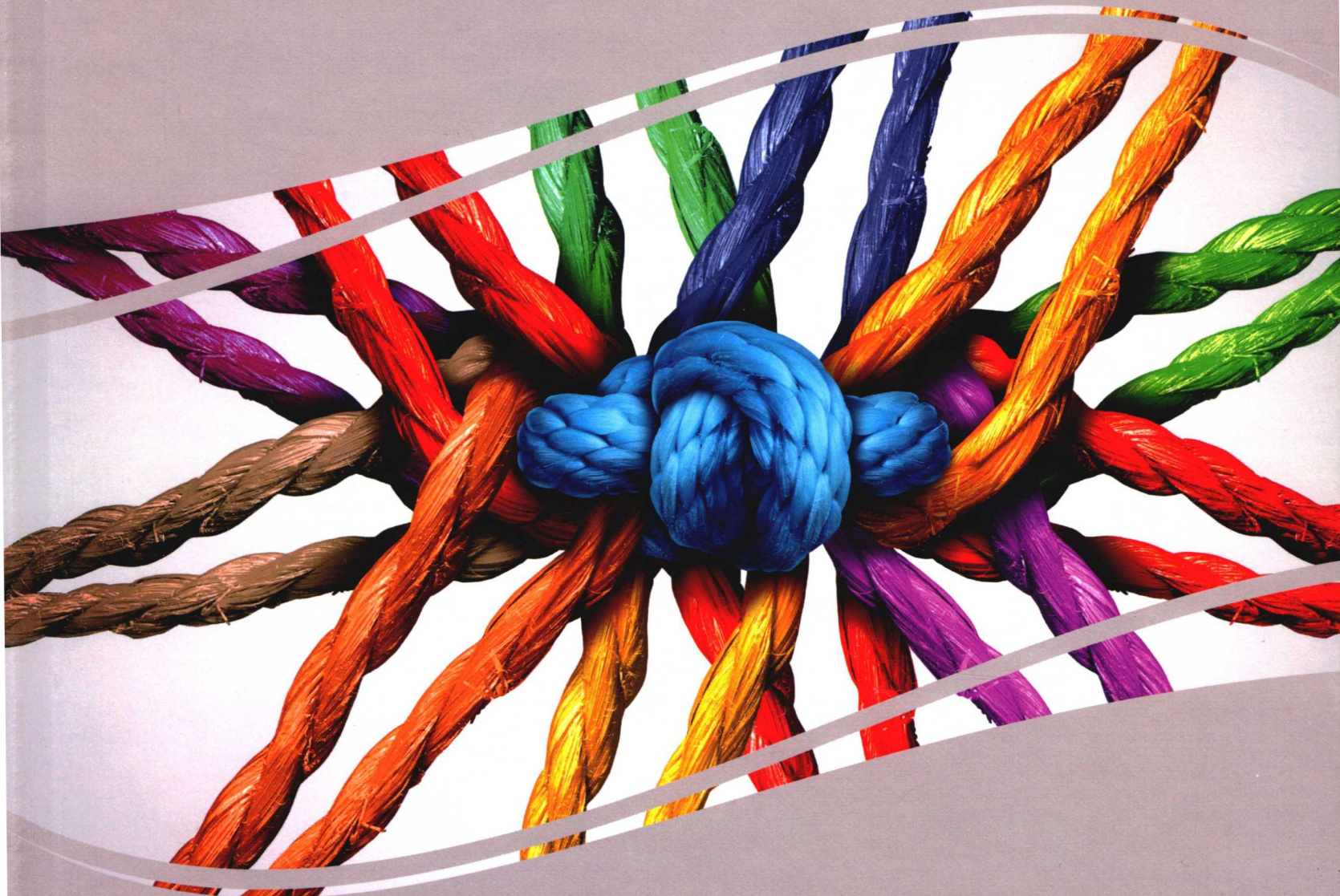


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# Culturally Engaging Service-Learning With Diverse Communities



Omobolade O. Delano-Oriaran, Marguerite W. Penick-Parks,  
and Suzanne Fondrie

**IGI Global**  
DISSEMINATOR OF KNOWLEDGE



# Culturally Engaging Service-Learning With Diverse Communities

Evaluating the experiences of racially marginalized and underrepresented groups is vital to creating equality in society. Such actions have the potential to provoke an interest in universities to adopt high-impact pedagogical practices that attempt to eliminate institutional injustices.

**Culturally Engaging Service-Learning With Diverse Communities** is a pivotal reference source for the latest scholarly research on service-learning models that recognize how systemic social injustices continue to pervade society. Featuring extensive coverage on a broad range of topics and perspectives such as cultural humility, oral histories, and social ecology, this book is ideally designed for scholars, practitioners, and students interested in engaging in thoughtful and authentic partnerships with diverse groups.

## Topics Covered:

- Community-Based Research
- Cultural Humility
- Identity Development
- Mentoring
- Oral Histories
- Social Ecology



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Delano-Oriaran,  
Penick-Parks & Fondrie

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With Diverse Communities

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# Culturally Engaging Service–Learning With Diverse Communities

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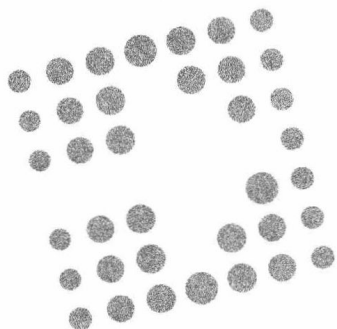
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## Foreword

*Service-Learning*, the term evokes a range of thoughts and ideas about engaging young people in community activities beyond the school. In some cases service-learning programs become merely a form of volunteerism for students to complete as a part of a diploma requirement. However, in schools and communities where careful thought has been given to service-learning, these courses become well-developed strategies for both service and learning. In the service component students engage in meaningful activities that help improve a community, institution, or set of individuals. In the learning component students participate in clearly delineated sets of activities with learning goals, objectives, and outcomes. But, even in this optimum state where service and learning are well-developed, few service-learning programs provide opportunities for culturally and community relevant experiences.

Too often students enter service-learning either to complete a graduation requirement or because some teacher, counselor, or adviser does not think they are up to the “rigors” of an academic class. But what if we considered service-learning the core of our curriculum? Think about it. We are tasked with preparing students to be effective participants in a multicultural, multilingual democracy. But, how can we do that when our students are too often isolated from the lives and experiences of others who have different cultural, linguistic, economic, religious, ethnic, or racial backgrounds?

Consider the many challenges that face our society and the equally numerous opportunities for students to engage in community service activities to both serve and learn as they complete diploma and degree requirements. A curriculum with a service-learning core could and should be grounded in students’ deeper understanding of culture and cultural understanding. In my early research I worked with teachers who were successful with African American students. In one of the classes I observed, the teacher established a partnership with a nearby Veterans’ Administration hospital. She paired her students with veterans to record their life histories for a book they intended to publish locally. The students, in turn, agreed to help the veterans cut through much of the paperwork that stood in the way of their receiving benefits. The students were able to make phone calls, compose letters, and interpret documents for the veterans. This reciprocity is an important element of good service-learning projects.

A second element of good service-learning projects is the ability to expand students’ outlooks. Thus, projects that merely reinforce what students already know or believe about a community or a culture are not actually providing service or learning. They are charitable efforts that keep students locked in stereotypical thinking or ensure they develop sympathy toward “those poor people.” In reciprocal, expansive service-learning projects students discover the resourcefulness and ingenuity of communities they may have not previously recognized.



A third element of good service-learning projects is cooperation. Too often service-learning projects are one sided. Institutions (i.e. schools, colleges, and universities) lay out the parameters and the terms of the relationship and communities are expected to be grateful for the extra sets of hands. However, in a high quality service-learning experience principals from both groups negotiate the terms of an agreement and create an environment that is mutually beneficial. It is important to attempt to construct equal status relationships to avoid the asymmetry that is prevalent in many of these arrangements. On one campus where pre-service teachers were required to spend 50 hours with students in a low-income, Black and Brown community as a part of a human relations requirement, the children would ask the pre-service teachers pointedly, “Are you hear to do your 50 hours?” The students realized that the pre-service teachers were not creating authentic relationships with them. They were merely completing a program requirement. A more cooperative relationship would help participants understand the need to create projects that truly met the communities’ needs and left the students with powerful experiences on which to reflect.

Finally, I would argue that good service-learning experiences include diverse teams of participants. Given the tendency for our schools to be relatively homogenous, good service-learning projects may require schools to partner with other schools or community groups to ensure that students get an opportunity to work alongside of people who have different experiences and backgrounds from them. The point of service-learning is to help schools in their citizenship building mission. They are not merely in place to give students an “interesting” outlet or diversion from mundane classwork. If we do service-learning correctly we can have our students explore big questions and consider big ideas. Instead of reading about “Black Lives Matter” service-learning projects can provide students with access to people in communities where they do not believe law enforcement has their best interests at heart. Instead of listening to a lecture about health care, students can work with local health clinics to learn more about the impact of limited health services for some communities. The point of this kind of service-learning is to provide needed service while helping to engage students in deep thought about major issues confronting the society. It is not busy work or charity work. It is real citizen work and perhaps the last opportunity we may have to develop thinking (and feeling), democratic citizens.

*Gloria Ladson-Billings*  
*University of Wisconsin, USA*

## Foreword

Diverse communities do not need to be saved: they need to be heard, respected, appreciated, and partnered with for the ways they contribute to society. What drew me to this particular book is that the editors and authors argue that authentic service-learning is grounded in the idea of stakeholders building and sustaining partnerships, not in people swooping in to “save” a community. In order to create and sustain social action, it is crucial that those who find themselves in positions of power recognize their privilege and engage in community activism designed to work against that privilege and establish more equitable systems. This idea is a key component in an authentic service-learning approach. Too many well-intentioned programs in our society have the potential to result in making those in positions of power feel good because they either gave money or a little time to an organization. If people in power do not reflect on privilege after such an experience, then it is little better than slave owners who fed their slaves. That is not the foundation of a relationship, that is the foundation of power. Every chapter in this book addresses how essential it is for authentic service-learning to involve partners in engaging on an equal level in the learning process and in laying the groundwork for relationships.

Although individual chapters present partnerships with diverse communities and groups, from race to age to sexual identity, there is also a consistent message of addressing intersectionality. The authors and editors recognize and highlight the importance of how intersectionality is essential to addressing critical components, not surface-level issues. Once again, if you are going to talk relationships, you need to be honest, uncomfortable, and vulnerable. This book, chapter by chapter, addresses this need.

I have known and worked with the editors of *Culturally Engaging Service-Learning With Diverse Communities* for years and am delighted to be asked to write one of the Forewords. Few scholars are willing to address issues of diversity as openly and honestly as they are, and I recommend readers take the time to read and consider the “how” asked at the beginning, so you, too, can engage in authentic service-learning for true and sustainable social justice.

*Eddie Moore*  
*The Privilege Institute, USA*



## Preface

In 2015, the editors produced a sourcebook on service-learning and civic engagement. During the process of conducting research for this volume, the lead editor did a cursory search on Google Scholar for the keywords “service-learning and diversity,” “service-learning and multiculturalism,” “service-learning and minorities,” “service-learning in urban communities,” “service-learning in diverse communities,” “service-learning in cultural communities,” “service-learning and cultural competency,” and “service-learning and cultural competence.” Even taking into consideration that articles in the search results might appear in multiple returns, the results demonstrate that substantial scholarship existed at that time. Two years later in 2017, although such a search is in no way scientific, the same search was conducted, resulting in what could be deemed as an increase in scholarship in this field with an emphasis on multiculturalism and social injustice. For example, in two years, search results for “service-learning and multiculturalism” increased from 14,700 to 17,500, and search results for “service-learning in diverse communities” went from 33,600 to 44,100.

As the focus of this book is authentic community-engagement with diverse communities and groups, it seems fitting to begin with an overview about these groups, including demographic data, projections, and their experiences within the United States. Census data from 2015 show that historically and currently marginalized and underrepresented groups, also known as “minorities,” represent thirty-eight percent of the U.S. population, with demographic projections predicting that by 2055, they will be a racial majority with a fourteen percent increase (Pew Research Center, 2015). Unfortunately, this increase is in number only and does not reflect conditions, subordinate status, or experiences. The following facts demonstrate institutional injustices and reveal why some scholars still consider historically and presently racially marginalized and underrepresented groups as the social minority:

- Police brutality in the U.S. against people of color (Troutt, 2014): “Black males are 21 times more likely than their white counterparts to be shot and killed at the hands of police at a rate of 31.17 deaths per million as compared to 1.47 deaths per million for white males” (Milner, George, & Allison, 2016, p. 2).
- Persistent housing discrimination against “minorities” who are positioned to purchase homes (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, 2013).
- Nearly 70 percent of children in U.S. working poor families are children of color (Children’s Defense Fund, 2016).
- School environments continue to be unsafe for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, intersex, queer, asexual, two-spirit (LGBTQIAA2s) students, with nearly sixty-six percent of that group experiencing discrimination and harassment (GLSEN, 2016).

Experiences of historically and presently racially marginalized and underrepresented groups should provoke a critical awakening to scholars and practitioners in Institutions of Higher Education (IHEs) to adopt high-impact pedagogical practices that attempt to eradicate or dismantle institutional injustices. Because these groups are disproportionately impacted, it is no coincidence that the primary editor's cursory search on service-learning and diversity and multiculturalism resulted in a wide range of articles involving K-16 institutions using high-impact pedagogical approaches to attempt to engage in social change in communities.

It is not difficult to determine if scholars are attempting to engage in social change with students, as the research demonstrates they are in the form of Community-Service, Service-Learning, Community-Based Learning, Critical Service-Learning, Academic Service-Learning and Civic Engagement (Delano-Oriaran, 2015). The more important question is how? The editors of this book assert that the "how" attempts to impact social change, especially with affected communities and groups who continue to experience injustice and discrimination, thus the focus of this publication: *Culturally Engaging Service-Learning With Diverse Communities*. This publication emphasizes the critical part of "how." It is crucial to engage diverse groups that are enduring injustices, because they are the experts of their community, though they are not the perpetrators of the injustices committed against them.

A review of literature to determine which communities and groups IHEs engage in partnerships with reveals they are predominantly underrepresented and marginalized groups. The literature also reveals that some IHE partners who enter diverse communities to engage in service-learning may leave with unaffected negative student beliefs, reinforced white privilege, and entrenched stereotypes (Desmond, Stahl, & Graham, 2011), as a result of a lack of, or misguided approaches in, preparing them to work within and with diverse communities. The outcomes in misguided approaches prompted some scholars (Delano-Oriaran, 2012; Mitchell, 2008) to identify Authentic and Culturally Engaging Service-Learning (ACE) and Critical Service-Learning (CSL) as pedagogies that are recommended to use with--and in--diverse communities. Using such approaches to engage with these communities may support students in dismantling systematic oppressive institutions, in addition to gaining multicultural awareness and deconstructing prejudices and stereotypes.

The "how" as a pedagogical approach is rooted in high-impact practices such as Critical Service-Learning, which is service-learning "with a social justice orientation" (Mitchell, 2008, p. 51). Critical Service-Learning engages students to participate in social change in response to the needs of the community as identified by, for, and with the community. Mitchell (2015) further recommends that CSL be complemented by reflections, readings, assignments, and dialogues that reflect multiple perspectives, with an emphasis on critical thinking and action. Stevens (2003) asserts that Critical Service-Learning "is a practice and teaching philosophy seeking to partner community and academe for community betterment" (p. 25).

*Culturally Engaging Service-Learning With Diverse Communities* is intended for scholars, practitioners, students, and programs that are currently engaging or considering engaging in thoughtful and authentic partnerships with diverse groups. It is a compilation of chapters that demonstrate how various IHEs have approached culturally engaging service-learning opportunities with community partners, taking into consideration their past and present experiences, cultural norms, social agendas, community identified needs, and social injustices (white privilege, racism, ageism, prejudice, oppression).



## HOW MUCH DO YOU KNOW?

The editors start with the words of noted scholars in multicultural education, who ask:

*How much do you know about the history and contemporary culture of African American women? Latin[x]? Asian Americans [Asian Pacific Americans]? Working class Americans? People with disabilities? If you are like most U.S. citizens, you may be able to cite only a few names and historic events. One way to enhance your knowledge about a group is to study it in more depth, from the group's perspective. (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p. 124)*

Like Sleeter and Grant (2009), this book frames a similar question, but the editors situate the question in the context of culturally engaging service-learning, community-based learning, or/and community-engagement: How much do we know about our partners? The editors assert it is important to have in-depth knowledge about partners prior to engaging with them.

Following Sleeter and Grant's (2009) characteristics of the single-group studies multicultural education approach, the editors suggest that IHEs conduct research on their service-learning partner/s group with a focus on (a) the group's perspective; (b) historical experiences and "how the dominant group has oppressed the group being studied" (Sleeter & Grant, 2009, p. 126); (c), culture: contributions, way of life, and language; (d) current social agenda: present experiences and needs; and (e) issues of particular concern from their own perspective. The editors emphasize that race, despite its social construction, "still remains the foundation for systems of power and inequality....[and] the United States is still highly stratified along lines of race... (Andersen & Collins, 2013, p. 1).

The editors attempt to provide an overview of presently and historically underrepresented groups that are typically engaged in service-learning with the K-16 community but emphatically note that this overview does not do justice to the breadth or depth of the stories, histories, experiences, cultures, languages, and degrees of injustices endured by the groups referenced in this text. They also caution readers of this volume to take into consideration that many of the partners that IHEs collaborate with experience oppression, domination, prejudice, discrimination, and other forms of injustices on multiple, intersecting levels (Collins, 2002; Choo & Ferree, 2010), resulting in varied experiences for individuals and groups.

## AFRICAN AMERICANS

Referred to by some people as Blacks and as African Americans by many more, this group in 2015 represented 13 percent of the U.S. population, or 42 million people (Schaefer, 2015; U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Analysts predict that by 2060, those who identify as Black alone or in combination with another race, will make up 74.5 million or 17.9 percent of the total population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Despite past and present contributions, they are still entrenched in a system of institutional inequalities. The National Urban League's "State of Black in America" (SOBA) report revealed that:

*Since 1976, the Black unemployment rate has consistently remained about twice that of the white rate across time, regardless of educational attainment. The household income gap remains at about 60 cents for every dollar. Black Americans are only slightly less likely today to live in poverty than they were in 1976. (National Urban League, 2016, p. 5)*

The SOBA report also identified key areas the nation needs to invest in over the next five years to dismantle the systems and apparatuses of institutional oppression, including universal early childhood education, a federal living wage of \$15 per hour indexed to inflation, funding urban infrastructure, expanded homeownership strategies, doubling the Pell Grant program, high-speed broadband and technology for all, and increased federal school funding to help eliminate resource equity gaps (National Urban League, 2016, p. 6).

Blacks or/and African Americans, as a socially constructed group, are highly diverse and include U.S. born and naturalized citizens with diverse religious, cultural, linguistic, sexual orientation, and economic identities. The U.S. is home to the largest number of Black immigrants (Mitchell, 2016, para 6), who come from countries in sub-Saharan Africa, including Nigeria and Ethiopia; Spanish-speaking countries such as the Dominican Republic; and Europe and South and East Asia (Anderson, 2015, para. 6). Furthermore, Black immigrants, specifically Nigerian immigrants, are considered the most educated in the U.S. (Casimir, 2008). As IHEs continue to engage in opportunities with African Americans and/or Blacks, Moule (2012) notes that the following issues still shape their experiences: the African legacy rich in cultures, customs, contributions, and achievement; and the psychological and economic subjugation of people instituted during slavery but still entrenched in present-day society through racism and discrimination (p. 273).

## ASIAN PACIFIC AMERICANS

Asian Pacific Americans are far from a monolithic group. Using the term Asian Pacific Americans is one way to refer to the peoples from countries in the Far East, Southeast Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific Islands. According to the Pew Research Center (2015), Asian Pacific Americans make up 5.8% of the U.S. populations and are quickly starting to outnumber the Latinx/Hispanic population. Countries represented by 83% of the Asian Pacific American population are (by order of largest population) China, the Philippines, India, Vietnam, Korea, and Japan. Among U.S. demographic categories, Asian Pacific Americans have the highest income, the highest education levels, and are also the fastest-growing group (Pew, 2012).

One of the most significant issues facing Asian Pacific Americans is the idea of the Asian population as a “model minority.” In *The Myth of the Model Minority: Asian Americans Facing Racism*, Chou and Feagin (2014) discuss the pressure to excel placed on members of the community--especially immigrants from impoverished nations--despite the racism, sexism, and poverty that affect them. Chow (2011) notes how the stigma of being a model minority acts to silence the complexity of the community. The idea of a model minority also may skew outsiders’ perceptions of the serious issues being faced and downplay the oppression the community experiences. The editors believe the racism faced by Asian Pacific Americans in the U.S. places them at a disadvantage despite statistics.

## NATIVE AMERICANS/AMERICAN INDIANS/FIRST NATIONS

One of the groups too often left out of conversations about race is indigenous to this continent: Native American Indians or members of First Nations. Even at “diversity” conferences, the phrase one often hears is “Black and Brown children.” The lack of acknowledgement about the oppression faced both historically and currently by indigenous populations speaks to the ability of those in privileged positions to ignore and refuse to address existing inequities.

The 2015 U.S. Census states there are 5.4 million American Indians and Alaskan Natives, including those of more than one race, which is 2% of the population. The Census Bureau predicts that by 2060, those who identify as American Indian or Alaskan Native will increase to approximately 10.2 million. The U.S. Department of Interior identifies 567 federally recognized American Indian Nation and Alaskan Native groups.

Although the Black Lives Matter movement has brought to the forefront issues facing African Americans and deaths through officer-involved shootings, it is important to note that members of Native groups also continue to experience police brutality. The Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice collected data from 1999-2011 on deaths at the hands of police. The data in the report notes that “the group most likely to be killed by law enforcement is Native Americans, followed by African Americans, Latinos[Latinx], Whites, and Asian Americans” (Males, 2014).

Native youths also experience inequitable treatment at a rate exceeding other groups. In 2015, the Lakota People’s Law Project released the report “Native Lives Matter,” addressing the inequities facing Native Americans and Alaskan Natives in the judicial system. The report states, “More commonly than any other ethnic group, Native Americans suffer the two most severe punishments that juvenile justice can offer, out-of-home placements and a transfer to the adult system” (Native Lives Matter, 2015, p. 4). In 2008, the report states,

*The national average for new commitments to adult state prisons by Native American youth is almost twice (1.84 times) that for white youth. In the states with enough Native Americans to facilitate comparisons, Native American youth were committed to adult prison from 1.3 to 18.1 times the rate of white youth.*

In terms of education, according to DeVoe, Darling-Churchill and Snyder (2008) the current rate of those in the U.S. who receive a graduate or professional degree is ten percent for the total population but only five percent for American Indians and Alaska Natives. The gap is even greater when one looks at Bachelor’s degrees, where only 9% percent of American Indians graduate as compared to 19% for the general U.S. population. The Pew Research Center (2012) shares a dropout [pushout] rate of 11% for American Indian and Alaska Natives as compared to 13% Hispanic, 9% Black, 5% White, and 3% Asian.

For poverty issues, members of American Indian and Alaskan Native groups do not fare much better. According to “American Indians and Alaska Natives--By the Numbers” (2014), the poverty rate for the nation is 14.7%; however, 26.6% of single-race American Indians and Alaska Natives were identified as living in poverty. The fact sheet also notes that the U.S. median household income is \$55,775, compared to \$38,530 for single-race American Indians and Alaskan Native households.

It is critical these issues are at the forefront of service-learning and civic engagement in order to address historical and current inequities. Approaching these concerns through a white savior mentality will not address the magnitude of the inequities. It is the goal of these chapters to explore service-learning opportunities that could bring real change to the community.



## **ELDERLY**

The report “Aging in the United States” (Mather, Jacobsen, & Pollard, 2015) states that because of the increasing lifespan of those over 65 in the United States, this population will double from 46 million to 98 million by 2060. Looking at income issues, the elderly appear to be more secure than in previous years because of social security payments; however, when comparing across racial groups and gender groups, women make up 12% of people over 65 living in poverty while men in the same group are only 7%. Non-Hispanic whites over 65 living in poverty comprise 8% compared to 18% of Latinxs/Hispanics and 19% of African Americans (p. 8).

The National Women’s Law Center reports that women are “more than 35 percent likely to live in poverty than men (Tucker & Lowell, 2016). The same report finds that 7.1% of white women live in poverty but the numbers change dramatically when looking at specific racial groups: 23.1% of African American women, 22.7% of Native women, 20.9% of Hispanic women and 11.7% of Asian women live in poverty (Tucker & Lowell, 2016). The National Snapshot report continues by sharing data supporting that one in three single mother families are in poverty. The report also discusses how Medicare pays for only a little over half of all long term care needs and that women use more long-term care than men which is not paid for by Medicare. The emotional needs of those in long-term care, many of whom have no family close by, are as essential as the physical needs, and these emotional needs may be met by quality service-learning programs.

## **LATINX/HISPANIC**

One of the fastest growing U.S. demographic segments, the Latinx/Hispanic population makes up about 17% of the total. However, they are overrepresented in the specific areas of poverty (28%) and children living in poverty (37%) (Krogstad, 2014). According to the Pew Research Center the two top issues facing the Hispanic community in the U.S. are education and the economy (<http://www.pewresearch.org/>).

America’s Hispanic Population: An Economic Snapshot (2013) states that the Hispanic population is on average younger than other racial groups, and that of the Hispanic population over 25, one in five lacks a high school diploma (p. 2). Data collected by Pew claims the Latinx/Hispanic population was hurt more than any other racial group by the 2008 recession with wealth assets falling by 66%, unemployment rising from 6.3% to 11% and poverty climbing from 20.6 to 26.6% (Krogstad, 2016). The report finds that even though the Latinx/Hispanic employment data has improved, in September, 2013 the unemployment rate stood at 9%, a number which is 1.9% higher than the national average. The “Conditions of Latinos in Education” report (Santiago, Gladeano, & Taylor, 2015) finds that the enrollment of Hispanics in public elementary and secondary schools has “increased from 19 to 24 percent of all students” (p. 3). With the knowledge of the importance of early education, the report raises a concern when recognizing that “28% of Hispanic children (3-5 years) were enrolled in nursery school or pre- school, compared to African Americans (38%) and Whites (33%)” (p. 5). These educational realities are going to impact on employment which impacts on income which impacts on wealth. It is critical to disrupt the cycle created by the systemic inequities ingrained in this society that create emotional and structural barriers for the Latinx/Hispanic community.