

Strengthening Pedagogy and Praxis in Cultural Anthropology and Service-Learning: Insights from Postcolonialism

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This article argues cultural anthropology would make a good partner to service-learning pedagogy because it offers students a theoretical approach for understanding community life and its power structures. Anthropologists have been dealing with power vis-à-vis the people they study using concepts relevant to the reflection process in service-learning. A liaison between anthropology and service-learning would help orient students toward systemic change in society. This responds to a desire among service-learning educators to prevent perpetuation of power imbalances and social injustices. The rich experience of service-learning would help anthropology further its interest in praxis.

A key issue addressed in the service-learning literature is what students learn from a service-learning experience. Scholars rightly point out that students in service-learning courses and programs explore multiculturalism, develop sensitivity to diversity, and strengthen commitment to civic engagement as a way of life (Barber & Battistoni, 1993; Bringle & Hatcher, 1996; Dubinsky, 2002; Rhoades, 1998; Root, Callahan, & Sepanski, 2000). These arguments emphasize the role of service-learning in building citizenship and democracy.

Scholars across many disciplines also describe the pedagogical benefits of service-learning to enhance classroom learning and expanding critical thinking skills and metacognitive tasks (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Eyler, Giles, & Schmiede, 1996; Litke, 2002; Steinke & Buresh, 2002). These arguments on learning outcomes define service-learning's merits as a useful and exciting form of pedagogy.

This article argues that an anthropologically-informed service-learning enterprise can enrich the service-learning experience. Cultural anthropology provides a theoretical framework for understanding the social relations of communities and analyzing student participation in service-learning projects in terms of transactions in meaning.

I will examine these two points, social relations and transactions in meaning, in the article below, but first I explore why anthropology is well positioned to combine with service-learning.

Why Cultural Anthropology?

One might legitimately question why anthropology has something to contribute to the service-learning enterprise. The answer is simple. In the

postcolonial era over the past 20 years or so, anthropologists have grappled with power *vis-à-vis* the people they study, and this concern with ethnographic authority and representation remains an important topic in anthropology (Asad, 1973; Brettell, 1993; Clifford & Marcus, 1986).

Within the discipline of anthropology, research and activism during postcolonial times has been motivated by interest in issues of power, domination, and hierarchy, and the negative impact on the *have-nots* of the world. Postcolonial anthropology has endeavored to look at social life in terms of local and global power relations and to be involved with social justice. One manifestation of this involvement is working to counter AIDS in developing countries (Farmer, 1992; 2003; Green, 1994). It is not lost on anthropologists, of course, that most professionals in the discipline may be considered to represent the developed world. Postcolonial anthropology has been examining ethnographers' role and their relationship with human subjects through the issues of reflexivity, representation, and agency. These issues are relevant to service-learning as well as anthropology.

In addition to anthropology's focus on understanding social relations (generally and specifically in terms of power), another reason the discipline would make a good partner to service-learning is the long-standing emphasis on the construction of meaning in other societies. Anthropologists have been devoted to understanding the beliefs and values among the people they study. The ethnographic literature provides in-depth pictures of how people in other societies make sense of themselves and the world in which they interact. This kind of insight is important in service-learning situations

because service-learning students usually come from different cultural backgrounds than people served by partner organizations. These differences pertain to class, ethnicity, gender, age, etc. Learning how others construct their world of meaning is needed to communicate across cultural boundaries.

In the following sections of this article, I first discuss how service-learning students can benefit from an anthropological approach to understanding community life and power relations animating it. Because service-learning students, like ethnographers, are not just outside observers of community life but interactive participants, I then discuss how they can explore their role in the community as cultural beings—typically the ones with power in relation to people the service-learning partner organizations serve. I believe students would enjoy the process of learning more about themselves by examining the issues of reflexivity, representation, and agency. The insight into self and others that would result is an important part of figuring out how to create systemic change and make a difference in the world.

Understanding Social Relations in Communities

Introducing cultural anthropology into service-learning pedagogy gives students a social science base from which to grasp the social structure of the community in which they are engaged. The anthropological tradition of studying of local communities has produced theoretical foundations for describing the structure of societies—social, economic and political factors that shape social identity and relationships. Recent postcolonial ethnographies that analyze inequalities based on ethnicity, race, gender, class and other sources of ideological differentiation (Beidelman, 1997; Blackwood, 2000; Emmett, 1996; Hansen, 2000; Nash, 2001; Ortner, 1999a) point to an unmet need in service-learning. The current service-learning literature is calling for recognition of differences in race and class to prevent service-learning programs from replicating power imbalances and economic injustices in societies where students are working (Green, 2001; Melanson, 2001; Morton 1996). Anthropology strengthens service-learning's ability to bring students to a level of analytical consciousness necessary to understand power structures underlying social relations and make systemic changes in community life.

Becoming Aware of Power Structures— Case Examples

I discuss bringing student attention to power structures within communities by drawing on a

course I teach in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Rochester. The course, *Local and Global Market Research*, provides an anthropological approach to market research, and includes a local market research project in which students conduct ethnographic research to help a Rochester neighborhood in the revitalization process. Two class projects provide case examples for this article. *Local and Global Market Research* has been offered the past five years. My experience in helping students become aware of power structures also comes from participating as a faculty member in the Urban Fellows Program at the University of Rochester. Urban Fellows is a 10-week summer fellowship which promotes civic engagement by placing students in a local community organization where they work and introducing them to urban affairs through faculty seminars. This program was initiated three years ago.¹ *Urban Fellows* and the market research course both serve an undergraduate population.

Helping Students to Set Realistic Expectations

Students tend to enter the market research course and the Urban Fellows program in affective mode; that is, expecting to help people living in the city of Rochester. Their expectations range from one extreme, “making sandwiches in a soup kitchen and feeling good as a result,” as one student put it, to another extreme, eradicating poverty in the community (if not the world) and enjoying the satisfaction of ameliorating a major social problem. Each of these extremes is not realistic given the purpose of the market research course, the Urban Fellows program, and service-learning in general. Thus, we have found it necessary to deal first with student expectations of their role in the community before discussing power structures. Dealing with student expectations is not new to service-learning educators (Gallini, 2003; Sperling, Wang, Kelly & Hritsuk, 2003).

We talk with students about what they hope to accomplish through community involvement and what seems possible to achieve as they become part of an ongoing process in the community. What constitutes a realistic expectation for intervention depends, of course, on the particular market research project or Urban Fellow placement, but students define something more than making sandwiches and less than ending poverty forever.

For example, in the 2003 market research course, students set out to conduct research among residents and retail business owners in the *Chelsea* neighborhood to gain their views on revitalizing the neighborhood. The mandate for this research came from our partner organization, *Faith in Action*, a faith-based community development

organization, with whom I had established a collaborative relationship.² *Faith in Action* had previously contacted the Rochester city government about financial help for revitalization. To consider the possibility of funding, city economic development officials required a written development plan that included input from neighborhood residents and business owners.³ The city officials wanted to insure that revitalization efforts would be based on what the residents and business owners desired. *Faith in Action* formulated a planning process making the student research one step in the process. Thus, the student project was defined as more than a mere elicitation of research findings that would sit gathering dust on an academic shelf and less than a complete revitalization of the neighborhood by stopping crime, improving housing, developing retail business, beautifying residential and commercial areas, etc. The students would produce a research report to be used in preparing the development plan for submission to the city.⁴ When I introduced the research project to students at the beginning of the market research course, I engaged the students in a discussion of what they imagined the research project would accomplish and then framed their thoughts and feelings within the context of the *Faith in Action* planning process. As a result, the students arrived at a realistic expectation for their (small but significant) intervention within the city funding process and the larger process of urban renewal.

Becoming Analytic about Power— Starting with Social Identities

Moving beyond the individual to identify patterns in social behavior is a skill that many students, especially those not well versed in social science, need to learn.⁵ I begin teaching students about patterns in social relationships by focusing on social identity and the construction of personhood.⁶ The class participates in a social identity exercise⁷ to help students learn more about themselves and each other, and explore the impact of group memberships on social interaction in diverse groups. I give students a list of categories (gender, ethnicity, age, class, religion, sexual orientation, ability status, year in school, fraternity, sorority, club or sports team membership), asking them to think about which social groups to which they belong and the three groups with which they identify most. In small group discussions, they talk about the three groups each student chose, why these were chosen, and how membership in these groups has affected their personal life in general and on campus. To reinforce the concept that social identity involves learned behavior, I then ask the students to

write down examples of what they learned about being that identity while they were growing up. Lastly, the students write down what they have learned about being lower-class, because students come primarily from middle- and upper-class families, and will be going into a lower-class neighborhood to conduct the local market research project.

When taking part in the exercise, students seem to expect differences among themselves in terms of their views of self and the world, and they are very aware of what is politically correct to say. They are often surprised, however, to find that they share worldviews with others who belong to different groups. I like to emphasize the point that sharing worldviews occurs because persons have multiple identities and inhabit multiple interpretive worlds. The point has implications for community service learning. Developing relationships with partner organizations depends on recognizing shared meanings that constitute reason for collaboration and joint action.

Discussing what students have learned about belonging to a lower socioeconomic group usually brings up assumptions of *the other* and causes of poverty, crime, and urban decay. Some student assumptions *blame the victim* (e.g., dealing drugs, dropping out of school, getting pregnant) and some reflect structural roots (limited family support, lack of access to good education and job opportunities, etc.). Bringing these assumptions to light opens the door to teaching concepts useful for analyzing power.

Concepts for Analyzing Power

Social identity underlies relations between powerful and powerless groups in society. Domination of one group over others is maintained by denying access to resources on the basis of one or more social identity aspects (gender, ethnicity, age, etc.). There are numerous anthropological concepts to understand how power is wielded. In the market research course, I cover social construction of race, formal versus informal power, social marginalization, and resistance so students can learn to recognize structural problems in communities.

Discussion with students is initiated with ethnographic material.⁸ There is a common analytic framework in the material I think service-learning can profitably take from anthropology: the distinction between structural features of social life and individual persons' lived reality. A study of crack dealers in New York City clearly points out this distinction (Bourgeois, 1995). According to the ethnographic account, Puerto Rican immigrants slipped into street culture when their hopes for jobs and careers in manufacturing were dashed by an economic shift from manufacturing to service because

Figure 1
Power Diagram

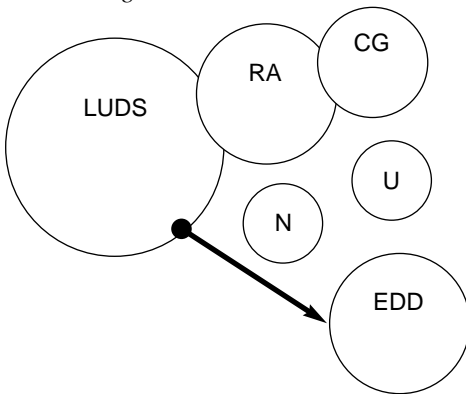
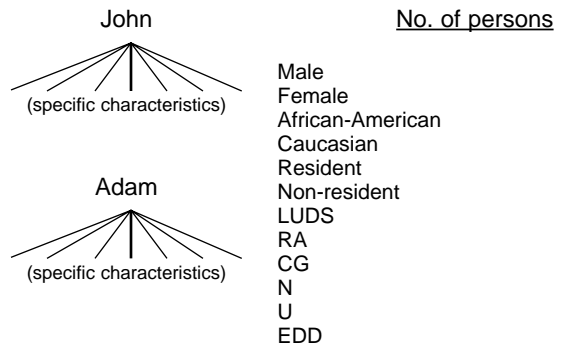


Figure 2
Network Grid



they did not have skills (work and cultural) to succeed in the white-collar service sector. East Harlem has been home to several generations of Puerto Rican families whose children begin dealing drugs and leave school. From an analytic point of view, rather than blaming individuals for choosing street life (based on the *culture of poverty* concept that pathological behavior is learned and passed from generation to generation), we need to look at how the social structure prevents individuals from access to resources leading to mainstream life. To emphasize the importance of directing attention to structural analysis, public policy, and systemic change in society, I relay narratives about one or two adolescents in the ethnographic material—stories about their hopes, dreams, and attempts to do well against struggles with inner-city education, housing, and employment. Hearing stories of structural impediments in the way of specific persons helps to focus on issues causing marginalization.

Learning from the ethnographic material is related to the neighborhood where the students conduct their project by asking our community partner to visit class and discuss community history. In the case example, the Director of *Faith in Action* talked about issues facing the *Chelsea* neighborhood. Like many Rust Belt cities in the United States after World War II, Rochester, experienced growth in the manufacturing sector, migration from the South, racism in the employment and housing markets, and *White flight* to suburban areas. *Chelsea* today is a working class, low-income neighborhood in transition—that is, spiraling downward. There are problems with youth, drug dealing, loitering, and vandalism in the retail district. On residential streets, there is a problem with home maintenance, especially in non-owner occupied (tenant) housing. Most residents are African American and the remainder Caucasian, Hispanic, and Asian American. It is important for students to learn

about historical processes affecting a local community and how the past shapes the present. Recognizing historical processes helps to orient students to what service-learning educators call a change versus charity model of intervention.

It is also important for students to identify power structures existing in the community where they will be engaged. In the market research class, we rely on community partners' knowledge to help draw power diagrams and network grids. Before community partners come to class, I ask them to be prepared to discuss and draw (a) power diagrams (see Figure 1) showing neighborhood organizations and groups relevant to the revitalization process; discussion includes each organization's mandates and activities, their sources of power, old and new players, and historical relationships between the organizations; (b) network grids (see Figure 2) indicating the social identities of key persons relevant to the revitalization process; discussion includes the person's voice (who they are speaking for in the community), complementary or competing interests, and sources of power to influence others' actions. These are not sophisticated drawings rendered electronically in full color, but drawn with chalk on a blackboard. Below are sketches to give the reader an image of these crude tools.

For power diagrams, circles are used to represent organizations; each circle's size reflects its role in the revitalization process; overlapping or separate circles indicate how closely organizations work together on the revitalization. Network grids enumerate social identity characteristics (gender, ethnicity, age, neighborhood resident/non-resident, organization affiliations in the revitalization process, etc.) for each key person (usually six to eight persons) and then aggregated by characteristic. Although power diagrams and power grids are drawn from the perspective of a specific community partner (and we talk about how and why they

may have been drawn differently by others), they do give students insight into key persons, organizations, power differentials, and decision-making locales in the community.

Observation — A Reflective Step in Preparing Students to Enter the Field

There is another step I take in preparing students to engage with residents and business owners in the community where they do a market research project: observation. Giving students written guidelines on what to look for, I ask them to walk the neighborhood residential and retail streets and write a brief report. There are two purposes for this assignment. First, training in the method of observation. Second, creating another opportunity for student assumptions about socioeconomic class to rise to the surface.

I ask students to include in their reports a comparison of how the neighborhood is similar to, or different from, the one where they grew up. This part of the assignment usually brings up student assumptions and values. For example, one student from an elite family in Korea described the neighborhood as ‘bad.’ He thought that residents who leave their houses in a state of disrepair do not care about their neighborhood and have no pride in it. When the student articulated this value judgment during class, I was able to reframe his judgment as an assumption or hypothesis warranting empirical testing.⁹

The observation assignment provides a window for encouraging students to confront their stereotypes and biases about lower class. Observing the neighborhood with their own eyes creates powerful images that evoke deeply-rooted beliefs and attitudes for many students. During class discussion, I introduce the concept of White *privilege* and privilege based on other aspects of social identity—gender, age, sexual orientation, etc. (Kendall, n.d.).

The observation assignment usually produces the benefit of giving students a sense of kinship with members of the community. That is, while the students may perceive themselves to be different, they also feel the same. This comes from seeing community members living everyday life in ways reminiscent of the student lives. For example, students often talk about observing parents with children in strollers, young kids playing, older kids shooting hoops, and residents buying quotidian things in the stores on the retail street. Students connect with resident desires to improve their lives and provide a better future for their children. As a result, students begin to see that they share an interpretive world with neighborhood residents.

Helping Students Understand Power Structures They Confront

Conflict during a revitalization process may be inevitable but impossible to predict. It is hard to predict when conflict will erupt between people and organizations with overlapping or different interests and sources of power. However, when conflict does occur and students come face-to-face with it, there is opportunity to analyze specific power structures and make sense of the dissonance. In the example below, a student used the network grid and power diagram developed in a market research class to create meaning out of a situation that at first glance seemed to reflect chaos.

The 2002 market research class conducted research to help the *Greenpoint* neighborhood expand target audiences for revitalization. Our partner organization, a local urban development sector (LUDS), wanted to gain University of Rochester students’ (the neighborhood is located within walking distance of campus) and commuters’ prospective (people who work in *Greenpoint* but live elsewhere). To attract students to *Greenpoint* shops and stores, the LUDS had thoughts of refashioning the retail area into a college town. But the student research project showed that students on campus did not want a college town. Instead, they wanted the *Greenpoint* retail area to be whatever *Greenpoint* residents wanted. That is, the students wished to participate in a ‘natural’ community.¹⁰

One student in the 2002 market research class who became an Urban Fellow was placed in the *Greenpoint* LUDS. As the course ended, her summer internship began. She was engaged in preparing marketing materials to attract new business to the community when conflict arose. *Greenpoint* residents had spoken clearly at LUDS public meetings of wanting “Mom and Pop” businesses that would give them places to gather and hang out (e.g., coffee shops, restaurants, book stores). Yet, at a subsequent public meeting, a city official announced that the city was negotiating to bring the first new business, a Dollar store, to the neighborhood’s retail area. When residents responded angrily that they had already expressed desire for locally-owned businesses, not a chain store, the city official defended the action by noting the difficulty in finding small business owners willing to take the risk of opening a retail store on a deteriorating commercial street.

The turn of events was unsettling to the student and me. I had attended the public meetings too. Both of us felt angry and frustrated. Then, we referred back to the network grid and power dia-

gram drawn in the market research class which made clear that the city official had overlapping networks in the community as a fellow resident but also as a city official. In fact, he is the only person on the *Greenpoint* network grid with this social identity. His beliefs and values as a government employee conflicted with those of other residents and local community leaders. The city official believed that having a Dollar store bringing in tax dollars was better than having an empty, boarded-up building. Other residents believed, to the contrary, that a Dollar store would only continue the downward spiral of a retail street troubled by drugs and crime.¹¹ While the city announcement and resident outburst could not have been predicted, analyzing the conflict in terms of the network grid helped to understand it. Of the city official's multiple identities, he acted only on the beliefs and values encapsulated in his social identity as government employee.

Understanding why the conflict happened motivated the student to seek to reverse the city's decision. By looking at the *Greenpoint* power diagram, she realized residents lacked sufficient power in relation to the city government to gain what they wanted. The formal power of the city was stronger than the informal power of the resident association involved in the revitalization process. She became committed to using her position as a student familiar with resident desires to approach LUDS leaders and persuade neighborhood organizations to join together and fight the city decision. In other words, could she convince them that they shared an interpretive world worth fighting for? In the end, the question became moot because negotiations between the city and the Dollar Store chain fell apart.

To conclude this section, the anthropological approach to studying community illuminates power relations among people and beliefs and values underlying their behavior. Analyzing community power structures is key to systemic change. The student in the above situation became clear on an important power differential in *Greenpoint* social life and acted to counter the effect of the city's decision making-authority. At the same time, she was aware of her positionality as a community actor—that is, allied with the residents' interests. She reflected on herself as a cultural being interacting with other cultural beings. Like this student, service-learning students would profit from the inward gaze of examining their beliefs and values in relation to those in the community with whom they are working. Thus, we now turn to reflexivity, representation, and agency—issues that have been in the forefront of postcolonial anthropology and its concern with power.

Reflection and Transactions in Meaning

Porter and Monard (2001), anthropologists involved in service-learning pedagogy, put forth the concept of reciprocity as a metaphor for thinking about participation in service-learning programs. This useful metaphor, based on the seminal study of exchange (Mauss, 1925), is a good way to frame the relationship between students and people in the community. Reciprocity orients us to critical issues in contemporary anthropological theory relevant to the service-learning experience. Reflexivity, representation, and agency expand upon the service-learning interest in reflection. Focusing on these issues provides conceptual direction for students keeping journals or using other means to increase awareness of the self, the other, and community intervention.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity, the notion employed in anthropology for situating Western understanding of the other, encourages analyzing one's own worldview, assumptions, and values as part of interactions with others (Abu-Lughod, 1986; Crapanzano, 1980; Marcus & Fischer, 1986). Anthropologists have been influenced in this regard by Edward Said's (1986) argument that all knowledge is situated historically and geographically. Ethnographers in postcolonial times have become zealous about examining the impact of their belief systems on how they perceive the people they are studying because they realize that the lens through which the ethnographer looks makes a difference. In this sense, ethnographic knowledge is contingent (Abu-Lughod, 1991; Heider, 1988; Ortner 1999b). At the same time, ethnographers pay attention to how they are perceived—how native perceptions of the ethnographer's social identity affect what informants say, and what that means for the problem of cultural translation. These perception issues, the lens through which the ethnographer perceives the other and how the other perceives the ethnographer, are analyzed by looking at positionality.

Positionality—Perceiving the Other through Your Own Lens. A curious thing happened in the *Chelsea* fieldwork experience highlighting students' position in the self/other relationship. At one moment the students were transformed, metaphorically speaking, from executives to scribes. When the semester got underway, students had a sense of themselves as experts coming to do research in the neighborhood. This sense of self was based on recognizing themselves as members of a university community oriented to research, knowledge, and learning. Even though the students were feeling some uncertainty about being fully competent to

carry out the project because they had never done this kind of research, the director of our partner organization, *Faith in Action*, affirmed the student sense of self as expert by graciously expressing gratitude to the students for the research skills they were bringing to the community development planning process. He reflected a local view of the University as a prestigious institution, thereby reinforcing the student sense of self as expert.

In the initial design the director and I had worked out for the *Chelsea* research,¹² there were to be group interviews with residents, conducted jointly by students and community leaders working in pairs. *Faith in Action* named the residents who volunteered to help with the research community leaders. I was to train the community leaders in an effort to empower residents that ironically also portrayed me as a university expert. But a midstream change occurred—something undoubtedly familiar to community service learning educators. The director decided he wanted pairs of community leaders to conduct the interviews, with the students serving as note-takers. I agreed to the change on the basis of resident empowerment. When I told the students about the change, they chafed a bit. Instead of being experts, they were becoming subalterns.

I had previously neglected to address the perceived role of expert with students, but given the altered group interview plans, we talked about the reversal of positionality and their assumptions underlying the role of expert and subaltern. What came out of the conversation was (a) awareness of themselves as university students having access to power and resources most *Chelsea* residents did not have, and (b) recognition of the assumption that an expert, whose specialized knowledge and skills grant privilege, knows what would be best for a revitalization plan. This reflexivity was important to the project because students would eventually present their research findings and recommendations to the community.

I tell this story because of the implications of positionality for transactions in meaning. The self is always a construction, a process of creating the person through opposition to another (Abu-Lughod, 1991). For students, the opposition was a system of difference based on socioeconomic class and, for some students, also on gender and ethnicity. The issue is understanding how one interprets fieldwork experience and interaction from their own position. Situating oneself in the community is important for service-learning students too.

Transactions in Meaning. To situate themselves in the community where they are working, service-learning students need to identify the meanings they as actors attribute to their own behavior and to others at a

specific time and place. This invites comparison to meanings given by the other to their own behavior. Such a comparison occurred in the *Chelsea* neighborhood over the meaning of steel bars on storefronts, which cover the windows and doors of numerous shops in the retail area. When the students conducted observation, they reacted negatively to the steel bars. They found the steel bars uninviting and deterring. Part of the observation assignment was to enter a few stores and observe there. The students much preferred the upscale urban retail areas and suburban malls they usually frequent. Upon interviewing business owners, however, students found that merchants see the steel bars differently. Business owners install them because they believe steel bars are necessary to prevent break-ins and robberies. By comparing their own beliefs about the steel bars with those of business owners, the students were able to interpret behavior as transactions in meaning across cultural boundaries.

Taking into account both meanings of steel bars (alienation versus protection) led students to realize some of the complexity in revitalization. To remove the steel bars and make aesthetic improvements, which initially seemed important to students, would not renew the commercial street, they realized, without addressing crime reduction and engaging youth in more productive activities than drug dealing. One of the outcomes of this analysis was to foster a terrain of understanding between business owners and residents. When group interviews with *Chelsea* residents were held later, the residents expressed a similar view to the students. According to residents, steel bars alienate them from their neighborhood retail street and stop many from shopping there anymore. The steel bars had become a symbolic stumbling block, creating an impasse between residents and business owners. The student research unearthed the complexity underlying this stumbling block, articulating common ground for working on social issues of youth and crime reduction in addition to aesthetic improvement.

In the market research course, I use the concept of culture as a filter to teach students about transactions in meaning. Simple exercises can convey the concept of communication across a filter based on the beliefs and values of the persons on each side. For example, I introduce Valentine's Day as a gendered occasion for which males and females often have different expectations. I ask students to define their expectations, describe how those expectations are communicated to boyfriends and girlfriends, and then discuss their reactions when the expectations are met or not met. Discussion quickly demonstrates how analyzing Valentine's Day experiences depends upon being reflective about the meaning of Valentine's Day for oneself as well as understand-

ing the meaning for the other person.

Another helpful tool for teaching students about culture as a filter comes from the practice of market research. One of the ways brand managers think about segmenting a market is through generational marketing—appealing, for instance, to baby boomers, gen x, or millennial.¹³ A basic premise of this marketing tool is that membership in a specific generation constitutes a dimension of social identity. In the class exercise we do, I ask students to identify *markers* or events of their formative years that have shaped their generation's values and attitudes. Such *markers* include social, economic, and political situations, and popular culture events (movies, TV, music, books). In small group discussions, students find it relatively easy, and even fun, to point out *markers*, and associated attitudes and values, for their generation. This reflective exercise lets students discern a shared worldview through which they interpret interactions. In a multicultural group, the exercise also provides opportunities to identify different interpretive worlds. For service-learning situations, it is the identification of shared meanings with the community partner that provides impetus for collaboration.

Positionality—How the Other Perceives You. Reflexivity also means recognizing how *the ethnographic other* perceives the anthropologist who has come to do fieldwork in their midst. How do the people with whom one is working interpret one's social identity? In service-learning situations, it is important for a student to become aware of how people in the community interpret their social identity. Their perceptions shape and direct interaction with the student. For example, one of the market research students came to realize that people in the *Greenpoint* neighborhood saw her in racial terms and identified with her because of her skin color. "They felt they could tell me their stories," she said. "They would say, 'You'll understand. It's not easy for us.'" However, the student did not perceive herself to be part of a minority group. "My parents emigrated 27 years ago. I grew up middle class American." She was proud of her Indian heritage, but felt like a fraud when people identifying with her on the basis of skin color started to confide in her. Over time, as the student got to know neighborhood residents better, she became more comfortable about the situation because she understood why they were behaving the way they did and could tell them about her ethnic background. Just as important for community intervention, the student knew that she shared with them an interpretive world about revitalizing *Greenpoint*.

Reflexivity—Market Research on the Global Stage. Because *Local and Global Market Research* is a

market research course, it is important for students to develop critical social thinking skills regarding the practice of market research. There is a dilemma in teaching an anthropological approach to market research insofar as the market research profession works with transnational corporations in a worldwide capitalistic economy. Antiglobalists adamantly decry the negative impact of global marketing and advertising on the world's poor and oppressed (Klein, 2002). I deal with this dilemma by problematizing capitalism.

When covering international market research, we explore benefits and abuses of the capitalistic system. In particular, we focus on global trade and the capital market (including the work of organizations that oversee international economic relations such as the World Trade Organization, World Bank, and International Monetary Fund). Specific instances of abuse we discuss are usually eye-opening for students. They are unaware, for example, of how U.S. farm subsidies and trade policies have deleterious effects on people of other countries, how the South Asian labor trade enslaves workers, or how 'structural adjustments' create further debt for countries.

There is a plethora of material for teaching students to be critical of capitalistic economic practices.¹⁴ I have found ethnographic films a potent way of increasing student awareness about the world landscape, constructed not only of potential markets for production and consumption according to a capitalistic mindset, but also consisting of peoples whose everyday lives are affected by global political and economic processes.¹⁵ We bring this kind of global structural analysis to the neighborhood level where the students are conducting research by focusing on food distribution. Emphasis is placed on the kinds of foods available or unavailable in the neighborhood. For example, during the observation part of the research, students check whether fresh fruits and vegetables are sold in local food stores. This simple activity leads students to consider whether *Chelsea* residents must travel outside their neighborhood to purchase healthy food and how accessible the public transportation system makes such food. In other words, students grasp the complexity of the urban renewal process.

The shared interpretive world that the market research project opens to students and members of the community has less to do with market research in the sense of studying consumer behavior (rational and emotional triggers to purchase) and more to do with ethnographic research in terms of understanding community perspectives on problems and solutions for revitalization. The shared interpretive world stems from the ethnographic research objec-

tives.¹⁶ There is thus a disjuncture between the practice of market research in the corporate sector and the local market research project. This disjuncture arises from combining three fields (anthropology, market research, and community revitalization) in one course. By encouraging students to adopt a critical stance toward the capitalist system in which market research is enmeshed, I give students a background for understanding larger political and economic forces reverberating at the local level in which they are working.

Representation

Representation is the concept that descriptions of *the other* are embedded in a cultural matrix that includes the ethnographer and his or her relationship with informants. Concern with representation in postcolonial anthropology grows out of the focus on reflexivity. The issues that arise are whose *voice* is reflected in the ethnographic writing and how the nature of the power relationship between ethnographer and informants affects the ethnographic description (Brettell, 1993; Ortner, 1999a).

I teach the concept of representation using advertising images. For example, I ask students to compare the image of *Aunt Jemima* in old advertisements published in an anthropological text (O'Barr, 1994) with the image on the box of Aunt Jemima Pancake & Waffle Mix currently sold on the market. Students see that the older image of an African American woman wearing a bandana is somewhat updated on the current box, though it falls short of being contemporary. Students also recognize that the current box portrays a power relationship between African Americans and Caucasians in U.S. society because there is an image of a young Caucasian boy on the back of the box eating pancakes. The box, semiotically speaking, conveys the message that the Caucasian boy is being served pancakes by the African American woman. The representation is racist.

Another source for teaching students about representation is a study of the advertising industry's effort to target Hispanic consumers in the United States, demonstrating how the representation of Hispanics in advertisements recapitulates the power relationship between the dominant and minority groups in U.S. society (Davila, 2001). The advertising industry created a single category (Latinos) to encompass the heterogeneous groups of Hispanic peoples living in the United States and then ascribed to this target a set of cultural symbols and values considered 'authentic.' It was hoped that these 'authentic' symbols and values would resonate with actual Hispanic persons. Marketing efforts have faced some hurdles. For instance, ads with salsa rhythms from the Caribbean

seem foreign to Mexican Americans living on the west coast. By using the construct of a single category and presenting 'authentic' Latino culture in relation to the dominant U.S. culture, the advertising reflects a social hierarchy based on differences in ethnicity, race, and class.

Applying the concept of representation to service-learning draws student attention to how people are represented by partner organizations. In the Chelsea market research project, as previously described, *Faith in Action* named residents who helped with the project 'community leaders.' The name gave status to these residents and made the research a collaborative effort in the eyes of students. They felt like partners with the residents—at least until the student role was changed from coleader to scribe of the group interviews. This change altered the power alignment and working relationship between students and 'community leaders' insofar as the group interviews were concerned. On the other hand, the change corroborates a goal statement in the *Faith in Action* brochure that "grassroots leaders are empowered to organize and bring about systemic change."

For students in service-learning projects, it would be useful to examine the partner organization's written documents (brochures, annual reports, etc.). How does the partner organization describe its mission and the people it serves? What are the cultural categories, symbols, and values underlying the description? For example, use of the word *client*, common in the vocabulary of many partner organizations, brings up a model of relationship that implies asymmetry. One person gives, one person receives, and a power differential exists between them. Clienthood redefines personhood (McKnight, 1995). As McKnight argues, professionals who assume power to label fellow citizens 'deficient people in need' usurp a tool of control and oppression. In comparison, reciprocity implies partnership without necessarily the encumbrance of power. Words and their meaning employed in the service-learning situation are key indicators of representation.

If service-learning students paid attention to communications between the partner organization and the people it serves, they could identify models of relationship encoded in vocabulary. How do employees conceive of themselves in relation to the people served? How is this expressed in behavior through interactions with people served? This focus would allow students to ask whether the representation in written documents is consistent with behavior observed in the community setting.

Agency

Agency refers to the self as a locus of power in the cultural construction of personhood. Because the concept of agency has been part of the anthro-

pological tool bag for a long time, we know that agency is culturally contingent (Evans-Pritchard, 1937). The Western construction of personhood—in which belief in free will, free choice, and self-determination reflect a kind of autonomous agency—differs from other societies (Foster, 2002). Agency is important in the service-learning situation because it highlights the relationship between structure and empowerment to act.

Social scientists in anthropology and other disciplines have come to think about structure in terms of factors that constrain the behavior of actors yet leave room for individual choice (MacGaffey & Bazenguissa-Ganga, 2000; Sugrue, 1996). Agency appropriately shifts interpretation of behavior away from notions like ‘underclass’ and ‘culture of poverty’ that tend to blame the victim. It provides a way to think about people as active agents of their own history without considering them passive victims or blaming them. Both concepts, structure and agency, are key to understanding causes of social problems and developing solutions to them.

Incorporating structure and agency into the analysis of *Chelsea* transformed the student view of the community and its members. While the students identified structural factors obstructing access to education, employment, and housing, they also discerned human intention to act in the process of revitalization. Inner-city neighborhoods are often represented by the media and official statistics (high crime rate, low employment rate) as impoverished places in a static way that creates a terminal diagnosis, leading to dismissal of the place.¹⁷ Through their research and interactions with *Chelsea* residents and business owners, students adopted a more dynamic view of the neighborhood. They listened to community people talk about what they wanted to do to “take back the streets” and improve the quality of life in *Chelsea*. They heard stories of people already taking action; for example, starting to work with youth in one part of the neighborhood. They ‘saw’ a construct of agency in *Chelsea*—empowerment to act individually and collectively. For students, this ethnographic experience reinforced the alignment of power based on reciprocity between themselves and community members.

Addressing the concept of agency in a service-learning environment sheds light on the perspective of persons coming to partner organizations for services or assistance. What goals do they set for themselves? How do they envision the self as a means to goal attainment? From their point of view, what role does the partner organization (and service-learning student) play as a catalyst of change? Looking at how organization consumers

perceive agency highlights the hopes and expectations they have for intervention and what they are willing to do when working with a service-learning partner organization. In other words, the concept of agency provides opportunity to reflect on the consumer side of the reciprocal relationship between the partner organization and the people it serves.

To summarize this discussion of reflection in the service-learning experience, paying attention to reflexivity, representation, and agency helps students stay attuned to analysis of power. Dealing with these three concepts provides a window on transactions in meaning among the self, the client, and the partner organization. As a result, service-learning students can become more aware of the cultural context in which they are interacting with others. This helps orient them to power and the need for creating systemic change in society.

Concluding Thoughts

For Service-Learning

A liaison with anthropology would help to institutionalize the service-learning enterprise. Without institutionalization, advocates of service-learning worry that this form of pedagogy might become a passing fad (Holland, 1997; Prins, 2002; Stanton, Giles, & Cruz, 1998). The specific aspect of service-learning where anthropology can prove useful is preparing students for community placements. Because anthropology is oriented to conducting ethnographic fieldwork, anthropologists have experience working in close interpersonal relationships with people unlike themselves. They have written volumes on preparing for fieldwork and have given comprehensive courses on the subject. The discussion and case examples in this article demonstrate the value of anthropological concepts for adequate preparation of students in community service learning. Developing a systematic effort to codify what constitutes good field preparation for service-learning students would enhance the service-learning enterprise and lead to greater institutionalization in the academic setting.

Letting anthropology constitute a theoretical foundation for service-learning pedagogy would also support the desire of service-learning advocates to base the pedagogy on a change versus charity model (Westheimer & Kahne, 1996). Holland (1997) argues colleges and universities must give the highest level of support to institutionalizing service-learning to affect systemic change. A liaison with anthropology can be a link in the connection between the institutionalization of service-learning and the promotion of systemic change. The *Chelsea* example from the market

research course described in this article indicates a grasp of larger social, economic, and political processes affecting the neighborhood is necessary to develop an effective revitalization plan. By supplying a framework to understand community, anthropology provides a means to define structural parameters of change. This would help to push service-learning further toward a change model and social justice.

For Anthropological Praxis

Service-learning can play an important role in expanding anthropological *praxis*. In contrast to its enduring commitment to theory-building in academia, anthropology is only beginning to recognize the importance of *praxis* in the learning environment (Chrisman, 2002; Sanjek, 1998). Until recently, applied anthropology was considered a step-child of the discipline. Postcolonialism, with the realization that theory is bound up with politics, seems to have led anthropology to an appreciation of *praxis* as a way of understanding the world. We can see this appreciation arising in the concern of reflexive postmodern anthropology for the issue of readership and the politicized context of readers who are interpreting ethnographic texts (Brettell, 1993). Readership is ensconced in the broader issue of intellectual property rights, a knotty problem facing the practice of anthropology today (Brown, 2004).

To become socially-active academics means expanding the ethnographic enterprise from knowledge production to knowledge use. I think the move toward knowledge use can be difficult for anthropologists, not because of any lingering ties to the positivist conception of knowledge, but because of the possible loss of ethnographic authority and autonomy. Once engaged in an activist situation, one's position, whether made public in text, verbal, or action form, may be misread or misinterpreted. The anthropologist's intentions may not determine the use to which ethnographic knowledge is put. Control over interpretation of ethnographic knowledge can slip from the anthropologist's hands.

Jaffe (1993) frames this dilemma of ethnographic authority and the political context of interpretation in terms of the insider/outsider dichotomy. In her fieldwork and activist situation, it was hard to find equilibrium between analytic detachment and political involvement. As outsiders, anthropologists are accustomed to analyzing webs of power and meaning, but as insider activists enmeshed in local politics, they are likely to become associated with a specific discourse and power alignment.¹⁸ Negotiating insider/outsider roles can prove a difficult task for the activist. If ethnographic analysis is

considered messy because of anthropology's ability to identify complexities and nuances of social life, then anthropological *praxis* gets even messier.

In the market research course, partnering with *Faith in Action* in *Chelsea* alienated me from partners in the adjacent *Greenpoint* neighborhood where the students had done their research project the previous year. The ostensible cause of alienation was the social identity of the *Faith in Action* director whom *Greenpoint* neighborhood leaders consider an outsider. Outsider status stems from his residency. He does not live in the *Chelsea-Greenpoint* sector but resides in a rural area outside the city. Nonresident in this case symbolized 'not one of us.' This became an issue for me the semester the students were working with *Faith in Action* when I was trying to make arrangements for my summer seminar in the *Urban Fellows* program to take place in the *Chelsea* neighborhood. Since the seminar topic is revitalization, I wanted to give the *Urban Fellow* students an experience of the revitalization effort being spearheaded by *Faith in Action*. The *Urban Fellows* administrator in charge of seminar arrangements (and also a *Greenpoint* community leader) refused to work with the *Faith in Action* director. Other *Greenpoint* leaders spoke to me about the *Faith in Action* director. They believed his behavior with city officials established a confrontational tone having a negative impact on them. *Chelsea* and *Greenpoint* are adjoining neighborhoods in one of the 10 sectors in the city that compete for city development funds. By partnering with *Faith in Action*, I was pushed into local alignments and categorized 'with them' (*Chelsea*), 'not one of us' (*Greenpoint*). Although my situation was a minor one, resolved by working with an assistant director of *Faith in Action* who is a *Chelsea* resident, the situation points up the hazards of academic activists becoming embroiled in local politics, especially concerning resources and decision-making.

The rich experience of the service-learning enterprise could help anthropology sort through the dilemma of analytic detachment and political involvement. Service-learning educators have undoubtedly dealt with many problematic situations that make anthropologists wary of engaging their students in social justice research outside the classroom. What anthropology can glean from service-learning is a more effective way of negotiating the insider/outsider roles of the activist. This would help the discipline increase its capacity for the practice of anthropology. Anthropologists are interested in using their ethnographic expertise to help solve the problems of our globalized world. Considering the experience of service-learning educators, anthropology departments could devote

more energy to engaging students in *praxis*, social-ly-responsive research that pursues the quest of ethnographic understanding and action.

Notes

¹ I would like to thank Robert J. Foster, chair of the Department of Anthropology, University of Rochester, and Jody Asbury, dean of Students, University of Rochester, and founder of Rochester's Urban Fellows Program, for giving me opportunity to participate in academic programs at the University of Rochester. Both of them generously spent time with me discussing ideas for this article.

² *Faith in Action* and *Chelsea* are pseudonyms used to protect the privacy of the community development organization and the neighborhood in which it is located. Likewise, *LUDS* and *Greenpoint* are pseudonyms for another partner organization and neighborhood cited in a subsequent section of this paper.

³ The city economic development officials had actually suggested to *Faith in Action* leaders that they contact me to see if the market research class could help with obtaining resident and business owner input. The market research class had worked with these city officials the previous year on a similar research project for revitalizing another neighborhood in Rochester (*Greenpoint*). I developed a close working relationship with the *Faith in Action* leaders. They welcomed the student involvement and helped students gain access to community residents and business owners for research purposes.

⁴ At the end of the semester, the class presented their report to the community at a public forum organized by *Faith in Action*. City officials and other parties concerned with revitalizing *Chelsea* attended. There was open discussion with *Chelsea* residents and business owners—part of the community involvement in the urban renewal process. As of this writing, The City of Rochester has committed funds for the revitalization, and *Faith in Action* is seeking additional funding from state and federal agencies.

⁵ Student composition of the market research class varies by discipline. Typically, one quarter are anthropology majors while others are majors in biology, computer science, economics, English literature, history, psychology, etc. The market research course is not open to freshmen. The students are usually evenly divided by year (sophomore, junior, senior).

⁶ This is one point in the course when the application of anthropological theory and methods to market research and community revitalization comes together. The concept of social identity has relevance to branding and positioning in the marketing field as well as social life. A brand is constructed as a cultural being based on the symbols and values that link the brand to target audiences (Malefyt & Moeran, 2003).

⁷ The social identity exercise is based on the work of Ximena Zuniga. See the volume, *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, (Adams, 2000). In the volume, the

article, "The Cycle of Socialization" by Bobbie Harrow, is particularly helpful in preparing this exercise.

⁸ Some of the ethnographic material I use includes: an ethnohistorical analysis of the relationship between the Sherpas of Nepal and Western climbers in the Himalayas which shows Sherpa resistance (Ortner, 1999a); an ethnographic perspective on contemporary Philadelphia which demonstrates how neighborhood relationships can cut across ethnic lines and coalesce around class position - although such new bonds in this case were disrupted by community leaders whose racist behavior belied their good intentions (Goode, 2001); and an ethnographic study of crack dealers in New York City with policy recommendations based on structural analysis of social marginalization (Bourgois, 1995).

⁹ In fact, the student later discovered through interviewing residents that most people who live in *Chelsea* care very deeply about their neighborhood. Local landlords may not maintain their properties because they are unwilling to put money into fixing up houses when tenants change frequently, rental income is low, and rental property may even stay vacant for periods of time. The local landlord behavior does not mean local landlords are not concerned about *Chelsea*.

¹⁰ Student reasoning behind dismissal of a college town reinforced the concept of personhood and multiple identities. UR students who were interviewed by students taking the market research course said when going off-campus, they want to shuck their campus identity (year in school, major, etc.) and engage with others using different parts of their social identity (e.g., interests not necessarily tied to campus life). The students imagined interaction with community members based on mutually-shared interests (e.g., film, photography, theatre).

¹¹ *Greenpoint* is a diverse neighborhood of people of mixed ethnic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Residents are proud of the diversity and support community efforts to help disadvantaged youth involved in drug dealing and drug use. Preference for locally-owned stores stems from a desire to retain diversity and avoid gentrification.

¹² Research methods vary for each of the market research class projects, although observation is always the first method used. For the *Chelsea* project, there were also group interviews with residents in their homes and one-on-one interviews with merchants in their places of business (food stores, butcher shop, furniture store, pizza shop, hair salons, a bank, video stores, etc). The *Greenpoint* project also involved one-on-one interviews with fellow students on campus and merchants in their place of business, and participant observation with commuters at their place of work.

¹³ There are numerous business texts on generational marketing, but Yankelovich Partners (Smith & Clurman, 1997) set out the premises of generational marketing and is useful for teaching the concept in the community service learning setting.

¹⁴ The *New York Times* editorial series, "Harvesting Poverty," is an excellent source on the effects of U.S.,

European, and Japanese agricultural subsidies and trade barriers on farmers in developing nations. It is available at www.nytimes.com/harvestingpoverty. My information about the South Asian labor trade comes from the article, "No Way Out," in the January 20, 2003 issue of *Fortune* magazine. Useful texts on IMF structural adjustments and Third World debt include George (1988, 1997), Hancock (1989), and Stiglitz (2002).

¹⁵ Ethnographic videos I have used are *Life and Debt* about the effects of IMF structural adjustments in Jamaica (directed by Stephanie Black, distributed by New Yorker Films, 2001) and *T-shirt Travels* about the second-hand clothing trade and Third World debt in Zambia (directed by Shantha Bloemen, distributed by Independent Television Service, 2001).

¹⁶ The research objectives forming the basis of a shared interpretive world between students and community members were (a) to understand the resident view of quality of life in the neighborhood, the housing situation, pressures on family life, use of the commercial street, and desires for revitalization; (b) to understand the business owner assessment of local businesses, reasons for joining (or not) the local business alliance, perceptions of the neighborhood surrounding the commercial street, and aspirations for revitalization. These objectives were written and openly discussed in meetings attended by students and community members.

¹⁷ Brettell (1993) points out that the insider/outsider dichotomy reifies the culturally-bound units anthropologists are trying to avoid. This is an important point in the service-learning context because of the importance of identifying a shared interpretive world for collaborating with partner organizations.

¹⁸ Fordham (1996) notes the negative imaging of African Americans not only in 'public transcripts,' but also through misrepresentation in the scholarly literature.

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