

Integrating equity, diversity, and inclusion into social innovation education: a case study of critical service-learning

Rebecca Otten, Máille Faughnan, Megan Flattley and
Samantha Fleurinor

*Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking,
Tulane University, New Orleans, Los Angeles, USA*

Received 1 November 2020
Revised 14 April 2021
Accepted 16 May 2021

Abstract

Purpose – Social innovation education aims to equip students with the skills and mindsets to pursue sustainable and just solutions to complex challenges, yet many programs fail to address the power dynamics underlying unjust social structures. This paper aims to examine a social innovation course that integrates equity, diversity and inclusion principles through critical service-learning.

Design/methodology/approach – Researchers conducted semi-structured interviews of 25 students and 5 key informants in a qualitative, single case design to understand multiple perspectives on significant factors in transformative learning. Document review and auto-ethnographic insights provide additional case background.

Findings – Students identified the service experience as unique and high impact. Significant factors included the atypical service structure, the EDI framework, and the partner organization as an exemplar in the field. Students displayed a spectrum of learning, from recall and comprehension to critical evaluation, new worldviews, and behavior change.

Research limitations/implications – The findings of this qualitative study pertain to one partnership but are generalizable to theories. These findings are plausibly transferable to other experiential social innovation courses embedded in elite, private, predominately white research universities.

© Rebecca Otten, Máille Faughnan, Megan Flattley and Samantha Fleurinor. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) licence. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this licence may be seen at <http://creativecommons.org/licences/by/4.0/legalcode>

This work is only possible through the generous contributions of time and energy from community members, past and present, at Grow Dat Youth Farm, VISIONS, Inc., and Tulane University. We want to share particular gratitude to Jabari Brown, Jeanne Firth, Johanna Gilligan, Joshua Schoop, Kevin Connell, and all of the Grow Dat youth leaders that have co-created transformational learning experiences for our students over the past six years. We are also grateful to our student and stakeholder respondents for participating in this research and to Devon Walker, Edson Cabalfin, Kenneth Schwartz and Laura Murphy for encouraging us to pursue this research.

This case study was conducted on land originally inhabited and traversed by over 40 native tribes who called it by the Choctaw name “Bulbancha,” a place of many tongues. Starting in the 1700s, colonizers exploited Black labor on this stolen land, then known as Allard Plantation (Grow Dat Youth Farm in City Park) and Foucher Plantation (Tulane University). City Park and Tulane University remained segregated until 1958 and 1961, respectively. We honor the past, present, and future generations who steward this place by considering our responsibility to the land and committing to the healing of ongoing harms from colonialism, racism, and environmental destruction.



Originality/value – This empirical case examines a unique pedagogical and curricular innovation. By seeking to understand factors and outcomes of experiential learning, this study contributes to the literature on social innovation education and critical service-learning. The analysis produced novel insights for faculty and institutions aiming to integrate equity, diversity, and inclusion goals into social innovation programs.

Keywords Multicultural education, Social innovation education, Critical service-learning, Multiculturalism, Equity, Diversity and inclusion (EDI), Changemaking, Higher education

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Higher education institutions (HEIs) face increasing calls to rethink how they engage with complex 21st century challenges that impact the well-being of our interconnected planet. In 2020, society is collectively grappling with threats to democratic governance and enduring injustices, such as anti-Black racism and White supremacy, amidst life-changing disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic. Global social entrepreneurship incubator Ashoka urges HEIs to deliver a “changemaking education” that equips every student with the ability to help create social value in a rapidly changing world (Ashoka, 2019). The recent growth of social innovation programs in universities worldwide marks one response to this call (Brock and Steiner, 2009).

This nascent field has already engendered debate about its foundational theories. Social innovation addresses social problems by reconfiguring resources and relationships in a complex system (Manzini, 2015). Some scholars foreground relationships, framing innovations as collective actions that lead to new, empowering societal arrangements (Moulaert *et al.*, 2017; Mulgan, 2019). However, critical scholars contend that social innovation and related approaches lack analysis of power dynamics across social groups (Murphy *et al.*, 2021). Ganz *et al.* (2018) posit that social entrepreneurship education perpetuates an inherently flawed approach to social change that emphasizes technical rather than political solutions and fails to address systemic issues. Other scholars claim these educational programs cultivate an “obsession with being an entrepreneur” rather than a commitment to social impact (Papi-Thornton, 2016, p. 6).

“Heropreneurship,” overemphasizing heroic social venture founders, does not prepare aspiring changemakers to tackle “wicked problems” within systems (Papi-Thornton, 2016). Addressing wicked problems requires collaborative processes where multiple stakeholders experiment with interconnected issues with unlimited possibilities (Rittel and Webber, 1973; Stacey, 2002). Papi-Thornton and Cubista (2019) re-imagine social innovation education rooted in systems thinking practices of interconnection, embeddedness and reflexive learning. An “ecosystem approach” to social innovation, focused on adaptive networks, could more meaningfully address wicked problems (Kumari *et al.*, 2020; Papi-Thornton, 2016).

Continuing to shift curricula toward a justice-oriented ecosystems approach may also require integrating equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) as core competencies (Rivers *et al.*, 2015b). However, limited research on this praxis-oriented field cannot yet confirm this hypothesis. Most published scholarship on social innovation in higher education focuses on the role of HEIs within ecosystems rather than on learning models and outcomes. Literature reviews and our own anecdotal knowledge suggest that many social innovation programs still do not meaningfully incorporate EDI into their core competencies or curriculum (Miller, *et al.*, 2012).

Community engagement strategies such as critical service-learning (CSL) offer a complementary approach to deepening EDI within social innovation education. Community engagement emphasizes bridging university-community boundaries to foster two-way interaction and mutual learning (Weerts and Sandmann, 2010). Service-learning, a pedagogical model that integrates experiential learning with serving community needs, is one popular form

of community engagement (Eyler and Giles, 1999). Social innovation courses have fostered students' civic engagement by incorporating service-learning, but not necessarily with an EDI lens (Brock and Steiner, 2009). While service-learning is often connected with social justice goals in both student and partnership outcomes (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Jones and Hill, 2001), "traditional" models may prioritize student benefit and reify inequities, while "critical" models seek transformative social change (Butin, 2015; Mitchell, 2008).

The social innovation and social entrepreneurship (SISE) minor program at Tulane University in the USA offers a case of an introductory social innovation course that integrates an EDI focus through CSL. This paper examines how this experience influences transformative learning for students. An empirical case study reveals the specific factors of the CSL model that contributed to changes in student perspectives and behaviors related to EDI. By seeking to understand the processes of integrating EDI through experiential learning, this study contributes to a growing body of literature on the integration of EDI outcomes within social innovation education.

Literature review

Social innovation education. Though social innovation is not a historically new phenomenon, its construction as a field of study is relatively recent (Ayob *et al.*, 2016). Waves of social innovations have emerged from societal upheaval, such as the rise of labor unions after the first Industrial Revolution or the post-Depression establishment of social security in the USA (Mulgan, 2019; Phills *et al.*, 2008). Ashoka and other support organizations founded in the 1980s popularized these concepts, such that social entrepreneurship became recognized as a change strategy different from advocacy or social service provision (Martin and Osberg, 2015). As much of the field's cannon is practitioner-driven, its core theoretical frameworks remain underdeveloped, contested and in flux (Mulgan, 2019).

Classic definitions of social innovation draw on liberal economic theories (Murphy *et al.*, 2021). Phills *et al.*'s (2008) oft-cited definition frames social innovation as "a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals" (p. 36). Solutions might take the form of a public policy (e.g. emissions trading), a financial practice (e.g. socially responsible investing) or new services (e.g. microfinance). This "social innovation" frame has theoretical linkages to social entrepreneurship, a process of creating and scaling a social value proposition for transformative equilibrium change (Martin and Osberg, 2015). Social entrepreneurs are thought to occupy a key role in this process "as change agents in the social sector" (Dees, 2001, p. 4).

Other scholars frame social innovation within complex adaptive systems ontologies (Murphy *et al.*, 2021). This perspective emphasizes social relations in both process and outcomes. Mulgan sees social innovations as "leav[ing] behind a stronger social capacity to act" (2019, p. 10). Social innovation should foster empowerment, the individual or collective ability to interpret and shape one's life or broader forces (Heiskala, 2007; Luttrell *et al.*, 2009). For example, Brazil's participatory budgeting schemes enable citizens to engage in previously top-down or closed-door decisions about how to allocate public money (Moulaert *et al.*, 2017). An ecosystem approach also prioritizes empowerment, but it focuses less on individual actors and more on how innovation happens through agile adaptation among interrelated people, objects and spaces (Mulgan, 2019; Kumari *et al.*, 2020).

Educational curricula mirror these conceptual differences (Brock and Ashoka, 2011). Social innovation education in the USA evolved from social entrepreneurship programs within graduate business schools (Austin and Rangan, 2019; Brock and Steiner, 2009). In 2005 Ashoka broadened its focus from social innovation to "everyone a changemaker,"

emphasizing skills and mindsets that anyone could use to address complex social challenges, such as the “ability to problem-solve” or “develop collaborative relationships” (Ashoka, 2019; Brock and Ashoka, 2011; Miller, *et al.*, 2012, p. 353). In the past ten years, social innovation education has also begun to integrate systems thinking, “understand[ing] the interconnections of complex problems in such a way as to achieve a desired purpose,” (Stroh, 2015, p. 6). Papi-Thornton’s (2016) influential report critiqued heropreneurship approaches that encourage privileged students at elite HEIs to try solving the problems of oppressed people, which reifies power imbalances (Papi-Thornton and Cubista, 2019). This report promoted an ecosystem approach that prepares students for multiple roles in social change processes while supporting the leadership of those with lived experience of an issue (Papi-Thornton, 2016).

Equity, diversity and inclusion. Multiculturalism, like social innovation, is a contested term (Blum, 1999). Some interpretations emphasize multicultural competence, which includes developing awareness of one’s positionality and biases, valuing others’ perspectives and interacting interpersonally in a culturally appropriate manner (Boyle-Baise, 2002; Einfeld and Collins, 2008). Others emphasize social justice through equitable distribution of resources, rights and participation in society (Fraser, 1997). Multiculturalism is a precursor to the evolving language of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), a moniker often used in US-based workplaces, including HEIs. This shift recognizes that increasing the mix of different people (diversity) does not guarantee meaningful integration and participation (inclusion) or the elimination of disparities in power, resources and access among social groups (equity) (Bernstein *et al.*, 2020).

Despite increased attention to power dynamics and oppression through systems thinking, many social innovation programs do not explicitly integrate EDI. Brock and Steiner’s (2009) review of 107 social entrepreneurship syllabi did not mention multiculturalism or EDI, nor did Miller *et al.*’s (2012) 35 key competencies in social entrepreneurship. If EDI is present within social innovation education outcomes, it is typically included within a broader category related to ethics and values (Curtis, 2013; Rivers, *et al.*, 2015a); social responsibility (Rivers, *et al.*, 2015a); empathy (Rivers, *et al.*, 2015a; Miller, *et al.*, 2012); cultural awareness (Miller, *et al.*, 2012); or cultural sensitivity (Smith *et al.*, 2012). Furthermore, each of these outcomes could be evaluated as “successful” without integrating EDI.

Some HEIs are beginning to integrate EDI concepts into social innovation education. Leaders of Ashoka’s higher education unit observed recent increases in the “use of systems thinking to dismantle systems of power and oppression, blending the best of social entrepreneurship and social justice” (Kim and Fuessel, 2020, p. 3). University of Northampton highlighted transformative and critical learning theories in their social innovation education framework (Rivers *et al.*, 2015b). Transformative learning involves iterative, critical reflection to reorient one’s worldviews which may lead to new patterns of thinking, feeling and acting (Mezirow, 1990). Kumari *et al.* (2020) highlighted these learning theories as one dimension of an overall framework for HEIs in social innovation ecosystems, suggesting that combining experiential learning with critical reflection can prepare students to participate in co-creation.

Critical service-learning. Service-learning can be an impetus for transformational learning within EDI (Hullender *et al.*, 2015; Kiely, 2005). Intentionally combining service activities with student reflection can help students: increase tolerance and mutuality (Kezar, 2002); develop critical consciousness (Jones and Hill, 2001) and multicultural competence (Einfeld and Collins, 2008); appreciate diversity and pluralism (Hurtado and DeAngelo, 2012;

Jay, 2008; Knapp *et al.*, 2010); and commit to civic engagement activities (Ehrlich, 2000; Kezar, 2002).

Critiques of traditional service-learning models led to distinguishing critical service-learning (CSL) as a unique approach (Jones and Kiser, 2014). While many traditional models align with diversity and inclusion, CSL prioritizes equity and social justice. Einfeld and Collins (2008) found that a commitment to civic engagement and increased awareness of inequality did not necessarily lead to social justice behaviors. A CSL model must further empower students to advocate for systemic change (Adams, 2000). Mitchell's (2008) literature review identifies three key dimensions of CSL: that parties use a social change orientation, to redistribute power, and through authentic relationships.

A "social change orientation" contextualizes service-learning within a systems framework by problematizing service, developing an awareness of identity within the service context, and interrogating the wider causes of social problems (Mitchell, 2008). This orientation highlights structures that shape social injustice rather than focusing primarily on individuals or culture. It also challenges students to reflect on how their service contributions intersect with longer-term strategies needed to achieve transformation (Mitchell, 2008). Finally, it shifts the course outcomes from student development to community transformation (Wade, 2001).

"Redistributing power" entails recognizing, analyzing, and subverting power dynamics through curriculum and pedagogy (Addes and Keene, 2006; Mitchell, 2008). Traditional service-learning can reinforce the power of students and the university by structuring the experience around their needs, contributions and benefit (Cooks *et al.*, 2004). Redistributing power requires students to reflect on how identity, privilege and oppression might operate within interpersonal and institutional relationships during the service experience (Mitchell, 2008). It also challenges notions of expertise by deconstructing traditional roles of knowledge creation and re-imagining partners as co-educators (Mitchell, 2008).

Finally, Mitchell (2008) identifies "authentic relationships" as the forging of genuine and respectful connections that lead to mutual benefit. She emphasizes recognizing difference without reifying or universalizing all experiences. Authentic relationships should enable shared agendas for collective action and learning (2008).

Methodology

This study examined a single case of a critical service-learning partnership within an introductory social innovation course. This approach enabled multi-level analysis of factors and outcomes of the learning experience within its context. Embedded units of analysis include individuals and groups. This research design allows us to situate analysis within theories of critical service-learning and equity, diversity and inclusion while explicating how these constructs connect to social innovation education.

To understand individual experiences, we conducted semi-structured, in-depth interviews. The within-case sampling frame included 218 undergraduate students and 32 stakeholders participating in the semester-long service experience between 2014 and 2019. We purposively selected 25 students representing different genders, academic disciplines, minor enrollment and year of participation. Students were interviewed six months to six years after the course to capture retrospective views at different distances. Five key informant interviews added perspectives from diverse institutional locations. Our inquiry approach aimed to capture varying points of view on the experience: positive, negative, anticipated and unexpected. Document review and our auto-ethnographic knowledge as instructors provided case background to complement interviews.

Thematic data analysis followed an iterative and emergent process consistent with qualitative research (Miles *et al.*, 2014). The two lead authors independently conducted line-by-line coding of interview transcripts. We combined open coding to develop assertions from the data with a priori constructs from the literature and the course. Internal analysis of each transcript produced holistic summaries of individual perspectives, leading to analytical memos identifying how key factors connected to transformative learning. Data excerpts visualization yielded different instances of each category, generating broad themes and comparing data against initial interpretations. For example, the descriptive category “relationships in service” contained observations of connection, disconnection and overall student surprise around the importance of relationships. Comparing this pattern with other impressions led to refining initial themes from “students contrasted this service with other experiences” to “the service structure challenged students’ mental models.”

This research obtained ethics approval from Tulane University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) for human subjects’ research. While the risk of participation was minimal, investigators sought to uphold the principles of respect, beneficence and justice laid out in the Belmont Report (United States, 1978). We used thorough consenting procedures emphasizing the voluntary nature of participation to recruit and enroll participants in the study. We protected confidentiality through omission of individual names and secure data management. These steps ensured that the recruitment population, which involves students and stakeholders in investigators’ networks, understood that participation decisions or responses would not have consequences on their personal or professional relationships.

Case background

Tulane University is a private research university in New Orleans, Louisiana, USA. In 2005, after Hurricane Katrina, Tulane developed national recognition by becoming the first US research university to integrate public service into its core curriculum. Tulane consistently ranks in the top 50 US colleges and universities by *U.S. News and World Report* and places high in rankings of socially conscious graduates by measures such as Peace Corps participation rates. Tulane’s social innovation and social entrepreneurship (SISE) minor launched in 2012, allowing undergraduate students across disciplines to integrate social innovation into their core area of study. The introductory course, SISE 2010, includes a mandatory service-learning component that fulfills Tulane’s first-tier public service graduation requirement.

Demographic differences between Tulane’s undergraduate student population and the surrounding community deeply shape the program’s approach to social innovation education. Tulane is a historically and predominately white institution located in a majority Black city (Tulane University, 2019; United States Census Data Bureau, 2010). Additionally, Tulane University enrolls many students with significantly more economic resources than the average Orleans Parish resident. In 2017, the *New York Times* reported that the median family income of a Tulane student was \$180,700, while the median household income of a New Orleans resident is \$36,964 (New York Times, 2017; United States Census Data Bureau, 2010). These differences manifest in the course. The 25–30 students enrolled in SISE 2010 each semester indicate a wide spectrum of EDI experience; while some demonstrate previous encounters with topics such as racism and white supremacy culture, others indicate little prior knowledge. Many students move to New Orleans from homogenous communities where they have been surrounded by predominately white, upper middle-class peers and neighbors. Often this course offers one of the first meaningful interactions that these students have with New Orleans citizens outside of Tulane University students, staff and faculty. In recognition of the identity-group privileges held by many, but not all, Tulane

students, SISE 2010 aims to circumvent a heropreneurship narrative as it builds fundamental changemaking competencies.

The SISE program's partnership with Grow Dat Youth Farm (GDYF) catalyzed significant curricular changes. GDYF is a nonprofit sustainable urban farm and youth leadership organization founded in 2010 that nurtures a diverse group of young leaders through the meaningful work of growing food (Grow Dat [Youth Farm, 2021](#)). Each spring, GDYF hires high school-aged young people to work on the farm and participate in leadership development. Ten young people form a "crew" under the guidance of two assistant crew leaders (ACLs) and one crew leader. GDYF has been affiliated with since its inception, and SISE 2010 instructor Dr. Joshua Schoop's dissertation research supported the creation of GDYF's Advanced Leadership Program, which trains former crew members to serve as ACLs and crew leaders ([Schoop, 2014](#)). After discussing their mutual frustration with Tulane's undergraduate service-learning model in 2014, Schoop and GDYF co-founder Johanna Gilligan proposed a new partnership rooted in mutual benefit, shared power and genuine human connection.

The new partnership re-envisioned how service activities are orchestrated. GDYF is compensated for staff time spent planning and facilitating service-learning, and service activities have become a core training strategy for GDYF. This structure ensures that activities on site with Tulane students also meet GDYF's core needs for youth development and staff capacity-building. At the beginning of the service experience, 5–8 SISE students join a "crew" with two ACLs and a crew leader. GDYF youth leaders develop skills by leading their crew through agricultural tasks; facilitating workshops on topics such as food justice and neoliberalism; and performing communication practices such as Standards and Real Talk ([Brown et al., 2020](#); [Schoop, 2014](#)). Tulane students serve GDYF by participating in the Advanced Leadership Program; this practice round prepares ACLs and crew leaders to facilitate the Youth Leadership Program the following January to June.

The new partnership also changed course curriculum and pedagogy. GDYF is identified as a classroom co-educator and has explicitly co-designed at least 20% of course content while indirectly influencing other aspects. Most significantly, in 2014 <REDACTED2> staff began facilitating a specific EDI framework with SISE 2010 students as a prerequisite to engaging with GDYF youth. GDYF had already identified Vigorous Interventions in Ongoing Natural Settings (VISIONS) as a critical partner early in its organizational development. VISIONS is a nonprofit that provides multicultural education "to empower the creation of environments where differences are recognized, understood, appreciated, and utilized for the benefit of all" (VISIONS, 2020). VISIONS defines multiculturalism as a "process of change that invites us to identify, interrupt, and implement change strategies at the personal, interpersonal, cultural, and institutional levels," so as to create a world where pluralism exists ([Batts, 2017](#), p. 2). This definition aligns with broader definitions of EDI; as such, this paper refers to VISIONS as an EDI framework. By 2020, roughly 327 undergraduate students had participated in VISIONS sessions as part of this class.

[Figure 1](#) describes key EDI learning goals for the VISIONS content, which comprises the first 20% of the semester. VISIONS sessions focus on identity development, culture sharing and understanding systems of oppression within the USA [1]. This module sets the foundation for in-class and service interactions; the course also weaves multi-level analysis of oppression and privilege into subsequent examinations of social innovation. Continuous processes of critical reflection and relationship-building support this content. Students interrogate power dynamics, critique service-learning and challenge assumptions about the university-community relationship through written and verbal reflections. Other class activities complement onsite learning by exploring the social and environmental systems GDYF aims to transform. GDYF is highlighted as an exemplar of social innovation throughout the semester.

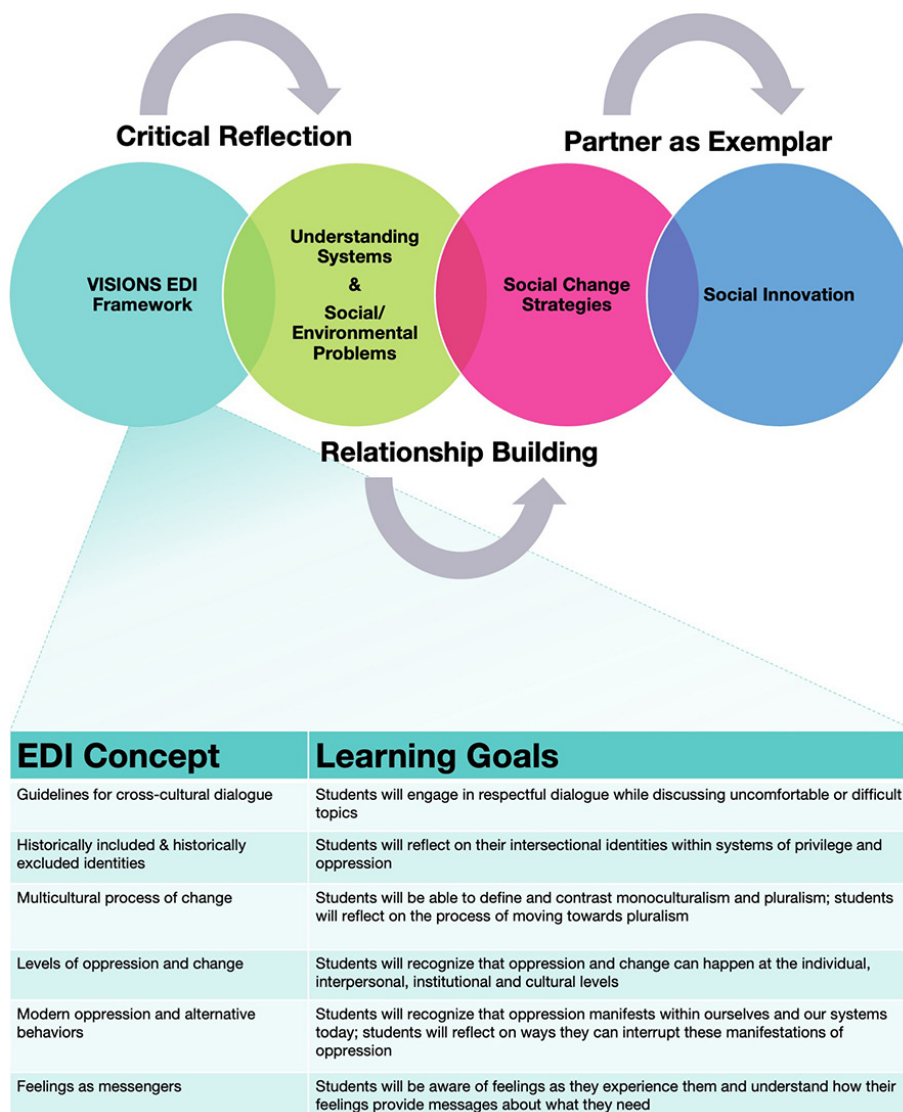


Figure 1.
VISIONS EDI
framework concepts
and learning goals

Results

Student respondents mostly had “positive” feelings about the experiential curriculum. However, students were not always excited or comfortable during the process. Two students indicated they would have opted out of service-learning if it was not mandatory but found the experience to be transformative. While respondents did not characterize their experience as negative, some contrasted their enjoyment and learning with others by noting, for example, “I know some of my peers don’t really feel the same way.” Key informants also acknowledged a range of enthusiasm and participation from Tulane students. Furthermore,

some students had positive feelings about the experience but were unable to recall specific aspects or ways that it impacted their life.

Respondents consistently described the experience as “unique” and “high impact,” noting that it met or exceeded their expectations. One student stated they got “as much or more out of the service-learning as the actual class.” A student skeptical of the overall course content felt that the service-learning with GDYF was the “the most impactful part of this SISE course.” Some students highlighted service-learning with GDYF as the most meaningful learning experience of their undergraduate education. Two students felt it set the tone for their college experience and their relationship with the city of New Orleans.

Students’ interviews display a spectrum of learning depth, from simply remembering or comprehending a concept to applying frameworks for analysis, creating new meanings and implementing new behaviors. Long-term, transformative student learning was observable in the areas of: food systems; communication and collaboration across difference; identity development; and career choices. Respondents identified the CSL model, the VISIONS EDI framework, and the organizational partner as significant influences on learning. They also indicated that deeply integrating these course-level factors enhanced learning.

Challenging mental models through critical service-learning

Roughly half of students contrasted the SISE 2010 service-learning with other experiences. One student felt that it fulfilled what the university was *trying* to promote: “It’s not just giving [students] a service-learning component [. . .] because, you know, we need to tell the world how many hours the university got. I always just admired how it fit the model that Tulane always talks about.” One of the most interesting or helpful aspects of the experience was noticing aspects of criticality that differed from traditional service-learning. Criticality challenged prior beliefs about roles, relationships and contributions in service. However, key informant perspectives question the level of criticality that could be achieved given the constraints of the service-learning partnership.

Redistributing power. Students anticipated a traditional service-learning model where they would use their assets to serve others with deficits. They had mixed experiences with confronting an unexpected dynamic in which power and benefit flowed two ways. One student was surprised but quickly accepted the new model: “Going into it, I was like, We’re going to help them farm.” I think it took me ‘til the end of the first day when I really thought, “Oh, we’re helping them practice. Learning that was the first obstacle.” The near-peer relationship between Tulane undergraduates and GDYF youth could subvert preconceived notions about who is best positioned to lead in service. One student explained, “it was definitely interesting to overcome knowing that my crew leader was my age.” Another struggled with feeling “decentered”:

My expectation of service-learning was very much in the first model of “we are valuable students that then put our knowledge forth in an unearned way” [. . .] Maybe that’s been the juxtaposition, in liking the theory behind how we were doing it but then feeling like there was just way less accountability and responsibility . . . it was a funny tension; I want to be more useful, but I like that I’m not deemed as useful right now.

For another student, this shift made them feel useful. “I think that us not contributing a final project, but us contributing as participants, was the coolest thing I’ve ever done in a service-learning course.”

However, one GDYF stakeholder questioned whether all students meaningfully engaged in power redistribution:

I know that there were some feelings that came out working with the students [...] I think that [Grow Dat youth] felt like they were put in a position where they were supposed to be leading and I didn't necessarily feel like the students were clear about that.

This informant concluded that students struggled to “understand the power dynamics they were bringing” and suggested introducing more explicit “conflict theory” to students.

Authentic relationships. Relationship-building, including getting to know the youth leaders and full-time staff, made a strong impression on more than a third of respondents. It was one of the primary ways that students' expectations were exceeded. One student explained:

I didn't expect the level of friendship [...] and different ways of thinking that came out of it. Maybe that's because I'd heard about other people's service-learning [...] They didn't talk much about a relationship. I feel like the Grow Dat experience is so different, in a good way.”

Students appreciated the opportunity to interact with people who had different identities and experiences. Two respondents appreciated developing relationships with New Orleanians outside Tulane University. Many respondents wanted even more connection, including more time in small groups, on the farm, and with GDYF in class. Several maintained relationships with current or former staff afterwards.

The continuity of the partnership also aided relationship-building. One respondent linked their learning to relationships between the faculty and partner:

I think your personal investment [as faculty] at Grow Dat added to the class when we could see how your knowledge of the program [...] its goals, its history [...] we're just being taught from a very well-informed perspective.

Students also noticed lack of authentic relationships. For many respondents, their peer's disengagement was the only negative aspect of the experience. For some students, this critique demonstrates an over-emphasis on other group members as the perpetrators of modern oppression (Batts, 2017). Yet others demonstrated awareness of self and others by expressing concern about the impact of Tulane students' actions in the New Orleans community. One GDYF informant validated these concerns, finding that “a handful of students exceeded my expectations or helped me have a better experience” but that their low expectations were fulfilled. This informant also did not observe significant engagement across difference, which calls into question whether GDYF counterparts felt the same sense of connection as Tulane students:

If I had an ACL who really hit it off with some undergrad and they wanted to become friends outside the program, then I might be like, “Whoa, that's amazing.” But that feels so far from anything that could have happened. I'm especially thinking about trust and how long that takes [...] in that kind of partnership, with two groups coming from very different social positions, trust takes even more time and commitment and support and intention.

Social change orientation. Students appreciated learning more about social and environmental issues within the local context. This learning primarily stemmed from GDYF's social change orientation (Brown *et al.*, 2020). Six students independently recalled that the GDYF workshops were the most interesting or helpful aspect of the partnership, with at least two highlighting systems thinking. One student recalled:

Activities were helpful in learning about food deserts and food insecurity that [...] aren't where students typically come from. It put their work into a broader context. It gave me a different view, learning how to be a better citizen of New Orleans.

Two students shared that learning from youth leaders had a significant impact in this area. Key informant interviews confirmed the value of these workshops:

It allows them to engage those issues that the community they're working in is facing. Just with talking about food access and any quality in oppressive systems that prevents people from accessing what they need. It put them in a position to [have those] conversations on a regular basis.

Several respondents noted that a social change approach to food systems was the most surprising impact on their learning. Most students, to varying degrees, felt that the SISE 2010 class changed their understanding of food systems. For example, many students first learned about food deserts in the course. Others indicated that the social change orientation encouraged long-term, sustainable behavior change related to how they engaged with the local food system (e.g. daily choices). Some respondents acknowledged that prior interests and later experiences reinforced GDYF's approach to food systems, along with the fact that food is a part of everyone's daily experiences.

However, some students may not have fully integrated a social change orientation into their mental models. A few respondents expressed a surface-level sympathy around social disparities, explicitly using the word sad or implying feeling sympathy about the injustices others have experienced. They did not position themselves within interconnected food systems or other systems that were discussed. A former crew leader specifically mentioned the limitation of too many participants and not enough time to achieve a social change orientation with students, which may contribute to some students' lack of integration.

Engaging in the multicultural process of change. Students remember the VISIONS EDI framework as one of the key elements of GDYF's model that they still think about and use; nearly half mentioned these tools without prompting. The VISIONS EDI framework helped them to recognize manifestations of modern oppression and more deeply understand intersectionality and positionality. It also provided new lenses and behaviors to approach interpersonal relationships across difference.

Students had mixed feelings about VISIONS sessions at the time. One student recalled, "Engaging the conversation about race and identity and talking about your names, and your background, can get uncomfortable." However, an emotion typically described as negative did not always yield a negative result. Nearly half the respondents expressed some sense of working through discomfort in a healthy way that promoted learning. Another student explained, "I know that VISIONS, at one point, got kind of awkward, but that was the most important part, because that was when we started to learn."

The eight VISIONS guidelines for multicultural communication were most often identified as a valuable tool. For many students, the guidelines provided a shared language to describe pre-existing behaviors or inclinations. Over half of respondents spoke to the impact of "take space/make space," which is process-oriented language that GDYF added to the guidelines. The next two most referenced guidelines challenged binary thinking and asked participants to own unintentional negative impact. Students felt that GDYF provided a strong explanation of these guidelines and planted a seed that continued to develop after the class. This framework helped three students stop using "good intentions" as a defense for having a negative impact. Several respondents valued the cohesive framework created through combining each individual guideline. Respondents also reported engaging in long-term behavior change in their communication methods from learning initiated in the course.

About 45% of students indicated that discussing how systems of oppression impact historically included and historically excluded (HI/HE) groups provided important learning or re-learning (Batts, 2017). Many students had thought about racism, sexism, heterosexism, and anti-Semitism prior to class. Students started exploring ableism, elitism, ageism and xenophobia in the class. Several students mentioned the value of understanding

intersectionality through the HI/HE chart, which defines privilege and oppression across social identity variables; one saved the HI/HE document for future use. These analytical concepts helped students make sense of events in their lives at both micro and macro levels. Three students stated that the HI/HE tool helped them better understand current social change efforts, and two students used the tool to have difficult conversations with family members that resulted in perspective change. One respondent shared: “With everything that happened with Black Lives Matter, I was super-supportive [of the movement]. My parents are very generous people but didn’t understand the concept of historically included or excluded. I had a long conversation with them using stuff I learned through SISE and other courses. Now they’re super-supportive of the movement.”

Students mentioned outside experiences that impacted their understanding of systems of privilege and oppression; three students did not find the HI/HE chart particularly helpful. While some students with prior exposure had a deeper analysis of HI/HE concepts than their classmates, others exhibited an uneven or surface-level understanding of the HI/HE chart during the class.

Overall, students demonstrated some internal contradictions in their assessment of the VISIONS EDI framework. One student described coming to appreciate the model retrospectively:

The activities we did in the beginning to recognize our place and position. I was just so inundated with [EDI discussions] at the time, it felt a little eyeroll-y or redundant in it as an angst-y sophomore. What it means to get people on the same page, I think there’s value in the way that they have to do, like, cross-cultural communication and setting up a team foundation. Over the years I’ve just held respect for GDYF as an organization that does that well.

Another student felt they had already learned the VISIONS content before class, but also explained that GDYF convinced them that racism was a current problem and not only historical. Additionally, they identified VISIONS as one of the most important contributions they experienced from the course. This student’s response indicates that they perhaps failed to recognize aspects of the VISIONS model they may have internalized.

Deepening learning through an exemplar organization. Respondents appreciated learning from a notable local institution that operationalized social innovation concepts. One student found the service-learning experience so valuable because <REDACTED2> was “a fantastic partner.” Working with GDYF gave students a chance to experience how EDI values informed an organization’s mission, culture and strategy. One student mentioned: “it was nice to see a prime example of an organization that fully promotes [EDI] concepts within social innovation.”

Students recognized GDYF’s expertise in building a pluralistic organizational culture, specifically in relation to hierarchy, communication and collaboration. Students noticed how GDYF used the VISIONS EDI framework to “ingrain very process-oriented working,” such as meeting in circles and using the guidelines to facilitate full inclusion. Learning from a real example helped another student connect process to outcomes, which challenged their assumptions about engaging in mission-related activities:

The ideas can be very abstract [. . .] it was really great to watch the inner workings and also how open they were. For me, seeing the amount of time it takes to build a strong organizational culture was really impactful. And seeing the tension between taking time to do things that didn’t directly influence their stated mission, but made it so that they could be better at doing the things they actually wanted to achieve.

This same student indicated that GDYF’s emphasis on communication and feedback channels seemed “unique even within the social innovation space.” Real Talk, a structured

feedback process central to GDYF's organizational culture, was mentioned by over a third of respondents as a memorable part of their model (Schoop, 2014). One respondent explained: "Just the way their talks were structured was really interesting and useful [...] it's great to come together and kind of reflect on [...] how to improve as a team and as an individual." Another student appreciated that the consistent schedule meant that feedback does not only happen when there is a problem. At least four respondents continued to use practices they learned from Real Talk, with one sharing:

I don't necessarily use it in that language of facilitation, but in my life I've continued to practice what feedback is. It was a foundation into ways to be constructively critical, which I use a lot now in my work.

Other respondents articulated how GDYF's youth development mission focused on authentic relationships and power redistribution. One noticed "that they were not only reaching opportunity youth, but that they wanted to create an intercultural environment with youth from various demographics." A student appreciated how the VISIONS EDI framework informed GDYF's work around reciprocal relationships: "I think that's something really unique that I've definitely looked to when looking at other nonprofits or social enterprises to make sure they're serving the community as much as the community is serving them." Another respondent highlighted equity practices around paying youth for leadership development in addition to agricultural tasks.

Students articulated that the experience influenced their career choices and highlighted their desire to engage in pluralistic organizational cultures in work and civic life. Most of this learning occurred afterwards when comparing GDYF to their current work and civic environments. One explained: "Even through my job process, I see that people who interview me give me feedback and I always compared that to Grow Dat." Another saw GDYF as a model for future venture creation: "I've thought about if I ever wanted to start an organization, how important it is to involve people from the community [so] they have a voice in all decisions."

Integrating key factors throughout course content. When asked which components of service-learning were most interesting or helpful, students identified the integration of class concepts and on-site activities. One student noted, "It was a phenomenal example of getting to learn, practically speaking, in the classroom and seeing how it fits in the world." Some students were surprised by how important their engagement in the service was for learning other course content. Students indicated that pre-service context-setting and post-service reflection deepened their learning. However, it took time for students to understand all the connections between VISIONS, other class modules, farm work and youth-led activities.

Inversely, noticing lack of integration was also significant. A substantive critique that one 2015 participant gave was the need for VISIONS content to be highlighted and integrated more throughout the course. While the course has continued to do this, one 2018 student still desired more VISIONS content. Although they developed ethical and empathetic attitudes toward community engagement in the class, they wanted more preparation prior to engaging with GDYF. A key informant echoed these comments, questioning how much multicultural development could be accomplished prior to service-learning. They explained: "I think it's great there was some attempt to do that, maybe as harm reduction, but I don't know if a couple days in class [is] enough to offset that in a meaningful way."

Discussion

This study examined the case of an experiential educational model within an introductory social innovation class. Students found the service-learning experience to be high impact

due to the following factors: the atypical CSL service structure; the VISIONS EDI framework; and GDYF as an exemplar organization. These factors contributed to transformative learning around equity, diversity and inclusion. Most respondents credited the course with shaping their worldviews, personal relationships, academic study and career pathways, although some demonstrated surface-level learning.

Our findings support critical service-learning as a pedagogical approach to develop students' orientations toward social justice (Mitchell, 2008). The CSL structure challenged students' mental models through emphasis on authentic relationships with near peers, the redistribution of power by subverting typical roles, and the social change orientation related to youth development and food systems. Key informants did question the level of criticality in the service partnership. However, their perspective is limited to the time of the experience and they are unable to track the influence of complementary factors over time. Despite this limitation, their critiques point to ways that the partnership could continue to evolve to enhance student learning *and* the immediate benefits for GDYF.

The integration of CSL appears key to creating transformative learning that connected EDI with social innovation and changemaking. The service structure brought students' attention to the dynamics of power and identity explored in the VISIONS EDI framework. These tools helped students stay engaged in the multicultural process of change through reflection on their identities, collaboration across difference and analysis of oppression with systems (Batts, 2017). Seeing a real-world example of a social enterprise modeling EDI and CSL practices in their mission and culture deepened student learning. Students came to understand and appreciate how the VISIONS EDI framework could be important for social ventures. While some students concluded EDI was always central to social innovation and others were surprised by this emphasis, GDYF's focus on equitable and inclusive relationships led students to conclude that all social enterprises *should* incorporate an EDI framework. Other case studies also support the significance of course integration, such as combining critical pedagogy and activist partners (Kajner *et al.*, 2013). Bowman *et al.* (2010) showed how this connection can be crucial for EDI learning during short-term placements such as this one.

The significance of integration precludes us from isolating the influence of the three main factors on student learning. Therefore, it is unclear if changing any key component would alter results. While conceptual models of CSL emphasize the importance of identity development, multicultural competence and systems analysis, they do not prescribe a particular EDI framework (Mitchell, 2008). We question if different multicultural learning modules can be substituted without impacting student learning; while many EDI frameworks would likely be appropriate, we do not see them as interchangeable. We are currently integrating VISIONS into other sections of the SISE 2010 class and consider it part of the overall course curriculum, a process that aligns with respondents' suggestions. While we believe similar transformative learning can be achieved by combining VISIONS with different service-learning partnerships, the extent may depend on the partner organization's existing orientation toward CSL principles. The impact of GDYF on the service-learning structure, course curriculum and student learning indicates that the partner's alignment is crucial. Even the near-peer relationships, enabled by pairing college students with similarly-aged young people, likely enhance the effects of power redistribution and authentic relationships on student learning.

The research findings suggest that EDI should be prioritized alongside other core competencies such as design or systems thinking. Our findings explicate themes that could inform student outcomes for similar experiential learning models in social innovation education, including:

- increased knowledge of complex systems and change strategies;
- behavior change related to engagement within a specified complex system;
- increased knowledge and behavior change related to communicating and collaborating across difference;
- increased knowledge and self-reflection related to identity development, privilege, oppression and intersectionality; and
- behavior change in career choices, specifically related to the career purpose and valuing EDI in organizational culture.

These themes also illuminate opportunities to embed EDI within social innovation educational competencies (Brock and Steiner, 2009; Curtis, 2013; Miller *et al.*, 2012; Rivers *et al.*, 2015a; Smith *et al.*, 2012). Miller *et al.* (2012) identified communication skills as significant within social innovation competencies; specifying “communication across difference” alongside HI/HE variables would embed EDI in a way that meaningfully changes the competency, which would impact curriculum design and outcome evaluation. We believe this shift would strengthen social innovation education across sectors and cultural context. This research suggests a need to develop theoretical linkages between social innovation’s existing frameworks and EDI concepts of identity, privilege, structural oppression and interpersonal and inter-group power dynamics.

This study is the first, to our knowledge, that examines CSL models or EDI frameworks in social innovation education. We selected this case as a critical incident of a social innovation course that responds to critiques of the field and strategically aligns EDI outcomes with its institutional context. However, the uniqueness of this model limits the generalizability of our results to a wider population or other contexts. Within-case sampling has further implications for transferability of the findings. We suspect that participant self-selection limits the robustness of our theory. Our data set is likely missing the perspectives of students who had negative experiences or did not connect well with the material. Furthermore, our sampling strategy did not track racial identity. While we believe our sample mirrors population trends for the course and for Tulane University, we cannot make claims about how racial identity informs these results. We recognize that students of color might perceive the curriculum differently and highlight other factors or outcomes.

Future research should aim to replicate and compare these results. Testing the educational models used in this case across other university settings with different populations would help confirm or disconfirm their efficacy in fostering EDI outcomes. Furthermore, similar efforts to integrate critical, experiential and multicultural education into social innovation are likely taking place at other universities. Documenting these field-level trends would provide an opportunity to compare pedagogical and curricular models to better understand the most effective ways to integrate EDI into social innovation education.

Conclusion

As social innovation education expands within HEIs, educators need to seriously consider where equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) is integrated into the curriculum. Addressing wicked problems requires co-creation to produce social innovations that empower marginalized communities and challenge the status quo. Social innovation programs need to prepare aspiring changemakers who can critically reflect on their positionality, work collaboratively across difference and systemically analyze forces of oppression and justice.

Our student-driven data illustrates how critical service-learning – operationalized in the service structure and combined with a specific EDI framework and an exemplar organization – can serve these efforts. Students demonstrated transformative learning around the pursuit of social justice, whether through responsible consumption, supporting broader movements or seeking out inclusive workplace cultures. Our findings support CSL’s existing best practices (Mitchell, 2008; Stith *et al.*, 2018). We also provide evidence-based support for a specific EDI framework that other educators can adopt and adapt (VISIONS, Inc, 2020).

The insights from this study are relevant for faculty and staff at similar institutions aiming to integrate EDI outcomes into experiential social innovation education. The students we educate now will have enormous influence, wealth and decision-making power in the future. Enabling them to explore and develop their commitments to changemaking through critical, experiential learning prepares them to work toward a more just and pluralistic world.

Note

1. Anyone interested in learning more about the VISIONS model can contact VISIONS, Inc. directly.

References

- Grow Dat Youth Farm (2021), “Homepage”, available at: <https://growdatyouthfarm.org/>
- Schoop, J.M. (2014), “An ecosystem approach for cultivating capabilities: The case of an innovative youth development project”, [Doctoral dissertation, Tulane University]. Tulane, University Theses and Dissertations Archive.
- Adams, M. (2000), *Readings for Diversity and Social Justice*, Routledge, New York, NY.
- Addes, D. and Keene, A. (2006), “Grassroots community development at UMass Amherst: the professorless classroom”, *Students as Colleagues: Expanding the Circle of Service-Learning Leadership*, pp. 227-240.
- Ashoka, U. (2019), *Preparing Students for a Rapidly Changing World: Social Entrepreneurship, Social Innovation and Changemaker Education*, Ashoka U Internal Publication.
- Austin, J. and Rangan, V.K. (2019), “Reflections on 25 years of building social enterprise education”, *Social Enterprise Journal*, Vol. 15 No. 1, pp. 2-21, doi: [10.1108/SEJ-09-2018-0057](https://doi.org/10.1108/SEJ-09-2018-0057).
- Ayob, N., *et al.* (2016), “How social innovation came to be: tracing the evolution of a contested concept”, *Journal of Social Policy*, Vol. 45 No. 4, pp. 1-19, doi: [10.1017/S004727941600009X](https://doi.org/10.1017/S004727941600009X).
- Batts, V. (2017), “Is reconciliation possible? The question remains”, VISIONS, Inc, available at: www.visions-inc.org/blog/is-reconciliation-possible-lessons-from-combating-modern-racism2950872 (accessed 17 October 2020).
- Bernstein, R.S., *et al.* (2020), “From diversity to inclusion to equity: a theory of generative interactions”, *Journal of Business Ethics*, Vol. 167 No. 3, pp. 395-410, doi: [10.1007/s10551-019-04180-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-019-04180-1).
- Blum, L. (1999), “Social justice within and against multiculturalism”, *Transformations: The Journal of Inclusive Scholarship and Pedagogy*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 52-59, available at: www.jstor.org/stable/i40142865
- Bowman, N., *et al.* (2010), “Sustained immersion courses and student orientations to equality, justice, and social responsibility: the role of short-term service-learning”, *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 20-31, available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3239521.0017.102>
- Boyle-Baise, M. (2002), *Multicultural Service-Learning: Educating Teachers in Diverse Communities*, Teachers College Press, New York, NY.

- Brock, D.D. and Ashoka, U. (2011), *Social Entrepreneurship Education Resource Handbook*, (accessed 18 March 2021).
- Brock, D.D. and Steiner, S. (2009), "Social entrepreneurship education: is it achieving the desired aims?", *Social Science Research Network Electronic Journal*, doi: [10.2139/ssrn.1344419](https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.1344419).
- Brown, J., et al. (2020), "The history of the land: a relational and place-based approach for teaching (more) radical food geographies", *Human Geography*, Vol. 13 No. 3, doi: [10.1177/1942778620962024](https://doi.org/10.1177/1942778620962024).
- Butin, D. (2015), "Dreaming of justice: critical service-learning and the need to wake up", *Theory into Practice*, Vol. 54 No. 1, pp. 5-10, doi: [10.1080/00405841.2015.977646](https://doi.org/10.1080/00405841.2015.977646).
- Cooks, L., et al. (2004), "Toward a social approach to learning in community service-learning", *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning*, Vol. 10 No. 2, pp. 44-56, available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3239521.0010.204>
- Curtis, T. (2013), "UoN changemaker campus presentation", available at: www.slideshare.net/curtistim/uon-changemaker-campus-presentation-sept-2013 (accessed 20 Mar 2020).
- Dees, J.G. (2001), "The meaning of 'social entrepreneurship'", available at: https://centers.fuqua.duke.edu/case/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2015/03/Article_Dees_MeaningofSocialEntrepreneurship_2001.pdf (accessed 18 March 2021).
- Ehrlich, T. (Ed.). (2000), *Civic Responsibility and Higher Education*, Oryx Press, Phoenix, AZ.
- Einfeld, A. and Collins, D. (2008), "The relationships between service-learning, social justice, multicultural competence, and civic engagement", *Journal of College Student Development*, Vol. 49 No. 2, pp. 95-109, doi: [10.1353/csd.2008.0017](https://doi.org/10.1353/csd.2008.0017).
- Eyler, J. and Giles, D. (1999), *Where's the Learning in Service-Learning?*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Fraser, N. (1997), *Justice Interruptus: Critical Reflections on the 'Postsocialist' Condition*, Routledge, New York, NY.
- Ganz et al. (2018), "Social enterprise is not social change", *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, available at: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/social_enterprise_is_not_social_change (accessed: 30 October 2020).
- Heiskala, R. (2007), "Social innovations: structural and power perspectives", in Hämäläinen, T.J. and Heiskala, R. (Eds), *Social Innovations, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, Edward Elgar, Cheltenham, PA, pp. 52-79.
- Hullender, R., et al. (2015), "Evidences of transformative learning in service-learning reflections", *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, Vol. 15 No. 4, pp. 58-82, doi: [10.14434/josotl.v15i4.13432](https://doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v15i4.13432).
- Hurtado, S. and DeAngelo, L. (2012), "Linking diversity and civic-minded practices with student outcomes", Association of American Colleges and Universities, available at: www.heri.ucla.edu/PDFs/Linking-Diversity-and-Civic-Minded-Practices-with-Student-Outcomes.pdf (accessed 30 October 2020).
- Jay, G. (2008), "Service-learning, multiculturalism, and the pedagogies of difference", *Pedagogy*, Vol. 8 No. 2, pp. 255-281, doi: [10.1215/15314200-2007-040](https://doi.org/10.1215/15314200-2007-040).
- Jones, S.R. and Hill, K. (2001), "Crossing high street: understanding diversity through community service-learning", *Journal of College Student Development*, Vol. 42 No. 3, pp. 204-216.
- Jones, A.L. and Kiser, P.M. (2014), "Conceptualizing criticality as a guiding principle for high quality academic service learning", *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, Vol. 26 No. 1, pp. 147-156.
- Kajner, T., et al. (2013), "Critical community service-learning: combining critical classroom pedagogy with activist community placements", *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning*, Vol. 19 No. 2, pp. 36-48, available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3239521.0019.203>

- Kezar, A. (2002), "Assessing community service-learning: are we identifying the right outcomes?", *About Campus: Enriching the Student Learning Experience*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 14-20, doi: [10.1177/108648220200700204](https://doi.org/10.1177/108648220200700204).
- Kiely, R. (2005), "A transformative learning model for service-learning: a longitudinal case study", *Michigan Journal of Community Service-Learning*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 5-22, available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3239521.0012.101>
- Kim, M. and Fuessel, A. (2020), "Leadership, resilience, and higher education's promise", *Stanford social innovation review*", available at: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/leadership_resilience_and_higher_educations_promise (accessed 18 March 2021).
- Knapp, T., *et al.* (2010), "Service-learning's impact on college students' commitment to future civic engagement, self-efficacy, and social empowerment", *Journal of Community Practice*, Vol. 18 Nos 2/3, pp. 233-251, doi: [10.1080/10705422.2010.490152](https://doi.org/10.1080/10705422.2010.490152).
- Kumari, R., *et al.* (2020), "Co-creation for social innovation in the ecosystem context: the role of higher educational institutions", *Sustainability*, Vol. 12 No. 1, pp. 307-328, doi: [10.3390/su12010307](https://doi.org/10.3390/su12010307).
- Luttrell, C., *et al.* (2009), "Understanding and operationalizing empowerment", working paper 308, Overseas Development Institute, London, UK.
- Manzini, E. (2015), *Design, When Everybody Designs*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Martin, R.L. and Osberg, S. (2015), *Getting beyond Better: How Social Entrepreneurship Works*, Harvard Business Review, Boston, MA.
- Mezirow, J. (1990), *Fostering Critical Reflection in Adulthood: A Guide to Transformative and Emancipatory Learning*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA.
- Miles, M., *et al.* (2014), *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook*, 3rd ed., Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Miller, T.L., *et al.* (2012), "Educating the minds of caring hearts: comparing the views of practitioners and educators on the importance of social entrepreneurship competencies", *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 349-370, doi: [10.5465/aml.2011.0017](https://doi.org/10.5465/aml.2011.0017).
- Mitchell, T.D. (2008), "Traditional vs. critical service-learning: engaging the literature to differentiate two models", *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, Vol. 14 No. 2, pp. 50-65, available at: <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.3239521.0014.205>
- Moulaert, F., *et al.* (2017), *Social innovation as a trigger for transformations: the role of research*, European Union, Luxembourg.
- Mulgan, G. (2019), *Social Innovation: How Societies Find the Power to Change*, Policy Press, Bristol.
- Murphy, L., *et al.* (2021), "A map of the landscape of social innovation theories", working paper 3, the Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking, <REDACTED1> University, New Orleans, LA.
- New York Times (2017), "The Upshot: economic diversity and student outcomes at University", available at: www.nytimes.com/interactive/projects/college-mobility/<REDACTED1>-university (accessed 17 October 2020).
- Papi-Thornton, D. (2016), "Tackling heropreneurship", available at: <http://tacklingheropreneurship.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/tackling-heropreneurship-daniela-papi.pdf> (Accessed 20 October 2020).
- Papi-Thornton, D. and Cubista, J. (2019), "Systems change in social innovation education". *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, available at: https://ssir.org/articles/entry/systems_change_in_social_innovation_education (accessed: 30 October 2020).
- Phills, J.A., *et al.* (2008), "Rediscovering social innovation", *Stanford Social Innovation Review, Fall 2008*, pp. 34-43.
- Rittel, H.W.J. and Webber, M.M. (1973), "Dilemmas in a general theory of planning", *Policy Sciences*, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 155-169, doi: [10.1007/BF01405730](https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01405730).

- Rivers, B.A., *et al.* (2015b), "Social innovation education: towards a framework for learning design", *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, Vol. 5 No. 4, pp. 383-400, doi: [10.1108/HESWBL-04-2015-0026](https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-04-2015-0026).
- Rivers, B.A., *et al.* (2015a), "Embedding social innovation and social impact across the disciplines: identifying 'changemaker' attributes", *Higher Education, Skills and Work-Based Learning*, Vol. 5 No. 3, pp. 242-257, doi: [10.1108/HESWBL-10-2014-0051](https://doi.org/10.1108/HESWBL-10-2014-0051).
- Smith, W.K., *et al.* (2012), "A paradoxical leadership model for social entrepreneurs: challenges, leadership skills, and pedagogical tools for managing social and commercial demands", *Academy of Management Learning and Education*, Vol. 11 No. 3, pp. 463-478, doi: [10.5465/amle.2011.0021](https://doi.org/10.5465/amle.2011.0021).
- Stacey, R.D. (2002), *Strategic Management and Organisational Dynamics: The Challenge of Complexity*, 3rd ed., Prentice Hall, Harlow, UK.
- Stith, M., *et al.* (2018), "Critical service-learning conversations tool", *Duke Service-Learning*, Vol. 2018, (accessed 1 November)
- Stroh, D.P. (2015), *Systems Thinking for Social Change*, Chelsea Green Publishing, White River Junction, VT.
- United States (1978), *The Belmont report: Ethical principles and guidelines for the protection of human subjects of research*, Bethesda, MD, The Commission.
- United States Census Data Bureau (2010), "US Census Bureau Quickfacts: New Orleans", available at: www.census.gov/quickfacts/neworleanscitylouisiana (accessed 20 October 2020).
- University, (2019), "About Page", available at: <https://<REDACTED1>.edu/about-<REDACTED1>> (accessed 30 October 2020).
- VISIONS, Inc (2020), "About Us page", available at: www.visions-inc.org/who-we-are.html (accessed 17 October 2020).
- Wade, R. (2001), "... And justice for all: community service-learning for social justice", Education Commission of the States, pp. 1-11, available at: <https://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slcestgen/119>
- Weerts, D.J. and Sandmann, L.R. (2010), "Community engagement and boundary-spanning roles at research universities", *The Journal of Higher Education*, Vol. 81 No. 6, pp. 632-657, doi: [10.1080/00221546.2010.11779075](https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2010.11779075).

About the authors

Rebecca Otten is a Professor of Practice and Director of Strategy & Engagement at the Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking at Tulane University in New Orleans, LA, USA. Rebecca Otten is the corresponding author and can be contacted at: rotten@tulane.edu

Máille Faughnan is a Lecturer in the Social Innovation and Social Entrepreneurship Minor program and a Research Fellow at the Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking at Tulane University in New Orleans, LA, USA.

Megan Flattley is a joint PhD candidate in Art History and Latin American Studies and Research & Scholarship Graduate Assistant at the Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking at Tulane University in New Orleans, LA, USA.

Samantha Fleurinor is the Senior Program Coordinator at the Phyllis M. Taylor Center for Social Innovation and Design Thinking at Tulane University in New Orleans, LA, USA.

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:

www.emeraldgroupublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm

Or contact us for further details: permissions@emeraldinsight.com