Making a Difference: Experiences of Students who Participate in Community Engagement within Urban Neighborhoods

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Abstract
This research explores how college students are being prepared to become active and socially responsible leaders as society continues and as institutions begin to create opportunities for multiculturalism programming on and off campus at undergraduate institutions. Student Affairs Professionals have the opportunity to create spaces for students to develop identities, redefine values, beliefs, and creative mistakes.

Research Significance
- This study is important due to the paucity of research on undergraduate students and their experiences of serving and completing community engaged learning programs within urban neighborhoods and inner cities
- Exploring vocational goals and cultural awareness at the University of Dayton

Research Question
How are undergraduate students participating in the Youth Economic Self Sufficiency Program at the University of Dayton becoming culturally aware and clarifying their vocational goals?

Methodology
Sampling: Six current members of the Youth Economic Self Sufficiency Program at the University of Dayton
Data Collection: Six qualitative interviews with five females and one male. Permission and student confidentiality was assured by providing students with pseudonyms, consent documentation and password-protected electronic devices.
Data Analysis: Understanding of interview transcriptions were completed through the use of coding and generation of themes
Building Trustworthiness: Member checking created a space for initial interviews and interpretations to be reviewed.

Findings
- Opportunity for students to develop openness to diversity, cultural awareness, personal development, and social leadership skills
- Students self-identified privilege by being unaware of the continuous language and money barriers, unequal education, and racial stereotypes
- Undergraduate students involved at the University of Dayton believe that the resources they have access to on campus can be useful to populations within the inner city neighborhoods surrounding the community

Implications
- Make opportunities easily accessible for students to sign up and review information (Jones & Hill, 2003).
- Co-curricular experiences should always include racial and cultural awareness opportunities to ensure preparation in a diverse society after graduation (Whitt et al., 2001).
- Create more opportunities within residence halls and intergroup dialogue sessions within classrooms to allow students to understand their peers on campus.

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Selected References