



A Guidebook For  
The Development  
Of Cultural  
Mindedness



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# About the Guidebook

With increasing numbers of college students participating in international service programs and a growing demand for international voluntourism, this guidebook offers an accessible orientation for intercultural service that blends sociocultural psychology with evidence-based practices of service-learning. Useful for a wide-range of intercultural service participants, the text highlights how understanding oneself and others as cultural beings is the foundation for empathetic and respectful service.

There are three chapters. Each chapter can be employed in a class or workshop setting and contains text with integrated reflection and discussion questions, and group activities that illustrate and build on the text. Additional resources are also available for leaders.

*A few words about the expected audience:* Designed for teachers, leaders, and participants of intercultural service, the guidebook assumes that the readers are motivated and committed to engage in ethical intercultural service; it is assumed that readers are eager to learn, build relationships, and engage in reflective practices. The text and activities are accessible for a wide range of people, but perhaps importantly, it is especially written for individuals who are described as western U.S. mainstream &/or middle class, or people who are developing their cultural awareness. Many of my students begin with the notion that they do not have culture, so the text starts there and provides guidance on how to think about oneself and others as cultural beings. This is not to say that the readings don't apply to others or that it can't be used by more diverse groups, but that I imagine people from "marginalized" or international backgrounds may already be more aware of what this guidebook covers.

The guidebook was initiated because I have experience and passion for guiding students through intercultural service-learning courses. In partnership with Conscious Alliance, my cultural psychology course has been invited to learn and serve on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in SD since 2009. Due to the positive response to these courses, I was asked by three non-profits to write and share how I prepare my students for their time on Pine Ridge. The three non-profits are Conscious Alliance, Camp Grier-Global Village, and NASHI: Learn more about my partnerships here. In creating this website, I hope to expand the audience that may find this guidebook useful.

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# Reading 1: Gaining A Cultural Perspective

## Introduction: Rationale for Writing This Guidebook and Overview

This is written to help individuals and groups as they prepare for intercultural service, (be it for mission work, a service learning course, or another blend of informed service). The intention is to build an understanding and an outlook that will allow individuals to collaborate with their hosts so that all stakeholders will have the most rich and meaningful experience possible. We know and believe in the profound benefits of intercultural service at the personal, community, and global levels. It can be an intensely transformative personal experience in which self-growth of all kinds ignite. It can build bridges between diverse people, promote reconciliation, and foster healing between and within communities. The collaboration can empower lasting changes that build a more connected, equitable, and just world. At it's best, building intercultural relations is imperative work that moves us towards world peace.

This guide explores the depths to which culture matters and why understanding culture is at the forefront of meaningful intercultural service. Taking a cultural lens to service work requires diligent preparation to generate initial knowledge of your host community as well as active learning about your own cultural practices. The guide highlights our tendency to prefer familiarity, so that we can understand and anticipate what it means to work and serve outside our comfort zone. The understanding of others and ourselves will continue to evolve over time such that ideas are persistently reevaluated to be more extensive, inclusive, and compassionate. Prepare to revise your paradigm. Taking a cultural lens to service work goes hand and hand with a strength-based approach to service in which “helpers” disregard notions that they have the “solution to problems,” but rather insist on being a supportive ally drawing upon the existing assets and expertise in the host community to generate sustainable methods of addressing the issues. The strength-based approach requires active listening to the community to facilitate better understanding of issues, perspective, and capacities. A strength-based approach is collaborative and empathetic, while actively avoiding self-righteous judgment of people (including ourselves) as better or worse.

Intercultural service work is usually done outside the servers' comfort zone and can therefore be tremendously challenging, but seeking greater connection across cultural divides is invaluable work. In brief, meaningful service derives from listening, learning, collaborating with, and empowering others. While, learning about yourself and others may not seem as central to the service work you hope to do, they are the foundation for connection, collaboration, and service.

## Understanding Why Culture is Critical to Service Work

Intercultural service requires engaging respectfully with diversity. This can be surprisingly challenging when we don't take the time to deeply consider the role of culture in our own lives. To understand yourself and another person, we need to investigate the relationship between our own and others' cultural practices. **“All people develop through participation in cultural practices”** (see Rogoff, 2003). There is no human without culture, nor has there ever been a human without culture. All humans are participants in ever-present cultural practices; we are inseparable from them. (If you are familiar with the nature/nurture debate, this viewpoint casts it aside, as not worthy of further consideration; nature and nurture are always present in combination. They are not separate and never have been.) All humans are cultural beings from the moment of conception through death, and because we develop through participation in cultural practices, people will differ to the extent that their practices differ.

When we describe cultures in this document, we are not describing a set of static characteristics that influence people. Although culture is technically a noun (and thus will be used as a noun in this document), it is best to think of it as a verb. Cultures represent a constellation of socially accepted ways of doing things and a community's approach to daily living -- all of which continues to change as people or the environment demands them to. While there are universal behaviors required to keep our bodies alive (food, water, shelter, and other health demands) the ways in which we do them are steeped in history (personal and our community's history), physical landscape (available natural resources for food and building materials), function (government systems and religions), and personal preference, etc. Simply put, strategies for managing survival are necessarily different because histories, climates, landscapes, and goals differ.

Because cultures are lived by people, they are never uniform. Even though one might say you share a culture with most of your friends, you'd probably also agree that you do not think (or behave or value) exactly as any one of

your friends do. Yet, as different as individuals are, there are some overlapping patterns (like the similarities you share with your friends) worthy of consideration. Cultural differences are a matter of degrees -- from interpersonal differences within a closely related group to large community wide differences (as seen across more distinct nations).

Many people underestimate how deep cultural differences run. They might think of cultural differences as the varieties of ice cream toppings in a store, where people are essentially the same, only different in superficial ways such as the clothes they wear or the sound of their language. The superficial differences are a part of it, but cultural differences are deeper and more powerful than surface differences. You can't remove the topping and find the generic acultural human underneath; there is no such thing. Indeed, there is a universal level of shared humanity, where people are all experiencing certain features of our planet life, such as day and night, inevitable weather, personal, and community change. And, I believe, humans should be treated with equal levels of respect and dignity. Notwithstanding, cultural differences run deep --to the essence of the **content** of mind and **how** a person thinks.

To best prepare individuals and groups for intercultural service we must learn to think of ourselves and others as going through the process of developing within cultural contexts. In the rest of this initial reading, we will explore this process and a variety of cultural patterns to demonstrate the importance of maintaining an acute appreciation for diversity, especially while engaged in intercultural service.

## The Beginning of Cultural Participation & the Roots of Preference for Familiarity

We begin to participate in cultural practices in the womb -- through foods and substances mothers ingest or inhale, movements she makes, and sounds that enter the womb. Because newborns were exposed to these aspects of life when they were inside the womb, newborns can recognize their mother's and partners' voices (DeCasper & Fifer, 1980; DeCasper & Spence, 1986; Kisilevsky et al., 2009), and perhaps more surprising can correctly identify the languages they speak, and the music they play. It might be interesting for the reader to know how we can make such claims. With an ingenious method, psychologists have created headphones that are linked to a pacifier that is sensitive to how fast or slow a newborn sucks on the pacifier. Newborns are skilled at varying the rate at which they suck on a pacifier. If the headphones are set up such that a newborn must suck fast on the pacifier to hear a recording of his or her mother's voice or suck slow to hear a recording of a stranger's voice, newborns will suck fast (and vice versa; the newborns will suck slow if that is what is needed to hear the mother's voice). Newborns will suck at whatever rate is required to hear the sounds as similar as possible to what they heard in the womb. Known tests of sounds include the mother's and partner's voices, the story read (as a part of an experiment in which mothers read the same story out loud every night at the end of pregnancy), and the songs she regularly played. Realizing newborns were paying attention to (and remembering!) these sounds from in the womb, we can reason that they also hear other loud sounds such as pets, siblings, or traffic, etc.

Newborns also demonstrate that they are more comfortable with the smells and tastes that surrounded them in the womb. Newborns will turn their heads left or right in order to be closer to the smell of their mother's embryonic fluid (as opposed to another mother's embryonic fluid) or the smells of the foods she commonly ate during pregnancy. This is important and worthy of elaboration because together these experiments demonstrate that **even as newborns, we already show preference for aspects of culture that are familiar to us**. Newborns have very few capacities under their control, but these experiments demonstrate that they will do what is necessary to hear and smell those things that are familiar. And numerous research studies reinforce this idea throughout the lifespan; humans tend to show a preference for familiarity.

**Preference for familiarity** is an important theme for intercultural service work. It feels uncomfortable and disorienting to be without familiar sights, sounds, smells, etc. Because we rely on these familiarities to help us predict where to go, what to do, what to say, and how other people will act, it can feel chaotic, confusing, or frustrating to live (and try to serve) with difference. You may feel personally disoriented, discombobulated, or otherwise experience culture shock. Just being aware that humans have this tendency --to like what we are accustomed to -- will help you acknowledge that working with difference usually requires a conscious effort to feel grounded with yourself and to not judge others or situations based on what is familiar to you. You may need to increase your efforts for self-care and to suspend judgment when encountering differences.

To demonstrate how your comfort zone may feel chaotic to someone else (and vice versa), consider the questions below. I invite you to read the questions and write your answer as well as what the questions reveal to you about your daily cultural experience. What roles does this behavior or way of thinking play in your daily life? What would be different about your life if you tried to live in the opposite way?

- Do you regularly think of what you are going to do next (future oriented)?
- Do you consider yourself an individual more than a group member?
- Is your day governed by what time it is?
- Do you believe speed is an indicator of greater intelligence?
- Do you often wish you could do things faster? or view doing things faster as doing them better?
- Does the day of the week matter to you?
- Are you concerned with saving money today so you can enjoy a better tomorrow?
- Do you enjoy accumulating and interacting with personal possessions?
- Do you adore youth over elderhood?
- Is the number of years since birth (chronological age) important to you and your community?
- Do you prefer new things to old ones?
- Do you desire privacy for home, work, and almost everywhere in between?

Answering “yes” to the questions above is in alignment with US mainstream cultural ways of life. Just because you live in the US doesn’t mean you need to answer “yes” to all questions; as a reminder, there is interpersonal diversity within any group. Also, people outside of the US may also answer “yes” as many other countries and communities share values with the US. The list is also not meant to be comprehensive, but provides a sample of ways cultural values (of independence, youth, productivity, and concepts of time) are often experienced in the US.

Assuming you answered “yes” to many of the questions, consider this scenario: Imagine you traveled to a community to do service but you don’t possess awareness of your own cultural values or knowledge. Imagine the host community differs on a number of these values but this is not known to you. Imagine the host community asks for your help to build a house. What happens? Do you arrive promptly on time and become frustrated if the host community routinely shows up late? Do you make plans according to the day of the week? Do you assume materials for the home can simply be bought and that new materials are better than old materials? Are you perplexed if the community members need to speak with their elders about the home before you can start? Take a few minutes to write what these questions reveal to you with regards to your plans to do intercultural service. Where or when do you expect to be challenged by working with difference? What does this mean for you and your work?

Making a positive difference through intercultural service involves a commitment to acknowledging your own cultural ways and expanding your comfort zone so that you may better engage with the local needs and with their process. This guide is designed to help you understand the process of how culture influences people (yourself included) as well as providing a glimpse into the kinds of differences you may encounter. First we will briefly describe how cultural practices relate to the brain.

### The Anatomical Level: Culture in the Brain

Cultural practices correspond to (and in some ways create) our brain anatomy. All thoughts and feelings happen physically in the brain through brain cell activity and communication between cells. Although the content of your mind can not be observed, we can observe where the blood flows through the brain (with fMRI technology) and we can watch how the blood flow changes with the presentation of different images or sounds. We have documented that images and sounds that are closely related in a person’s cultural experiences are physically close together in the brain. For example, if

I hear the word “salt” I am quick to recognize the anticipated next word “pepper.” This is because I grew up experiencing these two spices always on the table together. Corresponding to my experience (and perhaps because of my experience), my brain cells that are active when I think of “salt” are physically close to and overlap with my brain cells that are active when I think of “pepper.” It’s easy for these cells to communicate to one another because of the repetition and close relationship; they communicate to one another often (due to the everyday experience of salt and pepper on the table) and expect to communicate together such that I might misinterpret something on the table beside salt as pepper (even when it is not). However, if a person grew up with only salt on the table and pepper was reserved for occasional use, the brain cells involved in these two concepts would be further apart and communicate less frequently. In this way, we can observe that words of our language (or languages) and how they relate to one another are reflected in the neural network of your brain. How your particular network of brain cells functions is somewhat unique to you (like a fingerprint of the experiences and meanings you have had in your life). Your neural network will be more similar with another person’s network to the extent that you share practices (i.e. languages and lifestyles). The more similar your experience, the more similar your network, and the easier it is to communicate and understand one another. Thus if you speak an entirely different language and grow up with very different experiences than someone else, the ways you communicate and process the world are more different. If the aim is to engage in intercultural service, one must put in extra effort to find understanding; it can literally “rewire” or “additionally wire” your brain, and this will take time. What does this (knowledge of how the brain develops through cultural practice) mean for your work? We will discuss active listening in depth later, but it should be clear at this point that to really serve in another culture you need to slow down and set an intention to try to understand their perspective.

In the next section we will provide some examples of cultural differences. In doing so we must select a few specifics, but a mindful reader will realize the meaning of these small everyday differences equates to comprehensive and large differences. Echoed in each small example, is the foundational tenet that **people develop through participation in cultural practices**. If people are engaged in different practices, they will develop towards different ends. To engage in intercultural service one must learn to anticipate these differences and find places where cultural practices overlap or intersect.

## Everyday Differences

Extreme differences that appear at the day-to-day level are easier to understand and analyze, so we will begin with an example to illustrate that there are entire concepts that are so **central** in one community, that **don’t exist at all** in another community. Many US middle class values and behaviors illustrate an emphasis on individualism (for a review see Heine, 2008). We have many words for “I” & “me” to reference an independent identity, attitude, or personality (words like: I, me, self, identity, self-esteem, free-will, ego, introvert, etc). We tend to view our successes as our own doing, prefer to feel good about ourselves, and report that we have choices in our lives (see Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010). The fact that psychology (a discipline based on the idea of the separate individual), is consistently a popular major in college is evidence of the assumption and fascination with the concept of the independent self.

In contrast, in West African languages (such as Kreyol, Pelle, and Bassa) there is no word for “me”. Although some of these languages have recently adapted a word for “me” (demonstrating how cultures and languages shift), many communities still don’t use the word, such that the only way to reference the self is to reference “we” -- “me and the others I am with.” This reflects the everyday life of constantly being with others; it is rare to be alone in these communities and shows how language fits life as it is experienced. It can also be a way to pay tribute and respect to the family line: “as long as you have a surname, you are never alone.” Once I asked a student from Monrovia, the capital of the Republic of Liberia, how she’d refer to herself if she was talking on the phone in Bassa to her mom while “alone” here in the US (and in the English literal sense of “alone”). The student replied that she couldn’t. She didn’t know a word in her home language to use. As an adjustment, she would still use “we” because if nothing else, she could reference to being with God such that “we” means “me with God.”

Reflecting this difference between “we” and “I,” a brain imaging study, found that U.S. and people from China have brains that function differently when considering traits of themselves (Zhu, Zhang, & Han, 2007). Specifically the study used fMRI and observed the blood flow in the brain while participants thought about a time he or she was dishonest. Then the participants thought about a time when their mother was dishonest. U.S. participants’ blood flow showed a distinction; thinking about themselves involved different areas of the brain than thinking of their mother. However, among the Chinese participants the blood flow pattern was almost identical between the self and their mother.



The findings reflect the lived experience of the two cultures and provides evidence that how you think about your self (i.e. independent, collective, or somewhere in the middle of the spectrum) is reflected on a neurological level.

Although people can come to understand ideas present in other communities through education and experience, when the word or phrase doesn't exist in the everyday language, it is a meaningful distinction. As someone wanting to engage in intercultural work, places of distinction can be potential pitfalls (if they are ignored or unrealized) as well as areas that reveal the beauty and assets of diversity (when unveiled and treated with respect).

Because "I" and "me" are words many English speakers use with great frequency, and referencing the self is such an early developmental milestone among US infants, it is interesting to think through the effects of having a different frame of reference for the self. Consider other examples: the word used to refer to "me" in Japanese changes depending on to whom one is talking (Suzuki, 1973). There are at least 5 different versions of the word "me" commonly used, and the version depends on gender, age, and status such that "me" if I am talking to my wife is "ore," but "me" if I am talking to my colleague is "boku". In Lakota the word "I" refers to "I as I am now and I as I will be with the ground in the Earth after I have passed on". These differences in language and the way we categorize the world are **not** simply random and unrelated to cultural values and lifestyles. Rather they reflect a cultural ethos. Collectively, they shape the way a person comes to think about the world and themselves. Just imagine if you had a different word for "me" depending on to whom you were with; would you be more aware of the listener or the nature of the relationship between you and that person? How would that change other aspects of your life? Or, would your daily mindset be different if your word for "me" always served as a reminder that life is temporary and one day your body will be in the ground? The way you conceive of yourself has significant consequences for a variety of emotional experiences, goals, and motivations. To engage in service with someone who fundamentally thinks differently of him/herself brings added value to what can be learned from the experience. As you practice thinking through other ways of viewing the world, a-ha moments will assist you in accomplishing deeper connections and choosing more fulfilling ways to serve.

Related to language, nearly every aspect of daily living may be different from the moment we wake up. Who or what is beside you? Are you sleeping with your entire family, a spouse, or your grandmother? Are you in a bed, on the floor, or in a hammock? Is your day divided into categories such as family time, work, and time with friends, or are these inseparable and interwoven? Do you experience a weekend or are all days treated the same? Is there a link between the day of the week and when you practice your religion or spirituality? Does money have value? These questions are endless, life is lived differently.

And beyond the differences that are easy to observe, there can be differences underneath: *variation in the meaning* of any given specific activity. These are harder to notice because meaning can be hidden, but are important to anticipate as you engage with diversity. Even if two people engage in what appears to be the same behavior, it may have different meanings or functions. Consider this obvious example from Landrine (1995): the "objective" behavior in both A and B is "reading a newspaper". Case A: A man reads a newspaper as he rides the subway home from work. Case B: A man reads a newspaper in the middle of an argument with this wife. Clearly the function of "reading a newspaper" differs. The man's wife probably does not believe he was "just reading the newspaper to pass the time," while that argument could be made about Case A.

If while in a different cultural community you see a behavior that looks exactly like what you see at home, it is best not to assume that it carries the same meaning as it does at home. If it is a behavior that is not ideal in your world view, try to suspend judgment and learn how it fits within the given context (perhaps it is unhealthy, but it may also just be different). For example, in the US, parents are warned against sleeping with their infants and many create a separate room for their baby, but parents co-sleep with infants in most communities of the world (Lewis, 1995; Rogoff 2003). Perhaps there are skills to co-sleeping safely that people in the US are simply not practicing, and being out of practice makes it less safe for us to engage in co-sleeping. And, at least in some communities (such as some parts of Guatemala), putting an infant to sleep in a room all alone is along the lines of shocking neglect. "All alone! With no one else in the room!"

Conversely, one form of neglect in the US is leaving a child under 7 years old to care for younger siblings, but this is not neglect in communities in which children are prepared and supported to take care of siblings from infancy (Rogoff, 2003). In Kenya, withholding food from a child can be considered neglect (Edwards, 1994), but parents in the US often manage and restrict children's eating to fit our nutritional goals or as a part of punishment (as in "you don't get dessert today"). As person A and B and these examples show: interpreting an activity or behavior without regard for the context, meaning system, or goals opens the door to misinterpretations. Misinterpretations will have a negative effect on our ability to develop positive relationships or do meaningful service.



Without realizing that behaviors can have different meanings, I have seen students misunderstand gender roles on the Pine Ridge Reservation in SD. Specifically, the misjudgment has occurred over the meaning of wearing a long skirt. From some of my students' perspective, (which can be categorized as a middle class mainstream US and mostly millennials' perspective), noticing many traditional Lakota women in ankle-length skirts triggered notions of sexism and restrictive lifestyles for women. Simply put, they assumed it was oppressive. However, our Lakota host is sensitive to this difference and took the time to explain that in Lakota beliefs, a skirt is a symbol of the high position women hold in the community. The woman is viewed as the center of community life. The skirt represents the tipi, her body the center pole, and it is under her that all important community events happen. From this perspective, the skirt is a symbol of her strength and a reminder of how central she is to the community. Thus, it could be seen as oppressive to pressure a Lakota woman to wear pants, since it would strip her of her power! The lesson here is that there are many ways to misunderstand or misinterpret others' actions if we are using our own framework as a guide, so a constant self-reminder that we are not objective, but necessarily viewing the world through our own preferences and cultural lenses can be significantly enlightening to our work.

Furthermore, it is important to keep in mind, that when visiting, what you will see is only a version of typical behavior in daily life. If you are aware that someone is visiting your home or community and realize they are observing your actions (and possibly judging them), do you act exactly as you would without an observer or visitor present? To add another layer, remember the rules of another community for "how to behave in front of others" may also differ from your own. For example, in the US, parents are seen to engage in more nurturing behaviors with their young children when they know they are being observed. In lab studies mothers speak more and more encouragingly to their young children when they know the camera is recording their behavior than when they don't realize they are being observed (Graves, & Glick, 1978). In lab studies mothers speak more and more encouragingly to their young children when they know the camera is recording their behavior than when they don't realize they are being observed. Yet, for the Hausa people in Nigeria, the custom used to be the reverse: they didn't show affection for infants in public (but they did in private) (see Price-Williams, 1975). Our understanding of an entire community may be completely off if we insist on using our framework and simply what we see in brief visits to comprise comprehensive knowledge of others. You may think you recognize what you are seeing, but suspend judgment and keep a learning attitude in order to avoid false conclusions. To seek deeper insights by remaining open-minded will allow you to enter into respectful service.

Also related and perhaps underlying the behavioral differences, cultural communities express different values as well. Some values are stated and easier to identify (values of land, family, money, career, etc.) Other values are taken for granted and therefore not expressed, but implicit. Unstated and assumed values are often the hardest to recognize. For example, in testing cognitive abilities across cultures, psychologists were first surprised to learn that values influence what kind of evidence people accept in determining what is "true." In mainstream US public schools, the analytic or scientific method and logic are a foundation upon which most ideas are judged as valid or not. Students intellectual maturity is based on how logical and scientific-like their thinking patterns are (i.e. Piaget's approach to cognitive development). If something is illogical (emotional, spiritual, subjective, imaginative etc.) it is less valued in the US school curriculum. This value of logic has become so pervasive that sometimes we forget it is based on a cultural value system and is not universal (see Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010).

In the 1930s, psychologists sought to determine if other cultures were as "intellectually advanced" as people in the US. They took straightforward logic problems that most 5th graders would answer correctly in an instant, to different parts of the world and determined that some communities were smarter (defined as more logical) than others. This was a gross error in understanding that continues to perpetuate racist ideas today. With better understanding of particular value systems, it was later determined that the specific words of the logic problems were confounding the examinations. People were capable of logic, but chose not to use it because they valued other sources of knowledge more (in certain circumstances). For example, Central Asian adults were presented this problem: "In the far North, where there is snow, all bears are white. Novaya Zemlya is in the Far North and there is always snow there. What color are the bears there?" Fifth graders in the US view this problem as simple. The answer the psychologists received in Central Asia by adults was "I don't know." This led some of the psychologists to conclude that these adults were less intelligent (or less cognitively mature) and they made those results and conclusions public. However, other psychologists persisted in trying to understand the context surrounding the puzzling answer. By spending more time in the community, it was revealed that the adults "... always speak only of what we see" (Luria, 1976). Since the individuals were being tested by strangers with realistic sounding names of towns, they felt they needed to be honest about the fact that they had not

been to Novaya Zemlya. It was later determined that the Central Asian adults could demonstrate logic when the context was appropriate for it, but the issue was with the way the question was worded and that in this situation the adults didn't believe in speaking about something that they didn't know through a first hand experience.

The bottom line was the Central Asian adults interpreted the problem differently based on the value they place on other forms of knowledge in certain circumstances. The other take-home lesson is that without respect for difference, people in power can provide evidence for racist claims. Clearly, cross-cultural research can be a dangerous weapon against social justice.

In an interesting turn of the tables, a guidebook for international students coming to study in the US gave the advice not to judge Americans on their ability to comprehend complex ideas based on their use of "small talk". Some communities don't engage in such regular surface-level conversations, platitudes and quick phrases such as "how are you?" "fine thanks" etc. International students who observed small talk mistakenly thought it reflected the full intellectual capabilities of people in the US (Althen & Bennett, 1988).

A community's parenting and child development goals are another set of often unstated values to consider; what do they view as most desirable and mature? For example, consider this question: How will you know when your child becomes an adult? "When he/she becomes independent" is the most commonly expressed viewpoint in the US, but the implicit meaning is financial independence from the parents; we understand that independence in this case doesn't really mean the individual is going to live a life in isolation fully taking all responsibilities, such as building one's own shelter, hunting and gathering for one's own food, etc. In contrast, parents of newborns in Japan responded in a way that can translate to: "we will know the child is an adult when he/she is interdependent" (Lebra, 1994). Adult status is obtained when they understand their role within the family and community. Their use of the concept "interdependent" does not mean that they want their adult children to be jobless or eating food acquired by mom and dad. Japanese parents also described their newborns as "independent", as in "the newborn doesn't seem to know their responsibilities to family or care about how their actions impact others". As a mother, I gained insight into what the Japanese mothers must have been paying attention to: my newborn didn't express care at all if I desperately needed to sleep. Newborns truly do their own thing in this sense (crying when you want sleep, spitting up on you when you are hurriedly walking out the door for work). They are independent (in this way). Both ways of interpreting these life stages (the onset of adulthood and newborns) are true depending on what is being emphasized.

Another value difference often encountered and misunderstood is the value of introversion and extraversion (Rogoff, 2003). In the US we clearly have a preference for individuals who are extraverts. People who stand out and express themselves are considered more likely to succeed and highly verbal young children are deemed precocious. In other communities, it is the opposite. Being cautious, shy, or deferring to elders are the more appropriate behaviors. Whereas the US mainstream value is placed on being unique, "the nail that sticks out, gets hammered down" is a common saying in Japan that reflects a different goal or ideal for what a community should look like.

Given all these differences it is interesting to think about the existence of universals. Are there any? Beyond valuing the behaviors that are required to sustain life, some have written that self and family protection and the desire for respect are universal (Humphrey, 1992). And yet sometimes "protection" looks so different, you may not recognize it (Scheper-Hughes, 1985). How you experience and acknowledge respect may be different from other's expectations of respect. Others have suggested that there is a universal desire to be listened to and psychologists have made claims about certain emotions (see Ekman, 1993), personalities (McCrae & Costa, 1997) and other features of human life being universal. These are interesting to consider. However, such results are speculative because the capacity to document and fully prove something is universal is truly an unattainable goal. We'd need to see it existing among all humans everywhere and document it across generations. Instead of being eager to suggest universals, I have learned to take a barebones approach to universals and err on the side of leaving room for diversity. I believe all humans must necessarily develop through participation in cultural practices (because how can a human be born without exposure to culture at least within the womb) and all humans experience night and day and changes to their lives outside of their control. I believe that all humans deserve equal amounts of dignity and respect. Beyond that, differences are conceivable. (For an interesting discussion of universals in the field of Psychology read Henrich, Heine, & Norenzayan, 2010.)

The above examples of difference are intended to plant seeds for the kinds of diversity one might encounter while doing intercultural service. The everyday nature of culture means that we often forget that our way of life is just one way of living. My intention here is to make the hidden more noticeable, and inspire the reader to learn more about culture. If we devote time to gaining an understanding of our host community's culture and how it overlaps or differs from our

own, we can engage in more meaningful ways. In the next section, we look beyond separate behaviors and explore how cultural practices fit together. Noticing the connection between behaviors and values is a tool for making sense of the ways other people live their life.

## Cultural Practices Fit Together

There once was a Peace Corp group that decided to build an indoor plumbing system because the host community didn't have one (Bennett, 1979). The group had noticed that obtaining water from the community well mostly (unjustly, in their opinion) was a responsibility that fell on the women. They didn't think it was convenient or equitable, and thought the residents could benefit from indoor plumbing. They had the materials and skills to make indoor plumbing, so that is how they intended to serve the community. Before the project began, the community started to resist and stated they wanted help with their school. But, given the resources and the assumed need, the volunteers made the decision to build a modern indoor plumbing system. From the perspective of the volunteers, the project would benefit the community because it would prevent the daily hassle of going to get the water from the well, which was some distance away from the homes. However, they met resistance all along the way, and once completed, the women continued to walk each day to the well to carry water back to their homes. What the good intentioned volunteers didn't realize was the practice of getting water was more than just getting water, it served political and social purposes. At the water well, the women could socialize and communicate about important events in the family and larger community. It was a valued cultural practice. Soon after, the plumbing failed and the volunteers turned their attention to building the school.

When working in a community, it is important to recognize that if you change the way a person does one thing (such as obtains water), you will necessarily be changing other cultural practices (such as the social activities at the shared water well) and potentially interrupting the value system (such as communication between relatives) associated with the behavior (obtaining water). Cultural practices fit together and reflect current and past value systems. Whatever you do, it will necessarily impact the lives of the residents beyond what you can foresee. Because of this, projects should be designed in collaboration. Furthermore, if you hear resistance to the service plans, reconsider the project and remember there may be unintended consequences to the work that the residents can anticipate but to which you are blind.

Even when there is no resistance, and when the residents don't expect issues, there will be mistakes and lessons to learn. I want to share some examples that offer cautionary tales that may be relatable for your service. A friend of mine was working with a mission group to build cleaner indoor cookstoves in a community in Haiti (personal communication, B. Durham, August 2014). The problem was the cookstoves used inside the homes had poor ventilation and the smoke reached dangerous levels; the air quality in the home was not healthy due to the cookstoves. The residents were eager to have a solution to the indoor air pollution. The mission group spent a great deal of time and diligent work to find appropriate methods to build a new cookstove that produced less smoke in the home. Finally, it was time to test it out and a few families installed the new cookstove. The initial success was met with dismay and great disappointment when the homes were eaten entirely by termites! It was soon realized that the older cookstoves produced such poor air quality that termites were unable to live in the home! The point isn't to say that the residents were better off with poor air quality but rather to demonstrate that solutions are not likely quick and easy; they involve a series of problem finding and an array of solutions. For this reason, (and for the sake of a stronger relationships), intercultural service may require a long-term relationship.

## Turning the Tables

I've created an example of how this might feel for someone to come into your community and try to "fix" one problem without considering the ways in which practices fit together. Research has reliably shown that in the US, adolescents' brains are not active enough for academic learning until 10:00 am. Yet high schools commonly start first period as early as 7:30 am. Suppose a group from another country saw the solution to this problem and came to the US to demand that we act on the solution - that we start high school later. In isolation this seems reasonable, but think through the consequences if high school didn't start until 10:00 am. As the thought-experiment will reveal, changing the start time of high school will necessarily create a need for other changes, such as when parents can leave for work, how school bus systems operate, the time school can end and after school activities can begin (such as sports and theater), and the cost of operating high schools at a different time than elementary schools. This is not to say that we shouldn't make changes in the way communities function, but just to explain why there may be resistance to new ways, even when the isolated change seems perfectly reasonable.

Because we don't really know the impact of our intended service, we must be willing to approach the situation with our expertise and power balanced with genuine humility and strive for authentic understanding with the host community. It is arrogant to think individuals can conceive of a solution to a complex and significant problem outside of their own community. Furthermore that we might know the solution in advance of going there is absurd. We can't expect to simply insert ourselves, apply a solution, and have it fully work before we leave. Without engaging in collaboration with the people in the host country your presence may be vain and even harmful. Rather than imposing our service upon the residents (to do service for the community), fewer mistakes will be made when the service is approached with the community.

### Learning About Your Own Cultural Practices

Learning about other cultural communities often forces you to think of your own cultural heritage and practices. Learning about yourself and your own practices is important because it will help you gain perspective on what you bring to interactions with others. As mentioned, no human is completely removed or separate from their interaction with the living world, yet many people in the U.S. (especially white, middle-class people) believe that they are without culture. They haven't noticed their culture perhaps because there has not been a reason to notice it. In daily life, mainstream U.S. culture presents as the norm in schools, TV shows, movies, advertisements, hospitals, and otherwise. This isn't to blame someone for not recognizing it, but to provide reasons for this misunderstanding. A useful analogy is to say that a fish doesn't know or feel water (Kluckhohn in Erickson, 1986). Since a fish has never left the water, the fish hasn't had reason to notice it. Similarly if a person hasn't had reason to notice that they participate in culture every minute of everyday, then they may deny their own cultural heritage. "Oh that is what other people have....in exotic places," or "I wish I had culture" are the kind of comments I often hear from students. If you haven't had an encounter or experience to allow you to recognize your own cultural practices, you may live without noticing them. Participating in school, sitting down at a table to eat dinner, taking a shower in the morning, driving a car, wearing those shoes and reading this(!) are all cultural practices commonly taken for granted in the U.S. (like the fish takes water for granted).

Presented again, here are some questions that may help you identify your own cultural practices. Can you think of additional questions to add to this list?

- Do you regularly think of what you are going to do next (future oriented)?
- Do you consider yourself an individual more than a group member?
- Is your day governed by what time it is?
- Do you believe speed is an indicator of greater intelligence?
- Do you often wish you could do things faster? or view doing things faster is doing them better?
- Does the day of the week matter to you?
- Are you concerned with saving money today so you can enjoy a better tomorrow?
- Do you enjoy accumulating and interacting with personal possessions?
- Do you glorify youth over elderhood?
- Is the number of years since birth (chronological age) important to you and your community?
- Do you prefer new things to old ones?
- Do you desire privacy for home, work and almost everywhere in between?

Looking at your own cultural practices is important because you aren't just a neutral presence, a generic delivery system of "goods" to another community -- your language, behaviors, clothing, hairstyle, and values will be engaged with others and impact them just as you will be impacted by what you see, hear, and experience. When people are oblivious to their own culture, they are more likely to misunderstand practices in other communities by seeing "different as bad" and taking others' actions out of context. Remember, we tend to have preference for familiarity.

In interacting with another culture or even reading this, one must also remember to suspend judgment of **one's own** cultural practices-- just as you will work towards suspending judgment of others' cultural practices. Many people feel their own cultural practices are being questioned, attacked, or judged when they notice or read about the ways other communities do things. Feelings of loyalty to your own ways, guilt, or even shame for your privilege may be triggered. Yet, if you look closer you'll find that you aren't privileged in every way possible and feeling defensive probably doesn't make the world a better place. The best service doesn't come from a place of guilt, shame, or intense protection. It is



not necessary to view one as better than the other (or vice versa). Again, they are both fitting. Remember the bigger picture, if you see that there are multiple great ways that lead to multiple appropriately healthy outcomes in life and see that culture is designed to fit different environmental pressures, it will be easier to feel comfortable with and see the importance of diversity. And through a genuine interest in understanding and collaboration, we can be empowered to make the world better and more just.

Although you may enter this work because you want to serve others, as the person doing the service, you may experience deep, permanent changes in your present and future life. Learning more about yourself and own cultural practices will assist you in seeing the universal process of people participating in situationally appropriate cultures and thus will allow you to enter into respectful service.

### In Closing:

In closing, people can only “be understood in light of the cultural practices and circumstances of their community” (Rogoff, 2003, pg 3) and we need understanding first-- if we are interested in making the world a better, more safe, and just place. To serve, one must understand, and to understand one must respect the depth to which cultures may differ. Given that cultures aren't static and given that one won't know beforehand where there is overlap between your cultural life and that of others, it is best to reduce assumptions, to prepare as best you can. Continue to ask yourself if you need to update your ideas of yourself and others; remain in a state of learning and openness. The process of carefully acknowledging biases for familiarity, assumptions about others, and open-mindedly revising one's understanding in light of new information is essential for learning about cultural ways.

## Workshop 1: Activities and Discussion

### Activity: Introducing Difference

Beforehand: create different combinations of the following rules on small pieces of paper so that each piece of paper has a different set of rules on it -- each set has one rule from each category below (no particular combination is important). Provide each student with the generic directions (orally is fine) and the paper with his or her personalized list of 3 rules (that are mixed and matched from the below categories). Provide as much time as needed to allow for students to experience chaos, small amounts of frustration, or just stating this isn't working (likely 10 minutes). Then stop activity and go into discussion (follows).

Generic Directions: Introduce yourself to 6 different people and learn the other person's name so that you can demonstrate your knowledge of 6 people's names after the activity.

#### Category A - Personal space:

- You can only say your name if you are 6 inches away from the person's face.
- Stay at least 2 feet away from everyone at all times
- Silently identify one other person in the room and when the activity starts move close to this person and follow them closely wherever they go, as if you were tied to them by a small rope.

#### Category B - Eye contact:

- Make as little eye contact as possible
- Make intense sustained eye contact

#### Category C - Greetings:

- Smile intensely and constantly, talk loudly and make small talk before offering your name
- If the other person is shorter than you, you must speak first. If the other person is taller than you, you must let them speak first.
- Speak softly and only when spoken to.
- You can only say your name as you shake hands, but you must use your left hand.

Discussion: While some exaggerated rules were put into play to explicitly and quickly push our boundaries, these rules all exist in some form or another (perhaps not in this particular combination). What did this remind you of? (How did it feel to try to communicate across different cultures?) How did you attempt to resolve the conflict of rules?

This activity is based on the work of Susan Jackson and Associates in the book *Diversity in the Workplace*.

## Reading 2: Challenging Common Notions

### The Golden Rule, Sympathy, Cultural Assimilation, & the Just-World Fallacy

After the first reading, you understand that culture matters to your life as well as the lives of others; it is at the forefront of understanding how to engage together in respectful service. To be of true service is to take an open-learning stance towards another community in order to show respect for their lives, only then will you be able to appropriately serve. In this reading, we will apply what we know about culture to service work and consequently explicitly challenge some common notions about service that do more harm than good. In the third reading, the strength-based approach to service is elaborated upon and additional guiding principles for respectful service are expressed.

### The Golden Rule

Many people seek to live by the Golden Rule. In most world religions and philosophies, the Golden Rule (also called the Reciprocity Ethic) calls the followers to their correct and most loving way to treat people. The Golden Rule says “we should treat other people as we would like to be treated.” If we are speaking of treating people with the love, respect, and honoring our shared humanity, then the Golden Rule can be our guide in service as well as in the rest of our lives. However, the danger of the literal interpretation of the Golden Rule is that it doesn’t go far enough. If it is taken too narrowly and literally, it assumes a single reality-- that other people want to be treated as you do. The use of this rule becomes inadequate because people do not want to be treated with the exact social and personal action that you want. Perhaps people all want respect, but what does respect look like to you? Think about that for a minute -- how do you know if someone is being respectful towards you? Is a smile necessary? Is eye-contact a sign of respect? In some communities extended eye contact is a sign of disrespect. This example demonstrates how deeply ingrained our expectations are for others to be more similar to us with regards to their values and actions. Even if given a choice many people would not choose to live your life, and if they tried to do so, it would turn out with different results because it doesn’t fit into their personal and communal lives the same way it does for you. It is vital to keep in mind that love and respect are not demonstrated the same way, and the more cultural differences that exist between you and another person the more the literal interpretation of the Golden Rule doesn’t work as expected.

A few examples will illustrate the point: While many in mainstream U.S. culture view eye contact during conversation to be respectful, in traditional Lakota culture extended eye contact is seen as a sign of disrespect. From a Lakota perspective, eyes are distracting and making eye contact is a sign that you aren’t deeply listening. You may meet someone’s eyes briefly but in conversation, you don’t keep looking at the person’s eyes. As one of my student interpreted this difference: “instead of offering your eyes, you offer your ears” (though not literally). If you experiment with this for a while, you may understand this perspective; you may find you hear better when there is less eye contact. (Although if you try this and the other person expects eye contact, you’ll discover how unsettling it can be to mix-and-match cultural practices!)

Here is an example of a student doing service following the narrow interpretation of the Golden Rule, doing service from her own paradigm: The student spent hours sorting a food pantry’s soup cans into vegetarian and non-vegetarian options. As a vegetarian, she saw this as an important distinction, but she defined the patron’s needs based on her own food categorization system instead of how the food bank’s patrons thought about food. This particular act didn’t result in great harm to the food bank or patrons, but if 1% of the population self-describes themselves as vegetarian and the food bank is in the most food insecure place in the U.S., it is likely that she could have used her time more wisely (aside from the benefit that she probably felt good about herself).

Looking at any yard sale on a Saturday: one person's trash is another person's treasure. How I decorate my home would annoy a modernist. My idea of a dream vacation is not likely to be the same as your dream vacation. Bennett (1979) describes the tension he and his wife felt every time one of them became ill because they were applying the Golden Rule in a literal sense. When he became sick, she would treat him as she would want if she were sick; she would give him lots of attention and pamper him. When she became sick, he'd leave her alone (which is what he desired when he was sick). Only years later, after many miserable sick days, did they realize that he liked to be left alone when ill and his wife liked attention. For years they were trying to help each other, but only making the situation worse by doing the exact opposite of what was desired by the one who was sick. This type of misunderstanding can happen at great frequency. Knowing what you want, is not a stand-in for knowing what another person wants.

If you now understand that people differ, in part because they participate in different cultural practices, the adjustment to the Golden Rule is simple: give all people equal respect by treating them **the way they want to be treated** (some call this the Platinum Rule). Of course this requires more effort to get to know others more deeply (another way in which intercultural service requires more of you). If you are doing service across cultures, you must first observe and listen before you act so that you may actually know what the residents and hosts need and want.

## Sympathy

Another closely aligned concept to reconsider is that of sympathy; sympathy also involves using how you'd feel in a given situation to help you understand how someone else feels in that situation. While perhaps well intentioned, this is problematic because the other person has different opportunities, resources, knowledge, skills, experiences, values, etc. Again, they may want different treatment than you.

This is similar to the child development concept of egocentrism --a child sees that her father is sad, so brings him a teddy bear. A sweet gesture but it reflects what the child wants when he is sad; most adults I know don't use a teddy bear to make them feel better. In cross-cultural situations, using one's own view of the world (or paradigm) and expecting it to be the same for all others is an act of insensitivity.

This critique of sympathy can be met with resistance because sympathy is easy and **appears** to work reasonably well when you are surrounded by people who are fairly similar to yourself. In the big picture, many people in the U.S. tend to live, work, and play with similar others. Furthermore, if you represent mainstream U.S. values, the media also reflects more of how you view the world. Perhaps for these reasons, we often overestimate sameness. Yet, you are preparing for intercultural service where circumstances are deeply different. You'll want to be sensitive to these differences. In contrast to sympathy, empathy requires you to listen and try to view (or feel) the person's life from their perspective (as best you can). Listen to how they feel about their lives, what do they see as issues and strengths. Put yourself in their shoes as fully as you can. Like the Platinum Rule, it requires more work, but will result in more meaningful connections.

We will now address three other related concepts that similarly assume uniformity rather than diversity (cultural assimilation, the deficit model, and the Just World Fallacy) before turning our attention to elaborating on an alternative strength-based approach.

## Cultural Assimilation

Making people more similar to you (or an amalgamation like the melting pot idea) is not the intention of service. Your lifestyle is designed for you in your environment and may work well for you, but it won't work the same way for all others. Do you like it when people try to convince you to be more like them? For example, have you ever had someone give you unwanted advice to change your daily habits? I've been told I should bike to work, exercise a certain way at 6am, and write in a journal every night by well intentioned people who love me and enjoy those things in their lives. However, in my life those activities are not fitting. Often times, such suggestions don't take into consideration the other responsibilities or values that already exist in your life. Of course there is a time and a place to break old habits that aren't serving our lives, but the response to unwanted advice is usually not positive. It can make a person feel defensive to be spoken to as if he or she is lacking something important and can weaken your relationship with the person by offering such unwanted suggestions.

The assimilation approach to service functions the same way; it assumes that there is one best way or approach to life (usually the way of the person doing the service). Social scientists use the term ethnocentrism to refer to a person who sees his or her culture as the one true, most modern, best reality. Upon reflection, you may see how this functions to support

racism and classism because it automatically devalues the other person's life. It shows up in service when people with the power to help, assume their way is best. It seems easy to slip into this way of thinking when you view yourself as the "helper". But this is patronizing and ignores the purpose and value of diversity. The fact that landscapes, weather, resources, family life, government, history, language, jobs, food, shelter, etc. all differ makes diversity necessary. Although we may think we know what is best, ideas about everything from education to parenting practices, and even nutrition differ for a reason.

The assimilation approach to service is pervasive (perhaps perpetuated by the narrow interpretation of the Golden Rule). Well intentioned people often use what they think of as the components of a "good life" and seek to give these components to others (like the indoor plumbing example). For example, in the U.S. we tend to want individuals to feel good about themselves. When a friend and colleague took a faculty position at a university, she was asked to take over the leadership role for an annual service trip to a rural community in Guatemala. The goal of the service was to increase self-esteem among the youth living in the isolated rural community. This seems nice doesn't it? However, the colleague hesitated; she knew self-esteem to be an important concept in the U.S., but her knowledge of this community suggested (and later research confirmed) that the Guatemalan community spoke a language that not only didn't have a word for "self-esteem" but also didn't have a word for "identity" that conceptualized identity as one's personal possession. So what does it mean to raise or protect someone's sense of self-esteem in a community that has no word for it?

Let me flip the tables to make the point more thoroughly: The American Psychological Association's Diagnostic Manual (DSM) describes a cultural-bound mental illness called "Amok". In many communities (mostly the Asian countries of Malaysia, Philippines, and Thailand) Amok is a severe mental illness in which one briefly loses touch with reality ---with a sudden onset of rage and sometimes doing horribly destructive acts, such as homicide, then returns to a state of being grounded in reality, or has amnesia for the events or collapses in exhaustion. People may use the term loosely in the U.S. "he ran amok", but as a disease, Amok has not been observed in the U.S. Now, suppose a group of well-meaning people from the Philippines took pity on the U.S. because we have no programs to protect us from this devastating disease called Amok. Suppose they decided to come to the U.S. and help us with our issues surrounding Amok. Would that be a welcomed use of resources? Or would that be imposing their idea or expectation of the issue upon us? If a community doesn't have a word for self-esteem or inversely Amok, it probably isn't a sound use of resources to decide to view it as an issue for which they need help.

A powerful historical example can shed light on how far, devastating, and unjust the assimilation approach can be. "Kill the Indian, and Save the Man" was a quote used to capture the intention in the late 1800s and early 1900s by the U.S. government who sought to assimilate American Indian children into the European American way of life. Well-meaning and not, they intentionally systematically stripped the indigenous people of their cultural heritage by forcing the children into boarding schools where they were not allowed to see their parents, speak their native language, wear their native dress, eat their native foods, or participate in any of their cultural practices. The "Kill the Indian and Save the Man" approach is the epitome of an unjust, ethnocentric, deficit model approach to "service" whose devastating impact still endures today. The phrase reflects the belief that the "man" underneath the "Indian" is better, and assumed that the "man" underneath wants or should look and act like an European American. The assimilation approach to "service" is forceful, aggressive, and causes great suffering.

Whereas, the perspective of this guide is that variation across and within communities is a strength and resource for humanity. We must work hard to respect diversity; we don't need or want everyone to be the same. Difference is appropriate to sustain life now and it will provide for flexibility in the unknowable future. You are in a fortunate position to be able to witness and collaborate in the intersection of cultures and pay tribute to the fine and beautiful qualities of difference.

## Deficit Model

Closely linked to the ideas just discussed is the deficit model, to view another (or their community) as "less-than" is called a deficit-model and corresponds with the notions of "difference as bad" or "if you don't have what I have, you are lacking." To designate yourself as a judge of another community is to assume you are objective. Yet there is no way to be purely objective about human behavior. Everyone's interpretation of a situation is necessarily that of a person (with a unique brain) from a particular time and constellation of background experience; no one is special in his or her abilities to determine what is "better" or "worse."

Words that reflect a deficit model and express judgment include: "primitive" "3rd world" "developing world" "uneducated" and "unskilled." Each of these phrases imply a belief in a single path of linear cultural evolution (here again we see evidence of assimilation towards the middle class U.S. way). These phrases imply that communities should move from one "primitive" state to a more "advanced" state (like us!), and often at the expense of their individual culture.



In contrast to the deficit model (and assimilation approach), we believe that if you are living in 2015, you are just as modern as everyone else living in 2015. Others are not backwards or behind; you are not ahead, only different. Progression exists in all communities, it just takes different paths and likely for a different purpose/towards a different end. “Uneducated” and “unskilled” are often mistaken as “less formal schooling” and “skilled in ways not valued by the U.S. economy.” Upon closer inspection, each individual possesses capacities, skills, and expertise, and likely a system of some kind intended to teach the individual to participate in their community-valued activities (systems such as apprenticeships, practice, or schools) . The skills may not reflect what is valued by the U.S. economy (in terms of jobs) but they are appropriate for the location. The deficit model overlooks these strengths, knowledge bases, and powers that the other community holds by interpreting the circumstances through a narrow cultural lens. Every community and every person has strengths and challenges. Treating any community as one extreme (behind, deficit, lacking) or the other (prosperous with all the answers, best technology, or even the noble savage who is unspoiled by modern society) is alienating (Rogoff, 2013) and only going to further divide the world.

To summarize, the collective message regarding the Golden Rule, Sympathy, Cultural Assimilation, and the Deficit Model is that a one-size fits all mentality is irresponsible. There are many paths in life leading to many positive and healthy outcomes. Our landscapes, natural resources, and local weather patterns vary and will continue to vary. Therefore, people will need to make different choices. They will build homes in different shapes with different materials, eat different foods at different times, raise children to lead different lives, and make different forms of economies to appropriately fit their own environment. There is not one best way, and to assimilate for the sake of creating sameness (sometimes confused with equality), will reduce our ability to live successfully in different environments, and reduce our creative problem solving abilities as a human species in the future. To “help” someone does not mean to help them become more like you. To serve someone means to collaborate to meet their needs, as they understand and value them. There is not ONE BEST WAY. Understanding different cultural practices and engaging in intercultural service does not require determining which one way is right.

## Just World Fallacy

Another way in which disrespect can creep into service-work is illustrated in the Just World Fallacy. The Just World Fallacy is a belief that good behavior is rewarded and bad is punished. This belief plays out countless times in U.S. middle-class lives (and elsewhere) via movies, books, fairy tales, etc. In fact, many U.S. parents and schools explicitly teach children that good behaviors will be rewarded and bad behaviors punished. In the short-term, immediate context, this works through conditioning -- associating the good behavior with a nice consequence and vice versa. Thus, to parents and educators this seems like a worthwhile strategy when trying to get a young child to behave in socially appropriate ways. But the logic of it does not reflect the real-world beyond what the parents and educators can control. People’s lives are not actually governed by this principle.

Perhaps inadvertently, the Just World teachings of early childhood directly encourage children to believe that people living in less fortunate circumstances have done something to deserve that “punishment.” When we see a person whose life looks devastating (based on our world view), we start to seek the reason he or she is being penalized. This is further exasperated by U.S. mainstream culture’s emphasis on individualism because we tend to view fortune and misfortune as a reflection of the individual’s choices as opposed to the situations. Rather than thinking through the challenging notions of current and historical imbalances of power, privilege, and oppression, it is perhaps easier to think that the person suffering must have done something-- perhaps she is lazy, immoral, or unkind, etc. In this way, the Just World belief easily leads people to the conclusion that “people in harsh circumstances (i.e. poverty) must have done something bad to warrant their situation. This is also called blaming the victim.

But people live in harsh circumstances for reasons outside of their control. Inequalities exist even before birth, as womb environments and genetic inheritance combine to give individuals different degrees of health. Newborns don’t deserve their fate; do two-day-old or two-month olds? At what point, is someone fully responsible for their lot in life? The newborn with less privilege most often becomes the two- day-old with less privilege-- who becomes the toddler with less --and so on and so forth. Sometimes lives greatly improve and other times people’s lives fall apart (these extremes more likely gain media attention), but as best as social science can understand the process: the privilege at birth often leads to more privilege later and vice versa.

“What goes around comes around” and “you reap what you sow” can be other variations of the Just World Fallacy. Common stereotypes reflecting the Just World, such as “homeless are lazy” first imply that all homeless people are the same, and secondly, that they are reaping the consequences of their laziness. See if you can identify other common stereotypes

that are blaming the victim or describing another person as category that is inferior (and therefore deserving his or her challenging circumstances). These will be crucial to state in writing or share with your group so that you can identify them for what they are (tools of alienation). When you hear them or think of them, remind yourself that this is a fallacy.

Just as critical for the Just World Fallacy, is the misunderstanding that someone well-off is worthy of their privilege or entitled because of his or her good behavior. It is nice when good behavior is rewarded but doing good does not necessitate a reward, and having favorable capacities, resources, possessions, or power is not necessarily a reflection of good behavior. Having favorable circumstances is not a bad thing, it is not something to be shameful about, but these two events (behavior and reward) are simply not inevitably tied together.

An unfortunate consequence of believing in a Just World is that it can function to maintain a sense of “deserved privilege” for those with a more fortunate status in the world. This may consequently reduce some privileged people’s willingness to work for justice and equality. Did the newborn do something to deserve health or wealth? Perhaps there is resistance to seeing it as a fallacy because they want to believe they deserve their good fortune. (And indeed some of them might, but again not all fortunate circumstances are automatically caused by good behavior.)

Yet, unpacking the ways a person may be privileged can highlight some interesting complexities. Privilege is multidimensional, and there are many different types. Privilege comes in the form of attributes like favored skin color, sex/gender, sexual orientation, body type, mental health, physical attractiveness, or resources such as financial wealth, citizenship, education, language, or social support. People are not entirely privileged or completely lacking in privilege, each of us are privileged in some ways and not others. In addition, privilege is context specific: your native language (skin color, gender, etc) may make life easier at home, but not when you travel. Furthermore, the different types of privilege provide different benefits, and some forms of privilege bring greater power than others. These variations have little to do with moral character. For better and for worse, they are mostly not within the individual’s control.

Addressing your own privilege and the way you may benefit from undeserved privilege is hard and may trigger defensiveness but here is another place to suspend judgment. For example, identifying someone as having white privilege is NOT the same as calling him or her a racist, and it is not the intention to promote white- or colonizer’s- guilt or shame. It is however, pointing to a historic and current imbalance of power. When we ignore or pretend as though this imbalance doesn’t exist, we perpetuate injustice. With awareness that you likely have more power than others (in some ways) brings a unique opportunity to put that power to work towards reconciliation. If you are privileged with power and resources, you can use your time and resources to initiate a relationship, request a collaboration, or build community with diverse others. If you are privileged with emotional stability, you can sit with others as they grieve or feel anxious. You can be the one who has resources to listen to stories of oppression and resilience and find ways to be a supportive ally. No matter who you are or what your background is, your story matters, and you have strengths to bring to the social justice table.

As you can see, collectively, the Golden Rule, sympathy, cultural assimilation, the deficit model, and the Just World fallacy produce many negative consequences including racism, discrimination, negative stereotypes, and in general not treating someone as an equal human. Suspending judgment of others is important even if it is not your normal mode of interacting with difference. Words like “barbarous” “foreign” “exotic” “rude” “bizarre” “strange” and “ignorant” are examples that entail separation and often judgment of another community’s practices and beliefs. These words convey evaluating cultures without considering their origins, meaning, and functions from the perspective of that community. When one focuses on judging the deficits (or overly romanticizing difference), he or she loses out on the opportunity to collaborate and support the other community’s power and to draw upon those strengths for healing or improving the world. The next reading describes the strength-based approach to service and other considerations to foster meaningful intercultural service.

## Workshop 2: Activity & Discussion:

### Activity: I Just Want To Stand Beside You

Have group stand in space that is free of furniture. Tell them: “Without using any form of communication, silently and secretly pick two people in the group. Don’t say anything or communicate who you are attempting to do this with, but go stand equally between two people: So that one is on your left and the other on your right. Or one is in the front and one is in back of you.”

Have group attempt this activity until it is fun or frustrating and then wait 30 seconds before ending it.

Points to discuss:

1) First ask the group to come up with what they learned. Write on board short answer or just allow them to share out loud.

Here are some common answers with prompts to push them further:

\*It is a lot easier if we could communicate. Yes! Ok now try it again and communicate.

Still can't do it: -- so back to discussion.

Again, first ask the group to come up with what they learned.

\*If it isn't mentioned by the members, suggest that each of them had a relatively easy agenda, but couldn't get it met because other people were trying to meet their relatively easy agenda. The point is that sometimes, your "simple need," a) won't be met and b) interferes with someone's simple need. In group, you can't always expect your agenda to be met

\*The solution keeps moving -- I have this goal, but the process continues to be complicated. Yes! Just like service. It is always unfolding in new and interesting ways. Be prepared to shift.

Activity: Understanding Privilege

In group, read White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack available here: <https://www.isr.umich.edu/home/diversity/resources/white-privilege.pdf>.

Allow for general reactions and natural discussion focusing on skin color as the variable under the microscope. (10 minutes)

Then have participants get into small groups and generate other sources of privilege. Each group should be encouraged to create up to 10 items that reveal additional sources of privilege.

Then share a few of these sources and items with the whole class. If it doesn't come up from the group, be sure to discuss that one group is not 100% privileged while another group 100% without. There are different combinations of privilege and strengths.

Activity: Acknowledging the Diversity Here: Two Methods

A: As mentioned in the text, we tend to overestimate similarity between ourselves and other people. This leads us thinking the Golden Rule (narrowly defined), sympathy, and assimilation are meaningful and kind practices. Often we simply don't have reason to get to know the diversity that is actually present with any group of people.

Have group sit in a circle.

Look to your left, keep your eye gaze soft, and think about all that you know about this person. Think about what they've said about themselves in this class, outside of class, what you've heard about this person beyond class, what you pick up in their language, habits, and dress about who they are, etc. Take a moment to run through that and respect all that you do know. Now look center and close your eyes. Recognize that the person to your right just did that with you--- and instead of guessing what they know, think about what the person to your right doesn't know about you. Recognize and respect it's vastness compared to what they do know; they don't know the complexities. They don't know all the times you were hurt or proud. They don't understand the times you felt oppressed or mistreated. They probably made many assumptions about you that made you seem more similar to them than you really are. Because that is what people tend to do...they fill in information about other people in a way that is from their own understanding and misunderstandings of the world.

The goal is not to share all, what do we do with this information?

B: Another method that achieves similar results is to have the participants (as homework) write out their family tree. Provide these instructions for the homework:

To the best of your ability include: Name, DOB, DOD, Place of birth, Education, Military service, Occupation, Vocation, Residence locations, Religious affiliation, Ethnicity, Country of Heritage, Date Married, Number of children, & Other information you find interesting.

Organize the information in the way that works best for you.

Then structure the discussion so every participant gets to share. They are not to read their family tree (boring!) but rather summarize the findings about it. What does your family tree reveal about your family values, knowledge that was shared with you, typical ways of life, etc. What cultural tools are passed down in your family of origin?

After everyone has shared, involve the group in a discussion of how the diversity in the group was hidden before this exercise.

### Activity for Group Process: Defining Goals

After telling the group the community's needs then the leader-defined educational goals for the trip, have the participants also provide what their personal goals are. Remember to hold commitment in this order: First, the commitment to the community needs; second, the objectives of the group; and third, the personal goals of the participants.

### Discussion

“What goes around comes around” and “you reap what you sow” can be other variations of the Just World Fallacy. Common stereotypes reflecting the Just World, such as “homeless are lazy” first imply that all homeless people are the same, and secondly, that they are reaping the consequences of their laziness. See if you can identify other common stereotypes that are blaming the victim or describing another person as category that is inferior (and therefore deserving his or her challenging circumstances). These will be crucial to state in writing or share with your group so that you can identify them for what they are (tools of alienation). When you hear them or think of them, remind yourself that this is a fallacy.

## Reading 3: Suggested Solutions

In this third reading, the strength-based approach will be described along with other important practices to facilitate meaningful intercultural service.

### More on the Strength Based Approach.

In contrast to viewing those we help as deficit, attempting to make them more like us, or blaming them for their circumstance, a strength-based approach will produce a more respectful relationship and productive experience. A strength-based approach to intercultural service begins with the assumption that all people have assets, intelligence, and capacities, just as all communities have cultural practices that are positive, meaningful, and healthy. The strength-based view includes the idea that within all communities are some individuals who are not well, and some practices that are not healthy, but strengths can be found, emphasized and drawn upon to address issues.

The strength-based approach encourages the involvement of the host community in leading and determining the course of action. Their engagement will ensure that the solutions generated are rooted in their meaning system, such that the change is more appropriate, attractive, and sustainable. As most issues are systemic and complex, they require more than an outsider's remedy; you can't plan to fly in to fix the problem and leave. Plan to work in collaboration and facilitate the change at the pace and in the direction the residents want. Anticipate that this could be a long-term relationship.

On a daily basis, look for what is working and healthy and be sure to place some of your attention there. Even if the strengths appear unrelated to the issues, uncovering and acknowledging another person's unique capacities or knowledge is a way towards a more equitable partnership. It shows respect, and this will keep you humble and capable of learning from



other cultural practices. Use language carefully as it carries in it the perspective by which you are approaching service. For example, consider the difference between describing a five-year-old as “at risk” versus “with potential” or doing service “with” versus “for” someone, along with the other powerful words described earlier (i.e. unskilled, uneducated, developing, etc.). Your words can direct your attention to different aspects of the situation, influence your own state of mind, as well as be a powerful message received by others. Words that express optimism, hope, and faith that improvement is possible tends to generate more effective dynamics. With your words you can communicate to the community that you are aware that all people have their strengths and challenges and all inevitably change.

### Active Listening as a Part of Strength-Based Approach

As mentioned, a necessary ingredient in building healthy, constructive, and positive relationships is listening and understanding. We can draw from the fields of counseling psychology and conflict management to learn how to engage in **active listening**. Active listening can be accomplished through a variety of techniques, all of which help the listener give full attention to and focus on what is being communicated (as opposed to thinking through your own reaction or what you might say next). Watching body language, resisting the temptation to rush to speak, restating, clarifying, paraphrasing, confirming, and pausing before you speak are all techniques that are easy to understand but take practice to employ. Expect conversations to take more time; slow down to fully process the other’s intentions (and remember, it is an anatomical difference in the brain that creates the need for more time).

If you are building a brand new relationship, an initial step is to ask the person or community receiving the service what it is they want or need, what is important to them with regards to the collaboration, the issues, and how they’d like to use resources (personal resources or community-wide). A plan for ongoing communication may reduce the chances of something going off course.

Misunderstandings can happen even when one attempts to do diligent preparation. For example, Hillary Kahn, an experienced educator in international service learning, shared this example (2011). She began her work with a community in Jamaica by conducting a survey on the needs of the community. One clear outcome was that the community wanted a summer camp for their children. Kahn and her students worked hard to develop a fun enriching camp focused around themes of environment, civic engagement, global awareness, respecting differences, natural resources and healthy living. But, as they learned (a little too late), the US definition of “summer camp” is different than what “summer camp” means in Jamaica. They learned that summer camp in Jamaica is a time for students to build skills they need for school - essentially math and writing skills. Since words may have different meanings the community needs to be involved with any significant decisions.

An additional example can be used to highlight how inadequate communication, and in particular deficient attention to cultural beliefs, could negate plans for “service.” In another attempt to make improved cookstoves, a group discovered that wood ash is a great insulator (personal communication, B. Durham, August 2014). However a community in Haiti declined to use the ash because in this community ash is spiritually powerful and one would not have food surrounded by ash. This example highlights how one person’s solution may run counter to the host community’s religious or spiritual beliefs and communication is necessary to prevent wasted time and resources. Of course “the solution” --whether an ash insulated stove, or indoor plumbing won’t be accepted or sustained if it isn’t fitting to the host community.

When you ask what is needed, you may be surprised. As members of the middle class in the US, you may tend to think financially impoverished communities need resources and time to build infrastructure, health, or otherwise accomplish something visible, but sometimes the greatest service we offer is that we put down the shovel, paintbrush, rake, and other tools and work more to develop meaningful relationships. Listening is not the first idea many middle-class people think about when wanting to do service. But sometimes providing space to listen to people’s stories of hardship, resilience, oppression, and persistence is key to overcoming barriers and learning exactly what the community needs at the moment.

For example through listening for strengths in the very financially impoverished circumstances of Pine Ridge SD, my students have learned: a person who isn’t literate may have a stronger long-term memory for history or stories because he or she doesn’t rely on the cultural tools (of pens, pencils or computers) for writing things down. A person who doesn’t make eye contact while in conversation may be showing respect (as opposed to disinterest) and may be a better listener to what you are saying. Prior to their experience on Pine Ridge my students often equate poverty with a lack of financial resources, but after their experience they come to understand that in some ways they (the students) are more impoverished, specifically they often find themselves to be spirituality bankrupt.

As one participant stated,

*“Before going to Pine Ridge, I had read articles and books about the reservation’s poverty: the 95% unemployment rates, the high risk of diseases like tuberculosis, heart disease, and alcoholism, seventeen people living in a three-room house. But when we arrived at the home of Floyd and Natalie Hand on the reservation, the first thing Natalie told us as we sat around after dinner was, “We don’t consider this poverty.” This was a difficult concept to wrap our heads around.... As the week went on, the concept became clearer... They take care of each other and make sure everyone has what they need. In this way, I saw that the Lakota people lived richer than many American families. The Lakota people that I saw possessed love for each other, love for their animals, and love for their land. From this measurement of the quality of life, the Lakota are not impoverished in the slightest.”*

In summary, it can be difficult to not focus on “what is wrong” if the existence of a “problem” is the rationale for you to be there (Hammond, 2010). Importantly, the strength based approach is not about denying that issues need to be addressed, but places problems in context and it creates space for you to find and acknowledge forms of expertise, skill, and leadership within the community (like my students discovered spiritual wealth within the Lakota family). If your goal is to help, then first try to understand what it means “to help”. Help is not just bringing food, medical equipment, technologies, or sending money, but includes giving yourself to learning, to be willing to transform and grow from the experience. Don’t go/serve to change other people’s lives (that is paternalistic); don’t go/serve to just change your own life (that is selfish -- or mission-tourism). Go/serve to develop relationships and co-construct change that will lead to a more just, healthy world. Go to develop a stronger sense of interdependence in a reciprocal and non-exploitative way. To “do service” can be imposing, but “to be in the service of” is to be open to finding out what is needed.

### Addressing Your Expectations of Yourself: Starfish and Kittens

In honoring the host community’s approach, you also need to pay attention to your role and realize you may work for positive change, but you aren’t going to be able to “fix it all” (nor should you). You are, however, going to be capable of benefiting many lives. Before turning our attention to summarizing the lessons learned, I think it is fitting to share two popular stories regarding service. You may find inspiration in the starfish thrower story by Loren Eiseley which highlights the benefit of making a difference, even if it is just for one person’s life on a temporary basis (<http://www.esc16.net/users/0020/FACES/Starfish%20Story.pdf>).

Another feature of service is highlighted by another story. Suppose you are walking by a river and see a kitten floating down the river. The kitten is barely staying afloat so you swim out to rescue it. Once back on the shore, you feel gratitude that you saved the kitten. Then another kitten floats by, and another and another. You spend your day swimming out in the river to pull the kittens safely to shore never stopping to address why the kittens are in the river in the first place, or what or who is putting them there! Service work can sometimes feel like endlessly pulling kittens out of the river. It is important to recognize that your efforts make a difference for each kitten (or starfish) that no longer suffers. Furthermore, the larger cause of the problem is often upstream and out of sight. Although service work varies from upstream to downstream, it is important to know where you are and why. Upstream work may only appear less urgent and removed from the issue, but assistance upstream (i.e. policy work) is a significant way to engage in service, while downstream work has the immediate satisfaction of making a difference in a relatively short-time frame and is a preferred entry point for many people.

### Lessons Learned

Considering all that we reviewed thus far, the suggestions for how to prepare to build strong partnerships and contribute meaningfully in an intercultural collaboration can be repeated in short form here:

1) Diligent preparation that generates initial knowledge of:

A) the situation, community, or country that you are about to enter. We recommend the preparation include learning (through reading, watching videos, talking with people with experience, writing,

and/or critical reflective thinking) about the political, economic, cultural, historical and social issues of the cultures you will interact with.

B) Diligent preparation to unveil your own cultural practices and privileges as a means to understanding yourself. Remember the tendency that we have to prefer what we are familiar with and how we must actively work to overcome this judgment.

2) Take a strength based approach. Through empathy and active listening you can discover the beauty of the powers and strengths of the host community. Working towards solutions through collaboration will produce much more effective outcomes. Help create safe spaces where people can speak for themselves rather than stepping in and speaking for them. Support their efforts to make their own lives better and respect their desired outcomes.

A) Active listening is key to engaging in empathy and the Platinum Rule.

Since solutions don't come from the outside or in an instant, you might ask and listen to their responses to the following questions: What do they value? What do they expect from you? What are their needs? How do they want to work towards solutions? What is their perspective of the issue? What is their time frame and process?

B) Suspend judgment when you encounter difference. Working outside your comfort zone can be a challenge, but that doesn't mean their way of doing life is wrong, deficit, or in need of becoming more like your way. As you act to expand your comfort zone, you will experience transformative self growth and gain valuable insights into the shared and diverse aspects of humanity.

C) Meaningful service work with the host community -- Remember that service begins with understanding and that people can only be understood in light of the cultural practices and circumstances of their community. To understand and collaborate with others is not easy; it requires effort and time, but is endlessly rewarding. Honor what you can accomplish within any given visit (like saving a single starfish), and honor your limitations (you are likely working downstream).

3) *Prepare to adjust* (your expectations, knowledge, plans, ideas, viewpoint, self-awareness, etc.) What is referred to as "truth" is simply our current agreement on what seems to be a useful way to understand things in the moment; it should always be under revision. Strive to maintain a learning attitude with a notable lack of self-righteous ideology and recognize that assumptions of grand human sameness can be flagrantly harmful to individuals, communities, and entire nations of people. Anticipate that your own or your group's fumbling will be insightful -- Prepare to revise your understanding and change the way you engage to be more encompassing, comprehensive, and inclusive. Each day is a new opportunity to connect more deeply with others. Revision is a part of the learning process and continuing to strive for understanding is a major step in creating a more just world.

## In Closing

We believe the need for understanding other cultures has always been necessary, but even more so with globalization and climate change; we are obviously interconnected and need greater understanding. Respect and understanding are imperative for our survival and together we can make a better quality of life for everyone.

It bears repeating: humans are all unique and equally human, all deserve respect and dignity. We are all interconnected and diversity is valuable. If we dismiss the importance of different cultural systems, we create more injustices (even a simple waste of resources is unjust). This guide is written to help you utilize a framework for service that involves a strength-based approach (preparation, active listening, empathy, collaboration) and persistent learning. It requires curiosity, suspending one's own assumptions, and carefully separating efforts to understand cultural phenomena from efforts to judge their value. If the primary outcome of the service is that those who "helped" feel better about their privileged lives, then the host community was exploited and the opportunity to connect and improve the well-being of the world was lost. If you want to be of service, the first step is to listen and learn. Then be responsive to the host community's values and needs and be open to how the service unfolds. You will benefit greatly as well.

# Workshop 3: Activity & Discussion

## Activity: What Success Looks Like

Objectives: Explore and express individual goals, group goals and fears/concerns.

Materials Needed: 3 x 5 cards, pens/pencils

Procedures:

1. Hand out cards and then ask everyone to imagine we are there (for example, on Pine Ridge). We are engaging in intercultural service and the group is working quite successfully. Describe what this looks like on the 3 x 5 cards.
2. Ask them to describe their role in that moment.
3. Describe what the group did or said to help create that moment.
4. When everyone is finished turn the card over and describe a “concern or pitfall” that might challenge them or the group during intercultural service.
5. Once done, ask people to pair up with another person by one of the following: thumb size or width of smile (or something else random that forces friendly interaction and movement around the room).
6. Ask partners to share their responses with each other.
7. Come back into the large group and ask people for their responses and put them up on a board. Start with “successful” moments first. Once the list is on the board ask if there are any more ways we will define the experience as “successful”. Now do the same for the “concerns or pitfalls”.
8. Agreements/contracts: Ask what can individuals or the group do or not do to make the experience a success or to mitigate the “concerns or pitfalls”. What can we commit to, to work toward a successful course? Create this group agreement on paper so that it can be revisited and carried with you through the travel experience.
9. Make sure that the course leader collects all of the 3 x 5 cards to compile and review at a later date.

## Activity: Let it Go!

This activity should be done just prior to travel. Throughout the preparation, we have diligently generated knowledge of ourselves and of the communities we will work with. First, on an index card summarize the main points that you don't want to forget. In shorthand, write down your expectations for the community, service, and yourself. Share your card with at least one other person and practice active listening by clarifying, restating, and otherwise validating each other's expectations. Then return the card to the owner. All together now, rip up the card. You may encourage people to keep their pieces as a reminder of the on-going dynamic between learning and letting go.

## Discussion: “Those People”

Give each participant a copy of the poem My Name Is Not “Those People” by Julia Dinsmore

<http://doorwayproject.wordpress.com/2011/05/19/my-name-is-not-those-people-4/>

and either have participants take turns reading lines or watch a video of a reading of it here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hQWbkVqZKeo>

Then on the physical copy, ask participants to circle any language that reveals a deficit model and star lines that reveal a strength-based approach.

Second, you may also ask: how it is evident that cultural practices fit together to meet survival needs.

Third, you may ask participants to note other connections between the poem and these workshops.



## Hard Ethical Questions for Discussion

- What right do you have to enter this community?
- There is an inherent power differential (those serving are likely more privileged in many ways (education, financially, infrastructure) --what justification is there for you to be involved in someone else's community (showing up with your "answers" to their "problems")?
- What right do you have to be involved in the personal lives of the residents of a community, especially if you weren't invited by the residents?

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