

Developed for *Building a Better World: The Pedagogy and Practice of Global Service-Learning* (Hartman, E., Kiely, R., Friedrichs, J., and Boettcher, C. 2013) and available at criticalservicelearning.org.

Stereotype List

In this activity, the goal is to have participants generate a list of ideas they hold about the community they are entering. Generating the list should be done before travelling and very early in the course before readings and assignments. It can be generated in person in a classroom setting or online – we've been successful conducting this assignment either way. Importantly, the group will reflect on the list both at the time it is created and throughout the course. It is especially instructive to return to the list at the end of the course and deconstruct it. This helps participants begin the process of translating the experience home, as they will be communicating with a home community operating under a similar list.

Consider how the dynamic of this activity changes when you include members of the local community and/or community partner staff or local residents. Community members can participate in creating the list about their home community or can create a separate list for the culture of the GSL participants. It is possible to conduct the assignment in a diverse group that includes these stakeholders but be thoughtful about how that will impact what participants share and how community members will feel. Although it may be upsetting, it is instructive to know that participants think of a community as poor or associate it with a product ("Lucky Charms" and Ireland, Ganja and Jamaica, etc). If you avoid drawing this conversation out, you risk having participants stay connected to their superficial stereotypes and biases without interrogating them. If you avoid having this conversation with the community, you lose an opportunity for meaningful cross-cultural dialogue.

Sample assignment for conducting this assignment online, before traveling:

Please brainstorm a list of words that comes to mind when you think of this place/country/community. Be free and creative, don't censor yourself. The idea with this activity is to have a basis of what we were thinking before we experienced the culture. Email your list to the group. Later we will return to our combined list and critique it. We will also use it as a tool to think about how we can explain the complexity of our experience to family and friends whose understanding of this place is likely based on these terms and words.

If conducting the brainstorm online, be sure to schedule time to have a reflective conversation once the group meets (after some trust has been established). Alternatively, the participants could answer reflective questions in a paper or journal assignment.

If the group is together for this activity, the whole activity can occur as one session.

Example pre-service reflective questions:

- Where did these ideas and notions form? Who taught them to you? Who has a stake in them?
- What does the list look like - it is largely positive, negative or neutral? What historical events or recent current events helped shape these ideas?
- How do you benefit from these stereotypes? How do they contrast with ideas about yourself, your nation or your culture?

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- How could we collectively find out more about these topics and areas? What would be the most effective ways to interrogate and challenge our ideas while in the community?
- If you are from the community, were you aware of these stereotypes? Do you share any of them? Which ones hold a kernel of truth and how? Which ones are problematic and how?

Return to the list later in the GSL course. Participants may laugh or joke about their naïve ideas so facilitate a conversation that helps them to seriously address the underlying bias we unconsciously subscribe to - this will be stark for them when they return to their home community and it is essential for them to begin processing it.

Example post service reflective questions:

- What on this list has changed for you and how? Who taught you new knowledge? How could you transmit what you learned to others (especially people who have never been and will never come to this place).
- What would you add to this list now? What would you subtract? Where did you find your stereotypes reinforced and where were they challenged?
- What does this list help you see about your privilege? What couldn't you see before that you have a glimmer of now? What are you still struggling to understand?
- If you had come to this place as a tourist on vacation rather than in a service capacity, what might you have learned? How did being a part of a community-driven service experience help to illuminate and expand on your ideas? How might it have hindered your experience?
- Write a letter to a family member or good friend who is operating with this list in the back of their mind telling them about your experience here. Give them the letter and reflect on their reaction. Have a dialogue with them.
- For community members, how have your stereotypes changed based on your experience with the GSL program? In what areas have they been reinforced and in what have they been challenged?