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Diversity, Difference, and Safety: Adapting Service-Learning for Diverse Students

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Abstract

As American universities become more diverse, it is necessary to consider if existing pedagogies remain relevant and meaningful for all students. This paper examines service-learning, a community engagement pedagogy originally developed for white, middle-class students, by exploring the experiences of residential undergraduate students of color attending a small liberal arts college in rural Virginia. Rather than rejecting service-learning, I suggest reimagining some service-learning practices – particularly the definition of service, the values of reciprocity and collaboration, and preparation for service – in order to meet the needs and experiences of an increasingly diverse population of college students.

Introduction

In August 2016, as the interim director of the Spencer Center for Civic and Global Engagement at Mary Baldwin University, I found myself driving a van full of first-year students to a service-learning site in rural Augusta County, outside the small town of Craigsville, Virginia. In 2013, Craigsville received national attention when a Facebook photo of a seven-year-old boy dressed as a member of the Ku Klux Klan for Halloween went viral (Sieczkowski 2013). The first-year students in the van, most of whom were not local to the Shenandoah Valley, likely did not make the connection between the KKK "costume" and the service opportunity they were about to experience. I, however, could not get it out of my mind. As we began driving through the winding back roads, with house after house flying the Confederate flag, I became increasingly uncomfortable. My van full of students was representative of the diverse student body at Mary Baldwin University, and as such, included students of color and those who identified as sexual, gender, and religious minorities.

Like other practitioners, I believe in the transformative possibilities of service-learning to "enrich student learning, teach civic responsibility, strengthen communities and address issues of social justice" (Gonzales 2017, 18). Yet this particular experience – of sending diverse students into a predominately white, rural, and conservative community – unsettled me. What were student experiences like? How did community members interact with students? Did this setting make students uncomfortable, angry, or concerned for their safety? Would students be less willing to do community service or other community engagement work if they had negative experiences in the community? Although the Craigsville project was ultimately a success, these concerns stayed with me through my tenure as the interim director of the Spencer Center and became a shared priority when a new director was hired and I transitioned into my current position as faculty-in-residence.

While much work on service-learning has rightly focused on preparing students for respectful interaction with community members, this article represents the beginning of efforts at Mary Baldwin University to understand how student experiences in the Staunton community impact community engagement efforts and service-learning. Student focus group data indicate that some students do in fact have deep concerns about the surrounding community, and in particular, view Staunton as intolerant of diversity. These students report negative experiences in Staunton, lack of interest or engagement with the community, and feeling vulnerable and unsafe when off-campus. By limiting interest in the community, these perceptions and experiences can negatively impact community engagement efforts and participation in service-learning courses. The purpose of this article is to illuminate student concerns about the community and to discuss possible practices, in the classroom and across campus, to ensure that service-learning remains meaningful for all students, including people of color and those who identify as sexual, gender, and religious minorities. Rather than a rejection of service-learning pedagogy, I suggest reimagining some service-learning practices – particularly the definition of service, the values of reciprocity and collaboration, and how we prepare students for service – in order to meet the needs and experiences of an increasingly diverse population of college students. More broadly, this article adds to a growing body of literature both within and outside of anthropology that seeks to reimagine service-learning in response to the changing demands of higher education.

Service-Learning and Anthropology

Service-learning is one type of civic or community engagement that, at minimum, is "a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community needs, together with structured opportunities for reflection designed to achieve desired learning outcomes" (Jacoby 2014, 2). For practitioners across academic disciplines, the hyphen linking service-learning indicates that both service and learning are equally necessary. Although service-learning emerged out of efforts in the 1960s to link university students to federal anti-poverty programs based in

local communities, service-learning is also rooted in much deeper concerns about the sustainability of a democratic state that is dependent upon an educated civil society and the role of universities in educating that civil society (Pollack 2013, 223 –229).

According to Tania Mitchell (2008, 50), varied approaches to service-learning resulted in an "unspoken debate" that divided the service-learning field into two camps. Mitchell names these two camps "traditional service-learning," defined primarily as pedagogy of experiential education, and "critical service-learning," which promotes social justice and social change. As a proponent of critical service-learning, Mitchell argues that without addressing the "root causes of social problems . . . service-learning may have no impact beyond students' good feelings" (2008, 51). Such service-learning experiences may also further perpetuate inequalities by maintaining existing structural conditions (Mitchell 2008, 51) and creating relationships of dependency upon "experts" (Morton 1995, 22). For example, although providing homeless individuals with food and provisions meets a community need, it does not address the root causes of homelessness, such as gentrification, nor does it promote any social change to alleviate homelessness. Instead, these efforts may preserve systems of poverty and inequality by making homelessness more comfortable for homeless individuals and more palatable to the university students performing the service activity.

Critical service-learning is a response, at least in part, to critiques within the service-learning field about who determines "community needs," what activities are considered "service," who truly benefits from service-learning, and concerns about the power inequities within service-learning, charity, and philanthropy (Camacho 2004; Morton 1995; Rosenberger 2000). Despite early recognition of the need for reciprocity and mutuality in service-learning work, Rosenberger suggests that in practice service-learning continues to carry "connotations of 'doing good,' of the 'haves' giving to the 'have-nots,' of 'we' serving 'them'" and thus may frequently reproduce positions of power – therefore actually preserving the need for continued service (Rosenberger 2000, 19). To mitigate these power inequities, Mitchell suggests that critical service-learning should contain three crucial elements: 1) the redistribution of power amongst all participants in the service-learning relationship, so that community members lead the development of service projects; 2) the development of authentic and respectful relationships in the classroom and in the community, highly attuned to differences in power and privilege between participants; and 3) a critical social change perspective that highlights the social and political roots of community needs and inequalities (Mitchell 2008, 50). In addition, a central component of critical service-learning requires faculty, staff, and students to examine their own diverse identities (see also Donahue and Mitchell 2010 and Mitchell, Donahue, and Young-Law 2012).

Many of the ethical considerations in the service-learning field are also central to anthropology. As Keene and Colligan noted in their overview of anthropology and service-learning in a special volume of the *Michigan Journal of Community Service*

Learning (2004), these concerns center on how we develop relationships with those whom we study, work with, and serve:

> Are they collaborators or partners or objects of our inquiry or largesse? Do we see ourselves as stakeholders in a mutual project on common ground or are we engaged primarily in projects of self-fulfillment? Do we see ourselves as being in the community – at best visitors or at worst intruders – or of the community, that is, aspiring to if not holding a kind of membership or in the very least being a joint stakeholder in the community's well-being. (Keene and Colligan 2004, 5)

Despite these similar ethical concerns and similar methodological approaches – fieldwork, ethnography, field notes, and interviews – anthropology and service-learning remain fairly removed from one another. In 2004, Keene and Colligan noted that there was little discussion of anthropology in the service-learning literature and that service-learning was nearly absent from anthropology journals and meetings (2004, 6). While anthropologists, of course, frequently engage in local communities with their students, these projects have primarily been framed as community-based research, participatory action research, public interest anthropology, applied anthropology, activist research, or collaborative research rather than service-learning (Barone and Ritter 2010; Campbell and Lassiter 2010; Sanday and Jannowitz 2004; Schensul and Berg 2004; Wagner 1999).

In the ensuing fifteen years since the publication of the special volume of the *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, service-learning has gained some traction in anthropology, particularly as a way of teaching ethnographic field methods. These approaches to service-learning can be divided into two models, an individual model and a collaborative model. In the individual model, which Medeiros and Guzman label "ethnographic service learning," students choose from a range of individual short-term service opportunities in local agencies and organizations, using their service experiences as a field site for a research project (Medeiros and Guzman 2016; Schalge, Pajunen and Brotherton 2018). The collaborative model of service-learning involves students in collaborative community-based research (Borland 2017; Buckner 2004; Copeland et al. 2016; Cusack-McVeigh 2016; Gonzales 2017; Menzies and Butler 2011; Smith 2010; Stein et al. 2016; Swyers 2015; Wies 2018). Toni Copeland and her student co-authors, for example, reimagine service-learning as a combination of applied and practicing anthropology, community engagement, and experiential learning (Copeland et al. 2016, 232). Instead of service *to* a community, they focus on collaboration *with* a community (232). Although collaborative projects often occur as a course component, they are typically the product of a long-term research relationship between anthropologists and the communities with whom they work. In this model, the research – the data – are seen as valuable or useful to the community. As a result, the students' service contribution is primarily their research, the data they collect either in raw form or in an edited product, such as a short film.

Both of these models are also often intended, sometimes tacitly, to introduce "non-diverse" college students to "diverse communities" off-campus. In these instances, students are explicitly or implicitly identified as white and/or wealthy, while off-campus communities, including distant field sites, are assumed to be ethnically, economically, racially, and/or culturally different (Barone and Ritter 2010; Campbell and Lassiter 2010; Cusack-McVeigh 2016; Menzies and Butler 2011; Sanday and Jannowitz 2004). Although exposure to, and working with, diverse communities can lead to an increased awareness of cultural and economic differences, exposure alone – without paying attention to the creation and use of such differences to perpetuate systems of inequalities – may simply reinforce existing ethnic, racial, and class stereotypes (Mitchell 2008, 56). Similarly, Menzies and Butler identified cultural tourism and its associated naive racism as potential negative community impacts of the collaborative model (2011, 181). Without a critical approach to race, service-learning may become a "pedagogy of whiteness" that reinforces the normative privileges of structural racism and white supremacy (Mitchell, Donahue, and Young-Law 2012, 614).

In many cases, service-learning may in fact expose largely white, middle-class university students to racial, ethnic, economic, and cultural diversity. Even when practitioners address the structural origins of race and other forms of difference, service-learning pedagogy and practices continue to be based upon a model of exposure to difference that privileges serving white students. As a result, these models are often inapplicable to universities with distinctly different – in other words, more diverse – student populations like Mary Baldwin University. My students, for example, are frequently people of color and/or those with underrepresented gender identities, sexual orientations, and religious affiliations who are entering largely white communities. Although they may be entering communities that differ from their own, service-learning models based on exposure to difference do not make sense in this context since people of color and those with other marginalized identities are already familiar with normative American values. Even more, the assumption that service-learning provides "real-world experience" in general is based on a model of a wealthy, privileged college student who likely has little work experience. Similarly, narratives which promote service-learning as "giving back" to a community – subtly intertwined with charity models that suggest those with more privilege have an obligation to serve – may not be appropriate for less-privileged students. Even more, as Camacho reminds us (2004, 31), students may themselves have been the recipients of service or may be from communities that are often sites of service. These experiences with service will likely be quite varied, but some students may associate particular types of service with shame or embarassment.

How then must service-learning pedagogy change when less-privileged students are entering highly-privileged communities and spaces, or going from a diverse campus to a largely white community? Beginning with the student accounts below, I hope to add to the ongoing reimagining of service-learning in anthropology by addressing the concerns of students of color and their implications for community engagement.

The Local Context

Mary Baldwin University is in Staunton, Virginia, a town of about 24,000 people in the Shenandoah Valley of western Virginia (United States Census Bureau 2016). As any Stauntonian will tell you emphatically, Staunton is very different from the rural Shenandoah Valley and tends to narrowly support progressive political candidates. Despite this, the city remains 85 percent white (United States Census Bureau 2016). Staunton has a charming downtown, extensive historic districts, and a thriving tourist industry, but it is not a traditional "college town." The majority of businesses cater to well-to-do tourists and locals, most of whom are white and middle-aged. Visitors often describe Staunton as cute or quaint; some Mary Baldwin University students consider Staunton to be old and boring.

In contrast, Mary Baldwin University has experienced a significant demographic transition. Historically a women's liberal arts college, the university began admitting non-residential men to undergraduate and graduate programs in the 1970s and residential men in the fall of 2017, though women continue to be a majority in all programs. In 2016-2017, there were 1,761 students enrolled across two campuses and multiple regional centers. In the residential college on the historic Staunton campus, 656 students were enrolled in Mary Baldwin College for Women.[1] One of the most significant features of the contemporary institution is our striking racial and ethnic diversity, which challenges common assumptions of women's colleges as strongholds of elite white women. Mary Baldwin College for Women, one component of the larger institution, is particularly diverse: 2016 enrollment data indicated that 56 percent of students identified as non-white.[2] In addition, 36 percent of the incoming 2016 class were first generation students, defined as neither parent having any university education, and 40 percent of Mary Baldwin University undergraduate students qualify for Pell Grants. Mary Baldwin College for Women also includes significant diversity in terms of gender identity, sexual orientation, and religious affiliation.

The Spencer Center for Civic and Global Engagement was founded in 2007 as a central component of the university's Quality Enhancement Plan. Over the ensuing ten years it has served as a resource and leader for local and international engagement. The Spencer Center serves the entire Mary Baldwin student body (undergraduate, Mary Baldwin College for Women, University College, Online, and adult and graduate students) across two campuses and multiple regional centers. At the moment, the Center's staff includes two full-time professional staff members – a director and an assistant director – as well as up to six part-time student workers. The Center's work is

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[1] Mary Baldwin University statistics provided by Carrie Boyd, Coordinator of Institutional Reporting and Research, based on the Mary Baldwin University Enrollment Report 2016-2017.

[2] Students who identified as "non-white" were categorized as: 31percent Black; 12 percent Hispanic; 13 percent Other (includes Asian, American Indian/Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, and two or more races).

supported by the Faculty Fellows, a small group of faculty representing each college, as well as a Faculty-in-Residence and a faculty member who serves part-time as the International Student Advisor. These faculty members meet regularly with the Spencer Center staff to enhance programs and integrate principles of engagement broadly across the units of the institution.[3]

As noted above, in spring 2017 Christina Harrison was hired as the director of the Spencer Center and initiated a strategic planning process to assess the Spencer Center's mission and programs. As part of that strategic planning process, Spencer Center staff organized a research team to conduct focus groups with stakeholders both on and off campus. Stakeholders were recruited from the following five categories: current students, administrators and staff, faculty, alumni, and community members. Overall, approximately seventy individuals participated in these focus groups. Participants were led through a series of questions that addressed student civic and global engagement, student involvement in the Staunton community, and faculty, staff, and community concerns and issues.

In general, all parties expressed an interest in broadening and deepening connections between the university and the greater community, though there were many disconnects between stakeholders. Community members were very interested in meeting and interacting with Mary Baldwin University students, as well as learning about general institutional activities and achievements. While administrators and faculty supported greater community involvement and connections, some expressed concerns about the lack of institutional resources and cited professional demands that made additional projects difficult. Importantly, all students claimed to want more activities and involvement in the community, including service-learning and community service opportunities. Students, however, often reported not knowing how to engage, and in some cases negative experiences in and perceptions of the community created barriers to engagement.

Spencer Center Program Study: Student Experiences and Perspectives on the Community

Although the Spencer Center Program Study illuminated a wide range of issues, this paper focuses entirely on student responses, particularly students of color and/or those with marginalized identities. Although some students from all backgrounds viewed Staunton as unwelcoming and intolerant to racial, cultural, and other forms of difference, these ideas were particularly prominent in focus groups conducted with students of color, and less prevalent – though they did still occur – among white students and alumnae. For example, when asked how she was involved in the Staunton community, a student of color put it this way:

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[3] From the Spencer Center for Civic and Global Engagement Vision and Mission Statement.

> Well, when I first came to Mary Baldwin, Mary Baldwin was a culture shock for me. Because it's very rural and – just directly outside of our school and the places we might feel comfortable walking to, you don't see a Black or brown face. And it didn't seem very accepting of diversity.

Students of color very clearly connected the lack of racial diversity in Staunton with intolerance to their racial and ethnic identities. One student noted that she felt that Staunton did not embrace her or her culture, adding that "it almost feels like I would have to culturally appropriate or assimilate to kind of fit in." In many cases, the racial and ethnic homogeneity of the community was directly connected to the small, rural nature of the city, particularly in comparison to their diverse hometowns.

Students of color routinely spoke about feeling uncomfortable in downtown Staunton. They often pointed out that the stores do not cater to students of color, or even to Mary Baldwin students in general, noting a lack of Mary Baldwin products available in downtown stores and the high prices for specialty items that are often out of reach for a typical Mary Baldwin University student budget. Even more, students of color reported that they experienced suspicion from downtown business owners. A Latinx student pointed out that she was from Washington, D.C., so she was used to diversity. She added, "And so coming here and having the stares, getting the stares and getting uncomfortable downtown is different. Which automatically shut me down from downtown."

An African American student related a similar story:

> Well, we went into this . . . store downtown and I don't know, the manager of it kind of like rubbed us the wrong way. . . . She wasn't, like, inviting of us. Basically . . . she did that awkward thing where you follow people around when they're in the store. We just stopped going downtown. Me and my friends just stopped going downtown.

Anecdotally, similar stories are frequently heard on campus, in classrooms, and as general topics of conversation. In fact, students report hearing negative stories about Staunton as soon as they arrive on campus for first-year orientation, thus developing negative opinions of Staunton before ever venturing into the community themselves.

Besides racial and cultural differences, several students identified political differences as impacting their experiences in Staunton. One student, for example, explained that she had to quit her job at a retail clothing store after the 2016 Presidential election because of her interaction with customers:

> Everyone who came through that line just assumed that I was voting for Hillary Clinton and that I was going to sway the vote – and my Mary Baldwin counterparts – are going to sway the vote in Staunton, VA. And one of the ladies actually got in a very heated discussion with me about her political views and how she doesn't understand why 'those' people are

protesting and there's nothing that they can do about it. . . . Like, we're just proving [the President's] whole immigration ban, all that, proving him to be right because, basically, we don't belong.

The experience above was very similar to one that I witnessed. On November 8, 2016, I served as a driver to shuttle Mary Baldwin University students to their local polling site. As the students approached the building, a member of the local Republican Party blocked their way and told them they should not be allowed to vote in Staunton because they did not pay local taxes. Given these incidents, it should come as no surprise that students often find it difficult to connect to political issues in Staunton. As one student stated, "It's difficult for me to rally behind a political cause or anything like that. Just because it seems to be, you know, it's a very conservative community, whereas I have liberal views."

Strikingly, many students also reported feeling unsafe in Staunton and on the Mary Baldwin campus. These students often commented that Staunton is "dark" or "vacant." Rumors of off-campus crimes and incidents, many of them unconfirmed, spread like wildfire across campus, particularly through social media. One student noted this, saying:

There was a scare that turned out not to be true last week or a couple weeks ago where we were told that someone was kidnapped by word of mouth. And that turned out not to be true, but it was a very, like, scary thing. Cause we're like, "If you really could be kidnapped in Staunton . . . someone will throw you over the mountain and they will never hear from you again."

In addition, students of color often feel vulnerable on the Mary Baldwin campus; they critiqued the "open campus" policy because it allowed non-Mary Baldwin community members access to the campus, and they noted the frequency of dog-walkers and others passing through campus. Even though many of our residential students of color come from larger urban areas with higher rates of violent crimes on average than Staunton, with its relatively low small-town crime rates, fears about safety persist (Virginia Department of State Police 2016). This is an important reminder that crime statistics often do not reflect the lived experiences of harrassment, profiling, and other everyday forms of oppression.

These overwhelmingly negative experiences in Staunton lead directly to disconnection, feelings of fear, and sometimes animosity. As a result, students are uninterested in engagement beyond campus. Students frequently spoke of rarely leaving campus except to occasionally grab a quick meal, and we heard many stories about unpleasant run-ins with local residents. A student explained, "I think it's on both sides. There're like 'Oh, we don't really want to be associated with Staunton' and Staunton doesn't really want to be associated with us at the same time." On campus, the stereotype of Staunton as overwhelmingly white, rural, and conservative is so prevalent that some students avoid engaging with the community so that they will not be

associated with that image. Quite simply, many students do not want to engage in a community that appears to not want them.

Similarly, safety concerns clearly impacted student community involvement. Since many Mary Baldwin students do not own cars, students often have to walk to traditional service sites such as homeless shelters, community gardens, community centers, and public elementary schools. Because of safety conerns, students were frequently uneasy about walking around Staunton, particularly at night. According to one student, saftey concerns "can push us away from being civically engaged. Because when the sun goes down, it's like 'Oh, I need to head back to my room!'" Students also shared concerns of being alone at service sites, without other Mary Baldwin students, faculty, or staff. Although they were most pronounced in students of color, concerns about safety are a constant refrain on campus. Some students explicitly connected feelings of vulnerability to local knowledge that there are very few men living on campus. Whether they result primarily from concerns about racial or gender identity – or both – these fears are a powerful force in the complicated relationship between Staunton and Mary Baldwin University.

Because most students who participated in the focus groups wanted more connections to Staunton, students also had suggestions for ways to create a better relationship with the local community. First, students clearly identified particular communities or populations they wanted to serve. For example, one African American student provided a positive example of a community involvement course required for an African American Thought course. The professor "made us go outside of Mary Baldwin and establish community partners and get acquainted with the Staunton community. And she actually helped us find Black faces in Staunton." Other students encouraged the Spencer Center staff to make more opportunities available to work with local children, particularly children of color. One student who had an opportunity to work with African American children at a local elementary school spoke passionately about how meaningful the project was to her because she identified with several of the young girls. These comments suggest that students may be more likely to engage with communities that they are interested in serving, which may (or may not) be similar to their own identities.

In addition, students reported positive experiences in Staunton when they had an opportunity to collaborate in privileged community spaces. For example, a Mary Baldwin University staff member recruited students to help organize a fundraiser for a local non-profit, encouraging students to use their skills in writing, marketing, and social media as their service contributions. Students had an overwhelmingly positive reaction to this experience:

> I thought that was pretty fun because we got to go and participate, they
> fed us, everyone treated us nice. Everyone was kind to us, you know. And
> we got to interact with so many different people from Staunton and to just

> sit there and enjoy it. And it wasn't like 'Okay, well, you're kind of like the help. Let's push you to the back,' but no, they embraced us.

The student's words above suggest a subtle, but nevertheless powerful undercurrent among some Mary Baldwin University students. The association of some types of service work – cleaning, cooking, home repair, childcare – with being "the help" is a reminder that for some students, certain kinds of service activities carry negative connotations. It is likely that these students, and their families, see a university education as an opportunity to move away from service employment and as a result they may feel uncomfortable about engaging in these types of service opportunities. Students of color may also hesitate to participate in certain forms of service to white communities in order to avoid the appearance of falling into subservient roles in a system of racial hierarchy. In contrast, students may be more likely to have a positive reaction to service opportunities that utilize their education, recognize their strengths, and incorporate them as equals in a reciprocal service relationship.

Finally, students of color who had more contacts and experience in Staunton reported feeling more comfortable and more engaged in the community. One African American student, for example, moved off-campus during her sophomore year. At first, she struggled in the new environment, but she eventually came to love her neighborhood. Her job at a local community center also increased her social network. In the focus group, which took place only a few years after she moved off-campus, she identified herself as a member of both the Staunton and Mary Baldwin communities. Although living off-campus has not historically been a popular housing option for Mary Baldwin students, this community immersion suggests that increasing familiarity with the Staunton community may alleviate some of the concerns students reported above.

In the Spencer Center Program Study, students and community members recounted experiences that have compelling implications for community engagement and service-learning at Mary Baldwin University. While barriers between "town and gown" are not new to Mary Baldwin University or higher education more broadly, the focus group data suggests that in our situation concerns about racial prejudice and other forms of intolerance are signifcant factors limiting student involvement in the community. These concerns correlate with those expressed in other projects at Mary Baldwin University (Wightman 2019) and in anecdotal accounts in classrooms and other campus spaces. The program study, however, was fairly small and should be considered as a pilot project that initiated important and ongoing conversations and interventions on campus. Particularly because of the shifting demographics of our student population, we intend to follow-up with a larger study of our students.

Implications for Civic Engagement, Service-Learning, and Mary Baldwin University

The experiences of Mary Baldwin students turn most traditional accounts of service-learning, and community engagement more broadly, upside-down. Unlike many anthropological approaches to service-learning, at Mary Baldwin University racial, ethnic, and class diversity exist primarily on campus, not off. As can clearly be seen from student narratives, student experiences in Staunton leave them feeling disconnected from the community and often concerned for their safety. Some Mary Baldwin students very clearly articulated these concerns as barriers to their community involvement and civic engagement. In this context, can service-learning continue to be used "to illuminate differences in power and privilege between students and the communities in which they are engaged" (Gonzales 2017, 18) when the *students* are already all too familiar with these issues? How does the social justice component of critical service-learning change when students are serving communities who may, relatively speaking, have more privilege – particularly racial privilege – than themselves? Such questions illuminate just how much service-learning programs at universities have relied, perhaps tacitly, on a model that assumes university students will be working in communities with more diversity and less privilege than themselves.

The anthropological literature on service-learning provides some suggestions for how to adapt service-learning for diverse students. Keene and Colligan, for example, argue that anthropology's focus on reflexivity and positionality can provide students with tools for assessing their own power and privilege relative to the communities they serve (2004, 8), a position echoed by other service-learning practioners within the field (Camacho 2004; Copeland et al. 2016; Gonzales 2017; Menzies and Butler 2011; Wies 2018). Rather than focusing primarily on potential community impacts, I suggest that faculty should also consider the potential impact of the service opportunity on their students, particularly how some elements of service-learning pedagogy and practices are experienced from the perspectives of diverse, less-privileged students. Simultaneously, we need to reimagine the definitions of service, the values of reciprocity and collaboration, and the way we prepare students for service so that service-learning remains meaningful and appropriate for all students, including those with diverse and less-privileged identities.

In this reimagining, service opportunities and learning goals should become more inclusive and reciprocal. Instead of developing skills working with diverse communities, for example, diverse students may benefit from working collaboratively in professional, managerial, or research-based service projects, applying what they have learned in class, but also gaining additional workplace experience and access to beneficial social networks. For some students, these forms of service may indeed be a kind of "border-crossing," a sustained exposure to a middle-class, professional community that many students desire to enter, rather than menial service work associated with "the help." This follows other anthrolological practitioners (Copeland et al. 2016; Cusack-McVeigh 2016;

Medeiros and Guzman 2016; Menzies and Butler 2011; Swyers 2015; Stein et al. 2016; Wies 2018) who reimagined service as ethnographic research, but I suggest broadening the definition of service even farther to include a variety of professional experiences. Importantly, service-learning still provides transformative real-world experiences that allow students to make connections between their academic work and the needs of communities. Because these opportunities often allow students to provide more direct input during service opportunities, they are incorporated into the experience more equally, thus extending the value of reciprocity and collaboration to students as well as community partners.

In the classroom, faculty should consider their students' diverse identities in order to avoid teaching only to white students, thus making their white students' experiences normative (Mitchell, Donahue, and Young-Law 2012, 624). This is especially crucial when preparing students for service – a critical component of service-learning pedagogy – because preparing students should not only address the context of the service site and the service opportunity, but also how the community may perceive and react to all students. Just as we should question how our students may impact the community, we should interrogate how community members' identities, beliefs, and values may impact our students and their experiences. In so doing, faculty should take all student concerns about safety seriously and consider them before developing service opportunities. We must ask about, and be willing to hear, student concerns and experiences in the community, even if they diverge significantly from our own experiences. Because many universities continue to have a predominately white faculty, staff, and administration, students may encounter skepticism or overt hostility when they report incidents of racial or other forms of intolerance and hostility. In addition, some service sites – such as those in predominately white neighborhoods – may put students of color in uncomfortable or even dangerous situations. Holly Swyers (2015), for example, detailed a collaborative service project that required students to do survey archaeology in a suburban neighborhood. Even with extensive preparation of both homeowners and students, such a project might be inappropriate for students of color since it would place them in extremely vulnerable positions as visible minorities in a majority-white space. Just as we would be expected to take white students' concerns about safety into account when planning service opportunities and preparing students for service, we must consider and work to mitigate the very real fears of students of color.

Finding Solutions: Initiatives at the Spencer Center for Civic and Global Engagement

Beyond the classroom, student perspectives can also inform campus-wide initiatives and programming that can improve student experiences in the community, thus clearing a path for more successful course-based service-learning opportunities. Using data from the Spencer Center Program Study, the Center began developing several programs to begin to address student concerns, particularly by encouraging familiarity and contact

between students and the local community. These efforts represent the initial stages of an effort to shift how community engagement and service-learning are practiced at Mary Baldwin University. All three of these inititives were created and implemented by Christina Harrison, the director of the Spencer Center, and Charis Tucker, the assistant director.

As part of first-year orientation, Ms. Harrison organized Meet Staunton to familiarize students with local businesses, particularly those owned by women and people of color. Volunteers from the community took small groups of first-year students around Staunton, stopping at three local businesses. The owners gave students a tour and spoke about their business as a general welcome to students. The program served to highlight local businesses and the Spencer Center, but more deeply, it also required Mary Baldwin students to interact with and get to know local community members. As our data suggest, students very quickly develop strong negative associations about Staunton, either from direct experience or through their social networks. Students who have sustained experiences in Staunton, however, tend to have more positive perspectives of the community and to be more engaged. By introducing first-year students to Staunton during orientation, students had at least one positive experience in the community with a diverse group of Stauntonians.

Similarly, throughout the fall semester, Spencer Center student workers collaborated on an initiative called Staunton Stories to develop short audio pieces that aired on local public radio. Like Meet Staunton, Staunton Stories allowed a group of students to become more familiar with the community and to meet local residents. Even more, Staunton Stories reimagined community service at Mary Baldwin by engaging students in an activity – the production of a radio piece – that would likely not typically be considered "service." The broader purpose, however, met a community need to support and increase familiarity with local businesses. Simultaneously, Staunton Stories was also a reciprocal, collaborative experience that allowed students to contribute their writing and social media skills while also learning new, highly valued real-world skills in audio production.

In addition, the Spencer Center also began a series of dialogues about race in Staunton, called Cocoa and Conversation. Each of these events, which have been very well-attended by students, gave Mary Baldwin students opportunities to ask questions about race and prejudice directly to community members. Invited guests included African American business owners, government officials, political activists, and political candidates. In these conversations, students provided necessary, but difficult, commentary on their experiences in Staunton and their opinions about race in the community. For example, one conversation included two well-intentioned white political activists who were part of a community campaign to change the name of Staunton's one

public high school, Robert E. Lee High School.[4] While students generally supported a name change, they also reminded the activists that this would do little to alleviate racial disparities without additional structural changes in the community. The success of Cocoa and Conversation led to the creation of a student Task Force on Race, comprised of a diverse group of students who are planning new iniatitives to address and hopefully ameliorate continued tensions between the campus and community.

These Spencer Center initiatives serve multiple audiences and purposes across our campus and the broader community. Not only did they prepare *students* to interact with Staunton, but they also prepared *Staunton* to interact with diverse Mary Baldwin students. If community partnerships are to be truly reciprocal, and service-learning and other forms of community engagement truly transformative, we as anthropologists and educators should not expect students of color and those with marginalized identities to bear the burden of preparation for and accommodation to difference. Similarly, these diverse students should be not be expected to disporportionately "do" social justice work; in these instances, it may be the community, not students, that needs to develop a "social justice lens" by recognizing systems of inequities and differences in relative power and privilege. By engaging with the Staunton community directly and allowing opportunities for students to raise questions of race and tolerance candidly to community members, these initiatives recognize that the Staunton community must also acknowledge and confront systems of race and intolerance. They also provided ways for members of the Staunton community to familiarize themselves with our newly diverse student body. As one student in a focus group stated, "We . . . have to get rid of that image that everybody sees of Mary Baldwin girls being the rich, white girls on the hill."

Conclusion

Despite its potential pitfalls, I share with many of the scholars cited in this article a belief that service-learning can be transformative for both students and communities. In a shifting environment for higher education, with trends indicating increased undergraduate enrollment by students of color (Mitchell, Donahue, and Young-Law 2012, 612), it has never been more important to critically adapt service-learning practices for diverse students. As I have suggested here, this requires understanding our students – who they are, where they come from, and their perceptions and experiences in local communities. We must pay close attention to the contexts of the service projects we lead, especially the local dynamics of race, class, gender, and other forms of difference. In particular, we must consider how these systems structure relationships between students, community members, and faculty. And finally, we need to develop service-learning opportunities that are appropriate for a diverse student population by

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[4] Staunton High School was renamed Robert E. Lee High School in 1914. After a lengthy and contentious debate in the community, in 2018 the Staunton City School Board voted 4-2 to change the name back to Staunton High School. The change went into effect July 1, 2019 (Stewart 2018).

reimagining definitions of service, extending values of collaboration and reciprocity, and taking student identities into account when preparing for service. Centering student identities and experiences not only provides improved service-learning and community engagement experiences for students, but can also lead – as in our case at Mary Baldwin University – to new campus-wide initiatives to bring students and the community together in productive and honest dialogue.

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