ABSTRACT

KIM LILIENTHAL. Discursive Stancetaking in Service Learning Reflection Assessment. (Under the direction of Professor Agnes Bolonyai).

The divide between academic and co-curricular service learning settings can result in a fractured model of service learning presented to both students and the community partners. Studying, implementing, and assessing written reflection has the potential to bridge the gap between curricular and co-curricular pedagogies because writing, reflection, and critical thinking are areas of interest for both departments. This study, a follow up to a pilot completed in Fall 2014, developed a framework for analyzing and assessing written reflection using discursive stancetaking (Du Bois, 2007) and positioning (Davis & Harré, 2007) as an indicator for level of reflection and success of community partnerships. Thirty-seven reflections written by students on short-term, immersive Alternative Breaks service programs (domestic and international) were coded and analyzed for their level of reflection according to the Kolb Experiential Learning Cycle and 12 different types of stancetaking. Stance codes included three categories (affective, evaluative, epistemic) and four object orientations (self, work, partner, setting). Results showed correlation between diversity of stance type and level of reflection, indicating that students who are thinking more deeply about the experience tend to take more diverse stances. Patterns also emerged in how the international and domestic reflections showed different types of stances about the community partner, the work, and the setting, providing service learning educators with insight into the unique needs of students working in these different settings. Stance can be used to determine how to improve communication between college students and community partners about goal formation and role clarification, and can work as an indicator for the potential sustainability of the partnership.