

Lessons in Experiential and Service-Learning

Daniel Amick, Anthropology
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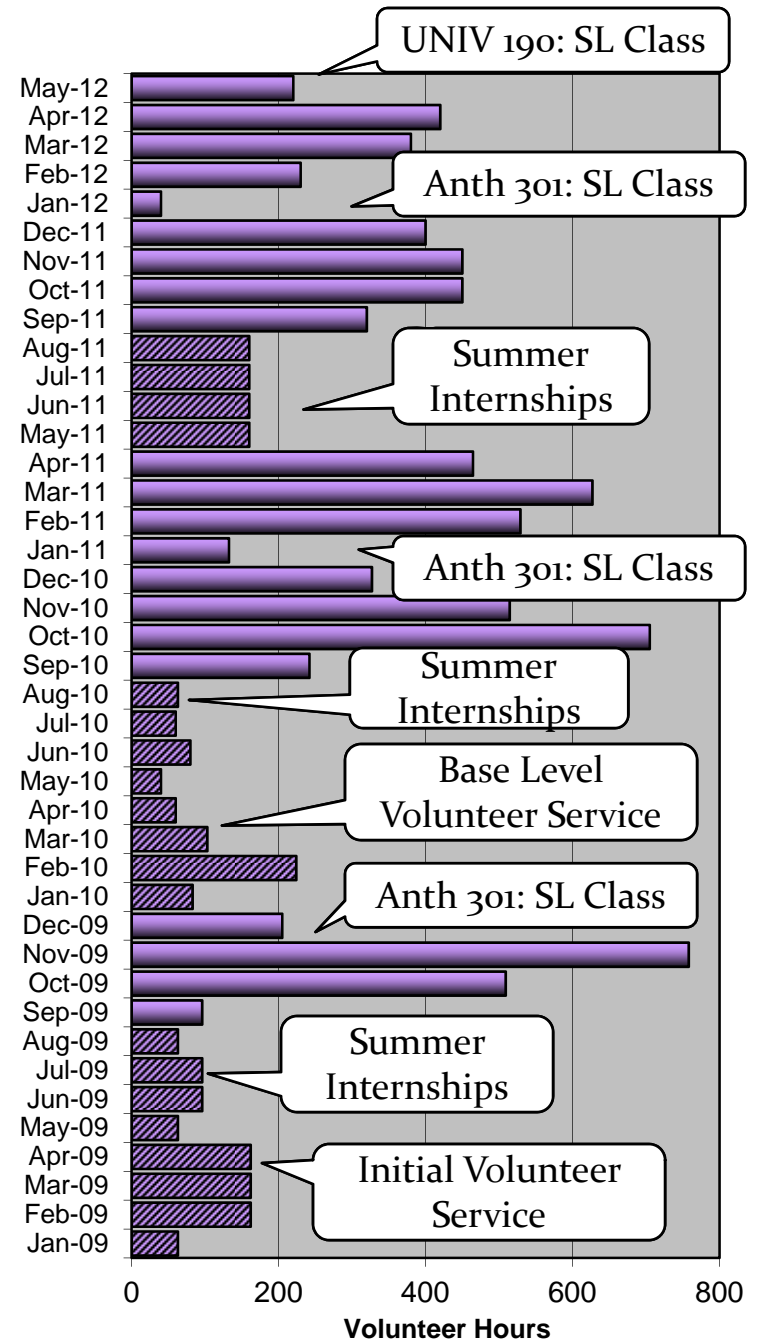


Creating Structure: Learning about Refugee Experiences and Operating a Non-Profit

- Program foundation: ELL tutoring, befriending, cultural brokers, supporting and shadowing agency services.
- More than 220 students partnered with more than 100 refugee families in the past 4 years (25-45 hrs/student per semester; ave. 1000 hrs service/semester)
- Expanded agency service capacity, increased federal contributions from the Office of Refugee Resettlement Matching Grant program for community partners.
- Drives for winter clothing, school supplies, household goods, CTA cards, fundraising ~ \$2250 per semester.
- These contributions = >\$70,00 of in-kind donations in the past 4 years.

Development and Sustainability

- Diversification in student opportunities: upper division and freshman classes, service organization, summer internships, individual contracts.
- Satisfaction assessments of all participants
- Developing products as well as foundational services.



Assignments as Useful Products

- IgNation blog with >1,000 posts and 300 comments.
- Educational and promotional documents and videos.
- Campus film & panel events (8).
- Public health fellowship bed bug study.
- Established partnerships with affiliated social justice causes on campus and immigrant and refugee rights organizations, & community service providers.
- Presentations for scholarly associations (7), practitioner conferences (2), teaching workshops (4), and UG research symposia (4).
- UG honors theses (2); e-Portfolios.

Creating Sustainable and Engaging Cultural Adjustment in Refugee Communities

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Introduction

Effective adjustment to the cultural practices of the United States is a central component of the refugee experience that assists in the refugee community's successful transition into American society. Although the process of cultural adjustment is essential, it lacks sufficient resources since limited government funds are dedicated to covering the basic and immediate needs of resettled refugees. As a result, refugee communities and engaged community volunteers are left with little in the way of standardized and sustainable resources to assist in directing equalizing and meaningful cultural adjustment.

Priority Needs Ranking

- 1) Housing
- 2) Medical examinations and services
- 3) Employment applications
- 4) School enrollment
- 5) Basic English language education (ESL)

Goals and Strategies

Two spheres of primary acculturation for refugee children and families are public schools and apartment housing complexes. As a consequence, we chose to focus our efforts on developing resources for cultural adjustment within the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) and apartment housing complexes within the Roger's Park neighborhood of Chicago. Our strategy involved identifying the following:

- > Areas of difficult cultural adjustment within the public school and apartment housing systems
- > Forms of media that are accessible to the refugee community volunteers
- > Means of involving the refugee community in their own cultural adjustment process



Fig. 1. Many refugees are school children who must adjust to public school settings. In addition, all Roger's Park refugees live in apartment complexes where they face difficult adjustment processes.

Results and Learning Outcomes

Summary of Results

- > Developed and applied a reproducible model for addressing areas in need of cultural adjustment assistance
- > Created, edited, and translated 5 short films addressing cultural concerns in classrooms
- > Prepared a housing workshop for student volunteers
- > Organized and translated apartment housing documents
- > Produced a sustainable and accessible website to centralize cultural adjustment resources for the refugee community and student volunteers
- > Engaged the refugee community of Roger's Park in the process of cultural adjustment



Produce Resources

Fig. 3. Video media is an easily accessible and highly utilized form of education and communication within both the refugee community and among student volunteers. Shown above: students from the refugee community actively participating in the production of educational videos.



Identify Needs

Fig. 2. Many of the refugee students in the Chicago Public Schools struggle to adjust to the cultural norms of classroom settings. Culturally defined student behaviors such as raising a hand to ask for assistance from a teacher or writing down class assignments can be problematic.



Fig. 4. All cultural adjustment media and resources were uploaded to our website where they remain accessible and modifiable to the needs of future student volunteers and members of the refugee community. Shown above: an image of our website



Fig. 5. The cultural adjustment website is accessible to student volunteers and refugee community members and may be incorporated into the efforts of the Chicago Public Schools

Conclusions

The website and materials produced from our model only begin to address the great breadth of adjustment needs that exist in refugee communities. Our work takes a first step in addressing these concerns and provides a foundation for future work by student volunteers as well as a platform for broadening our network of community partnerships. As the Loyola Refugee Resettlement Project begins to directly consider issues of culture, our work may serve as a model as well as a resource that works in tandem with the efforts of larger organizations addressing cultural needs.



Fig. 6. Potential future partners that may use our resources and assist in broadening the scope of cultural adjustment work.

Recommendations

- > Continued use of the website as a tool of cultural adjustment
 - > Development of more media resources that can broaden the scope of issues addressed
 - > Integration of the website into the larger efforts of organizations addressing or facing cultural adjustment issues
- All efforts towards more effective cultural adjustment could be aided with additional research into the effects of adjustment programs on the process of resettlement.

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- Cultural Adjustment Website
- <http://troca.weebly.com/>

Acknowledgments

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Refugee Clothing: Adapting to Winter in Chicago

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Why do refugees need winter clothes?

The majority of refugees being resettled in Roger's Park are from warmer climates. In 2009, 2561 refugees were resettled in Illinois. The majority of them are from Iraq, Eritrea, Burma and Bhutan (coming from refugee camps in Nepal).



Figure 1. (Left) This insert shows the Chicago skyline in winter.

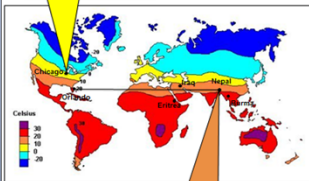


Figure 2. (Above) This map depicts the various climates of the world. Note that the Nepali Refugee camps that shelter thousands of Bhutanese refugees is on the same latitudinal line as Orlando, Florida.



Figure 3. (Above) This insert shows a Refugee Camp in Nepal. The subtropical climate is in great contrast to the climate of Chicago.

Goals and Strategies

Main Objectives of Winter Clothing Drive Committee:

- Obtain boxes to collect items; decorate boxes.
- Get permission from various departments and residence halls at Loyola to place boxes around the University.
- Email department secretaries and heads to alert them to our project, educate them on the issue and encourage them to donate.
- Design and circulate flyers around the university.
- Committee met weekly to collect donations.
- Organize storage area for total collection.

Figure 4. (Right) Ms. Ryan's advisor group at Audubon Elementary School contributed 60 coats to Loyola's efforts.



Traditional Nepali Dress Conflicts with Appropriate Winter Clothing

- Although the Nepalese of southern Bhutan had lived in Bhutan for generations, prior to being forced into Nepali refugee camps, they retained their own culture and traditional dress. Traditional dress for Nepali men consists of the Daura-Suruwal, or "Labeda-Suruwal", a Western-style jacket and a topi, or hat.
- The female counterpart, called a guniu, consists of a sari and blouse.
- Although, the older generation continues to dress traditionally, the younger generation tends to wear more Western-style clothing. However, since they are used to wearing lighter fitting clothing and sandals, adjusting to weather-appropriate dress in Chicago can still be a challenge.



Figure 6. Older man wearing daura-suruwal, jacket and topi. Woman on his left wearing red sari and blouse.



Figure 5. (Above Left) Shows the typical refugee camp environment and clothing worn in Nepal.

(Above Right) Shows the extreme contrast to winter in Chicago.

Health problems that may arise due to cold weather

- Cold weather can cause individuals with serious health risks if they do not have the proper attire.
- Common colds
- Frostbites
- Hyperthermia
- Influenza
- Pneumonia
- Windburn
- Slipping and falling on ice

Results and Learning Outcomes

Our efforts culminated in the Free Market at the ECAC:

- 1400 total items were collected and distributed
- 80 bags were given out to families, averaging \$20 value per bag (a \$1600 value)
- Items accumulated from Loyola faculty, students, and their families; the Lincoln Park Zoo and Audubon Elementary School

Breakdown of Clothing Items Received

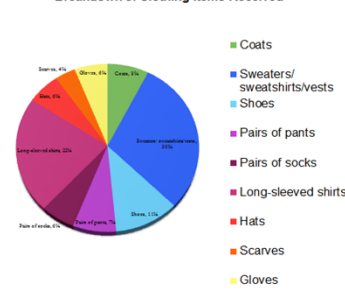


Figure 6. (Above) This graph shows an estimate of clothing items received over the past 3 months of our Winter Clothing Drive.

Figure 7. (Below) This chart illustrates the limited economic abilities of refugees in Illinois. Without employment to provide adequate income, it is difficult for refugees to purchase the clothing necessary for winter.

Economic Adjustments: Refugee Employment Rates in Illinois (Based on 2007 Annual Survey of Refugees who have been in the U.S. less than five years)

| Report to Congress | FY 2006 | | FY 2007 | |
|---------------------|---------|------------|---------|------------|
| | Number | Percentage | Number | Percentage |
| Caseload | 1371 | N/A | 1130 | N/A |
| Entered Employments | 740 | 54.00% | 869 | 77.00% |
| Terminations | 322 | 57.00% | 280 | 61.00% |
| Reductions | 216 | 38.00% | 99 | 22.00% |
| Average Wage | \$8.21 | N/A | \$8.13 | N/A |
| Retentions | 590 | 80.00% | 775 | 89.00% |
| Health Benefits | 561 | 85.00% | 681 | 88.00% |

Conclusions

Why is Winter Clothing Drive important to refugee families?

- Keeps them warm in winters
- Helps prevent winter related diseases
- Saves money that refugees can spend on other necessities

What does a donor accomplish:

- Helped another family to stay warm
- Made refugees feel important and cared for
- Gained sense of fulfillment

Overall Successes:

- At the end of the Clothing Drive we were able to supply 1400 clothes to 80 refugee families
- Families still came out, despite the fact that it was snowing
- The refugee community of Roger's Park knows they have support adjusting to this harsh climate

Recommendations

Based on our success, target these departments:

- Philosophy/Theology/Residence Halls

Areas to reach out to for future drives:

- Jesuit Residences/Madonna della Strada/Ministries
- Wellness Center/Nursing
- Clothing/Department Stores
- CFSU/Library/IC

Unite efforts with LRO to strengthen success.

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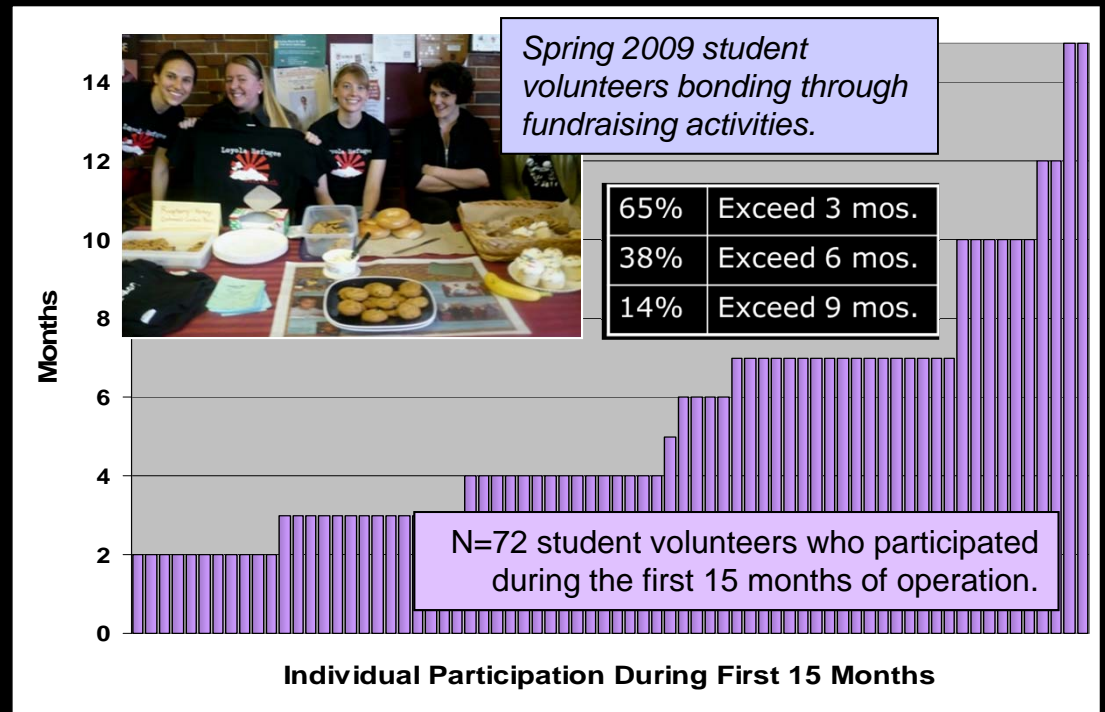
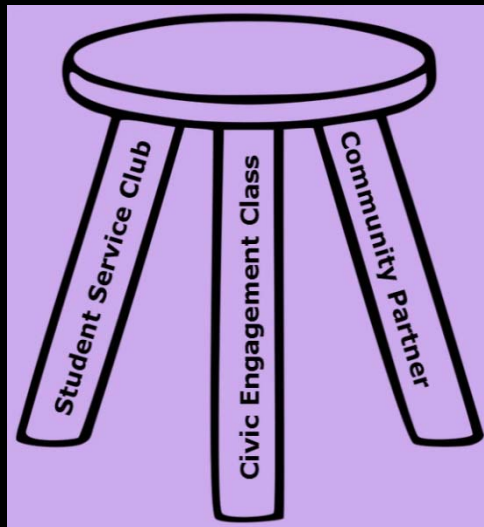
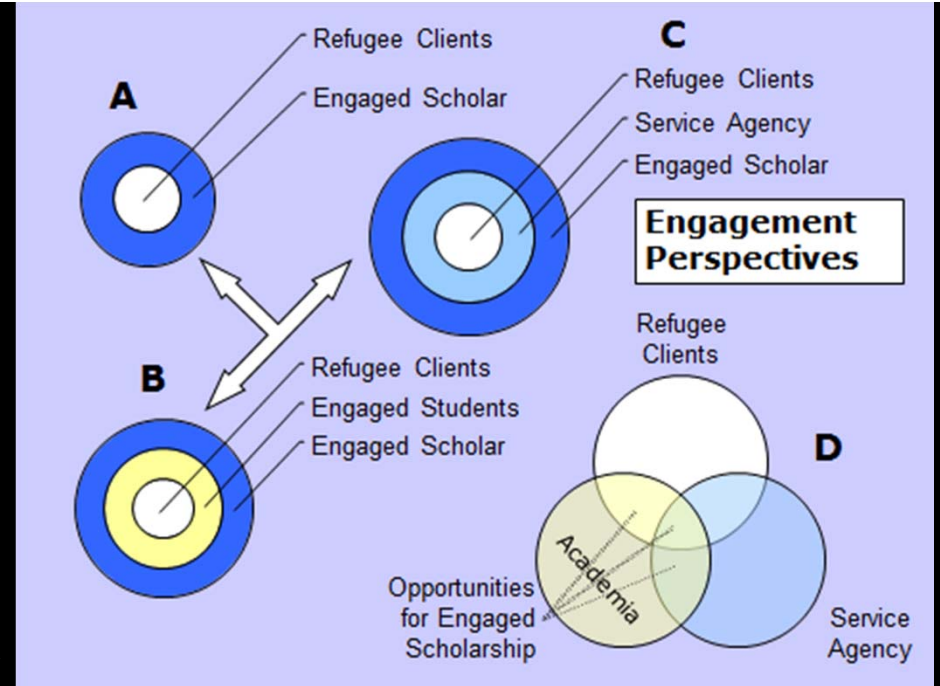
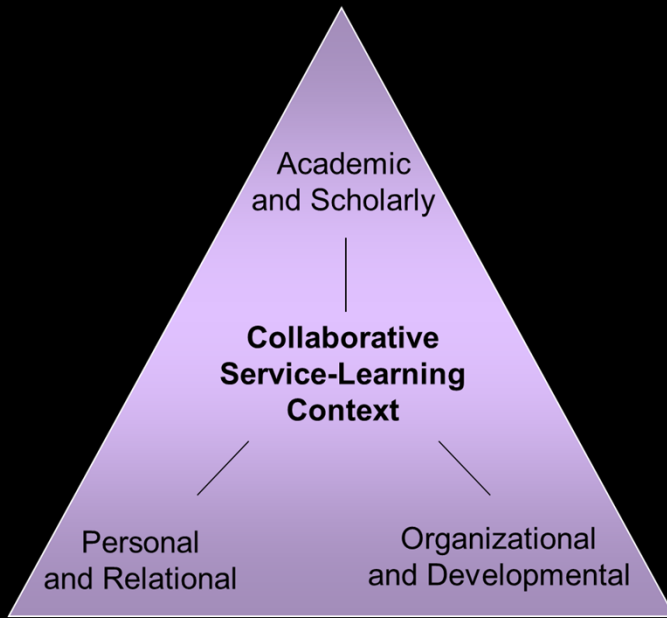
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Acknowledgments

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Research on Pedagogy



Collaborative Learning: Removing Barriers

- Learning to loosen the grip on the steering wheel.
- Showing vulnerability and leading by example.
- Making work transparent: community partners, general public, scholars and practitioners.



Pay no attention to that man behind the curtain!

Evaluating Student Performance

- Teaching for transformation and growth, but grading on effort and intellectual achievement.
- Challenge: getting high levels of student engagement and responsibility to community service.



Investment in Mentoring

- Surrendering course content time for service preparation, brainstorming, and reflection.
- In-class training and guiding discussions on reflection.
- Multiple layering: class, peer-mentors, teams, groups.
- Providing direction, support, and encouragement.



We need transformative learning experiences to help us gain courage, intelligence, heart, and appreciation of community.

Main Take Away Points

1. Begin with a few community partners and get to know them and their concerns well – then broaden your network and services – deepening, expanding, and pruning along the way.
2. Put thought into the design and structure of your program and encourage its evolution. Reach out to other faculty and staff with experience and learn from it.
3. Document program activities, student responses, and reflect on them. Maintain accounting records of community impacts.
4. Make the work transparent by presenting it to multiple audiences – including students, scholars, and relevant community members.

Main Take Away Points – Con't

5. Establish multiple platforms for research while gaining critical understanding of the subject matter – in my case, learning about causes and effects of forced migration and the structural flaws in refugee resettlement programs.
6. Collaborative learning in practice means sharing the steering wheel, not taking a back seat. Endeavor to teach someone how to drive rather than just giving them the keys to the car. Engage in service-learning yourself. Know what your students are experiencing. Embrace the opportunity for self-transformation.
7. Maintain an academic core to the class with clear explanation of the role of service as an experiential assignment intended to clarify the course content.
8. Provide guidance and support to increase learning potential and to remove possible disconnects between academic content and field experiences.

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