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DESIGNING YOUR COMMUNITY-BASED LEARNING PROJECT: FIVE QUESTIONS TO ASK ABOUT YOUR PEDAGOGICAL AND PARTICIPATORY GOALS*

This paper presents a set of five questions that are important to consider in the preliminary planning of a community-based learning (CBL) project. The questions are relevant to most CBL projects, ranging from internships to research projects and field trips. The questions include: Among the goals of the project, are there primary and secondary goals or are the goals given equal weight? Is participation in the project mandatory or voluntary? Should the CBL component of a course be concentrated in one site or dispersed across many sites? How similar or different should each student's individual participation in the project be? How central should direct client/community interaction be to students' activities? Based on a review of the CBL literature in Sociology and feedback from the students and partner organization in our own CBL project, we discuss each question and outline some of the advantages and disadvantages of various decisions, focusing on the competing interests of students, instructors, and partner organizations. The aim is not to advocate one kind of project or design over another but rather to help other project planners anticipate and avoid pitfalls noted in the literature and maximize the benefits of CBL.

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THE INTEGRATION OF CLASSROOM learning with community-based experiences is increasingly common in U.S. universities, particularly in sociology departments. Grouped here under the term "community-based learning" (CBL), these efforts describe a wide range of projects that involve structured interaction between higher educational institutions (primarily colleges and universities) and community organizations. CBL projects include field trips, observational projects, service learning projects, community-based internships, research,

courses, and programs (Marullo 1998; May et al. 2000; Myers-Lipton 1998).¹ While differing in form and emphasis, CBL projects share some concerns about their pedagogical and participatory aspects. This paper offers a set of questions intended to help instructors navigate some of these issues during the initial stages of project planning.

Following the pedagogical visions articulated by John Dewey and later by C. Wright Mills and others, CBL is thought to fit well with both the substance and methodologies of sociology, as well as the policy-oriented undertone of many sociology departments

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(Hironimus-Wendt and Lovell-Troy 1999; Ostrow, Hesser and Enos 1999). However, the results of such pedagogical projects are often mixed. While many benefits have been noted (Everett 1998; Marullo 1998; Myers-Lipton 1998; Parilla and Hesser 1998), so too has the inability for some projects to achieve their intended aims (Eby 1999; Hironimus-Wendt and Lovell-Troy 1999; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Raskoff 1994; Parker-Gwin and Mabry 1998; Strand 1999). Hondagneu-Sotelo and Raskoff (1994), for example, outline common pitfalls of CBL projects, including the difficulty many students have in linking their experiences in the community with those in the classroom and the tendency for students to assume a “white-knight” persona, whereby they see themselves as saviors to the detriment of social science learning. Perhaps most discouraging, some research documents how students may use their experiences with community projects to further harden, rather than break, prevailing stereotypes (Eby 1999; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Raskoff 1994). In short, fulfilling the civic and academic potential of CBL projects can be difficult.

In part, mixed outcomes of CBL experiences may be a function of project design. The purpose of this paper is to offer five questions for thinking through initial design issues not currently addressed in the literature. The questions—based on hindsight from our own CBL project, feedback from students and the partner organization, and relevant literature in sociology—intend to help clarify pedagogical and participatory goals in light of the competing interests of instructors, students, and community organizations. The points discussed here do not represent a comprehensive framework for total project design but rather frame issues that underlie initial project development once the decision to include a CBL component has been made and the instructor(s) begin to shape the basic structure of the

course and project requirements. The broader aim is to help make the process of incorporating CBL into sociology courses easier and perhaps more fruitful.

CURRENT RESOURCES FOR CBL PROJECT PLANNING IN SOCIOLOGY

The decision to incorporate CBL into a course in the first place has received considerable attention in work discussing the pedagogical advantages of CBL in sociology classes (Hironimus-Wendt and Lovell-Troy 1999; Marullo 1996; Ender et al. 2000; Parker-Gwin 1996a). Similarly, there is a relatively vast literature to help instructors decide among the different kinds of CBL projects given their particular curricula, objectives, and institutional resources. Some describe and categorize the different projects that fall under CBL (e.g., out-of-class activities, internships, volunteering) (Mooney and Edwards, 2001), and others explore the relative academic and civic advantages and limitations of some of these project types (Marullo 1998; Mooney and Edwards 2001; Parker-Gwin and Mabry 1998; Wright 2000).

Other parts of project implementation have also received attention in existing literature. For example, many authors offer guidelines and practical examples of how to help students link their CBL experience with course material (Darling 1998; Everett 1998; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Raskoff 1994; Lowe and Reisch 1998; Parilla and Hesser 1998; Silver and Perez 1998) and of how students can evaluate their CBL experiences (Everett 1996; Parker-Gwin 1996b)

Compiled volumes of syllabi of courses with CBL components provide further ideas for integration and evaluation (Ender et al 1996). Several works also discuss specific problems that can arise during the implementation of CBL projects and offer some possible solutions. Many of these problems refer to negative effects in the learning process, such as the reinforcement of stereotypes and the detriment of systematic analysis in favor of personal experience

¹For definitions and typologies of various CBL projects see May et al. under review; May et al. (2000); Mooney and Edwards (2001).

(Hongdaneu-Sotelo and Raskoff 1994; Marullo 1998; Parrilla and Hesser 1998; Strand 1999). Other studies discuss how student and community characteristics, such as ethnic diversity, can affect the integration of course content and volunteer experience (Parker-Gwin 1996a). There are also examples of ways to address certain logistical problems, including transportation and geographical difficulties (Porter and Schwartz 1993; Scarce 1997), serious budget constraints (Corwin 1996), and maintaining continuity in long-term programs (Calderon 1996).

Missing among these varied references is more systematic treatment of preliminary planning once the decision to do a CBL project has been made and the project begins to assume shape. Specifically, relatively little discussion has been focused on how to choose the form of the CBL project and how to evaluate the pedagogical and participatory tradeoffs associated with different forms. Based on our experience and reading of the literature, this paper presents a set of five questions intended to help fill this gap. We situate this set of questions between, on the one hand, well-documented work on the decision to incorporate CBL, and on the other, resources devoted to aspects of evaluation, integration of course material, and overcoming challenges. The five questions are:

- Among the goals of the project, are there primary and secondary goals, or are the goals given equal weight?
- Is participation in the project mandatory or voluntary?
- Should the CBL component of a course be concentrated in one site or dispersed across many sites?
- How similar or different should each student's individual participation in the project be?
- How central should direct client/community interaction be to students' activities?

All of these questions are germane to

courses integrating a CBL experience into a more traditional classroom setting. They also may serve as a helpful starting point in designing projects that are even more focused on communities and which may not have central classroom components, for example some internships or community-based research projects.

The five questions are the focus of this discussion. We begin, however, by outlining the basic contours of our own CBL project. In addition to providing the impetus for this paper, this CBL experience is the source of many examples employed in later analyses.

OUR PROJECT

Basic Course Profile

"Sex, Sexuality, and Gender" was an introductory gender course offered by Princeton University's Sociology Department in the spring semester of the 1999-2000 academic year, involving 20 students (two men and 18 women). Some students were particularly engaged in the course material while others showed only mild interest, and the majority had no exposure to sociology or gender studies prior to the course. In addition to the professor and a graduate student assistant leading student discussion sections, two other graduate students were employed part-time to help develop and manage the CBL project.

Origins of the CBL Component of the Course

Our CBL project emerged from a desire to break from conventional modes of teaching and bring sociological ideas—in our case, gender—"to life." Gender is a topic well-suited for an experiential learning approach in an undergraduate course; students often take gender differences for granted because of their ubiquity and popular perceptions that they are natural, "cultural," or predominantly psychological. Moreover, the professor wanted to bring a cross-cultural perspective to the course to help emphasize and illustrate the dynamics of gender in the United States, particularly as it is socially

constructed among immigrant and native-born people and may change in the process of migration. To combine these pedagogical goals, we decided to pursue working with organizations addressing the needs of the Latino immigrant population in Central New Jersey.² Issues related to the social construction of gender and to Latino immigration to the United States were addressed in course lectures, readings, and discussions.

At Princeton, CBL projects begin with the Community-Based Learning Initiative (CBLI). CBLI was created in 1998 to help professors incorporate CBL into their courses by establishing links with potential partner organizations and matching courses with appropriate organizations. Notably, CBLI also provides financial support for a graduate student assistant for each course that includes a CBL component.³ As course organizers, we met with staff from CBLI three months before the course was to begin. CBLI already had contact with one organization that seemed like a possible match: Latinas Unidas ("Latino Women United" or LU), directed by Nidia Fernandez, M.A., M.Div. and based in the YWCA of neighboring Trenton, New Jersey. LU serves the growing Latino immigrant population of Trenton by offering social support and life skills training to women (e.g., personal and family counseling, job interview training, prenatal care courses) and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) courses to the Latino community at large (men and women).

In many ways Latinas Unidas was an ideal partner; in others it posed challenges to our project. Practically a one-woman show, the organization was small and had only worked with a few volunteers at a time. In addition, by and large its clients did not speak En-

glish, and we did not anticipate that many of our students would speak much, if any, Spanish. However, Ms. Fernandez believed in the pedagogical philosophy underlying CBL and had reasonable expectations of the students and what the project could produce. We decided to form the partnership.

Project Design

Our project began to take shape when we first met with Ms. Fernandez to discuss her organizational goals and needs. She quickly identified grant-writing, community outreach, and publicity as her most immediate concerns; in addition, she needed some assistance with LU classes, planning, and administration. With these needs in mind, we designed a project that eventually included five options for students, each of which pertained to the study of gender in a different way. The options were:

- 1) Research papers on topics that could be useful to Ms. Fernandez in the grant-writing process. Six of the 20 students decided to work on this type of project, working in three teams of two on the following topics (which they selected with our guidance): Latinos in the Trenton Labor Market; Welfare, Gender, and the Immigrant Experience; and Parenting Issues and the Second Generation Conflict.
- 2) Publicity development that would promote LU and its programs throughout Trenton and to funding agencies. Four students worked on this project and produced various fliers, a promotional bookmark, and a new pamphlet.
- 3) Publicity distribution that would plan and organize the distribution of the new publicity materials. Four students chose this project and contacted over

²To this end, the professor sought and received a grant from Princeton's Program in Latin American Studies to integrate issues related to Latin American immigrants into the course. This substantive focus is also based on the novelty and high quality and quantity of current sociological scholarship on gender and migration from Latin America, and on the fact

that the Latino population in Princeton, Trenton, and other parts of New Jersey has grown significantly in the past few years.

³Additional information about the Community Based Learning Initiative at Princeton University is available at: <http://www.princeton.edu/~cbli/main.html>

- 60 establishments throughout Trenton, distributing the new publicity materials by mail or in person.
- 4) Volunteering in LU's service delivery. Four students chose this component, committing to going to LU on a weekly basis to assist with child care or the development and teaching of ESL classes.
 - 5) Administering a survey to LU clients. This part of the project was added later in the semester, in response to the desire of nearly all students and Ms. Fernandez for more information about LU's clients. This decision was also motivated by the need to offer more guidance and an alternative project to two students who were struggling with the research projects they had proposed. They helped manage survey design, implementation, data entry, and the writing of the final report.

CBL Project Requirements and Evaluation

At the start of the course, we introduced students to the projects and asked them to choose one of the project components as their focus for the duration of the course. Participation was mandatory and constituted forty percent of each student's course grade.

Students were required to develop a short proposal for their particular project. Once the project got underway, they submitted a short weekly journal describing both their progress for the week and reflections on their activities in light of course readings and lectures. Graduate assistants gave them regular feedback on the journal entries in order to respond to administrative issues and help students link gender studies to their CBL experiences.

Each student also was required to attend the weekend ESL course offered by LU at least one time during the semester, in order to ensure that all students had some direct client contact regardless of their project type. LU also welcomed having additional English-language conversation partners for their ESL students. At the end of the pro-

ject, each team wrote a final paper and gave a presentation about their experiences to their peers, Ms. Fernandez, and representatives from Princeton's CBLI program. More details about the course and project can be found in the appendix.

Our project design was complex and a work-in-progress. It was the culmination of many decisions, made both before and during the project, and in response to new challenges and opportunities. The introduction of the client survey midway through our project is a case in point. In hindsight, our project design was navigated carefully but not systematically, and ultimately gave rise to many of the questions and ideas presented here.

FIVE QUESTIONS FOR YOUR CBL PEDAGOGICAL AND PARTICIPATORY GOALS

In the remainder of the paper, we outline and discuss five questions that underlie the initial stages of CBL project designs, in an effort to help instructors be more systematic when designing CBL projects. These questions were derived inductively from our own experience, but this discussion relies on multiple sources: three interviews with Ms. Fernandez during the planning stage of the project and two interviews once the project had finished, a questionnaire completed by 14 students giving their general evaluation of the project, the individual reflections students incorporated in their final project reports (N=20), and a systematic review of over 25 articles and materials (most from *Teaching Sociology*) concerning CBL projects and sociology.

These questions do not speak to every aspect of project design and management but rather represent a complement to existing resources on CBL. The framework is best situated at the point after which instructors have chosen to pursue CBL but have not yet decided on the specific form and content of their project. Additionally, it is important to recognize that each CBL project designer may not face the full range of choices

outlined here. The degree of relevance for each question will depend upon an instructor's individual and institutional circumstances. Factors such as the institutional capacity of a college or university, the human and financial resources available to an instructor, the number and kind of students in a course, and the geographic location of the school all bear upon the kinds of choices an instructor faces (Corwin 1996; Parker-Gwin 1996).

For each question, we explain its importance and then analyze it according to some of the potential benefits and drawbacks to particular responses. In each case we present an example from our own experience and at times use simple hypothetical examples to illustrate the consequences of various decision paths. The tables show a list of advantages ("+") and disadvantages ("-") to most of the options discussed. We evaluate these decision points from the perspective of three interests: the instructor, the students, and the partner organization(s). Dividing the impacts of CBL design this way makes explicit the balancing act involved in CBL projects. Most are designed to benefit all interests in some way and to not burden any one of them unduly. Yet each interest may represent different motivations for carrying out a CBL project and often face different constraints on their participation (Cox 2000). For example, instructors may emphasize the academic links and benefits to the exercise, while partner organization(s) may emphasize the contributions and assistance to the organization or community; students may care primarily about their grade and/or other courses.⁴ All interests undoubtedly face their own time limitations to participation and/or management. Recognizing these sorts of differences and similarities from the outset of project design is important for setting the goals of the project and for

increasing the likelihood of meeting those goals.

Q 1. Among the goals of the project, are there primary and secondary goals or are they all given equal weight?

Every CBL project has many goals. Often they are divided into academic and civic responsibility goals, but other instructors may delineate more specific objectives. For example, Calderon and Farrell (1996) note that their project's objectives included enhancing the sense of social responsibility, allowing students to engage in the craft of "doing sociology," and linking internships in public schools with academic study. In our own case, we had three primary objectives: contribute meaningfully to our partner organization, help the students better understand gender, and help the students appreciate and understand social contexts distinct from their own (Latino immigrant communities and inner-city Trenton).

Critical questions concern not only the content of project goals but also the priority or rank assigned to each goal. A decision about goal ranking provides a consistent guidepost for the decisions that inevitably arise during planning and throughout the course. Moreover, when the goal ranking is made explicit to the different interests involved—students and partner organization(s)—their expectations may be clearer and in turn better met by the experience.

To illustrate this point, consider a stylized example of a CBL project in an introductory urban sociology course. The stated goals may be twofold: to help students understand the course material and to make a contribution to an urban community organization. If the instructor decides to prioritize the academic goal over the contribution to the organization, then s/he may decide to include more activities that are arguably easier to incorporate into class materials and discuss in an academic fashion. These activities could involve, for example, participant observation in an urban community (e.g., having students spend time at a street corner or take a specific bus line) or an activity like

⁴Identifying and explicating these interests may overstate the differences among them and simplify the multiple competing interests within each, but these are arguably natural interest groups or stakeholders given standard pedagogical structures.

participation in an urban park clean-up day and an assignment to write field notes about that experience. A project that reflects a decision to prioritize the practical contribution of the CBL project to the organization would take a different form, such as ongoing student participation in a community needs assessment survey, grant-writing, office work, or web design. These activities may also yield important academic benefits, but inevitably more time is spent handling administrative, logistical, and political aspects of intensive student involvement in community affairs. Devoting time to these issues may come at a cost of course content. In short, the implications for students, the organization, and the instructors are different in each of these scenarios. But in each case, the instructor/manager who begins with a clearer notion of the desired outcome can more efficiently and perhaps effectively design the project.

Project managers also can decide to give all or some goals equal weight. When this is the case, project design requires a different approach aimed at striking an even balance between or among goals. This was the approach we attempted. In an effort to ensure that our students' efforts made real contributions to Latinas Unidas, we included projects such as publicity development and distribution, which were more challenging to link to gender studies than were other activities, like research papers or the client survey. We tried to help the publicity group members see the gendered aspects of the work they did (e.g., thinking about gender messages in the media), but the course content was not focused on this aspect of gender as much as it was on the themes related to other student projects. Ms. Fernandez, however, found the publicity projects the most useful of all of the students' contributions. We would not have included this type of project among the student options if we had made academic gains the highest priority.

The intent is not to recommend one type of priority ranking over another. Rather, we want to highlight the importance of recognizing that different goal-rankings have varied implications for instructors, students,

and partner organizations, as well as for other aspects of project design.

Q 2. Is participation in the project mandatory or voluntary?

After determining both the content and priority of a project's goals, a second important decision concerns whether student participation in the project will be mandatory or voluntary. Table 1 outlines some of the relative merits and demerits of both choices.

This question has received more attention in the literature than the other questions we discuss in this paper. A central issue is the selection bias that voluntary participation often introduces (Ender et al. 2000; Parker-Gwin and Mabry 1998).⁵ Another is the ethical concern related to mandatory programs and the risk that "unwilling" students may pose to often vulnerable populations (Ender et al. 2000; Marullo 1998). Other authors emphasize the flexibility of voluntary programs to both instructors' and students' time and learning styles (Ender et al. 2000; Parker-Gwin and Mabry 1998) and the greater ease with which mandatory programs can be incorporated into the course (Everett 1998). These works imply that this decision can depend on the human resources available to manage the project as well.

In our case, we made the project mandatory as well as central to the course. This arrangement may have introduced selectivity at an earlier point, among the students who took the course. Eight students dropped the course after the first week, and it is possible that their reasons related to the requirements

⁵The Ender et al. (2000) study concludes that women, non-social science majors, students who do not commute to class, and students who are not employed are more likely to participate in service learning projects. Parker and Mabry (1998) argue that self-selection into service learning might vary by course type, but overall find a higher participation of women and students with prior volunteer experience.

⁶We and the University lack information about why these students dropped the course. It is standard procedure at Princeton for students to "shop" for classes during the first week of the semester, so it is hard to know how this early turnover related to the CBL project.

Table 1. Mandatory or Voluntary Participation?						
Option	Instructor		Students		Partner Organization(s)	
	+	-	+	-	+	-
Mandatory	Incorporation into class and grading criteria might be easier (Everstt 1998)	Increases course management load (Ender et al. 2000)	May promote class cohesion and friendship (Rundblad 1998)	Some students might not enjoy participation (Marullo 1998)	Potential contribution may be greater from having more volunteers	Unwilling students may pose risk to the organization(s) or clients (Marullo 1998; Ender et al. 2000)
	Might increase academic performance and in-class participation	May lead to selectivity in who takes the course (Parker-Gwin and Mabry 1998) Lack of professional reward for added work (Marullo 1998; Sweet 1998)	May add to everyone's understanding of academic concepts	Increases time devoted to that one class over other classes and activities (Rundblad 1998; Parker-Gwin and Mabry 1998)		
Voluntary	More likely to involve only highly motivated students	May be harder to bring students' experience into lectures and class discussions	Course is an option for students who cannot otherwise participate in community service	Experience remains marginal to class dynamic	More likely to involve only highly motivated students	Student commitment may be lower or students may be less reliable
	Fits well with the different learning styles of students (Ender et al. 2000; Parker-Gwin 1998)	Evaluation may be difficult May lead to selectivity in who participates in the project (Ender et al. 2000; Parker-Gwin and Mabry 1998) Students' commitment may be lower	Allows flexibility in time devoted to the course (Ender et al. 2000; Parker-Gwin and Mabry 1998)	Might feel isolated. Participating students may not have other students to talk to about their projects May get the impression that the instructor is not committed to the project		Contribution might be lower from having fewer volunteers

of the CBL project.⁶ As both mandatory and central, the CBL project took a lot of time on the part of instructors and from the perspective of students. In their evaluations at the end of the course, some students said that they wished it had been voluntary or said they were not interested in doing another course with a CBL component, though it was evident that this reaction partly had to do with the amount of work that we required, not with its mandatory quality. That said, another student appreciated the fact that something she liked to do (volunteer) was "institutionalized." From an instructor's perspective, it was easier to draw on the experience in class discussion and lecture because all students were participating in the CBL project. For example, we were able to invite Ms. Fernandez and an immigration scholar to class for guest lectures and show a film about immigrant experiences, as well as draw on the students' perceptions of LU and its clients in discussions. These options would have been possible regardless of the mandatory nature of the project, but we feel the impact of these additions to the class was increased as a result of all students' participation.

Q 3. Should the CBL component of a course be concentrated in one site or dispersed across many sites?

Another key question with little explicit discussion in the existing literature pertains to whether students should be dispersed across organizations or concentrated in one site. While the approach to this question revolves around logistics, this decision is also guided directly by the decisions made about project goal prioritization.

We chose to work with one organization, anticipating that doing so would facilitate incorporation of students' experiences into course discussions and lectures. We also thought that management of the project would be easier from our perspective than if we were handling relationships with many organizations. Both of these advantages appeared to mesh well with our other decisions to make the project mandatory and central

and to give all of our goals equal weight. Making the case that our project could make a real difference for our partner organization(s) was easier by virtue of the fact that we had all students directing their energies towards one organization.

One clear disadvantage to this approach was the risk of overloading Ms. Fernandez, already over-burdened with her own work. However, this problem may be minimized for others who work with larger organizations or those with stronger volunteer infrastructures.

Given the focus on a particular population, another option would have been to find more than one organization that worked with Latino immigrants in the area. If students had been divided between two organizations and client bases, for example, students may have learned more about how community organizations work and may have been able to bring in a more comparative view on the local Latino community than they did in our case. Another possibility might have been not to concentrate on one single population but instead to seek out many organizations that serve different minority women throughout the area (e.g., programs for teen mothers, LU, and a sexual abuse center). In both alternative schemes, for example, students could have self-selected to the organizations that best fit their interests and time availability (e.g., one organization is closer to campus than another). Table 2 outlines these and other merits of these choices.

Q 4. How similar or different should each student's individual participation in the process be?

A fourth and related question is whether and to what degree students' own participation should differ from that of their peers. Should each student be asked to do the same kind of project or interact with the partner organization(s) in the same way? What kinds of advantages and disadvantages are posed by offering students different ways to participate in the project? Again, the resources available to instructors partly determine this decision, as does the way that the project

Table 2. One Site or Many Sites?

Option	Instructor	Students	Partner Organization(s)
<p>One Site</p> <p>Incorporation into class might be easier</p> <p>Facilitates the sense of a "class project" or "common goal" with students</p> <p>Interaction with the organization might be easier</p>	<p>+</p> <p>Little ability to compare across organizations and populations</p>	<p>+</p> <p>May be easier to organize visits among themselves</p> <p>May be easier to work in groups on different aspects of the project</p>	<p>+</p> <p>Contribution may be greater from having all efforts concentrated on one site</p> <p>Can place stress within the organization if there is not enough infrastructure to manage large numbers of students</p>
<p>Many Sites</p> <p>More examples and comparisons from different populations</p>	<p>-</p> <p>Knowledge of individual sites or populations might be more limited</p> <p>Not enough time to explore in depth various examples during class</p> <p>Logistical management could be difficult (e.g., transportation) (Marullo 1998; Porter and Schwartz 1993; Everett 1998)</p> <p>Design of the specifics of the project (e.g., students' tasks) might be more difficult</p>	<p>-</p> <p>May not like the organization selected</p> <p>Might feel isolated in their experience</p> <p>More difficult to find transportation and organize visits</p>	<p>-</p> <p>Receives motivated students for that organization (given that "choose" them)</p> <p>Potential contribution may be compromised by a limited number of volunteers</p>

goals are prioritized.

We allowed for substantial variation in the way that students participated in the CBL project. Students self-selected into the different components (the survey component was an exception), each of which involved both different types of activities (e.g., designing fliers, doing a literature review, caring for children) and different issues (publicity, labor force participation, child care). One clear advantage of this approach was that it allowed us to assist LU in various ways and, arguably, more effectively. This decision also made sense in light of LU's small size and our decision to focus all of the class' energies there; for example, LU could not absorb all students as weekly volunteers.

From an instructor's point of view, it was clear that students gained different insights depending on their project. Students in the research component learned about immigrant communities and gender in general; students working with publicity and distribution learned about the immigrant community; and the students in the volunteer component gained "hands on" experience about non-profit organizations. These conclusions are reflected in students' final evaluations. A member of the distribution group wrote, "[my project] had very little to do with gender and was only about immigration," and a volunteer wrote, "I had a very difficult time trying to find gender-relevant observations thru [sic] my volunteer work." That said, some students expressed new appreciation for what it takes to manage a community organization and for the flexibility required to work in one. Overall, the implications of allowing substantial variation in student participation are that instructors must anticipate differential impacts (upon students, the organization, and course content), give more individual guidance to students, and during class time draw across students' experiences to the benefit of all students.

As a counter-example to this project design, consider a case in which everyone in a course about social stratification is asked to

volunteer for two hours a week at a local soup kitchen. If all students share the same experience, then they may more easily relate and bring the CBL experience into course discussions, in turn making integration of the experience into the course more straightforward for the instructor. All students could also be evaluated in the same way, thereby reducing confusion about differing expectations among students and easing the management burden of the instructors and possibly the partner organization. An alternative design could include one common goal but many different jobs, thereby combining the class cohesion and clarity of purpose fostered in the soup kitchen example with the benefits of having various activities, as noted in our own case. Designing, carrying out, and analyzing a community survey might be an example of this approach. (See Table 3.)

Q 5. How central should direct community/client interaction be to students' projects?

Many CBL projects in sociology aim to expose students to communities different from their own and to ensure some amount of direct client interaction. Beyond that, however, there is relatively little discussion about how much students' projects or learning experiences should revolve around this interaction. This section speaks to some of the advantages and disadvantages of having students' experience rely primarily on interaction with the clients, compared to students whose activities or projects do not. The issue about variations in client interaction among students participating in a CBL component is distinct and closely tied to the previous question. (See Table 4.)

In our case, the students whose projects primarily relied on direct client interaction faced particular problems and opportunities that other students did not. For example, one student who volunteered weekly in LU's childcare center noted in her final presentation and evaluation that her experience made her appreciate how difficult and time-consuming participant-observation research

Table 3. Uniform or Variable Participation?

Option	Instructor		Students		Partner Organization(s)	
<p>Uniform Participation</p> <p>Easier to design, organize, and set grading criteria</p> <p>Interaction with the organization(s) might be easier</p>	+	-	+	-	+	-
<p>Variable Participation</p> <p>Easier to achieve various goals</p> <p>More examples and comparisons across experiences</p>	-	-	+	+	-	-

May not need students in a particular capacity

May have other work that does not get done

Easier to organize and incorporate students

Might generate competition across students

The assignment is probably clearer and easier to follow

Feel they are doing the same job and investing the same effort

Any unpredictability or failure is more likely to compromise the success of the whole project

Easier to design, organize, and set grading criteria

Interaction with the organization(s) might be easier

Requires more involvement in planning the project

May get less out of the partnership because students do a lot of little things rather than one big project

Can help in organizations' varying needs

Might feel isolated

Might generate conflict when comparing across grades and tasks

Can choose according to interests, talents, or collateral requirements (e.g., athletic team or lab courses)

Might feel their contribution to the organization is unique and important

Lessons learned might vary across projects

Increases course management and supervision load

Easier to achieve various goals

More examples and comparisons across experiences

Table 4. Interaction with Community Service Client Population Central or Marginal?

Option	Instructor	Students	Partner Organization(s)
<p>Interaction Central</p> <p>Students can get firsthand testimony of topic</p> <p>Students can gain methodological experience in qualitative research methods</p>	<p>+</p> <p>Might reinforce stereotypes (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Raskoff 1994)</p> <p>Logistical problems related to interaction (e.g., language barriers and distance in our case)</p> <p>Students might need special training (e.g., in qualitative research methods)</p> <p>Might need more time to gather relevant data, resulting in a trade-off in course content</p>	<p>+</p> <p>More likely to feel their work has a direct effect for the clients</p> <p>More interaction with the instructors for the course on a personal basis</p>	<p>+</p> <p>Students might be more motivated</p>
<p>Interaction Marginal</p> <p>Might need less supervision from instructors</p>	<p>-</p> <p>Students might not get a rounded sense of the topic</p> <p>Might reinforce stereotypes (Hondagneu-Sotelo and Raskoff 1994)</p> <p>Might lead to misleading "empirical" conclusions (students might infer more than they should from their limited interaction)</p>	<p>-</p> <p>Students might not enjoy interaction</p> <p>Interaction may be stressful for some when clients are from a different culture or speak a different language</p> <p>Too time consuming</p>	<p>-</p> <p>Unwilling students may pose risk to the clients</p> <p>Might need to train students</p> <p>Might disrupt normal activities with clients</p> <p>Confidentiality issues with clients</p> <p>Some organizations might not have enough infrastructure so as to take every student into volunteering</p> <p>Students may take the experience less seriously and be less reliable</p>

can be. She felt she needed much more time at the organization in order to begin to make conclusions, noting in her final paper, "We often read of the thorough, time-consuming, variable-accounting methods employed by real sociologists for conducting their research. But to sample this experience first hand, if only slightly, gave me a new respect for the difficulty and obstacle-oriented reality of field research." While frustrating for her, this methodological lesson is important; yet it was not central to the experiences of students working on the publicity campaign, for instance. For them, their client interaction at the ESL courses, albeit superficial in one sense, complemented their other activities in sensitizing them to the barrier that language poses for the social and economic integration of immigrants. According to this group of students, this lesson made them more engaged in their own contribution to LU.

The experience of another student whose project aimed to collect and analyze the life stories of a few LU clients revealed further advantages and disadvantages of projects that depend closely on direct client interaction. We felt ambivalent about allowing this project, given the student's lack of training in qualitative research. In fact she did not gain substantial insights from the interviews she did and turned to work on the survey project. Additionally, this project caused hardship on the organization because it had to match clients with the student, help negotiate language barriers, and help mediate the organization of the interviews.

FINAL THOUGHTS

While by no means comprehensive, the five issues presented here are central to any CBL project design and are important to consider during initial planning, after the decision to incorporate CBL into a course has been made. The answers given to these questions help guide decisions about more specific, logistical, or management concerns about CBL. In our estimation, the first question about the priority assigned to goals of CBL

merits initial and primary consideration. The other decisions flow from the choices made at that point. The set of questions discussed here is intended to complement existing resources that relate to other aspects of course and project design and to help instructors design CBL projects more efficiently, given the particular constraints and opportunities they each encounter.

Certain gaps remain among the resources on CBL design and management. For example, the pedagogical question about how much control students should have in designing a course and their projects—a question important to all courses with or without a CBL—assumes a new twist in the face of a CBL project, given the fact that student activities involve and impact a third party, the partner organization(s). Another important topic regards how to create an effective and fair structure for evaluating student performance when some or all students work on a CBL project and/or engage in quite different CBL activities, as was our case. As instructors continue to carry out CBL projects, issues like these and those discussed in this paper need to be discussed and shared among faculty working on CBL projects. While there is no empirical evidence that more systematic project planning will produce more positive results for CBL, we believe it could have improved the experiences of all who were involved in our own CBL experience.

APPENDIX SUMMARY OF THE CBL PROJECT

University context and funding

- Course was one of two Sociology courses, out of a total of 10 courses involved with CBLI that semester
- CBLI program provided \$1,000 for one graduate student assistant's time
- From a grant awarded to the professor, Princeton's Program in Latin America Studies provided an additional \$1,000 for another graduate student assistant and funds, which were used to help cover other aspects of the course and project

Course overview

- Introductory gender course, with a focus on U.S. immigration
- 20 students (two men and 18 women)
- Aside from readings, lectures, and precepts, there were three main assignments
 - Research about gender on campus (20% of final grade)
 - CBL project (40%)
 - Take-home final (25%).

The remainder of the course grade (15%) was based on participation in discussion sections ("precepts").

CBL project

- Mandatory
- Two graduate student assistants worked exclusively on CBL component
- Supplemented by three guest lectures about gender and immigration; three special precepts devoted to discussing the project, including a discussion of a film about immigration; and inclusion of readings about immigration in the syllabus
- Students initially chose one of four aspects of the project presented to them: research papers, publicity development, publicity distributions, volunteering. The survey of Latinas Unidas clients was added later in the course
- Main Requirements:

Proposals. (3-5 pages) These included: 1) their motivations for their project, 2) specific plans and resources needed/to be used, 3) time-line, 4) division of labor (given that most students were working in teams).

Weekly diaries. (2-5 pages). Students were instructed to devote 50 percent of their entries to their progress for the week; or for volunteers, their "field notes"; the other 50 percent was to entail reflections on their activities in light of course readings and lectures. Graduate student assistants provided feedback on both aspects of the diaries.

ESL attendance. At least once over the semester, students had to assist in a Saturday-morning ESL course held at LU.

Final paper and presentation. Each team's final paper summarized their work and lessons learned. Students working on research papers submitted those as their final papers (15 pages), while the students working on publicity or as volunteers wrote papers about their respective experiences and

lessons learned (10 pages). Those working on the client survey turned in a report of key results from the perspective of gender as discussed throughout the course. All students working in teams also were instructed to include in their group paper an additional section (1-2 pages) that was written independently and summarized their individual reflections on their experience.

- Final grade for project: completion of weekly diary (40%) and the proposal, final paper, and presentation (60%). Grading was based upon timely completion of each requirement and clear evidence of efforts to link their experience to course material, in addition to the quality of written and oral presentations.

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