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“Ethnographizing” Service-Learning: Creating Politically Engaged Anthropology

Wendy Ann Hathaway
University of South Florida

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“Ethnographizing” Service-Learning: Creating Politically Engaged Anthropology

by

Wendy Ann Hathaway

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of Anthropology
College of Arts and Sciences
University of South Florida

Major Professor: Susan Greenbaum, Ph.D.
Cheryl Rodriguez, Ph.D.
Alvin Wolfe, Ph.D.

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis to the memories of James Haag, Ronald Hathaway, Hank Marr, Audrey Marr, and Harold William Hathaway. Their love, support, and guidance filled me with the courage, commitment, and faith necessary to complete this task. You are dearly missed.

It is also dedicated to my family and friends. At times I was filled with self-doubt and frustration, but you were always there with a shoulder, a hug, a beer, or a kind word. I would not have succeeded without the love and friendship you have showed me over the past six years. I am so grateful to have you in my life and know that I can count on you for your continued support. Peace and Love.

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ABSTRACT

Service-Learning is a popular teaching method that is increasingly being adopted by institutions of higher learning throughout the nation and is enthusiastically promoted as a progressive method for mediating the alleged decline in civic responsibility and ameliorating subsequent social ills. Service-learning courses are also seen as an answer to growing student disinterest by connecting students to “real world” experiences while simultaneously providing much needed community support in the face of receding social services in this “Post-Welfare” moment (Goode and Maskovsky 2001a).

Anthropological insights, born out of a liberal humanistic tradition, can be employed to critically examine this popular educational and social project. Critical anthropology theories and methods help articulate disparity between the promises of service-learning and the realities of implementation. Recent calls from within the discipline challenge anthropologists to do more than simply documenting experiences of poverty and violence, but to become politically engaged by exposing how global and state processes shape and create those realities in the local realm (Hyatt and Lyon-Callo 2003).

My internship as a volunteer tutor at a local recreation center provided a unique vantage for critically examining service-learning while simultaneously working to establish a politically engaged anthropology project. "Ethnographizing" (Lyon-Callo and Hyatt 2003:177) service-learning reveals hidden contradictions that act as substantial barriers to the goals of the generally agreeable and beneficial service-learning program. Expressing an explicitly politically engaged service-learning agenda works to ameliorate these dangers for the creation of a potentially powerful vehicle for social change.

Chapter 1: Introduction

- *“I learned that my role as a student at the University of South Florida, is not to sit through a class and take a few notes on things, and then have a test on them, but it is to go out in the community and work with people on things and teach them new things and learn from what they do”.*
- *“They taught us while we taught them”.*

Comments by service-learning students,
Spring 2002

Imagine the typical urban university. Thousands of students matriculating in courses in a range of topics; working towards degrees that will provide knowledge and experience that will some day lead to lucrative careers or socially meaningful endeavors. Adjacent to campus are low-income and declining neighborhoods with residents who have never once stepped foot on the school grounds. The university students hurry by with little thought and much avoidance of these fear-inducing ghettos. There is little connection made between what is taught in the classroom to the lived experiences just beyond the classroom walls.

Student disinterest and dissatisfaction with traditional “expert” based education is growing. Likewise, surrounding communities are demanding more from their university neighbors. To combat the perceived irrelevancy and disconnection, faculty are electing to offer courses that utilize a new and increasingly popular teaching method—service-learning. Service-learning is a

course option that engages students in projects that help them “learn by doing” in conjunction with traditional classroom techniques. Service-learning students develop enhanced civic responsibilities and connections to civil society through their participation in hands-on community service. This relationship provides communities with much needed and free mentorship, support, and resources. A report detailing student service estimates the value of student volunteer efforts in 2004 at over \$4 billion dollars (Salgado 2005).

Institutions of higher learning, especially land grant and urban universities, have historically worked towards developing innovative and effective community engagement initiatives (Kellogg Foundation 2005). Service-learning appears to be the newest trend for addressing the varied requests and critiques that call for increased social responsibilities on the part of higher education. While the literature abounds with the virtues and benefits of service-learning programs, those dedicated to collaborative and effective university-community partnerships and those with an interest in community development theories need not be too hasty in subscribing to this supposed “cure-all” strategy. As educators, social scientists, and concerned citizens we must critically examine the service-learning project. We must ask questions that reveal possible hidden agendas and unintended consequences. Why, considering all of the available university-community engagement possibilities, has service-learning become the leading model? What does the service-learning project achieve and what does it not? Can service-learning deliver on all of its promises? If not, how can we strengthen

the agenda so that service-learning can achieve its goal of bridging the “town and gown” divide?

The Problem

Service learning is a recent strategy in a long line of social interventions. Service-learning was developed not only to supplement the student experience but to address and alleviate conditions of poverty in American communities. There have been many attempts and schools of thought dedicated to this very issue.

Social science, born out of the liberal idea that scientific investigation can provide answers and solutions to human problems, often focuses on poverty, or better, what Alice O'Connor calls the “poverty problem” (O'Connor 2001:1). Poverty is seen as a societal problem, not only for the individual discomforts that it inflicts but also for the moral bankruptcy and unpleasing aesthetics unleashed on society. Various social science disciplines incorporate schools of thought dedicated to describing, explaining, and solving issues related to poverty and its unfortunate effects on American society. Politicians and the public have vacillated between various explanatory theories and poverty solutions for centuries. These hypotheses and assumptions often form the basis for policies and programs (Katz 1990; Katz 1996; O'Connor 2001). Anthropology is one such discipline with academicians and practitioners devoted to “poverty studies”. Recently, there has been a call for anthropologists to do more than describe conditions of poverty, but to “have a responsibility to engage politically with the

issue of rising inequalities and oppression (Hyatt and Lyon-Callo 2003:138). But how exactly does an anthropologist become “engaged”? This question is in need of an answer for, despite the continued and dedicated desire to address inequities, poverty still exists and disparities continue to rise.

Social critics have identified “civic apathy” as an additional threat to American middle class values and customs. According to David Lisman, America “need[s] to become a more civil society, for we are suffering from a civic malaise” (Lisman 1998:1). In the now famous and well known study on social capital, *Bowling Alone*, sociologist Robert Putnam states, “the vibrancy of American civil society has notably declined over the past several decades” (1995:65) —citing declines in voter turn out; fewer Americans attending public meetings; increased distrust of the police, government, and politics; and drops in organization membership like the PTA as evidence (65-68). Lisman cites the “weakening of the institution of the family as evidenced by the reporting of increased child abuse and neglect, a high divorce rate, and fathers avoiding child support payments” as additional verification of the civic crisis (1998:2). Apparently this attitude is a growing and future crisis since youths, in particular, are showing a growing dissatisfaction and disengagement (Wade 1997:2).

Continued and increasing poverty, dwindling civic participation, and other social ills have been attributed to under-education and societal disconnection (Kenny and Gallagher 2002). Therefore it is not surprising that “engaged education” is being held up as the mechanism for lifting individuals out of impoverished and disconnected lives. Service-learning, with its promises of

increased learning, civic participation, and poverty alleviation, is being adopted in an increasing number of our nation's higher educational institutions. Proponents of service-learning promise enhanced student learning through the exposure of real world experiences gained through service. This process not only exposes students to the rudiments of book-based academics but also the responsibilities of good citizenship and thereby counteracts the growing malaise.

The abundant service-learning literature asserts beneficial outcomes for students and society. However, caveats do exist. As an applied anthropology graduate student at the University of South Florida, over the past four years I have participated in service-learning courses; developed and taught two undergraduate service-learning courses based on my applied anthropology internship; obtained funding to implement a summer service-learning program at a local neighborhood recreation center; and have served on university engagement and service-learning committees. In analyzing this experience, I have concluded that, in spite of several benefits, there are underlying contradictions within service-learning and the "neoliberal" ideologies that promote this type of course design as a panacea for the social inequities of our society. In this thesis, I examine these experiences and events that have shaped my current understanding of this popular program. It is my hope that these insights help to build a politically engaged service-learning agenda that supports the social change and social justice movements while contributing to the development of politically engaged anthropology.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

What is Service-Learning?

Service-Learning is an approach to pedagogy that has enjoyed large successes, as is evidenced by the increasing number of universities and colleges that offer service-learning courses. According to Campus Compact, a national coalition of universities and colleges that support the civic missions of higher education, there are over 950 higher education institutions offering service-learning curriculum options with more adding the popular option annually (Compact 2005) .

Service-learning is a relatively a new idea, although experimental educators trace it back to the early 1970s” (Wade 1997: 25). Kenny and Gallagher report that the term was first used in 1967 in reference to “an internship program that was sponsored by the Southern Regional Education Board and through which college students gained academic credit/or federally funded financial remuneration for work on community projects” (Sigmon 1979). There are a number of service-learning definitions, each displaying nuances in word choice and varying degrees of emphasis; however, they all claim that service in conjunction with classroom activities results in benefits to students and communities. The National Service-Learning Clearinghouse defines service-learning as “a teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning

experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities (National Service Learning Clearinghouse 2005). Another commonly used service-learning definition is from the American Association for Higher Education (AAHE), which states that service-learning means a:

method under which students learn and develop through thoughtfully organized service that: is conducted in and meets the needs of a community and is coordinated with an institution of higher education, and with the community; helps foster civic responsibility; is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students enrolled; and includes structured time for students to reflect on the service experience. (Campus Compact 2005)

According to Wade “quality service-learning” needs to contain six essential components: preparation, collaboration, service, curriculum integration, reflection, and celebration (1997). She explains, in an idealized version, “service-learning provides students with a means for self-development as well as the development of civic attitudes such as concern, care for others, tolerance, respect, compassion, fairness, and integrity (Wade 1997:15). Jacoby, a leader in the development of and research on Service-Learning, provides this definition, “Service-learning is 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. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning” (Jacoby 1996:5).

Building or creating “civic responsibility” is a common theme that runs through all service-learning definitions and efforts. Like service-learning, there is no one single accepted definition for civic responsibility. The essence behind

these calls for civic responsibility is the need for an American citizenry that addresses social problems and questions through an “informed, committed and positive manner” (Constitutional Rights Foundation 2000). As part of this effort to instill individuals with civic responsibility, moral and religious reasoning, appropriate character traits, service-learning is being touted as a way to alleviate alleged American apathy regarding civic engagement (Kenny and Gallagher 2002). In line with the need for “good” personal characteristics, service-learning instills the value of volunteerism while teaching valuable skills needed in the workplace (Beck 2001; Lisman 1998).

Service-learning can be utilized in almost any discipline and can incorporate a variety of service goals and entities. Campus Compact and the National Service Learning Clearinghouse maintain lengthy lists of discipline specific syllabi in conjunction with numerous and varied types of community partners, agencies, and institutions. In regards to service-learning, community can refer “to local neighborhoods, the state, the nation, and the global community” (Jacoby 2003:4). Service-learning can provide a relatively low-risk process for establishing university-community partnerships (Jacoby 2003; Wade 1997). It is through these university-community partnerships that students gain critical thinking and reflection skills and where communities gain much needed support (Jacoby 2003; Lisman 1998; Wade 1997).

The widespread implementation of service-learning has led to a range of curriculum models. Some projects are individually based and loosely connected to classroom materials. Other programs are highly structured service projects

carried out by teams or an entire class and are strongly linked to academic subjects. Various and numerous resources abound providing frameworks, agendas, syllabi, and project ideas for professors interested in delving into the service-learning arena. Despite the benefits of an extensive and flexible collection of resources, the array leads to inconsistency in the definition and implementation of service-learning—leading to problems in the evaluation and assessment service-learning programs.

History of Service-Learning in Higher Education

-“Schools were (and still are) the sole institution available to society as a whole to train youth in the theory and practice of democratic citizenship” (Wade 1997:4).

-“Service-learning has encouraged colleges and universities of all types to reexamine and bolster their missions to prepare students to become civically engaged citizens” (Jacoby 2003:2).

Service Learning has come to be viewed as the principal answer to for “the decades-long criticism levied against universities by government, the private sector and local communities that they remain isolated in their ‘ivory towers’ stuck in abstractions and separated from the ‘real world’ and unable or unwilling to tackle real world problems” (Beck 2001:3). Although there were periods when academics and research were artificially removed from society’s needs, recent critiques of the purposes for higher education and backlashes to university administrations’ over zealous interests in efficiency and labor force production

have forced higher education to answer the question, “higher education for what?”

The answer is for the creation of a better citizen and thus a better society. The creation of civic-minded students has historically been associated with higher education institutions. Lisman contextualizes the development of service-learning within the discussion of the “social responsibilities of higher education” commenting that “higher education has an ethical and social responsibility to utilize its resources to help strengthen the local democratic process in the service of improving community life” (1998:149).

The Morrill Act of 1862 marks a significant beginning point, an investment of public resources for which the public expected a “return” on their investment. The Morrill Act “provided federal land for the creation of state universities and community colleges” (Eyler and Giles 1999:12-13). Kenny & Gallagher also argue that the Morrill Act established a “focus on excellence in scholarship to the practical needs of the community,” and that the second Morrill Act of 1887 created block land-grant universities with their even greater focus on tying together learning, scholarship and service (2002:16).

When discussing the roots and development of service-learning pedagogy, many cite the settlement house movement of the Progressive Era as a solid foundation from which experiential learning—service-learning—developed (Kenny and Gallagher 2002:16; Stevens 2003:26). The Settlement House movement and other progressive era programs were predicated on the idea that academics and education could provide “expert-driven models of change...that

improve the quality of life for the urban poor and immigrant” (Harkavy 1996:8). The University of Chicago’s Hull House, founded by Jane Addams in 1889, is a model example of a university-community partnership where students provided services to needy communities (Lisman 1998:151).

Judith Trolander outlines the development and purposes of the settlement house movement and its direct connection to addressing the “needs of the lower-income neighborhoods in which they are located” (Trolander 1987:1). Like service-learning agendas, the social settlement house movement served these communities through direct services and a focus on social change agendas. Another similarity to service-learning is the idea of having college students perform the services and “field-work” of the settlement house. Traditionally, college graduate students would work and live in the settlement house—mirroring anthropology’s participant-observation and fieldwork methodologies.

Trolander points to the growing reliance on “community volunteers” for the daily operations and services provided by the settlement houses when professionalism of social work began to take hold by the 1950s (1987:35-38). The ideal settlement house resident workers “included people from a variety of professions and backgrounds” (35). The underlying sentiment here is that middle and upper-class, educated and professional people would bring with them a moral character that would pass down from them to the settlement house participants—much like the theory behind planned development of mixed-income neighborhoods (Popkin, et al. 2000; Rubinowitz and Rosenbaum 2000). This theory of diffused social capital also has a place in service-learning, where it is

believed that well-to-do college students will impart benefits on impoverished communities merely through their presence in the neighborhood. The distinction here is based on the inherent value of volunteer work versus that of a paid professional who may have less-philanthropic motives (Wilson 2000).

Furthermore, the act of freely giving of one's time renders a perception that the individual possess increased worth and exceptional deservingness of their social status and prosperity.

Trolander does not deal with race as a primary concern. However, Lasch-Quinn (1993) devotes her entire book to the issue of race in the settlement house movement and beyond. The settlement house movement was initially aimed at assisting the white, European immigrants learn to assimilate and develop appropriate individual and cultural habits. It was only when black migrants arrived from the south during the Great Migration, the years between World War I-II, that the settlement house movement began to deal with the so-called "black problem" (11). How individual settlement houses handled the shifting demographics varied. Some relocated their services, following their clients into new neighborhoods; others dissolved the settlement rather than serve the new black neighbors. Very few changed their programs or services directly to assist the new population and their new needs thereby creating a separate group of "black" settlements with their own black volunteers (Stevens 2003).

While the settlement house movement has much to be commended, it was fraught with issues of race, gender, and politics—issues that still pervade the current service-learning movement. The principals tended to locate the causes

of poverty and social ills in individual behavioral deficiencies that could be corrected by mentoring and tutoring. They consequently failed to look at systemic and structural causes for the problems they were trying to address. This myopic belief affected the settlement house movement and is also problematic in the service learning movement. Because “race does matter” Green provides a critical examination of race and class in the service-learning movement for the explicit purpose of “preventing service-learning from replicating the power imbalances and economic injustices that create the need for service-learning in the first place” (2001:18). Her discussion highlights the fact that the majority of service-learning courses involve white middle-class students performing service for poor people of color. This social scenario has explicit implications for service and “limits the work that can be accomplished at the service-learning site” (25).

The “idea of national service through government-sponsored programs” traces to 1910, when William James, another American philosopher, envisioned nonmilitary national service in his essay, “The Moral Equivalent of War” (Wade 1997:24). James laid a philosophical foundation for government sponsored national service that has continued through to current presidential initiatives. During the depression of the 1930s, Roosevelt’s Civilian Conservations Corps provided service opportunities for well over 3 million unemployed young men by the time the program ended in 1942 (Beck 2001:4; Wade 1997:24). The activities and services provided were aimed towards the restoration of national parks in exchange for small, but much needed wage. Although providing

benefits to public property and increased employment for youth, these projects were not really aimed at pedagogy or moral tutelage.

During WWI and right after, institutions of higher education began dropping their social missions and focus more on scientific research and the production of technology. Fortunately, the social component did not disappear completely. John Dewey, a philosopher and pioneer in American education at the University of Chicago, theorized and promoted the connection between higher education and democracy (Lutz and Merz 1992:23; Wade 1997:25). According to Lutz and Merz, Dewey believed that “experience meant more than learning a trade, and education meant more than being minimally prepared to enter the workforce”(23). He was reportedly concerned that young people were becoming disconnected from their communities.

Some writers place service-learning roots more squarely in the 1960s when many students became involved in social movements, most notably, the Civil Rights and anti-war movements. These activities and causes provided a political context for professors and others to engage their students in activities and services aimed at ending and ameliorating segregation (Hyatt 2001b:8). Hyatt explains that the 1944 GI Bill had a tremendous impact on the demographics of college and university campuses by allowing, for the first time, an achievable pathway into college for working class men—many of them “ethnic” minorities. Lutz & Merz also cite the GI Bill as a root cause of the growth and development of curricula that was “more practical and more student-oriented” (1992:26). The GI Bill students opened the door for future increases in

minorities and women on college campuses, and these new undergraduate populations called for the creation of new classes, theories and disciplines in order to make the undergraduate experience “relevant” (Hyatt 2001b:9).

President John F. Kennedy established the Peace Corps in 1961 to address the needs of underdeveloped countries with the specific purpose that one day the service dedicated to foreign countries would be brought home to serve America’s needy communities (Wade 1997). Lyndon B. Johnson’s War on Poverty “brought it home” through the Volunteers in Service to America, or VISTA (Beck 2001; Wade 1997). Beginning in 1964, a vast majority of the participants were college students who received little pay but enjoyed the “ultimate reward which comes to those who serve their fellow man” (Friends of VISTA 2005). The Freedom Summer of 1964 also spawned a “volunteer” movement of mostly white college students who traveled to Mississippi to help African-Americans win the right to vote (Hyatt 2001b). Hyatt places the development of this type of politically engaged university campus and other liberal policies surrounding the War on Poverty within the context of a changing university undergraduate population spurred on by the GI Bill (8-9).

A more recent Republican initiative by President George H. Bush established the Office of National Service in the White House in 1989 “Points of Light Foundation”. In 1990 Congress passed the National and Community Service Act that created the Corporation for National and Community Service, providing funds, training, and technical assistance to states and communities to develop and expand service opportunities for all ages” (Wade 1997:24-25).

Continuing the support for enhanced service-learning opportunities, President Clinton and Congress passed the National and Community Service Trust Act of 1993, thereby establishing the Americorps, which provides college age students with volunteer opportunities in exchange for “postservice educational benefits” (Wade 1997:25) and the ability to “expand their sense of community so that they look first to themselves and to one another to improve their lives” (Corporation for National & Community Service 2005).

The movement to supplement domestic poverty programs with community service first emerged in response to the Reagan Administration’s cutbacks in social services (Countryman and Sullivan 1993). George W. Bush has continued this emphasis on volunteerism as a substitute for any kind of publicly supported programs. In his 2002 State of the Union address, President Bush called on all Americans to donate at least two years, cumulatively over their life time, of service to their community and subsequently established the USA Freedom Corps to “foster a culture of service, citizenship, and responsibility” (The White House 2002). Bush’s “hard-right variant of the neoliberal project” is unprecedented in ushering in continued neoliberal reforms--dismantling the existing social welfare system by increasing welfare work and volunteer requirements while simultaneously reducing benefits (Goode and Maskovsky 2001a:8). However, the very programs poised to support the call for responsible volunteerism like Americorps and Learn and Serve America have netted budgets cuts while faith-based initiatives receive significant gains—leaving a significant gap in the social welfare programs.

Service-Learning and Neoliberalism

Throughout the ever-growing service-learning literature, it is clear that the service-learning movement was developed in response to a perceived loss of attachment by young people to their “communities.” Enos and Morton write that service-learning is a response to “a continuing perception that the social fabric is unraveling and that the lived experience of individual person has become more privatized, compartmentalized, and fragmented over time” (2003:21). This lack of connectedness is also associated with societal problems in general, and poverty in particular. There are numerous scholars who develop this point at length (Goode and Maskovsky 2001a; Maskovsky 2001; Maskovsky and Kingfisher 2001). Here it is sufficient to sketch briefly some of the more defining elements of the current environment, in which causes of and solutions to poverty and civic apathy are linked.

Poverty and individualism. Over the past three decades, the gap between the rich and poor has grown tremendously. Economic restructuring, weakening of labor unions, and privatization have resulted in decreased wages and benefits for workers while concentrating tremendous wealth in the hands of increasingly few corporate stakeholders. This polarization is the direct result of government policies that favor the market at the expense of social spending. The belief that a “free and unfettered” market is the “most efficient means for achieving economic growth and guaranteeing social welfare” (Goode and

Maskovsky 2001a:7) is called *neo-liberalism*. It is a “new” liberalism since it builds on the work of earlier Liberalism discussed by Adam Smith and is defined as “the re-embrace of classic liberalism’s faith in the economic, social, and moral attributes of unhindered competition and unregulated markets”, the government’s role is to ensure the existence of the market—not social welfare (Goode and Maskovsky 2001a:8). Competition among firms, and among individuals, is regarded as positive. Public support of indigents is viewed as nurturing dependency.

This neo-liberal philosophy is reflected in the 1996 Personal Responsibility and Work Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), or what has come to be known as Welfare Reform. Ending Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), PRWORA set harsh time limits on financial assistance and added work, education, or volunteer requirements in order to receive benefits. The underlying goal of the reform was the installation of the market’s value and the forced exchange of labor. Assistance and social welfare benefits are no longer seen as entitlements of American citizenship. They are provided only to deserving citizens who conduct themselves morally by engaging in the market (Goode and Maskovsky 2001a; Hyatt 2001a; Maskovsky and Kingfisher 2001).

The explanatory ideology driving these neo-liberal social reforms is the belief, made colloquial by Charles Murray and others, that the state’s old citizenship-based system of social support was actually the source of dependency, indolence, depravity, and poverty and not the intended provisional respite. In his book, *Losing Ground*, Murray aims to illustrate how the social

programs since the Great Society made it “profitable for the poor to behave in the short term in ways that were destructive in the long term” and “to subsidize [their] irretrievable mistakes” (1994:9). This theory of poverty places the blame squarely on the shoulders of poor individuals themselves—on their behaviors, choices, and attitudes—while they were “trapped by the system”. Murray’s solution was to derive a merit-based and short-term social support system requiring the exchange of labor, be it through employment or volunteering that not only kept poor people from getting something for nothing, but also turned idle hands into busy hands and therefore would supposedly reduce inclinations towards drug use, criminal activity, and other prohibited behaviors.

Current discussions regarding the persistence of poverty in a land of plenty focus on individual behaviors, attitudes, and morals as the cause (or evasion) of personal financial and moral suffering. In this scenario, civic apathy is seen as an unproductive attitude that causes poverty and societal dissolution. Across a broad spectrum, liberals and conservatives, Democrats and Republicans, social scientists and politicians alike endorse social policies based on this idea that we need to alter the personal and behavioral traits of the poor. For example, women who participate in the new “welfare to work” programs are required to attend work training sessions that not only teach employment skills, but also include “dress for success” sessions that teach women how to dress appropriately for their employment. Other government-sponsored training tied to benefit receivership includes parenting classes, hygiene, credit and consumer courses, and marriage counseling.

However, in his examination of welfare reform in Florida, Wolfe stresses the need to consider this view of “rugged individualism and self-reliance” not as “natural universal conditions of human existence” but as socially constructed with “roots in our own cultural experience” (2000:4). Wolfe and other authors of a special issue on Welfare Reform argue that “as a society, we may have reached the maximum limit of individualistic self-reliance that can be endured and still have viable communities” and calls for anthropologists working directly within institutions of welfare reform to document experiences that reveal poverty as, “not so much a moral issue as it is a structural issue” (Wolfe 2000:4).

Volunteerism. In conjunction to these dependency and behavioral theories of poverty, there is a “renewed emphasis on the importance of volunteerism as a corollary of responsible citizenship for *all* Americans” (Hyatt 2001a:204). Historians of poor relief in America (Katz 2001; Katz 1990; Katz 1996; O'Connor 2001) note that the American system has always depended on and utilized volunteerism. When the government began to augment its role in poverty relief beginning in the Great Depression of the 1930s many were afraid that this government action would replace civil society (Katz 1996). Faith in volunteerism as the best and most moral answer to societal problems has returned today with a vengeance. In this “postwelfare moment” (Goode and Maskovsky 2001a:9), the objective is downsizing government through privatization and the contraction of social safety nets. Rather than the debilitating and habit forming cash-benefits of the old system, a return to volunteerism and the mythical golden age of American civil society will provide for the deserving

citizens that the market fails to encapsulate. Various national policies enacted by Presidents George H. Bush, William Clinton and George W. Bush rely heavily on volunteer labor as *the* source of human services. Beck explains, “the government and societal desire for an actively engaged citizenry that helps construct a civil society in which volunteerism and service can help support (at times replace) the state, its functions and ideological underpinnings is being funded and supported through a variety of programs” (Beck 2001:3).

George W. Bush called on American citizens to give two years, or 4000 hours over the course of their life times, of volunteer labor. He links “proper citizenship” to eligibility for a dwindling array of government assistance. Those who do not volunteer or work should not benefit. Those who are affluent, can purchase services in the newly privatized sector but should in turn, provide volunteer help to those who are less fortunate. Those less fortunate are also required to provide volunteer help to others to prove that they are worthy. Through the requirement of volunteering as a condition of entitlement and citizenship, government can be seen as moving towards neoliberal forms that “endeavor to govern more while spending less” (Merry 2001:17). In her examination of the social consequences of the privatization of a food assistance program, Curtis (1997) illustrates how the volunteer sector has been brought in as a “shadow government”, performing and serving much like government, but it is based on volunteer labor (i.e. “free”) and is increasingly inflexible in dealing with the broad spectrum of need.

There is no doubt that volunteerism and the services provided through such efforts as service-learning are much needed and indeed helpful. In fact, many agencies that provide essential services depend upon volunteer efforts to meet demand and often have a full-time paid volunteer coordinator. Service-learning partnerships between universities and local agencies can be a source of educated, coordinated and reliable volunteers supplying hours of service. Furthermore, service-learning students “learn to serve” often continue to serve after the course is over and pursue careers in the service field (Astin, et al. 2000). However, if government policies continue to provide “market incentives” to corporations and business at the expense of social welfare spending continue, there will never be enough volunteers to “mask state failings” (Curtis 1997; Curtis 1999).

Applied Anthropology and Service-Learning

American Anthropology is traced back to Franz Boas, considered the “Father of American Anthropology”. His legacy as a “radical” (Patterson 2001:45) and his critique of anthropological theories that tied race to cultural development set anthropology on a path of social critique in “the struggles for social justice and racial equality” (2001:50). In an earlier statement, Sol Tax argued “we are willing to make things happen, or to help them along, or at least to be catalysts...so we are anthropologists interested in anthropological problems, but we pursue them in a context of action” (1975:515). While there were commendable beginnings, anthropology is a discipline ripe with its own

contradictions and critiques. In response to its colonial history, a sensitivity to power and ethics developed in conjunction with a commitment by “activist anthropologists” to engage “in struggles against racist oppression, gender inequality, class disparities, and international patterns of exploitation” (Harrison 1997:2).

Beginning in the 1960’s anthropology was attacked for its “collusion with and complicity in colonial and imperialists dominations” (Harrison 1997:1). Such critiques lead to calls, from within and outside of the discipline, for changes and the pursuit of a socially and ethically responsible research agenda. This discussion has continued to the present with more and more anthropologists “returning” to an “activist” agenda. Nancy Scheper-Hughes claims, that despite the post-modernist critiques that seek to place anthropological observation as a “hostile act that reduces our ‘subjects’ to mere ‘objects’ of our discriminating, incriminating, scientific gaze”, the “answer” is “an ethnography that is personally engaged and politically committed (1995:417-419). While there is some resistance to this sentiment, a growing number of anthropologists believe in an “ethical” responsibility to not only comment on the wrongs in our society but to do something about it (Hyatt and Lyon-Callo 2003; Rodriguez 1996; Sanday and Jannowitz 2001; Wolfe 2000).

Beck cites the methodological connection between service learning and anthropology—“our discipline’s knowledge and concepts regarding field work can serve to enhance the learning that takes place when students engage in experience-based learning because we use ‘field work’ to generate new

knowledge” (2001:1). Anthropology’s emphasis on community-engagement through ethnography, analyses of power structures, and critical reflection make it an model framework for building service-learning experiences (Chin 2001). Ethnography, a core anthropological research method, like service-learning, places the anthropologist/student in a situation where they can see how they are “part of a common community of interests” from which a deeper understanding of the problem can arise (Sanday and Jannowitz 2001:66). Rodriquez claims that through such an approach, “we can identify the ambiguities that confound the precisely chiseled definitions of community; we can note the changing and heterogeneous nature of community, the ingenuity of survival strategies, the voices of history, the sources of strength” (2003:234).

Some anthropologists, responding to the critiques of postmodernism and more recently of activists and activist scholars, are using their power and privilege not just to comment on the poor or to describe the conditions of poverty but to use ethnography and other anthropological methods “for the creation of a more politically engaged poverty scholarship” (Maskovsky 2001:480). Lyon-Callo and Hyatt suggest an “ethnography from below” that makes “visible the concrete programs and policies that have been used to create a single narrative in which poverty and inequality are made to seem the natural and inevitable upshots of evolutionary processes, rather than the conscious and planned outcomes of a very deliberate set of human interventions” (2003:177-178). Anthropologically informed service learning can be an element in politically engaged pedagogical strategies by making privileged students more aware of the true causes of social

injustice while, at the same time, taking action to alleviate some of it (Chin 2001; Fox 2002; Ward and Wolfe-Wendel 2000; Wilson 2005).

Authors who write about service learning draw connections between anthropology and the goals of the service-learning program. “Direct linkage between students’ work ‘in the field’—a long-standing tradition in Anthropology—and their readings and class discussions helps them put their practical experience into a reflective framework of theory and generalizable knowledge (Harkavy, et al. 2000). It could therefore be said that anthropologists employing fieldwork and applied anthropological methodologies in their classrooms have been employing service-learning for decades. However, because these activities have been traditionally discussed using discipline specific language the unique similarities between engaged ethnography and service-learning has received little attention. With service-learning’s growing popularity among an ever increasing list of disciplines, anthropologists from a variety of sub-disciplines have adopted service-learning terminologies and agendas to better communicate with students, educators, and community partners traditional anthropological methodologies and practices (Chin 2001; Fox 2002; Huber 2004; Hyatt 2001b; Rodriguez 2003; Sanday and Jannowitz 2001).

Critical anthropology and service-learning. Without a critical framework beyond simply “helping the poor,” service-learning is limited in its scope and inevitably serves neoliberal objectives. The underlying theory of service-learning is that those in college, presumably middle to upper class students who can afford to pay the increasing costs of higher education, serve as

natural mentors and models for the poor. It is based in part on two assumptions. The first is that low-income people are poor due to deficient individual behaviors or personality traits; service-learning proposes that struggling communities only require free-labor service and opportunities to model “productive and deserving” behaviors to alleviate their inadequacies--not resources or investment. Second, it is believed that service-learning students amass educational (and moral) benefits through their attempts to “help” and “serve,” regardless of the actual service outcome. Unless examined and critiqued, this framework leaves many holes that are often filled with racial and classist stereotypes, as well as gaps where unintended consequences frequently emerge.

Due to the exorbitant cost of a college education, the majority (63%) of college students are white and middle class (Horn, et al. 2002). Class and race stereotypes and assumptions carried by these students are brought with them to the service-learning site. Green explains that, “in arguing for service-learning, we often gloss over the difficulties that students have performing service in places where they are uncomfortable, where poverty is not pretty or idealized (2001:18). Stereotypes portrayed throughout the media blame poverty, particularly that suffered by blacks, on individual character traits. Images of “the pregnant adolescent, the absent father, the dependent welfare mother (as though welfare were a drug), and the violent, drug-dealing young male” (Williams 1992:166) prevail as characters of Wilson’s (1987) “underclass”. Unless introduced to the layered and complex political–economic forces that underlie poverty, service-learning students will misinterpret the racist structures “embedded in institutions

that people of color encounter on a daily basis” as personal failings (Green 2001:19). Such misunderstandings perpetuate the current system where the only responsibility of the volunteer is an attempt to help an individual out of poverty, an obligation that requires no commitment to working for social change. When tutoring and mentoring do not alleviate suffering, failure can be placed squarely upon the shoulders of the unwilling and dependent, thus adding fuel to the flame and continued stereotyping.

“Blaming the victim” (Ryan 1971), a political socialization that attributes the causes of social problems to individuals’ inferior character traits (poor decision making skills, defunct morals, genetic dysfunction, and insufficient social capital) or cultural environment (poverty concentration, poor neighbors, and defunct role models) a possible outcome of service-learning projects according to Hollis (2004). Other scholars have identified similar effects in experiential learning agendas, claiming that “experiential learning, if bad, can become a ‘zoo phenomenon’ by reinforcing student stereotypes about the poor and disadvantaged” (Hollis 2004). Such victim blaming is a striking contrast to the purported and stated claims regarding service learning. Hollis (2004) examines two service-learning case studies and concludes that “while they may be intended to improve citizens’ civic responsibility, many of the volunteer experiences supported by federal programs like Learn and Serve are likely to have the effect of reinforcing society’s victim-blaming tendency and to exacerbate our current tendency towards political intolerance” (2004:595).

These findings indicate the importance of examining service-learning critically and rejecting the idea that all volunteer service is inherently “good”.

As Hyatt discusses at length, reliance on volunteer labor, be it service-learning or other, cannot make up for the dismantling of the government’s role in providing services for its citizens (Hyatt 2001a; Hyatt 2001b). The volunteer labor that service-learning activities provide an agency, institution, or community can indeed produce benefits to a variety of constituents. However, no amount of volunteer (“free”) labor can make up for the systematic assault on the nation’s safety net and social spending. Furthermore, goodwill and good intentions only cannot overcome drastic budget shortfalls, low employment wages, school overcrowding, inadequate housing, environmental degradation and other sources of community immiseration that our country’s minority populations continually and increasingly are being subject.

Reliance on service, volunteerism, and goodwill as strategies for poverty reduction only serves to mask inequalities, unfair market places, and other macro level forces. Theoretical foundations that situate causation in the individual are reminiscent of Oscar Lewis’ “Culture of Poverty” theory from the late 1960s. According to Barnes (2001), although largely debunked by anthropologists and other ethnographers (MacLeod 1995; Newman 1999; Stack 1974), “moral disorder” theories still persist in the urban poverty research literature (Anderson 1997; Massey and Denton 1993; Murray 1994; Ogbu 1978; Wilson 1987). While some of this literature does indeed recognize some structural and macro level forces it has essentially served to stereotype and generalize the extreme social

ills to all poor and near-poor urban residents. Furthermore, because these studies have also focused mainly on a very small subset of the African-American demographic, characterizations of the “underclass” have become associated with “race”—attributing poverty and social pathologies to all urban blacks, regardless of their actual circumstances and histories. Likewise, the pervasive use and reliance on certain poverty statistics, such as unemployment, teen pregnancy, single parent households, and crime rates, mask other potential indicators that would more fully explain the inner-city experience (Barnes 2001:45).

This literature has greatly influenced social policy and has had a heavy hand in the development of the service-learning agenda. The dismantling of basic social safety nets through Welfare Reform and concurrent expectation that mentorship in the form of service-learning will fill the need gap is no coincidence. Harsh penalties and extreme time limits, or what is now called Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF) is accepted as appropriate if the people receiving the benefits are seen as lazy, immoral, irresponsible, black single teen mothers who really just need to be taught how to want to not be impoverished. Service-learning projects that bring white, aspiring, responsible middle class students in contact with the concentrated poor can therefore mentor poor children on how to act, speak, dress, work, and consume like the non-poor and will therefore essentially be better citizens (Goode and Maskovsky 2001a; Greenbaum 2002; Hyatt 2001b).

Service-Learning Ethics or the “Rules of Engagement”

According to Keene and Colligan, there is no substantial service-learning literature on the “ethics of entry or engagement” outside of the Institutional Review Board at the university (2004:9). Since there is no standardized format or framework nor an evaluation methodology for service-learning it is oftentimes left up to the individual faculty member and agency supervisor to negotiate the terms of the service-learning project.

By design, service-learning relationships are relatively short-term and temporary. Projects are performed in locations of need and carried out with very little resources outside of volunteer labor hours. The lack of verifiable and reliable service-learning forms leaves large room for choosing inadequate and inappropriate service-learning models. These conditions impose huge barriers that make it extremely difficult for service learning projects to meet the philanthropic goal of “improving the lives of people in need”. For example, in a review of volunteer tutoring programs, Wasik (1998) points out that there exists few guidelines for choosing or implementing volunteer tutoring programs and inconsistent conclusions regarding their effectiveness. An earlier review of tutoring programs indicated that the best student outcomes associated with volunteer tutoring programs resulted from one-on-one sessions with trained teacher or paraprofessional tutors (Wasik and Slavin 1993).

These findings reveal that student benefits as a result of volunteer tutoring are not automatic and it uncovers an additional hidden contradiction in the service-learning program. Service-learning activities are specifically aimed to provide a beneficial “service” to the recipients through an “experiential activity...not necessarily skill-based” (Bringle and Hatcher 1996). However there appears no clear evidence that the stated benefits actually result from the service-learning activities. Abundant literature exists on the benefits of service-learning (Bringle and Hatcher 1996; Eyler, et al. 1997; Rockwell 2001; Roschelle, et al. 2000), but the returns—enhanced citizenship skills, improved academic performance, optimistic beliefs in volunteering, developed commitments to social justice, etc—are largely enjoyed by the service-learning student, not the stated object of the service—the community.

Service-learning is a popular teaching and social service strategy that is likely to enjoy increasing support and adherents. However, as people interested in educating, serving, and supporting our students and communities we have to ask, “What is service-learning really? Who is service-learning for and who not? What agendas are furthered by the service-learning project?” How can we enhance service-learning to actually meet its stated goals?” These questions and others can be answered with critical analysis rather than blind adherence to and faith in the altruistic and state supported third way.

Chapter 3: Methods

Over the course of anthropology's development, anthropologists have possessed vacillating devotion to one methodology over another and have embraced epistemological blends of positivism and humanism (Bernard 1994). Anthropologists also utilize qualitative and quantitative methodologies and are most often associated with ethnography. Ethnography, is a research process that places the ethnographer as the primary tool of data collection and emphasizes what people do and their explanations of why they do what they do (LeCompte and Schensul 1999). Ethnography is a systematic course of study that incorporates interviews, participant-observation, sampling, archival, and other mixed methods.

My research and internship at the Sulphur Springs Recreation Center and community primarily utilized participant-observation. Participant-observation is a qualitative and interpretive method that "refers to a process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the research setting" (Schensul, et al. 1999:91). As a participant-observer I did not simply observe the daily routines and exceptional moments at the Rec Center—I participated in activities and was charged with continuing and enforcing particular aspects of the institution's customary schedule. Such endeavors afforded an intimate knowledge of the social processes and expectations that cannot be developed through observation alone. Participant-

observation allows for the “testing” of knowledge through the practice of social behaviors—if I held incorrect assumptions they would reveal themselves in a socially awkward moment or an embarrassing faux pas. Appropriate knowledge lead to deeper personal connections and increased institutional responsibilities.

Participant-observation is not as simple, or easy, as it first appears.

Personal and social characteristics such as appearance, gender, race, dress, age, language, class, etc. can pose obstacles or barriers to the acceptance of the researcher (Bernard 1994; Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte 1999).

Oftentimes, commencing participant-observation can be difficult at best and disruptive at worst. “Natives”, the research population, and the community can be guarded against a newcomer that seemingly has no apparent reason for being around and asking “stupid” questions. How does an anthropologist gain entrée into a community? How does she legitimate her presence while easing the research subjects’ wariness? How can you be sure that you, as a researcher, is observing and not only participating?

Numerous books have been written on the subject of anthropological ethnographic methodology (Agar 1996; Bernard 1994; Schensul, Schensul and LeCompte 1999; Van Willigen 1993). However, no class or book will ever prepare the ethnographic researcher enough; experience in the field is the best teacher. My position as a volunteer tutor provided an exceptional and unique position to engage participant-observation at the Rec Center and in the Sulphur Springs community. As a tutor I was immediately thrust into the daily routine and was quickly able to gain an instant rapport with the students because I was there

to “help” them with their homework. Even though I was initially viewed with skepticism, staff and parents eventually accepted my participation as a white female because I was there as a tutor, not as a prying social worker or selfish researcher.

As a volunteer tutor, I participated in most of the staff duties—picking the children up from the local elementary school; walking them to the Rec Center; signing-in the children; instructing students in homework assignments; supervised playground and sports activities; helped prepare and distribute snacks; signed students out and was even introduced to parents. Each of these activities provided a new sphere of inquiry and avenue for investigating the many lived realities of Sulphur Springs’ residents. I came into contact with teachers, crossing-guards, neighbors, coaches, police officers, and others that provided layered ethnographic details in addition to my personal observations.

After some weeks, I gained the respect of staff and began to be included in porch talks and picnic table gatherings. At first, those places, where staff, students, and some parents congregated appeared off-limits. There was often loud conversation and laughing. Being that there was limited seating I felt out of place just sitting down and butting into their conversation. As the “professional stranger” (Agar 1996) I was highly cognizant of my position as an outsider and did not want to jeopardize my position. One day, after being called over to the table to join the conversation I realized that the staff was as interested in my motives as I was of theirs. Although I had introduced myself and explained my research goals at the outset, it required recurrent discussions to fully and

convincingly explain my purpose for being at the Rec. I did not think it ethical to masquerade only as an altruistic volunteer—I was an applied anthropologist investigating the effects of a locally implemented national policy. Once I was able to satisfactorily explain my perspective and understanding of the social processes that effected places like Sulphur Springs a wellspring of dialogue with the Rec staff followed. Some of the staff knew family or friends that were relocated under the HOPE VI program and were concerned regarding the difficulties that they endured during the process. Some expressed hopefulness in the project but acknowledged the problems that their students faced and the ones they managed as Rec center staff. The insights I gained through these conversations could not have come from anywhere else. Likewise, my insights and familiarity with the policy and its effects on other communities helped to solidify and bolster the staff's assessment of my motives.

In addition to my regular days of tutoring, I attended and staffed neighborhood ceremonies, community events, and youth programming days that took place at the Rec later in the evenings and on weekends. Other neighborhood events away from the Rec, fish-fry's, community festivals, and Sunday Brunch, helped to establish relationships apart from the Rec and youth.

Staff knowledge of my research goals played a key role in helping to identify and connect with important neighborhood entities. For instance, the Sulphur Springs Action League, the neighborhood's civic association, held their monthly membership meetings at the Rec. Since a goal of the HOPE VI study was to understand the range of neighborhood experiences from the vantage of

public housing relocatees and incumbents, the SSAL meetings provided a forum to meet community residents. While the SSAL had been meeting at the Rec for years there was a strained and fragile relationship between the group and the Rec. Coach Wesely suggested that I attend the meetings as a Rec representative and work towards creating a renewed partnership. During times of transition, when students vacated the Rec building for SSAL's use, there were obvious tensions between the older, white home owning SSAL members and the mostly black, poor, youth. As I listened and engaged members in conversation it was clear that many of the members held an unmistakable racist and classist apprehension of the Rec youth. Residents knew (or assumed) that people from the projects had recently begun to relocate to the neighborhood and were highly cautious of their new neighbors. Far fewer members were genuinely concerned for the children's well being, but they worked to garner resources for the youth. Membership in the SSAL provided additional socialization activities within the Sulphur Springs community but also, and more interestingly, it allowed for an enhanced articulation of the community's social organization.

Eventually, I became a common feature at the Rec. and in the community. Participant-observation activities had forced me to wear many different hats and play many different roles—always trying to be conscious of my role and duties as a researcher. Being that I was a representative of the University of South Florida, I was seen as someone with authority, and was often asked to provide input regarding Rec functions and activities. Primarily, I was seen as a volunteer, someone to be accepted and appreciated because I was donating my time for a

worthy cause. My motives or opinions were not questioned. I was no longer scrutinized. Continued commitment to the community portrayed legitimacy I might not have gained as observer. Participation in neighborhood activities, coupled by my understanding and willingness to discuss the effects of policies and other macrolevel processes on the community led to the perception that I was a partner in the struggle to make Sulphur Springs a better place.

Chapter 4: Context

I first became interested in the community of Sulphur Springs as an outgrowth of research interest in evaluating the effects of implementing HOPE VI, a national program that allowed local housing authorities to demolish existing public housing communities and replace them with mixed-income developments. The Tampa Housing Authority was awarded a HOPE VI award of \$32.5 million in 1997 to redevelop two public housing complexes, College Hill Homes and Ponce de Leon Courts. Part of federally funded slum clearance, Ponce de Leon was built in 1940 for “white Latin Americans”. In 1943, the Housing Authority announced that College Hill would be available for “black” residents although, after opening many units were rented out to white war workers (Kerstein 2001:97).

Beginning in 1999, College Hill and Ponce de Leon residents began relocating to new neighborhoods—either into other public housing complexes or into private rentals using Section 8 housing subsidy vouchers. In the first wave of relocations, over 70 families moved to the Sulphur Springs—a historic, but troubled community. In the summer of 2000, a group of applied anthropologists at the University of South Florida began researching the individual and community effects of such a mass relocation of nearly 3000 very low-income people.

Translating Service-Learning into Engaged Ethnography

Abundant scholarship exists documenting the increased developmental risks for children as a result of the neighborhood's local conditions, particularly the effects of low-income communities (Briggs 1998; Brooks-Gunn, et al. 1997; Massey and Denton 1993). This literature focuses on individual responses to concentrated poverty rather than the causes of poverty concentration (Goetz 2000). It often generalizes entire "ghetto" communities with little to no recognition of the diversity of family structures and incomes or the variation in children's behavioral responses to the selected indicators (Moore 2003). These scholars virtually ignore the beneficial and supportive ties that exist between family and friends in poor communities—providing essential supports and resources (Greenbaum 2001; Greenbaum 2002). However, there is little debate that children living in poverty suffer unduly.

The community conditions of Sulphur Springs appear to pose excessive burden of risk for the neighborhoods' children. Research in Sulphur Springs has revealed a growing and still unmet need for child and youth services. The 2000 Census reported that just under 41% (2,578) of the total population (6,308) were under 18 years of age; an increase from 1990 where 35% (2,208) of the total population (6,223) were under 18. The local neighborhood school, Sulphur Springs Elementary is one of Florida's lowest scoring FCAT schools. Since the inception of No Child Left Behind, it has failed to make "adequate yearly

progress”. Almost all (96%) of the students are minorities and only slightly less (93%) qualifies for free or reduced lunch (Florida Department of Education 2005). The neighborhood has been repeatedly characterized as a "drug hole" in the local media and is the object of frequent reports of crime and violence. Very young children often play in the streets, supervised only by older siblings while teenagers gather on corners to socialize. Many parents say they are too scared to let their children out of the house and confess to confining children indoors.

As Wesley Maiyo, a youth advocate and Recreation Center site coordinator, said, “Sulphur Springs is the toughest neighborhood. People live hard here and they don’t let anybody in”. Its “bad” reputation is perpetuated in the media, crime reports, and popular lore. As researchers and outsiders, how were we to gain access to this community? Our first move was to make contact with community activists—Wesley Maiyo and Mrs. Dorothy Harmon, a long time Tampa resident and teacher. Based on their input, a formal internship position was developed at the neighborhood recreation center. This collaboratively designed position provided immediate purpose and utility for our research goals as well as providing a small space to engage the community.

The Community of Sulphur Springs

My service-learning activities were focused in a low-income urban neighborhood just south of the University of South Florida. The neighborhood has a long history in Tampa and has been the site of many changes, typical of residential areas in the urban south (Feldman and Hathaway 2002). “The

Springs”, as it is referred to by the residents of Sulphur Springs, is a historic neighborhood with roots back to the early 1900s when the natural mineral springs were developed as one of Florida's first tourist attractions. In the 1920's Josiah Richardson built vacation rental homes and a grand arcade providing goods and services to an increasing number of seasonal tourists. The area's success was tempered by the Depression years and nearly ruined when the flood of 1933 destroyed many of the facilities. A brief revival occurred during and right after World War II, when military personnel found cheap, affordable housing in the neighborhood.

Over the years, Sulphur Springs experienced a decline as long-time residents passed away, wealthier neighbors left the inner-city for the suburbs, and businesses relocated or went bankrupt. Beginning in the late 1970s, a City of Tampa sponsored revitalization program targeted the area's aging housing stock, most of which had been shoddily built as seasonal tourist accommodations. As part of the revitalization plan, dilapidated structures were demolished and homeowners were relocated within the Springs to newly constructed houses. Concrete-block duplexes were then built on the newly vacated lots. Many long-term residents claim that these duplexes caused the economic and social decline of their neighborhood. One such resident said, referring to a block of duplexes littered with trash, sofas, mattresses and abandoned cars:

This is terrible. This is absolutely terrible. This is what, Section 8, and absent landlords have done to Sulphur Springs. This is it! And its all worse on the other side of

Waters. I don't even come on this side of the road. I NEVER come over here because it's SO BAD. I hear everyone say how bad it is over here.

Sulphur Springs is a neighborhood of contradictions. As a geographic location it offers convenience—it is seconds from the interstate, minutes from downtown, and within a few miles of the university campus. The beautiful Hillsborough River, the natural springs, and grand old oak trees are environmental treasures in an urban landscape. Historical structures such as the 240-foot Sulphur Springs water tower, built in 1927 by Josiah Richardson to provide running water to tourists, and the art deco style Springs Theater, built in the early 1940s, are two of the City's few remaining historical landmarks. However, day-to-day existence in the Springs can be challenging. Speeding cars and commercial vehicles are a big problem on the winding roads of the neighborhood. Vacant lots strewn with trash from illegal dumping, quite often done by people and businesses from outside of neighborhood, are not only eyesores but serve as affirmation of the area's reputation and stigma. Although the Hillsborough River and the springs are desirable natural amenities, toxic runoff from local and not-so-local industrial and chemical businesses pollute the waters, and there are very few public access sites for neighborhood residents.

Numerous pawnshops, used furniture stores, car repair garages, small independent businesses and, most recently, a few new social service agencies, line Nebraska Avenue, the main north south thoroughfare. Signs advertising realtors who will “buy your ugly home” litter the landscape. There are no grocery stores, except small “mom and pop” markets and the “Stop and Shop”

convenience store, or what has been sarcastically called the “Stop and Get Shot”. Although there are more than a dozen houses of worship, no banks or financial services are locally available adding additional hardships and hazards (Williams 2001). The greyhound racetrack, a popular spot, especially on the weekends, with its sprawling concrete parking lot occupies the two full blocks between Nebraska on the east and the interstate on the west. A recently constructed community pool, replacing use of the now polluted springs, is crammed between the parking lot and Hillsborough River.

Aesthetically, the picture of Sulphur Springs may seem undesirable; however, there is quaintness about the area that engenders feelings of pride and deep affinity. Reminiscing about earlier days, another long-time resident walked to the end of Mulberry Drive and said:

Just look down this street. Look at the trees...and its just nice and shady and older houses. You know its just when you get down here closer to the trestle, well the trestle's not here anymore but it used to be a metal bridge to get over, over the River. And it was just a little wooden bridge that we used to go across. We used to run across it because when you walk on it, it would, the boards would make noise, even when you drove across it the boards would make noise and it was just a fun, fun bridge and they tore it down. But look how pretty this is.

Today, what was once a predominantly white, working-class community is now a culturally, racially, politically, and economically mixed neighborhood. Census data over the past thirty years indicate increased racial transition and poverty in the area. The overall population of the area stayed relatively stable

over the past decade (6,223 in 1990 and 6,308 in 2000), but racial percentages changed considerably (1990: white 54%, black 42%; 2000: white 32%, black 58%). The 2000 median household income for the tract, \$21,700, was significantly lower than that of the county, \$40,663, and is one of Tampa's poorest census tracts, with 40.2% of the families below poverty; and only 34.2% of the population has attained a high school diploma or equivalent. This situation is further complicated by the recent in-migration of poor, mostly black households who have been relocated from public housing as a result of the HOPE VI process (the 2000 Census does not reflect the relocations since the data was collected before the dislocations).

Although seemingly resource poor, Sulphur Springs contains very active civic institutions. The Sulphur Springs Action League (SSAL), the neighborhood association, was first established in the fall of 1986 when a long time resident, Linda Hope, moved back to the neighborhood and was dismayed at what had happened to her old neighborhood. Hope sparked a neighborhood campaign that eventually led to zoning changes, empowering the neighborhood to force the conversion of duplexes to single-family residential houses if left vacant for six months. This was a significant event for the community of Sulphur Springs, gaining political recognition and the ability to enforce community standards on absentee landlords. Almost two decades later, the SSAL is still active and through laborious negotiations and petitions, is on the verge of delivering a much needed Hillsborough Public Library Branch for the neighborhood.

Another popular neighborhood institution is the City of Tampa Recreation Center. The “Rec” as it is affectionately called by the many neighborhood youth, serves the neighborhood with a variety of programs for youth, adults and seniors. Other community groups such as the Hillsborough Planning Commission, Hillsborough County School System, an African Drumming class, and other social services utilize the space throughout the year. The “Rec” is a foundation of the neighborhood not just as a physical site but one that reaches back into the memories of the many seniors that have grown up in the area. Ethyl, an older woman who has lived in Sulphur Springs since she was a little girl, over 55 years, remembers hearing her dad call her home from the corner a few streets away as she played on the basketball court. The fact that the North Tampa Recreation Center was changed to the George A. Bartholomew Center, named after the first VP of the SSAL, bears witness to the importance of the connection between the Center space and the neighborhood.

Service-Learning as Ethnography

Fall 2000. In the fall of 2000, I began research in Sulphur Springs as part of Dr. Greenbaum’s Community Development course, which included a service-learning component. In conjunction to course reading material, I explored the issues related to anthropological community development through service as a tutor at the neighborhood recreation center. As former public housing residents relocated to the neighborhood, I wanted to know what the effects these relocations would have on the relocatees, the incumbent residents, and on the

neighborhood institutions. Wesley Maiyo, Director of the North Tampa Recreation Center, had recently asked for volunteer tutoring help and Greenbaum suggested that it would be a good place to begin community research.

I met with the director, Wesley Maiyo, shortly after to learn about the community, recreation center and volunteer activities. After the first meeting, Wesley went out of town to visit his family in Africa, leaving either no one capable, knowledgeable, or interested in introducing me to the youth students, other staff, or volunteer work. My first visit without Wesley was one of my most awkward moments as an anthropologist. I stood around for about an hour. None of the staff introduced themselves or even asked me what I was doing there. I was basically ignored or worse—not seen. I assumed that Wesley had not told anyone about my volunteering. I mistakenly assumed that I would be welcomed with open arms.

I did not see any other volunteers, only children, teenagers, and staff—easily identified by their maroon uniform shirts. No parents or other adults were there. I later learned that the ambivalence to my presence was not a result of my personality or behavior, nor was it out of rudeness or indifference. Basically, there was no official volunteer coordinator and the staff and youth were not expecting a volunteer—there weren't usually any. In the past, volunteers were part of a church group or other organization that had specific plans to accomplish or projects to implement. They were more or less self-contained. Individuals, especially white, middle-class looking people stopped by the Rec all the time to

put on a demonstration project or to use the facility for this or other meeting. The staff assumed that I was there for such a purpose and preferred not to be approached (unfortunately, there had been strained relations between community members and the Rec center staff and youth as I would come to find out).

As a result of this initial failed attempt to engage volunteering at the Center, Wesley and I worked together to establish an official role at the Rec. I became a “tutoring volunteer”. After walking over with Coach Wayne to pick up the students from Sulphur Springs Elementary, I was introduced to the staff and the youth participants as a “very special student from USF who was giving up personal time and energy to be here to help you kids with your homework.” I was to be respected and listened to. If I had problems there would be trouble just like with any other staff or coach. I was asked to address the crowd of students and staff. Caught off guard and embarrassed, I thanked everyone for allowing me the opportunity and told them that I was looking forward to learning from the students as much as I was looking forward to helping them with their homework. I felt silly to think that I was special and that I was “giving up” time. At first, I thought, “I’m the one getting a grade for this”. I also did not want anyone to expect too much of me or of my tutoring abilities. That introduction initiated my official role as a volunteer and I was immediately transferred to a different status among the staff and students. What that status was exactly was yet to be negotiated.

Spring 2001. While I was going through an awkward process of becoming a recognized volunteer at the Center I also became an official member of the

HOPE VI research group. My interest and activities in Sulphur Springs were formally incorporated into the research plan. As I learned more and more about Sulphur Springs I also learned more about other areas of Tampa that were impacted through the implementation of HOPE VI. I attended meetings of the Homeless Coalition, Enterprise Zone, Tampa Housing Authority and other community meetings and make contacts there.

Although the initial service-learning requirement was completed, I continued my tutoring activities at the Rec and decided that I could commit at least one day a week on a regular and continuing basis for tutoring. However, with over seventy students, it quickly became apparent that it was very difficult, if not impossible, to do any real tutoring. In the beginning, I visited table after table helping students with their homework sheets while introducing myself. It was hard work getting to know all of the students. It seemed that many did not have respect for me evidenced by their refusal to listen to my requests and their obvious disregard for my reprimands. But who could blame them? Who was I? I had not proven myself yet and considering their unfamiliarity with volunteers we were all in uncharted territory.

Some were surprised when I returned week after week. One little boy, Dante, asked, "Why do you keep coming here?" I explained to him that I was a volunteer and that I had committed to visiting and helping him and other students with their homework once a week. He showed his appreciation by flashing a smile and giving me a big hug. Then he dug into his book bag to retrieve his crumbled homework sheet and we sat down together.

Time and practice proved, that I, as an inexperienced volunteer tutor, was not at all prepared or qualified to provide tutoring services to many of the children. Some students could not yet write the alphabet and numbers. Some students were obviously below their actual grade level and had consistent and serious difficulties in comprehending homework assignments. Other students attempted to work through learning barriers that I was untrained and unqualified to address. Other problems resulted from the definite lack of resources in terms of pencils, paper, homework materials, and supplemental aids. The ratio, one tutor to seventy plus students resulted in effective tutoring sessions. Short attention spans due to sugar rushes, insufficient nutrition, or lack of recreation time created additional barriers to successful learning. Things taken for granted at most tutoring sites, like pencils and working sharpeners, were not only absent but would often be the source of fighting and bickering among the students.

Sometimes pencils and paper were provided by the Rec and it would be distributed as widely as possible. Many times I passed out pencils and paper that I had purchased myself, which was not an easy charge on a graduate student's budget. Regardless, there was never enough and I used the shortage as an opportunity to discuss and practice sharing. It often seemed that it was the same scenario for everything from school supplies, to arts and crafts, to computers, to books, to sports equipment. After weeks of this, it became clear that homework and other enrichment activities simply could not be the focus of my service-learning activities—the lack of resources and materials were major obstacles in addition to my lack of training.

Many children claimed not to have homework—and often they were legitimate. Teachers did not always assign homework. A commonly told story involved an unprepared substitute teacher and a lax school day. This was hard for me to believe, but I would check with other students in the same class and heard the same story. I learned that substitutes were reason enough not to have homework. Disappointingly, students and staff also blamed the lack of homework on the school's inability to produce enough homework sheet copies to send home with all the students. Other times, Rec staff was busy with other more pressing concerns to look for the tattered and used homework books supplied by the City of Tampa. Even when the books were located, the Rec Center copy machine would be out of toner or inflicted with some other malfunction. If homework sheets were available, they were often difficult to decipher and were, in my opinion, inane. I can remember homework ditto sheets that were incorrect or were so hard to decipher that I, a graduate student, could not determine how to proceed. They were entirely disconnected to the realities and circumstances of these children's lives. The extreme absence of appropriate supplies produced a deep disinterest on the part of students, teachers, Rec center staff, parents and myself in tutoring and homework activities and was thus became a major hurdle to achieving the service goals.

Since there were no materials available to engage them in academic work, the students often resorted to running around, playing, misbehaving, fighting, yelling, sleeping; all the things children do after a long day at school when there is not enough supervision and nothing interesting to capture their energies.

Food, or the lack of, was an additional hurdle and distraction. The children were hungry. Some were lethargic and distracted easily. Others begged for money for the vending machine, which was “officially” off-limits. However, many children often purchased sugary snacks or salty chips. Others bought snacks before coming to the Rec or brought snacks from home. Some walked down the street to the “Candy Lady’s” house for “candy, chicken or jewelry”. Although the children needed these calories and energy, it was empty nourishment and caused the students to be overly hyperactive and distracted.

In spite of these growing pains and hurdles, as the weeks went by, the children became used to my presence and the idea that we would attempt homework. Some students would see me pull up in my car and they would come running over yelling, “Miss Wendy!” One would be hugging me, another grabbing for my sunglasses, and there was always someone asking me for spare change. Students would ask me to play with them. Groups of girls would gather around and “do” my hair. Others would tell me about their family and ask about mine. Some students even began introducing me to their parents. These were all opportunities to engage the children and parents about what was going on in their lives and know their thoughts on such things as the weather, sports, gossip, and public policies.

At first, this scenario was in contrast to my relationship with the staff. While the children gravitated towards me the staff established more and more distance. After a few weeks I was basically left on my own to watch, tutor, control, praise, teach, and reprimand more than seventy students. Other staff

would supervise other grade levels, play sports, or eat chicken and gossip about other staff and students on the front stoop. I felt that my volunteerism was being taken for granted. I was concerned about this detachment. There were ethical issues, related more to volunteer work among children than to research and IRB guidelines. I still had not filled out any paperwork certifying that I was who I said I was, that I was not a criminal, or worst of all a child molester, but that was never established. I was accepted solely on the basis of my willingness to be a service-learning volunteer in that community. Furthermore, I had absolutely no childcare or tutoring skills beyond a few baby-sitting jobs from when I was twelve. I simply did not have the skills to watch this many children and never claimed to have that experience, especially with children this young in age. I do not mean to suggest that all of the staff were slacking off all the time, but there were several times when I was completely overwhelmed and needed help only to see a group of staff, congregating on the front porch. I couldn't help but assume they were just hanging out and taking a break. The longer I continued at the center, the more frustrated and exhausted I became.

After some time, I empathized and realized that the staff wasn't lazy or mean but overworked and run ragged. It also became evident that what I assumed was avoidance was result of an absence of official or socially established guidelines dealing with a volunteer tutor. The staff had their own opinions of what I was doing there, what I could do there, and how I was to do it. There were no rules for engagement.

I approached Wesley to discuss the shocking lack of resources. The Rec's building and grounds bore telltale signs of an inner-city center, unsightly from neglect. The outside was coated in jarring pink pastel paint leftover from some other city project with metal screens over the few tiny windows. The playground was littered and bare of landscaping except two trees with carvings and tired limbs. The playground pavilion housed a wooden picnic table with broken benches—that was often overturned but kept in place by a steel chain. Metal garbage cans were bent and kicked in. The basketball court markings were faded with no nets in the hoop. Glass and trash littered the parking lot just the outside. Inside the walls were bare because City rules dictated that tape and other adhesives ruined the walls. The lone pool table was ripped with tip less cue sticks. Likewise, the community workout equipment was torn with missing pieces. The TV/VCR worked if you pushed the right buttons in the right combination. There were few, old, anachronistic books on the “library” shelves—often with torn and missing pages. As an “Enrichment Center,” it was failing to provide the resources and activities promoted and promised by the City's Parks and Recreation Department.

Wesley and I had many conversations about the goals and ideas he had for improving the center. Wesley was familiar with Sulphur Springs and knew about the challenges on the street, in the schools, and at home that his students faced. He knew that these students were poor. He knew that their grandmothers or other relatives were raising many. Many of who worked more than one full-time job just to make the bare ends meet.

Most people who work or live in Sulphur Springs have the same opinion about the neighborhood. I have heard that in the past it was a wonderful place. It was near the river, the springs, shopping, downtown, churches, supermarkets, etc. But that was in the past. Now, parents are scared to let their children out of the house. One Sulphur Springs parent said, "I don't even let them out to play half the time. If they go out the door, I'm there. I have to watch them." Another parent said about the neighborhood, "You got some kids over here that fights and you, basically, you got to walk with your kids, cause, I mean there is a lot of trouble here." Although the Rec is a valuable and much needed community institution, the neighborhood dangers often prevent parents, especially those without cars, from allowing their children to visit. When asked why her child no longer went to the Center, one mother said, "I used to let them go up there. But now that we're far, I don't let them go up there as often. Yeah, cause, I mean, if I let them go, I don't know what will happen or walking on Waters. Anything can happen!"

Other concerns mirror the common stereotypes about urban, poor, black neighborhoods. Talking to a white, thirty-something church activist and Sulphur Springs resident about what it is like to grow up in Sulphur Springs, she said, "What kind of life can you expect for a child who is growing up with a 14 or 15 year old mother who didn't finish high school herself?" She went on to say:

You go over to drop off their kids or go talk to a mom. Usually when we find out things like that, when we go over to talk to the mom about their kids acting wild at the church. We go to tell them. And then you come in and you're, like the mom is like, 'What?' You know the

door is wide open and the kids are like, and they don't even care. You're like, 'What a waste of my time!' Mom didn't even care that I went and told. You know. The kids are like, "I told you she wasn't going to care." You know and you smell pot and you see it, you know, and smoke and stuff.

Other stereotypes identify the youth, especially teenage boys, as the sole cause for the neighborhood's decline. Members of the Sulphur Springs Action League often claim that "boys on bikes" are drug dealers and car thieves. Boys on bikes, especially black boys on bikes, are feared by the elderly, both black and white, who are mostly middle class. There is no recognition that these boys have no transportation except for their bikes and that while, yes some drug dealers do use bikes, others are innocently riding through the neighborhood on their way home, to a friend's house, or up to the park.

Building a Service-Learning Model

Wesley was also knowledgeable about the HOPE VI program. He spoke out against the HOPE VI plan at a Jacksonville meeting. A long time friend of his owned a business in the area around College Hill and Ponce de Leon. According to the HOPE VI plans there was to be no compensation for the local business that lost their clientele base through the mass relocation of housing project residents. He was also keenly aware of the influx of new youth participants at the Rec. and in the neighborhood. He attributed a lot of the new families to the HOPE VI relocations. This recognition was in conjunction with the knowledge that Sulphur Springs is a transitory place where families find temporary housing

for a time before they move on to the next affordable housing location—sometimes leaving for good but other times returning just months or years later.

Wesley knew of incidences where children were sent to live with family elsewhere in the city and as far away as Kansas or California, due to HOPE VI. Furthermore, he was rightly frustrated with the lack of concern and attention the City and other government agencies showed Sulphur Springs. He desired more coordination between USF and the neighborhood. Since Mr. Maiyo worked at USF on the weekends he was aware of the work students and researchers were doing in Tampa neighborhoods.

We began to meet and work on setting out his goals as well as develop new possibilities. As I showed continued interest and dedication to the site and the people of the recreation center Wesley introduced me to more and more people, visiting staff, parents, and other service programmers. I started going to SSAL meetings on behalf of the Center--talking with members, defending the children of the center, and promoting the Rec center's agenda. Above all, volunteers were needed. I thought it would be a good idea to get others from the university to join me. Wesley expressed concern over the use and reliance on volunteers, citing previous experiences where volunteers came to the center for a week to a month, promising more than they could give. He had seen children develop deep, intense, emotional bonds with volunteers just to be hurt and disappointed when volunteers fulfilled their obligations, and promised to return but never did so. He thought that through the children's life position, constantly being exposed to agency after agency, volunteer after volunteer. As they grew

older, moving through the system of disconnected services, through one pair of short-term, community service fulfilling volunteer hands to the next, to the burned out service provider who has surrendered (acquiesced) to the status quo, that the children become frigid and reluctant to accept new faces and volunteers.

Although he recognized that the center, staff, youth, and community desperately needed an influx of volunteers (because there was not enough funds to pay or hire additional trained staff) he wanted dedicated, educated, and energetic volunteers.

Summer 2001. During the summer internship, I continued working and going to the recreation center at least twice a week. I would tutor, play, discipline, and joke with the students. The composition of the youth participants changed--students who usually came to the recreation during the school year did not participate in the summer program for a variety of reasons—too costly, not in the area, didn't have transportation, went to a different summer program, or stayed at home with other siblings or alone. New students came to the program, many of whom attended the local elementary school. The children gave a variety of reasons that they did not attend the school year after school program—the program was too expensive; they were enrolled in after programs at their school; during the school year, parents arrived home soon after children returned from school but during the summer they were reluctant to leave their children alone for an entire day; fieldtrips and activities were a huge draw; or they were new in the area and this was their first time at the recreation center.

Knowing that there were no funds to hire paid staff, I worked on assembling a mechanism that would bring reliable volunteers to the Rec. Coach Wesley had some reservations regarding the use of volunteers due to past difficulties. Coordinating volunteers requires extra staff attention and can easily turn into a hindrance rather than help. He also expressed concern over the children's willingness to accept outsiders. In his opinion, he had seen many children build emotional walls of defense against the inevitable ending of "volunteer" relationships—persistent barriers encumbering the development of future trusting relationships.

With this understanding I worked with Dr. Janna Jones from USF's Department of Interdisciplinary Studies to developing a Service-Learning course that would introduce USF students to the Center. As part of Jones' commitment to the benefits of service-learning, she had developed an undergraduate service-learning course in the spring of 2001 based at the YMCA in Tampa Heights. Hearing of our HOPE VI research in Sulphur Springs, Jones wanted to conduct a service-learning course at the Rec. In the spring of 2001, Dr. Jones and I were granted funds from USF's University Community Initiative Grant Program to fund a service-learning course based on my previous internship and research.

Over the summer, I continued my research based service and became familiar with students, parents, staff, community members, government representatives, service providers, and more. The Rec was a location where a variety of services, interests, persons, and agendas intersected and sometimes collided. I did notice that the use of the recreation center was segregated

depending upon the time of day. In the mornings, especially during the school year, there were virtually no students. The only students there during the school year were students enrolled in the ATOSS program—a program that allowed suspended students the chance to attend a “special class” where they could maintain their attendance. Otherwise, without this opportunity, students who amassed too many absences would automatically be held back and forced to repeat a grade regardless of their grades. A senior citizen group would use the space to hold meetings and their weekly bingo game. I sat in a few times to see about anywhere from ½ dozen to 15 or more elderly people enjoy conversation, light snacks, and games. They were predominantly white, working class residents over the age of 70. I do remember one or two black elderly. Most of these residents had lived in the neighborhood for decades. Some grew up in the area and had never really lived elsewhere. In the afternoons, the children would come from the elementary school, middle school, and later in the afternoon the high school. Being that the recreation center was an open facility and a community resource, students not enrolled in the after school program could still use the grounds, most often the playground and the basketball courts. They were not provided homework help, movies, snacks, or other recreation such as team sports or step classes.

Fall 2001. Beginning in the fall of 2001, Dr. Jones and I spent hours preparing for the service-learning course. Designing a service-learning curriculum is labor intensive, requiring particular care in selecting course materials that will speak to and connect students with the real-world situations

that they will encounter. Frequent communication with Rec staff helped to keep key stakeholders aware of course developments and it helped to insure their participation in designing the purpose and goals of the “service” project. Rec staff input is a key requirement in developing a service project thereby maximizing the potential for success.

Spring 2002. Dr. Jones and I co-taught ISS 3010, An Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies in the spring semester of 2002. Although the course is required for all Interdisciplinary Studies majors, this class was unique in that it was the only service-learning option for this requirement. On the first day of class, the concept of service-learning was discussed. A few students immediately dropped the course, but most decided to stay enrolled. The objective of the course was to introduce students to the investigation of structures of inequality through traditional classroom activities, such as reading, writing, discussions, films, etc., and participation in activities in a local neighborhood affected by those structures.

The class met for three hours once a week, providing a convenient block of time to discuss theoretical issues and engage in service. The first six weeks were spent introducing social science concepts, teaching the value of qualitative research, and building sensitivity to the conditions in Sulphur Springs. Many of the students were resistant to hearing liberal ideas regarding our society’s forms of inequality. Some were offended at the dismissal of the “American Dream” as a viable mechanism for social mobility. Students were encouraged to think critically and use empirical evidence to support their conclusions.

Most of the students had never heard of Sulphur Springs and certainly had not visited the neighborhood. As in anthropology fieldwork and research, it is important that students prepare for entering the field. Students were introduced to qualitative research methods, focusing on participant-observation and interviewing. Readings by Jonathan Kozol (1995) provided ethnographic descriptions of urban poverty and its effects on families and children. Literature and discussions on the history of southern urban centers explained the development of suburbs and the general decline of urban districts (Fishman 1999; Lang and Sohmer 2000) . I provided lectures on the history of the Sulphur Springs neighborhood and provided firsthand accounts of the current social, economic, and political environment. In addition, careful and repeated attention was given to discussions on the ethics of engagement—the need to be respectful and understanding, but most of all the need to acknowledge personal biases and ethnocentric stereotypes when assessing the neighborhood conditions and the lived realities of our service-learning partners.

The class met at the Rec for the next seven weeks. On the first visit, groups of three to four college students teamed up with five to six youth participants and formed a cohesive group for the remainder of the course. Although all the students wanted to play, the first hour of every class period was spent on homework. After the tutoring session, the groups went to work on getting to know one another through community mapping exercises and interviews. The college students had developed an interview protocol in class

and interviewed the children using tape recorders. Then the children interviewed the college students and wrote up short biographical paragraphs.

Amazing differences and similarities between the college students and youth were gleaned from these exchanges and the weekly response papers that the college students were required to write. One student commented on her surprise at learning that “overall, what came out of my interviews was that [the children] seem very happy and content in Sulphur Springs and really know no other way of life. There was very little negativity in what they told me about their community and they all seemed to feel safe and very much ‘at home’ in Sulphur Springs”. In contrast, another student was distressed writing, “Behind the smiles, there is a lot of pain. These kids have seen a lot and they know a lot. One touching moment for me was when I asked how he feels about the cops and as he was talking tears were coming from his eyes as he was explaining how the cops chase people and sometimes beat them”. Through the exchanges the college students were able to see a humanity there that they never expected to see in a place of poverty.

From this position of collaboration, the teams set out to interview neighborhood residents about the community of Sulphur Springs. To the students’ consternation, many neighborhood residents were reluctant to be interviewed. However, the students were able to secure some interviews and through those interviews they were surprised to discover that for such a small community, there were very diverse perspectives and attitudes regarding Sulphur Springs. Older residents often reminisced about the “good ol’ days” and either

supported or lamented the current state of affairs depending upon their personal points of view. Many residents enthusiastically supported and recommended their community institutions, however others had virulent opinions laced with racist undertones. The older, life long residents proclaimed that no matter what happened they were going to die in Sulphur Springs, cementing their life long relationship with neighborhood. Newcomers, young homeowners, saw potential in the overlooked community, pointing out opportunities for community clean-ups and youth programs.

The interviews were transcribed, collated, and published into a research document, *The Sulphur Springs Community Folio*, which was distributed to all of the youth, college, staff, and resident participants. Copies of the document were placed in the Rec lending library, the University of South Florida's Special Collections, and the City of Tampa Public Library.

The college students coordinated with local service providers, churches, local businesses, and the USF Athletic Department to host a celebration party at the Rec. It was well attended and appreciated--There was food to feed hundreds; a DJ playing all the hip records; Rocky, USF's costumed mascot, Lee Roy Selmon, a Tampa Bay Buccaneer Hall of Famer; and tons of prizes and gifts. This party served as an effective way to promote the Center's activities to a number of community members who were unfamiliar with the services provided there. Community members from the Sulphur Springs Action League, neighborhood churches, and other residents attended the event in celebration of "positive community action".

During the last three weeks, the students drew upon their fieldnotes, classroom notes, readings, films, and the Folio to write a critical assessment of the variety of factors that influence a person's social status. For many, this was their first experience with fieldwork, qualitative methodologies, and poverty. The student papers were very impressive and highly reflexive. For a group that was at first very uneasy about leaving the comforts of the campus for the unknown and potential dangers of the "community", their eventual willingness and commitment to the idea of service and compassion was encouraging. More satisfying was that students were able to make connections between structural processes and the residents' lived realities; discussing the effects of racism, suburbanization, globalization, and welfare reform on the creation and alleviation of poverty. Although not all students were as willing to acknowledge the macrolevel forces in the creation and maintenance of local poverty, the majority was now willing to look for the larger societal structures rather than rely on simple individual and behavior based explanations.

My immediate assessment of the course's success was supported by the students' course evaluations. Overall, the students rated the course as "Very Good" or "Excellent"; often accompanied by favorable and encouraging comments regarding their service-learning experiences. Many wrote to explain that they never had a class like this before and that they had not expected the service requirement to have such a large impact on their worldview. Many of the students (the majority of students were white and middle class) had never met and befriended poor, black people before and were appreciative of the

experience. A few students wrote and suggested that they were interested in continuing their service project and would like to incorporate their experiences in other classes, if not other service-learning courses.

While the majority of the evaluations were overwhelmingly positive, some had critiques. One student rated the class and the instructors as poor and provided no comments to further explain their assessment. Even more disheartening was one student's comments pleading that America was a great society and that all people, regardless of race or gender, had equal opportunity to make a living for themselves and that bad decisions and choices were the cause of human suffering and poverty. Other non-positive comments were coupled with remarks on the difficulty of the service-learning project. One particularly memorable evaluation questioned the service-learning project goals—pointing out that none of the students seemed to benefit from the tutoring or interviews and that the children would continue to be poor. Overall, Dr. Jones and I felt the course was a success in that the majority of the students satisfactorily completed the course and service assignments. In addition, students were exposed to alternative explanations for poverty and inequality and many developed critical thinking skills that would be carried out of the classroom to other courses and life situations.

Building Bridges to the University: University-Community Engagement

As my research activities and ethnography in the Sulphur Springs community continued, I found additional resources to continue service-learning

activities at the Rec. I assisted other faculty members to establish connections to the Rec and other community institutions so that they could conduct additional service-learning programs. Additionally, I began to attend various meetings at the university and in the Sulphur Springs community that were concerned with building and strengthening university-community relationships.

In the summer of 2002, James Kuzin and I, under the guidance of Dr. Greenbaum, wrote and received a Safe Summer grant from the Hillsborough County Children's Board to conduct a service-learning summer program for the youth, ages 6-12, of Sulphur Springs at the Rec. The curriculum focused on introducing the children to concepts of "community" and qualitative inquiry while engaging in beautification and gardening service activities. Daily discussions regarding the community; guest speakers; and fieldtrips to neighborhood landmarks; the Hillsborough River State Park; and the USF Botanical Gardens and Anthropology Museum; in conjunction with qualitative research—interviewing, photography, and participant-observation—connected students to the history and current context of their neighborhood and beyond.

This scenario was different for the youth for many of them had been "receivers" of the earlier service-learning course. Like college students who have access to the various benefits of service-learning, the youth were provided the same opportunities. A book, *The Sulphur Springs Neighborhood Engagement Summer 2002 Program*, documenting the curriculum, fieldtrips, interviews, photographs, and service was published and distributed to the students and community. The summer program was determined a success by all involved.

The program supplemented the Rec's regular summer programming, provided much needed beautification and clean-up services, and offered youth with opportunities to experience facets of their community. Most importantly, the relationships and partnerships established between the various community institutions and the youth helped to dispel the myths—held by many—regarding what it meant to be from Sulphur Springs, or what it meant to be a person in “power”.

Then in the Spring of 2003, I taught another undergraduate service-learning at USF. Writing Cultures, was part of the Learning Communities program and focused on providing students with analytic tools, methods, and examples for examining power and social inequality. The curriculum was a close duplication of the Introduction to Interdisciplinary Studies course with one major deviation. Due to the class's morning meeting time, the class was not able to participate in service-activities as a group. Instead, individuals engaged their service requirements as their schedules permitted. Overall, the course was less successful due to the fragmented service activities. However, the Rec staff and youth still appreciated the effort and the students learned that they shared more similarities with the residents than they initially suspected.

At the same time, three other USF service-learning courses were conducted at the Rec in Sulphur Springs. Students enrolled in play therapy, visual arts, and social work found themselves “learning by doing”. Each course had differing objectives and projects, but all were designed to introduce the college students to discipline-specific concepts and practices through the service

activities. Rec staff and youth were excited and enthusiastic about the increased interest. However, a perceived lack of communication, collaboration, and concern quickly led to problems and staff distrust of the service-learning agenda.

As I had been volunteering at the Rec center for many months and had worked hard to establish a relationship of mutual trust, it was not surprising that the staff approached me with their concerns. At first, many of the staff had assumed that I was somehow in charge or involved with the service-learning courses. When I explained that I only helped make the connection between the Rec and the university, the staff admitted that they were confused. More dismaying was the revelation that they had issues with some aspects of the projects and felt they had little opportunity or possibility for conveying those concerns. Talking with staff I learned there was a range of problems. Staff often found Rec space and equipment dirty, messy, and not put away—causing extra work at the end of an already long workday. Other staff worried about parent complaints regarding a “permission letter” that not only spelled the neighborhood incorrectly (Sulfur Springs) but “informed” parents that the children were not allowed to take their art projects home because “art is for art’s sake”.

Of major concern was a perceived ethical transgression regarding two of the service projects. Concern arose when it was learned that “students” were conducting the play therapy services—eliciting conversations about abuse and trauma through play—with young children. Furthermore, there were no professional services available or a plan to connect families and children after the “service-learning” course was finished, beyond a “required by law” report to the

appropriate agency. What assurance did the staff or parents have that the children would receive appropriate care once the traumas were exposed? What guarantee was available to ensure that parents and families were not wrongly accused?

The biggest problem regarding this set of service-learning projects was the lack of collaboration and coordination between USF faculty and Rec staff. There were unclear lines of communication with apparently no specific USF coordinator or contact. Staff felt pressured to accept the “services” because they were “free” and did not want to be seen as complaining or undeserving. Furthermore, the perceived lack of attention to possible consequences of the services left staff and parents feeling used by the university.

Dismayed and disappointed, I learned that there was very little I could do to remedy the situation. I suggested that I contact the professors to discuss the “ethics of engagement” and concern for collaboration and offer guidance based on anthropology fieldwork training. I spoke to representatives at the university, however the lack of a clear or centralized coordination body for service-learning projects thwarted attempts to achieve immediate changes or alleviate the perceived transgressions.

Chapter 5: Discussion

My applied anthropology research internship at a community recreation center proved to be a unique opportunity to practice and build on USF's university-community engagement mission. Anthropologically informed approaches to community research and fieldwork resulted in a collaborative partnership that not only generated one successful service-learning course, but also provided opportunities for faculty to create additional and diverse service-learning relationships. According to the service-learning and engagement literature, these programs offer benefits to the community and the university. What benefits did these particular programs provide? How can we be sure that the service-learning programs at the Sulphur Springs Recreation Center "create better citizens" and provide valuable service without falling into possible "blaming the victim" pitfalls?

This analysis makes no attempt to evaluate systematically the service-learning agendas. However, as an applied anthropologist with deep personal and professional ties to the community of Sulphur Spring (the Rec Center especially), I have an ethical responsibility not only to document concerns raised by staff over the service-learning enterprise, but to reveal the ways that state sponsored policies mask the macrolevel processes that create inequality, and thus the need for service-learning. It is clear that university faculty and students have good intentions in implementing service-learning programs in depressed

and low-income areas. However, a critical anthropology must ask if the project achieved its goals and whether those goals contribute to creating social change.

The projects described above indicate that on superficial level service-learning courses provide much needed resources and expertise. However, these resources apparently come with a price. The service-learning agenda requires extra expenditures in the way of staffing and supervision and even in materials. If the service-learning model does not include or consider these attached “costs”, the burden is then transferred to staff and often results in feelings of distrust and dissatisfaction. Agency staff must be capable and willing to coordinate and supervise service-learning activities. Even with a faculty member present, there must be someone to represent the agency’s or institute’s interests. Without collaborative representation, power imbalances quickly turn into trouble and can be the demise of any service-learning or research project.

Concerns arise for college students enrolling in the service-learning course. Often, many have never visited low-income and minority neighborhoods. This “culture shock” can lead to feelings of fear and discomfort and can cause some students to drop the course or worse, carry negative stereotypes between “town and gown”. For this reason, it is essential that students be prepared, not only with an explanation of the service project goals, but also with introductions to the historical political-economic processes that have produced current community conditions. Students who have not yet gained critical analysis skills or exposure to social stratification theories often rely on popular explanations for

inequality and poverty--employing either racial and gendered (and class and sexuality) stereotypes or individualized explanations.

More disturbing is the reality that even those with understanding and exposure continue to reproduce ideologies of difference and inferiority. At a mini-conference on community engagement a service-learning faculty member commented on the special and extraordinary “rhythm” possessed by the black youth at the Sulphur Springs. And in addressing the extreme lack of food security experienced by many of the youth serviced by the service-learning project, it was recommended that the children be taught “to be resilient against hunger”. As if the solution to debilitating poverty can be conjured up in individual bodies and that it would be best to start teaching “them” while they are young.

Another Sulphur Springs service-learning presentation highlighted letters written by the youth to various government agencies expressing dissatisfaction. Verbatim quotes or entire letters were projected onto a screen, including misspellings and colloquial sayings. These “African American Vernacular English” phrases triggered giggles and laughs by the university audience. Furthermore, the same faculty member, at a Hillsborough County Planning Commission “Think Tank on the Community of Sulphur Springs” meeting, proposed that the Sulphur Springs youth learn to play band instruments donated by USF faculty and other communities members. The youth would then perform concerts, drawing white and well-to-do “tourists”—providing profits that could then be used for community development projects.

While these are subtle suggestions, they serve to reinforce power relations based on intersecting subjectivities that continue to place poor people of color at one end while blaming their social position on “bad decisions”. Furthermore, service-learning agendas that fail to consider long-term or future consequences of the service project again reinforce the notion that the benefits of the service-learning project is designed more for the college students rather than the community. Without reflection on ethical “rules for engagement” and a plan for leaving, service-learning projects may cause more harm than good.

If the goal of service-learning is to provide students with analysis skills and civic responsibility while also providing valuable resources to communities in need, we must then consider the ideologies and “discursive processes through which conditions are accepted as ‘normal’ part of our society and how these make sense to people at precise historical moments” (Lyon-Callo 2004:25). Service-learning curriculums can be a useful tool in teaching students skills and providing experiences required for critical analysis of the hegemonic discourses that reproduce axes of difference. However, creating social justice requires that service-learning partnerships be based on mutual understandings and collaborative processes—thereby enabling mutually satisfactory outcomes and results. A reliance on the assumed and proposed benefits of service alone will not automatically result in better community conditions or improved university-community relations. Initiating service-learning agendas without respect for the “importance of race and class (and gender and sexuality) as axes of inequality” will not only fail to produce enhanced learning opportunities and civic

responsibility, but may even contribute to the neoliberal project that works to individualize social problems by masking government responsibility and its complicity in promoting “state policies which favor the interests of capital over the concerns of the citizenry” (Lyon-Callo and Hyatt 2003:137).

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Recommendations

The applied anthropology and service-learning experiences described above reveal the many benefits and consequences of university-community engagement. Despite surging literature that professes unlimited benefits, service-learning is a complex process that does not contain intrinsic benefits. Positive outcomes are the result of much planning and collaboration. Simply offering volunteer service in conjunction with classroom activities does not automatically produce desirable outcomes. It creates greater potential for disaster—engendering and intensifying feelings of distrust—thereby deepening the divide between “town and gown”. Harkavy, a service-learning expert and engaged scholar has similar distrust in the ability of the service-learning project to deliver on its promises. He writes, that because service-learning “has largely been concerned with advancing the civic consciousness and moral character of college students” and “does not focus on solving core community problems” that “service learning, as currently defined and practiced, is not an effective vehicle for improving our schools and communities. It may even enable universities to evade their responsibility to their local environments” (Harkavy 1996:5).

Harkavy does not advocate abandoning the service-learning concept, but recommends a critical examination of the goals, methods, and purposes. As the ethnographic evidence illustrates, the generic service-learning model contains

serious weaknesses. Consequences can affect both the university and community and be suffered by individuals and institutions.

Particularly vulnerable are the service receivers due to the power imbalance of a relationship where one party is imparting “benefits” to another “needy” party. The scenario sets up one group or individual as the giver and the other as the taker. Additionally, the receiver is rendered somewhat powerless in deciding how the relationship will work. The service-learner is a foreigner who has agreed to enter the service site territory for a specified period of time but will return to their native lands and lives at the end of the semester, leaving those at the site without means to continue the relationship. Paid staff or even long term volunteers of the service site may be threatened by the presence of short term volunteers with light responsibility loads but nonetheless are celebrated and praised for their brief interlude. While short service periods are necessary to fit the academic timeframe, it can lead to feelings of abandonment and loss. Tutoring and mentoring services are intimate connections, especially for young children and the elderly. It is sometimes difficult for people receiving the service to understand why their new friend and tutor must end their relationship at a seemingly artificial juncture. Due to the awkwardness of the situation and sometimes out of honest desire, service-learning students will promise to return after spring break or at the end of summer, never to return, leaving those at the service site powerless to continue the relationship. It is clear that service-learning activities have the potential to upset social order. Steps and

consideration need to be taken at the outset to reduce and reconcile the disruptions.

Influxes of service-learners, while intending to provide support services can actually cause more work for staff due to the need for supervision, background checks, and other logistics that accompany volunteers. Oftentimes, service-learning activities center on tutoring and homework help and are expected to produce increased student achievement. However, poor student outcomes are a complex issue that can find no simply solution in service-learning tutoring. Any expectation that it can serve as a substitute for increased education spending, parental involvement, qualified teachers, and appropriate curriculum is unrealistic and misleading.

The very presence of service-learning students and their activities can actually be more of a detriment than a benefit. Agency staff may expect follow-up actions or may have different objectives than what the service-learning project allows for. In order to lessen the possibility, service-learning students and agency staff should be introduced to the service-learning goals, the neighborhood context, and the logistics for carrying out the project before beginning the service activities. All participants need to be aware of and agree upon the service-learning plan—including but not limited to issues of responsibility for supervision; contact information; complaint processes; resource allocation; time limits and duration; methods for dealing with unintended consequences; etc. Service-learning, community engagement, and fieldwork

have inherent risks. Planning and foresight can help minimize that potential and provides all participants with a plan for action in case problems do arise.

Other unintended consequences can revolve around the sharing or co-opting of scarce resources. Some service sites have very few supplies, and heedless use by volunteers can leave the host agency strapped and unable to serve their clients. Using space and time can be an issue of contention, especially if only a segment of the agency's clients will receive the service-learning student support. Likewise, cleaning up and dealing with the aftermath of service activities can be an extra burden on agency staff that can lead to feelings of mistrust and resentment.

According to Hyatt and Lyon-Callo "the greatest threat to American democracy comes not from an apathetic and disengaged citizenry but from the ever-growing complicity between the state and the market" (2003:136). A politically engaged anthropology can address this connection and its effects on society—one possibility is the development of an engaged, politically minded anthropological service-learning agenda. One that seeks to do more than just serve but provides the benefits of critical thinking to all participants, not only college students. An activist service-learning model can do more than describe conditions of poverty and the global forces that produce unequal shares of violence and misery (Goode and Maskovsky 2001b; Hyatt and Lyon-Callo 2003; Keene and Colligan 2004; Maskovsky and Kingfisher 2001). It can and should endeavor, for the "advancement of human liberation" (Keene and Colligan 2004:6). Politically engaged anthropology untangles a priori assumptions and

hidden subjectivities embedded in service-learning's theoretical foundation—the assumed decline in social capital and civic participation. The civic malaise discussion focuses on the historically white, male and middle class model of civic participation and social capital as the accepted norm and neglects to discuss the disenfranchisement and the barriers minority peoples must overcome in order to adhere to ideal. It also reveals the hidden ways that some service-learning projects, although unwittingly, contribute to the disenfranchisement and marginalization of poor people of color.

An essential prerequisite in designing an appropriate and activist service-learning project is to have an understanding of what life is like for children living in Sulphur Springs. A politically engaged anthropology and methodology toolkit results in collaborative knowledge, providing a foundation for developing mutually beneficial projects. The process creates opportunities for dialogue—discursive spaces that promote true collaboration and partnerships. These conversations reveal the ways in which people are complicit in and resistant to neoliberal strategies that effectively “disappear” (Goode and Maskovsky 2001a:10) disadvantaged communities by masking state interventions and policies, which continue to advance capital over communities.

A politically engaged service-learning course then seeks to impart an understanding of the processes and ideologies used to naturalize and individualize poverty through experiential learning and traditional classroom materials. This of course, is easier said than done. Planning and implementing a service-learning course focused on social justice requires significant

investment on the part of all its participants—faculty, agency staff and clients, student, and the university. Investments and commitments need to be established up front. Without key supports and a sustainability plan, the service-learning benefits will be one-sided favoring the elite institution over the disadvantaged community. Such a scenario, while on the service appears to be providing advantages, in fact continues and furthers the disappearance. Blame will continue to be placed upon the community for its inability to improve—in spite of the university’s noble volunteer services.

Taking a politically engaged approach to service-learning is only a first step in creating an effective mechanism for social change. Some hurdles are inherent in the endeavor. Others can be remedied with continued commitment to university-community engagement. An institutionalized politically engaged service-learning agenda could be one of many strategies to achieve USF’s community engagement goals. A university wide service-learning program would not seek to dominate and restrict faculty and community partnerships, but work to provide resources—training, materials, connections, ideas, mentoring, and best practices—to both the university and community partners. Preparation is the responsibility of both institutions and there is a wide range of materials available to educate the partners of their responsibilities and the “rules of engagement”.

The initial service-learning course based on my internship has had a lasting impression upon the students as evidenced by their course evaluations and the fact that a few continued to volunteer at the Rec. Just as importantly, the Rec staff and community residents viewed the partnership as a success. Even

with the concerns and road bumps, Rec staff continues to request service-learning courses and encourages increased university-community collaborations with USF. Although there has been no formal evaluation of the tutoring, youth participants found the program fun and were very proud to see their names, stories, and work in a published book. Furthermore, many remember their “partners” and aspire to attend USF. A few students made plans to continue visiting the Rec outside of class time and correspondence letters have been exchanged. Parents appreciated the added homework help and some even participated in the resident interviews.

All things considered, service-learning is a progressive and encouraging strategy. However, a reliance on the volunteer labor of service-learning students alone will not provide the solution to society’s toughest problems. No amount of tutoring, neighborhood clean-ups, or mentoring can make up for the drastic cuts in government social spending, poorly funded school systems, lack of affordable housing, increasing costs of transportation, and low-wage employment. Social welfare policies and reforms aimed at changing poor people’s behaviors through tutoring and mentoring services provided by college volunteers do nothing to put food on the table, gas in the car, or a roof over their heads. Even if service-learning beneficiaries gain academic achievement through the help of tutoring sessions, they are not guaranteed living wage employment in the increasingly privatized and corporatized market. While helpful and commendable, service learning projects are limited in their capacity to create the social change required to end poverty.

The Rec is the only public sponsored community center in Sulphur Springs neighborhood. Although it is under funded and underutilized, it is a valuable community resource and with some attention and support, it could address the growing unmet needs of neighborhood residents. A service-learning program could indeed buttress the existing supports. There is little doubt that the services provided through service-learning are needed and welcomed additions to a community that has felt neglected and ignored by the larger Tampa community. However, unless service-learning projects are based on ethnographic understanding and are designed to produce political action, no amount of free labor service will alleviate or solve the neighborhood's "poverty problem". It is my hope that USF broadens its commitment to university-community engagement and expands its service-learning options. However, if USF is to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem, its faculty and administration must do even more to support and adopt collaborative partnerships. These university-community relationships enable critical examinations of the processes and ideologies that create and justify neighborhoods of need. Politically engaged anthropology provides critical theories and methods combined with sensitivity for the ethics of entrée, or "rules for engagement". A politically engaged service-learning can indeed teach students and neighbors to "learn by doing" with the hopes that new strategies and possibilities be discovered to counteract the seemingly totalizing forces of neoliberal government.

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