Building empathy and practicing social justice: Partnering with Latina/o/x communities in the Midwest

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Abstract

In an increasingly competitive market, the onerous is on departments to ensure that students build targeted skills. Nevertheless, in an ever more polarized and politicized world, it is unwise to trade off engaging in social justice for a checklist of abilities. Community-based and service-learning offer the unique opportunity for students to hone their professional skills while developing into responsive citizens. We explore partnering with Spanish-speaking communities in two contexts: a land-grant and a Jesuit university. Student reflections demonstrate that being in situations where community members are their equals allows them to build empathy, test their intercultural competence, and make connections between their studies and careers.

Background

Recent studies and news reports note that the humanities are in decline (e.g. Jaschik, 2017; American Academy of Arts & Sciences, 2017) and that departments and programs are struggling to keep students interested, and to keep disciplines relevant to our changing world. Students may major or minor in languages, music, or philosophy without ever having an opportunity to see the relevance of these studies in the real world. One way to make these connections, in undergraduate and graduate courses and programs, is by promoting curricular changes that draw on local resources to advance innovations in community-based learning, service-learning, or experiential learning, encouraging students to see the study of a given subject as one that connects with them and with the community in real-life settings.

We draw on students' reflective essays and (online) classroom discussions in two Spanish classes, at one land-grant university and one Jesuit university, to compare approaches, student populations, successes, and challenges. We use narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) to analyze students' essays. Through community-engaged work that includes ethnographical work, oral histories and interviews, and diverse work with non-profit organizations, we allow students to see the value of their chosen fields of study and how they might utilize them in professional settings. Using students' work from two different institutions, but with a focus on working with the Latina/o/x community, our goal is to show that by creating places and spaces, void of hierarchy and privilege, we engender a culture of trust and communal sharing of knowledge and ideas that benefits students and community partners equally. In this process, the community's knowledge, or their "organic intellect" as Antonio Gramsci (1971) framed it, is foundational for us and our students to learn about and understand issues that concern the community.

Our contexts

It is important to provide a definition of each university's identity and mission as we analyze the course and our students. First, a land-grant university's mandate, as a public university, is to serve society, increase higher education accessibility, and reach all people. Land-grant universities have an obligation to share knowledge and expertise with the communities they serve. The identity of this particular land-grant university is to also be a research-intensive institution, and as a university designated as a Carnegie Classified Community Engagement institution, its mission is to build sustainable partnerships with the community across the state, the nation, and globally. It seeks the common good. It is essential to note that while this identity is openly professed by university leaders, rarely do undergraduate students understand it, and most do not attend the university because of this identity. On the other hand, at the Jesuit university, many students choose to attend specifically because of the university's identity as a Jesuit institution and its mission of using scholarship for the good of society and developing students into men and women for and with others. This university is also designated as a Carnegie Classified Community Engagement institution and furthermore was named the No. 2 school for community service in the Princeton Review's *The Best 385 Colleges* (Princeton Review, 2019), a testament to the fact that students engage with the Jesuit tradition by serving the community locally, nationally, and abroad, as part of curricular, co-curricular, and extracurricular activities.

For our analysis, we use essays, reports, and online discussion posts to analyze the process in which students begin to understand the concept of belonging. While we are looking at the transformation of thought and the breakdown of binary views of communities different than those of the students, we also understand that students hold values that inform how they see the world. Thus, we argue that, in the process of engaging in readings, discussions, and later working alongside the Latina/o/x community, they begin to develop a sense of community interconnectedness, blurring the line between us and them. For this article, and because it is the case in most language courses, we chose all females students, 13 in total, all of which are Caucasian except for three students: one Indian-American student, one Filipino-American student, and a student who identifies as a white Latina, signaling her upbringing and family make up. For the analysis of the students at the land-grant university, we chose two students, one was an undergraduate student and one a doctoral student. Although these students might be in different academic rankings, there is much to say about the learning and growth each experienced in the classroom, and this is worth noting and further investigating. For these students, we looked at their beginning and end of the semester reflective essays, weekly online discussions in which they often responded and interacted with other classmates, and their bi-weekly reports which included a short reflection of their work in the community. Given that there were less assignments available per student, we chose eleven students total from the Jesuit university and analyzed their end of the semester reflection essay. Students consented to allow us to include their course materials for this article. However, we have changed their real names to protect their identities. All students' quotes, originally in Spanish, have been translated by the authors.

The class taught at the land-grant university is an upper division service-learning course with a requirement of 70 hours of students' engagement with the Spanish

language, both via personal time, listening, reading, and viewing content of interest to the students (i.e. music, series available on different streaming services, news, blogs, podcast) and by directly working with the Latina/o/x community in Columbus, Ohio. The Spanish class at the Jesuit university is an upper division course for Spanish majors and minors who typically are studying a health-related field. One component of this course is a service-learning project in which students spend a minimum of 15 hours working with a Latina/o/x-serving community organization in St. Louis, Missouri. The students selected for the present analysis were matched with a hospital's outreach program, a nonprofit agency, a health clinic, a legal aid clinic, and a bilingual elementary school.

Towards a social justice shift

In working with these communities, students learn empathy by listening to the organizations they partner with and through relationships with community members. The student essays and discussions illustrate that engaging in intercultural education and dialogue when working with local Latina/o/x communities, on issues of language justice, representation, and equity as they are explored in the classroom, and actively working in the community, allows them to engage in social justice in deeply personal ways. We argue, too, that engaging in the work of social justice begins by learning to be empathetic. Foulis and Martinez (2019) have shown that the key to empathy is listening, so working with students and preparing them to work outside of the classrooms starts by modeling reciprocal exchange and listening to various organizations. For example, before students begin to work in the community, they begin reading about immigration and Latina/o/x communities, and listening to first-person narratives about Latina/o/x life in the U.S. They also learn from several Latina/o/x-serving non-profit organizations that come to the classroom to talk to students about the work they do and why they do it.

There is much research that points to the value of service-learning in ways that are responsible, reciprocal, and life-changing to both students and community (Eyler et al., 1997; Eyler et al., 1999*)*. At the same time, we also want to acknowledge that there exists the danger of replicating power structures that take away from the community's and, in particular, marginalized groups' ability to solve their own problems with solutions that best fit their circumstance (Hernandez, 2018). Certainly, not taking away agency from marginalized groups, understanding that they know their challenges best and what can best address them, is at the core of how we teach our courses. We follow a critical service-learning pedagogy that is informed by the work of Paulo Freire (1970) and bell hooks (1994), who both express that pedagogy, if it is going to lead to emancipatory praxis, must be done in community.

Foulis and Barajas (2019) express the need for creating a community of trust in the classroom by being willing to share personal stories, sometimes vulnerable stories, to facilitate a classroom that is more equitable. That is, how can we expect students to feel safe enough to be vulnerable when we have not also been vulnerable, or how do we expect them to know how to work in the community when we have not built one in the classroom. Furthermore, by disrupting binaries and confronting biases, unconscious or not, about groups that are different than our own, we can better equip students, so that a simplistic way of looking at different groups is minimized (Butin, 2010). We find that both classroom and online discussions where students interact with their peers, and

assignments that are only read by the instructors, provide different levels of comfort and expression that allow students to name and disclose some of their own privileges. Clearly, taking a service-learning class is something unfamiliar to our students since most have never taken one. As instructors, we know that, like Butin (2005) has listed, preparing for the class takes "time, organizational capabilities, creativity, networking skills, tolerance for ambiguity, willingness to cede sole control of classroom learning, and an acceptance of long-term rather than immediate increments of progress" (p. viii). Students often struggle with each of these items at different times during the semester, so we address them and discuss them within the first weeks of classes, and again as they circle back in our discussions or students' work (essays, reports, discussions) throughout the semester. Having, jointly, worked with students in service-learning for several years, we (authors) are deliberate about getting to these tricky conversations in the classroom, and work on building a safe place inside the classroom for this dialogue to happen.

Before students step into the community, we emphasize the difference between volunteerism, charity, and good deeds, because we want students to know that service-learning is a reciprocal experience and it is centered around building relationships of trust and one that promotes social change (Kahne & Westheimer, 1999; Lewis, 2004; Marullo & Edwards, 2000). Indeed, since we want to build spaces void of hierarchy by normalizing vulnerability in the classroom (Foulis & Martinez, 2019), we know that, if at any point, students feel the sense of superiority because of their education, immigration status, social class, etc. and think that, for example, undocumented immigrants are responsible for their own living conditions, this can be lessened or nulled by our constant class discussions, guest speakers, oral histories, research articles, and class activities where students must actively think about how they might confront mainstream narratives of the "blame-the-victim mentality" (Marullo & Edwards, 2000, p. 905) about marginalized communities. We know, too, and we want to let our students know, that the charge of social change and/or social justice will not be solved in one semester, but we also make clear that our approach to service-learning has a social change orientation, that is, we practice critical service-learning, in which students are to be active citizens (Wade, 2000; Marullo, 1999). Some of our students might have had the opportunity to participate in social justice before, so we believe that through these courses, they can incorporate this mindset and put together the pieces of their professional futures which include breaking down ideologies of power. We mention ideologies of power because, as instructors who work at institutions of higher education, we can easily run the risk of perpetuating ideologies that continue to see the work of service-learning as one of volunteerism and charity. Instead, we want students to move beyond the idea of doing good deeds; failing to do so prevents us from thinking that the people who we work with in the community have the ability to identify and work to solve their own challenges.

One way that we discourage students from feeling like and portraying themselves as experts is by putting them in environments where, while welcoming and supportive, they are lower on the linguistic totem pole and must rely on the guidance and help of community organization leaders and participants. Crucially, students are not put in situations where their linguistic skills are insufficient for the tasks asked of them, but even so, given the lack of confidence, perhaps shyness, of language learners, they

often underestimate their own (in particular oral) skills and go into their service-learning experiences feeling like they have a lot to learn. This forces them to spend much of their initial interactions in the community *listening* and observing before figuring out their particular role. Indeed, as we explore in the next section, what students find with the community interactions is that they have just as much to gain and learn from the experience.

Student Reflections: Comparing Land-Grant & Jesuit University Context

Earlier, we provided brief definitions of the distinctiveness of being a land-grant university and a Jesuit university. To be succinct, a land-grant university produces knowledge to improve the well-being of the state where it resides, and in national and global communities; it educates students through its many academic programs; it prepares students to be leaders and engaged citizens; and it fosters a culture of engagement and service. This, however, is not always associated with the identity of attending a land-grant university for our students. Both of us have taught undergraduate students at this type of institution. We did not encounter pride of this distinctiveness as we interact(ed) with undergraduate students or were students ourselves at a land-grant institution. It is important to note that, in 2018, Gavazzi and Gee included a syllabus in their book to be used in teaching a course under the general education curriculum for undergraduates as an "intentional way of developing land-grant advocates and leaders for the twenty-first century" (Gavazzi & Gee, 2018, p. 171). This is not to say that the university does not offer opportunities and programs with a service focus. However, the approach to service is different than the pedagogy of engagement we teach in the classroom in our service-learning courses. The Kellogg commission (1999) provides the following definition of engagement:

> *Engagement must become part of the core missions of our institutions. We will know we have succeeded when faculty and students at our institutions understand that the land-grant concept is more a state of mind than it is a practical definition of particular forms of interacting with our communities or special offices responsible for managing the relationships (p. 47).*

From our own experiences as undergraduate students and working with undergraduate students at this type of institution, we believe that this mandate or identity is best modeled in the service-learning classroom. While we agree that, as a whole, students understand the value of outreach and service, they rarely connect it to the land-grant concept.

Although the identity and mission are more self-evident to students at the Jesuit university and indeed often factor into their decision to attend the university, there is still a process to shift in perspective from serving the community to serving *with* the community. Students begin their studies eager to serve and along the course of their four years discern how to do so in a socially responsible way, void of the "savior" mentality. For most, this process begins much before they take the Spanish service-learning course; however, in many cases, this is their first real interaction with the Latina/o/x community in St. Louis and they are able to make connections between previous discussions of social justice and the study of Spanish.

Meredith is a third-year undergraduate student at the land-grant university, has lived abroad, and has a high level of proficiency in Spanish. Over the years, she has learned about different communities from her previous classes and friends, and also from having lived in Mexico for a year. She is very aware of her own identity as a white woman, has a deep desire to learn and knows that putting herself outside of her comfort zone, will push her to engage in situations and with people who she might not otherwise organically interact with. It is evident in her first reflection that she wants to be intentional about this, she says:

> *The main objective that I plan to have is to engage, daily, in things that make me uncomfortable. I feel that having experiences like this is the best way to learn, and most importantly, not forget what one learns. I hope that by putting myself in situations where I am vulnerable during my work in the community, my effort will be noticed and will ease the process of making meaningful connections. Therefore, by having these real connections and shared histories, I hope to help the organization I work with in a meaningful way and in a way that will also impact my perspective with respect to everyday life and my responsibility as a human being.*

It is important to note that, in looking at Meredith's reflections, discussions, and personal conversations, she felt, at several times throughout the semester, ready for the task, unsure about her role, and surprised by the correlation of class readings and what she was actually witnessing in the community. Throughout her journey, Meredith never seemed to see herself as an expert at anything; instead, she often questions whether her presence and work was of value to the community. For example, earlier in the semester she wrote about being excited to participate in the schools and in their ESL program and learning to be comfortable in different settings. Since the beginning of the semester, she understood the value of experiential learning, but even more, "the importance of human connection, something we should not underestimate."

A similar sentiment is expressed by Elizabeth, a graduating senior at the Jesuit university, who worked with a non-profit that provides health and wellness programming for Latina women. She reflects that at the beginning of the semester "I didn't know if we [the volunteer interpreters] were necessary….I thought they [the community members] were helping us more than we were helping them." However, after getting acclimated to the situation and being shepherded by the health and wellness director, Elizabeth found herself taking a more active role, building relationships with the women, and negotiating which types of assistance the women most needed and appreciated. The students' reflections make it clear that they view their service-learning as a reciprocal relationship, often citing their linguistic and personal gains, as articulated by most students: "a relationship of service benefits everyone who is involved."

In taking on the role of observer and learner in their service-learning, students hear immigration stories firsthand, develop empathy for the community members they meet, build intercultural competence because of these connections, and share in the community's triumph. Much different than what may be portrayed about immigrants in the public sphere, students cite that they glean what the daily life of an immigrant is like, the many struggles and inequities they face on a daily basis, what their needs are, and

the trauma they may have experienced in the past, which breaks down the myth that "Latino immigrants only want to take advantage of the resources in the United States." Noel, another graduating senior at the Jesuit university, writes, "I became aware of the difficulties that they [immigrants] deal with when they navigate complex social systems throughout their daily life, during their normal routine — things that I do, too, but easily take for granted."

Having had opportunities to be vulnerable and share inside the classroom, students are able to build empathy and compassion for the community they work alongside, noting that "we all want someone to listen to us" and that hearing firsthand the difficulties and trauma faced by immigrants touched them personally. For example, Amelia, a third-year pre-law student who worked with a legal clinic, recounts the heart-wrench she felt when translating letters from immigrants seeking assistance and upon hearing the cases that the clinic was not successful in, including a father who was deported leaving his entire family in the United States. Students read about these stories in the texts and oral histories used in class, but they are much more impactful when coming straight from the source.

At the same time, and perhaps even more importantly, the students witness the resilience and determination of the communities they work with, and share in their successes. For example, the students who worked with the non-profit observed strong, tenacious Latina women who had taken the initiative to improve their own health and wellness and that of their families. Noel, who worked as a patient advocate, recounts a time when she went to the pharmacy with a patient and there were several issues with the prescription his doctor had given him. She was inspired by the way that he would not give up until he had received the medication he needed, stating, "Due to experiences like this, I saw the resilience that they need to navigate interactions day to day." It is also important to note that most of the organizations we work with are led by members of the Latina/o/x community, which ensures that the students are being led and guided in culturally competent ways, but also shows them how the community is working together and enabling each other to solve problems. In the end, the students come to realize the commonality they share with the community members in wanting the best for their families and working hard towards that goal. Claire, a third-year student at the Jesuit University who worked in the non-profit's daycare, puts it best when she says:

> *It's not a big lesson, but my work with these little kids serves as a good reminder that we are all similar. All of the kids have different personalities, a desire to play together, and none of them like homework very much. Their parents love them very much and want them to learn and accomplish everything possible. In our society today, there is so much polarization between diverse groups, and especially a worry about undocumented immigrants and Latinos. I think if politicians take a few hours to work with the Latino population, they will easily see that they are completely similar to the other Americans. Generally, we all have the same problems, the same wishes, the same goals for our family. In this way, I think we can solve many societal problems simply with dialogue and an effort to understand each other.*

On the other hand, at the land-grant university, when the students were asked to reflect on what they thought working in the community would be and their goals for the semester, Ximena was quick to point out that we need to acknowledge the university's own history of "land possession and displacement in relation to local and global communities." She said in knowing this, we need to make sure that we "treat these relationships with care and intentionality as we think about the service-learning model". Furthermore, just like Meredith did earlier, Ximena also connected her own desire to work in the community with that of connection by discovering how our stories connect us, she said:

> *I want to have a better understanding of the history and the historical context of my own family and its migration to Ohio. This goal is personal, clearly, but I believe it is an important aspect of the class, too. The goal [the class goal as stated in the syllabus] reflects the class's intention of facilitating opportunities for students to ask questions about their own [personal] histories.*

Ximena's biweekly reports also show how she was intentional about making these connections and surrounding herself with as many opportunities to speak Spanish and learn from Latina/o/x leaders across the city and state. She attended many outreach events hosted by Latina/o/x organizations, attended parent-teacher conferences, and collected oral histories of other Latinas/os/x in the state, alongside her professor, and often visited local restaurants to learn more about the workers and owners of each establishment. She writes, "I have learned so much about the local restaurant industry, in particular, the challenges Mexican owners face." During a meeting at an outreach event, she recounts, "I was surprised to know that there many young Latina girls who are Girls Scouts," something she was happy to discover she had in common since she, too, was one. It is important to mention that for Ximena, as she said in her first reflection, practicing the language and learning more about the Latino/a/x community is also understanding and learning about her own history. Ximena, during class discussions, often commented on missing out growing up Latina, primarily because she grew up in a small town where there were only three other Latinas/os in her graduating class. For her, learning and speaking Spanish is a connection to her heritage, one that she didn't really embrace until she started graduate school. Certainly, Latina/o/x students who participate in courses that allow them to engage with their identity as Latinos often realize how much they continue to learn given that the majority of that group might be from a different heritage—Mexican, Puerto Rican, Dominican, etc.—indeed, it offers students "a point of inquiry into lived experiences" that might be very different than their own (Foulis, 2018, p. 132).

Ximena often commented in her reports how she saw things we discussed in the classroom being played out or confirmed in the community. Although she frequently commented on her own personal growth and fulfilment about immersing herself in the community, she also witnessed the lack of cultural humility or access certain groups face in different environments: she writes, "I was witness to the problem Roxana [a public school liaison] mentioned in class during her presentation, that is, teachers that work in districts with a large Latina/o/x student body, don't always know how to interact with the students' families."

Meredith also commented on this lack of understanding or miscommunication (cultural, linguistic, or both) at the school where she worked. She says:

> *Because of the discussions we've had in class lately, I find myself thinking more about the systems that form to build or destroy a sense of belonging for an immigrant child, especially in the school environment. The children I work with are not yet conditioned to think a certain way in regards to race and borders. One day, a young girl told me that the first time she saw me was when I was at the library with a Honduran student and she thought that the girl was my daughter. The first thought that came to my mind was, 'but I am white and she is dark-skinned, it doesn't make sense that she would be my daughter.' After thinking a bit more about my reaction to it, I was worried. It was a reaction based on exclusion and characteristics that separate us as people, and even though it was not the end of the world, I am sorry that I focused on those things and stereotypes about me and those around me. I notice and I am critical of prejudices I find in my life, whether they are mine or those of my friends and family, and I try to understand the social and political environment in all of us. I think that, although people are not overtly racist, personal and private biases can become harmful in the long run.*

While most students will not be as open about their experience facing their privilege and naming their biases, Meredith did just that throughout her reflections. She credits the work she did in this course as helping her identify instances of exclusion of certain populations and equally important, she felt that her work was of value to the community, something she struggled to accept initially. It is evident, throughout her work, how much she valued the experiences, but equally, the opportunity to reflect on them. She remarks, "something very relevant for me, personally, during my interactions and class time, was the opportunity to reflect."

Although there are many differences in the way students at both universities are learning to engage in a social justice framework, it is safe to say students come to the conclusion that a relationship of service benefits everyone who is involved. As a result of doing this work that begins in the classroom, in interaction with peers, learning about community organization, and, lastly, doing the work side-by-side with members of the community, community and students come together and the possibility for mutual transformation exists. Whereby community and students may have had preconceived notions about each other, by this experience they are broken down and transformed. We believe that leaving out any of these intentional encounters would not accomplish the goal of helping our students become engaged citizens who are able to form communities with people outside of their group identities.

Conclusions and Implications

In our analysis and examples, we provided information that traced students' growth and understanding of others and themselves as they worked with the Latina/o/x community in two midwestern cities. However, we want to emphasize that this type of growth, personal development, and engagement is not experienced by all or at all times

in the courses. In fact, it is not uncommon that somewhere, through the course of the semester, students default to the more familiar, perhaps comfortable, mindset in developing a final project that is supposed to reflect this partnership with the community: they end up presenting their own idea of what this organization or community needs. Thus, we have to reassess, reevaluate, and reteach some of the concepts learned earlier in the semester to remind the students that we are not here to solve the community's problem, but instead we are guided by the community and organization to come up with solutions that fit them best. As we tell our students that the work of social justice/change will not be done in one semester, we remind ourselves that our students must continue to have experiences like this to continue to be transformed.

We also want to be clear that, in our work developing intercultural competence with students in an advanced Spanish language class, we do not believe that this alone leads to social justice. But also, we know that students at this level have been thinking and studying different Spanish-speaking populations throughout the world for several years. What is unique about this type of course and the work that goes into carefully developing and choosing materials is that the students get to use and test their intercultural competence in real life, while realizing, in different ways, how much and how little they know about a particular group. In essence, intercultural competence does little to the work of social justice unless we are willing to practice and test this knowledge in the community.

Epitaph: Our Reflection

Peter Block believes that,

> *Restorative community is created when we allow ourselves to use the language of healing and relatedness and belonging without embarrassment. It recognizes that taking responsibility for one's own part in creating the present situation is the critical act of courage and engagement, which is the axis around which the future rotates. The essence of restorative community building is not economic prosperity or the political discourse or the capacity of leadership; it is citizens' willingness to own up to their contribution, to be humble, to choose accountability, and to have faith in their own capacity to make authentic promises to create the alternative future (2008, Chapter 4, par 2).*

There is something empowering for us as educators in thinking that the work we do with students and partners has the potential to restore communities. We often witness, through reflection, discussions, and personal encounters, how they are becoming empathetic leaders. As we consider our own experience as teachers, scholars, and community connectors, we often reflect on how to improve our own practices in the future and to seek to dialogue with others doing similar work.

As we write this article, we are living under stay-at-home orders, social distancing, and quarantine conditions that made it difficult for our students to continue to be physically engaged with the community. The abrupt change that happened in March 2020 all across the nation, and our continued pandemic conditions for the 2020-2021 academic year, made us worry about how to best advise our students on what to do for their required engagement. We learned to adjust, to be flexible, and provide support to

students in ways that are also socially just; that is, while we could no longer meet in person in class and in the community, we quickly became aware of the hardships our students were about to face. For example, our students had to deal with the lack of high-speed internet, or poor broadband reception, a more constrained space to continue to attend classes online while also having to care for younger siblings, or their own children who, additionally, had now also switched to online learning, or could not attend childcare. Indeed, this sudden change provided an opportunity for us to continue to model humility, empathy, and dedication to the work we do with students. While most community organizations could no longer accept students in their buildings, some were eager to continue to work with them in a virtual format, and have designed, along with us, a model for continued engagement in virtual settings. For example, one student worked at a government organization that specifically works with Latina/o/x affairs and their work has doubled during this time. Many students willingly exceeded the required time for the class and saw firsthand the value and urgency of getting information to the Latina/o/x community that was both culturally relevant and in Spanish. Another organization continued to work with a group of students via Zoom meetings, and students joined in meetings with young Latinas and their mothers during weekly check-ins and mentorship opportunities. They worked from home making masks and putting together care packages that were later mailed to these families. Indeed, the experience was challenging and unique, and it uncovered inequities in our communities that were not part of case studies, articles, or other course materials we studied in class.

As the students continued their work with the community, in one way or another, during this public health crisis, their reflection on health inequities, too, continued, and empathy and compassion took on new meaning as they grappled with their role and purpose during the pandemic and beyond. Two students, both pre-med minoring in Spanish, worked as a team to quickly shift gears from in-person interpretation of health and wellness classes to subtitling fitness videos and translating infographics (created by physical therapy students at their same university) so that the Latina women they worked with could continue to exercise and practice healthy living habits at home. While they had witnessed and reflected on language barriers prior to COVID-19, they became acutely more aware of this as they transitioned to remote service learning, concluding, “health and language are therefore inherently intertwined since one cannot come without the other”. As before, the students also saw the resilience, endurance, and strength of the community as the women did not give up on their health and wellness goals and continued to actively engage online. Seeing simultaneously the barriers that the Latina women face and their persistence to overcome them made a lasting impact on the students. One writes that she feels inspired to continue working with this community organization in the future and wants to encourage her pre-med classmates to consider taking up a language, and the other student comments that she will have these language barriers in mind in her future work as a physician.

As we continue to confront how the pandemic has changed our lives as scholars, teachers, and mothers, our students’ lives, and the lives and work of our community partners, we must continue this recursive reflection process. At times it might be unreasonable to ask the community partners to continue to work with us virtually when doing so would be a big lift or an extra burden on their part. We must also carefully consider what is reasonable to ask of our students, given the increased demands on their time and mental energy, and what is reasonable to ask of ourselves. Now, more than ever, the empathy,

compassion, and understanding that we emulate in the classroom and engender in the students' experiences in the community is needed as we navigate, together, this ever-changing world.

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