

*PUTTING THE LEARNING IN  
SERVICE LEARNING  
From Soup Kitchen Models to the  
Black Metropolis Model*

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Results of the Black Metropolis Model (BMM) of service learning are analyzed and illustrated in this article to explain how to “put the learning in service learning.” There are many soup kitchens or nontransforming models of service learning where students are asked to serve needy populations but internalize and learn little about the service in their service learning. The results of a successful transforming model of service learning are presented to demonstrate how to put the learning in service learning for all students. The model integrates community institutions, residents, university faculty, staff, and undergraduate and high school students in hands-on service learning experiences that document uneven changes in the Black Metropolis of Chicago. The results reveal that the information and knowledge acquired by students transforms student knowledge as they internalize how uneven development in housing impacts community residents and their future in the original Black Metropolis of Chicago.

*Keywords:* service learning; Black Metropolis; community empowerment

**Service learning and community-based** research is becoming increasingly popular in the pedagogy and praxis of a small number of higher

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AUTHORS' NOTE: This project was supported by junior and senior students from the following high schools in Chicago: Dusable, Kenwood Academy, Phillips, Senn, North Lawndale College Prep, Jones Academy, and North College Prep. Adrian Capehart, Lazarus Rice, Lori Murphy, David Jabon, Pat McHaffie, and Michale Bennett provided valuable assistance in the first year of the Black Metropolis Project. Special thanks to Professor Steve Harp and his tireless efforts to produce the oral history of Douglas and Grand Boulevard. The senior author received funding from the College of Liberal Arts and Science Undergraduate Research Assistant Program. This project was supported by grants from DePaul University's Vincentian Endowment Fund, the Steans Center for Community based Service Learning and Community Service Studies, the University Research Council, and Quality of Instruction Councils.

EDUCATION AND URBAN SOCIETY, Vol. 38 No. 2, February 2006 115-141  
DOI: 10.1177/0013124505284294  
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education professors, academic professionals, and college and university research and learning centers. Both service learning and community-based research are pedagogies that require students to insert themselves as social actors and agents into a particular community, place, or experience outside of the classroom. Whether in the form of service learning and/or community-based research, this pedagogy views experience as a conduit in improving student comprehension, as well as critical and analytical understanding of a particular subject, population, and/or phenomenon being taught through traditional devices—such as conceptual and didactic themes and ideas—in the classroom. Yet, one of the obstacles toward experiential education, in particular service learning, is in gaining institutional legitimacy. Denial of institutional legitimacy, whether it is in the university or other professional fields where service learning is being taught, is tied to the perception that service learning lacks educational quality and merit. Thus, Eyster and Giles (1999) raise the proverbial question: Where's the learning in service learning?

The matter of educational merit is not the only obstacle plaguing service learning and community-based research. Questions arise regarding service-learning methodology, the role of reflection, how reciprocal is service learning to those being "served," and whether community-based research constitutes service learning. The following article strives to address these questions by analyzing the success of a comprehensive service-learning research model that synthesizes classroom lectures and activities, multiple learning tools (i.e., reading, writing, data collection, spatial mapping, field observation research, and photography), and service and experiential learning. Through this model, we not only illuminate where the learning in service learning is but also show how the bifurcation between service learning and community-based research can be bridged, as well as how collaborating with various community actors can foster, augment, and sustain a relationship of reciprocity between university and community agents. This article provides a framework from which both service learning and educational practitioners can conceptualize and implement service learning and community-based research curriculum.

### **SOUP KITCHENS AS NONTRANSFORMING SERVICE-LEARNING MODELS**

Jacoby and Associates (1996) define service learning in the following way:

Service-learning is a form of experiential education in which students engage in activities that address human and community need together with structured opportunities intentionally designed to promote student learning and development. Reflection and reciprocity are key concepts of service-learning. (p. 5)

We define the soup kitchen models of service learning as experiences where students explore social problems but do not learn about the nuances, complexities, and challenges that create the need for service. In the soup kitchen models of service learning, there is little commitment to those being served, the frequency of interaction is limited, and the amount of time spent serving those in need is short term. In this model, there is little to no learning in the service learning. Soup kitchen models often serve as quick college credits and, in some cases, as an easy grade for students. Moreover, soup kitchen models are ideal for those that seek to invest little time or resources in the engagement or immersion of themselves in the life and circumstances of the people being served. The approach taken by both student and faculty in soup kitchen models of service learning is typically framed as a “serve and split the scene” experience to get back to the normal routine of the classroom and education.

The above definition by Jacoby and Associates (1996) is a general definition of service learning for public and private high schools, universities, and colleges that are attempting to build into their standard curriculum ways to teach students about the importance and the need for civic responsibility in the 21st century. To assist in this endeavor, a spectrum of service-learning models in higher education has emerged out of the concept of the “new university” (Boyer, 1994). The concept of the new university urges higher educational institutions to “respond to the challenges that confront our children, schools, and our cities, just as land-grant colleges responded to the needs of agriculture and industry a century ago” (Boyer, 1994, p. 48). To meet this challenge, universities and colleges have asked faculty and staff to take leadership roles in building bridges to community-service organizations and institutions in order to move students beyond theory in the classroom to practice in the real world. Where faculty and staff at colleges and universities choose to place students to accomplish the task of active learning in service learning affects the how the “learning is put into service learning.” We argue that models of service learning that swing toward the soup kitchen type fail to assist students in reaching a developmental stage of learning where they internalize into their own life and everyday decisions the nuances of those being served, the complexity of their needs, and the challenges the served person or community faces on a daily basis. We suggest that when students are placed in a service-learning context that supports and critically chal-

lenges their human development they will internalize the nuances, complexities, and challenges of those being served and “put the learning in the service learning.”

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BLACK METROPOLIS

*The Black Metropolis: A Study of Negro Life in a Northern City* by St. Clair Drake and Horace Cayton (1945) is a monumental work that encompassed historical, anthropological, sociological, economic, and social-survey analysis of Black life and culture in Chicago after WWI. The Great Migration that began just before WWI and continued through WWII was the largest redistribution of a single population in the United States. They transplanted and built social, cultural, religious, political, and economic institutions in Chicago to sustain their life in an environment that treated them as second-class citizens (Drake & Cayton, 1945; Hirsch, 1987; Spear, 1967).

In spite of the overt and covert racism Blacks experienced in Chicago, Black individuals and families were a critical and vital population resource for the eventual development of the Black Metropolis. Although confined in a narrow corridor on the city’s south side, they transplanted their culture and lifestyle by naming this “new” community of Blacks *Bronzeville*. They called the community Bronzeville to signify, illuminate, and magnify the dynamism of the multiple shades and colors of Black people who inhabited the community and to depict the emergence of an energetic Black identity through a renaissance of Black businesses, and cultural expression, in particular music, literature, and art.

By the 1960s, the community areas of Douglas and Grand Boulevard housed the largest concentration of public housing in the city of Chicago. The residential mobility of the Black middle and upper classes alone cannot explain the rapid deterioration of Bronzeville—its cultural, artistic, and musical legacy (Wilson, 1987). Institutions at the city, county, state, and federal level orchestrated a policy of housing confinement for the Black working class and working poor that fundamentally changed the rich diversity and cultural literacy that characterized the life and breath of Bronzeville (Hirsch, 1987). How did this “not just another neighborhood” change into a depressed, isolated, and hyper-segregated neighborhood during the last half of the 20th century (Drake & Cayton, 1945, p. 379). To understand and answer this question the Black Metropolis Model (BMM) of service learning was developed in 1999 to link student learning to the history of the Black

Metropolis through classroom instruction, structured field placements, experiential learning sites, and community research spaces to “put the learning in service learning.”

### **THE BMM**

The BMM is a comprehensive, collaborative, and reciprocal service-learning model designed to offer action research for and with the community. The BMM uses multiple theories and methods to co-construct knowledge and information with community people in order to have strategic dialogue on the changes taking place in Bronzeville since the last half of the 20th century. The BMM includes collaboration between DePaul University undergraduate and graduate students,<sup>1</sup> Chicago Public School high school junior and senior students, and Chicago Public Library and branch libraries in the Douglas and Grand Boulevard areas. There are two components of the BMM. One component involves collaboration between university departments and auxiliary programs. These departments and auxiliary units of the university provide instruction in the areas of bibliographic research, quantitative data manipulation, photography, and qualitative-field research. The second component of the BMM is the curriculum.

### **THE BLACK METROPOLIS CURRICULUM**

The BMM curriculum is designed to meet the long-range curricula objectives of DePaul University’s College of Liberal Arts and Sciences. The BMM uses a curriculum to meet course requirements in student major and minor areas of study in addition to requirements in experiential, service, and internship learning. The BMM enhances student experiential knowledge through project-based service learning, focusing on character development and student self-esteem through a transformative and intensive curriculum and team-based approach.<sup>2</sup> The curriculum is based on enhancing the human and career development of all students enrolled in the course.

The human development of students is challenged by the curriculum’s effort to bring to students’ consciousness the massive private and public disinvestment and devaluation of housing and commercial property in Bronzeville since 1950 (Smith, 1996). Students learn in the classroom not only the reasons for the evolution and then rapid out-migration of the Black middle class since the 1950s but also the flight of capital to the suburbs and the

resulting consequences this has for the population groups left behind (e.g., poverty, unemployment, ill health, poor education, and the under maintenance of housing). Students are exposed to these inequities through hands-on multiple intensive service-learning projects in Bronzeville to transform their everyday experiences and stereotypes about poor and working-class Black people. Structured service learning experiences illuminate the inequities and demonstrate for students how structural changes in Bronzeville since the last half of the 20th century led to the creation and social construction of the ghetto—resulting in multiple forms of aberrant behavior as feelings of despair and powerlessness dominated the life and breath of groups and individuals remaining in Bronzeville. Our service learning and curriculum focus transforms student values as they recognize and internalize how choices and decisions made by powerful groups and agents of capital outside Bronzeville can disrupt group and individual life chances and career aspirations. When the focus of the service-learning curriculum is on human and career development, through historical and contemporary experiences, circumstances, and situations that are confronting disadvantaged communities of color, the service learning impact on student values, morals, ethics, and identity is enhanced exponentially (Jacoby & Associates, 1999).

All students taking the BMM curriculum have demonstrated this. The BMM curriculum consists of three sequenced courses (see Table 1 below).

The Black Metropolis curriculum encompasses the nine learning goals of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at DePaul University.

1. **Writing intensive experiences:** Students write weekly journals and field notes describing their emotional reactions and observations during their supervised field placements. Students write weekly summaries of data and archival information being collected for project-based service learning. Finally, student teams orally present and hand in a written portfolio of their project-based service-learning assignments.
2. **The use of quantitative methods:** All students learn Excel and Arc View for geographical manipulation and analysis of census files on the Douglas and Grand Boulevard community areas. Using large data sets from the U.S. census and community survey data from standardized questionnaires sent to local residents in the area, students learn simple statistics to draw, where appropriate, co-relations between objective and subjective indicators of change in the project site.
3. **The use of active learning pedagogies:** All students spend no less than 25 hours in the field site per quarter with hands-on supervision and in-field instruction on observing key concepts of change reflected in housing, commercial, health, education, environment, safety, and the economy of the local project site.

**TABLE 1**  
**The Black Metropolis Model Curriculum Sequence**

<p>Black Metropolis I 1890-1950 (migration and settlement)</p> <p>Content: Causes and latent consequences of the Great Migration.</p> <p>Credit: Experiential, major and minor in sociology; credit in allied social sciences.</p> <p>The field experience for students in the first sequence is to investigate the historical achievements and accomplishments of the original settlers in the area through oral history, survey, field observation of historical sites and their contemporary use, library archival research, photo solicitation, census data manipulation using Atlas-GIS, and face-to-face interviews.</p>	<p>Black Metropolis II 1950-1975 (community development and the rise of the Black middle class)</p> <p>Content: Black occupational advancement, the rise of Black politicians and the middle class and the struggle for fair housing and civil rights.</p> <p>Credit: Experiential and service; minor in service learning; major and minor in sociology, credit in allied social sciences.</p> <p>The service and field experience for students in the second sequence is to investigate through direct service-learning community organizations, local institutions, and commercial and retail industries—the creation of their mission to serve and develop the community. Students conduct face-to-face interviews with key people in each organization; in addition, students conduct field observations, photo solicitation of the site and its surroundings, and conduct surveys with local constituents and proprietors.</p>	<p>Black Metropolis III 1975-present (Black disenfranchisement, political empowerment, and gentrification)</p> <p>Content: Black discontent, the election and death of Mayor Harold Washington and empowerment zones and/or gentrification.</p> <p>Credit: Experiential, service and internship; major and minor in sociology credit in allied social sciences.</p> <p>The internship, service, and field experience for students in the third sequence will involve placement in a social service agency as an intern with matching skills to enhance the performance of that agency. Students will also conduct service-learning projects in community organizations, local institutions, and commercial and retail industries and continue to conduct oral history, surveys, field observations of historical sites and their contemporary use, library archival research, photo solicitation, census data manipulation using Atlas-GIS, and face-to-face interviews.</p>
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4. **The use of cooperative learning group projects:** All students are placed in diverse heterogeneous grouped teams. Our goal is to match students in terms of their talent, social skills, and levels of self-esteem. We define cooperative learning as “students working together to maximize their own and each other’s learning” (Johnson & Johnson, 1992, p. 121). In doing this we expect to instill in each student and cooperative learning team the following attributes.<sup>3</sup>
  - A. *Positive interdependence:* in which each member can succeed only if all members succeed.
  - B. *Face-to-face promotive interaction:* Students assist and support each other’s efforts to achieve.
  - C. *Individual accountability:* to ensure that all members do their fair share of the work.
  - D. *Interpersonal and small group skills:* required to work cooperatively with others.
  - E. *Group processing:* in which groups reflect on how well they are working together and how their effectiveness as a group may be improved.
5. **An original research requirement:** All student teams are assigned a service-learning project-based assignment focusing on collecting data and information on a variety of components tied to the quality of life in the project site (health, housing, education, economy, environment, safety, culture, lifestyle, religion, music, art, literature, etc.). Each student team is given the latitude to focus on unique aspects and correlates of each component in the area based on their shared interest and guidance by the BMM staff and instructors.
6. **An emphasis on original and/or primary rather than secondary works:** All students work with original work and literature published on the Black Metropolis. Most of this literature is housed at the Carter G. Woodson regional library under the Vivian G. Harsh collection of African American literature and history. The BMM established a working relationship with each of the branch libraries in the project site (Hall, Bee, and King) and the Carter G. Woodson regional library. Each student team has full access to print materials for their project-based service-learning assignments.
7. **A course structure designed to utilize the resources of the urban area:** All students are exposed on a frequent basis, more than once a week, to the project site. Under team-guided and focused staff, faculty, and community supervision, student teams come to reflect, understand, appreciate, experience, learn, and serve the residents of the project site and its institutions.
8. **Service learning and reflection:** All student teams participate in service learning, which is the art of using the local urban community as an asset in the formation of student understanding, learning, and career development through collaboration, reciprocity, and reflection (Jacoby & Associates, 1996). Service learning involves the testing, shaping, and building of values and character to understand the need for equity and the actions required to achieve a just society. To this end, the BMM devotes one third of its curric-



ulum for reflection. Reflection sessions occur weekly to foster opportunities for students and instructional staff to share feelings, concerns, and questions on how their service is integrated with the BMM curriculum. Students and instructional support staff discuss in each class period their experiences, knowledge, ideas, and ethical and moral concerns about their role and its value to the BMM and the community the project serves. The below quotes illuminate the reflection that goes on when the focus is on “putting the learning in the service learning” for high school students.

**HIGH SCHOOL (HS) JUNIOR, 2000**

I have now got a feel of what college is like and how I need to space my time and planning. Over these past 9 weeks I have opened my eyes to many new things that I never knew. I think that I would like a class like this in college when I get there. Throughout this class I have learned a lot of good information and black history. I will remember this experience for the rest of my life.

**HS JUNIOR, 2002**

I really enjoyed the town hall meeting. At first I thought it was going to be boring, but I was wrong. I learned a lot of things about our history there—such as the legendary events that happened around the projects and the recreation centers that were built and are no longer in existence.

**HS JUNIOR, 2002**

The town hall meetings were very interesting and gave me a better look visually at how rapidly Bronzeville is changing. On my way to the second town hall meeting, I saw a billboard sign that startled me. The sign read “New Homes in Bronzeville starting at \$236,000.” That really had me thinking, because the majority of the people living in the Bronzeville area are low-income.

**HS SENIOR, 2001**

These projects (housing) seem to me to be just another form of slavery. These projects were built to keep black people limited to the offerings of the world. The projects were like cages that caused the residents to act as though they were “animals.” They seemed to be imprisoned because they were black.

9. **Interdisciplinary perspectives:** All students are exposed to the interdisciplinary nature of the research being conducted in the project site with instruction by faculty and staff in sociology, history, social work, political science, psychology, economics, photography, music, religion, bibliographic instruction, geography, oral history, ethnography, and qualitative and quantitative reasoning.

To implement the BMM curriculum, an infrastructure to recruit, monitor, train, assess, and evaluate the performance of all students enrolled in the project was designed.

## RESULTS

The BMM is a reciprocal, collaborative, and reflective relationship with the branch public libraries in Bronzeville—The George Cleveland Hall, The Chicago Bee and The Martin Luther King, Jr. The BMM Web site ([www.depaul.edu/~blackmet](http://www.depaul.edu/~blackmet)) is linked to the Chicago Public Library. Below, we illuminate the results of the BMM as students, staff, and faculty learn how to “put the learning in service learning.”

### THE LEARNING IN THE BRONZEVILLE PHOTO DOCUMENTARY PROJECT

The BMM, in collaboration with each head librarian at the Chicago branch libraries in the project site, designed and produced a photographic documentary service-learning curriculum of historical sites and contemporary changes occurring in public housing. This became the first BMM reciprocal and collaborative community service-learning project that was student focused but community led. The photo exhibit was the first installment of photographs depicting historical sites and documenting the acceleration of housing changes in the Black Metropolis.

Over the past 8 years, the community area of Douglas experienced dramatic increases in new construction whereas the adjacent community area, Grand Boulevard, experienced massive amounts of public housing demolition. These changes raised serious social, political, and economic questions regarding historic preservation, the future of public housing, and the city's short- and long-range plans for the Bronzeville. The photo exhibit provided an opportunity for students, staff, faculty, and the community to observe and



**Figure 1:** Photograph of Metropolitan Community Church, 41st Street and Martin Luther King Drive, Autumn 2000, Photo Taken by Project Photographer Lazarus Rice

reflect on the changes taking place in Bronzeville. A sample of photographs displayed at the exhibit is presented below.

The Metropolitan Community Church was founded and organized in 1920 by the late Dr. William Decatur Cook.<sup>4</sup> In 1927, the congregation moved to its new home in what was formerly The First Presbyterian Church at 41st and King Drive. At its new location, the Metropolitan Community Church, under the leadership of Rev. Dr. Joseph M. Evans (1930-1956) became a meeting place for political candidates, social reformers, and fraternal organizations. A number of organizations who were at the forefront of the African American struggle for democratic rights held critical meetings in the sanctuary of the church. Included on this list are the Pullman Porters Union and the NAACP. Among the many visitors to Metropolitan Community Church during the 20th century were A. Phillip Randolph, Eleanor Roosevelt, Mary McCloud Bethune, Henry Wallace, and Paul Robeson. Recently, the Metropolitan Community Church was boarded up and placed on the city's list for demolition. Students, faculty, and community organizations are currently developing strategies to petition the city of Chicago to place the church on the historic landmark list.

Included in the photo documentary exhibit were the recent changes occurring in public housing. From the 1960s to 2003, Bronzeville held the status of



**Figure 2: Photograph of Robert Taylor Homes Located at 48th and State Streets With Wrecking Crane**

locating the largest public housing complex in the city of Chicago and the United States.

All of the 28 high-rise buildings that comprise the Robert Taylor Homes, some that dwarf St. Mary's Church, as seen in the photograph above, are located in the Grand Boulevard community area of Bronzeville.<sup>5</sup>

These units, named after Robert Taylor, the first African American chairman of the Chicago Housing Authority, opened in 1962 on the remnants of the old Federal Street "slum," as a segregated project with a population of 27,000 African Americans, 20,000 of whom were children. During the course of almost 40 years, the character of the world's largest public housing complex changed dramatically (Venkatesh, 2000). By the end of the 20th century, the City of Chicago under the auspices of the Chicago Housing Authority and the federal department of Housing and Urban Development, the demolition of these housing developments began to make room for Hope VI—a Hope federal policy promoting new mixed-income housing development in the neighborhood. Out of a total of 28 buildings, three remain standing in 2003. The two pictures below are poignant illustrations of the changes occurring in Bronzeville in the 21st century.<sup>6</sup>

The documentary photography project and the photo exhibit engaged students, the community, and the BMM staff and faculty in a community effort to teach not just about the historical landmark status of Bronzeville but the current changes affecting public housing. As a permanent archive and exhibit



**Figure 3:** Photograph of Demolition of Robert Taylor Homes Located at 48th and Federal Streets



**Figure 4:** Photograph of Demolition of Robert Taylor Homes Located at 41st and Federal Streets

in the local branch libraries in Bronzeville, the photographic documentary service-learning project is a living testament to student investment in service learning. Students learned how photographs can be used to tell stories about the history of a community—its people, institutions, and organizations while also serving to document the changing life of a community as a massive demolition of public housing takes place in Bronzeville to make way for

mixed-income development. The photographs taken by students and BMM staff were aligned with classroom reading assignments, discussions, and reflections as students learned how this service-learning project was not just another project assignment but a statement about the social values of a community and the current choices and decisions being made outside of the community with the resulting effect they will have on the remaining population—its life chances and career aspirations.

#### **THE LEARNING IN THE BRONZEVILLE DOUGLAS AND GRAND BOULEVARD ORAL HISTORY**

The Douglas and Grand Boulevard Oral History Project involved audio and visual recording of residents who formally lived and or currently live in the State Way Gardens, Robert Taylor, Madden Park, and the Ida B. Wells public housing developments. The oral history is ongoing and represents an effort to permanently store and document the life and experiences of people who lived and still live in public housing in Bronzeville.

#### **SELECTED ORAL HISTORY EXCERPTS**

The quotes below are taken from four oral history participants. These quotes were selected because they represent the voices of some of the first individuals and families that moved into the housing developments soon after they were opened in Bronzeville (Ida B. Wells, State Way Gardens, Robert Taylor, and Madden Park). The quotes were taken from the interview protocol section of the oral history service-learning project that focused on the past and dealt primarily with what the oral history participants remembered about their first few years of living in the housing developments. These quotes were selected because they profoundly challenged student perceptions, images, and stereotypes of public housing residents. That is, as students participated in the oral history service-learning project most of their perceptions and images of public housing residents and the stereotypes of crime and drug infestation in public housing developments were challenged and contradicted by these four oral history participants—who were the first to move into the housing developments in Bronzeville. The four selected oral history participants illuminated how structural changes from the Mayor's office down to the CHA (Chicago Housing Authority) precipitated and ultimately caused the change in the milieu of public housing. Indeed, change in CHA

leadership in the 1960s marked a turning point in the maintenance, funding, and supervision of public housing in Bronzeville (Venkatesh, 2000).

On several occasions, staff and faculty of the BMM noticed how students were shocked to hear the participants speak about public housing as a positive part of their life and that most families worked, disciplined, looked after, and cared for children even when they were not their own. In the end, these four oral history participants helped students to challenge their values and the ways in which they were influenced by peers, the media, and their parents to internalize these stereotypes without checking all sources, especially the people themselves, to separate fact from fiction. They learned about the political economy of housing and what went wrong when tenant selection committees were no longer used as a method for selecting residents to live in public housing. Moreover, they learned about the change in CHA management and how public and private policies lowered and underfunded the upkeep and maintenance of the housing developments that many of the early tenants had come to expect as the norm for maintaining a safe and decent place for them and their children to live.

#### **IDA B. WELLS HOUSING DEVELOPMENT**

And she said, “we got this one apartment” where I’m at now, been there 38 years or better at 550 East 39th. And I moved into this place, it was so pretty. We had one janitor, but they gave you garbage bags. You had to clean the hall and the front—from upstairs, downstairs to the end of the wall. You raked all your leaves up; you were able to plant your own flowers. And the janitor would come along and he would pick the bag up. We had incinerators at that time; we didn’t have garbage dumpsters. And it was a real nice place to live. They fine you, okay! Five dollars if you didn’t keep your hall clean the first time. The second time it was 10 dollars. The next time you have to vacate the premises. . . . And since I’ve been in Chicago, I went to auto mechanics school, I went to shoe covering school, I went to millenary school, and I went to nursing school. I work!

#### **STATE WAY GARDEN HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS**

The other feature was the planting here, the landscape. It was really landscaped beautifully. And after 2 years there was a Mrs. Wood who was the head of housing, and she was very concerned about housing, public housing. And she and older Mayor Daley had a falling out and she was fired. And Schwibel, who was a big real estator downtown, took over all the public housing. And from that

point it went down, he fired our manager who we had, who had been hired by Mrs. Wood and he brought in a Mr. McGraff. Surely you remember his name. Very shortly after Mr. McGraff came I had been there for 2 years. I went out one day and the bulldozers were out there scraping all the planting, all the landscaping, and when I came home that evening, they had blacktopped it. Black tar, all the beautiful landscaping, and that gave me an indication of where they were going. There was no rhyme or reason for doing that. To make a long story short, things kept going downhill.

#### **ROBERT TAYLOR HOMES HOUSING DEVELOPMENTS**

I was born in 1958, August 20, Cook County Hospital. I was a middle child. I have an older brother, two younger brothers and a sister. We moved to Robert Taylor in 1962, one of the first families. I lived prior to that on Spaulding, on the West Side of Chicago, so when we moved into Robert Taylor, I'd say we were one of the first families, I was 4 years old. So for me, it wasn't a matter of poverty; I didn't even know it. My years there, I say, from 1962 to probably 1968, 1969 when we moved, was the best times of my life, actually, in terms, in terms of just having fun and enjoying myself. That for me, I felt, I actually felt, I felt that nothing could get in my way, I was very happy. So it is odd to think of the conditions there now, in terms of the conditions taking place over the last 20 or 30 years. So for me it was just incredible. I mean, I think back and I have nothing but fond memories, believe it or not.

The last of the four oral history respondents who was a member of one of the first families to move into the Madden Park housing developments—that were completely demolished in 2001—emphatically concluded the interview with the opinion that Bronzeville would not be “Black” in the 21st century.

I don't think it is going to be a Black area. I can see the changes taking place in the aldermanic wards, how they are trying to swoop people out with a silver shovel. And it is happening. I can see the political arena, and a lot of people are not in that political arena—the ones who are the victims. A good majority of the voters come out of these public housing buildings, but they said, there are 32,000 of them that they want to displace. I know what that's all about, I think I know what that's all about. The people are not there, the votes are not there. And the people don't have the education, they don't realize the importance of the vote. So, I don't think it's going to be a Black Metropolis. If it's going to be a Black Metropolis then it will be our children, [how] we're teaching them to live, with the right information because we've been subjected to these sanctions on a daily basis.



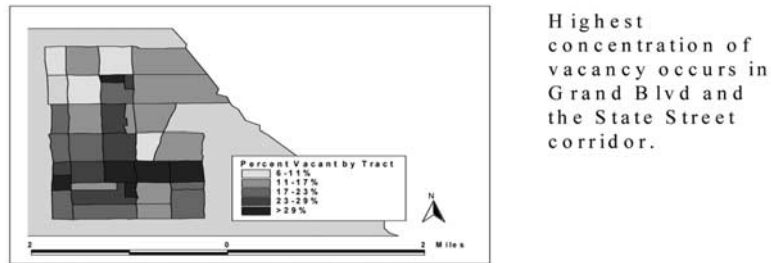
The demolition of housing developments in Bronzeville in the past decade of the 20th and into the 21st century provide service-learning students the opportunity to learn about the ways in which urban policies have undermined the human potential and resiliency of Black working poor and working-class families in Chicago. Indeed, when work and housing disappear, what is left (Wilson, 1996)?

#### **THE LEARNING IN THE PHYSICAL QUALITY OF LIFE PROJECT**

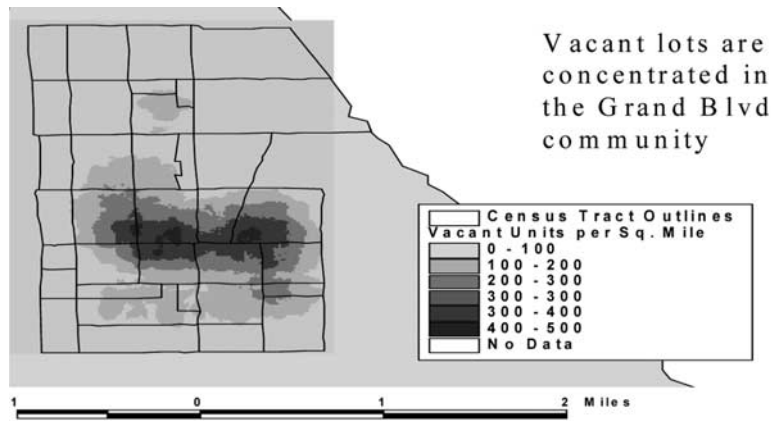
In the 1st year of the BMM yearlong sequence course, students were instructed to collect physical characteristics of the Douglas and Grand Boulevard community areas during their supervised fieldwork experiences. All students worked in teams and were instructed by field-site supervisors to walk each block in the project site to record on either steno notepad paper or dictate into a mini-cassette recorder a complete description of what they observed—noting particularly, the address and specific geographical location of the object observed (e.g., “sunken sewer on northeast corner of 51st and State Street;” “new construction;” “pothole middle of block, in left lane, in front of 3230 S. Prairie,” etc.)<sup>7</sup>

The primary field data collected by the students were consolidated into the physical quality of life database. The database was built from the detailed observations of students’ fieldwork experiences. Each location of a specific observed object was recorded and matched by address to a specific census track to calculate the percentage occurrence of that observed object within the census track. Students conducting this level of intensive field observations were instructed to “test” the reliability and validity of the physical quality of life data and their importance to the community. To accomplish this service-learning objective, students were trained to analyze the physical quality of life database using spatial mapping techniques. The results of the spatial mapping analysis were compared to the U.S. census of 1990. For example, the U.S. census in 1990 recorded vacant lots in the Douglas and Grand Boulevard community areas by census tracts (see Area Vacancy Map, Figure 5). The 1990 U.S. census track data reveal that vacant lots are concentrated in the Grand Boulevard community area—specifically along State Street from 39th to 51st Streets and along 47th Street from approximately Wabash to Cottage Grove (see Area Vacancy map below).

The physical quality of life database matches the 1990 U.S. census track data by showing vacant lots concentrated in the Grand Boulevard community area of Bronzeville (see Density of Vacant Lots Map below, Figure 6).

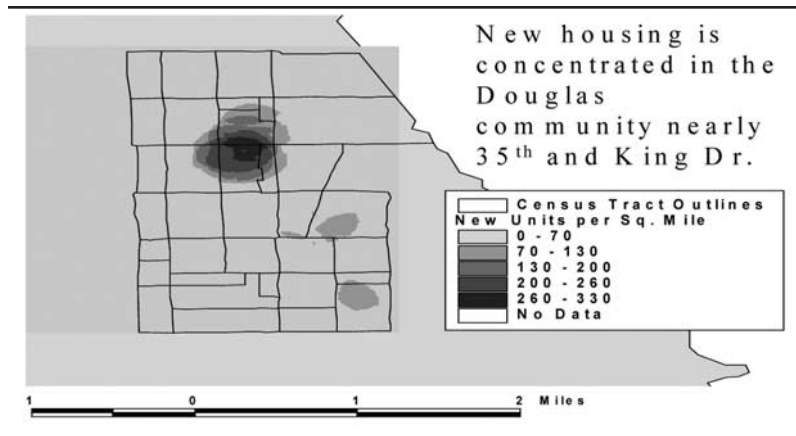


**Figure 5: Vacant Lots in Black Metropolis**  
SOURCE: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990.



**Figure 6: Density of Vacant Lots**  
SOURCE: Manley, 2000.

However, the primary data collected by the students sharpened the accuracy of the circumference and density of vacant lots in those concentrated areas. Although the 1990 census track data collected by the United States Census Bureau show that vacant lots are more concentrated along the commercial strip of 47th Street, the physical quality of life database appears more robust in showing the density and the magnitude of severe vacant lot concentrations extending from 47th to 39th Street (north) and from 47th to 49th Streets (south), extending as far as Evans (on the west) to Michigan Avenue (on the east) (see Figure 6).



**Figure 7: Density of New Construction**  
SOURCE: Manley, 2000.

Also, the primary data collected by the students were used to analyze the density of new construction in the project site. Analysis of the physical quality of life database using density of vacant lots in Grand Boulevard allowed students to discern that new construction is more densely concentrated in the Douglas community area of Bronzeville (see Density of New Construction map below, Figure 7).

The dense concentration of new construction is primarily located in the community area of Douglas—an area formally referred to as “The Gap.” The student data show that the former gap is being filled in. New construction extends from 31st street to 37th street between Indiana and Martin Luther King Drive. Less dense areas of new construction in Grand Boulevard are present between Vincennes and Evans near 43rd street and further south between Evans and Cottage Grove near 48th Street. Students were instructed to use photographs to illuminate and document the type of new construction occurring in Bronzeville. Analysis of the pictures taken by undergraduate and high school students reveals that large vacant lots, typically located on a corner, are filled in with town home complexes. However, new development on smaller vacant lots takes on the architectural style similar to existing housing located near smaller vacant lots (see Figure 8 below).

After compiling and analyzing the physical quality-of-life database students in the 2nd year of BMM were instructed to develop a Powerpoint presentation to discuss the results of the research and what they had learned in a Town Hall meeting format with Bronzeville at the George Cleveland Hall and



**Figure 8: Photographs of New Construction on 33rd and Indiana Streets and 33rd and Giles Streets**

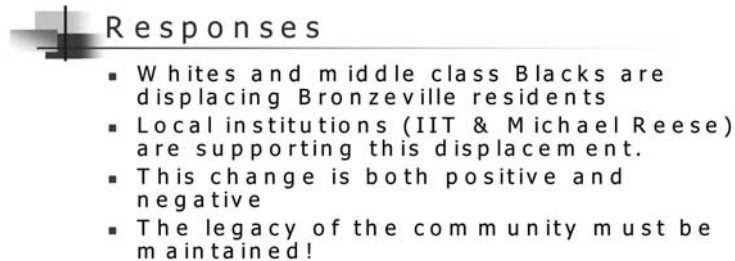


**Figure 9: Sales Growth in Bronzeville**  
SOURCE: Rogal, 2000.

Chicago Bee branch libraries of the Chicago Public Library. The Town Hall meeting was titled “Where Will You Live?”<sup>8</sup>

At the town hall meetings, students used secondary data obtained from a local publication in Chicago, *The Chicago Reporter*, to build an Excel graph to discuss over a 9-year period, sales growth in Bronzeville. Since 1990, sales growth in Bronzeville has increased five-fold (see Sales Growth in Bronzeville line chart, Figure 9).

Mostly adults and youth from the community attended the town hall meetings. Community responses to the town hall presentation were captured by



**Figure 10: Town Hall Meeting at Chicago Public Library Branch Libraries, George Cleveland Hall and the Chicago Bee, March 20, 2002**

students and summarized in their final paper (see Responses slide below, Figure 10).

The town hall experience was challenging for many of the undergraduate and high school students. Although the BMM faculty and staff prepared the students, many felt vulnerable and intimidated by the youth in the community who raised concerns about the students' role in understanding and serving the community. Some of the high school students who have relatives and friends that live in the community were aware of these changes and the impact they were having on residents in Bronzeville. This information was shared during feedback and discussion at the town hall meetings and created a level of comity. The town hall presentations were invaluable learning opportunities for the students in the BMM. Students learned the frustration and anxiety of children and youth in Bronzeville who were forced to watch the demolition of their homes occur while new construction was taking place with for sale signs that read, "starting at \$209,900." These adverts were vivid reminders of the potential beneficiaries of these changes and provoked anger and mixed emotions about the quality of life in Bronzeville for those being "forced" to leave.

#### **THE LEARNING IN THE BRONZEVILLE COMMUNITY SURVEY**

Students in the 1st and 2nd year of the project BMM assisted in developing, designing, and mailing a community needs assessment survey to a random sample of registered voters in Bronzeville. The survey covered the broad areas of migration, length of residence, education, housing, health,

**TABLE 2**  
**Correlation of New Construction as a Positive Change and Income**

		<i>The New Single Family and Town Home Construction Going on in the Douglas/Grand Blvd. Area Is a Positive Change?</i>	<i>What is Your Annual Income?</i>
The new single family and row house construction going on in the Douglas/Grand Blvd. area is a positive change?	Pearson Correlation	1.000	-.268**
Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.007	

\*\* Correlation is significant at the .01 level (2-tailed).  
 SOURCE: Manley, 2001.

environment, safety, recreation, politics, and demographic characteristics of age, income, investment, and savings. The 1998 voter registration list of Douglas and Grand Boulevard was used as a sampling frame to develop a random clustered sample of precinct blocks. More than 2,000 surveys were mailed with a response rate of 7% after a second mailing.

The community survey was designed to provide a way for community residents, organizations, and students to understand the attitudes and opinions of a sample of registered voters on questions such as "Is the new single family and town home construction going on in the Douglas and Grand Boulevard area a positive change?" The response choices for this question was arrayed along a Likert-type scale ranging from *strongly agree*, *agree*, *uncertain*, *disagree*, and *strongly disagree*. Students were trained by BMM staff to enter all survey data into SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). A weak but statistically significant negative correlation was found between new construction, as a "positive change," and income. Lower income groups were less likely to view new construction as a positive change.

Also, a cross-tabulation was run to determine the association between income and new construction or "The new single family and new town home construction going on in the Douglas/Grand Boulevard area is a positive change?" (see Table 3). Preliminary analysis of the survey data tends to support the community responses at the town hall meetings—that the "change is positive and negative" in the Douglas and Grand Boulevard community areas. Lower income groups that responded to the survey were more likely to vary in their response to the question of new construction as a positive change when compared to higher income groups that responded to the survey.

**TABLE 3**  
**Cross Tabulation Between Income and**  
**“New Construction Is a Positive Change”**

<i>Income</i>	<i>Low</i> <i>(\$0-20,000)</i>	<i>Medium</i> <i>(\$20-60,000)</i>	<i>High</i> <i>(\$60,000 or more)</i>	<i>Total</i>
Strongly agree	42.1% (16)	43.5% (17)	75% (18)	50% (51)
Agree	26.3% (10)	35.9% (14)	20% (5)	29% (29)
Uncertain and disagree	31.6% (12)	20.5% (8)	4% (1)	20.7% (21)
Total	100% (38)	100% (39)	100% (24)	101

$p < .05$ .

SOURCE: Manley, 2001.

Students in this service-learning project were able to learn ways to survey the diversity of opinion in the community and link these to the subjective experiences they witnessed and reflected on at the town hall meetings.

## CONCLUSION

The BMM of service learning illuminates the ways in which public and private universities and high schools can “put the learning in service learning.” The BMM uses cooperative, collaborative, and reciprocal service-learning projects to serve the needs of the Bronzeville community while enhancing student and community knowledge about the changing institutions in the community that critically affect their life chances. The BMM involves using multiple pedagogies of learning, service, and research to understand the changes occurring in Bronzeville since the last half of the 20th century. The goal is to empower the community with information to understand, interpret, and act on these changes. In doing this, students internalize their learning by experiencing situations that challenge their values and ethics toward producing a just and equitable society for all U.S. citizens. Moreover, students in the BMM learn to internalize the contexts in which policies and actions of government leaders affect the everyday life of working poor and working-class citizens.

In contrast to “soup kitchen models” of service learning, the BMM is a lifelong learning service-learning model where students acquire and internalize knowledge and information to shape their future career choices and civic responsibilities. The BMM offers the following.

1. Ongoing interaction *between* learners and community participants (a two-way process, not just giving and “receiving help”),
2. learners learn from the community,
3. course creates products of permanent value—a record of information (oral histories, interviews, photos, etc.)—that the community receives and is placed in community institutions,
4. a variety of institutions participate (libraries, churches, schools, etc.), and
5. the learning of information is historically contextualized—learners understand the *why* in the historical or diachronic context. This goes beyond the surface impression of the current problems.

Moving beyond the classroom with structured and supervised experiences students see the relevance of long-term, as opposed to short-term, soup-kitchen models. Many of the students in their journals shared their insights on how they were transformed by their service-learning experiences.

#### **HS JUNIOR, 2001**

I want to learn, but not for the letter grade. We had to think of what our passion is, and in part, mine is people. Not talking about them or necessarily to them. My passion is to know more about them, therefore knowing myself a little better in the same time.

The BMM model allows students to participate in a 1-year service-learning sequence where they experience, see, and come to internalize the changes taking place in Bronzeville. Students witness an elevation in their critical thinking, research and technical skills, and their emotional development as many have chosen to serve as research assistants on the BMM in subsequent years after completing the yearlong course sequence. Many of the undergraduate students have graduated and begun to pursue careers in social services by furthering their education. The BMM provides continual learning opportunities for the community through the branch libraries that are stable institutions in a community experiencing rapid depopulation and massive income changes. All of the data collected, analyzed, interpreted, and presented by instructors, project staff, and students are reciprocated to the community via Internet access through the branch libraries and through the direct delivery of products to the community (i.e., photo documentary, oral history, and the “Where Will You Live” town hall Powerpoint presentations). Also, hands-on presentations and discussions with and for the community become lifelong learning experiences as students engage in controversial issues and debate with the residents in the community that are most influenced and affected by



the changes the students are learning about. Also, the BMM continues its effort to recruit high school students and teachers from Bronzeville public and private high schools to participate in the BMM through its yearlong sequence course and curriculum.

### NOTES

1. DePaul University has an experiential learning requirement that many students fulfill through service-learning courses.

2. Through the college bridge program, a joint partnership with DePaul University and Chicago Public Schools, the Black Metropolis Model (BMM) recruits eligible juniors and seniors from Chicago Public high schools and teams them up with juniors and seniors at DePaul University. For undergraduate students, the BMM is advertised in the student newspaper. High school students are recruited by face-to-face interaction with high school guidance counselors and information sessions with potential high school students.

3. The essential elements of cooperative learning were adopted from David W. Johnson and Roger T. Johnson "Encouraging Thinking Through Constructive Controversy" in *Enhancing Thinking Through Cooperative Learning* edited by Neil Davidson and Toni Worsham (London: Teachers College Press, 1992).

4. Project photographer Lazarus Rice took the Metropolitan Community Church picture in the spring 2001.

5. Students from North Lawndale College Preparatory high school took the picture of Robert Taylor Homes, spring 2001.

6. Undergraduate and high school students took the two demolition photos of the Robert Taylor Homes, spring 2001.

7. Abandoned Building, Bad Driveway, Boarded/Broken Windows, Broken Glass, Broken Streetlight, Broken Windows, Clean/Maintained curb, Clean/Maintained Sidewalk, Damage to Property, Damaged Curb, Damaged Fire Hydrant, Damaged Sidewalk, Damaged Street, Deteriorated Building, Empty Store Unit, Garage, Garbage, Garbage, Clogged Gutter, Maintained Houses, Maintained Lawns, New Construction, New Sidewalk, New Street/Lot, New Town Homes/Condos, Poor Lawn Maintenance, Pothole, Property for Sale, Remodeled, Sunken/Damaged Sewer, Under Construction, Under Demolition, Vacant Lot.

8. The Town Hall meeting Powerpoint presentation is Internet accessible at the Black Metropolis Project Web site [www.depaul.edu/~blackmet](http://www.depaul.edu/~blackmet).

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