

# On the Integration of Community and Cultural Engagement Experiences into Undergraduate Classes: Reflections and Lessons Learned

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# Overview of Three Projects

Patrick Cheek

- Scaffolding research, civic, and cross-cultural engagement assignments in undergraduate program curriculum

Jennifer Reinke

- Three unique community engagement activities in the family science classroom

Catherine Solheim

- Rethinking learning abroad in a COVID environment

# Scaffolding Engagement in Social Science Program

Overview and process:

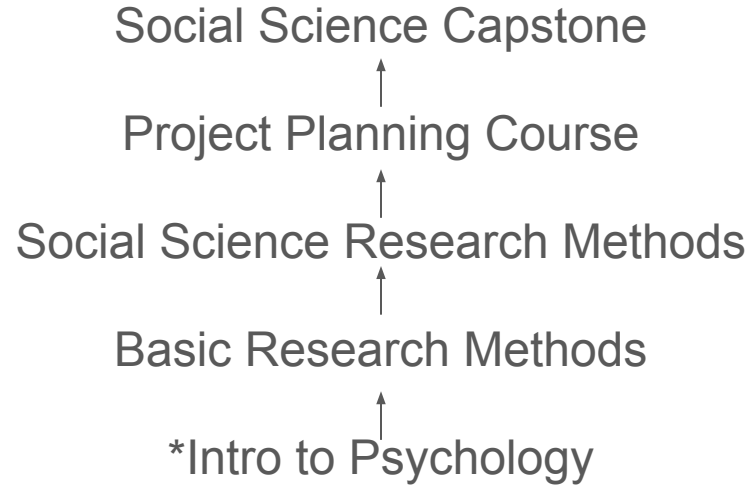
- Program received internal grant *Academic Programs of the Future* (APOF) to revamp curriculum
- Goal was to redesign interdisciplinary Social Science major to incorporate research, cross-cultural, and civic engagement throughout the curriculum
- Involved remapping program checksheet, developing new courses, and updating course charters (e.g. PSY 100)
- Engagement is introductory/basic in lower-level courses but becomes more involved in upper-level courses

# Scaffolding Engagement in Social Science Program

## Goals:

- Students gain practical skills that give them comparative career advantage
- Develop deeper knowledge of subject matter
- Create networking and 'foot-in-the-door' opportunities
- Foster greater appreciation for diversity
- Increase self-efficacy

# Scaffolding Engagement in Social Science Program



# Scaffolding Engagement in Social Science Program

Example:

- PSY 100: Psychology of X paper
- Integrate learning in course with subject of interest (e.g. homelessness, music, literacy, nicotine addiction)
- Spend at least a day doing an engagement experience
  - Online options
  - In-class solicitations
  - Social Science Clearinghouse

# Scaffolding Engagement in Social Science Program

## Preliminary Findings:

- Prelim data show students responding favorably
- Students are hesitant at first but feel accomplished after
- Improves understanding of the value of engagement
- Improves understanding of introductory psychology
- Students believe it will help improve job prospects

# Scaffolding Engagement in Social Science Program

Barriers so far:

- Mainly sustainability issues
- Lack of institutional infrastructure
- Online options difficult to coordinate and verify (i.e. out-of-state students)
- Difficult to scale in large sections
- Difficult to support and get compliance from adjuncts
- COVID-19!



# Build Your Own Brochure Project

100-level couple relationships course

- Students work with a community partner of their choosing to develop a couple relationships brochure with “tips” for the couples the community partner serves

# Build Your Own Brochure Project

The B.Y.O.B. is comprised of ten steps. The following outlines the work of the student:

1. contact a potential community partner;
2. interview the potential community partner;
3. locate at least five peer-reviewed journal articles related to the topic;
4. write eight to ten tips that suggest things a couple can do to enhance their relationship based on the literature;
5. create the actual brochure;
6. share a rough draft with the community partner;
7. revise brochure given community partner and peer feedback;
8. complete a self-assessment;
9. present the final brochure in class and give a final copy to the community partner; and
10. write a reflection on their overall experience with the B.Y.O.B.

# Build Your Own Brochure Project

## Examples:

- *Investing in Your Relationship*
  - Finance senior who partnered with a bank in his hometown; offered tips related to couple communication around money
- *Keep Your Relationship Caffeinated*
  - HDFS freshman who partnered with one of the local coffee shops; offered tips on how to keep the passion alive in a romantic relationship
- *Parenting a Child with a Disability: Coping as a Couple*
  - Vocational Rehabilitation sophomore who worked with the hospital she was already volunteering at

# Practice in Critical Cultural Competence

300-level cultural competence service-learning course

- Students participate in 25 hours of service-learning with one or more populations with which they do not culturally identify.
  - Food pantry
  - Assisted living facility
  - Domestic abuse shelter
  - Centers on campus
- Critical Reflection Journals
- Final Portfolio
  - Cultural Competence in Professional Development
  - Diversity Statement for Graduate School
  - Past, Present, and Future Cultural Competency Collages

# Making a Difference Project

## 400-level abuse and the family course

- **Part I: Students write a series of five papers on a family violence-related topic**
- **Part II: Students develop a social action project in response to that topic**
  - connecting with volunteer or advocacy opportunities at the state, local or national level; sending the newspaper an editorial letter;
  - sending a letter of support for a particular bill to a local representative;
  - creating an informational presentation for a local high school or middle school;
  - creating a flyer or pamphlet for a local organization that works with family violence;
  - posting flyers around the community with “pull tabs” for family violence resources
  - “welcome” kit for kids at a homeless shelter
- **Part III: Connect the dots in a final Family Violence and Reflection paper**

# Rethinking Learning Abroad in a COVID Environment

## Challenge and Opportunity

- COVID, COVID, COVID
- Need still exists
- Opportunity in the presence of challenge

# Rethinking Process

Thailand course:

- Thailand: Global Change, Communities, and Families
- Two-three week immersion experience in Thailand
- 3 credits offered in January or May

Minnesota-based course:

- SE Asia in the Twin Cities: Migration, Family Diversity, and Transnationalism
- Two-week intensive cross-cultural experience in Minneapolis/St. Paul
- 3 credits (?) offered during May Term

# Kept some elements of course; changed others

## Elements Kept:

- Interdisciplinary, framed by social justice and human ecological lenses
- experience rich cultural traditions that shape family life

## Elements Changed:

**Thailand:** examine global change that is occurring at the intersections among Thailand's natural environment, communities, families, and culture

**Minnesota:** examine how global change, migration, and immigration policy impacts transnational families with roots in SE Asia



# Changes continued

**Thailand:** interact with key community leaders, village leaders, elders, and students

**Minnesota:** interact with MN and Thai scholars and community leaders via Zoom or in-person

**Thailand:** develop a critical understanding of Thai culture and the contemporary issues faced by Thailand's families and communities

**Minnesota:** develop a critical understanding of the local-global nature of transnational SE Asian families in MN and how they are impacted by American contextual factors

# Tweaks to Learning Objectives

- **LO1:** Thailand course: Globalization impact on families is underlying contextual force
- **MN-based course:** Migration, transnational families, and acculturation impact on families is underlying contextual force
  
- **LO 2:** Thailand course: Multiculturalism expressed in families and communities in northern Thailand; Relationships of indigenous families and communities with dominant Thai culture; Threats to maintaining cultural traditions and language
- **MN-based course:** Multiculturalism expressed in families and communities in Minnesota; Relationships of immigrants families and communities with dominant white American culture; Threats to maintaining cultural traditions and language (including identity development); Current migration policy and practices (including deportation of Cambodian Americans) and impact on transnational SE Asia families

# Learning Objective Tweaks continued

**LO 3: Thailand course:** Make transnational connections between families in Thailand and Minnesota, specifically Hmong and Karen (due specifically to resettlement of refugees from SE Asia)

**MN-based course:** Make transnational connections between families in Minnesota and Southeast Asia due to migration, specifically refugee resettlement (Hmong, Karen from Burma, Laotian, Cambodian, Vietnamese)

**LO 4:** Both courses: Develop reflective and critical thinking skills through a writing journal to document; document learning about multicultural and transnational families and their own intercultural development through digital stories

# Next steps

- Syllabus draft (readings, specific local learning activities/speakers, tentative schedule)
- Budget development
- Multi-level course approval
  - Is this a College study abroad course (tuition waiver agreement in place) or department course?
- Recruitment

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Thank you for watching!

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