mixed-income neighborhoods, were forced to move outside the city limits while on the waiting list.

However, because all of the jobs were in the city, many people struggled to keep, find, and maintain jobs. Communities of people who for generations had depended on each other for support were broken up, after being displaced. Many individuals struggled to maintain the standard of living they had previously without that support system. Carrie, the volunteer coordinator at the homeless shelter for men and women, explained in our orientation that homelessness, though tied to other issues as well, was said to have increased as a result of HOPE VI.

Prior to our two nights at the homeless shelter, Carrie, engaged the participants in an informative and eye-opening discussion about homelessness in the city and worked to dispel stereotypes that we held. Carrie shared many shocking statistics and stories of how government initiatives on homelessness emerged. In subsequent group reflections and journal entries, many participants referenced the information Carrie provided as they analyzed and discussed what they were seeing and hearing about homelessness and affordable housing. Even days later, participants would begin sentences with, "It's like what Carrie said…" or "Remember what Carrie said about…?"

In addition to engaging at the service sites, meeting Mr. Price, Big Henry, Ms. Beauty, Beth, and Carrie was an integral part of our experience as we learned about the issue of affordable housing and homelessness. Through our nightly reflections we processed the new information and new questions our experiences uncovered.

Group Reflections: Validating and Challenging

Group reflections were established as an important part of our daily activities. Often, reflections took place in the larger bunk room where participants spread across the bunks and on the floor. In addition to assigning pairs of students to lead the group

through the public transportation system, Angela and Zeya assigned different pairs of students to be responsible for facilitating daily reflection. Angela and Zeya modeled a reflection on the first night and told their peers that they could choose the type of activity used to facilitate the reflection. The reflections took a variety of forms, including written activities, journal writing, or verbal sharing with the group or with a partner. Participants took seriously the role of facilitating reflection and met with their partner to plan the activity prior to the meeting.

Reflections lasted from one hour to three hours, usually because the conversation stimulated by the reflection continued well after the planned activity ended. All of the participants contributed to the structured activity planned by their peers. However, the dynamics of the group were such that several outspoken White students tended to dominate the unstructured conversation that emerged toward the end. In individual conversations with some of the outspoken White students, they expressed frustration that the students of color did not contribute to the conversation. Some disagreements occurred, such as whether or not to give a homeless person money, but more often, the dominant speakers were seeking validation of their experiences and perceptions, using statements with "well, I don't know about you…" "did you think that, too?" or "what do you all think about…"

Working at the service placements, engaging with the community, and reflecting as a group were the main activities of ASB trip. Each of these activities placed students in unfamiliar and at times uncomfortable environments. Participants captured the significance of these new environments in describing the disorienting and intense context that they encountered on the trip. In the next section, I provide a richer picture of the

disorientation of immersion in which students experienced the ASB trip, which involved intense emotions and elements of detachment.

Immersion: The Power of Intensity and the Privilege of Detachment

> She showed us the church that held Emit Till
> Once
> With thousands of people there to see him—
> A church with hardly any people living near it
> But a place announcing its importance
> She told us of contact cards
> Of the laws that did nothing but remind me
> Of a paper I wrote once
> On Apartheid
> But all this ugliness was ok
> Because there were haikus in the subway. (Zeya, journal)

It was a clear and cool Sunday night, nearly 9:00 p.m., when three participants and I set out for the grocery store on our first night in the city. Andrew, Becca, Kaitlyn, and I were walking in the direction the receptionist at the hostel had told us we would find the nearest grocery store. Chatter about being in a new city, who had traveled before and where, and how "cool" the hostel was gradually quieted as we continued farther away from the hostel and deeper into the neighborhood of dark store fronts and flickering street lights. "Are you sure we're going the right way?," "Shouldn't we have seen it by now?," "I'm glad we have a big guy like Andrew with us." There was an air of anxiety as we walked past a man sitting on the sidewalk asking for spare change. We soon arrived at the grocery store, and the participants were visibly overwhelmed by our journey and the many new sights and people. Their bubbly chatter with each other had turned to somber glances at the surroundings and an introspective demeanor as they tried to take in all that was unlike what they were accustomed to seeing.

Leaving the comfort of college life and their immersion into a new context was a disorienting and intense experience, which students described as going "out of the bubble" of the campus or "outside my comfort zone." The act of leaving the "bubble" was "intense" and "mind-blowing" as they encountered sights and stories from people, whom they had "never seen before." The emotions associated with the "out of the bubble" experience were intense and included shock, depression, heart-break, anger, awe and disbelief. Getting out of the "bubble" and experiencing a range of emotions make up the core of the immersion experience and are sensations experienced throughout the trip.

All of the students noted the awareness of being in a new, unfamiliar environment. For some, the new environment was in stark contrast to their home community, particularly the comfort of campus life. Angela described the situation as leaving the "bubble" of the college campus:

> I think college students really, really live in a bubble. We don't have like the plastic clear bubble wrap but we definitely live in a bubble…I think taking a group of college students out of their bubble, placing them in a different place for a week that they've never been, that they've never experienced, learning about something that they had no idea about is the best part of ASB. Putting them somewhere else, you can't just crawl back into your dorm room, pull the covers over your head and be like I'm just going to sleep and then I'll go hang out with my friends or something like that.

In leaving the "bubble" of college life, students were immersed in a "different reality," separate from the reality of their life at home. For Alex, being removed from the pressures of school made it easier to "live in the moment" and fully experience the new city and people. Alex continued to share:

> I think that you're thrown into this whole different reality for a week and you're away from reality and not even with people you know and it's like I think it's so much easier when it's like that to really live in the moment and not have to worry about this paper you have to write because it's so easy to get caught up in your own life that you don't like step back and like try to figure out what's going on

> around you so when you go off with a bunch of strangers all you have to do is listen to people talk to you and figure out why things are the way they are.

Being "thrown into this whole different reality" (Alex) conveys the extent to which participants were confronted with a situation in which they had little control. Alex's comment that "you're away from reality" further reflects the newness of what participants were experiencing, as Stephanie shared, "I've never seen anything like it before."

Experiencing the "different reality with a group of "strangers" was an added dimension of disorientation. The team of participants lived, worked, and learned together every day for eight days. For Julia, being immersed with a team of peers caused her to open up to others sooner than usual and emerge from her own personal "bubble." She stated, "I guess because we were in such small quarters and because we were experiencing all this together, I definitely stepped out of my shell pretty early on I would say."

The immersion in a new context was intense and difficult to process because of the information and knowledge-sharing participants gained from the community service activities and the community speakers. Alex explained:

> It's just so much to process and like having to be on all the time like that was really difficult. Trying to not tune out and I sit there and am like 'when can we like have some free time' but actually like making sure that I'm taking everything in and appreciating fully.

Similarly, Andrew found that it was challenging to remain open to the variety of new experiences to which they were exposed. He shared:

> I think the most challenging thing for me was staying open and absorbing for that long. Toward the end of the trip, I know I didn't. For five or six days in a row, absorb this stuff and understand it, and fit it in, you get burned out pretty quickly. You can only hit home so many times.

Alex and Andrew's comments demonstrate that participants saw themselves as integral parts of the experience and assumed responsibility for effectively and fully taking in all that they encountered. Yet, their comments also convey a lack of awareness about and detachment from their privilege to have "free time," away from the social issues which were an escapable constant in the lives of the people they met. The power of the intensity of immersion is clear in the way participants were challenged to continually process and "be on all the time" (Alex). In response, some participants resorted to a tired detachment in which they used their privilege to create distance from attempting to "absorb this stuff…and fit it in" (Andrew) and seek "free time" (Alex).

Andrew continued to note the intensity of balancing the learning and "being a part of it, and having this rush of a new understanding come on you in a group of people…you don't realize when you're there what exactly is going on but there's periods of like, man, this is very intense." The intensity was hard to understand as a participant described in an anonymous reflection activity: "It was really hard for me to even believe what I was seeing in a sense because I felt like I was in a dream, or a movie, completely detached from the community around me. It didn't feel like we were even in an Industrialized Country, let alone the richest." This participant's comments again portray an element of detachment from the reality of the social issues to which they were exposed. Such detachment indicated the privileged life through which many of the participants viewed the world and were now being challenged.

For some participants, the intensity of the experience was influenced by the emotional impact of the social issue on which we were focusing. Becca shared, "It was really just too much, too fast, which I think is the nature of the trip. It's a week and they

do pick hard social issues. It's not like why are the butterflies becoming extinct, which is sad but it doesn't hit home too much." Candace shared the ache and sadness of our work at the service sites, "we can see the pain and we can see the heart-break." Alex noted in her journal that she felt "depressed at times" after our work at the homeless shelter. She wondered, "What keeps these women going? I get existentialist about my own life sometimes and wonder what exactly I'm living for. Not to say they don't have anything to live for." In her words, Alex conveys both empathy but also judgment about the situation of the women she met in the shelter. In the disorientating atmosphere of the trip, participants were confronted with information and experiences outside the context of their own understanding of the world.

Processing the intensity of the immersion was challenging and overwhelming for some participants. The detachment they experienced as a result of the intense immersion experience often caused them to put distance between themselves and what they were observing. In the following sections, I will delve into what students learned about themselves, others and complex social issues as they navigated their immersion experience "out of the bubble."

Connections and Complexity: Community, Peers, and New Perspectives

> There were haikus in the subway
> We went down there to reach the southside where we were lucky enough to meet a beauty…
> Beauty
> A writer and a fighter
> Beautiful Beauty took us on a tour…
> We also visited the coalition to protect public housing
> It was in the middle of blocks of rubble and abandoned houses
> Because the HOPE was that it would be upgraded… (Zeya, journal)

Riding the subway connected our ASB group to new sights and stories. In this journey, participants made connections with community members through which they personalized social issues of homelessness and affordable housing and confronted stereotypes. In addition to learning from the community, participants made connections with peers with whom they processed the experience and shared different viewpoints. The new perspectives students gained about homelessness, affordable housing, and the experiences of others complicated students' view of the world.

Learning from the Community

> In the subway
> We used it to get to the homeless shelter we stayed at
> Where we made dinner and breakfast
> And met amazing men,
> Illegal Aliens who poured out their life story
> Men who went to medical school
> And then had a stroke that left them paralyzed
> Some of us had brief floating eye contact that seemed
> To speak worlds of words
> We met women who were in control
> And some that needed it. (Zeya, journal)

As Zeya eloquently captures in her poem, interactions with the community provided participants with powerful stories and a personalized understanding of individuals experiencing homelessness. We met low-income families, people who were homeless, and inspiring community leaders. The newness of being "out of the bubble" continued as Coral explained that "you don't meet these people on a college campus." Coral's use of "these people" conveys the distance perceived between her life and the lives of the community members, and highlights her lingering assumptions about difference. Connecting with community and listening to stories bridged the differences these participants felt existed. Through these connections participants personalized the

issue of homelessness and the people impacted by affordable housing issues. They broke down stereotypes and in some cases confirmed previous assumptions.

"It was real." The issue of affordable housing and homelessness was new for students, and being immersed in the community allowed them to experience the issues "for real." Stephanie shared:

> The whole homelessness thing is not really an issue where I live and I don't know much about low income housing and stuff like that. We live around a university. So that community, we're not really a part of, but to see [the issues] for real.

The ability to "see" the issue "for real" expanded participants' understanding to include the people affected by affordable housing and homelessness. Julia shared, "The biggest thing I learned from the people that we worked in service with is that they are all real people. I guess I was so removed from the situation before. I saw it was an issue and not as people who just happen to be suffering from whatever issue it was." Learning from inspiring community leaders was also a unique opportunity, which students recognized as an experience they had not previously had a chance to encounter, in part because of differences between their home community and the community in Chicago struggling with affordable housing issues. As Stephanie described:

> With Mr. Price, he was a genuine community leader, which is something I hadn't seen before. You hear about people like that, you read about them, and stuff like that, but I've never seen one in action. In my community, we didn't have anything to fight about.

The firsthand exposure students encountered was surprising to them when they compared what they previously thought from learning about the issues in textbooks and actually seeing the social issue and impact on people. Joseph commented "you're not learning from a textbook, you're learning from actual human beings." Kaitlyn also shared

the impact of personal experience, “I’d never seen anything like that before. I just couldn’t ever imagine it. You see it in movies and then you see it in real life.”

Seeing the “real” issue was often challenging and opened students to experience a range of emotions as Candace emphasized:

> It was real…you read about it…but when you actually see and are able to touch, and able to hear the stories and look at the people face to face, and hear them talking about their lives and what they’ve been through, and everything they’ve had to deal with is definitely more, because it makes you…emotionally and we can see the pain, and we can see the heart-break. So that just surprised me to know that, yes, you can read it and know it’s for real but actually seeing it, and being able to touch it, and being able to deal with it hands on, that was definitely surprising.

The sensory impact of seeing, touching, and hearing the stories of the people experiencing by homelessness and affordable housing issues was a powerful influence on participants’ experiences in Chicago. In processing these challenging sights and voices students personalized the “human side” and proximity of the issues to their own lives.

Personalizing. As students interacted with others and experienced “real people” experiencing the social issue on which we were focusing, they came to personalize the experience both in seeing the “human face” of the issue and in recognizing their own proximity to the issue (Julia). The people with whom we interacted, particularly in the homeless shelter, were mentioned by all of the participants as the experience that stood out the most. Julia describes interacting with community members in the homeless shelter as “the most profound experience” because we were able to “actually meet them and know them as people rather than homeless people but real individuals…they were like real people who I could relate to.”

For Joseph and Coral, the homeless shelter was a unique experience that, as outsiders, they were “allowed” to have. Joseph also recognized his experiences with the

community were uncommon. He noted, “Like honestly the vast majority of people will never be able to say like ‘I’ve slept amongst homeless people before.’” Joseph’s comments also suggest that interactions with the community were unique because of the distance that existed between their lives, and illustrated that Joseph viewed the people who were homeless as people difficult to relate to and one which others would not expect to have such close contact. Coral was also struck by the closeness with which we interacted with community members and were “allowed” such interactions, particularly at the homeless shelter. She shared:

> We were sleeping in the same building as homeless people, and we were there in the night time and in the morning, and we basically woke up together and went to sleep together. It just seemed like it was an experience that really allowed us to, I can’t think of the right word, you kind of know what I’m talking about, being there with them and kind of being part of their community and their society.

Viewing themselves as outsiders being permitted an unusual glance into the “society” of people by staying in the homeless shelter was a common theme as participants encountered issues and people whose stories they realized they had not considered before. Many students perpetuated “us/them” dichotomous language, unaware that, though they attempted to describe situations in which difference was bridged, they continued to emphasize the power differences between themselves and the community.

For participants, personalizing also meant seeing the issue and community members in the context of their own life and their proximity to the issue. As Joseph described, “it just really put your life in check.” Joseph continued to share:

> Homeless people are pretty normal or like you know just like you could be a stones-throw away from like a gang violent area even though we’re near a seemingly nice mall, happy mall. These things are probably closer than you think.

Joseph frequently talked about the proximity of "gang violent" areas with a mixture of surprise, disbelief, and fear. Joseph and others also often used "normal" to describe the community members we met, unaware that this language implied that they previously perceived homeless individuals as abnormal. Alex struggled to make sense of the challenging situation at the women's shelter and contemplated the term "normal." She wrote in her journal:

> I met some women who seemed mentally unstable, like the one who didn't talk but instead communicated by writing notes on napkins. She had meds; I'm not sure what for. Turns out she was insistent they call an ambulance in the middle of the night. Maybe she just wanted the attention. I also met Sunshine. She didn't have dinner, she said she was fasting. She was probably the nicest of all the ladies, though maybe her name has just biased me. Other women seemed pretty normal, though I guess more "inner city normal" than "life in the suburbs" normal, if such a difference exists. Of course, one has to ask, what's normal?

Many students expressed surprise discovering that the people who were homeless were "just like me" and "normal" people. Julia also noted that the people she met were like her and her family. She remarked, "I definitely learned that the people who are homeless are the people who are being kicked out of their homes are people just like me or just like my friends or my family. That really hit home for me, I think." Alex processed her experience meeting the women in the homeless shelter by contemplating at an even more personal level the women in relation to her own experience. She pondered in her journal, "At one point, I wondered where these women were when they were my age. And where they were 10 years ago. And most of all, where they'll be 10 years from now."

Stephanie was challenged when she saw similarities between her roommate and the men in the homeless shelter. This connection gave her pause about the ease with which one could find themselves homeless:

> The most challenging was probably, it wasn't challenging at the time but just thinking about it was the men at the men's shelter because one of them really reminded me of my roommate because he had this wide taste in music and he went to see the Smashing Pumpkins when they weren't famous, which my roommate would absolutely love the Smashing Pumpkins, and he went to college, and he studied theater, and he lost his job, and he lost his home. It's entirely possible and it could happen to my roommate, and he was such a nice guy. He was just a normal guy stuck in a bad situation.

Several participants mentioned meeting a man in the homeless shelter who had graduated from medical school as a powerful example of how easily one can become homeless. Kaitlyn was shaken by the realization of how close homelessness is to her own life:

> I learned that homelessness could happen to anyone, and that terrified me. We're all in college now and one of the people we met had graduated from med school. It wasn't like he gambled his money away or all the scary things you hear about. He had a stroke. It really opened my eyes because everyone judges them but they're just like you, like you're one step away from being where they are.

Personalizing put a human face on participants' understanding of homelessness and affordable housing. Some participants reacted with surprise at the proximity of these issues to their lives and in some cases they continued to perpetuate "us/them" dichotomies.

Confronting stereotypes. Interactions with community members through service activities and organized talks gave students the opportunity to learn new perspectives on the social issue and community leadership, and to break down stereotypes. Connecting the idea of bridging between different communities, Alex personalized her understanding of low-income families as "just people" and challenged the stereotypes that "they're not difficult to talk to." Confronting stereotypes was a common theme as students made new connections to social issues and learning from the community. She states, "People in the projects are just people. They're raising their kids, they have pics of their families on the

wall and too many knick-knacks and they're not difficult to talk to, if *you're* willing to talk to them."

In a written reflection activity during which participants discussed topics on a piece of paper that was passed around, three participants noticed that they were beginning to critique external forces, of which they were a part:

> Student 1: I don't know if this happened to anyone else—but once we entered the rich part of the neighborhood, I felt a hostility to the affluent residents walking around, and even scorned the boutiques and shops. I felt like even though I had just learned about the Cabrini situation—I was one of them (Mr. P, Big H) and felt like a foreigner. Also, this scares me because I am totally biased, and wish I knew the other side of the story.
>
> Student 2: It makes me wonder if people like us actually realize they are participating in gentrification or if they are oblivious to what's happening without trying to be. I am afraid this could be happening all around me but I may be blinded by the new additions to my community.
>
> Student 3: I also felt that hostility towards the affluent residents—and that surprised me but I definitely wondered if any of them understood the consequences of their decisions to buy homes in that neighborhood. I don't think I would have known before talking to Mr. Price.

By connecting with community members at such a personal level, participants uncovered new insight about who was involved in gentrification, which produced unexpected anger and confusion. Suddenly, participants found themselves with negative feelings toward the people with whom they most readily identified—the more affluent, encroaching neighbors. Participants still used "us/them" language to discuss the dynamics they observed but began to grapple with their own positionality within the issue.

Many participants were surprised by the amount of knowledge the community members shared, which broke stereotypes students had about what would be the nature of their relationship. Kaitlyn notes, "Every question we had, they could answer. That really surprised me. I was sad that I assumed they could be uneducated and didn't really know

what to do, but I was very impressed with how much they knew." Kaitlyn continued to share that she learned from the community, particularly the women's homeless shelter, and grappled with how to make sense of conflicting stereotypes. She said:

> A lot of the women there weren't mentally stable or weren't motivated to go out and to try to make something of themselves. And then there were some that were trying to go out and work. So it was really difficult for me to see the stereotypes because it's like she did this, it's just hard to say what some of them are, like the truth. There aren't all people that do that, but there are some people that come in and aren't sober. It was just difficult because you want all of the bad things that people say about homeless people to be false and like, no, they got in a car accident and this happened, and it's not their fault. It was really hard for me to see that in some cases there's always those people.

Several participants were conscious of being an outsider and expected to be treated differently because of their differences. As Alex shares, her assumptions were wrong:

> I would have thought that the people who like live in the projects wouldn't like people who hadn't. Or would have assumed that we were…they would have thought that we thought that we were better than them and so they would have gotten defensive or aggressive or not like that we were there. And they were just really welcoming and they just wanted to talk to us and they didn't think anything bad about us. It didn't seem and that made it a lot easier to talk to them and be open with them.

Seeing the issue "for real," personalizing the story of others, and confronting stereotypes were important components of the connections students made to learning from the community.

Learning from Peers

In addition to encountering people in the community with different life experiences, participants were surprised to find that there were differences within their team of peers. Julia commented, "We all have different perspectives on things. I guess I had never really been in a situation before where we were talking about something serious where other people might have a different perspective of it than others." For

some, like Joseph, these differences in background provided opportunity for learning from each other: "it was really good because just the fact that we were from different geographical areas and that we could all sort of contribute to the discussion was like pretty good. I mean they all had a lot of just insights to say so I mean [I learned] from the discussions, the individual comments they were really nice." For Andrew, experiencing the trip with a group of peers helped process and support the challenging experience. He explained, "it was definitely helpful to have other people who were going through the same learning process as you. You would at least be able to talk to them. It validates what you're learning."

Reflecting the intense nature of the experience, Coral noted one night in her journal, "really tired now—no time/energy for reflection, everything important was mentioned during our 2 hour reflection tonight." The role of nightly reflections, even when exhausted was integral to making meaning of the intense experience. Through the reflections, students processed with their peers to understand how they were similar or not in the ways they understood the experience. Students discovered that they each came from different experiences that caused them to make meaning of the experience differently. Julia captures this point:

> The most challenging part was probably I guess having to listen to other people talk about their views and opinions on things. I had to kind of force myself to be open minded sometimes because we're all different and we all come from different places. I guess the most challenging part for me was instead of taking it as something personal just taking it as a statement and think about it that way and kind of step back from the situation.

Candace also found challenges and rewards in peer learning: "what was most challenging would probably be…working with the group. It definitely shows you how to work within a group, and just being able to deal with different viewpoints and the way

people talk and people's perceptions." Candace elaborated to say that though the experience was challenging she learned about the importance of being open-minded about others from different backgrounds. She illuminated, "you definitely have to understand that people come from various backgrounds and have dealt with different things. Even though they may not have dealt with the same things you have or dealt with the issues, they nevertheless do care." Zeya conveyed some frustration with her peers on the trip who criticized the information they were learning as too biased:

> I guess I was just surprised at how much people could doubt, how much people could ask for the other side—we get the other side everyday—from our parents, from our professors—I didn't think the participants would demand to hear both or doubt whatsoever the things they heard [on the trip]. (While I know doubt is good, I felt like the participants doubted too much). I think part of the issue is that this issue—low income housing—is mostly hidden. You can hide everything you're doing to limit public housing and even those that it directly affects, may not actually know it. I think it's a topic that requires a lot of background research that maybe we didn't provide.

Zeya's frustration portrays the differing perspectives on the trip and the tension that sometimes resulted. Zeya indicated feeling responsible as a trip leader that the students on her trip come to understand the issues in the same way she did. The idea of getting the "other side" emphasizes that Zeya perceived parents and professors as perpetuating the dominant White culture beliefs that her peers were inundated with and that caused them to doubt what the community members were saying about injustice. To Zeya, the "other," more dominant side allowed participants to resist seeing the impact of racism, oppression, and their own privilege in relation to the community. The connections participants made through learning from the community and peers continued to make the world more complex as they uncovered the many layers of the social issues of affordable housing and homelessness.

Complexity of Perspectives

Zeya writes about the complexity of politics and tragic circumstances that the participants discovered through our work with the homeless shelter and in conversations with community members:

> The fact that the only reason this organization existed
> Was the unhappy truth that a man had frozen to death,
> In a dumpster,
> The politics,
> The mayor said there were only 24 homeless people in the city.

As students connected to the learning from the community and peers in the disorienting context of the trip, they uncovered a greater complexity to the social issues and viewpoints.

Participants may have come on the trip with a general understanding of the social issue of affordable housing; however their experiences during the trip uncovered a much more complicated picture. Stephanie shared:

> I think the trip made it a lot more complicated. I already had kind of a notion that there's a lot of problems that are so complicated and no easy way out of them, but this just leaves…there's so much more than housing. It's not such a simple thing.

Like Stephanie, many participants readily identified a shift from a simple to a more complex understanding of social issues. Alex recognized that there were interconnected factors that made solving issues like homelessness difficult:

> I probably went in thinking that things were a lot simpler than they are and if only these three steps were taken things would be resolved, but there's just so many intricacies and things are just so interconnected that there's really…like I feel like homelessness is like it would be great to solve but I just don't see any way that we can totally eradicate homelessness just because there are so many factors that play into it.

Alex went on to comment that uncovering this complexity was to "see" versus her previous state of being "blind," which empowered her to have a more informed perspective:

> And I think just kind of knowing more about these issues and I think more about them and it bums me out that there are so many problems but I think I can just see things from a more informed perspective and I think I have a better understanding of how things work and so I feel like I know more about how I could help whereas before I feel like I was more blind and I didn't know anything about anything.

However, for some participants, this complex and interconnecting web of issues and structures that made it difficult to "totally eradicate homelessness," also stirred feelings of being overwhelmed and unable to make a difference. Becca shared:

> I have always known that there's a lot of layers to things, but definitely it was just an example of how incredibly complex things are, just how incredibly complex things are and how there are so many layers, and about how you can't just snap your fingers and say you can't go to a place for a week and expect to do service and come away feeling like you made a difference. I don't feel like I made a difference. I don't feel like my time was wasted there either, at all, but I don't feel like I really made a difference.

In addition to uncovering new complexity, Becca conveys that participants had expectations for the impact of their work and struggled with how to "make a difference" in the interconnected web of factors that complicate one's ability to create change.

Experiencing a new complexity of perspectives included learning from community members' viewpoints and engaging with peers' understanding of social identities in relation to social issues. The social identity that was particular salient through group reflections and interactions with the community was race. Race became more complicated as students struggled with new connections and disconnections between their understanding of social issues, such as affordable housing and homelessness in relation to their own identity.

Race (Dis)Connections

The issues of race became more complicated as participants uncovered the complexities of affordable housing and homelessness and the different perspectives of their peers. Some participants thought about race for the first time, while others made new observations of the influence of race on social structures and in relation to themselves. Joseph did not find race to be particularly salient during the trip. He revealed, "I don't really think about my personal race." Though Joseph, who identifies as Asian, did not relate any new understanding relating to his race or race in relation to the affordable housing, he did bring up his surprise in meeting the community members whom he originally thought might feel differently toward him because of being Asian. He shared, "I felt like they didn't really care and they treated me all the same. Most people can't even tell I'm Asian but to them it didn't seem to matter, which was really nice because that's sort of like the ideal we're striving towards." Joseph focused on a colorblind approach to race and recognized the difference between his race and the community with whom we were interacting, yet thought it best that no attention was drawn to this fact. For Coral, being a student of color did mean differences, specifically in that she had a greater capacity to see the other side of issues:

> And I think being a minority, that's always in the back of my mind as how do people perceive me. That's something that other people, if you're not a minority, you probably wouldn't think about that as much. I think I'm always careful and I try to see the other side of things a lot more because I know there's another side. I've learned not to take anything for granted, and not to have such strong opinions about things because I think moderation is the key to make your own decisions, and kind of take everything in, and then think about it before making such strong decisions about whatever it is.

Candace also felt that she was able to connect more to the issues as a minority:

> I love that each person has something different to bring to the table based on their race, based on their background, based on everything that makes them who they are. But for me personally, I was able to connect to the issue I guess a little bit more because I am a minority, I have to deal with certain social issues.

Stephanie, who identifies as White, grappled with the fact that race had not been a factor in her life; yet, from what she was seeing, race was a determining factor in poor communities. She commented:

> The majority of the communities that we visited, the poor communities, were Black people, and I still don't fully understand the tie with race and how much money you make. Race was never much of a factor in my life because my parents both have good jobs and they're White people but I didn't connect that they have good jobs because they're White people.

For Stephanie, interacting with a community who is different from her home community both in race and socio-economic status was her first view that there might be a tie between race and income.

Angela identified ASB as an opportunity to interact with diverse others and felt that a "token minority" was needed on each trip to help other students, like Stephanie, understand better the social issue. She noted:

> We live in a world and we're mixed and the United States is a melting pot, not an ideal melting pot but tries to explore these differences. I think as college students when you're in classes predominantly with your same gender or your same race you don't get that diversity. So even if you have that token minority kid on your trip he or she is going to have a lot to offer and a lot to educate the rest of the team. Sure they're the token minority but people will learn from them. I think that's something that every trip should have. We shouldn't all just be homogeneous and just one race, one gender, one class.

In almost a direct response to Angela's comment, Zeya described frustration with the idea of "depending on" minority participants to educate others in her journal entry. She commented:

> I also thought it was interesting how Coral came in tonight and said that Angela had mentioned having a talk on race and words and such and [names withheld]

> (the two black participants) and myself all felt this was a bad idea. It would be awkward to have such a formal conversation about it this late in the game and also since there are only two A.A. participants, most of the conversation I feel like would depend on them and they are very shy. I feel like that's just forcing a lot of pressure on them to break down to the group what's acceptable…

Yet in a later journal entry, in frustration over a group reflection, Zeya commented on the racial make-up of the team as having an impact on the potential for learning about an issue which "affluent white girls" would not understand. Similar to Angela, Zeya conveyed her "naïvete," perhaps implying White peers would understand more if they heard about race issues from participants of color. She wrote:

> Tonight was the first time I really understood how naïve this team is. To say that they understand what it is like to be in a gang—from middle to affluent white girls growing up in beach towns and other similarly ridiculous places is incredible. I really wish that we had a more balanced team racially and "louder" African American minorities—just so that the people who don't fully understand race issues can actually hear about it because I feel like it's something they have not got in a class or anywhere else.

As evident in the comments from Angela and Zeya, the racial dynamics between participants on the trip became a point of frustration, particularly from a group reflection about gangs, which became a central experience from which students recognized the complexity of race.

During this particular reflection, in the middle of our week-long trip, the students were processing their experience at Cabrini-Green, an infamous low-income neighborhood which was being torn down, and the stories they heard about gang violence. As usual, the conversation was dominated by the White participants who were debating whether the community depended on the gangs or the gangs depended on the community. The reflection had continued for over an hour, during which Becca, in particular, could not understand why the community would allow the gang violence to

continue, particularly when innocent people were being killed. Candace, who rarely spoke out, exclaimed with exasperation: "I'm sorry but you all just don't get it…because…you're…Caucasian. You don't understand, you can't." Silence filled the room but was soon broken by Becca and other White participants who were "offended" that they couldn't "get it" because of their race. Candace said little after her initial comment. Zeya who identifies as White and Coral who identifies as Asian, both offered comments to try to encourage understanding about what Candace was communicating, specifically that there are certain situations which we cannot understand because of our different life experiences. After the discussion, all the White women went down to the kitchen for a "snack" and women of color, including Zeya who identifies as White, stayed in the room. Each group had their own support and debrief session. Emotional conversations continued after the close of the group reflection session both in small groups, journal entries, and post-trip interviews.

With the exception of Zeya, all the White women shared that they felt "frustrated" or "offended" about the comment Candace made in the reflection during their post-trip interviews. For Stephanie, the idea of skin color impacting one's ability to understand a situation was shocking:

> I consider myself a pretty intelligent person, and if I want to understand something I'd like to think that I would be able to and that my skin color is really not a factor and that it's a matter of whether I want to understand it or not. I always thought I'd be able to understand everything and really dug into it. I thought if I would really try to understand it, I would be able to, to the best of my ability and that really wasn't an issue at all, the color of my skin. But she said it was. I was like, "are you kidding for a second, no, that's not true." When you think about it, I don't know, like how would I know, I've been white my whole life and there's no way to actually change that to go back and do it over. So I don't know, maybe she had a point, but at the same time I was really offended so I didn't really look into that. I was just surprised that she would say that.

In some ways, Stephanie's comments highlight the privilege she experienced by not having to consider her race as a factor in understanding issues until this point. Stephanie shared her comments a month after the trip, which may have increased her ability to see that "maybe she had a point," however during the trip almost all the White participants felt less open to understanding Candace's comment. With anger and frustration, Julia wrote in her journal immediately after the reflection:

> There was no need to blatantly state that "we" don't understand because "we" are white. Just because the color of her skin is different from mine doesn't mean she understands more/less than me. It's just different. I felt offended when she said "you don't understand because you're Caucasian." It's assumptions like that that hold societies back from advancing!

Willing to acknowledge color differences but not considering how "her skin is different from mine," impacted their experiences or view of the world, Julia directed her frustration toward the idea that Candace's comments were a form of reverse racism, which "hold societies back from advancing." Becca, to whom the original comment was in response, reflected on how the racial make-up of the participants played into group dynamics in our interview a month after the trip. She said:

> I know that [name withheld] and Candace felt like the rest of us were excluding them, but I know that the rest of us felt like they were excluding themselves. The group dynamics played out weird there because I felt like it was almost like the whole group and then them. We weren't pushing them out. It was almost like they were the clique, we weren't the clique, we were the whole group. So that was weird, and that kind of played into things. I did say before we left, I'm really opinionated. I know that they got upset at some of the things I said. I got upset at some of the things they said. That was interesting to see how that played out. I know that race was a big part of it, and I'm not racist. I mean we all are to a certain extent, but really I don't have any…issues with them…that wasn't the first thing that was apparent to me about them. And so I almost left the trip feeling misunderstood and whatever because it's the way that things worked out with them.

Similar to Stephanie and Julia, Becca's assessment of the group dynamics portrays a resistance to acknowledge racial differences as a contributing factor to understanding each other, social issues, or group dynamics. White participants, unaware of the connections around them, were using the same "us/them" dichotomous language that they had previously used to describe the communities with whom we interacted. In Becca's statement, the "rest of us" were all of the White participants and indicated a lack of understanding about what it meant to say that all the participants of color were "excluding themselves" when there were nearly twice as many White participants in the group.

Coral, who identifies as Asian and was part of the category of "them" in Becca's comments, noted that cliques had formed, though she also did not initially account for the racial separations within the group. She shared, "It was interesting how our group turned out, because I don't think we had that big group bonding thing…I think we were cliquey almost…We definitely split off a little bit into our own little cliques." Later, when asked how her social identities influenced her experience, Coral commented:

> I think that it's not a big deal that I'm Asian per say, but just the fact that I am a minority, I think I was able to connect with certain people in my group better than others. I definitely felt more connected with Candace and with [name withheld] more so than with anybody else on the trip. The three of us just somehow understood each other. I don't know if it's because we're a minority, but I think we shared some of the same opinions about other people in the group and just about our experiences as a whole. There's less of a barrier between me and those two girls than other people.

Coral's reflection highlights the division across racial lines that many of the White participants were unable to acknowledge. For the students of color, having each other to "share the same opinions" was important support during their experiences. However, the

racial make-up of the team was predominantly White, which was a new experience for Candace.

Candace's experience of traveling and working with a group of predominantly White peers was a new situation and encouraged her to learn about being open-minded. After the heated group reflection about gangs, I followed up with Candace and she expressed how difficult the trip had been for her. Though she racially identifies as West Indian, she said "I'm basically black culturally; I mean all my friends are Black, and I just think of myself that way." She went on to note that coming to Maryland, she thought it would be "diverse" but really "there are a lot of Caucasians." Reflecting on the trip as a whole, Candace noted her new understanding of difference as a result of her experience with the team:

> I learned that you can't be judgmental, you can't go into a project, especially one that deals with social issues, thinking one thing and expecting everyone to think the same thing or deal with it the same way you do. I think that's the biggest thing that ASB taught me, that I cannot be close-minded in the sense that I have to recognize that people come from different places and they don't understand.

In some ways, Candace's comment that "people come from different places and they don't understand" conveys some of her own frustration with the group dynamics and an element of loneliness. Within the complexities of social issues, such as low-income housing and gang violence and social interactions, race was a challenging aspect of students' experiences. New connections were made, but for some participants, there remained a resistance to positioning one's own social identity within the racial dynamics of the group and the social issues about which we were learning. Returning home with questions, connections and disjunction, students experienced a jarring reentry.

Reconnection: Bringing it Home

Participants returned to their home community from the ASB trip with new questions, new views of the world, and the challenge of connecting their experience with their friends, family, and daily life at school. Their reentry was at times a jarring experience, in which students described themselves as being "thrown back" into school or going "suddenly back to real life" where "re-acclimating was difficult." For Alex, returning home made the experiences she had in Chicago feel unreal, "you come back to the real world and it definitely feels like a dream almost." Coral struggled to reconnect with people, and they noticed the difference. She commented:

> Definitely for the first week, two weeks, I felt very distant from everyone else. There was that couple of days when I would see people again, they would ask me how Chicago was, and even people at work would say, "Chicago really changed you.

Participants' reentry to their lives back at school involved conveying their experience to others, applying what they learned, and attempting to take action.

Conveying the Experience to Others: "She's Going to Get Depressed Again."

Many students found it difficult to convey their experience to friends and family. The trip was challenging and eye-opening, which the students wanted to communicate to others but did not know how. Becca shared:

> Just this feeling of being back here and seeing all of these people, I wanted to tell everybody what had happened, and the whole trip, and everything, but at the same time you can't do that and everything. So it was kind of the thought of how do you tell people it was a big deal?

Coral also struggled when her friends did not receive the changes she experienced or ways she conveyed the trip supportively. She explained:

> I was telling one of my friends, I told her how it was, and she saw me telling somebody else and she's like "Don't ask her about it, she's going to get depressed again"…So it was really hard coming back and talking to my old friends.

Sharing the experience with friends and family was difficult, but as participants continued to process the experience on their own after returning from the trip, they discovered that although they might struggle to share their personal experience, the trip became a source of information that inspired confidence in talking with others about the social issues of affordable housing and homelessness. Andrew was surprised to realize that homelessness was discussed in his law class, and he was able to speak from his experience in order to challenge his peer's idea about the simplicity of homelessness. He described:

> There are a lot more issues and just because you're homeless doesn't mean you're not protected by the law. Being able to tie it back into your life and being informed enough to do that…I think when these issues pop up, having a larger understanding and being informed enough to speak confidently and hopefully accurate on the subject.

Like Andrew, many of the participants found themselves breaking down stereotypes or more confident to offer their opinion, "Whenever I hear people talking about things that have to do with it now I kind of want to jump in and have something important to say or correct them or throw in my opinion" (Alex). Angela recognized that even people's curiosity about her experience was an opportunity to educate and correct stereotypes:

> People are like 'You really went to Cabrini-Green? Weren't you scared? Did you carry guns? Did you have a police officer?' It's really amusing their questions but you break down the stereotypes for them because they ask me questions out of stereotypes.

Challenging the stereotypes of family and friends seemed to be an empowering outcome among the challenges of reentry. Students also recognized new understandings about themselves, which they sought to apply to their life at home.

Applying New Understandings: "I Think I've Seen Changes"

As participants continued to process what they experienced in Chicago after the trip concluded, they uncovered new insights into what they learned and how they changed as they attempted to integrate their "old" life and new understandings. Angela confronted her privilege when she returned, "I came back feeling I was very much more privileged than the majority of the world…I think class-wise I am very, very privileged. Even at this university I am privileged." Angela also recognized changes in how she would interact with her home community. She shared:

> If help is needed in the bad parts of DC and I've got the time then I'm definitely going to venture out to the bad part of DC because I'm not scared. Everybody is a human being. Everybody deserves the same kind of respect that I command from people or I ask them to respect me as a human being. I'm going to definitely respect people, the communities because we all have a heart. We just don't know the circumstances.

Stephanie brought back a change in perception about hearing the "other side" and recognized a new commitment to looking more deeply at issues:

> In terms of me as a person, I'm slightly changed. There's definitely more of a will to see both sides or however many sides there are to the story. That became a little more clearer. There is definitely more of a willingness to investigate a problem more deeply. There's also a question of your sources. You should think about all the different sides of an issue before you jump in.

For some students, like Coral, coming back with a new view of the world meant changes in friendships and struggles with how to interact with peers who did not share the experience:

> I think I've seen changes, even with my friendships with other people. Just little things that they do, I'm just like that's so petty, and I can't even stand it. I just think about the people who do so much and are out there helping people everyday. I feel like that's so much more important than who got invited to what party, or just little things like that. It kind of irritates me a little bit, but then again I don't want to seem too condescending because I'm sure if they'd have had an experience like this they may be changed also.

In contending with the struggles of reentry, there was little support from the team of people with whom they traveled and shared experiences. Angela lamented:

> I wish I talked to more people [from the trip] but we're all just so busy and we're still trying to plan the local service trip or even if we could get together. So I've come back and I'm going to take ASB with me and I don't know if everyone else is going to do that.

Grappling with how to convey their experiences with others and without the support of their team, students returning from Chicago were left to figure out what to do with the changes they recognized in themselves and their new understanding of a complex social issue. Interestingly, the three oldest participants commented the most on struggling to apply their learning upon returning home.

Attempting to Take Action: "It's a Band-Aid for a Bullet Wound"

Students struggled to determine what to do with their new understanding and questions about the world. Becca had trouble knowing what to do because her previous ways for creating change were complicated by what she learned on the trip. She reflected:

> It's kind of like if we decide you can't elect representatives, and presidents, and mayors, and whatever who are going to make decisions, good decisions, about social issues, how do we go about fixing these things and how do we make sure that the government does take care of things? I guess I left the trip thinking how could I best apply this, because I'm not walking away feeling great about this. I guess that's what I thought about the most, is how did you go to the social problems and fix that because volunteering every single day at the soup kitchen in DC or in a homeless shelter is great, and it's helpful, but it's a Band-Aid for a bullet wound. So you need to kind of have that idea of how you fix this. It really takes a lot to fix something like that.

Some students sought out ways of taking action but were often unable to identify how they could make a difference and overcome the constraints on their lives as students. Candace applied for an internship in the Community Service-Learning office to help her

learn what opportunities existed and to push herself to carve out time to be involved. She explained:

> I just don't know the avenues to do that, and I think that's one of the reasons why I applied for an internship here, because one of my issues is I don't have time. I'm a dancer. I'm a church-goer. I am a student, everything. I'm a family member who has responsibilities, so it does feel like I don't have time. So I was pushing myself to get involved. It's a lot easier. I think that's the issue, finding the avenues to make sure you get the things you want accomplished.

For others, like Alex, returning home meant facing busy, stressful schoolwork, which was perceived as a barrier to taking action and resulted in feelings of guilt. Alex revealed:

> I feel like I get caught up in my life and I feel bad about not doing as much as I feel like I should be. It's not like I've gone and done any service projects since being back and I feel bad. I feel worse now than I might have before just because I know what I could be doing, if I had a whole week free. But now that I have papers to write, exams and people to see, it's hard to put your life on hold when you can go serve soup or whatever. And now that I know what I could be doing it's just…I feel more guilty.

Direct action was more difficult to identify and commit to; however, almost all of the students talked about the ways in which they now saw themselves as more informed on affordable housing and homelessness and more likely to engage with others about comments or stereotypes that were counter to the students' experiences. Although participants struggled with how to be involved in the community immediately after returning, many students spoke of the ways in which they intended to be involved later and shape their future decisions differently as a result of the experience. Coral struggled to justify her chemistry major when she realized how disconnected she had been from social issues and was considering joining Teach for America. Joseph recommitted himself to being "humanitarian-minded" in his future career as an engineer. Nearly all the students mentioned a new confidence traveling to new locations and participating in study abroad. Many of the students intended to participate in an ASB trip again. For

Becca, the experience of engaging in service-learning influenced her desire to go on an ASB trip again. She shared:

> Doing this it's definitely changed the context of community service to me. They always say that you're trying to get your service-learning hours in high school, and it's not really service-learning, it's just service. This was the first experience that I ever had with service-learning. So it definitely motivates me to do ASB again.

Returning home from the ASB was challenging and frustrating as participants attempted to integrate their new understandings of the world with others and determine next steps to engage in further learning and service. Many participants sought out support from friends, family, and trip peers or sought support from organized service opportunities like ASB, Peacecorps, and Teach for America. The conflicting image of "haikus in the subway" followed participants back home as they experienced the surprising and jarring reentry.

Summary

Haikus in the subway are an unusual and curious image to encounter because public transportation and poetry often do not interact. Through the intense immersion experience of this ASB trip, participants engaged in eye-opening interactions with others and conflicting challenges to their social identities. This immersion was overwhelming for some participants who exerted their privilege to detach themselves from the conflicting and disorienting experiences. Participants learned more about themselves, others and the social issues related to affordable housing through connections to community members and peers. Race connections and disjunctions emerged as participants processed with peers and attempted to situate themselves in the context of the lives of the communities with whom we interacted. Returning home to the difficulties of

conveying their experience and reconnecting with friends was another aspect of the trip that reflected the conflicting image of "haikus in the subway." In the next chapter, I discuss in more depth these findings in relation to relevant literature and the research questions, the implications for student affairs and future research, and the limitations of the study.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

There were haikus in the subway—
Most of the pictures we took were down there—
Most of our trip was spent down there
In the subway
We used it to get to the homeless shelter we stayed at
Where we made dinner and breakfast
And met amazing men,
Illegal Aliens who poured out their life story
Men who went to medical school
And then had a stroke that left them paralyzed
Some of us had brief floating eye contact that seemed
To speak worlds of words
We met women who were in control
And some that needed it.
But the ugliness of the city,
The fact that the only reason this organization existed
Was the unhappy truth that a man had frozen to death,
In a dumpster,
The politics,
The mayor said there were only 24 homeless people in the city
All of this ugliness was ok
There were haikus in the subway
We went down there to reach the south side where we
Were lucky enough to meet a beauty.

Beauty
A writer and a fighter
Beautiful Beauty took us on a tour.
She showed us her lifetime lover
Robert Taylor
At least she showed us the grass that was
Robert Taylor
She showed us the church that held Emit Till
Once
With thousands of people there to see him—
A church with hardly any people living near it
But a place announcing its importance
She told us of contact cards
Of the laws that did nothing but remind me
Of a paper I wrote once
On Apartheid
But all this ugliness was ok
Because there were haikus in the subway

We loved the haikus
We took pictures of them
We also visited the coalition to protect public housing
It was in the middle of blocks of rubble &
Abandoned houses,
Because the HOPE was that it would be upgraded
But even people who don't go to college know that
HOPE is fleeting
No promises came with HOPE
But that's ok
Because there's haikus in the subway
I don't know how everyone else viewed this trip
It wasn't as moving as I wanted it to be
But I hope that it will lead people to strive for a Life Uncommon.
Because not everyone gets to walk up the steps in public housing
And look at the reality of what is
Meet the people that live there
And have it register
They are not scary
I hope at least people won't be scared anymore
And at the end of everyday they knew they would
Safely get on the subway
And ride through the darkness
Underneath all the ugliness that is that city
And realize all that is ok
Because when they get off that train
And stand on the platform
They smile and know
All that ugliness is ok
There are haikus in the subway. (Zeya, journal)

Summary of Findings

Zeya's poem, presented here in its entirety, introduces this chapter discussing the findings from this study. I used sections of Zeya's poem throughout the previous chapters to illustrate specific findings and now bring these sections together to discuss the results of the study as a whole in this chapter. In Zeya's poem, haikus in the subway convey the dissonance and beauty of the students' experience during our Alternative Spring Break (ASB) trip to Chicago. Haikus in the subway capture the conflicting and rewarding situations students traveled to and through during their experience. Participants were

immersed in an intense and disorienting setting outside the "bubble" of college life. They encountered different people and processed new information and sights. Through connections with community members and peers, participants personalized their learning about social issues and encountered challenges in learning from the differences between their peers' backgrounds and experiences. Participants made connections and disconnections to race, through which some participants thought about race for the first time and others were challenged to discover that racial identity influenced differences in viewpoints. A final aspect of students' experiences on the ASB trip was the challenging process of reconnecting with their way of life and friends upon returning home. Participants were frustrated by the difficulty of conveying their experience to friends and family and sought out ways to integrate their new understandings. In this chapter, I summarize and discuss the findings in relation to the research questions, discuss key findings in relation to relevant literature, and offer implications for practice. Finally, I make recommendations for practice and future research and present the limitations of the study.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Research Questions

The purpose of this constructivist case study was to investigate college students' experiences on an ASB trip focused on affordable housing and the meaning students made of the experience. The research questions that guided this study were:

1. What do students learn about themselves and others through their participation in ASB?
2. How do students' social identities interact with the contexts of the ASB immersion location and influence their experiences in ASB?

In the following sections, I discuss these findings in relation to the research questions that guided the study and, in subsequent sections, in relation to relevant literature that framed the study.

What Do Students Learn About Themselves and Others?

At the heart of the students' experiences on the ASB trip was their exploration of new understandings about themselves and others. Participants learned about their lives as confined by the campus "bubble" and realized their capacity for learning from others. They learned about complex social issues and how their own lives are positioned within social systems. Participants expressed a sense of "seeing" for the first-time and that their previous worldview was narrow. At times, the intensity of the immersion was overwhelming and students sought to detach themselves from dissonance they were experiencing. Yet participants also recognized in themselves an openness to new experiences and people who would challenge them to reflect on their own background and experiences which shaped their way of thinking. Many White participants thought about their race for the first time and began to question how they may be a part of a social structure that overlooks the struggles of others. Many connections were made between the participants' previous thinking about the world and the ASB experience. Upon return, participants discovered new passion for engaging with the community and future travel.

Several participants realized, when working with both community members and peers, that they were quick to judge others' viewpoints instead of seeking out the other "side" of the story. Participants learned that differences in race, background, and life experience dictated the varying viewpoints and life stories they heard during the trip. They broke down stereotypes of people who are homeless and low-income and

discovered the power of connecting on a personal level with others. When trying to reconnect to their college life upon return from the trip, students saw friends and family in a different light, particularly those whose friends were caught up in the "bubble" and oblivious to the broader world around them.

How Do Students' Social Identities Interact with the Contexts of the ASB Immersion Location and Influence Their Experiences?

The social identities of the participants, particularly social class and race, came into contact with the social issues they were learning about and the dynamics of the group. Many participants confronted their social class in relation to the community members who were low-income and homeless. Interactions with community members put a "human face" on affordable housing and homelessness and caused participants to reflect on their previous assumptions about people who are struggling with affordable housing or homelessness issues. By comparing the community members' life situations to their own, participants personalized the experiences of the community members and challenged previous stereotypes. The majority of participants reflected on their excessive material possessions and the security of their privilege in having a home and good health; however, several students expressed detachment from community members when they spoke of wishing for "free time" away from the "intensity" of the trip.

Although participants were confronted with differences in race and social class through interactions with community members, participants expressed that they were most challenged to confront the influence of their race on their experience through reflections with peers. Several White participants said that this was the first time they had thought about their race. Almost all the students commented that the group dynamics

were challenging but they learned more about others' differences in opinions and reasons for those divergent perspectives. In the following, section I explore in more depth key themes from the findings through which participants made meaning of their experience on the ASB trip in relation to relevant literature.

Discussion of Findings in Relation to Relevant Literature

The key themes that emerged in the findings and explored in Chapter Four that I discuss in relation to relevant literature include immersion and reentry, dissonant experiences, the context of homelessness, direct contact, peer interactions, reflection and intercultural dialogue, and resistance and detachment. In Chapter Two, I discussed the literature informed this study. In this section, I discuss the connections and contradictions of these themes to the relevant literature. I presented Kiely's (2005) model of transformative learning for service-learning in Chapter Two as a framework for understanding some of the components of short-term service-learning immersion experiences, such as ASB. I begin this discussion of findings by returning to the model to situate some of my findings and connect key themes for discussion in relation to the relevant literature.

Transformative Learning Model

With limited research on ASB experiences, Kiely's (2005) model of transformative learning provides useful understanding of short-term service-learning immersion programs, such as ASB. Kiely conducted a longitudinal study of a curricular, international service-learning immersion trip and developed a transformative learning model for service-learning. Consistent with Kiely's findings, participants in this study encountered disorienting dilemmas that prompted them to reflect on their previous

assumptions and views of the world, often resulting in dissonance. Kiely identified different levels of dissonance, an emotional high level and a lower level often related to language differences. Participants in this study were not confronted with language differences, and the dissonance they experienced was more closely associated with Kiely's high-intensity dissonance that resulted in emotional confusion through which students confronted their previous assumptions about the world. Participants also crossed identity borders, particularly relating to their racial identity during peer reflections.

Meaningful and direct interactions with people of different backgrounds led students to personalize their understanding of social issues (Kiely, 2005). Similarly, participants in this study came to personalize the issues of affordable housing and homelessness through direct contact with community members. Kiely (2005) identified the emotional impact of personalizing and connecting with community members. For participants, the direct contact, involving interpersonal interaction with and specific personal stories from community members experiencing homelessness or struggling with affordable housing, was the powerful source of emotional and visceral learning.

Participants, similar to Kiely's findings, experienced difficulty integrating the connections they formed upon return from the trip. Kiely noted that students became frustrated upon returning home as they struggled with knowing what to do to make a difference or raise awareness. Several participants also struggled with the idea of whether they made a difference during the week-long trip or how to make a difference upon returning home. Kiely (2005) suggested that students continue to encounter dissonance as they struggle to integrate their new perspective into meaningful action. Kiely's (2005) work highlighted key components of an ASB trip immersion, including, immersion,

dissonance, encounters with others, border crossing, racial identity and privilege, intercultural dialogue, and reentry. These components capture the key themes through which participants in this study made meaning of their experience on the ASB trip.

Meaning-Making through Immersion and Reentry

Similar to prior research, the findings of this study support Pompa's (2002) focus on service-learning immersion as an experience in which students are exposed to new concepts about themselves and social issues and that fosters deeper interactions with others whom they might not otherwise have known. Immersion allowed students to engage with a subject matter from a new context (Pompa, 2002). Participants were immersed in a new culture in Chicago and formed deeper connections with community members and peers. Connections with community members and peers were opportunities for intercultural engagement through which students explored their own identity and interpersonal skills.

Consistent with Ivory (1997), participants returning from the immersion experience struggled with social difficulties, such as a sense of alienation, as part of the ASB experience. Participants struggled to convey their experiences to others, which is problematic considering Martin (1986) identified communication with friends and family as crucial factors in a sojourner's reentry. Though the duration and purpose of the ASB trip was different from a study abroad experience, literature on reverse culture shock and reentry is applicable (Martin, Sussman, 2002). Martin viewed reentry as a negotiation of changes through interactions with others.

As reflected in the experiences of participants in this study, relationships, particularly with friends, showed significant changes upon return. Most of the changes

revolved around participants seeing with new insight the "petty issues" their friends focused on and their friends' lack of support of or interest in the participants' new understandings about the world. Participants felt frustrated that people from their "old" life maintained the views of the world that the participants held before going on the trip. Sussman (2002) noted that identity changes may contribute to the distress in reentry and returning students may disparage their home community. Similarly, ASB participants came to recognize the privilege of their home community and a lack of understanding about that privilege among their friends. Some participants disparaged the home community and distanced themselves from their "old" life. The changes participants identified in their reentry were closely associated with the meaning they made of dissonant experiences during the trip.

Meaning-Making through Dissonant Experiences

Participants in this study struggled with the new understandings of complex social problems, which they often spoke of with exasperation, noting the lack of simplicity and the multiplicity of layers. The dissonance that resulted from the immersion experience in this study was at times overwhelming. Kambutu and Nganga (2008) found that the dissonance that results from an immersion experience was an essential step in building cultural awareness. This study of an ASB trip was different in that Kambutu and Nganga studied international immersion experiences over a two to three week period; however as participants made meaning of the dissonant experiences they encountered they recognized their positionality in relation to affordable housing and homelessness.

Jones and Abes (2003) suggested that grappling with ill-structured problems developed students' critical thinking skills. The confusing and frustrating experience of

trying to understand affordable housing and recognizing that solutions to the problem may not be easy or possible, was discouraging for participants. Eyler and Giles (1999) noted that the "ambiguity inherent in ill-structured problems is unnerving" (p. 105). The development of critical thinking skills helps identify and frame the ill-structured problem (Eyler & Giles). Participants struggled to make sense of the ill-structured problem of affordable housing and homelessness, to which finding a solution that encompassed the many perspectives and constituencies seemed impossible. Grappling with the dissonance of ill-structured problems demonstrates that the ASB trip was an opportunity for students to increase critical thinking skills. The context of affordable housing and homelessness furthered participants' interaction with the dissonance of ill-structured problems.

Meaning-Making through the Context of Homelessness

Community members were a powerful influence in encouraging students to think about their own privilege in material possessions and comfort of life. Participants were challenged to think more critically about diversity and their own privilege in relation to the community members and social issue of affordable housing and homelessness. This is consistent with Jones and Hill (2001), who reported on the importance of learning from community members as an influence on students' understanding of diversity. As the students interacted with people experiencing social issues, they came to understand more about diversity, particularly stereotypes, and multiple perspectives. Participants in this study indicated that interacting with people experiencing homelessness was the experience that stood out the most. Within the context of homelessness, participants explored their privilege and broke down stereotypes. However, participants also indicated that some community sites were more compelling than others.

Participants rarely commented on the senior center and immigrant/refugee support agency during reflections or post-trip interviews. There was no direct contact with the clients for whom we were cleaning and preparing the house. At the senior center, although there was direct contact with the seniors at the day center, many of them were unable to take care of themselves or had speech or communication restrictions. Little interaction, besides serving breakfast or helping the nurses with the tasks that were required, occurred. Some participants commented that they were uncomfortable with how helpless the seniors appeared, which is contrasted with how strong and inspiring they found stories and interactions with the low-income and homeless individuals we met.

Rhoads (1997) commented that students in his study preferred to work at sites where they had more interaction with clients of the homeless organization as a way of informing their understanding of self through the "other" (p. 105). Stories from the homeless individuals in Rhoads' study took away the invisibility of the issue for the students. Participants in this study, unable to hear the stories from the community members at the senior center or immigrant/refugee support organization, did not reposition their images and assumptions about homeless or low-income communities. Without opportunities to challenge their previous perceptions, participants developed little empathy or shifts in perceptions.

Participants seemed to feel pity toward the seniors or no emotion toward the immigrant/refugee organization; yet, they developed a sense of empathy for the community members with whom our interactions were most direct and personal, particularly at the homeless shelter and during community conversations and interactions

with low-income communities. Direct contact with others was an opportunity for participants to more personally challenge assumptions and reflect on social inequality.

Meaning-Making through Direct Contact

Through the direct contact with community members, participants were given the opportunity and motivation to engage with challengingly different perspectives. Participants in this study were confronted by the new and different perspectives and a new awareness of inequity in the world around them, of which many of them had no previous knowledge. King (2004) explored how college students came to examine their assumptions about self and others during an international service-learning trip. Similar to findings in this study, upon encountering experiences and perspectives different from their own assumptions, students reflected on their perceptions and uncovered inequities in previous understandings, thus critically examined the socially constructed circumstances in which they lived (King). The crucial ingredient for participants on this trip, as well as King's study, was the direct encounter with community members through service work in the shelter and community conversations and tours in which students recognized the limits of their own perspectives and questioned their assumptions.

Participants were forced to confront the assumptions and stereotypes they have and put a human face on the issue of homelessness. Jones and Abes (2003) also supported this finding asserting that direct contact with clients was necessary for student learning about a specific social issue such as HIV/AIDS. Hearing the personal stories and putting a human face to the experience was crucial to participants' ability to connect with and develop empathy for others. "Just like me" connections or comments about a community member who reminded a participant of someone from her own life helped foster this

empathy. The depth with which participants interacted with community members in the homeless shelter and Cabrini-Green provided the space for students to reflect on and make connections with their own life. As Dunlap et al. (2007) noted, students communicate intimately with community members in a way that humanizes the people affected by homelessness and causes students to reflect on themselves and their previous assumptions.

Rosenberger (2000) suggested that service-learning educators need to create experiences in which students develop critical consciousness beyond empathy. In this study, many of the students developed empathy for the community members we met. Participants also challenged the idea of "helping others" as they questioned whether their actions made much of a difference. One danger, however, in developing a sense of empathy was that some participants began to essentialize community members with descriptions of their surprise at being "normal." Participants were challenged to think about the multiplicities of identities of the homeless and low-income people we met. This caused some degree of discomfort as students were forced to move away from easy generalizations to a more complex understanding. As a result, some participants engaged in "essentializing" (Rhoads, 1997, p. 125) the community members with comments like "they are just like me" or "they're normal," which removed any notion of the complexity, diversity, and privilege involved in their interaction.

As Rhoads (1997) noted, the challenge in service-learning is to help students understand both the ways in which humans have commonality and the ways in which race and class have been socially constructed and position people differently. Trying to understand these differences was challenging for participants, particularly because of the

level of personalizing that students engage to make sense of the social issue of affordable housing and homelessness. As a result, students essentialized community members, that is, viewed community members as a generalized set of characteristics (Rhoads). Participants' repeated use of phrases such as "normal" to describe the community members is an example of essentializing. Jones and Abes (2003) also discovered a prevailing use of the word "normal" used to describe students' new understanding about people with HIV/AIDS. Similar to Jones and Abes's study, participants did not realize that the use of "normal" suggested that their previous perception was that these community members were abnormal.

Several students resorted to essentializing racial differences even among their peers with claims that "race didn't matter" and questioned why the color of one's skin would dictate one's ability to understand another's situation. This danger shows that encouraging students to confront otherness without losing the diversity and complexity of the relationship is a challenge. One area of complexity that emerged was participants' racial identity and confrontation with White privilege through peer interactions.

Meaning-Making through Peer Interactions

Milem, Chang, and Antonio (2005), in an article about the benefits of racial and ethnic diversity on campus, suggested that many students come from homogeneous high schools with little intercultural communication experience. When students experience an atmosphere distinctly different from their previous experience, they encounter "discontinuity," which enhances their cognitive and identity development (Milem et al., p. 8). Intercultural interactions with peers during this ASB trip were challenging for

participants. Many participants confronted new aspects of their racial identity, and for some White participants, this was their first time thinking about their race.

This finding supports Rhoads and Neururer's (1998) assertion that a week-long ASB trip to a rural, African American community influenced student development and understanding of community and self, particularly developing cross-cultural understanding. The findings of this study suggest new complexity in understanding self and others in relation to race and social class through interactions with others, consistent with Eyler and Giles's (1999) finding that personal connections with community and peers have the potential to break down stereotypes and build appreciation for cultural diversity.

The intercultural dialogue between peers created the greatest stimulation for exploring racial identity and, specifically, White privilege. The strength of peer influence on undergraduate students' affective and cognitive growth, interpersonal development, attitudes, and behaviors is widely cited in higher education literature (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Students' interactions with diverse peers, perspectives, and backgrounds influence their intellectual growth and openness to diversity (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Milem et al., 2005; Pascarella & Terenzini).

Opportunities for cross-racial interaction increase as compositional diversity on campuses increases, particularly with a large number of racial/ethnic minority students (Harper & Quaye, 2009; Milem et al., 2005). With increased compositional diversity, students of color are more likely to find same-race peer groups, which serve as sources of support. That opportunities for cross-racial interaction exist does not mean that students will chose to engage with peers across racial/ethnic groups (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Harper

& Quaye, 2009; Milem et al., 2005). Participants' surprise at encountering peers with different backgrounds whom they would not have otherwise met though they live on campus together, indicates that students remain balkanized on campus. Students' cross-racial interactions and experiences with diversity may be limited by informal segregation (Eyler & Giles, 1999). Jones, Gasiorski, and Gilbride-Brown (2005) suggested creating communities of peer learners in order to expose them to different perspectives and stimulate greater self awareness because students are more likely to "take risks if they see their peers engaging in new ideas and different experiences" (p. 19).

Though conversations about race were disruptive to their previous understanding of self, discussions with peers challenged students to think more complexly about their race and how others have different experiences that expose them to different perspectives on the world. The context for the conflict between participants originated with a conversation about gang violence, a conversation in which race was a clearly present factor, yet it was not discussed until a participant of color brought up the fact that White participants were trying to understand experiences that they had no cultural basis to understand. The White students were offended and many continued to question this comment as reverse racism but almost all reflected in post-trip interviews that this situation gave them pause to consider that people have different experiences based on race, which may impact their perspectives. Engaging in difficult dialogues with peers who were different from themselves was the main catalyst for understanding self in relation to race, particularly for White students. Green (2001) offered valuable suggestions for addressing racial dynamics in service-learning and noted the importance of White students engaging in discussions about Whiteness and White privilege.

Ortiz and Rhoads (2000) developed a theoretical framework on White racial identity to promote multicultural understanding, which suggested that educational activities that invite students to explore White racial identity promote higher levels of White racial consciousness and deepen understanding about privilege. Findings from this study suggested that the ASB experience, particularly the role of interactions with people with whom students had little contact previously, was essential to enhancing participants' understanding of privilege and multicultural differences. Furthermore, participants needed space to explore White racial identity with their peers providing them with an opportunity to deepen their understanding of culture and privilege.

This ASB trip provided an opportunity for students to participate in cross-racial interactions and discuss issues of race and privilege. Researchers have suggested that conversations about race can be contentiously debated in the classroom but the informal conversations that emerge in service-learning reflections allow students to connect in a way in which they break down the typical defensive stance (Dunlap et al., 2007; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Green 2001). In this study, conversations about race emerged organically during group reflections; however, the defensive stance of the White students was not lessened by the informal nature of the discussion. This dynamic may reflect the White racial identity status of the White participants and the role of student resistance in formulating their response.

The influence of peer interaction and intercultural dialogue on White participants' understanding of White privilege is clear. As Gilbride-Brown (2008) noted, there is little research or consideration in service-learning literature on the influence of race and intercultural interactions for students of color. On this trip, four participants identified as

students of color and seven identified as White. Gilbride-Brown suggested that for many students of color, service-learning may be more accurately described as working "within" community. Candace's exasperated comment that the White students could not understand gangs reflects the ways in which the experiences of participants of color may be different from their White peers. Several participants of color also mentioned that their interactions and reflections with White peers clarified for them an understanding of how one's life situation influences the perceptions one brings to a situation.

Meaning-Making through Reflection

In this study, reflection emerged as a critical aspect of the ASB experience. Many students were surprised by how much they learned though the reflection activities and how supportive it was for them to process their experiences with others. Hatcher, Bringle, and Muthiah (2004) noted that the nature of reflection in service-learning correlates with the quality of the course tied to the service-learning experience. Though referring to curricular service-learning, the authors provided useful insight into effective reflection in service-learning settings. Hatcher et al. noted that reflection deepened students' moral, cognitive, social, and civic learning. Effective reflection activities involved connection between the experience and knowledge; continuity before, during, and after the experience; challenging perspectives; and emotional support for students (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Hatcher et al.).

Through reflection, particularly peer reflection, participants in this study critically evaluated their personal perceptions, processed connections between their experience and their own assumptions, and attempted to make sense of the intense emotions they were experiencing. Kiely (2005) supported the critical role of reflection in fostering students'

perspective transformation, specifically by enabling students to process the emotional impact of transformational learning. In Kiely's study, dialogue with community members was the critical source for questioning assumptions and shifting perspectives. Beyond individual reflection, as suggested by Hatcher et al., the role of peer dialogue in the reflection setting stimulated the greatest challenge and reevaluation of self and others.

As Pompa (2002) posited, the dialogic interaction among those involved is at the center of the service-learning experience. Though Pompa focused primarily on the dialogic interaction between community members and students, the role of dialogic interaction in the service-learning setting was clear in this study as well. This finding on the importance of peer dialogue also supports Rhoads (1997) assertion that open peer discussion of values stimulates higher levels of reasoning and the possibilities for creating an ethic of care throughout another's reality. Rhoads further suggested that the positioning of one's identities dictates how one defines oneself and perceives the other to be situated.

For participants in this study, the racial makeup of the team had bearing on the impact of the reflection experience. The positioning of each person became the reference point from which they perceived others and themselves in relation to the social issues about which we learned. The value of the reflection dialogue, particularly the fact that participants came from different backgrounds and benefitted from exposure to new perspectives, suggests that a diverse racial makeup on ASB trip is desirable. The possibility exists that if the group had been all White students, learning about and challenging issues of race and privilege would not have occurred. However, comments about needing a "token minority kid" or a "louder African American participant" to

educate the group suggests that undue burden may be placed on students of color in these settings. This also raises questions about whether the connection participants made with community members alone would have been enough to stimulate the level of self-reflection and challenges over issues of race.

Rosenberger (2000) questioned the potential of service-learning to reproduce power and privilege dynamics and put forth a conceptualization of service-learning to develop critical consciousness. Rosenberger used Freire's concepts of praxis, the combination of reflection and action, and conscientization, gaining critical consciousness of one's place in reality and one's capacity to create change, to frame her understanding. Dialogue is a necessary pedagogical approach to developing critical consciousness, which Rosenberger defined as occurring "between subjects who are open to seeing the world through the eyes of others and who grant others the right of naming the world" (p. 37). Rosenberger suggested that if educators were to build these principles of dialogue within the service-learning setting, they must refrain from seeing themselves as more enlightened than others but rather listen and learn from those with different experiences. Findings from this study complicate the way in which dialogue took place because of the conflict that existed about racial identity. Participants, particularly White participants, were resistant to "seeing the world through the eyes of others" (p. 37). In journals and post-trip interviews, participants indicated that they desired to learn about other perspectives but were unwilling to grant those other perspectives the "right of naming the world" (p. 37), including participants of color on our team. Candace, in particular, easily identified with the world the community members were "naming" and noted an

emotional response in seeing and learning about affordable housing and homelessness, which often confirmed their beliefs about who is disproportionately impacted.

For participants of color and White participants in this study, the act of listening and learning from those with different experiences was particularly valuable during our community conversations and tours. Similar to discussions about race with their peers, some participants remained skeptical of what we were learning from the community and each other in the reflection setting as participants shared opinions on the experience. In many ways, participants resisted a truly open dialogue by not being open to seeing that there were different experiences and trying to see the world through the eyes of those who were different, thus giving them the power to "name the world." As discussed in the previous section, White students in particular were not open to the idea of understanding a situation differently because of differences in racial experiences, perhaps in an effort to resist confrontation with White privilege.

In this study, the reflection setting was not constructed with Freire's principles or with intercultural dialogue in mind; however, there was potential for these settings to cultivate seeing another's perspective. Intergroup dialogue involves direct contact and exchange of perspectives with the purpose of reaching new levels of understanding and action (Zúñiga, 2003; Zúñiga, Nagda, & Sevig, 2002). Zúñiga et al. (2002) warned that heated discussions, involving emotions of fear and alienation, may emerge because of conflicting perspectives and feelings. Yet, these conflicts are opportunities for students to understand the tension and complexity about these issues and increase their self-awareness and sensitivity toward others (Zúñiga et al.). Participants in this study reflected

the potential for heated discussion in which emotions of anger and frustration were strong.

Zúñiga et al. (2002) provided a four-stage intergroup dialogue model, built on the interconnected processes of sustained communication, critical social awareness, consciousness raising, and bridge building. The duration of the trip was not long enough to engage in sustained communication. Participants were encouraged to recognize institutionalized beliefs that perpetuate power and privilege through provocative conversations with peers; however, the process did not generate bridge building or sustained commitment to social justice. The group's conversations and experiences were at times challenging and disruptive, which some participants reacted to with resistance and detachment.

Meaning-Making through Resistance and Detachment

Butin (2005) suggested that students engage in resistance as a result of their racial identity, and many White students embrace ignorance of their White identity. In this study, economic privilege was easily and often discussed; however, dialogues about White privilege did not occur until a challenging comment by a participant of color brought the topic to the surface. Using Helms's (2008) model of White racial identity development, a majority of the White participants seemed to operate in the contact status, which is characterized by innocence, neutrality about race, and reliance on a colorblind attitude. Some participants also exhibited characteristics of reintegration, which is characterized by placing blame onto people of color by intellectualizing the issue of race or denying responsibility.

In this study, White students spoke easily about economic differences and avoided confronting the racial dynamics involved in the inequity of affordable housing and homelessness. Some students avoided the conversation altogether and others, when forced into a conversation about race as a result of a peer's comment, focused on the fact that the comment directed at them was unfair and offensive. These participants were not able to translate the comment into greater understanding about the disproportionate number of African Americans affected by affordable housing and homelessness. This reflects Butin's (2005) concept of resistance, which he conceptualizes as students' attempt to maintain a particular identity by refusing to see themselves as an alternate identity or admit to their privilege. In this case, the White students resisted identifying with White privilege, which would put themselves in positions of power and create further distance from the community members with whom we interacted. In this way, White participants resisted the recognition of their position within the system of power affecting the community.

Jones, Gasiorski, and Gilbride-Brown (2005) posited an understanding of students' resistance as "a process of struggle, negotiation, and meaning-making" (p. 7) and used literature on self-authorship and critical Whiteness to examine the phenomenon of student resistance, in service-learning. Jones et al. offered three profiles of student resistance including absence of critical thinking about connections and complexity, emerging recognition of role of power and privilege, and disruptively resistant. In conversations about race during group reflections, many White participants exhibited an absence of critically thinking about the connections and complexities of affordable housing and homelessness with social factors. Some participants attempted to hold onto a

notion of colorblindness, which allowed them to avoid confronting their own privilege by challenging the assumption that they could not understand the culture of gang violence because they were White. Such colorblindness is "deeply ingrained in how white people see and make sense of the world, allowing racism and marginalization to permeate everyday social practices" (Jones et al., 2005, p. 9).

Participants, through resistance, were actively avoiding new knowledge that challenged their view of the world and their role in it. In another example of resistance, some participants sought to detach from the intensity of the ASB experience and distance themselves from the new people and understandings they encountered about affordable housing and homelessness. Several participants, particularly White participants, sought more "free time," not recognizing their own privilege to walk away from the community members' everyday realities. Understanding the role of resistance and detachment in participants' meaning making of their ASB experience suggests implication for practice and future research.

Implications for Practice

The findings from this study offer implications for student affairs and service-learning practice, and future research. These implications reflect both programmatic implications and implications for student learning and development.

Implications for Alternative Spring Break Design

Alternative Spring Breaks, often designed as a form of service-learning, benefit from research on characteristics of effective service-learning, such as reflection, reciprocity, and placement quality (Eyler & Giles; Jacoby, 1996; Jones, 2002b; Pascarella

& Terenzini, 2005). Findings from this study of an ASB trip provide further insight into the unique characteristics to consider in ASB design.

Reflection and dialogue. Reflection with peers was an important component of the students' experiences as they processed the new sights, experiences, and viewpoints they encountered. Reflective discussions with peers helped validate the learning and intense nature of the experience but was more than a processing mechanism. The nightly reflections were an opportunity for intercultural dialogue between peers from different racial and cultural backgrounds. Integrating structured reflection into ASB design requires intentional planning and facilitation as another component of the learning and developmental experiences of students.

Service-learning educators may enhance students' learning about themselves and others in relation to social identities by using reflective discussion as opportunities to foster intercultural dialogue between students. Using an intergroup dialogue approach to structure group reflections during ASB trips requires an intentional, dialogic bridge-building method to allow for critical analysis of socially constructed group dynamics (Zúñiga, 2003). Relationship and communication building activities before the trip would create a stronger group dynamic to support the difficult conversations that emerged.

The racial dynamic of this ASB trip was an important part of participants' learning as a result of group reflections, which suggests that ASB practitioners need to consider the racial make-up of the students on the trip. Similar to research on the value of compositional diversity on campus, increased diversity in the racial make-up of the team was more conducive to powerful intergroup dialogue. However, also similar to literature on diversity on campus, students may not engage in provocative conversations on their

own. The presence of structured reflective practices and trained facilitators would help encourage ASB groups to reach their potential for perspective shifting dialogues. This consideration is also important so that adequate support is available if the racial make-up isolates students of color as the "token minority kid" who is expected to "educate" the White participants. Educators must balance creating a safe space to explore issues of race and privilege in the service-learning setting but protect against the danger of doing so at the expense of students of color.

Programmatic considerations. There are several components to the ASB trip under study that suggest more attention given to programmatic details, such as social issue, location, community partnerships, and trip schedule. Several participants spoke of the importance of the issue of affordable housing, which was seen as a basic necessity for all people. For them, the issue was more powerful than "saving butterflies" as Becca noted. The depth of human connection to the social issue may influence students' experiences on ASB trips. Additionally, traveling to a new city that was unfamiliar to all the students created an even more intense immersion environment. The travel aspect may be an important ingredient in the students' experiences, although it is necessary to note that many low-income students, many of whom are students of color, may not have the same financial resources to travel.

As noted in the discussion, direct contact with community members was a key component of participants' experience and ability to connect with the social issue, develop empathy, and reflect on their own identity. Service projects in which there was limited direct contact with the community members were not as compelling and described as "boring" by participants. Consideration of the nature and depth of the

community partnership is important to addressing how compelling the ASB experience is for students. However, caution is needed to mediate the possibility that participants essentialize the community partners. Structured reflection with the intention of addressing how students come to view the community with whom they interact could navigate this danger. Another caution, although not addressed in this study, is the potential for ASB educators to use this finding suggesting that direct contact is needed to create transformative experiences and engage in unbalanced partnerships with the community. If the nature of the interaction is dictated by the ASB group's desire for direct contact versus basing the relationship on community voice, harm can be caused to the community, and educators will perpetuate the dynamics of power and privilege that most service-learning seeks to mediate.

Reentry into life back on campus was challenging for many participants. ASB educators may need to devote more attention to the return process for students. Rather than the end of the trip signaling the end of the structured experience, better systems for assisting students to find avenues for involvement and reaching their future intentions when they return from the trip are needed. Many participants in this study struggled to find a system of support as they continued to process the trip and attempted to integrate their new view of the world with their "old" life and friends who had not gone on an ASB trip. ASB educators may need to provide opportunities for sustained, structured reflection after return from the trip in order to help in processing the experience. Findings from this study suggest that reconnecting home is a challenging and significant part of students' experiences with ASB. Conceptualizing ASB as an experience requiring time and

interaction outside the specific days of the trip will help integrate the necessary pre-trip and post-trip components.

Civic engagement initiatives. Jacoby (in press) suggested that renewing the civic role of higher education is one of the powerful movements that service-learning addresses. Educators have recognized the social and developmental benefits of experiential education activities, such as service-learning, for meeting civic engagement outcomes (Astin & Sax, 1999; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jacoby, 2009; Musil, 2003; Rhoads, 1997; Vogelgesang, 2005; Vogelgesang & Astin, 2000). Eyler and Giles posited five crucial dimensions of citizenship: values, knowledge, skills, efficacy, and commitment. Service-learning provides an environment for students to foster personal, interpersonal, and intellectual development that prepared them for active citizenship (Eyler & Giles). This study suggests that ASB programs that employ well-designed service-learning characteristics, have the potential to address civic engagement initiatives.

Participants clarified their own personal values and developed a sense of social responsibility. However, many participants discussed frustration when returning from the experience and not knowing what avenues to take for further involvement. This indicates more emphasis may need to be given to the efficacy dimension of fostering citizenship through ASB programs. Participants gained knowledge about the complexity of social issues and the various influences and perspectives which shaped the debate about how to solve the "ill-structured problems" (Eyler & Giles, 1999, p. 157). Many participants also indicated increased interpersonal skills as a result of their exposure to diverse people and perspectives. Using Eyler and Giles's five dimensions of active citizenship, this ASB trip appears to have promoted civic engagement. However, integrating intentionally-designed

civic learning outcomes from ASB trips to address these five crucial dimensions of active citizenship will enhance the possibilities of using ASB to meet the civic mission in higher education.

Implications for Student Affairs

This study on an ASB trip contributes to a dearth in research about students' experiences in ASB programs and offers several implications for student affairs. On this ASB trip, students learned more about themselves, others, and complex social issues of affordable housing and homelessness. Students engaged in meaningful learning outside the classroom, which some students referred to as "real" learning and compared the experience to a "text." Student affairs educators may look to these short-term immersion and service-learning experiences to meet learning goals. However, educators should be careful not to assume that learning outside the classroom involves reality show conditions in which coordinating the most uncomfortable and intense immersion experiences will meet expected outcomes.

Many participants referred to the ASB experience as getting out of the "bubble" of college life or going to the "real" world, which was "outside my comfort zone." Student affairs and university administration may need to assess the degree to which students are too isolated on campus and the implications on their understanding of course content or obtaining important life experiences outside the campus community. If students are in a bubble on campus and experience such dissonance on a week-long ASB trip, do students find equally jarring experiences upon graduation?

Within this bubble, participants, to their surprise at meeting peers from their same campus who were different from themselves, suggested that students remain balkanized

on campus and do not interact with others from different backgrounds. Two participants even realized that they had been in the same class at one point but never met. The presence of a diverse student body still warrants attention to more intentional effort to encourage interactions across different groups.

One way to accomplish this may be through intercultural interactions and dialogues. A main source of learning for participants occurred through engaging in group reflections with peers from different backgrounds and perspectives. The value of peer learning may be applicable to other student affairs programs and suggest pedagogical implications for the use of group process or intergroup dialogue in the classroom.

Short-term immersion programs, such as ASB or study abroad are gaining increased attention. The findings from this study support the student learning and development value of short immersion experiences. Incorporating more short immersion experiences as a part of the curriculum or through co-curricular programs may augment learning goals.

Service-learning educators often struggle with how to define service-learning or community service, particularly in how they frame the experience to students. Students' positive responses to the learning dimension of service-learning offers insight into students' receptiveness to learning-centered experiences. Several participants commented that they now understood the concept of service-learning and thought that the "magic" was in the combination of learning and service. Oftentimes, educators attempt to disguise the learning intentions of programs in order to make them more attractive to students. However, participants in this study suggested that students want to be a part of and guide transformative learning experiences.

Implications for Future Research

Limited research on ASB makes this area rich for future research. Many implications for future research were uncovered. This study revealed new insight into students' experiences on an ASB trip; however, future research is needed for greater understanding into the components of the trip that encouraged students to engage in perspective shifting and challenged their notions of self and others. This particular trip involved travel to a large city nearly 700 miles from our home community. How do students' experiences on rural or more local ASB trips differ? Additionally, the social issue focus was affordable housing and homelessness. Many participants viewed housing as a basic necessity, which gave participants a greater basis on which to relate to the issue. How would students' experiences have differed on a trip focusing on an issue to which they may have less connection and greater stigma, such as HIV/AIDS? Similarly, how much of the students' experiences as captured in this study was dependent on the particular personalities of the group?

Although curricular focused, Wade and Raba (2003), suggested that students crossed identity borders; yet, a week-long program was not long enough to sustain long-term multicultural competency. This suggests that though gains were made in cross-cultural understanding, more research needs to be conducted on the longitudinal implications and sustainability of the findings. Longitudinal studies would also provide further insight into the lasting effects of students' experience, particularly if they continue to process the transformative aspects of the trip or if their intentions for future action wane.

For the participants, an important component of the ASB experience was the connection to community members. Students personalized the social issues and put a "human face" to their learning, which broke down stereotypes through meaningful interactions and story sharing. Although not a focus of this study, more research is needed to understand both the role of the community partner relationship and the impact of the partnership on the community. Unlike ongoing service-learning programs located in the community near the university, ASB partnerships occur only once a year and may place significant burden on the community partner to identify and coordinate meaningful projects during the limited timeframe offered to them by the university. Additionally, participants indicated that community partner sites in which they had the direct contact with community members were most compelling. More research is needed to address the nature of these relationships and characteristics of an effective and mutually reciprocal partnership.

The influence of social identities, particularly racial identity, on the participants warrants further exploration. How might students' experiences have been different with a different racial make-up of the team? The community most impacted by affordable housing and homelessness in Chicago was African American. Would participants' have considered their social identities differently in the context of the experience if the social issue was White rural poverty or domestic violence issues? Additionally, none of the participants had personal experience with homelessness; however, if the social issue had been a topic of which participants had personally experienced, how might their experiences with community members and peers changed?

Another aspect of social identity that would benefit from additional research is gender. Only two of eleven participants were men, which is consistent with the typical demographics of service-learning participants. However, further research into the barriers and perceptions of men to ASB and into the experiences of men on these trips is needed.

The role of peer interaction and intercultural dialogue in service-learning and ASB experiences needs further investigation. Best practices for structuring effective reflections and group dialogues during ASB trips would be helpful in addressing this crucial component. Additionally, the role of group dynamics in shaping the experiences suggests that differences in the personality and background make-up of ASB groups could result in different experiences. The distinctive interactions and culture that the group assumes during the trip may also be ripe for ethnographic study.

Finally, further research is needed to explore the experiences of students on ASB trips at different institution types. The "bubble" atmosphere of this university and the indication of balkanization between diverse peer groups suggests the need for more investigation of these dynamics at various institution types.

Limitations

There are several potential limitations in this research design. Due to scheduling complications, I interviewed some participants immediately after returning from the trip and others did not have an interview until about a month after the trip. The students who interviewed a month after the trip may have had different insights because of the length of time they had to process their experience and attempt to integrate it in their life back on campus.

No pre-trip interview was conducted to determine what was previously understood by participants about themselves, others, social identities, or anticipated outcomes from the experience. Additionally, data collection took place over a short time frame. Further longitudinal research is needed to determine what lasting meaning was made by the participants as a result of the ASB trip.

My dual role as staff advisor and researcher may have limited my ability to fully immerse myself in either role. My observations may have been distracted by attempting to balance the expectations I had as a staff advisor and my responsibility as a researcher. As a staff advisor and full participant in all activities, the personal emotional and physical toll of the trip may also have limited my role as a researcher. Additionally, participants may have perceived me differently given the dual roles and may have limited their willingness to share their experiences.

The study is limited to the students who both were interested in ASB and in participating in the research project. There may be important ways in which those who did not participate experienced the trip, though this was not the focus of my study. Furthermore, the study explores only one ASB program at one institution. As such, there may be differences in program models and institutions, which would change the findings of the study.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to investigate students' experiences on an ASB trip and the meaning they made of their experiences. The research was guided by a search to understand what students learned about themselves and others and how their social identities interacted with the context of the ASB location and influenced their

experiences. Findings revealed that participants were immersed in an intense and disorienting setting through which they encountered new people, sites, and perspectives. Direct contact with community members led participants to personalize affordable housing and homelessness. Interactions with peers challenged participants to confront different viewpoints and make connections and disconnections to race and privilege. Bringing home new perspectives and worldviews was frustrating and confusing as participants attempted to reenter the "bubble" of their home community.

The findings of this study contribute to the limited research on ASB experiences. Implications for practices suggest the need for more intentionality in structuring reflection, intercultural interactions, and direct service contact for ASB trips. The potential for ASB to contribute to students' growing complexity of understanding about social issues and their personal construction of identity and privilege warrants additional research. Haikus in the subway is a powerful thread around which this understanding of students' experiences on an ASB trip was woven. Exploring this metaphor, the intensity, possibility, confusion, insights, dissonance, complexity, and beauty, hints at the potential for capturing new dimensions of the natural world through students' words.

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Electronic Letter to Interested Participants

February __, 2008

Dear _____,

As someone selected to participate in Alternative Spring Break (ASB)-Chicago, ASB-New York City, ASB-Peru, or the Chevy Chase Leadership Internship Program (CCLIP)-Prague, you are invited to participate in a research study investigating short-term immersion programs. The purpose of this study is to investigate students' experiences as participants in short-term immersion programs and to explore the meaning students make of these experiences. Of particular interest to this study is what students learn about themselves, cross-cultural engagement, and complex social issues; and their sense of agency in relation to their learning. There is a dearth of scholarship on this topic and your participation in this study has the potential to make an important contribution to research on the impact of these programs.

The study will be conducted during the University of Maryland's Spring Break (March 15-23, 2008) with potential follow-up during the spring and summer 2008 semesters. If you agree to participate, you will join a group of 10-18 in a multi-site constructivist case study. The data collection will occur over multiple phases, including participant observation, group reflection, individual interviewing, and individual journaling. The total expected time for the individual and group activities is consistent with planned activities for your program, approximately 8-10 hours over the course of the week and in potential follow-up interviews. If you are interested I can send you some of the initial questions in advance. You may use a pseudonym if desired and your confidentiality will be protected to the fullest extent possible.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary and you may chose not to participate at any point in time. If you are interested in participating, please send me an email affirming your interest at sjones4@umd.edu. I will then be in touch with you about beginning the research process and scheduling a time to meet with other participants in the study. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I can be reached at:

Susan R. Jones
Associate Professor
CAPS Department
3214 Benjamin Building
University of Maryland
College Park, MD 20742
301-405-8384
sjones4@umd.edu

I am very excited about this project and pleased that you would consider participating as well. I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,
Dr. Susan R. Jones

Appendix B: Consent Form

Project Title	*Meaning-Making Through Short-Term Immersion Programs*
Why is this research being done?	*This is a research project being conducted by Dr. Susan R. Jones at the University of Maryland, College Park. I am inviting you to participate in this research because you are at least 18 years of age and you are a participant in a short-term immersion program selected as a site for this study. The purpose of this study is to investigate student's experiences as participants in short-term immersion programs and to explore the meaning students make of these experiences.*
What will I be asked to do?	*You will be asked to participate fully in group reflection activities, individual interviews with research team members, and individual journaling. These group activities will be documented through the use of digital audio recording and researcher notes. The total expected time for your participation will be 8-10 hours. You may also be contacted to assess the accuracy of the researcher's notes and to provide feedback on preliminary research results.*
What about confidentiality?	*I will do my best to keep your personal information confidential. You may use a pseudonym if desired. To help protect your confidentiality: (1) storage of data and notes will be kept in a secured location accessible only to the research team; (2) purging of personally-identifiable information from field notes, transcripts, and research reports submitted to me will be done if requested. If I or the research team write a report or article about this research project, your identity will be protected to the fullest extent possible consistent with your interests.* *This research project involves making digital audio recordings of your conversations. The digital audio recordings, accompanying notes, and transcriptions will be kept on my password protected computer. Information from this study will be kept until May 2012 when all information will be destroyed.* ☐ I agree to be digitally recorded during my participation in this study. ☐ I do not agree to be digitally recorded during my participation in this study. *Your information may be shared with representatives of the University of Maryland, College Park or governmental authorities if you or someone else is in danger or if I am required to do so by law.*

Project Title	*Meaning-Making Through Short-Term Immersion Programs*
What are the risks of this research?	*This research is not designed to help participants personally, but they will have the chance to reflect on their experience as a participant in a short-term immersion program. This process may affect participants' perceptions of themselves and inform their future personal and professional decisions. This process may affect your perceptions of yourself and inform your future personal and professional decisions.*
What are the benefits of this research?	*The research study will provide necessary data on the experience of participants in short-term immersion programs both from a perspective of improving practice, but also to contribute to the dearth of scholarship in the field.*
Do I have to be in this research? Can I stop participating at any time?	*Your participation in this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to participate in this research, you may stop participating at any time. If you decide not to participate in this study or if you stop participating at any time, you will not be penalized or lose any benefits to which you otherwise qualify. If you withdraw from the study, I will destroy transcripts, digital recordings, and fieldnotes of your data or give originals and all copies of these documents to you.*
What if I have questions?	*This research is being conducted by Dr. Susan R. Jones at the University of Maryland, College Park. If you have any questions about the research study itself, please contact Dr. Susan R. Jones at: The University of Maryland, 3214 Benjamin Building, 301-405-8384 or sjones4@umd.edu* *If you have questions about your rights as a research subject or wish to report a research-related injury, please contact:* **Institutional Review Board Office, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland, 20742; (e-mail) irb@deans.umd.edu; (telephone) 301-405-0678** *This research has been reviewed according to the University of Maryland, College Park IRB procedures for research involving human subjects.*

Statement of Age and Consent	*Your signature indicates that:* ▪ *You are at least 18 years of age;* ▪ *The research has been explained to you;* ▪ *Your questions have been answered; and* ▪ *You freely and voluntarily choose to participate in this research project.*

Name (printed): _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix C: Interest Survey

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Name: _____ Phone Number: (___)_____

Mailing Address: _____ Email: _____

Date of birth:_____ UID: _____

RESIDENCY : □ In State □ Out of State

TRANSFER STATUS : □ Started College Here □ Started College Elsewhere

GENDER: □ Man □ Woman □ Transgender

CLASS STANDING: □ Freshman (0-29 hours) □ Sophomore (30 -59 hours) □ Junior (60-89 hours)
□ Senior (90+ hours) □ Graduate Student □ Other

RACE/ ETHNICITY: (check all that apply)
□ International Student
□ Hispanic, Latino, Chicano
□ African American, Black
□ Multiracial
□ White, Caucasian- Non-Hispanic
□ Asian, Asian-American, Pacific Islander
□ American Indian, Alaskan Native
□ Other: _____

COLLEGE:
□ Engineering
□ Architecture, Planning, & Preservation
□ Behavioral & Social Sciences
□ Computer, Math, & Physical Sciences
□ Health & Human Performance
□ Journalism
□ Public Policy
□ Agriculture & Natural Resources
□ Arts & Humanities
□ Chemical & Life Sciences
□ Education
□ Information Studies
□ Business
□ Letters & Sciences

TRIP: □ Chicago □ Peru
□ New York □ Czech Republic

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Permission to look at ASB/CCLIP Application:	□	yes	□	no
Have you had previous international travel experience?	□	yes, where?	□	no
Are you available after your trip in spring 2008 for a follow-up interview?	□	yes	□	no

Please list your involvement in community service.

What other activities, clubs, and teams are you involved in? (use back of page if necessary)

Appendix D: Participant-Observation Protocol

Observation Type	Notes
Describe Setting (work site, reflections, living situation, travel time, meals, fun time)	
Group Interaction (affective dimension, who led, who participated)	
Interactions with Others (characteristics of immersion, community partner)	
Portrait of Informers (dress, what say and do, gestures, emotions, dialogue)	
Discomfort (convey where there is discomfort to increase credibility of judgments, descriptive and reflective)	
Build In-depth Picture of Case (take pictures for later descriptions)	
Participant-Observer (analyze observations for meaning and personal bias, guard against preconceived opinions, memoing)	

Appendix E: Interview Protocol

Name:_____

Date: _____

Pseudonym: _____

Welcome person and thank them for participating.

Review the informed consent that they have signed--in particular (attached):

- Confidentiality
- Use of pseudonym (ASK FOR A PSEUDONYM HERE!)
- Recording
- Permission to review application and journal
- Participation is completely voluntary
- They can choose to discontinue at any time

Ask them if they have any questions.

Introduce interview by telling them that you are going to ask them a series of questions about their experience and that there are no right/wrong answers, that you are just interested in their perspective.

QUESTIONS:

(1) What were your motivations to participate in the program?

(1a) What did you hope to get out of the experience?

(2) Thinking back on your trip to Chicago, please describe your experience. What stands out for you about what you did, who you met, what you saw, how you felt…

(2a) How did your experience fit or not fit with your expectations?

(3) What most surprised you on the trip?

(4) What was most challenging?

(4) What difference did being in Chicago make to your experience and your learning?

(6)What did you learn from the settings (homebase, school…) that we were in?

(7) What did you learn from the people with whom you interacted?
What about the other students on the trip?
What about the local community members/people in _____?

What about the group dynamics?

(8) What stereotypes were challenged during the trip?

(9) How do you think your identity (such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion, etc) influenced your experience?

(10)What has your experience been like upon returning to College Park?

(10a) How have you conveyed your experiences on the trip to your friends and family?

(11) How has your understanding of the world changed as a result of your experience on the trip?

(11a) Are there ways in which your life may be different as a result of your experience?
How so/Why not?

(12) How has the trip influenced your future plans?
Has this experience influenced any plans to study or travel abroad in the future?

(13) Is there anything else that you would like to share?

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