

Service, Ethnography, and the “Leap Of Faith”: A Spiritan Catholic Perspective on Service Learning

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This article considers the state of service and experiential learning initiatives in higher education, especially in Catholic universities. Concluding that the Catholic mission of service, education, moral values, world concerns, and ecumenism can be integrated into student experience, the essay offers a model of service ethnography. Service ethnography is a research method wherein ethnographers undertake service with the intercultural community as a central component of their learning. The model is explored via a case study, demonstrating the experiences of students at a Catholic university and using their reflections to describe a new vision of ethnography as a “leap of faith.”

Introduction

In the past decade, service learning has become *de rigueur* in the academy. It is widely regarded as highly beneficial to educational institutions and society at large. Through service learning, students can begin a long life of civic responsibility within the context of a broadened worldview. Catholic universities, whose missions call for compassion and social responsibility, offer inspired sites for service learning.

Yet like all innovations in higher education, the concept of service learning should be treated as an evolving one with potential for improvement. Service learning should be critiqued, enhanced, and integrated into larger fields of endeavor. The work of critique and enhancement is under way in some circles of higher education, as a literature review below will indicate. This last element of integration is discussed in the following pages. This essay proposes that a holistic approach to teaching, research, and service would alleviate some criticisms of service learning and enhance its value for all stakeholders. The model described integrates service learning and field research, seeking new insight into intercultural and experiential education. This model has been tested at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh through a project at a Catholic parish on the Flathead Reservation. The resulting integration is termed service ethnography.

This essay proposes to define service ethnography: It is a research method that brings together participant-observation and qualitative inquiry with service and experiential learning. The bringing together of these elements is not intended as a mere combination—a research project with service tacked on, for example—but instead aims at true synergy in the project from beginning to end. As the essay explains from the point of view of the students, the synergy results in large part from student reflection, an essential component of service learning. The goal of service ethnography is to practice social justice and aim toward the highest degree of ethics possible in research. It is hoped that higher education’s false divisions between research, teaching, and service can be bridged in service ethnography.

The merging of service learning and ethnographic research in service ethnography arises from three motives. First, the benefits of service learning are present. Second, within Catholic higher education there is an increased call for undergraduate students to have a greater grasp of epistemology and research methods. The Catholic tradition of inquiry, as the title of this journal suggests, is paramount in Catholic universities. Inquiry in the Catholic tradition is textured differently from research at non-mission-oriented institutions. Inquiry concerns the pursuit of truth with the end goal of illumination. Naturally, the pursuit of truth is not merely a practical matter; epistemology and reflection are at the heart of this pursuit. Undergraduate students need to participate in these activities. A recent study at the University of Notre Dame concluded that emphasis on undergraduate research participation results in greater student satisfaction with professors’ teaching—contradicting false concerns that research somehow diminishes the delivery of courses (Flory, 2006). Service learning is an effective way to teach research methods because of its typical applied emphasis (Keyton, 2001). The second motive toward inquiry is thus fulfilled.

A third motive for the development of service ethnography is that most ethnographers are continually seeking more ethical ways to engage human communication. As a brief literature review below indicates, over the past century ethnography has moved from the exploitation of the other to a danger of self-centeredness on the part of the researcher. Service ethnography may offer an alternative, or at least a middle road, to these two poles of other and self. Service ethnography happens in the space where students, teachers, and community partners work together and allow new knowledge to emerge on a broad scale. Catholic higher education offers an ideal context for more ethical, compassionate, and reflective approaches to inquiry.

To unpack this call for service ethnography, the following pages begin with an overview of major ideas about ethnography, service learning, and

the particular charisms of one religious community: the Spiritans. Next is a description of the methodology of a recent service ethnography project called “Giving Away” at a Catholic university. The essay discusses the results of that project and then treats it as a case study for the potential of service ethnography. Since the case occurred at a Catholic university in the Spiritan tradition, a new model of ethnography as a “leap of faith” is put forward. Implications and suggestions for further research and practice in service ethnography conclude the essay.

Perspectives on Ethnography, Service, and the Spiritan Catholic Mission

Ethnography is the interpretive research method of participant-observation. The researcher immerses oneself in the field, approaching the social and communal lives of others in an experiential way. Ethnography typically involves notes on one’s observations, supported by extensive interviewing.

The ethnographer’s relationship to the other seemed simple in the dawn of anthropology, which was the first discipline to employ ethnography. The researcher’s self was diametrically and sometimes dramatically opposed to the exotic other under observation. Ethnography has changed since then, branching out into other disciplines. The past 100 years has seen a paradigm shift not merely in methodology, but in the nature of intercultural relationships. As Geertz (1988) points out, “The end of colonialism altered radically the nature of the social relationship between those who ask and look and those who are asked and looked at” (p. 131). Clifford (1988) argues “that identity, ethnographically considered, must always be mixed, relational, and inventive” (p. 10). Indeed, the public self is composed of a variety of sociocultural components (Turner, 1986).

Turner’s (1986) term “sociocultural” is an apt description for the importance of identity in ethnography. Our identities are not merely our own; they present the face we turn to the other. Our identities are our relationships. At the same time, Crawford (1996) reminds us:

The relationships an ethnographer experiences are not “owned” by the ethnographer—it is a co-constructed experience that obligates the ethnographer to depict whatever is exploited/appropriated from the encounter in a manner that humanely accounts for the persons involved. (p. 166)

This sociocultural space where identities meet is most intriguing in its potential application for ethnography and service learning. There is much

in common between ethnography and service learning, and many reasons—including increased civic engagement—why ethnography ought to be part of the curriculum on a more specific scale. Unfortunately, as Keyton (2001) points out, “there is virtually no scholarship comparing pedagogical approaches for teaching research methods” (p. 207). This essay intends in part to suggest a pedagogical approach, through service learning, to ethnography. Before that approach can be explored, first it is necessary to move into an overview of service learning and the meaning of a Catholic education in a Spiritan tradition.

Service learning is an interdisciplinary approach to experiential education, wherein students engage in community service projects within the context of a particular disciplinary curriculum—most often, a specific course. Unlike extracurricular voluntary service, service learning includes “meaningful service activities [that] are related to the course material through reflection activities” (Bringle & Hatcher, 1996, p. 221). Research on service learning suggests students are more likely to volunteer in the future, “make greater increases in moral reasoning and critical thinking, are more tolerant, perform better academically...and take greater interest in civic responsibility” (Keyton, 2001, p. 207).

Gibson, Kostecki, and Lucas (2001) evaluated their service-learning course for best practices in service learning articulated by the National Association for Experiential Education. These best practices principles included “intention, authenticity, planning, clarity, orientation, training and mentoring, monitoring and assessment, continuous improvement, reflection, evaluation, and acknowledgment” (p. 188).

However, one of the practices listed above seems to be absent from many service-learning projects. Rooted in the inquiry-inspired tradition of the liberal arts, Catholic universities in particular ought to call for more rigorous reflection as a best practice in service learning. Further, some Catholic institutions may grapple with service learning as a for-credit activity when so many of its students already embrace service as an everyday ethic. Artz (2001) argued that volunteerism lacks cultural critique when service learning is posited merely as charity. The same problem occurs when service is constructed in terms of the market, as if it were repayment (Crabtree, 1998). In these charity or repayment frames for service learning, “students become aware of a particular injustice...[but] stop short of serious consideration of the fundamental systemic practices and relations that give rise to the injustice” (Artz, 2001, p. 240).

Artz (2001) points instead to Freire’s (1970/2000) assertion that communication with the oppressed should have one goal: to allow the oppressed

to liberate themselves. This focus on empowering the other toward self-liberation forms the impetus for Crabtree's (1998) analysis of two service learning projects in cross-cultural contexts and is the motivation for Thomas and Velthouse's (1990) list of the four elements of empowerment: one's actions must have meaningfulness, competence, impact, and choice. Crabtree (1998) was "interested in both intrapersonal and interactional manifestations of empowerment" (p. 194). From this research, it is clear that one can measure elements of empowerment based on the methods of ethnography. Ethnography is inherently interactional and requires intrapersonal reflection as well. The critical ethnography of Artz (2001), described below, makes this step in relation to service learning and empowerment.

Drawing on Freire (1970/2000), Artz (2001) proposed a new model for service learning. Transforming a service-learning class to a course in critical ethnography, Artz (2001) called for dialogic service learning. This framework emphasized communication with the disadvantaged that would allow both students and community partners to confront hegemony. This critical ethnography empowers the subjects' voices and uses new knowledge from community partnerships in order to work toward change. The results showed a clear shift in students' attitudes toward service. They were no longer preoccupied with what is, but with what "ought to be" (p. 243).

Critical ethnography as a mode of service learning introduces helpful stopgaps for the problems that can arise in volunteerism. However, it also speaks to an ongoing difficulty in this area: Service learning lacks philosophical grounding (Sheffield, 2005). Fritz and Roberts (in press) recognized this challenge and suggested as a first step that service learning should be situated in the missions of given institutions, providing some framework for why and how service learning informs curricula in unique contexts. Recent scholarship has proven mission commitments are necessary to the success of service-learning initiatives (Holland, 1997, 1999). Grounding service learning in the mission of a particular institution provides at least some moral framework (Taylor, 1989).

Especially in the missions of Catholic institutions, the philosophical foundations of service learning are explicit (Bowes, 1998). This can be analyzed in both general and particular ways. For instance in Catholic contexts, one need look no further than Dorothy Day's emphasis on the poor as "ambassadors of God" to find humility in service learning. This humility espoused by the Catholic tradition can offer a sharp contrast to the problem of condescension that Artz (2001) identified. Catholic universities share common missions in the search for truth that illuminates human dignity, justice, and freedom, as John Paul II (1990) explained in *Ex Corde Ecclesiae*.

But the Catholic tradition provides a departure point for the unique missions of specific Catholic universities. The Spiritan Catholic mission, in particular, allows for certain openings to service ethnography. The five pillars of the mission at Duquesne University, the only university in the world guided by the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, are academic excellence, service, moral and spiritual values, ecumenism, and world concerns. While all Catholic universities would espouse some of these attributes, the Spiritan mission at Duquesne University is unique in its emphasis on world concerns, service, and ecumenism. This emphasis is lived out daily and it is grounded in the philosophical founding of the Congregation. The remainder of this essay makes this clear and explains how, in the Giving Away research project, service and ethnography combined to make a “leap of faith” for undergraduates who had been educated within the mission of Duquesne University. First some background on the Spiritan Congregation and its development will be discussed.

The Congregation of the Holy Spirit was founded in 1703 by Claude Francis Poullart des Places, when he was 24 years old. The founding was a curious one, and it established the uniqueness of the Congregation’s charism: Once ordained, the Spiritan fathers were bound not by formal institutional structures but by a shared view of their priesthood. Their obedience to the Spirit was evangelical; as Koren (1990) has written, “A true Spiritan simply places himself...at God’s disposal” (p. 10). The formal Spiritan Rule as it is known today was not written until 1849, but even then the leadership of the Holy Spirit was foundational. *Spiritus est qui vivificat*, it is the Spirit who gives Life. The writer of the Rule, Venerable Francis Libermann, had converted from Judaism and retained its influence. Libermann “lived in the conviction that ‘the proper place for his encounter with God lies in the ever-changing situations of life’” (Koren, p. 52).

Libermann was also highly influential on the Spiritan view of ecumenism, although there is a long history of Spiritan regard for that quality of human life. Fr. Maillard, for example, was highly praised at his death in 1762 for the way he had completely identified with “his” Micmac Indians; his writings sustained the Micmacs’ faith for three generations in the absence of any priest. Maillard was widely remembered for living all aspects of his daily existence in the same way the Micmacs did, right down to their “stinking seal soup” (Koren, 1990, p. 20). But even in the mid-19th century, Libermann was unique among spiritual leaders in his clear instructions to missionaries that they should not disturb the cultural identities of the peoples with whom they worked:

Strip yourselves of Europe, its customs and its mentality. [Become African with the Africans]...Leave them in their own way of being. Adapt yourselves to the customs, mentality and habits [of the Africans] to make of them a people of God. (Congregation of the Holy Spirit, 1917, p. 330)

Today, Duquesne University has one of the highest percentages of international students among Catholic universities and ecumenism has evolved to mean not just Christian interdominational fellowship, but also the welcoming of all faith traditions. Duquesne's mission is "to serve God by serving students," and this service happens through the commitment to the five attributes listed above: academic excellence, ecumenism, service, moral and spiritual values, and world concerns. In all cases, the Spirit speaks through the cries of others. Indeed, the university was founded because of the need for education among Pittsburgh's poor in the 19th century, and that mission continues. The Spirit giving life or speaking through the voices of others is not mere metaphor. It is a literal call "from on high to the mobility of the Spirit" (Koren, 1990, p. 27). When Spiritans are called to such mobility, they are called to identify completely with those whom they serve—hence, the unusual emphasis on cultural identities in their missionary work. Above all, Spiritan evangelization and mission are based on the life of Christ, which

showed that it is really possible for us human beings to begin to live together as God's loving sons and daughters even here on earth, although we will attain perfect togetherness in love only at the end of our earthly pilgrimage. (p. 73)

Educated in such a context in the 21st century, how do undergraduates respond to this call for academic excellence, moral and spiritual values, ecumenism, service, and world concerns? That is the question that informs the rest of this essay and it yields two significant models: service ethnography as a model for any institution and ethnography as a leap of faith for faith-based institutions. Service should not be undertaken merely to nudge students toward civic engagement, especially when they are earning college credit to do so. Service must also advance knowledge. It is clear that social change is possible when dialogue occurs between service learners and community partners (Artz, 2001). Students should work toward an education in humanity and social change, not solely service and philanthropy. Service ethnography, described below, is another fusion of methods and another exploration in research and pedagogy. Its goals are similar to critical ethnography, yet it emphasizes inquiry and interpretation in the humanities. To explain this further,

the next section of this essay begins with a description of the method in a case study project entitled Giving Away.

Methodology: The Giving Away Project

In service ethnography, the researchers donate time, labor, and expertise to the community studied as part of their research project. The service is not done as a token reciprocal response to the expertise the community lends the researchers; it is essential to the project itself. Service must be integrated into the ethnography, rather than being tacked on as a *quid pro quo* in exchange for information from cultural groups and/or communities.

The Giving Away project provided a unique opportunity to connect service learning with theoretical concepts of particular fields (Crabtree, 1998). This particular case study lent itself to the integration of service on the part of the researchers because of the element of generosity in Native American communities that the professor and students wished to study. The project title, Giving Away, thus had polysemic significance. The title reflected a commitment to gift giving as a significant research topic in the humanities. The focus of the particular research was comprised of a research trip to Northern Plains powwows to study gift exchange ceremonies known as “giveaways.” After making a similar trip in 1999, when gifting was demonstrated so clearly and directly to a research team, this researcher has also been deeply committed to developing generosity and reciprocity in research methods. Gift exchange is not merely a phenomenon to be studied; it is also a virtue that must be practiced.

The challenge was to develop a method to allow Giving Away to be transformed from a research study into a gift exchange on multiple levels. The team elected to forfeit wages and course credit for the duration of time in the field. It was essential to explore the feasibility of this project because of its potential impact on future research programs. More significant to the element of gift exchange, the team began planning service projects for the communities in which they would study. In that sense, the project became a service-learning opportunity as well as a research exercise.

In the original research plan, it was noted that American Indian people are familiar with ethnographic research, especially on the Plains. On a previous trip, one Blackfeet powwow speaker was overheard to say: “It must be summer—here come the anthropologists” (E. Old Person, personal communication, July 3, 1999). While everyone that this researcher has met in the course of research has always been welcoming, it is true that some ethnographers come to a community, take whatever data they can absorb, and give almost

nothing in return. Service ethnography could accomplish two things. First, it could help the research team establish rapport in communities by working side by side with community members on a common task. Second, and more importantly, it could create reciprocity between collaborators in the research. Academics all benefit from research in tangible ways. Service projects can ensure that community partners benefit equally tangibly.

The Giving Away team wanted to show a commitment to generosity both theoretically and practically. A 2-week period was planned to record and analyze as much Native American gift exchange rhetoric as possible, spreading out across the Northern Plains reservations to visit various ceremonials. In addition to recording and transcribing rhetoric, the research team members would interview participants. Later, the gift exchange rituals would be placed into historical context through further archival research. Thus, the method included research into Native American gift exchange, service-learning opportunities, and the placement of data into historical context. It was hoped that the method, in conjunction with a philosophical commitment to generosity and reciprocity, would yield significant contributions to teaching and scholarship. It might also provide a model for ethnographic research in collaboration with undergraduate students, with service learning as a key component.

The sponsoring institution agreed with the principles of the project and supported the team. There still remained, however, the question of how to establish rapport and trust and build working relationships within the communities. This is a major concern because service-learning projects often falter along intercultural boundaries (Gibson et al., 2001; Morreale & Droge, 1998). For instance, Gibson and colleagues (2001) cited the concerns expressed by community partners in their project. The partners were justifiably skeptical about the abilities of a mostly White, upper-middle-class group of students to work with poverty-level African American, Hispanic, and multi-racial residents in a service-learning-based course. Intentionally or not, this intercultural scenario is generally the norm in service learning in American universities. Societal relationships between majority and minority groups are necessarily mirrored in the dynamic between students and community partners. These issues must be addressed in service learning.

Given these potential limitations to our project, multiple cultural factors had to be considered in approaching community partners. As current research on ethnography describes, we are living in a time of "blurred genres" (Geertz, 1983) and "hybrid" identities (Kraidy, 1999). Given the typical intercultural problems in service learning, it was clear that an unsolicited offer to service agencies on the reservations would be exceedingly arrogant. A simple yet profound answer then presented itself: Who would better understand the

team’s commitment to service than those with the same faith commitment? The Giving Away project arose from a Catholic university, and all members of the research team were Catholic. The Roman Catholic Church has a strong presence on the Northern Plains reservations, especially the Flathead Nation. Catholic parishes on the reservation were contacted with a carefully worded request to reflect the team’s sincerity and respect:

I hope you will not mind my contacting you via this letter. I teach Intercultural Communication at Duquesne University, a university that is dedicated to the missions of the Catholic Church. I have conducted research before (in 1999) at the Arlee Fourth of July Powwow, and was moved and delighted by the Mass conducted there on Sunday morning.

Some Duquesne University students and I will be visiting the powwow again this year for the purposes of education and research. As part of our learning and research, we are committed to service in the communities that teach us. In 1999 I learned the importance of generosity in powwows and in all Indian communities, and we wish to honor this spirit of giving when we visit next month.

To that end, I would like to volunteer our services to you in the days leading up to the Arlee powwow. The students and I have experience in teaching, building, and agricultural projects...Our faith calls us to sincere and humble service. Whatever work we can do for you will not repay the experience of learning from the people at Arlee. But I ask you to prayerfully consider giving us the opportunity to work for you at the end of June.

In the end, an ideal situation was discovered. The team secured work at Sacred Heart Parish in Ronan, Montana, on the Flathead Reservation. The administrator of the parish welcomed the team to stay in the parish hall, while the team landscaped, scrubbed, and repainted it. In the weeks leading up to the trip, the students read about ethnographic methods and the tribes they would be visiting. Generosity was stressed as an intercultural notion, and the students read previous research and scholarship on Native American giveaways. After much prayer and reflection together, they were off into the field.

Results: Rethinking Charity, Cultural Identities, and Interpretive Method

It is worth noting that the results of the methodology began showing themselves well before the team set foot in Ronan. The reply to the initial letter, although it declined their offer, was enlightening and helpful. A

parish administrator on the Wind River Reservation in Wyoming wrote in an e-mail:

I sincerely appreciate your offer of help, and running the risk of sounding ungrateful, I have to decline your offer. We are a small operation, for the most part, and want to foster much needed lay involvement in our churches; as a result, we have been rather consistent in declining volunteers, although we realize what a benefit the intercultural exchange might have. (Parish Administrator, personal communication, June 5, 2005)

This note was a reminder that no service learners should expect unquestioning openness to the offer of service. While the team's recognition that service projects are a necessity on many reservations was based in factual evidence, there was still the difficulty of their presumption that they could fulfill those needs—and the unintentional infringement on the dignity of reservation residents. The parish administrator's correspondence reminded the team that the self-efficacy of residents is at a premium even in the sparsest communities.

More importantly, the parish administrator's message served as a rhetorical interruption. The fact that he understood so well the intentions of the project and took pains to convey his response on a cultural level, referencing the idea of intercultural exchange, ironically reinforced the team's decision to pursue volunteer connections within the Catholic context. He also introduced into the research the realization that the agenda of the academy is never paramount. There are always diverse and meaningful ideas about who should engage in service within a community.

It was fortuitous that the parish administrator's note came so quickly, because well before the trip began the students were able to discuss perceptions of service learning as condescending. During our first full day of the trip, the team attended Eastern Shoshone Indian Days at Fort Washakie, Wyoming, with moderate success in terms of research. The team divided up tasks at the powwow. They approached interviews respectfully, simply opening up to opportunities for conversation—never aggressively pursuing answers to questions. This approach worked well with fellow spectators at Fort Washakie, but the team's outsider status was constantly present.

In a way, this first powwow established something of a control in the case study, albeit an imprecise one. Even if the team had completed service at Fort Washakie before the powwow, they still may have felt as outsiders compared with their experiences at Arlee. Every reservation group has its own cultural mores. The notion of friendship is constructed differently, for instance (Basso, 1979). So the sharp contrast between the team's

powwow experiences did not emerge solely because of a lack of service at Fort Washakie. However, it is clear that the service project conducted at the Flathead Reservation positively impacted the team's ability to conduct research at Arlee the following weekend.

Feedback from the students indicated that they saw the project as a collaborative process, not condescension or repayment. It is true that living under the same conditions and "working side-by-side with other cultural members gives both groups of participants a unique vantage point from which to see each other's perspectives and experiences" (Crabtree, 1998, pp. 186-187). The work on the parish hall was lengthy and sometimes difficult. Heated by propane, the entire interior needed a major scrub-down, but the students approached it with gusto and reinforced positive outcomes of service learning. After all, "Integrative education rejects the conventional educational divisions between physiology, cognition, and emotion" (Crabtree, 1998, p. 190). Common, everyday mainstream American notions of work were also challenged. The students were physically tired and subject to an environment with few comforts. One of them struggled in particular with adjusting to a slower, yet more physically demanding, way of life. However, the majority of them remained committed to the project, one another, and the task at hand. As the students wrote in their journal in the middle of the project:

Evaluating the team to this point, the most significant element has been the successful communication between the members of the team as well as the lack of homesickness. Being busy each day, there is a sense of anticipation each morning resulting in no time to think of home, but focus on being here and accomplishing our goal. (Ferrara, Zerishnek, & Lauteri, 2005, p. 7)

Testing the service learning for best practices proved enlightening, especially in the integration of service and ethnography. Team members were amazed to find that people were exuberant in their gratitude and generosity in response to their presence. While this researcher was relieved to have found an ethical means of doing service and a place for the students to sleep, a local administrator kept giving them money for food and offering the team further comforts. The owner of the local video store loaned the team a television and DVD player. The best practice acknowledgment, then, often comes naturally from the community. The students were humbled by these acknowledgments; they began to internalize the idea of reciprocity in remarkable ways. "The people here are so nice," one of them wrote; "we feel like we are in heaven" (Ferrara et al., 2005, p. 6).

In another instance of acknowledgment, the Flathead Nation provided an excellent background to consider ideas about hybridity and blurred identities in ethnography. The community itself was multicultural, so the students quickly became adept at managing multiple contexts for interaction. The parish at which they worked served both Native Americans and Anglos, as the Flathead Nation is an open reservation where anyone may purchase land for sale. Part of the acknowledgment of the team's service came from an exceptionally generous Anglo family who invited the team to stay with them for a night at their home in the mountains. Engaged with family members in conversation about Native American culture, the students seemed to achieve a balanced overview of multicultural perspectives and respected disparate worldviews in the context of a social gathering. They did not succumb to becoming dilettantes in intercultural interaction, which Crabtree (1998) argued can happen when student commitment to multiculturalism disintegrates and becomes artificial.

The best practice principle of clarity was also interesting. One does not always have clarity in ethnographic research. It is a strength of the method that clarity needs to emerge within relationships and from productive communication. As much as they read before the trip, neither the students nor this researcher could have predicted what they would learn. These words from a similar service-learning project participant resonated with the team: "This is easily one of the best things about a [service] trip, to see a culture much richer and deeper, but that may look on the surface as if it were broken down" (as cited in Crabtree, 1998, p. 196). The ethnographic component of service, in particular, allowed the students to see the community in a new light: as one that shared their Catholic faith commitment, hope, and sense of social justice. The students on the Giving Away research team expressed this when they wrote:

If there ever was a time when one's heart and mind were open and soul felt purified, it was now amidst the people who live on this reservation and take part in its daily offerings. This truly proves that good people still do exist in a world that is sometimes filled with greed and corruption. (Ferrara et al., 2005, p. 8)

Empowerment should be a two-way process in service learning, as community partners teach students how to be better citizens (Crabtree, 1998). In this case, the powwow community at Arlee had the position of power in teaching, especially about generosity. They were the team's hosts and there is a long powwow tradition of giving to visitors. This discovery alone made the trip worthwhile for the students. It is why ethnography is so necessary

and why ethnography can be enlivened by service: Ethnography dismantles assumptions about poverty and self-empowerment.

To reach these realizations, the team had to adjust cross-culturally and establish rapport with participants in the powwow at Arlee. Compared with the earlier powwow undertaken before the service project, there was marked improvement in the ability to conduct research. Cross-cultural adjustment is primarily a communicative phenomenon. It is expressed through interaction (Kim, 1995, 1997). The students were much more relaxed at Arlee; they felt less self-conscious and reported many more spontaneous interactions with powwow participants (R. Ferrara, personal communication, July 1, 2005; J. Zerishnek, personal communication, July 2, 2005). In a few instances, members of the team were asked if they were living on the reservation, since people had seen them around. The team’s understanding of the community was enhanced by service. Because of their service, they were welcomed at communal celebrations in addition to the powwow, including a Mass partly conducted in Salish on the last day of the trip. The students reflected on this in their journal, displaying unique introspection about their role as Catholic Anglos in this community:

Though most of the Mass was in English, the songs were not and some of the expressions [the priest] referred back to were not either. It was beautiful to hear the language spoken naturally, how you could imagine it during the time when missionaries came into Montana and other parts of the West to convert Indians to Catholicism. At the end of Mass, we formed a large fellowship ring as we shook hands with and greeted everyone in attendance, one at a time. This special Sign of Peace was touching. (Ferrara et al., 2005, p. 13)

Months after writing this journal entry, two of the students were challenged by an audience member at an academic conference about their role as Catholics on a reservation that had been colonized by the Jesuits. Setting aside the lack of historical knowledge on the part of the critic, and also setting aside the fact that the Catholic community continues to thrive on the Flathead Reservation, a positive outcome of the service ethnography was the students’ staunch defense of their identities as Catholics but also as service learners at that conference. Their comment in the journal expresses neither regret nor triumph at the conversion of American Indians. Rather, the students seem to have been reflecting, however implicitly, on Gospel messages that underpin the same cultural and intercultural impulses that have inspired the Spiritans. The students’ journal reflection about Mass calls to mind the Pentecost: “We hear them declaring the wonders of God in our own tongues” (Acts 2:7-11).

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul takes a similar stance: “But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility” (Eph. 2:13-14). It is not just that their mission as stemming from a Catholic university made them comfortable with Catholic communities on the reservation. A more important ethic permeated their service: They followed in the path of the Spiritans from their university who brought a unique perspective to ecumenism, service, and world concerns.

These three pillars were inseparable from the other two pillars of a Spiritan education: moral values and academic excellence. An important insight here is the integration of teaching, research, and service in service ethnography—something the students intuited. Indeed, the single greatest outcome of the project could not have been predicted. This researcher was humbled by the perspectives of one student at the conclusion of the project when she began to articulate a new model of ethnography. When members of the team were invited to speak to Duquesne University’s Women’s Spirituality Group, one of them described the nature of the ethnographic part of the trip. She called it a “leap of faith.” As her journal entry explained:

One thing we noticed right away, especially after previous warnings... was that there were many photographers and supposed anthropologists who would take pictures of people first, and ask questions later. Never have I been more appreciative of the ethnographic way... Ethnography is different from typical research because you literally submerge yourself in the culture and do what comes naturally—which is usually taking part with the culture in their traditions... [Our professor] believes in her teachings on ethnography and she challenged the team to focus on allowing the natural flow of the experience to be their guide. In taking this advice, this process led to one of the most enlightening experiences of the trip for [me]. (J. Zerishnek, personal communication, July 2, 2005)

The student then went on to describe her conversation with a Salish man who told her many things about his culture, and also about faith, family, and life. While the model of ethnography offered to the team could be applicable to any group of undergraduates learning ethnography, this team was unique because of their connection to service through a Spiritan Catholic university. Again, the general principles of Catholic higher education, especially those recently explored in *Fides et Ratio* (John Paul II, 1998), influence the experiences of students. Donders (2001) meditates on *Fides et Ratio* and emphasizes the sense of wonder John Paul II invokes in his discussion of philosophy:

[The] fundamental elements of knowledge spring from the wonder and astonishment people experience when they discover themselves as part of the world, together with others, and as having a common destiny. Without that wonder life would be deadly boring and in the end unlivable. (p. 326)

Yet again, more specifically, the Spiritan mission calls for openness to the Spirit, not metaphorically, but literally. The Spiritan tradition accepts openly that “Christianity is not a religion of laws and legality but a religion of faith, faith in Jesus....It is the faith of the Christian which gives a new meaning to everything that touches him or her” (Koren, 1990, p. 31).

For the students on this research team, all of the uncertainties of nature as well as intercultural contact were calmed by faith. On the last day of the project, a student wrote:

Now that it is time to depart, the group truly appreciates the great outdoors, the splendor of nature, and the beauty in other cultures. These past ten days have made us that much more grateful to be alive and witness such glory. (Ferrara et al., 2005, p. 13)

For the Spiritans, who utilize the familiar phrase from St. Ignatius that one is called to a life *ad maiorem Dei gloriam*, the greater glory of God “is a person fully alive” (Koren, 1990, p. 54). As the journal entries make clear, the students—with no prompting from their instructor—understood everything, including this trip, to be a leap of faith and to be a certain mobility of the Spirit.

After experiences leading students in service learning, Crabtree (1998) called for scholars to identify different types of “sojourners” (p. 204) in cross-cultural interaction. The acculturation of the service ethnographer may be unique among sojourners in general and ethnographers in particular, especially when arising from the Catholic faith. The Giving Away team’s acculturation was positive and productive. They produced good ethnographies. The results indicate that students prefer learning research methods through service “because the intensity is shifted to the issue under study” (Keyton, 2001, p. 208). They also developed cognitive complexity, found solutions to communicative problems, and practiced tolerance. They immediately began to talk of returning next year to paint the entire parish hall and step up their engagement in research for the reservation. The goals of service learning were certainly fulfilled with the added value of lasting ethnographic documentation, new pedagogical methods, a leap of faith, and glory in being fully alive.

Implications for Future Research: Challenges and Hope

This was the first attempt at service ethnography, and it must be tested further and critiqued. There are some challenges to the Giving Away model. Different types of institutions will require different models for service learning (Zlotkowski, 1998). Team members were fortunate to be based at a Catholic university; their faith commitment to service was sincere and supported by their institution.

Pedagogy distinguishes service ethnography from other ethnographic approaches—an element that should be researched further. This researcher is aware of three dissertation projects that incorporated service into the ethnography (Brady, 1978; Levy, 2003; Urbanski, 2004), but none of the other ethnographers brought students with them to the field, or made the students the focus in framing the project. “The service learning approach to intercultural experience provides the *academic* [italics added] framework for this type of cross-cultural participatory development” (Crabtree, 1998, p. 187). The presence of students offers hope for ethnography in that researchers begin to lead their students by example.

There are power issues in humanities research that may be alleviated with further development of service ethnography. For example, there is an ongoing argument among ethnographers as to whether the subjects should be called subjects or collaborators or consultants. Some have made the compelling argument that to call subjects “collaborators” is to be dishonest: The relationship will always be hierarchical and it is unethical to pretend that the subjects are equal partners in the project, for they rarely are. Service ethnography allows for work to happen between the ethnographer and community partner, both in a physical and a cognitive sense. There are stronger possibilities for true partnerships.

This question of responsibility points to another challenge in Giving Away, but perhaps a hope for service ethnography: The Giving Away team did not truly engage in critical ethnography or question their own complicity in the economic circumstances on the reservation. In some ways, their communal connections with parishioners precluded this. On the other hand, this researcher believes students can engage a rich ethnography without deconstruction. The ethnographic goals of rapport, collaboration, and understanding may in the end be as useful as the critical ethnography of Artz (2001), especially if these goals lead students to understand common virtues like generosity and charity in cross-cultural contexts.

There are some cautions in service ethnography. Service has to take priority over research; at the very least, the two must not contradict each other.

Crabtree (1998) cited an unfortunate incident in a service project in Nicaragua. A service group arrived to distribute new sanitary water containers, but their research project required that the containers be given to community members over a staggered time period. The researchers wanted to maintain a control group that would not have the water containers for the first 6 weeks, in order to best study the effects of the innovation. Not surprisingly, this research design created disharmony among the people (Crabtree, 1998).

Perhaps a move away from the rhetoric of student improvement is also needed. The task now is to encourage more reflection among students, to be critical of the societal forces that create situations of service in the first place (Artz, 2001), and to find ways to empower communities for the long term through ethnographic research in conjunction with service. If the academy continues to preoccupy itself solely with the effects of service learning on students, it will only reinforce the power relationships that create service needs.

In order to regard community partners as allies in service learning, a final step will occur when service learning is moved out of an academic position entirely. Emic notions of service would be of great benefit to higher education and prevent the navel-gazing tendency that plagues pedagogical theory. Service learning will always run the risk of reinforcing hierarchy if we assume our own ideas about service are the correct ones. "Cross-cultural communication which is initiated and directed by the more powerful of the two cultures...always runs the risk of reducing the weaker to the canvas upon which the stronger represents itself and its power" (Fiske, 1993, p. 149). One can counter that tendency by the simple recognition that even one's construct of service learning is predicated on cultural biases. Other cultures conceive of service in rich and meaningful ways (Larson-Keagy, 2002), and these must be explored for successful service ethnography. The leap of faith in the Spiritan Catholic mission offers one cultural perspective. Gift exchange on the Northern Plains reservations offers another.

Conclusion

Service ethnography, especially ethnography for the community, may be a first step in alleviating the power imbalance that has plagued ethnography since its inception. On the other hand, the humility of service inherent in ethical service learning also reduces the recent preoccupation ethnographers have had with the self. Service ethnography means that when the service project ends, ethnography can offer lasting impact on the community. Students would also learn research methods crucial for the tradition of deep inquiry in Catholic higher education in an innovative, stimulating, practical environment

(Keyton, 2001). The community, the students, higher education, and society at large can all benefit.

Of course, the development of service ethnography is a tall order. It requires attention to multiple competing goals in research, teaching, and service. Evidence shows, however, that the results are worth the effort. The end products are ethical teaching and relevant scholarship (Crabtree, 1998). Research is privilege, service is humility, and teaching is gift. Professors need to model for students their commitment to learning and to gratitude, for one must never forget that ethnography is dependent on others' teachings. Service ethnography's uniting of research, teaching, and scholarship is an opportunity "to participate in the process whereby the knowledge we generate has a real impact on our society and potentially on the world" (Crabtree, 1998, p. 203). As the Giving Away research team wrote in their journal:

After listening to the words of the family and the master of ceremonies, the team concurred with the MC when he stated: "We are a gifted people from our creator." How true this is for all cultures—no matter who you consider to be your "creator" we are all created by Him and blessed with certain talents that we can use to change the world. (Ferrara et al., 2005, p. 2)

This article has taken pains to explain service ethnography through the words of the students because of the project's embeddedness in a Catholic university. The synergy of their education is one that integrates faith and reason, and as John Paul II (1998) pointed out in *Fides et Ratio*, "Reason too needs to be sustained...by trusting dialogue and sincere friendship" (§33). The students' journal makes clear that they experienced dialogue and friendship not only among themselves, but also in their conversations with the Salish people on the reservation. More significantly to the Spiritan tradition, the Spirit always gives life through voices in the present day. It is imperative that Catholic educators in particular recognize that the most pertinent and incisive voices of the Spirit may indeed be those of their students, who teach them to take the leap of faith in service, in relationships, in teaching, in ethnography, and in all research.

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