

STUDENT REFLECTION GUIDE

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*Others are merely mirrors of you. You cannot
love or hate something about another person
unless it reflects something you love or hate
about yourself.*

From "The Rules for Being Human" by Cherie Carter-Scott

Community Participation ULR
Introduction to Service
in Multicultural Communities
California State University Monterey Bay

REFLECTION: The Art of Questioning

I want to beg you, as much as I can, to be patient toward all that is unresolved in your heart; try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms or books that are written in a foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers; they cannot be given to you now because you would not be able to live them. And the point is to live everything. Live the questions now. You will then gradually, without even noticing it perhaps, live along some day into the answer. –Rilke

Various perspectives on what reflection is...

“... the process of holding a mirror up to an experience to explore the way it can illuminate concepts, feelings, or ideas as they relate to my role in the world.”

-Kathleen Rice

“... stepping out of an activity and observing or pondering a larger meaning.”

-Cecilia Burciaga

“...reviewing events to make meaning out of them which can be used to shape our future actions, goals, and beliefs.”

“... the glue that holds service and learning together.”

-Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede

“Reflection” and “reflection”

Reflection is not unique to service learning. We all reflect on a daily basis. When you are on a long walk or driving alone in a car, thinking back over an argument you had with a loved one, trying to better understand what happened, you are reflecting. We call this everyday, unplanned reflection, "small r" reflection. When you engage in more intentionally designed Reflection activities (such as the journal you keep for the class or structured discussion you have in class about your service experience), this is called "Capital R" reflection.

-Martha Baer Wilmes, University of Maryland

“Study without reflection is a waste of time; reflection without study is dangerous.”

-Confucius

Why is reflection important to service learning?

Why do you think reflection is important in this course? To the site? What relationship do you think there might be between reflection and:

- the quality of the service provided?
- the quality of the learning gained?
- the quality of the relationships built with service learners, professors, and people at your community site?
- the depth with which service learners understand the theories and concepts of SL 200?
- the feelings that result from service learners' experiences in the community?
- service learners' awareness of experiences of people they are different from?
- the role service learners want to have in their communities--locally, nationally, and globally?

Reflection is a process that allows service-learners to:

- ✓ think critically about ourselves, our identities, our experiences, and our perceptions of ourselves and others;
 - ✓ understand the complexity of our experience and put it in a larger context;
 - ✓ ask "Why?" "What have I learned about myself?" and "Who am I in the world?";
 - ✓ explore, understand and question policies, laws, trends, theories;
 - ✓ challenge (although not necessarily change) our own attitudes, beliefs, assumptions, privileges, prejudices, stereotypes;
 - ✓ look at what we're doing, where we've been, where we're going;
 - ✓ transform a single activity into further community involvement and/or broader issue awareness;
 - ✓ be challenged and supported throughout the service-learning experience;
 - ✓ link thought and action;
 - ✓ increase our commitment to the community; and
 - ✓ improve the quality of our experiences and of our involvement in the community.
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Skills Needed To Be An Effective Reflector:

- Self awareness - Who am I in the world? How do I see the world?
 - Openness to seeing and understanding the world in new ways, from other perspectives, not just ones' own
 - Ability to recognize and own ones own assumptions
 - Willingness to commit time to think and explore feelings
 - Willingness to question, and go deeper
 - Listening
 - Risk Taking
 - Writing, Speaking, Artistic Expression
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- From "The Rules for Being Human" by Cherie Carter-Scott*

*"Service combined with learning adds value to each and transforms both."
-Honnet and Poulsen, 1989*

The 4 Cs of Reflection

In their book entitled A Practitioner's Guide to Reflection (1996) Eyler, Giles, and Schmiede talk about the value and process of reflection in service learning. They discuss how when something happens that we do not understand, we try to explain it using information that we used before. When these old explanations don't fit, we experience "dissonance," a gap between what we are experiencing and what we understand. We may try to ignore the discomfort of the dissonance, we can try to apply the old, familiar, but inadequate framework, or we can choose to explore the discomfort and learn from it. Sometimes

structured opportunities for reflection can assist us in this exploration for meaning. By engaging in this questioning process, we develop strategies for understanding many new situations on a deeper level.

Through their research, they found the most effective reflection involved the "4 Cs":

Continuous

Reflection should be on-going, and occur before, during and after an experience.

Connected

Reflection should provide an opportunity for the service learner to link their service in the community to their academic goals, and to specific course content. The service should help explain the theory, and theory should help explain the service experience.

Challenging

Reflection should provide service learners with the opportunity to explore uncomfortable and unfamiliar feelings and ideas. As service learners are encouraged to examine old ways of thinking and to create new ways of seeing the world, adequate support is important as well as challenge. Reflecting with peers and receiving encouragement from faculty and community members is important.

Contextualized

Reflection can occur in various forms including journaling, tape recordings, artistic expressions, and video. These may be conducted individually, one-on-one with another student or community member, in small and large groups, in the classroom, or at a community site. Reflection may be formally structured, or informally conducted. The setting, process, and form should all be selected according to the goals for the reflection and for the service learning experience.

"Emotion is the chief source of all becoming conscious. There can be no transforming of darkness into light and of apathy into movement without emotion." - Eric Jung

JOURNALING

What service learners have said about reflecting through journals:

"..I don't like to keep a journal...but the assignment that really helped me get things clear in my mind was the journal keeping...taking the issues and turning them around and making them personal to the experiences we were having in our service project--it was taking the academic and making it personal."

"The most important thing has been the journals...I really hated having to force myself to write in a journal when I didn't feel like it, but there were times at the homeless shelter when I really needed that space. That was my world that I could retreat into and it was times like that where the most internalization of the issues took place."

"After I write down my thoughts and everything, I can look back and find answers to questions that I thought were impossible to find. Like I've found answers to some questions through writing what has happened."

[writing in journals helps you] "...question continually...It is easy when you go in once or twice to go in with preconceived ideas [and] look for information that affirms those ideas, even the second time, find more information and write about it, how you feel about it...If you don't reflect on it, it's easy to keep going there for the same assumptions...only when you reflect, and other people say 'what about this', or your professor writes in your journal, what about this? Then you go back and say, well, she asked me about this, maybe I can look for this information."

Student quotes from Janet Eyster and Dwight Giles, Jr. "Reflections on Service Resource Guide" published by the Corporation for National Service.

Reflection Activity: Journal Entry - First Site Visit

Service learners are encouraged to write in their journals immediately after each visit to their site. It is easy to quickly forget things you are sure you will remember. The optimal time to do this is after you have completed your first visit, but before you go home. You may want to begin writing in your car or on the bus. At least try to jot down notes to trigger your memory when you get home. Jot down descriptions, details, what went on, questions, emotional reactions, thoughts, whatever comes to mind! Remember, the What, So What, Now What model may help you frame your thoughts.

What did you do, see, hear, feel, think, smell? What were your most vivid first impressions?

Describe (or draw!) your site in as much detail as possible. Describe the people in as much physical detail as possible. What does the agency do? How do they do it? What happened at the site while you were there? What interactions took place? Describe them. Describe your own participation.

So what did you learn? What questions do you have? What did you understand? What was unclear? So what did you like? So what didn't you like? Explain why. So what ideas from the readings and class discussions come to mind as you reflect on your first visit?

Now what will you do with the learning, experience, and information you now have? How will you approach your next visit? Now what are you apprehensive about, what are you excited about? Now what do you want to explore further? How did you feel when you arrived at your site and now how do you feel about your site?

"We don't see things as they are, we see things as we are." - Anaïs Nin

Sample Reflection Questions

- How do you tell friends and family about your experience in the community and in this class? What kinds of responses do you get? How do you feel about their reactions?
- What was the most positive thing that happened this week at your site? What can you learn from this?
- What was most difficult? What can you learn from this?
- Do you know if your work is valuable to the community? If so, how do you know? If not, how do you plan to find out?
- Were you disappointed at your site this week? If so, why? What can you learn from this?
- Is there any situation or problem you want to discuss with someone at your site? With your classmates? With your USA? With your professor?
- Which of your goals for your service learning experience are you accomplishing? Which are still not accomplished? Do any goals need to be revised? How and why?

- How does your service work relate to your career plans? If you don't see a direct relationship (e.g. tutoring elementary school children for liberal studies majors), try to find an indirect relationship (e.g. tutoring elementary school children and developing strong listening skills will help any major).
- What do you now know? What do you still want to know? What have you learned?
- How is your work at your site helping you understand your course work?
- How is your coursework helping you be more effective at your site?
- Have you become more self-reflective through your work at your site? If so how, if not, why do you think that is?
- Have you become more culturally aware through your work at your site? If so how, if not, why do you think that is?
- Have you become more responsive to the community through your work at your site? If so how, if not, why do you think that is?
- Would you describe your relationship at your site as reciprocal? Why or why not?
- Have you observed examples of privilege or inequity at your site?
- Have you become more aware of your own privilege or targeted identities?

4 Steps to Creating a Reflection Activity

1. Decide the intended OUTCOME/PURPOSE of the activity.
2. Develop meaningful, open-ended QUESTIONS related to the activity's OUTCOME/PURPOSE.
3. Choose the method for your activity (be sure to vary methods, accessing multiple learning styles: linguistic, logical/mathematical, spatial, musical, kinesthetic, interpersonal, intrapersonal and naturalist).
4. Determine and gather needed resources for the activity.

"When we understand our own education, then we will have self understanding: where we are, whom we came from, who we are, what we are, why we are here and where we are going. We will then walk in beauty and everything will finish in beauty." - Wilson Aronith, Jr., Diné (Navajo)

*"Every small, positive change we can make in ourselves repays us in confidence in the future."
-Alice Walker*

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The information for the Reflection Guide was compiled and adapted from various sources:

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