Cultivating the Sociological Imagination

Concepts and Models for Service-Learning in **Sociology**

James Ostrow, Garry Hesser, and Sandra Enos, volume editors

Edward Zlotkowski, series editor

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A Multicultural and Critical Perspective on Teaching Through Community:
A Dialogue With Jose Calderon of Pitzer College

by Sandra Enos

Jose Zapata Calderon is an associate professor in sociology and Chicano studies at Pitzer College, in Claremont, California. After graduating from the University of Colorado, he returned to northern Colorado as a community organizer for 14 years. At Aims Community College and the University of Northern Colorado, he taught courses that connected students with research in the Mexican-American barrios in Weld County. As an advocate ethnographer, Calderon has published numerous articles and studies based on his community experiences and observations. The type of research and teaching methods described below have served as a catalyst for other endeavors.

In 1991, after being hired as an assistant professor at Pitzer College, Calderon led the development of a multiethnic coalition, the Multi-Cultural Community Association, to find solutions to ethnic tensions between Latino and Asian students in the Alhambra School District. As a parent in the district, he was also elected as the chair of the Alhambra School District Human Relations Advisory Committee. A grant that he wrote to Campus Compact in 1994 resulted in a course, Community and Social Responsibility, cotaught with sociology professor Betty Farrell. This class allowed Pitzer students to carry out participant observation and multicultural study plans in the Alhambra School District high schools. The project resulted in the development of multicultural and conflict resolution classes in the school district, the initiation of a conflict resolution program at Pitzer College, and continued funding by the Edison Company and other foundations.

For the last three years, Calderon has taken a class of (on average) 30 students to study and work with the United Farm Workers union in La Paz, California. In return for the union's hospitality and shared knowledge, the students contribute their skills and abilities to various segments of the farmworker community. On the last day of their stay, students present skits depicting what they have learned from the experience. This class was honored as the Curriculum-Based Alternative Spring Break of 1995 by the

BreakAway Foundation. In the spring of 1996, together with film/video professor Alex Juhasz, Calderon taught a class, Film and Diversity, in which students created videos focused on issues of diversity, as part of a Ford Foundation–funded "ism" project. Most recently, Calderon has taught a class called Restructuring Community that focuses on the practical consequences of urban growth, the emergence of "growth machines," and alternatives to uneven development and inequality. The class provides students with service-learning experiences through local city governments as well as community organizations.

ENOS: Can you tell me about how you came to integrate service-learning into your classes?

CALDERON: It came out of resolving a problem that I really had trying to connect the world of community activism with academia. I went to graduate school with the idea that academia would provide more flexibility to survive, on the one hand, but also to continue this tradition that I had, which was to use knowledge to create social change, or to develop policies based on building a better quality of life. After I graduated from the University of Colorado in the early 1970s, I was involved in community organizing for about 14 years before coming back and working on a Ph.D. I think the only reason I survived in the sociology Ph.D. program at the University of California-Los Angeles (UCLA) was because I found a means to apply what I was learning in the classroom to my concrete lived experience. Otherwise, I would have never stayed there. I was able to apply it to community service and activism, particularly in the city I was living in when I was working on the Ph.D., and to involve my entire family in particular sites we had been organizing in.

When I graduated from UCLA and was hired as a professor at Pitzer, I sought to continue this practice in all my classes. As a result, one of the most successful classes and a catalyst for more service-learning here at Pitzer was when I applied for funds from Campus Compact.[1]

Betty Farrell and I developed and cotaught a class where we placed students in the Alhambra School District to do participant observations, on one hand, and give service, on the other hand. They worked with teachers and carried out mentoring and tutoring. In some cases, our students even helped to teach classes.

In the second semester, students helped teachers to develop multicultural lesson plans. Out of this, we were able to hook up with a coalition of parents, the Multi-Cultural Community Association, that I was part of. We were able to work together in advancing some structural changes in the schools. Through our efforts, a multicultural education curriculum was more institutionalized, a conflict resolution class was established, and alternatives to a traditional tracking system were implemented. These experiences helped solve my dilemma of how to connect the classroom with social change, and it gave me motivation to go even deeper into service-learning. Discovering Campus Compact and the connections to other people who were carrying out service-learning in other parts of the country motivated me and other professors on the Pitzer campus to integrate community service into our classes.

My lived experience as a farmworker also became an asset to this process. I grew up working in the fields alongside my grandparents, who were farmworkers all their lives. When I began teaching at Pitzer College, I wanted to develop a class that could let students feel what I felt when I went out to work with Cesar Chavez and the United Farm Workers (UFW) after I graduated. That experience had changed my life in terms of wanting to come back and organize in my own community back in Colorado. So in order to bring a flavor of that experience to my students, I developed a class called Rural and Urban Ethnic Movements, where students go work and live with the farmworkers. In preparation for their going, I utilize a number of books and a lot of literature that has been written about the farmworkers. The ties that I developed in the early 1970s have provided me with the contacts to allow for the kinds of relations that have developed between students at Pitzer and the United Farm Workers. In return for the union's hospitality and shared knowledge, the students work in various departments of the union. When they return to Pitzer, they organize a memorial celebration and support the union's boycott efforts throughout the year.

That pretty much relates to how I came to integrate community service. It came out of a passion, of trying to figure out how I could connect this passion for community activism and social change with the classroom and do it in such a way that I could survive in academia.

There seems to be a common profile of faculty who are drawn to the practice of service-learning.

A lot of the faculty whom I have met who are involved in service-learning have had some type of community organizing and service background. Because of their past experiences, they struggle to make education a nonalienating, relevant experience. Usually, these individuals care immensely about the state of the world and its inhabitants, and they are using their energies to make it a better place to live. I put myself in this group. Although we have stumbled over many hurdles, we tend to be optimists. We are constantly looking for new angles to teach, learn, and organize. There are never enough hours in the day to do all of this — but somehow service-learning creates the balance and the link.

I have students work with autobiographies in my class, and I clearly see this distinction. Many minority students do come from lower socioeconomic

backgrounds, from immigrant families. Their fathers and mothers may be janitors now, may no longer be just farmworkers, but they have that background. Consequently, they have particular issues that emerge on the campus that sometimes, unless there are other individuals on campus like myself who are sensitive to them, they hold in, and it can result in their dropping out. Those issues involve the lack of funds and feeling alienated, particularly if there isn't a whole lot of material about the history and identity of their particular community. Those histories need to be represented, and I think that is what diversity and multiculturalism are all about. It's not just something that minority students or women or gay and lesbian students need to know about, but something that the majority population needs to know about so that they can all be aware and work together on common issues. That's where the real issues emerge — the issue of affirmative action, the issue of making sure that history books are representative of the contributions of all groups.

My view is that in order to understand our commonalities, it is important to recognize our historical differences and why those differences exist. Then I think real unities develop, not just unities developed on superficial, feel-good levels, but unity based on an understanding of each other and where we do have commonalities.

Do you think that community service provides a platform where students can experience the sort of things that you are talking about? Students are in the world but may not be seeing the world. Do your students need the link to the community and to the academy to see what it is you are trying to teach?

A lot of students come right out of high school and are full of theories and ideas that they were taught in high school or by their parents. I find many students who come out of communities where they were not exposed to people of color or to issues having to do with race, gender, class, or gay and lesbian issues. In the Rural and Urban Ethnic Movements class, we get students from all different stratification levels. The students who are the most affected are not necessarily the minority students, because I think they know something about the social situation. The students who have been somewhat isolated and have not been exposed to the conditions of farmworkers and how farmworkers have emerged to organize themselves are the ones who begin to question why there has been this massive movement, there have been all these books written about it, and they have not been taught about it. The direct experience with the UFW affects them on a long-term basis, because it doesn't just follow how they have been taught in the past out of a book or a teacher feeding them abstract information.

The impact is long term; that is why it is hard to evaluate the effect of service-learning after one semester. Usually, students say that they had a positive experience and that they learned a lot. But the long-term impact is what we don't get right away. For example, I had this very conservative student who used to question the legitimacy of unions. He went on the service-learning alternative break. I recently got a letter from him in which he wrote that the class and experience had changed his entire life. He wrote that he decided to go into social welfare and empower people. Before, his outlook was to go into corporate America and make lots of money. His is not an isolated incident. If we started asking people involved in service-learning all across the country, I think we would find that this transformation occurs among many students. They end up working with the homeless, in unions, in non-profits, in agencies, and in the community. Their values are now to use their lives, their knowledge, and their values to build a better community. That is what I have found. Again, some of the students who are most affected are not just students from minority backgrounds but those other students.

Have you made any changes in your courses since you began with service-learning?

Many times over. I definitely learn new lessons every time I teach, and I use these lessons to continuously restructure my courses. One of the things that I have learned is to integrate more student-centered learning. Over and over, I have read Ira Shor's *Empowering Education* alongside *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* by Paolo Freire. These books have helped to take me away from traditional methods of lecturing and to understand the meaning of student-centered learning and that learning is a two-way process between students and teachers in the classroom. This method allows me to use problem-solving and critical-thinking techniques to draw out students. It allows for a continual process of reenergizing students, and I get energized as well. It certainly energizes me a lot more that students are energized when they return from their community site and are able to reflect upon it in relationship to class concepts. In my Social Stratification class, for example, I ensure that the students learn about some of the classical theories that emerged from Marx, Durkheim, and Weber. However, these theories become more concrete when we are able to talk about them in their relation to local communities or to the students' service experience. This really makes for more dynamic learning.

Service-learning has also led me to change the requirements for my classes. I primarily give essay examinations, and ask students to write reflection papers and research papers based on ethnographic methodologies. I especially promote that students learn about what participatory action research and advocate research are all about. I bring in books such as William Foote Whyte's *Participatory Action Research*, Michael Burawoy's

Ethnography Unbound, Jim Thomas's *Critical Ethnography*, and Orlando Fals-Borda's *Breaking the Monopoly With Participatory Action Research*. These books all demonstrate that it is good for students to be involved, to do research, to put themselves into the place of others, and to represent the voice and views of the oppressed. In terms of the books and articles I use for the class, I try to pick out materials that directly relate to lived experience and the type of community service that students carry out. I particularly like biographies and autobiographies. I now make it a practice at the beginning of each semester to allow students to review the syllabus — this has come out of my experience with Invisible College [an association of service-learning educators] and Campus Compact — to propose changes, and address any holes in the content. This practice allows us to make a contract with each other. I also periodically throughout the semester discuss with the students how the class is going and consider any changes that they might have. Many of these changes and modifications in my classes have come as a result of my deep involvement with service-learning and with individuals throughout the country who have shared their lessons with me.

Do you think Pitzer is an unusual school in terms of its location, its student body, its ability to accommodate the sort of work you do? Your president supports your work, I know. I can imagine that other institutions are more conservative in their orientation to service. While students on many campuses might be encouraged to serve soup in a soup kitchen, there may be fewer schools that have students out in the community doing critical analysis of the public schools and proposing reform and policy change.
Right. We have an administration and a faculty that are very supportive of service-learning. One of the foundations of our college, since its founding in 1963, is to integrate interdisciplinary intercultural perspectives as part of the liberal arts curriculum. Way back then, Pitzer had already begun to adopt three educational objectives. These were the interdisciplinary perspective, the intercultural perspective, and what was called a concern with the ethical implications or social consequences of the relationship between knowledge and action.

Pitzer is also unique in placing responsibility for educational quality with its faculty and its students. Rather than, for example, having academic departments, we have field groups. Academic departments, the faculty felt, lead to academic entrenchment and cut out the interdisciplinary character; they also create turf wars. Instead, Pitzer faculty organize themselves into what are called field groups that have no budgets and really have no department chairs. Field groups access curriculum with a concentration, and they make tenure recommendations. Faculty have membership in multiple field groups, not just one, so the system itself allows for continual development of interdisciplinary courses and [initiatives] where faculty from many disciplines can find common ground. So there are a lot of faculty here from different disciplines that I coteach service-learning courses with who are strong colleagues. For example, last year I cotaught a course with professor Alex Juhasz called Film and Diversity. This course combined our strengths in video, and race and ethnic relations.

Another thing that has allowed Pitzer to advance is the Ford Foundation Diversity Initiative. Six years ago, the college began the process of introducing diversity into the curriculum. Over a two-year period, eight seminars were held involving two-thirds of the faculty. The purpose was for faculty to figure out how they would redesign their courses to be more inclusive of the role historically underrepresented groups played in the development of the United States.

Within this context, a broad array of courses with increased outreach to the community have flourished. So today, although there are some individuals who believe that service-learning lowers academic standards in higher education, on the whole here we have full support. Through our development of service-learning models, we are able to provide evidence that it is helping to enrich higher education. With those who are skeptical, we have shared studies that have come out of Campus Compact and other sources. We have shared articles written about how service-learning has advanced collaboration with local communities. We have been a catalyst for creating examples of how service-learning is academically rigorous. Our class with the Alhambra School District, for example, was a class that was academically rigorous for the students by making concrete connections between books, theories, and lived experience. The faculty support here has led to the institutionalization of a "social responsibility" objective that requires the students to take at least one class during their term here involving community service, community-based fieldwork, or an internship. This has been made a prerequisite for graduation. The Faculty Council also recently decided to give lab credit for courses that have a service-learning component. These initiatives have advanced the development of a career and community services center, which is able to help faculty with some of the logistics in developing classes that have a service-learning component. Our work in the Alhambra School District also led to the development of a conflict resolution center, which was initially funded by a grant. The campus is now looking into long-term funding, because the project is serving so many schools in the region.

Overall, Pitzer's history of innovative education together with recent service-learning initiatives have led to strong support by the faculty and administration.

Have you found that your own research and path of investigation have changed any by virtue of what the students have been involved in?
I think that it has been sort of a dual learning experience. For example, as the students began to work in the Alhambra School District, their observations resulted in a number of concrete findings that served as a foundation for a lot of changes in the school. As they shared those experiences, it influenced me to further expand the research that I was carrying out We began to collaborate on the research Some students used their data to write their thesis papers. The class that Betty Farrell and I cotaught culminated in an article that appeared in *Teaching Sociology*. It also helped to fulfill our needs for doing research — which is necessary for promotion. I think a lot of young faculty are hesitant to go into service-learning because they are told that it will not help them in obtaining tenure. My own tenure recommendation included a substantial segment on the contributions I had made through service-learning. I would say that it is now being seriously considered in the evaluation of other faculty, as well. This didn't come overnight, it involved the creation of service-learning models and other faculty members' seeing the significance and importance of its being part of the tenure process. During my term at Pitzer, I've learned how to balance my teaching and service-learning with my research.

As service-learning becomes popular and faddish, and faculty talk about placements for students and work in the community, they worry that students aren't prepared and that maybe they don't belong in the community. On the other hand, do you think the potential benefits of students' being in the community supersede the need for a perfectly created placement in the community by a faculty member?
I lean toward the viewpoint that there are no guarantees in service-learning. It is positive in itself that some professors are attempting to try it out. I think that is where those of us who are involved in service-learning play a role. Those of use who have had a lot of experience in service-learning need to be catalysts on our campuses and share our experiences with others who are just beginning to get excited about it.

At Pitzer, we have institutionalized yearly meetings where we talk about our plans for how we are going to advance the service-learning curriculum on campus, what needs still are unmet. Every Friday, we have also institutionalized the meeting of a learning circle that brings faculty and students together to discuss service-learning projects and take up concrete issues on campus.

What are some of the lessons we share? One of the things we've learned is that service-learning means making a commitment to a particular site for a long period of time. The difference between students and faculty is that students usually take a course for one semester or carry out service-learning until they graduate and then they are gone. But that's not true with faculty. We're around for a longer period of time. I think too many communities have been burned by service-learning practitioners who parachute in to involve students over one semester or to gather research for a particular project, and then very little is given back to the community. What we have learned is that when those individuals go back to the community, they are not very well respected or accepted. Sometimes, they burn the field for other, sincere faculty who want to work there.

So, to me, it is better from the very beginning if service-learning is treated as a collaborative effort between the campus and the community and the institutions involved. That's why service-learning, if it is done well, takes so much time. I think faculty have to know that. The key to a successful service-learning class or a research project lies in the initial planning. For sure, it has to be carried out with the voice of the participants at the selected site. Throughout the term of the project, there has to be communication among all those involved. And when the term ends, it is important that faculty and the students summarize the results together. You can't guarantee that students aren't going to say or do things that might be insensitive or unconscious, but those are the risks we have to take. In the case of the Rural and Urban Ethnic Movements class, for example, not only do we have the class time to prepare students through readings, videos, and discussions, but we are also bringing speakers from the farmworkers themselves to talk about the issues. We also hold evening meetings where members of the UFW come and talk to the students about what they can expect when they go there. At the same time, we help the site by letting them know who the individuals are who are coming and what skills, abilities, and questions they are bringing with them. If we as faculty have developed a strong relationship with the site, and they know that we are going to be there for the long term, they will respect us. If mistakes are made, they will let us know, because it is that kind of relationship.

You have taught sociology for a while. Do you think service-learning is a particularly good tool to teach sociology as you understand the field?
I have always thought of sociology in terms of praxis and in terms of how the Brazilian educator Paolo Freire defined our capacity as human beings to create culture I was an activist before I became a sociologist. How can we live in society, study social relations, teach about social problems, without actively promoting practical solutions? This involves seeing the world as a local community being connected to much larger worlds.

I have long grappled with the question of how to relate my academic world to a better society. Wherever I go to speak, I raise the question as to

the role of higher education in helping to advance human development. What should be the role of higher education in promoting participation in the issues that are really facing us right now: a clean environment, quality of life, adequate child care, a quality education? My view is that higher education should meet these challenges head on. We have resources that can be utilized, not to "help" communities but to collaboratively utilize the energies and resources — research, teaching — to work with and alongside communities because we are part of those communities. The role of higher education should be to help develop campus-community partnerships that can present alternatives to some social, political, economic, and environmental inequalities.

We should be asking ourselves some questions: How can I use the position that I have in teaching, learning, and research without losing my humanity? How do I ensure the values of caring for others, values that may have come from experiences in activism, in the community, and in trying to build a better world? This is to me what sociology should be all about. We do have the capacity to be active participants in the process of social change. We can connect the tools of knowledge to finding solutions to the economic and social realities of our communities. Of course, we have to focus because we can only do so much. But to me, that's what sociology should be all about, not just carrying out research that gathers dust in some library.

It also occurs to me that we can look at higher education as an institution in the larger society that has basically been a somewhat neutral actor in some settings. High on the hill — doing the job of educating students — it is able to maintain a detached outlook on matters that are of important interest to the communities that surround it. How do you, as an active member of the community and as an engaged researcher, function in an institution that may have a smaller purpose than the one you think the organization or institution should be about?

It can be very frustrating sometimes unless there's some perspective to it. There are conservative professors who definitely teach their class with a bias. They say it is not biased. However, the theories that they use in the classroom have a bias to them. We also have a bias, and I don't hold back from relating to students my positions. The one thing that we can provide in this place that pretends to be neutral is that we can give students something that they may not have gotten elsewhere. To develop critical thinking in my classes I present literature so we can examine both sides of an issue. That allows for a lot of dialogue. Then if service-learning is tied to it, it becomes an even larger dialogue and more concrete.

At the same time, I think we can have a perspective and utilize that perspective to understand that faculty teach in a lot of different ways and that a thousand ideas can flow. This type of teaching can give room to be able to create critical thinking to help students to question and think to create change. This type of teaching gets away from the banking method of instruction, where the flow of knowledge is channeled primarily from the teacher to the student. I find my place within the institution by, on the one hand, being clear about the positions I hold on certain issues, while at the same time allowing students to critically think about their positions and where these positions fit into the larger picture.

I know that you've done a bit of traveling to campuses that are doing service-learning. What is your analysis of the variety of practices that are assumed under the service-learning rubric?

There are sharp differences in how various practitioners and institutions implement service-learning. There are those who primarily focus on the "service" aspect. Although the service-learning experience may have course materials and class discussions, its main goal is to place students in a particular institution or organization to provide a service. Still, this type of service-learning does benefit the community, and it affects students and faculty, as well. In some cases, this may be the first introduction to getting involved and giving service.

Another type of service-learning, which I am interested in, is based on a mutual process of empowerment, in which students, together with the community, are involved in a collaborative effort to find solutions to particular issues or problems. This type of service-learning requires the faculty and students to immerse themselves alongside community participants to do reflection and to collectively develop theories and strategies related to the problems that they are facing.

As service-learning is becoming more popular, there are new questions that are emerging in its application in institutions of higher education. In some institutions, the issues of liability, management, and governance have come to the fore. In others, the issues of control and power relations are becoming a reality. In one college I know, a professor got students involved in researching and protesting land development policies in an African-American community. It turned out that some of the developers were also on the college's board of trustees. This created tremendous conflict between the interests of the college, the land interests, and those interested in protecting the quality of life in their community.

For me, these are positive developments. As we begin to explore new types of service-learning, it makes for very exciting research and for finding new ways to deal with these issues. It is natural that once service-learning is embraced by faculty and students, it will move to other levels that can include policy making and social change. When it moves to this level, there

are no guarantees as to the involvement and support of the institution. There are no guarantees as to whom the students will confront, including those in powerful positions related to the institution. I don't see this as a negative, but it certainly moves beyond the "safe" models that many institutions are comfortable with — the internship, service, and volunteer models. I personally support all these different models, because they serve different purposes and constituencies at different times and under different circumstances. At the same time, they can build upon each other.

It has been interesting speaking both with you and with Frank Furstenberg from the University of Pennsylvania, because you have both been involved as sociologists in work with public schools. You have significantly different entry points to the school setting and significantly different ways of determining the problem to be addressed.

As I have mentioned before, my entry point comes from my activist background. Coming from this background, I really laud students who get involved with community leaders and other participants in finding solutions to practical problems in their communities. I try to show through example that there is a need to get involved. There are many students coming out of high school these days who have a history of community involvement. The higher education experience can put a damper on that quality. Some of these students have a tendency to turn away from the academy and drop out.

I think service-learning can make a real difference for these students. I know that it makes a difference for faculty who have come out of an activist history and are trying to find a means to exist in academia without being co-opted and without losing the values that give social meaning to their research or teaching.

My research and activism correspond with aspects of the participatory action research approach, particularly in the explicit connections made between social research and action. However, in my situation, in the city of Monterey Park, I became an activist before I became a social researcher. Consequently, I had to resolve the issue that my data were collected in the dual roles of researcher and advocate. I began to call this type of research "advocate research": a type of research where one could be involved in the process while simultaneously seeking to describe the world of the participants through their eyes. Of course, as ethnographers we have to seek to represent all sides. However, our involvement can give us an "in" that allows us to more fully understand the participants and to summarize the lessons learned.

What kind of impact do you think all this activity on the part of higher education is having on communities?

Certainly, the communities that I have been working with have been empowered to see campuses as having tremendous resources that the community can take advantage of. The labor unions, for example, are actively seeking to develop stronger ties among labor, campuses, and community activists. I am heartened by the efforts being made by labor organizers as well as faculty to become part of the communities that they live in — collaborating with neighborhood groups to advance local organizing efforts and political campaigns.

As the research efforts on our campuses are being used to create and change policies, the divide between campus and community is being diminished. Our communities don't see the campus as an island, and, more important, we don't see ourselves as an island. We see ourselves as an appendage of a larger community.

As students and faculty get involved in local political issues, they also begin to see that they can be a political force in the community. They no longer see themselves as travelers passing by, but as individuals with a stake in the decisions being made. Service-learning certainly helps to bring all these aspects together. Pitzer College, as an example, is developing a reputation locally and regionally as a place where there is a culture of service-learning. We get calls all the time from schools that want to utilize our resources in conflict resolution, early outreach, and curriculum transformation. As we get known for that sort of work, the strengths and advantages of service-learning get known.

This sounds like a wonderful example and somewhat unique in its bilateral and multilevel organizational involvement.

Yes, students and faculty are involved at all levels. It is based on where professors find their passion. Many service-learning practitioners come out of a background of activism. They realize that they have lost their idealism along the way. They find that they are so caught up in academia that they have lost ties with the community. The reason why some professors shy away from service-learning is that they don't have ties to the communities around them.

We are being innovative at all levels. Some professors have involved students in local unions. They have learned to use email and the Internet to communicate with union organizers and community members in other cities and in other nations. Some students are part of a partnership between the nearby city of Ontario and Pitzer that includes students' living with families in the targeted area, intensive writing courses with a focus on urban issues, and seminars led by a variety of scholars, agency directors, and community workers. These various curriculum initiatives have been complemented with institutional grants from the Irvine and Mellon Foundations. With these funds, faculty-development grants are providing opportunities

for professors to develop classes in their fields that integrate experiential learning or to participate in internships themselves.

Do you find there are unique kinds of teaching and learning opportunities that are afforded by service-learning that cannot be achieved in any other way?

Yes. Through service-learning, students were "doing" diversity and multiculturalism without realizing it. In various classes that I have been involved with, students were drawn from different backgrounds in terms of race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. What I found is that the students, in the process of working together in service-learning projects, have developed a sense of collectivity. In the case of the UFW experience, students work together in teams doing data entry, public action mailings, archival research, etc. In return for the union's hospitality and shared knowledge, the students present a reflection of what they have learned through the medium of theater. The beauty of this project is that it brings together students from diverse backgrounds to work together and to think critically and creatively. When they come back to campus, these ties are not lost but enriched. These are results that we cannot replicate in the classroom. These are results that reenergize me as a professor and remind me about the concrete meaning of collaborative learning.

Are you able to weave in sociological knowledge? What concepts and theories are students pointed to?

This is one thing that we are very careful of doing. In my Social Stratification class, I ensure that students learn about classical and contemporary stratification theories. However, I take it one step further and have students figure out how to apply these theories to multicultural novels and class presentations In this class, for example, a group of students from varied ethnic backgrounds read the book *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*, by Maya Angelou, and applied its content to various stratification theories. In the process, they found connections to their own lived experience and shared their collective interpretation through the creation of a wall-size mural. As they worked on the project, I observed how students from varying ethnic, class, and gender backgrounds could come together to produce a masterpiece.

In a couple of classes that I cotaught with sociology professor Betty Farrell, Social Responsibility and Community, and Roots of Social Conflict in Schools and Communities, students participated in a weekly seminar organized around varied readings about the region, including educational stratification, demographic changes, and the nature of the Latino and Asian Pacific people's experiences.

In the Rural and Urban Ethnic Movements course, students learn about social movement theories and the difference between use values and exchange values as applied to the concepts of place, growth, gentrification, and community development. By virtue of their experience in the community, they are able to critically evaluate these theories

In the courses that focused on local school districts [Alhambra and Garvey], most of the students wrote in their evaluations of the class that it was most difficult because of the requirements· extensive reading, fieldwork, traveling to the site, working independently with the students, taking field notes, coding, and writing up the final results. As mentioned before, we ensured that the books that they were reading were concretely related to the site that they were involved in. This was also ensured through the Rural and Urban Ethnic Movements class. There are now a lot of books on the history, origins, and strategies of the farmworker movement. In the class, we spend a lot of time looking at all the different sociological theories that relate to this particular social movement. When we go out into the field, students see the theories in practice and how different strategies are being applied. As a result, their reflection papers are not based just on emotion or personal reflection but are about how the theories can be applied to what they have learned and observed.

For faculty, helping students to link experience to theories is a real challenge. I know that I am always trying to move students beyond their own experience so that they become awakened to the importance of reading and critically examining texts and meaning. In some cases, in a course such as The Family, for instance, the students want to base all their learning on lived experience, and often challenge our research because they are aware of a personal exception to the rule. Helping students to see the world in new ways via experience and theory is designed not to rid them of old ways of thinking but simply to help them understand where their own perspectives come from.

One of the lessons that I have learned about student-centered education is that if it is applied well, it leads to a more interactive classroom, where the roles of the faculty member are made more equal to those of the student. This is a good thing. However, I have also found (particularly in introductory courses) that many students have not been exposed to particular theories or different ways of looking at issues. Some students in this situation often become comfortable with sharing their experience but slight the importance of doing the readings. As professors, we can shirk our responsibilities if the class becomes primarily focused on lived experience. The students need to learn to be dialectical and critical of the various sides and implications of classical and contemporary issues and theories in the literature. They need to ask challenging questions: Why do people have different positions on

issues? Why are individuals and groups stratified at different levels? How did I, as an individual, get stratified in the position that I am in today? Students should be able to explain the historical, economic, political, and social foundations of how individuals and groups have become stratified at different levels and how inequality in positioning is explained in different ways by contending theories and theoreticians.

Overall, I think that this type of learning by "doing" sociology will stay much longer with them than if it were knowledge being taught merely out of a book. I am learning, more and more, how to develop combinations of lived experience, theory, and praxis in the classroom.

Do you find that students who come from backgrounds that are similar to the communities and people being served are having experiences that are different from students from more-privileged backgrounds?

Both are affected in deep ways. From reading reflection papers, I find that the more-privileged students respond in awe at having experiences with communities such as the farmworkers' communities in La Paz and Delay. They are struck time and time again by the realities that these communities have to face on a daily basis and how they are able to survive through resistance and organization. The service-learning experience often influences these students to change their career goals. Now, they begin to think about how they can use their lives after graduation.

However, I have found that the students who come from those communities are not surprised, but instead spend most of their time searching for answers. They are more affected by the strategies and efforts that the community advocacy organizations are carrying out to change things. These students become more interested in returning to their communities and using their education to join the efforts of others. Many minority or underrepresented students (including women and gay and lesbian students) fall in this category. They are sensitive to the issues on campus, issues that have a lot to do with their survival. These issues involve the lack of funds, role models, financial aid, and a relevant learning environment. Often, if the institution lacks a multicultural curriculum and faculty who can understand where the students are coming from, such students will drop out. All students and faculty need to realize that the inclusion of the underrepresented in the curriculum is something that serves not only the underrepresented but everyone, regardless of background. This country was built on the backs of diverse people Unfortunately, some benefited and some didn't. That story needs to be told so that students from all backgrounds can sincerely and genuinely work together on common issues. The service-learning experience impacts both types of students, but the impacts are quite different.

As I look at the field of service-learning, it occurs to me that we have not established a useful framework that helps people to really understand what we mean by "community work." There are a variety of competing meanings here, and I think we assume understanding and agreement where none exists.

I think that we need a deep dialogue on this issue. The community, as a whole, is made up of many competing interests. Those who are corporate growers, developers, polluters — interests that may place profits over quality of life — are all part of what we call "community" When we talk about community, we are talking about a geographical, political, or spiritual place that is very diverse. This place has different levels of stratification, power relations, backgrounds, and ideologies. When you and I talk about community, we have a common sense that we are talking about communities of people who are facing inequality or who are trying to improve their living environment.

Ultimately, what communities we serve can have institutional implications, and this can result in conflict with the traditional power and decision-making interests. We need to debate some hard questions. What are the ethics of service-learning? Do we treat all communities the same? What communities are we talking about when we say that service-learning is all about "collaborating with the community"? This is an important question — because service-learning can be used to oppress and domesticate communities, to do all the things that we say that we are not about.

As we teach and develop critical thinking, some may take it to mean that it is only about "criticizing" and being oppositional. People today are asking for positive solutions, not just to hear what you are against. In this context, it is important to present and learn about all sides of issues that are affecting our communities. Our students need to learn the intricacies of research methodology and its strength in producing various options, answers, and outcomes. This sort of openness and exchange should be a hallmark of our service-learning classrooms. We have to teach our classes in such a way as to allow divergent perspectives to flow from the literature and from the students themselves.

It is my perspective that in the larger society students are not provided with many different ways to look at the world. The dominant understanding of inequality has a tendency to blame the "individual" for his or her "inadequacies." There are other theories and explanations that focus on the historical and systemic foundations of inequality. Students should learn to weigh the strength of the evidence for these explanations. What is liberating — as both Ira Shor and Paolo Freire would agree — is that first attempt at dialogue and critical analysis. From this can emerge consciousness that moves to the level of practice — empowering practice. If we as educators,

who have direct contact with the students, are not the catalysts for this type of learning and community work, the students will most likely not get it from anywhere else.

Note

1. Campus Compact, a national organization with offices in more than 20 states, works with member campuses and higher education in general to advance the practice of service-learning and community service on college campuses.