

## **Sample Service-Learning Reflection Questions**

These sample questions are offered to inspire your thinking about how to guide your students through critical reflection in service-learning courses. They are intended only as examples. Reflection questions should be based on the learning outcomes for the experience and directly relate to the service experience and other readings and learning activities.

### **General Personal Questions**

What do you bring to this experience? How much effort are you willing to put forth? How open are you to learning?

How did this experience make you feel? How do you believe others felt?

What assumptions and expectations did you bring to the experience? What assumptions and expectations do you think others brought about you?

To what extent were your assumptions and expectations validated? If the reality was different from your assumptions and expectations, why do you believe there was a discrepancy?

How did your experience reveal your values, attitudes, and biases? How did it reinforce or challenge your values, attitudes, and biases?

What personal characteristic are you coming to understand better as a result of your service and reflection experiences? Explain this characteristic so that someone who does not know you would understand it. What are the origins of this characteristic? How do you think you will seek to use, improve, or change this characteristic in the future?

What was it like to work with community members and other students from different/like race communities? How are your life experiences similar and different from others' in the situation?

In what ways did you do well in this experience? What personal characteristics helped you do well? What was difficult for you? What personal characteristics contributed to the difficulties you experienced?

How have you changed as a result of this experience? How will these changes affect your future behaviors?

### **Project-Based Questions**

What are the strengths and limitations of the project?

Does the project address immediate needs or long-term solutions?

If the project continued, would the problem go away eventually?

If the project stopped in order to try another approach to the issue, would the community suffer?

Are there assets in the community that are not being tapped? Is our involvement so focused on the community's deficits that we haven't seen its assets?

### **General Analytic Questions**

What concepts/principles/facts/theories that you have learned relate to your experience? To what extent were they validated or challenged by the experience?

What do we know about the social issue being addressed and about how it has affected this community in particular?

What are the symptoms of the problem and what are the causes?

What social issues are connected to the problem addressed by the project, such as racism, class stratification, sexism? To what extent can a difference be made on this issue without addressing these social problems?

How did differences in power and privilege emerge in this experience? What underlying systems influence the power dynamics? What are their effects?

What underlying systems maintain the problem and the power dynamics? How can they be addressed? Dismantled?

What ethical issues emerged during this experience?

How do the ethical principles and practices of your discipline align, or not align, with the core beliefs of the community or organization you are working with?

What tensions between individual interests and the common good did you observe? What trade-offs between them occurred? Who made the trade-offs? To whom were they beneficial or not? Were they appropriate? Why or why not?

What is progress? Is progress necessarily good for everyone? Why or why not?

What is the purpose of this reading? What is the author's main argument? How is this argument supported, validated, or contradicted by other readings? By the service experience?

What are the assumptions embedded in this reading? What is omitted or glossed over? Why?

Based on the service experience and other readings, where do you stand vis-à-vis the author's position?

## Questions to Explore Future Action

Is enough known about the issue and this community, or is more research needed?

Who needs to understand the problem better and be convinced to make a change?

Have the voices of all members of the community been heard? What steps have been taken to ensure everyone agrees on the direction of the effort?

Is more funding needed? Who would receive the money and what would they use it for? Who could be approached for funding?

What relevant laws or policies affect the issue? How did they come to be?

What stance do local and/or national politicians take on the issue?

How are other individuals or groups working to address the problem? Discuss the strengths and limitations of those approaches and how a coalition might be able to coordinate effort.

What campus or community organizations could be tapped to make the effort stronger? Should a new organization be formed to bring together people who are interested in this issue?

How can students use the knowledge and skills they are gaining in college, particularly in their career field, to address the issues?

What other forms of civic engagement would be effective in addressing the issue?

Excerpted from: B. Jacoby, *Service-Learning Essentials: Questions, Answers, and Lessons Learned* (2015, Jossey-Bass).