Putting Social Justice at the Center: Assessing social justice learning outcomes as a result of classroom, community, and co-curricular experiences

Through the partnership of the university Core curriculum, the Ignatian Center for Jesuit Education, SCU's community partners, and the Office of Assessment, Santa Clara University has completed an assessment of its social justice learning outcomes by drawing upon multiple sources of direct and indirect evidence. The collaboration among units was especially beneficial in interpreting the data, and identifying and coordinating action plans for deepening students' social justice learning.

Experiential Learning for Social Justice (ELSJ) Undergraduate Core Curriculum

What we did: Direct assessments of student work in ELSJ courses toward social justice, perspective, and civic engagement-oriented learning outcomes. Many different disciplines have ELSJ courses and all have a community-based learning placement.

What we found: Most students met learning goals for perspective-taking and civic engagement, but fewer met levels of understanding sought for social justice (recognize, analyze & understand reality and injustices). Better performance with more aligned assignments.

Actions: Collaboratively designed faculty workshop to talk about instructional strategies and assignment design.

Ignatian Center's Community-based Learning Program

What we did: Online survey disseminated to students in community-based learning placements, allowing for their self-assessments of learning. Asked about perceptions of learning gains and open-ended questions about community learning.

What we found: While students perceived they deepened their understanding, the narrative responses for social justice learning reflected more developing understandings of social justice, without a lot of attention to the causes of injustices or practices that keep injustices in place.

Actions: Revise narrative prompts and discuss findings and possible interventions with faculty and community partners.

Ignatian Center's Immersion Program

What we did: Pre and post immersion experience survey to assess students' learning growth in social justice and other learning areas. About 175 SCU students take part in national or international immersion trips each year to communities with little access to wealth, power, and privilege.

What we found: Immersion increased commitment to active engagement. Also, greater gains from students who had already completed their ELSJ class in empathy/compassion, active engagement, and structural understanding of poverty.

Actions: Revise survey to create stronger measures. Collect more data on experiences to better understand process by which students develop stronger social justice orientations.

Conclusions and Next Steps:

- Maturing one's social justice critical consciousness requires multiple learning experiences
- Social justice learning outcomes are best achieved through a mix of curricular and co-curricular community-based learning experiences
- Collaborative assessment led to more coordinated and targeted actions; helped clarify desired levels of LO's
- Plans to leverage national surveys (e.g., NSSE, CIRP) to triangulate further our student learning data

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Students' Social Justice Learning Outcomes in connection with Community-based Learning Placements in Experiential Learning for Social Justice (ELSJ) undergraduate Core Curriculum Courses
Santa Clara University

		Charity/Personal Responsibility(1)	Social Awareness/Personal Participation (2)	Social Justice/Engaging in Social Change (3)
Ethic of Service	**Service Orientation (Perception of Relationship) "VIEW OF SERVICE"**	Charity: give back to community; Do *for* others [e.g., "give back to the community", "serve as mentors"]	Caring: compassion and empathy; Do for, but are in relationship with others [e.g., "I have learned compassion should be the underlying basis of teaching regardless of any circumstances"]	Social Justice: systemic change, work in solidarity [e.g., "gain compassion by working with people who come from different situations and socioeconomic status, and gaining respect for these individuals"]
Awareness of Self and Others	**View of the Other (Attitudes toward those served; Beliefs about Individuals/Groups; Approach to Community Service) "VIEW OF OTHERS"**	Demonstrates deficit view of others: less fortunate, disadvantaged; [e.g., "good to learn about disadvantaged communities"]	Views others as individuals, each with own story, not stereotypes: [e.g., "(the experience) really removes stereotypical ideology"; "understand the perspectives and values of those who are less well off"]	Views others as equals; community members are seen as strengths & resources; Connected to others [e.g., "…taught me a lot about being a positive and motivated individual"]
	Diversity "VIEW OF DIFFERENCES"	Indicates everyone is the same *or* everyone has individual differences. [e.g., "the children have taught me how unique each person is"]	Acknowledges group differences. [e.g., "there is a lot to learn from people who have different backgrounds than our own"]	Acknowledges and values group differences. [e.g., "…insight into the quality and worth of others' lives"]
Awareness of Social Issues	**View of the World (Situating the Locus of the Problem) "UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM"**	Identifies individual responsibility; if everyone just tried harder; "Pull oneself up by the boot straps." Blame the victim. [e.g., "the kids are going to be a product of their parent's influence. Despite that, they are good kids. They all have the potential to overcome their economic handicap."]	Recognizes the need to protect and ensure basic rights for all; [e.g., "learned that these are hardworking people but are in the situation they're in due to a variety of external factors"]	Examines policies and practices maintain and reproduce the status quo that favors certain groups at the expense of others. [e.g., "I have learned that the root of many societal problems comes from oppression and the inability to acquire wealth which presents future generations with a lack of opportunity."]
	View of Social Justice (Responding to Community Challenges/Issues) "TAKING ACTION TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM"	Increase resources. [e.g., "many of these students do not have access to quality resources"]	Treat people fairly and increase opportunities. [e.g., "a quality education will open up more opportunities in life for these children"]	Examine causes of injustice and work for social change. [e.g., "we begin to question the existence of such a huge disparity"; (CBL) challenges us to do something about the inequalities that we are witnessing and learning about"]

Note: This rubric draws heavily from Chipolle (2010) & Tinkler (2013), but also draws from Mitchell (2008) Westheimer & Kahn (2004), and Morton (1995).