Title:

Native healing traditions for personal and social change: Assessing student learning in a

local-global community engagement program

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Abstract

This article presents a design for, and assessment of, a local-global paired course program that took place over two terms in the United States and Mexico with a focus on native healing traditions for personal and social change. The students participated in local partnerships with native elders to explore the praxis of well-being and self-realization as it connects to community-building and social transformation. A direct assessment of student writing was conducted to measure learning across multiple objectives, including self-knowledge, intercultural understanding, and local-global connections. This paper looks at the critical act of engaging indigenous knowledge in the academy, linking student well-being to community engagement and social change, and tools used to assess learning related to both.

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This article focuses on the development of curriculum and assessment of student

learning around native healing traditions for personal and social change that occur in the

nexus of classroom and community. This effort presents myriad challenges, as such

student learning and growth outcomes are often highly subjective and nuanced, and

emerge over time as opposed to immediately following the learning experience.

Furthermore, in a program that engages intellectual as well as personal growth,

evaluating the holistic academic and psycho-social development of the lived experience

is sometimes difficult to show (especially moving beyond evidence that merely *asserts*

that learning outcomes have been achieved and actually *demonstrates* it). This article

aims to address the aforementioned challenges while adding to the field of community

service learning scholars and teachers that have been working diligently to create

meaningful learning and growth opportunities for students, measurable learning outcomes

and effective strategies of assessment (Ash & Clayton, 2009; Driscoll, Gelmon, Holland,

Kerrigan, Spring, Grisvold, & Longley, 1998; Eyler, Giles, & Braxton, 1997; Eyler,

Giles, Stenson, & Gray, 2001; Ferrari & Worrall, 2000; Galura, Pasque, Schoem, &

Howard, 2004; Gelmon, Holland, Seiffer, Shinnamon, & Conners, 1998; Glass,

Doberneck, & Schweitzer, 2008; Gray, Ondaaje, Fricker, Geschwind, Goldman,

Kaganoff, & Robyn, 1999; Honnet & Poulsen, 1989; Marcus, Howard & King, 1993;

Miron & Moely, 2006; Myers-Lipton, 1998; Polin & Keene, 2010; Sandy, 2007; Sax &

Astin, 1997; Shapiro, 2012; Shavelson, 2007; Strage, 2007; Strand, Marcullo, Cutforth,

Stoecker, & Donahue, 2003; Vernon & Ward, 1999). This paper introduces a unique set

of local-global community engagement courses and a direct assessment effort that were conducted to evaluate such student learning, providing an overview of an inter-disciplinary and holistic teaching approach as well as an assessment rubric that is potentially transferable.

The Local-Global Paired Course Program

Pitzer College was founded in 1963 as an experimental liberal arts college influenced by social reform movements with deep roots in American progressivism and a commitment to the founding ideas of participation and community. The College's mission is to "produce engaged, socially responsible citizens of the world through academically rigorous, interdisciplinary liberal arts education emphasizing social justice, intercultural understanding, and environmental sensitivity" (Pitzer College "History and Mission", n.d., para. 1). Utilizing critical pedagogy and experiential learning theories, students and faculty prioritize community-based teaching and research; combining theory and practice, students explore the praxis of subject matters both within the communities they live in while studying abroad, and within the local communities in which they do community service learning courses.

To strengthen the link between distinct local and global community-based learning, teaching and research efforts, the College created the "local-global paired course program" in which a semester seminar course explores a particular theme in a local setting in the College's surrounding communities, followed by a study and engagement of that same topic in an abroad location during a summer program. When the College first began proposing this idea to funders over ten years ago, it drew on the

charge given at that time in Martha Nussbuam's article "Liberal Education and Global Community" which reminded us that,

> the idea of liberal education is more important than ever in our interdependent world. An education based on the idea of an inclusive global citizenship and on the possibilities of the compassionate imagination has the potential to transcend divisions created by distance, cultural difference, and mistrust. Developing the ideal further and thinking about how to modify it in light of our times is one of the most exciting and urgent tasks we can undertake as educators and citizens. (1994, p. 1)

Leaders at the College felt that it was incumbent upon higher education institutions to build the international into traditional fields, simultaneously bringing the numerous students interested in the "foreign" into a dialogue with "the other" in their own communities. By helping students to see how the local is already profoundly interconnected with the foreign and the other is already part of their homeland, Pitzer leaders claimed that colleges and universities can help our society's new generation of leaders understand how to make diversity an asset for communities rather than a threat to unity. This was the curricular rationale given for the creation of the school's newly launched "Institute for Global and Local Action and Study" and the local-global paired course program[i].

I had the opportunity to develop one such paired course program and chose to explore a more-neglected aspect of typical community engagement courses, that is, an exploration of the links between personal development and social justice through the lens of indigenous knowledge and mindful engagement. The course, "Healing ourselves and

healing our communities," focused on the theory and practice of personal transformation and social change, connecting students to indigenous community partnerships in both the U.S. and Mexico. This paired course program emphasized the importance of learning about and exercising mindful approaches to working for peace and justice for activist students who are often highly invested in being agents of change but are still grappling with their own internal experiences of violence, pain, and/or marginalization. Furthermore, it aimed to provide guidance in understanding how to translate student desires for change into action, especially with communities culturally, racially, and/or economically distinct from their own. The course infused readings, discussions, and applied practices on the topic of psychosocial and spiritual well-being with notions of civic engagement and social change, echoing a practice among a small but growing group of service-learning practitioners, interdisciplinary scholars, social justice activists, and spiritual leaders (Anzaldua, 1999; Alexander, Albrecht, Day, & Segrest, 2003; Armstrong, 2006; Beath, 2005; Bernal, Elenes, Godinez, & Villenas, 2006; Bringing Theory to Practice, 2013; Finn, 2012; Fernandes, 2003; Flanagan, Constance, & Bundnik, 2011; Ginwright, 2001; Hale, 2008; Hanh, 2003; Harward, 2012; hooks, 1994; Iyer, 1991; Macy, 1998; Sudbury & Okazawa- Rey, 2009; Sweitzer & King, 2009; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Washington, 1991; Zimmerman, Pathikonda, Salgado, & James, 2010).

The primary learning outcomes of this paired course program included engaging a *praxis* of social responsibility and intercultural understanding, developing an awareness of self, capacity, and positionality in community engagement efforts, and garnering the ability to critically analyze and situate local circumstances within broader, global contexts. The works of diverse scholars from such fields as cultural studies, globalization

studies, indigenous studies, and feminist theory were assigned to explore indigenous theories that bridge individual well-being and self-realization with community well-being and social change. The course examined issues such as knowledge production and alternative epistemologies, de-colonization and cultural affirmation of indigenous cultural traditions, environmental sustainability and practices of engaged mindfulness and conscious activism.

The initial seminar course was offered in the spring of 2010 to a diverse group of fifteen students, followed by a month-long summer program in Mexico with seven of these students (all first year students)[ii]. The spring semester course took place on campus, with community engagement focused on collaborative projects and mentoring partnerships with members of the Costanoan Rusmen Carmel/Ohlone and Gabrieleno/Tongva, two tribal nations of urban Indians living in and near the major metropolitan county of Los Angeles in which the College is located. The correlating summer course was co-developed in partnership with a grass roots, community-based organization that facilitates indigenous Mexican healing practices for personal and community development, located in a semi-rural, small town near Cuernavaca in Central Mexico.

Through assigned reading, in-class discussions and lectures, guest speakers, experiential activities, and community engagement in both courses, students learned about and practiced strategies for individual and collective transformation. Research and service ethics were rigorously explored and practiced weekly in an engagement practicum in the community and in online forums of critical reflection. Students wrote personal reflections and critical analysis papers on their own journey of self-awareness,

healing, community knowledge and community-building strategies within the context of existing theoretical frameworks around personal development and social change. Final papers required that students weave together theoretical underpinnings of both personal and community development with their own experiences of community engagement and self-realization, and were later analyzed closely as part of a direct assessment project which this article will focus on in depth.

Overview of the Local Community Engagement Course

The spring course set the groundwork and themes as well as an intentionality and coherence among learning outcomes that were carried out in both components of the paired-course program. The community engagement component of the spring course connected students with local native elders for regular meetings, workshops and community outreach projects, building on already established relationships and involving a four-hour weekly commitment to specific projects and partnership-building. As a result of their mentoring relationships with elders, students were invited to participate in a number of activities, such as educational workshops around native craft-making; training around native domestic violence advocacy and fetal alcohol syndrome educational workshops; girls' self-esteem workshops and native traditional fashion shows at a local Indian boarding school; and through informal meetings and gatherings in their homes or at the tribal office, were able to learn about history, traditions, stories, and cultural values from these native elders. In addition to fieldtrips to traditional native village models and educational centers, students were also welcomed as participants at tribal functions such as pow wows, ceremonial dances, ancestor walks, sweat lodges, women's healing circles, and inter-tribal ceremonial gatherings. Through these experiential activities, students

expanded levels of intercultural understanding and also learned about ways of knowing, being, and healing from two distinct but interconnected local tribal traditions (the Ohlone and the Tongva).

In the nature of reciprocity, students participated in a range of activities including volunteering time, tools and resources for various classes, events, fundraisers and workshops hosted by local native partners; securing and preparing land at the College and renewing local land on a donated plot for an organic farm and garden for tribal members; co-coordinating and co-facilitating a youth mentoring group with college students and native youth; assisting in documentary film-making of tribal events for tribal archives, fundraising, and outreach needs; writing and securing mini-grants for some of the aforementioned programs; creating and sustaining social media interfaces (i.e., Facebook pages, blogs, email distributions) to connect college students, tribal partners, and the general public; and assisting with outreach and organizing efforts of the College's annual Native Summer Pipeline to College program, Native American film festival, and Native-academic community partnerships conference[iii].

Throughout the course's practicum in the community and through related theoretical texts assigned, students were introduced to native epistemological perspectives around such concepts as individuality and community, pain and healing, relationships to land, language, rights, and governance structures, and the interconnection of the physical, mental, spiritual and emotional bodies. This learning provided not only for a paradigm-shift in notions of epistemology and ontology but also made the students active participants in decolonizing the academy (by infusing different ways of knowing into the classroom and civic engagement setting). This intentional pedagogical and

theoretical framing of the course is a supported practice by many native scholars and academic allies wishing to challenge dominant colonial narratives that still persist in the academy and re-consider the ways we think about, teach, and demonstrate value for indigenous knowledge production, authorship, and distribution in the academy (Apffel-Marglin & PRATEC,1998; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Delgado & Gomez, 2003; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 1991; Mankiller, 2004; Moore, 2006; Semali & Kincheloe, 1999; Shiva, 1993; Smith, 1999; Steinman, 2011; Wilson, 2008).[iv]

Overview of the Community Engagement Course Abroad

Continuing the study of native practices for healing that was begun in the local component of this program, the month-long, two-course credit abroad summer program took place in Central Mexico and provided a brief, though intensive exploration of indigenous Mexican cosmologies and practices for healing. The course focused on a variety of Mexican philosophies surrounding illness and wellness, the interconnection of mind-body-spirit, and the ancient knowledge systems that drive energetic, botanic, and meditative practices of healing. Through an exploration of both theory and practice, students gained exposure to indigenous Mexican beliefs around life and death, spirituality, gender, justice, and peacemaking. The course explored, in particular, presuppositions of indigenous and non-indigenous philosophy, metaphysics, and ethics that affect value systems and decision-making related to ecology, health, food, community-building, economic sustainability, and human/treaty rights. This understanding of local knowledge and culture was situated in a global context, recognizing the impacts of global restructuring on indigenous communities. Students were taught perspectives and skills to critically analyze and dialogue about the roles,

tensions, and praxis of indigenous healing practices within a global context. Finally, as a result of the paired course structure, specific readings, discussions and writing prompts encouraged students to make connections of their understandings of the course topics between both the local, spring course and this summer program abroad.

The summer program was conceived, taught, and coordinated in collaboration with a local healer and native to the area whose long-standing relationships with community members enabled engagement with local host families, guest lecturers, service learning opportunities, and cultural projects[v]. Students engaged in learning in Mexico through workshops by spiritual leaders, oral storytelling and experiential activities (such as sweat lodges, energetic massage, herbal remedies, meditation, and song) as well as the inclusion of conventional scholarly texts and academic guest lectures. Fieldtrips to local sacred sites and ancient ruins within the state of Morelos also provided context for the learning, as did their month-long residential immersion with host families in the neighborhood and daily intensive Spanish language classes. While the community engagement component of this course was limited due to the four-week timeframe of the program, students did engage six hours per week in one of two local community service learning partnerships: a children's convivencia (for abandoned or abused children) and in a local alternative healing spa and treatment center[vi]. Through the on-going critical reflections and experiential nature of the course, students were also encouraged to explore and reflect on their own well-being and process of self-realization.

Pedagogical Foundations

The specific pedagogical approach, course aims and student learning outcomes for this course were inspired greatly by the work of John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Ira Shor, bell

hooks and Parker Palmer regarding experiential learning, wholehearted teaching, and liberatory pedagogy. Dewey's work provided foundational experiential learning concepts by promoting the idea that learning is a wholehearted affair; that is, you can't sever knowing and doing, and with cycles of action and reflection, one's greatest learning occurs. Dewey was interested in the learning that resulted from the mutual exchange between people and their environment (Dewey, 1938). Freire's work provided pertinent exploration into the power dynamics that exist in traditional roles of teachers as the knower and students as the empty receptacles in which the teachers deposit knowledge. He not only dismantled the inherent power dynamics in that relationship but also the idea that learning is something that is done to you, given to you, rather than something you co-create and exchange in a consciousness-raising process that involves literacy, reading, writing, action, reflection, self-awareness, relationship-building and reciprocity (Freire, 2006). The work of Freire and Shor (1986) offered a platform from which to investigate the power dynamics between common knowledge (knowledge/wisdom of the people, formed by lived experience) and academic knowledge (knowledge given legitimacy and credibility as a result of its formation through rigorous, academic study) so as to create spaces where a real liberatory education can occur through a dialogical relationship between these two spheres of thought. In engaging in this dialectic, a critical reflection of one's own positionality and situatedness within community, culture, and knowledge production becomes essential, which both Shor (1992) and hooks (2003) speak to. Supported by Parker Palmer, this wholehearted teaching philosophy describes teaching as an affective process, with affective goals to teach the whole person (where emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual wellbeing is being attended to so students don't have to

leave their personal experience at the door in order to increase cognitive development).

As hooks quotes Palmer in *Teaching community: A pedagogy of hope*, this approach

posits that "Education is about healing and wholeness. It is about empowerment,

liberation, transcendence, about renewing vitality of life. It is about finding and claiming

ourselves and our place in the world" (cited in hooks, 2003, p. 43). While certainly many

others have expanded upon and contributed to this field of liberatory education, these

pioneers shaped a generation of teachers and students by promoting a teaching

philosophy that is openly informed by (and invites into the classroom) progressive

political, cultural, and personal values.

Owing much to this foundation, a growing movement of applied scholars have

invested more focus in their research, curriculum-building, and institutional restructuring

to the notion of student well-being. This concept encompasses a number of aspects of

student mental health, identity development, and sense of purpose, especially as they

relate to the social connectedness found through community service learning. In its most

recent publication on the topic, Bringing Theory to Practice Project Scholar Jill N. Reich

aptly explores the concept and its diverse definitions and qualities:

> Be it flourishing (Keyes), Well-being (Diener), wholeness (Long), thriving
>
> (Schreiner), identity (Magolda) or a myriad of other terms we use on our campus, a
>
> common thread in this effort, as Don Harward has so persistently argued, is our
>
> conceptual reach back to the Aristotelian concept of eudaemonia. It is not about
>
> some superficial or even transient experience of being happy or even about feeling
>
> happy, but rather it turns to that more important, sustainable quality of purpose that

underlies our sense of self, our motivation to persist, our trust in agency, and our

responsibility to act for the common good (2013, 2).

Affective teaching and learning that aims to foster self-realization and

purposefulness within student's academic experience, with clear and direct ties to

community engagement and collective well-being, were primary areas of focus in the

creation of this course content and subsequent establishment of learning outcomes.

Finally, the entirety of this effort was couched in the epistemological, cosmological

and cultural framework of indigenous knowledge. While I don't in any way claim

authority to represent indigenous knowledge (and the primary teaching around it was

carried out by the indigenous elders with whom we partnered in the community), through

theoretical readings and guest lectures in class I did introduce fundamental principals of

this knowledge system (which I will share briefly below). Of course, this topic is really

too complex to investigate in any in-depth manner in this section and I am also wary of

making vast generalizations about this rich and diverse knowledge system; I point here to

Barnhardt and Kawagley's claim that when describing indigenous knowledge

"generalizations must be recognized as indicative and not definitive, since Indigenous

knowledge systems are themselves diverse (as are knowledge and traits ascribed to

Western societies); these knowledge systems are constantly adapting and changing in

response to new conditions" (2005, 8). Nonetheless, it is important to paint a picture of

some fundamental characteristics of indigenous knowledge as they had major influence

not only on the pedagogical approach to this course but it's content and community

engagement components.

Indigenous knowledge systems typically posit that education occurs in and is

informed by community (and community in this sense includes the earth, cosmos, ancestors, animals, plants, waters, etc.) It is often transmitted through story-telling/ the oral tradition and occurs in a holistic manner to include intellectual as well as spiritual, moral and physical growth and benefit. Indigenous scholar R. Sambuli Mosha describes it as such: "the analytic facet of education gives useful data and information; the story part gives birth to insight, awe, wonder, reverence, and therefore, wisdom" (1999, 215). The practice of mutual nurturing between and among human and non-human beings is the basis for the belief that we exist in an interconnected community, where relationship to/between land, family, and community is one and the same, all of which is exemplified through language (words and phrases which espouse the inter-being of land, community, self, heart, and body) (Armstrong, 2006, 37). In this sense, beings are engaged in a process of reciprocal dialogue, that is, communing and communicating between the senses. Indigenous knowledge systems generally indicate different understandings of space, time, ways of knowing, notions of ownership, and a value system that privileges the dynamic over the static, the subjective over the objective, the collective over the individual, the experiential and practical over the theoretical, and diversity over monoculture and standardization (Appfel-Marglin & PRATEC, 1998; Armstrong, 2006; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Delgado & Gomez, 2003; Kirkness & Barnhard, 1991; Mankiller, 2004; Mosha, 1999; Semali & Kincheloe, 1999; Smith, 2002; Vasquez, 1998; Wilson, 2008). These ideas and practices informed not only a large part of the course content as it related to students' exploration into strategies for healing, transformation, and well-being of individuals and communities, but also influenced the way the course was structured, the methods for teaching, and the experiential learning that occurred

within the partnerships with local native communities.

Developing Student Learning Outcomes and Assessment Rubric

Designing learning outcomes for this particular set of courses which would capture the nuances of experiential, liberatory education and measure not only critical thinking but self-awareness, self-realization, a deepening of community knowledge and relationships, an understanding of indigenous cosmologies and epistemological frameworks, and do so within the scaffolding of globalization, proved to be a fascinating challenge. The conversations with collaborators that were born while trying to craft meaningful learning outcomes, as well as pinpoint how evaluators would conclude when a student had demonstrated that learning in their written work, revealed that evaluation itself is a true blend of art and science. The author joins a long line of practitioners who have wrestled with these challenges, as the practice of evaluation has been occurring since service-learning first gained popularity in the late 1980's (and was catapulted forward by the charge given through the Wingspread Conference to foment all evaluation efforts, Gelmon et al., 2001). As such, I met the challenge by drawing on ideas gleaned from existing evaluation tools and the findings of expert evaluators in the field (AAC&U Liberal Education & America's Promise, 2012; Bacon, 2002; Boyte & Farr, 1997; Costa & Kallick, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1996; Eyler, Giles, Stenson & Gray, 2001; Giles, Honnet & Migliore, 1991; Markus, Howard & King, 1993; National Survey on Student Engagement, 2008; Oden & Casey, 2007; Overbaugh & Schultz, 2012; Ryff & Keyes, 1995; Tisch College of Citizenship and Public Service, 2012; Wabash College Center of Inquiry, 2009). These contributed to the creation of an initial list of key outcomes of engaged learning (Hicks, 2009), which later was transformed into an assessment rubric[vii]

(which then went through some iterations based on emergent discoveries by inter-raters as this assessment process developed).

The literature around student learning outcomes in community service learning courses highlights the possibility of multiple levels of achievement, including:

- civic: which typically includes an exposure or commitment to social responsibility, including relationships with school, city, partner organizations and neighbors; political involvement and policy reform actions; community building, community organizing skills and awareness of systemic social injustice (Astin & Sax, 1998; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Giles & Braxton, 1997; Greene & Diehm, 1995; Gray et al., 1998; Kendrick, 1996; Mabry, 1998; Strage, 2004; Mitchell, 2008);

- personal: indicating awareness of identity and self-development, self-realization and purposefulness, interpersonal skills, positionality/ power dynamics with others, moral and ethical reasoning, and improved relationships with peers, faculty, and the local community (Astin & Sax, 1998; Bringing Theory to Practice, 2013; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Giles and Braxton, 1997; Gray et al., 1998; Kendrick, 1996);

- intercultural understanding: indicating skills, awareness or commitment to cultural immersion, reciprocity, local social issues, perception of others and potential bias, diverse perspectives, and communication skills (Astin & Sax, 1998 Eyler & Giles, 1996; Gray, et al., 1998; Markus, Howard & King, 1993; Stanton, 1990);

- academic and career development: indicating a reciprocal application of

  learning to/from field and class, development of tools and theories on

  service, research and evaluation, problem-solving skills, leadership and

  teaching skills and enhanced analysis/ critical thinking abilities (Boss,

  1994; Eyler&Giles, 1999; Gelmon, et al., 1998; Gray et al., 1998; Jacoby,

  2003; Kendrick, 1996; Marcus, et al., 1993; Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1998;

  Strand et al., 2003).

I wished to examine each of these areas through the course's social justice, inter-cultural and local-global lens. The aim to create a non-reductionist method of assessing learning and student development resulted in the creation of the following course learning outcomes: self-knowledge (defined as reflexivity and awareness of capacities, skills, and perspectives as well as an awareness of one's positionality, biases and values), intercultural understanding (ability to appreciate and cross cultural boundaries and engage diverse perspectives to examine social issues in the theoretical and practical) and the local-global context (ability to compare, contrast, identify and analyze points of intersection between local and global perspectives on course topic and situate local circumstances within broader, global context). While not explicitly a part of the final rubric used in this assessment, the following were additional student learning outcomes taught to in this course: community knowledge (recognizing the needs and strengths of a community, as defined through the lens and experience of that community), interpersonal competency (demonstrating leadership, teamwork and problem-solving skills, as well as rigorous professional and ethical conduct), social responsibility (attaining a heightened sense of personal responsibility to community issues) and finally, the ability to grasp the

praxis of critical community engagement, such as applying community lessons to understand theory and vice versa.

I attempted to follow the promising practice for effective evaluation developed by Ash and Clayton (2009), which "begins with the identification of desired learning outcomes. It then proceeds with the expression of learning goals in terms of assessable learning objectives and continues to the design and implementation of teaching and learning strategies (such as reflection) aligned with those objectives, all the while developing assessment strategies that are well-matched to the objectives and to the teaching and learning strategies and that can be used to inform future revisions of either or both" (p. 29). As such, once the student learning outcomes and critical reflection learning strategies were established, the rubric was created as a tool to analyze to what degree students achieved these outcomes and the direct assessment design was outlined. The original learning outcomes and final assessment rubric used can be found in tables 1 and 2:

INSERT TABLES 1 AND 2

Direct Assessment Focus: Final Critical Reflection Papers

Students gained from active processes of learning, doing, and reflecting in their partnership-building and community change efforts in the field, in the experiential, healing activities they participated in locally and abroad, and in the process of writing about and reflecting together on their learning and growth, as documented in their critical reflection papers. Every week students participated in both written and verbal forms of reflection in order to assess the impacts of their cultural immersion and community engagement experiences. For most academics engaged in experiential learning, this is an

inherent component of the pedagogy—that is, a belief that students' most powerful education will result from a combination of theoretical reading, active participation in the community, and involvement in a critical forum for reflection and analysis (Ash & Clayon, 2009;Dewey, 1938; Eyler & Giles, 1996; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Freire, 2006; Greene & Diehm, 1995; Illich, 1971; Mabry, 1998; Stanton, Giles & Cruz, 1999). Critical reflection was utilized not only as a vehicle for learning, but as the focus of assessment because of its multifaceted impact, as described by Ash and Clayon (2009, 27-28): "it generates learning (articulating questions, confronting bias, examining causality, contrasting theory with practice, pointing to systemic issues), deepens learning (challenging simplistic conclusions, inviting alternative perspectives, asking "why" iteratively), and documents learning (producing tangible expressions of new understandings for evaluation) (Ash and Clayton, 2009a and 2009b; Whitney and Clayton, in press)."

The critical reflection assignments in this class exemplified the components of "High Quality Reflection" as introduced by Eyler et al. (1996) in that they were: "continuous (ongoing); connected (with assignments and activities related to and building on one another and including explicit integration with learning goals and academic material); challenging (including in terms of the expectation that students take responsibility for their own learning); and contextualized (to the community setting and broader public issues and to the students' own particular roles)" (as cited in Ash and Clayton, 2009, p. 35). In addition to weekly reflection and critical analysis essays, student crafted final papers that wove personal reflections with critical/theoretical analysis, which became the primary focus of the direct assessment.

The final paper instructions for both spring and summer final papers reflected the aims of the student learning objectives by requesting that students utilize theoretical frameworks from the course and their own personal reflections to craft a manifesto of healing as social change, incorporating a reflection on their own state of consciousness as it relates to healing practices; positionality as it relates to bias, assumptions, and social responsibility; and sense of self and capacity within local community partnerships and projects. The summer program asked specifically that students explore the philosophical and practical aspects of at least two traditional Mexican healing traditions and epistemology; demonstrate an understanding of different Mexican cultural practices, cultural communication strategies and social issues; compare, contrast and analyze points of intersection between local and global perspectives on the course topics; and situate the local circumstances in Mexico within a broader, global context (culturally, politically, socially, historically, etc.).

Methodology

The direct assessment conducted around this course was guided by the rubric (table 2), and involved close readings of student final papers from both courses to assess and compare their performance at the end of the spring and the summer courses, and to ascertain the degree to which their writing reflected the achievement of anticipated learning outcomes. This qualitative evaluation design also included a review of self-reported reflections by students and community members (including in-take and out-take surveys, course evaluations, community input, and student focus groups) regarding perceptions of growth, learning, and impact that resulted from the courses. Analyzing the self-reported data did not take priority in the evaluation project at the time (the reasons

why will be explored below) so this paper concentrates solely on the findings of the direct assessment of students' written work from both sets of courses.

The singular focus on direct assessment was a result of the College's recent accreditation review which found that too much evidence of successful learning was based entirely on self-reporting, indirect data as opposed to demonstrations of learning evident in student writing, as illuminated by direct assessment. Self-reported evaluation data was deemed as less worthy evidence of students successfully achieving stated learning outcomes and thus, in preparation for the follow-up accreditation visit, the administration decided to focus on innovative curricular offerings (i.e., the new local-global paired course program) that emphasized some of the school's most popular and foundational principles (social responsibility/community engagement and study abroad) as a pilot program with which to conduct direct assessment. As such, the administrators from the dean of faculty's office (the associate dean and the assistant director of academic curriculum), along with members of both the Study Abroad and Community Engagement Centers (the directors and assistant directors of each) were given the task of evaluating final papers from both courses. As both director of our Community Engagement Center and the faculty member who taught the course, I took on yet another role as a member of the evaluation team.

The three–part process for doing this assessment began with a critical examination of the direct assessment rubric for completeness and usefulness, an evaluation of spring student papers for the purpose of addressing inter-rater reliability and establishing a baseline, and a final evaluation of both spring and summer student papers for the purpose of assessing achievement of student learning outcomes and growth from

the baseline. The first part entailed discussing each learning outcome to be assessed and the ways in which the rubric indicated the level of achievement of each outcome (gradations to mark increasing levels of achievement—from "1" representing only "initial" achievement of the learning outcome, to "4" representing "highly developed" achievement). An earlier version of the learning rubric did not contain such gradations of achievement and proved harder to use in other assessments because students rarely completely achieved or in no way achieved some of the outcomes, but more typically achieved them to varying degrees. This has been noted by other evaluation teams, as evidenced by the work of Ash and Clayton (2009) who note: "The creation of a rubric that expresses varying levels of quality or mastery, from novice to expert or from under-developed to excellent, can be extremely helpful in guiding this [assessment] process" (p. 38). Thus, the team focused on the rubric that contained gradations of achievement and also narrowed the list of student learning outcomes (from six taught in the course to a condensed version of three) so that the assessment process would be more manageable for the timeframe provided and evaluation capacity that existed.

Second, each member of the global-local assessment team received the seven summative analysis papers from the spring semester course for the first part of a two-part norming process. First, the team members conducted an initial pilot evaluation in order to secure inter-rater reliability by having each evaluator read the same sample paper and rate it based upon their assessment of the student's level of achievement for the three learning objectives. The team then discussed their ratings assessment for the student, with an explicit emphasis on establishing a common understanding of the rubric and its application to student papers. Overall, there was a very strong consensus about the rating

results and the team felt satisfied that norming was occurring amongst the inter-raters'

approach to the evaluation.

For the second stage of the norming process, individual evaluators then read each

paper and scored students on their achievement of each learning outcome, based on how

their written work communicated their levels of understanding on the agreed upon scales

and the application of the rubric. Once all spring papers were evaluated, the team came

together to discuss each paper, their ratings, and to verify that they were each

approaching the evaluation rubric with a shared understanding. Further discussion

ensued in the actual process of sharing scores (utilizing examples from student papers to

ensure inter-rater reliability). In the discussion after the evaluation scores were compiled,

the team members found that their individual ratings, with regard to the first two

objectives, self-knowledge and intercultural understanding, were remarkably similar.

Some significant disparities in rating on the third category ("local-global connections")

led to a comprehensive discussion on whether students should be rated on their

conceptual analysis of the connections between the global and the local or based upon

their experiential understanding of the relationship. The team agreed that for students to

attain a high level (developed or highly developed) of achievement for this objective,

they must be able to demonstrate that they could integrate the conceptual knowledge they

gained through taking the course with the more experiential elements that resulted from a

hands-on engagement with the host culture. Articulating the integration of the conceptual

and the experiential led to a team consensus on how to rate the local global learning

objective and further ensured inter-rater reliability and norming across the board.

In the final step of the direct assessment process, final "scores" were determined by averaging individual evaluator scores for each student, and then the students as a group, resulting in a final set of baseline data from the spring course papers. After the second component of the course was completed (the summer abroad course) and the paired course program was effectively complete, the group returned to assess the final papers of the same students, from their second (abroad) course. Again, final "scores" were determined by averaging individual evaluator scores for each student, and then the students as a group, thus securing a set of growth scores from the summer course. This three-part process produced a cohesive and targeted approach to direct assessment which maintained focus on assessing student achievement of learning outcomes in meaningful ways that could contribute to future discussions of curriculum and program implementation.

<div align="center">**Direct Assessment Results**</div>

Results of the direct assessment of the final papers from the spring, 2010 course found that out of a possible four points (from "1" representing only "initial" achievement of the learning outcome and "4" representing "highly developed" achievement), students averaged a score of 2.64 in the category of "self-knowledge" (meaning that the average finding of the evaluators showed the students achieved this objective somewhere between the categories of "emerging" and "developing" levels of understanding, leaning toward the latter). For the category of intercultural understanding, students averaged a score of 2.30 and for the local-global connections, they averaged a score of 1.5 (which, given that they had not yet been exposed to the "global" study abroad component of the course, made sense).

In assessing the seven final papers from the summer (abroad) course, the group noticed marked improvement in student scores, not only in the third "local-global" objective, but in the other two as well. The students overall demonstrated growth in all categories: in the category of "self-knowledge" students moved from an average score of 2.64 in the spring evaluation to an average score of 3.21 after the summer course; in the category of "intercultural understanding" they moved from an average score of 2.30 to 2.64; and in the category of "local-global connections", students demonstrated the greatest growth as they moved from an average score of 1.5 to 3.21 (see table 3). The findings reveal that initial learning occurred for all students in the first course pertaining to all three assessed areas of self-knowledge, intercultural understanding and local-global connections. The assessment also found that the summer component of the local-global paired course did, in fact, produce significant growth and proved to be an additive learning experience, not simply for students' understanding of the link between the local and global, but in all categories of the two courses' learning objectives.

<div align="center">INSERT TABLE 3</div>

The students in the paired course program demonstrated learning in all areas of the assessment rubric, but in particular in the areas of self-knowledge (which was shown to have the highest marks of achievement after both the spring and the summer programs). With so many variables present, it is impossible to draw definitive conclusions about the causality of this finding, but there are some general deductions I would venture to make about why this is the case: in both courses, students engaged in a regular, critical practice of reflection, in which they demonstrated a growing awareness of self and acknowledging the knowledge, truth and values they held which they believed to

be universal. The theme of the course concentrated a great deal on the cultivation of self-knowledge and in class discussions, weekly writing activities, and through course readings, students began to recognize and challenge their own perceptions, biases, assumptions, and positions of power and privilege. The readings and lectures also explored in depth the epistemological paradigm in which most of the students were raised and educated and offered opportunities to consider other perspectives and ontologies. The course repeatedly invited them to investigate how their own personal practices of ethics, compassion, and peace or violence (within their own bodies, families, and peer groups) had a correlating impact on how those topics play out in interpersonal and structural ways in society. Given the amount of attention this set of courses gave to theories and practices of self-development, it makes sense that the "self-knowledge" category demonstrated the greatest level of achievement. Nonetheless, it is impressive for first year students to achieve at this high level (and perhaps indicates a propensity for already self-possessed students to self-select into the course).

While it is difficult to present the ways in which students demonstrated their attainment of the learning objectives through small excerpts from their papers (because more often than not, this demonstration occurred cumulatively throughout the entire paper or set of papers), a few examples from student papers that exemplify the aims of each learning outcome will be shared to provide a space for student voice. In one instance, a student wrote:

> I came into this class with previous practice in and knowledge about some of the topics covered, but my background and the culture in which I have been raised has nevertheless informed my experience. Despite my exposure to ideas outside

of the dominate hegemony, and though my intentions have been good, conventional ideology infiltrated my subconscious, shaping the words I used, the values and the scales by which I measure things.

Another student reflected on her personal experience in the community partnership with a local Native American tribe, which demonstrates specifically her ability to reflect on her own worldview and implicit assumptions about progress:

> Of Beath's seven attributes for guiding social change,[viii] I found attribute seven, 'being joyful without attachment to goals' to be the most relevant to my experience with the tribe. It took some time to adjust to my internship with the tribe. At times, I found the meetings exhausting because of the lack of organization. Often it seemed that issues would be addressed, however we would move to the next issue before completely resolving it. I find truth in the attribute of "being joyful without attachment to goals" because now, looking back at the internship experience, although not all of my goals were achieved, so much was accomplished that I feel extremely joyful. I recognize that 'progress' is seen differently depending on the cultural perspective and that I should not be frustrated, but instead, handle these differences with an open mind. […] Detaching myself from my initial goals and looking at the garden project with a critical perspective, I am overjoyed with the outcome. Although the project did not always follow the agenda I found effective, it created its own agenda, which has ultimately been extremely successful. Recognizing these differences became incredibly important when deciding the diverse strategies to implement when 'healing ourselves and our communities.'

While there are more complex ways the student could extrapolate how cultural, racial, and ethnic background influences worldview and specific notions of time, space, progress, and partnership work, her awareness and emerging analysis demonstrate development within not only the self-knowledge but the intercultural understanding learning outcome. Demonstration of learning within the intercultural understanding outcome was replicated by another student who wrote, "I realized that I had been measuring ideas using a value system created outside of the context of the cultures that generated those ideas." This understanding was sought through praxis (illuminated both by theoretical frameworks found in course readings and through experiential learning in internships), enabling students to recognize how integral intercultural understanding is when working within a community-campus partnership. One student writes:

I think it is possible to create changes in other communities, but it is necessary to have the correct mental approach when engaging in any sort of service. The first step must be to stop thinking of it as another community, and begin seeing how you are a part of the same community. My favorite quotation from the class comes from the syllabus. The quotation is from Lila Watson, an aboriginal woman. She said, 'If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us walk together.' This quotation is particularly meaningful to me because I am always wary when people go into another community to 'help' them. The word 'help' implies the superiority of the helper, and the inferiority of the one being helped. If you want to create change in another community, you must realize that they are not really a different community. We are all tied together, as citizens of the world.

To change another community, we must realize that their wellbeing is connected to our wellbeing.

This excerpt points to learning gained not only in regards to intercultural understanding but to the learning outcomes associated with community knowledge (recognizing the needs and strengths of a community, as defined through the lens and experience of that community) and social responsibility (heightened sense of personal responsibility to community issues), as well. It also begins to speak to other essential components of social justice-focused community engagement, such as recognizing our interconnectedness while underscoring the limits and potential hazards of charity (Bacon, 2002; Calderon, 2007; Kivel, 2007; Lewis, 2004; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Oden & Casey, 2007; Moely, Furco, & Reed, 2008; Morton, 1995; Mitchell, 2008; Miron & Moley, 2006; Marullo & Edwards, 2000; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000).

While there is demonstrated achievement in the intercultural understanding learning objective in both the spring and summer course assessments, it is not terribly surprising that the students did not appear to grow a great deal more by the end of the summer program. This may be attributed to the fact that deep learning and practice of intercultural understanding takes longer than a semester or summer program to achieve, (or to articulate) especially considering the disparity that existed between the cultural experience of the students (six middle to upper-class white women, and one middle-class Latina woman, all of whom were approximately 18 years old) and the community members with whom we partnered (working class Chicano, Mexican and indigenous youth and elders). The fact that they rated between the "emerging" and "developing" levels of achievement of this outcome (instead of any gradations within the first category

of "initial") demonstrates at least that the course was successful in moving them along this continuum to some degree (unless, again, they were already at that place when they entered the course, which we cannot know without having conducted pre- and post-testing). I believe that greater growth in this learning outcome is best attained over time, when students participate in on-going relationships and opportunities to practice ethical relationship building across cultural divides and expand their knowledge of diverse perspectives in examining social issues in the theoretical and practical. Perhaps also this indicates that greater training and teaching towards the complexities of "intercultural understanding" is needed; follow-up interviews exploring this topic in greater depth could aid in developing better and expanded lesson plans around this topic.

In regards to the final learning objective, "local-global connections," students demonstrated a significant leap in their achievement from spring to summer (from 1.5 to 3.21), which is most likely attributed to the depth of reading, discussion and writing they participated in during the summer program on the topics of globalization and analyzing the impact of global restructuring on Mexican indigenous healing traditions. It may also be attributed to the intentional framework of the paired-course program that laid the groundwork for students to make meaningful theoretical and practical connections between their local and global community engagement fieldwork and coursework. This is precisely the area we have seen in need of intentional linkage to address the disconnect students repeatedly report feeling in attempting to link their powerful experience abroad and at home, both in regards to their personal and their academic development.

As a result of the summer abroad program, students deepened their understanding of indigenous Mexican cosmology and practices for healing, as well as how to frame this

within discussions of globalization, development, and social change. Furthermore, they demonstrated understanding of the ability to impact global change on a local level, as this student explains:

> We must recognize that we do not need to add to pollution by traveling across the world to fight capitalism and its ripple effects. With record levels of violence and poverty, food insecurity, environmental destruction, and racism in our own community, it is apparent that there are plenty of outlets surrounding us in which to engage positively. Responding to our local circumstances with the knowledge of our global impact allows us to build power-to for our communities and empowers others to tear down fences in their locality. Because while fences divide us, make us feel alone, and disconnect us from the Earth and compassion; awareness, activism, and healing is a bridge slowly being built that will reconnect each of us to the rest of humanity, and humanity with the Earth.

The statistically significant increase in all measurements indicate that the linkage across the set of paired courses allowed students to experience exponential growth in all categories of the learning outcomes rubric. Revealed in the summative evaluation/ full readings of all student papers, it became clear that they grew significantly in a short period of time, especially in their ability to reflect on their own psychosocial well-being, what further work they needed to do in their own paths of self-care and personal development and how this related to their perceived sense of purposefulness in community-building and social change. I close this section with a final excerpt from a student paper, demonstrating not only the student's achievement within the learning outcomes framework but also illustrating many of the principal aims of the course(s):

Understanding the gaps in our knowledge, the cavities in our consciousness, and the social and economic divides that manifest as a result is necessary to the survival of humanity. We must recognize where fences are built within ourselves and on the land, segregating and marginalizing others. We can then begin to do the work of healing ourselves, and of healing our communities. To learn about the effects of our travels, the impacts of our market consumption, to realize the limits of our knowledge and to begin to respect different ways of knowing, is to begin this healing process.

Limitations, Opportunities and Lessons Learned

Just as I hope students used these courses' critical reflection assignments as a means of both deepening their learning and gaining insight for where the process and outcomes of this engagement can be strengthened, I believe it is important for me as the teacher/ evaluator to also reflect on and learn from the structure put in place to facilitate such growth. As Ash and Clayton (2009) describe it, "the designer of applied learning opportunities is best understood as a reflective practitioner herself—one who engages in the same critical reflection that she expects from her students— thereby improving her thinking and action relative to the work of generating, deepening, and documenting student learning in applied learning" (p. 28). As such, the last section of this article will focus on the limitations of and lessons learned from this experience, changes that can inform future curricular and assessment endeavors, and critical questions that remain.

Assessing student learning in community engagement is a challenging task, especially in a course that encourages experiential learning and growth on topics intimately related to a student's personal, moral and spiritual transformation.

Furthermore, measuring how well students grasp the epistemological frameworks that link indigenous knowledge systems, critical pedagogy, and interdisciplinarity, while also evaluating how students transitioned from theoretical understandings to developing a sense of agency in their engagement requires a sophisticated assessment strategy. Despite the weariness of the accreditation review team to rely on self-reporting data, I feel that triangulation of evaluation data (which would incorporate mixed methods, including ethnographic evaluation mechanisms such as formal in-field observation and participant observation, input from community partners on the student growth, and multiple indicators, such as journal writing throughout semester and results from student pre and post- course surveys) would strengthen the findings of this assessment. This additional, raw data did in fact exist but the capacity for evaluating and analyzing it data did not, which leads to the opportunity to do so in the future if support for such efforts is possible (evaluation capacity will be addressed next). Without this additional data and relying wholly on such a small sample size, demonstrating growth through only two sets of written work alone admittedly weakens the validity of the study's findings.

Other issues that may weaken the validity of the study's findings include the inability to determine which aspects of the learning outcomes were ones the students already entered the class fully aware of. I find myself in a similar position as Daniel Shapiro (2012), who noted in his own study that "because assignments were not structured for detecting changes in student attitudes, beliefs, and knowledge over the course of the semester, this study was not able to distinguish what knowledge and skills students had before entering the course from what students learned from the course and their service-learning experiences" (p. 54). In addition, even though through the direct

assessment of student writing we could often witness the depth a student's understanding of the concepts of the course and general reflection on self-awareness and personal actions, there were many occasions when the writing seemed to *assert* that the student had learned much rather than necessary *demonstrate* it. This points to the issue of a "praxis[ix] gap," wherein students may understand and be able to articulate a concept but we aren't shown if or even how they are able to apply it. I am doubtful that reading papers alone allows us to fully verify students' abilities to engage in praxis (given that the nature of praxis itself involves putting theory into action and thus assessing it would also need to occur in action). I believe that integrating other methods and evidence of learning would address in particular this potential gap and offer additional validity to the findings.

To make a comprehensive study possible, though, requires a re-thinking of priorities and responsibilities for the evaluation and community engagement center staff and faculty so that such capacity exists. This involves a complex negotiation and possible re-structuring of college time, resources, and energy towards assessment work, which had not been possible at this particular time. Given that the singular "office of institutional research" staff evaluator had recently vacated her position, it was incumbent on my colleagues and I to design and conduct the evaluation in its entirety, though none of us are professional or expert evaluators. Conducting evaluation with practitioners who lack particular evaluation expertise is common in typical within academia (Gelmon et al., 2001) but can lead to problems with the design and execution, as some readers may find in the model presented here. For example, while the direct assessment of final papers was appropriate in measuring the absolute outcomes in the rubric, in retrospect I can see that some of the general course learning outcomes were value-added outcomes, which require

pre-post test assessment. These are important lessons learned in the evaluation process but I do feel overall that the experience and knowledge each evaluator brought to the table from their years of experience as administrators, teachers, and participants in community service learning programs and evaluations was substantial enough to result in a productive and informative direct assessment model. Seeing as greater support and resources for assessment on college campuses is a rapidly growing trend (Kuh, et al., 2014), I am also hopeful that in the future both evaluation capacity and expertise at the table will increase. (This has already been the case at my college, as we now have a bolstered office of institutional research and a new office of academic assessment – due in large part to the recommendations of the most recent accreditation review).

Another reflection that has resulted from this effort is that the learning in this kind of course is often the kind of growth that emerges over time, once the student has space to ruminate on the impact on her/his lived experience. I found that the student learning measured through the activities discussed here are important but perhaps just the beginning of a longer road for comprehensive evaluation, similar to the observation by Polin and Keene (2010, p. 30) that "meaningful assessment must include the longitudinal; we know that many important impacts are developmental and realized long after the class is over. We also are aware there is significant interest in and a perceived need for expanding this area, as noted by scholars in the field (Astin, Sax, and Avalos, 1999; Denson, Vogelgesang, and Saenz, 2005; Eyler, 2000; Kiely, 2005)." Some of the greatest measures of student learning that I feel most confident in are the one-on-one conversations I had with the students in this program years later, once they were in their senior year, and had significant time and distance in which to digest and integrate the

learning of that paired course experience into their daily lives. In particular, I was impressed by how they articulated the impact of that experience in their applications for graduate school and post-baccalaureate fellowships, like the Fulbright and Watson awards, that they shared with me; these reflections eloquently demonstrated the many ways this one freshman local-global experience had taken root in both their value systems and academic and career aspirations. The take away for me in this process has pointed to the essential value of evaluating learning over time (over the course of the semester *and* over the course of student's college careers, if not beyond).

A significant hurdle negotiated in this evaluation effort relates to the broader issue of attempting to quantify deeply qualitative experiences. It was noted in the methodology section the challenge presented by the very subjective and nuanced ways in which students articulated (and demonstrated) their learning and the ways each evaluator negotiated the standard/definition of each outcome. Unpacking these nuances and potential areas for diverse demonstrations and interpretations proved critical to making the evaluation effort as streamlined and coherent as possible, but also underscored the impossibility of totally eradicating the reality that some range of diverse interpretation exists in shared qualitative analysis. This also begs the question if standards for assessing validity and inter-rater reliability that are lifted from quantitative evaluation can simply be projected onto qualitative evaluation, given the fundamental differences in the nature of the data (data collection, analysis, and sample size, in particular). Simply put, there is a heuristic importance in qualitative assessment that doesn't conform to all quantitative notions of validity. How standards for inter-rater reliability and validity scales must take into consideration the nuanced, subjective and qualitative nature of growth on personal,

political, professional, academic and civic areas is a critical question that many

qualitative researchers and evaluators have contended with (Bickman & Rog, 1998;

Bringing Theory to Practice, 2013; Creswell, 2012; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Keyes,

2002; Steinberg & Kincheloe, 1998; Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker & Donahue,

2003). In this study, we attempted to address the question of norming by conducting a

pilot assessment wherein all evaluators rated the first paper and discussed their scores and

their approach to their scoring framework to build an interpretation consensus. This

initial discussion continued amongst evaluators throughout the assessment process and

helped establish a shared understanding of approach to and interpretation of the

qualitative outcomes they assessed.

This use of critical conversations amongst evaluators to inform the assessment

process falls into the "social approach to community service learning," as characterized

by Cooks, Scharrer, and Paredes (2004), which provides "a foundation for raising

questions that place communication as central to learning and situate CSL

[community service learning] projects in their social, political, and moral context" (as

cited in Shapiro, 2012, p. 53). This context shaped the learning outcomes as they were

initially developed as well as informed the interpretation and assessment of them in

student writing. This put into motion the fact that communication of this kind resulted in

a critical learning experience for the evaluators, just as communication and context

amongst the students, faculty and community partners who developed the community

service learning partnership served to inform learning for all involved. Context also

extends to the "ethnographic sensibility" necessary in qualitative assessment so that the

assessment effort accurately captures the unique learning and growth that occurs in

experiential programs; Polin and Keene remind us that "we can move toward an ethnographic sensibility by framing the questions that drive assessment in a way that recognizes students as complex social actors and allows for the exploration of their lived experiences and sense making" (2010, p. 29).

Finally, my involvement (as both teacher and evaluator of the program) may be a red flag to some readers, in that significant time spent with the students in the classroom, in the field, and abroad invariably had an impact on my reading and evaluation of student work. In response to this potential critique, I point to the claim of Polin and Keene (2010) that this background knowledge and relationship provides an ethnographic context that can enrich rather than taint the evaluation process:

The importance of context cannot be overstated. Critiques of collecting stories as data, or of using student journals and/or critical incident reports, are that the results are not generalizable or comparable, and that it is difficult to understand the complete context from which these stories are drawn (Gelmon, Holland, Driscoll, Spring, and Kerrigan, 2001). While this could be true for external evaluators who are not immersed in the communities in which they are doing research, or for those who don't know their students well, this is not the case for those of us involved in sustained, developmental, cohort-based programs employing a relational approach to teaching, where practitioners come to know their students' context to a much greater degree than we might otherwise (Mitchell, Visconti, Keene, and Battistoni, in press). In these situations, practitioner evaluators are in a position to immerse themselves as participant observers in the communities in which they are gathering data" (p. 24).

Employing a relational approach to teaching and having had the opportunity to spend much time in the field with my students, I was afforded insight from my own participant observations, reflexive conversations with community partners, students, guest teachers and other program assistants that offered an informal triangulation from which to verify the findings that emerged in the reading of student papers. As is the practice for most feminist researchers and teachers (Bernal, Elenes, Godinez & Villenas, 2006; hooks, 1994; Lather, 1986; Madison, 2005; Mamidipudi & Gajjala, 2006; Riessman, 2005; Smith, 2002; Sudbury & Okazawa-Rey, 2009; Tellez, 2005; Wolf, 1992), I continually practiced a reflective and reflexive practice regarding any bias I held with these students I knew so well (which could result in my assessment approach being either overly empathic or overly critical). I also counted on the norming process of evaluating the same papers as my team and finding my scores to be in line with theirs, and thus I felt more assured that the ethnographic and relational approach was a beneficial rather than a problematic factor in the analysis process.

Lastly, a fundamental aspect of this program that deserves further focus is an area that most of academia has yet to fully explore and embrace, that is, recognizing the importance of student well-being and self-realization as real components of learning and intellectual skill-building within the community service learning field. While certainly there are some key scholars investigating this arena of teaching and learning (Bernal, Elenes, Godinez & Villenas, 2006; Finn, 2012; Flanagan, Constance, & Bundnik, 2011; Ginwright, 2001; Harward, 2012; hooks, 2003; Ryff & Keyes, 1995) there is still much to be explored regarding more ways to teach towards and assess this. Nuanced shifts in beliefs, values, perceptions, self-identity, purposefulness, and sense of responsibility

related to personal and social change are generally difficult qualities to grasp in an evaluation (either self-reported or direct assessment). Some quantitative standardized scales are emerging to assess student "flourishing" (Keyes, 2009), and efforts are underway for qualitative evaluation as well, but the field of service learning assessment is still just in the beginning phases of tackling assessment of student well-being in academic community service learning (Finley, 2013). I would venture to say that integrating lesson plans that more directly focus on student psycho-social well-being (and it's connection to community engagement) would not only provide critical skills to student success and empowerment but possibly impact general mental health and retention issues at schools, as well. Crafting assessment tools and approaches that can determine how this curricular focus impacts students (both in terms of academic learning goals and personal/civic development goals) requires further study in the field.

Conclusion

The aim of this essay was multi-faceted, including first of all, the desire to expand the current dialogue around community engagement to include partnerships that focus on indigenous knowledge systems and healing traditions; secondly, to expand notions of community engagement to include both local and global involvement in an effort to link subject matter and change efforts across borders; thirdly, to expand traditional notions of student engagement beyond academic and civic realms to include theoretical and experiential learning about personal, emotional, and spiritual growth; fourthly, to provide a direct assessment approach and rubric model that could successfully capture student growth in each of these areas; and lastly, to explore what challenges and further work is still needed to accurately and holistically evaluate nuanced and subjective personal and

intellectual growth that occurs over time. While this particular program is unique in its

small size, funding support, rich resources in terms of knowledgeable and willing

community and college partners, and singular approach to evaluation (through direct

assessment of student writing), I believe the heart of this project is one that may resonate

with a growing number of engaged scholars, activists, and teachers with whom I hope to

continue a shared dialogue around creating and assessing meaningful self-development

and local-global community engagement.

Tables

Table 1: Student Learning Outcomes and Evidence of Learning

Learning Objectives	Learning Outcomes	Evidence of learning
Self Knowledge	Students will reflect on, evaluate, and critique their experiences *in depth*. Students will demonstrate an awareness of their own perceptions, biases, assumptions, issues of power, privilege, positionality. Students will exhibit development in sense of self, capacity, and moral reasoning.	* Pre- and post-internship student surveys *Course evaluations *Student proposals and subsequent community-based action projects * Weekly Journal reflections *Final papers *Final presentations *Assessment by community partners *Community partner site interview debrief notes *Student focus groups
Community Knowledge	Students will recognize and practice service ethics in a weekly practicum, including how to negotiate issues of responsibility, respect, and reciprocity as they relate to participation with local community mentors and organizations. Through this community engagement, students will become more aware of local knowledge, assets, and cultures.	
Interpersonal Competency	Students will demonstrate leadership, teamwork, problem-solving and communication skills, as well as rigorous professional and ethical conduct in classroom and community settings.	
Intercultural Understanding	Students will appreciate different cultures, cross cultural boundaries, and have close connections with community members. Students will use effective strategies to communicate across cultures and engage diverse perspectives to examine social issues in the theoretical and practical.	

Local-Global Connections	Students will be able to compare, contrast, and analyze points of intersection between local and global perspectives on course topics. Students will be able to critically analyze and situate local circumstances within a broader, global context (i.e., politically, culturally, socially, historically).	
Social Responsibility	Students will demonstrate a heightened sense of personal responsibility to community issues and an awareness of systematic and historical roots of the conditions affecting local communities. Students will demonstrate an understanding of and commitment to personal ethics and values of community engagement.	

Table 2. Rubric for Assessing Student Learning in Local-Global Paired-Courses

Learning Outcome	Level of Achievement			
	Initial 1	Emerging 2	Developed 3	Highly Developed 4
Self-Knowledge	Cannot evaluate one's experiences in the field. Only reiterates observations in narrative form and does not reflect on them.	Has the ability to reflect on one's experiences in the field, but is not deeply aware of values, beliefs, and attitudes one holds and how these impact the ways in which one sees and acts with others.	Can reflect on one's experiences and also critique one's interactions with others. Shares personal thoughts and beliefs about own experiences and is aware of one's personal biases and/ or privileges.	Can reflect on, evaluate and critique one's experiences *in depth*. Demonstrates an awareness of own perceptions, biases, assumptions; issues of power, privilege, positionality. Exhibits development in sense of self, capacity, and moral reasoning.
Intercultural Understanding	Does not appreciate or empathize with different cultures,	Has empathy and appreciation for other cultures. However, still	Displays knowledge of one's biases, assumptions and perceptions	Appreciates different cultures, can cross cultural boundaries, and has close

	ways of being, or viewpoints. Lacks direct contact with community.	lacks the ability to effectively interact and connect with other cultures/ community members.	*in relating to other cultures*. Has established a working relationship with some community members and is just beginning to understand effective strategies to communicate across cultures.	connections with community members. Uses effective strategies to communicate across cultures and engage diverse perspectives to examine social issues in the theoretical and practical.
Local-Global Connections	Lacks the ability to describe local and global perspectives on course topic.	Has the ability to describe local and global perspectives on course topic but lacks skills to compare, contrast or find intersections within them. Cannot situate local circumstances within broader, global context.	Has the ability to compare and contrast but not find points of intersection between local and global perspectives on course topic. Ability to situate local circumstances within broader, global context but does not provide in-depth analysis.	Demonstrates integration of conceptual knowledge and personal experience in order to compare, contrast, identify and analyze points of intersection between local and global perspectives on course topic. Ability to critically analyze and situate local circumstances within broader, global context (i.e., politically, culturally, socially, historically).

Table 3. Direct Assessment Final Scores

Student Learning Outcomes	Spring Assessment Scores	Summer Assessment Scores

Self-Knowledge	2.64	3.21
Intercultural Understanding	2.30	2.64
Local-Global Connections	1.5	3.21

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Biography:

Tessa Hicks Peterson is the Assistant Vice President for Community Engagement and

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Notes

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[i] This description of the curricular rationale for the local-global paired course program was originally written as part of the College's grant proposal.

[ii] The participating students were all freshman because this was one of the criteria of the Mellon grant that supported the local-global paired course program (this was a strategy used to address sophomore retention issues).

[iii] The native community-campus partnership and programs that this class participated in were built over the last five years. In both my role as director of the Community Engagement Center and as a faculty collaborator, I have been a part of building this partnership since its inception but owe tremendous gratitude to the leaders of the effort, professors Erich Steinman and Gina Lamb, staff member, Scott Scoggins and native elders Julia Bogany, RobertJohn Knapp, and Tony Cerda, as well as the college students, other professors and local tribal members who have helped shaped the projects and relationships over the years.

[iv] A deeper look at the aim to "decolonize the academy" and the impacts, challenges, and importance of navigating tribal-university partnerships can be found in the companion article that explores that component of this program in greater depth. Contact the author to preview a forthcoming (unpublished) paper: Peterson, T. (2013). *Understanding Personal Transformation, Social Change, and Globalization through Indigenous Community Partnerships.*

[v] This summer program could not have been possible (nor such a success) without the fine work of my collaborator, friend, and colleague, Judith Estela Roman. As a curandera (healer), lawyer, peace studies scholar and community organizer, she has had tremendous impact on the lives of many and we were very fortunate to have her partnership and collaboration in this effort.

[vi] For greater detail on the experiences of this summer program in Mexico, contact the author to preview a forthcoming (unpublished) paper: Peterson, T. (2014). *Understanding Personal Transformation, Social Change, and Globalization through Indigenous Community Partnerships.*

[vii] Thanks are due to Sandra Richards-Mayo for her help and insight in the process of transforming the learning outcomes into an assessment rubric.

[viii] The student here is referring to the following work: Beath. A. (2005). *Consciousness in action: The power of beauty, love and courage in a violent time.* New York, NY: Lantern Books.

[ix] I defer here to the definition of praxis offered by Paulo Freire and Ira Shor as the intersectionality of practice, action, theory, and reflection (Freire and Shor,1986). The term "praxis gap" was presented to the author by a peer reviewer of this paper.