Building Understanding Regarding Charitable and Change Paradigms in Service Learning

Sarah Himmelheber

Assistant Professor

Social Work Professional Programs

Project Overview

- Background
- Study Design
- Participant Information
- Data Collection and Analysis
- Study Limitations
- Preliminary Findings
- Next Steps

Background

- Service-learning as a pedagogical tool has experienced growth and validation over the last several decades.

- Morton (1995) hypothesized that students enter the classroom with a preference for, what he initially termed "Charity" or "Change" paradigms.

- Service and Social Justice are two of the core values of the social work profession.

- Service, due to its focus on immediate needs, reflects the "charitable" paradigm.

- Social justice, due to its macro/ systems orientation, aligns more closely with the "change" paradigm.

Study Design

- Qualitative, exploratory study– piloted in one, 10-person course
- Research Question:
  - To better understand how students make meaning of their service-learning experiences, and how the type of service site placement impacts the meaning-making process
- Aim→ Analytic generalization (vs. statistical)
- Social Work 330, Understanding Diversity, Challenging Oppression: A Service Learning Course for Helping Professionals
- Students elected to participate in one of two service site options:
  - Oneida Food Distribution
  - Tsyunhehkwa
  → Both service sites are programs of the Oneida Community Integrated Food System (OCIFS); however, the interventions characterizing these programs provided a contrasting experience for students.

Participant Information

- 10 participants
  - Six selected service placement at Oneida Food Distribution; four selected placement at Tsyunhehkwa.
- Female
- European decent
- Traditional-aged college students (between 18-25 years old)

Data Collection & Analysis

- Students participated in two hours per week (22 hours for the semester) at one of the two service sites.
- Eight journals were completed over the course of the semester.
- Journals were de-identified and separated into service groups.
- Grouped journals were read iteratively for themes.
- Atlas.ti was used to organize data (grouped journals).
- Codes were constructed and utilized for meaning-making.

Study Limitations

- Pilot study- exploratory in nature
- Small class size– multiple consequences
- Variability in journal length, evidence of critical thinking, and connections between readings/ classroom content and service site placements (ability to make connections suggested a group-related pattern; however, small class size prevents drawing conclusions)
- Lack of clarity for some students on definitions of "charity" and "change"

Preliminary Findings:
Table of Initial Codes

CODE NAME	NUMBER OF TOTAL DATA POINTS	DATA POINTS BY SERVICE GROUP	
		Charitable Orientation	Change Orientation
Attitudes re: Oneida	9	3	6
Noticing Privilege	14	6	8
Knowledge re: Oneida	10	1	9
Personal Growth/ Change	3	2	1
Over-generalized "knowledge" of Oneida	2	1	1
Gender Divisions	11	4	7
Prizing the Personal	15	14	1
Community-Oriented Perspective	13	3	10

Preliminary Findings: Defining the Codes

- *Prizing the Personal*→ Included in this code were remarks that focuses on and valued personal relationships or interactions, whether they be between the student and another worker or the student and an identified client.

- *Community-Oriented Perspective*→ This code term included remarks where the student was connecting their work/ the work of the program with larger outcomes—those beyond the immediate intervention with which they were involved.

Preliminary Findings: Examples from the Data

- **Prizing the Personal→** [from Charitable-group]
    - *"The best feeling was when some of the elderly people were supposed to bring huge carts of groceries out to their vehicles and when I offered to carry everything out for them I could tell they were surprised and happy to have me there."*

- **Community Oriented Perspective→** [from Change-group]
    - *"At Tsyunhehkwa, they set people up with seed and plants to start their own garden. They are trying to maintain cultural traditions.... The goal of this program is [spreading the idea]... that everyone is capable of having fresh food and food security"*

Next Steps

- Refine goals of the study, with consideration to community partner perspective.
- Utilize "initial course questions" to gauge students understanding of and preferences around charitable and change paradigms prior to their selection of service placements.
- Clarify connections between charity and social work value of service and change and social work value of social justice
- Consider exploring other group differences revealed during this pilot study– ie. "Knowledge re: Oneida" and "Gender Divisions" codes were disproportionally represented within the "change" paradigm.

Questions?

Email: himmelhs@uwgb.edu