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Part III. ACADEMIC STRUCTURES THAT FOSTER SYNERGY, COLLABORATION, & COURSES:

Chapter 7: The Field School in Intercultural Education as a Model for International Service-Learning and Collaborative Action-Research Training

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Democracy means the belief that humanistic culture *should* prevail.

—John Dewey, 1938

No culture can live if it attempts to be exclusive.

—Mahatma Gandhi, 1936

The Department of Human and Organizational Development (HOD) recognizes that many of its students need to develop skills that will allow them to successfully navigate research and/or practice across cultures.[1] Our attempt to train students and utilize our core principles to address social concerns around the globe takes the form of an experiential learning model we have termed the "Field School in Intercultural Education." Previous HOD field schools have taken place in Ecuador, Argentina, China, the southwestern United States, and South Africa. Although the potential benefits of such work are vast, so too are the risks of reinforcing stereotypes of the "other" and exacerbating historical patterns of paternalistic and unsustainable international

[1] This chapter reflects the efforts of a first author (Karakos), a team of second authors (Fisher, Geller, Lunn, Palmer, and Perkins), and a team of third authors (Mihaylov, Partridge, and Shields). Each person contributed equally within his or her respective group. Names are listed

development. In this chapter, we describe the field school program, including its theoretical foundations and history, and the experiences of community partners and student participants, comparing experiences across settings and expanding on themes that have been observed consistently. Throughout our discussion, we address the complexities of simultaneously meeting the personal and professional needs of students while working with communities in ways that align with the ideals of empowerment, reciprocity, intercultural respect and learning, participatory research, and sustainability.

Design of the Field School in Intercultural Education

The concept of a "field school" in which students engage in "hands-on" learning at a site beyond the bounds of the classroom or university campus is not new.[2] Field school programs are designed to provide students with experience and skills relevant to their chosen disciplines, research topics, or professional practices; they are opportunities to apply academic concepts to a "real-world" setting. The practice of the HOD field school provides an illustrative case study to consider some of its challenges and complexities.

Former Vanderbilt Professor William Partridge designed the HOD field school to work toward specific goals aligned with the department's mission, focusing on the integration of research and action around social justice issues. In much of the world, poverty and oppression prevent people from participating in their country's or community's development as a result of their exclusion from educational opportunities, systems of justice, security of person and property, health services, financial institutions, and political representation (Partridge & Mejia, 2013). The field school provides students with opportunities to empirically investigate the obstacles that poor and socially excluded people must face to access the major institutions of society while working with community partners to develop the needed resources to sustain independent efforts to minimize or eliminate those obstacles. Our conviction is that immersing students in communities will facilitate a systematic understanding of how such obstacles often operate in people´s lives and enable students to better understand how to devise projects, programs, and policies that can include the excluded. Although this vision cannot always

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be fully realized, each successive field school strives toward immersion, investigation, and action with the overarching goal of working toward a socially just world.

Although HOD field schools have differed over the years, they generally take the form of a supervised, collaborative research project conducted in a less-developed country or area of the United States for a period of six to twelve weeks. Participating students, supervising faculty, and host community partners discuss potential projects identified by the partners and choose those that show the most promise of: (1) addressing a pressing social issue and need as defined by the community; (2) being manageable in the timeframe of the field school; (3) matching the interests of student participants; (4) using existing skills and knowledge of participants; and (5) developing new skills and knowledge for students and community partners. Participants work in teams with community members and academic partners from host countries to implement service-learning projects to develop or improve social programs, or engage in primary data collection, refining skills such as participant observation, focus group management, survey administration, and preliminary data analysis. The experience is designed for students from masters and doctoral programs, but can accommodate advanced undergraduates. When and where a field school is offered depends on funding sources and the availability of community partners in the host site. Students must complete at least two semesters of relevant course work, often including material about the host country and issues relevant to the partner communities. It also provides students with academic course credit and may count toward other program requirements such as practicum hours. Student admission to the field school is competitive and based on fit with field school needs and goals.

Although the field school bears some similarity to traditional study abroad programs, it is distinct in a number of ways. One distinction is its emphasis on development of both the university students and the community partner (versus solely the education of university students). Another is its emphasis on both research and action. Unlike study abroad, in which individual students may travel, enroll, and study on their own, collaborative team-based projects are a critical part of the HOD field school. Moreover, study abroad programs are typically administered through agreements between U.S. colleges, host universities in a foreign country, and sometimes third-party sponsors; thus, students' experiences are largely defined by the administrative and academic

routines of partnering institutions. In contrast, the HOD field school program varies annually and site-to-site depending on the specific interests and connections of supervising faculty, students, local partners, and funding sources. Thus, the field school program is distinct from study abroad programs and the HOD field school meets particular departmental goals.

Theoretical Foundations of the Field School

It is useful to preface our discussion of specific field school examples with the theoretical lens that frames them. Here, we consider civic education and service-learning—including the potential for extending Dewey's (1916) ideas on the role of education in democratic civic learning and engagement not only into the twenty-first century but internationally, international development and collaboration, participatory research, learning theory, cross-cultural adjustment and communication, and international education and study abroad programs (Crabtree, 2008). Key questions raised by each of these literatures are displayed in Table 7-1. Together, they address both student and community outcomes of international service-learning (ISL). Although the field school has a greater focus on research than most traditional service-learning experiences, the ISL literature aligns closely with our work. Consistent with the HOD department's ethos, Crabtree's (2008) framing of ISL reflects a transdisciplinary approach, in which scholars bring different disciplines together to jointly create new theories, methods, or applications, to understanding effective ISL and considers outcomes at multiple ecological levels (Christens & Perkins, 2008).

The recent proliferation of service-learning on university campuses likely results from increased public demand for institutions of higher education to serve the public good (Burkhardt & Merisotis, 2006; Combs & Schmidt, 2013) and the accumulation of research demonstrating the academic, social, and civic benefits of experiential learning (Eyler & Giles, 1999). However, service-learning without adequate preparation, critical reflection, and strong community input can reinforce existing stereotypes and further divide universities and communities. According to Crabtree (2008), this risk is exacerbated in international contexts, where students may be unprepared for comprehending vast social inequities and understanding different cultural norms and practices. Further, prior

experiences with externally driven development may predispose communities to regard foreign students with elevated skepticism or optimism. This risk is exacerbated when possibilities for a sustainable university-community relationship are limited by time and distance. Crabtree's (2008) research focuses on the experiences of undergraduate students (or younger). Our work extends previous research by describing the unique advantages and challenges of engaging graduate students in such work.

Table 7-1: Key Literatures and Questions to Consider Within International Service-Learning Programs

Literature	Key Questions
Civic education and service-learning	To what extent do communities benefit from service-learning? What are the long-term student and community impacts of service-learning?
Development and collaboration	To what extent does ISL address root causes of social problems? To what extent do communities participate in project design, implementation, and assessment?
Participatory research	How can communities be involved in all stages of the research process? How does participatory research improve both student and community outcomes?
Learning theory	How does experiential learning influence students differently from traditional classroom learning? What is the role of critical reflection in transformational learning?
Cross-cultural adjustment and communication	How do cross-cultural experiences influence students? What factors facilitate such positive impacts?
International education and study abroad	How has globalization impacted the ability of students to immerse themselves fully in another culture?

Literature suggests that student and community outcomes should be synergistic. When students benefit, so too should communities, and vice versa. Service-learning literature typically positions student- and community-level outcomes as competing interests, perhaps because institutions of higher education are focused on student learning (Cruz & Giles, 2000). Crabtree (2008) states, "attention to community-level concerns is underwhelming at best" (p. 23). She suggests principles from participatory action research

(PAR) and feminist research may guide ISL. Both PAR and feminist research stress that researchers must consider their positions of power, avoid conducting research that reproduces patterns of social injustice, and most importantly, collaborate with communities during all stages of the research process. The strong, trusting, reciprocal relationships that result will often benefit communities and enhance the transformational learning experiences of students. This same scholar offers three questions that have guided her own experience with ISL and bear directly on our experiences with HOD field schools. How do ISL and field school programs: (1) balance student learning with community improvement, working toward "sustainable improvements and meaningful social change," (2) empower all participants, neither "reinforcing nor exacerbating the social distance among them," and (3) avoid becoming paralyzed by social problems that seem too vast and overwhelming to address responsibly in a short period of time (p. 29). These questions raise important issues that have emerged in nearly every HOD field school. The reader is challenged to bear these questions in mind and join us in working to meaningfully explore them.

History of HOD Field Schools

Professor William Partridge organized the first three field schools during the summers of 2003, 2004, and 2005 in the Ecuadorian cities of Riobamba, San Lorenzo, and Otavalo among Quichua and Afro-Ecuadorian peoples. They centered on the impacts of programs aimed at building human and social capital in minority communities through grants provided to bright but poor young people to finish high school, university, or post-graduate studies. Funders included Vanderbilt's Peabody College of Education and Human Development (2003–2007) and the Research Institute for the Study of Man in New York (2004–2005). Professor Isaac Prilleltensky led a field school in Buenos Aires in 2006, focusing on poverty in "villas miserias," or "misery villages" as they are known in Argentina. Students partnered with governmental and local grass roots organizations to understand residents' challenges and contribute to community organizing.

Professor Douglas Perkins organized the 2007 field school in Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, an interior area of southern China with a large ethnic minority population. Chinese university students and faculty worked with eleven Vanderbilt

students to design and implement four projects local organizations needed and welcomed. In one project, students and a local hospital and center for disease control collected data on the changing dietary habits of youth and associated health trends. A second project identified educational resource and quality disparities in rural versus urban schools and assisted English language instruction. Community needs and assets assessments were also conducted in a small city near Vietnam and in a poor rural area (Robinson & Perkins, 2009).

In 2009, Professor Sharon Shields spearheaded student research in a poor geographically isolated community in New Mexico to identify and enhance community resources for healthy living, healthy dietary options, and physical activity. Students and community partners from a local private hospital collected community data; students then analyzed the data and presented it to a community advisory board. This endeavor was not explicitly envisioned as a field school, and did not engage with community partners until after the identification of the research topic and study design. Instead, it emerged out of an 11-year relationship built on research, training, and service exchanges with the University of New Mexico–Gallup that facilitated a partnership with local residents. The experience reflected many field school features that are relevant here.

In 2012, Professors Douglas Perkins, Maury Nation, and Gina Frieden obtained a grant from the U.S. Department of Education Fulbright-Hays Group Projects Abroad program (along with the U.S. Agency for International Development, an excellent potential source for supporting international service-learning) to support a summer field school in Cape Town, South Africa, including educational tours of Durban, Johannesburg, and Pretoria. Participants included fifteen students from all three HOD graduate programs and two South African graduate students. Each of the three main projects included a team of students from multiple programs working in a low-income neighborhood. One team studied high school dropout dynamics in partnership with school stakeholders. Another project focused on professional development for primary school teachers and the creation of a program to foster students' social and emotional learning. The third assessed treatment adherence and stressful life events among individuals with HIV/AIDS at a local clinic. In all three projects, students provided suggestions and tools for community partners to continue the work after they left. The brief field time and ambitious goals

create an intense experience as well as a wealth of lessons learned—both successes and challenges. We now discuss the experiences of community partners and student participants based on the three most recent HOD field schools in China, New Mexico, and South Africa.

Community Partners' Experiences

Each field school is primarily comprised of two groups: participating students and local community partners. The following sections describe the nature of the relationships cultivated with community partners, challenges managing expectations, issues around work and relationship sustainability, use of community-based participatory research methods, and challenges inherent to cultural outsiders working with local communities.

University-Community Partnerships

In each field school, the various types of partners and relationships reflect responsiveness to local settings. Community partners contributed in varying ways. Some provided local legitimacy needed for project success; others connected the university with additional partners; others helped recruit research participants; and still others worked directly with the research team during data collection and analyses. Despite efforts by field school participants and organizers toward flexibility and responsiveness to community needs and preferences, tensions between university and community partners are common. Differing expectations have been a common source of misunderstanding. Another source of possible tension arises when more than two parties are involved; other academic partners, local NGOs (non-governmental organizations), or a number of other groups might also be working with the local community around the relevant issue. For example, in New Mexico, three universities had partnered together and the inter-group values and expectations differed greatly. The number of involved parties put additional strain on the community partner to interpret inter-organizational dynamics and to reconcile the sometimes-conflicting messages from the different institutions.

The limited resources—especially time—of the local community partners can also challenge relationship building. Field school participants must endeavor to create maximally beneficial and minimally taxing opportunities for community partnerships.

Such efforts must happen alongside strategies to maximize project ownership and participation by community partners. However, this balancing act can take a toll on field school participants. When soliciting approval from community agents and officials to ensure project ownership, field school participants may be unsure of how to proceed when approval is not granted or when community partners and field school participants have different priorities. For example, local officials in China blocked a rural needs assessment project and delayed an urban needs assessment project for fear of criticism and emboldening Chinese students and citizens. In New Mexico, offers from local officials to promote the project were not realized. In South Africa, some meetings with local NGO representatives were slow to materialize, possibly as a result of field school participants' arrival when many locals were traveling. In each case, field school participants lacked full understanding of the context that might have allowed them to anticipate and navigate these complications to maximize community partners' contributions. Although developing relationships is challenging, the potential benefits for both parties far outweigh the work required to overcome the challenges.

Managing Expectations

Differing inter-group expectations are a common source of misunderstanding that can create disappointment or frustration for one or both groups. For community partners, the field school is often their first opportunity to work on a research project, and members may be unclear about what this work entails, their role, and the anticipated outcomes. This misunderstanding might result in part from field school participants failing to communicate expectations to the community or naïveté about the realities of how this work might progress (for example, slower than expected, less popular than hoped). Fieldwork can be an unpredictable endeavor and expectations from both sides must be continually renegotiated. Thus, successful partnerships require honest and open communication throughout all project stages. Managing expectations presented a major challenge in the China field school as last-minute changes required significant restructuring. Although the public health and schools projects went smoothly, the two remaining projects, assessing urban and rural community needs and assets, were considered potentially sensitive or embarrassing by local Communist Party officials in the

university and city government who were not accustomed to international collaboration (Robinson & Perkins, 2009). Thus, the urban project had to change partners in the final weeks of the field school to another university and city that welcomed the project and foreign collaboration. Selecting local partners with more international experience and more local political clout could have helped avoid many barriers and improve community participation. Unfortunately, the rural project did not receive local approval until it was too late for completion, forcing students to switch to a less controversial project. The ability to be flexible in response to changing circumstances is essential to successful field school experiences.

In New Mexico, community partners initially expressed confusion over specific, concrete project deliverables after idealistic visions of the partnership during the planning phase had dissipated. Nearing the end of data collection, community members remained uncertain about whether the project had been worth their investment. Several months after completion, they acknowledged the project's usefulness for bringing together relevant stakeholders in addressing community needs because advisory groups formed as a result of the project continued to function independently. According to one community partner during post-field school interviews:

> I might even be so bold to say that the real failure or success of this past research project is coming up. [. . .] If some significant things happen over the next year, then I would consider this research project very successful. But right now, I can't tell.

Although primary project goals were not achieved, the community partners had flexible expectations. Communicating about expectations and progress helped achieve feelings of some level of project success because all parties appreciated the final outcome and were not surprised by the progress made during the field school.

Additionally, field school participants working at a local high school in South Africa worked continually to manage expectations with the school principal, teachers, coaches, local police, and other key community stakeholders. Because these stakeholders frequently met and established a clear idea of desired project deliverables, they opened lines of communication (for example, group meetings about progress and next steps).

Although expected outcomes shifted, from developing a dropout prevention program to providing tools to continually address this issue as a community, effective communication meant that all partners seemed pleased with the resulting products. One community stakeholder working in the high school reported in a post-field school interview:

> The very fact that the (field school students) have been here and the processes that (were) facilitated—all the workshops and the interviews—have been such an eye-opener for me . . . because it has woken me up to the fact that . . . there needs to be a process, it needs to have structure. It's been hugely helpful, absolutely.

Expectations are almost certain to change throughout the field school. Communicating frequently and honestly about whether and how expectations align with outcomes is key.

Sustainability

It is important to intentionally provide mechanisms to maintain relationships over time such that interested community partners can continue field school work after participants depart. The challenges, opportunities, and success of such efforts have varied. Many field schools adopted a model in which community representatives are designated as liaisons between the university and community partners. Such persons typically work in other full-time capacities; thus their time and resources are already potentially strained, making sustainability of this new role difficult. For example, in the New Mexico project, an effort to promote long-term sustainability was made by designating half of the grant funding to the community partner, offsetting some of the financial burden that participation could entail. However, this mechanism did not result in a reduced workload for the primary community partner because the funding was not used for staffing but rather for anticipated future intervention costs and for other project-related costs that the grant did not anticipate. Academic partners recognized the heavy burden of the project on the community partner and attempted to minimize the time she had to spend in meetings and preparation. In retrospect, this strategy actually resulted in increased project ambiguity and disconnect, thus diminishing its sustainability over

time. Thus, efforts to be sensitive to time and financial resources inadvertently caused neglect of an important dimension of fieldwork—community buy-in.

Participants in the South African field school began with the understanding that there was no sustainable source of funding for their work. Therefore, they included activities to facilitate organizational capacity building to maximize impact and project sustainability. One way sustainability was accomplished was by training community members. For example, at a township primary school, field school participants provided staff training in classroom discipline and stress management, and student training in conflict resolution and positive communication. Another student, placed at an NGO in the same township, trained parents to better understand healthy childhood development and parenting practices. At another site, field school participants created a survey and implemented a tracking system to monitor high school dropout rates that staff members could continue to use to gather new information about student risk and protective factors. Similarly, during two projects in China, sustainability was promoted by providing local partners with empirical data to inform health promotion and community development decisions in addition to teaching applied research skills so they could continue to collect new data over time. Teaching research and application skills and knowledge to community partners is one way field school participants have helped build sustainability. Project sustainability and partnerships can extend beyond the field school. For example, in South Africa, field school participants ensured that community partners were able to contact them post-project through email, phone, and GoogleDocs. Although partners demonstrated the skills and resources to utilize these tools, subsequent communication was not as frequent or substantive as participants and partners had hoped. Creative uses of time during field schools and technology afterward have enabled some degree of sustainability, although there is still much opportunity for improvement.

Community-Based Participatory Methods

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) methods align closely with the HOD ethos, combining research and service for social change (Mosavel, Simon, van Stade, & Buchbinder, 2005). One of the strengths of the South African field school was the use of CBPR methods. Participants studied potential partner schools and organizations prior to the field school. Yet final partners were selected and projects developed on-site in collaboration with community organizations. During an initial site visit, community stakeholders identified their top priority as understanding the school's high dropout rate in order to develop prevention programs. Receiving the invitation to collaborate directly from the school was an important step for at least two reasons. First, it meant that the field school group was working at the request of the community rather than imposing itself in a well-intentioned but paternalistic way. Second, it granted the field school participants access to teachers, administrators, staff, students, and community partners in a way that would not have been possible without their invitation.

After the invitation, field school participants spent time in conversation with interested stakeholders (e.g., teachers, students). Community members influenced the final products. For example, school personnel wanted to be able to track students as they progressed through high school to assess various factors potentially related to dropout. In response, participants developed a student survey and an associated web-based spreadsheet wherein information could be collected, recorded, and used by staff. Drafting the survey was an iterative process during which school staff provided feedback about wording and content. After agreeing on a final version, school members were trained to administer the survey and record the data in a format that would enable them to continue post-field school. Thus, CBPR methods facilitated an experience that was beneficial for all invested parties.

Although utilization of CBPR methods confers many benefits, this approach also presents some challenges. For example, waiting until after the start of field school to meet and choose partners, observe settings, and plan projects leaves less

time to carry out actual project work. To offset this potential problem in China, faculty and graduate students identified potential partners prior to the start of the field school and used a semester-long preparatory course to communicate with them and collaboratively plan projects via email and Skype. The study of changing youth diet and health outcomes, the most successful of the four projects in China, would not have been feasible if students had not had time to prepare and plan collaboratively with local partners in advance. Although full implementation of CBPR methods was the goal in each project, they were implemented to varying degrees based on available resources to community partners and field school participants as well as the level of group trust.

Challenges of Being Cultural Outsiders

By definition, field school participants are outsiders in their host community. This creates unique challenges for both groups (Chawla-Duggan, 2007; Young, 2005). For many community partners, the field school might be their first experience working intensively with university members who have substantial academic training but little applied community work experience. This type of interaction can easily lend itself to undesirable power differentials, especially if communication has not been honest and frequent and if community partners are unsure about expectations (Merriam et al., 2001). Some community members may also be uncomfortable with or unaccustomed to serving as community representatives. Underlying suspicion or distrust may be especially acute in communities that have participated in research projects with little benefit to them (Smith-Morris, 2007). Moreover, as cultural "outsiders" researchers may not understand the complex dynamics that operate in the community and are necessary for successful work there (Mosavel, Simon, van Stade, & Buchbinder, 2005). Pre-trip orientation to the culture and history of the site is crucial. Furthermore, the definition of project "success" may be ambiguous and the practical implications

from data analyses may be unclear. One community partner from the New Mexico site revealed his concern:

> I don't think the advisory council members really understood what the implications of this research study would be. Even now, I'm not quite sure what all this means, all this data means, or what we can do with it, or what kind of policy steps we can take.

Assumptions about differing amounts of inter-group knowledge often pose challenges. Developing relationships among cultural insiders and outsiders requires careful consideration of inter-group assumptions and requires varied approaches for developing and fostering communication (Maeda, 2011). Field school participants must also remember that community partners are experts and provide invaluable information about local context. Honoring inter-group expertise is one approach to reduce power differentials between field school participants and community partners, minimize ethnocentrism, and increase cultural appreciation.

The group in South Africa bridged this gap by developing relationships with community stakeholders before fully delving into project work as well as by listening more than talking. In one community meeting, a South African pointedly asked field school participants, "Where are the coloured researchers?" Although he eventually became a key ally in supporting the project, his remark reminds us of the importance of a racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse field school team and the limitations of our team's profile and skill set in this regard. By talking directly about obvious cultural gaps, this community partner pushed the group to more open communication and greater willingness to discuss difficult topics, which helped navigate the challenges of collaborative work between cultural insiders and outsiders. Thus cultural differences present challenges, but also rich opportunities for learning (Chawla-Duggan, 2007).

Student Participants' Experiences

Educators must understand how to prepare students for the field school program, manage their expectations throughout the process, and facilitate formative

learning experiences. Understanding diverse student profiles can lead to an understanding of how field schools can best develop culturally responsive, committed, and highly skilled researchers and practitioners.

Preparing, Planning, and Reflecting: Cultivating Student Buy-In

The field school is designed to involve students of varying academic and professional backgrounds. It is often the first exposure some students have to poverty, community tensions, and cultural diversity. Moreover, their shocked reactions often occur in recognition of their own middle- and upper-class privilege as they examine for the first time how their own experiences and beliefs about other groups are vastly different from reality. Such experiences often lead to questions about their own communities, values, and careers. To prepare them for this intense, potentially jarring experience, field school participants are generally required to complete specific coursework. For example, before the South Africa field school, participants were required to take an intensive three-week course about the history and current cultural climate of South Africa, as well as research topics of personal interest such as HIV interventions or youth activism in impoverished communities. Although this preparation was valuable, post-field school discussions suggested the value of holding the preparatory course on site with instruction by local experts and professionals. For example, a local South African tour was an invaluable resource. The combination of localized knowledge with direct experience and cultural immersion provided an educational lesson that would be impossible to deliver remotely. In addition to context-specific education, general courses about cultural understanding and communication can provide essential training for students prior to a culturally immersive experience (for example, Schmidt & Finkbeiner, 2006).

Student schedules present another challenge to proper preparation, particularly when they are traveling to the field school from other research or project sites. This can lead to a significant gap between the preparatory course and

field site arrival. In contrast, a tight timeline between preparatory course completion and the beginning of field school can make sufficient pre-field school reflection a challenge. Making time for reflection on-site can also be difficult based on time constraints. In addition, graduate students who are accustomed to more autonomy than undergraduate students may be resistant to having group reflection times dictated during their "free time." Despite field school organizers' best efforts, missed opportunities to provide preparation, planning, and reflection can be detrimental to student experiences. Time for these pre- and post- reflection activities must be prioritized to cultivate buy-in by all involved.

Managing Expectations

Student expectations around personal experiences, project work, and on-site work must be managed. Despite warnings that they were entering an unpredictable space where navigating cultural differences and negotiating the barriers of local political systems were expected, several students were repeatedly frustrated by the realities they experienced. Field school participants' flexibility and responsiveness are critical in fostering community partners' involvement in and ownership of work. This flexibility can limit the formation of clearly defined roles and expectations. Communication with students about the changing nature of a project and expectations can alleviate some of the problem; in some cases, it may not be apparent to leaders that students have disparate expectations about roles and responsibilities. For example, the New Mexico project could be more accurately described as a field *experience*—as opposed to a field *school*—because it did not emphasize student learning or devote substantial attention to student needs. Instead, the project largely involved students as study personnel in a community field setting. Many students expected more time and attention from faculty, diverse learning experiences in the field, and more direct contact with community members. The contrast of these expectations with the project reality led to disappointment and unmotivated students.

In South Africa, master's and doctoral-level students had different interests: Some students wanted practical experience and others wanted research experience. Having multiple projects with flexibility to match student interests and skills enabled community members to take full advantage of students' abilities during projects and enabled students to satisfy their own personal and professional goals. Several students were able to work directly with South African youth, teachers, and parents while others were able to conduct research in partnership with local organizations. Unfortunately, the time required to facilitate such meetings reduced student work time with community partners. Several other timing constraints in South Africa limited reflection periods during which tensions about the field school's work/immersion balance and student expectations could have possibly been addressed.

Student followup after program completion often presents an additional challenge. Meaning-making often occurs well beyond the end of field school, especially given the short timeline for the experience. Students commonly question what it means to exit their field sites, return to their community of relative privilege, and leave the host community perhaps as it had been before. A student from the New Mexico project notes:

> We don't know what the impact of our research has been, and I think that's kind of unfortunate, not just because you want to help the population, but also, as a researcher you want to feel that the work that you did and the effort that you put in and the commitment you made was for a good purpose . . . [It's not] that I'm saying nothing has happened, but it just hasn't been very transparent.

Initial preparation as well as discussion and reflection throughout and at the close of the project assists students in assessing the totality of their experiences and make meaning from them. Yet the task of reflection can be difficult. For example, in South Africa, students left the country at varying times—rendering post-field school reflections logistically impossible. Time for this had not been planned and protected in advance. Meeting all participants' expectations is an impossible task. The goal is to manage expectations, which can be accomplished through open,

honest communication and continual dialogue among all parties. In addition, preparatory courses, student flexibility, post-reflection sessions, and debriefing sessions throughout the field school are important tools in managing student expectations.

Working with Academic Partners

Field schools are designed to involve a partner academic institution at the host location. This partnership enables students from a local university together with U.S.-based students to further mutual learning opportunities. Inclusion of local students has had varying degrees of success in the field schools. The China field school would not have been possible without close collaboration of local faculty and students. They facilitated agenda development, located housing for field school participants, identified partners, negotiated entrée, contributed to the design of projects and collection of data, and served as translators. In contrast, the South Africa field school did not involve a formal academic partner, but included two local students who contributed significantly to the experiences of the American students and also reported a high level of educational benefit. More structured involvement from a local South African academic institution would have provided infrastructure to ensure that the work done was part of a larger, strategic initiative, thereby ensuring the continuity and sustainability deemed important by both field school members and local partners.

Another critical function of local academic partners is the provision of institutional resources. For example, many field school participants hope to gather data during their project in order to publish peer-reviewed articles. Data collection often requires Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval. Gaining IRB approval from the home institution can be especially difficult given the ever changing and often last minute planning of in-country projects. For example, two projects in South Africa necessitated IRB approval. Instead of trying to initiate a new proposal through the Vanderbilt University IRB, team members worked under the umbrella

of existing approved projects from South African IRBs. These approvals facilitated opportunities to present and publish research that might otherwise not have been possible. Choosing the right academic partners is critical. For example, the Chinese field school may have proceeded more smoothly had a university with experience working with international groups been initially chosen. One of the goals of field schools is to work where the needs are greatest and students can have the most impact, so there may be some value in introducing international collaborations to partners who have not experienced them. Thus, selecting partners is a delicate balance of prioritizing places with the greatest need and ensuring selection of projects that are feasible within field school constraints. Regardless of the institution, local academic partners help ensure sustainability and community access and are critical to the success of field schools.

Facilitating a Field School Experience

The following list provides suggested action items to help guide educators interested in facilitating a field school experience based on the authors' experience with prior field schools. We acknowledge that each field school and site is different; the model must therefore be adapted to tailor each action item to the needs and situation of a particular community. For example, some field schools might not have the opportunity to work closely with community partners prior to entering the site, requiring alternative, creative ways of preparing and planning for stakeholders. Other field schools might involve students with diverse interests and professional development needs, requiring responsive mentorship and strategic planning from faculty leaders. Every attempt should be made to follow the key principles of these action items, namely: prepare thoroughly, communicate honestly, act collaboratively, and reflect continually.

Chapter 7: Getting Started! The Field School in Intercultural Education

Action Item 1: *Update your reading list.* Assign Donald Schön's The Reflective Practitioner (1983) as required reading. This text will provide a baseline for students, faculty, and community partners to discuss expectations of the roles of different stakeholders. Use this common reading to define, discuss, and problematize concepts of power, professional, expertise, and action, and

identify sources of power inequality that may be associated with these terms. Identify additional readings specific to the location and partners with which you will be working to familiarize students and faculty with the language, culture, geography, and politics of the region and community.

Action Item 2: *Define your vision of an excellent field school experience.* Together with all stakeholders on your project, read chapter 9, "Strengthening the Role of Service in the College Curriculum," in Eyler & Giles (1999) Where's the service in service-learning? Use it to identify specific metrics for how participants will identify both quality learning and service during the project. These dimensions—quality of learning and quality of service—can guide the conversation about what it means to have a community-school partnership. The chapter provides guidance on reflection as well.

Action Item 3: *Begin the experience before the experience begins.* Assign students to begin taking field notes (on the planning and preparation activities leading up to the field school placement) and reflecting on their experience well before they arrive in the field. Assign reflective writing to uncover student expectations, both academic/work-related and affective/hopes and fears. These activities can serve as benchmarks to which students can return throughout the experience. Prompts and guidelines for different types of reflective journals are described in "Reflection in service learning: Making meaning of experience" by R. G. Bringle and J. A. Hatcher (Chapter 1 in the service learning toolkit, available free online).

Action Item 4: *Incorporate the participatory action research model.* Use students' reflections and field notes as rich data sources from which to draw theoretical understandings about the experience. Encourage students to move through the action research model. Draw a map of the model to post in a common area and chart your progress through the model as a community. Free resources on participatory action research (including methods, tools, and prompts for scaffolding conversations to support it) can be found at the Community Toolbox (www.ctb.ku.edu).

Action Item 5: *Model and practice structured times for dialogue.* Before students arrive in the field, plan ahead to set aside times to negotiate and renegotiate the role of different stakeholders. Prepare students, faculty, and community partners for the possibility that some situations may not go as planned such that they are more comfortable adjusting expectations, procedures, roles, and relationships as needed. Discuss all stakeholders' expectations on a regular basis, encouraging honest views of whether expectations will be met or need to be adjusted with time.

Action Item 6: *Provide safe space for affective responses.* Be prepared for all participants to have a wider variety of feelings and possibly more emotional reactions than they may have in a traditional work, course, or lab setting. Experiential learning involves the whole person and this long-lasting learning typically requires greater emotional investment. Be sure to set aside time for adequate self-care (rest, exercise, and breaks) and for debriefing about difficult issues that may emerge in the field. Continue to engage in direct conversations about the concepts of power, professionalism, expertise, and action.

Action Item 7: *Consider the field experience an ongoing relationship.* The uncertainty of an applied experience—the time required for negotiating and renegotiating relationships, working outside the traditional university power dynamic, and working in an unfamiliar culture—may mean that originally intended goals cannot be reached in the timeframes established. Understand that the field experience process itself, particularly the way stakeholders are included and conflicts are managed, may be more important than the immediate outcomes. Include unmet goals and unanswered questions in subsequent rounds of the action research cycle and encourage participants to learn as much as they can where they are each day.

Conclusions and Implications

With each new iteration, the field school program adjusts to meet the ever-changing needs of students and local community partners in a way that remains consistent with our mission. By doing so, the questions explicated by Crabtree (2008) are in constant focus—questions about the balance of student learning with sustainable community change, empowering participants without unintentionally replicating power differentials, and taking on major social problems without allowing their magnitude to overwhelm participants. Additionally, given the unique contexts of each field school, this process must cater to the specific strengths, barriers, and histories of community partners. One way we have addressed the first two questions raised by Crabtree (2008) is through the use of community-based participatory research methods. Future field schools—and other programs seeking to carry out this kind of cross-cultural, collaborative work—would benefit from instituting formal accountability measures to help participants continually evaluate communication as well as power differentials. This kind of dialogue can be difficult, especially with cultural differences in communication styles. Yet formally agreeing to continual conversations can facilitate this process and build trusting relationships. For students engaging in a field school, experiencing the lived realities of poverty and oppression can be overwhelming. With adequate preparation and reflection they can lead to important discussions and reflections about privilege, personal values, and inequality; without support they can easily lead to feelings of helplessness. Preparatory coursework and self-reflection throughout time on-site and afterwards can better prepare students. Times for group processing, reflecting, and de-briefing must be a consistent and systematic part of every field school experience. Allowing student and community member feedback also helps create a sense of ownership, facilitating more open, meaningful dialogue, and a potentially transformative experience for all involved.

Although not a panacea, we posit that field schools reflect one contemporary approach to extend Dewey's (1916, 1939) emphasis on theory and praxis outside the traditional classroom. Interested readers can pursue this form of intercultural education by seeking information and possible strategic partnerships with other institutions with greater funding or that have successfully sponsored field schools, seeking funding via sources such as the U.S. Department of Education and the Agency for International Development,

tapping into social media such as Skype and GoogleDocs to interact with potential and/or existing community partners despite limited resources, initially sponsoring small-scale field schools locally and regionally that lend themselves to car or bus transport, and continuing sustained work by prior field schools.

The field school approach extends international service learning by allowing students to engage in action research using community-based participatory methods to respond to social issues together with community partners who engage continually in this work. Drawing from the principles of international service-learning *and* the values of the HOD department, the field school challenges faculty, students, and community partners to expand their thinking, diversify their toolbox of research and practice skills, and consider how their personal and professional strengths can be used to work toward community betterment. Simultaneously, it can create bridges between the university and community partners, increase the relevance of practical research, open doors to new resources, and inspire new, innovative approaches to combat social problems. Field schools provide an opportunity for students and communities to engage each other to promote partnership, collaboration, and experiential learning. Although the field schools described here have all been located far from the home institution, we propose that other groups can draw from many of the field school principals, programs, and lessons learned to implement a similar experience wherever opportunities allow, whether in their local community, a neighboring state, or a distant country.

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