

Amanda Royster

Soc 103

Final Reflection

Education Advocacy Research Assistant *Reflection Questions*

1. What did serving migrant and refugee families teach you about trust, advocacy, and the barriers that families face when trying to access basic educational resources in Chicago? Reflect on specific moments of challenge or growth and consider how this experience shaped your understanding of educational equity.

Serving migrants and refugee families made me realize how difficult it is for so many people to acquire very basic and essential needs. I don't believe that most people have an accurate understanding of the hardships that these families are going through. Some things such as having to ignore your own life and education in order to help your family is a challenge faced by many people that are forced to rearrange their priorities for the survival of their families and themselves.

2. How did your role in collecting and distributing clothing, raising funds, and organizing community support shift the way you understand mutual aid and grassroots organizing? What emotions or insights came up for you as you took on responsibility for meeting urgent needs in real time?

These roles gave me a deeper understanding of how important having a strong sense of community is and how beneficial that bond can be. Modern life and social media sometimes makes people feel very disconnected from one another. Directly helping and creating bonds with a community gives the sense that things are easier when everyone is supporting each other, even if it's just emotionally or spiritually. Mutual aid is beneficial to everyone involved.

3. Of the three research studies you contributed to, which one resonated most with your personal story or the stories of people you know? How did participating in this research project impact the way you view the role of data in shaping public understanding and policy?

I think sharing how mental health and economic status is connected resonated with me the most. The data can influence public understanding by giving more insight into just how many people feel the same way. It also made me understand how many hardships are interconnected with each other and having a mutual understanding of this is impactful to the public because it can push lawmakers to be more accommodating and take action to help.

4. How did this experience challenge or confirm what you believed about the power of community organizations in addressing complex issues like job searching, educational access, and technology in daily life? What do you now see as the strengths and limitations of this kind of work?

This experience confirmed my thoughts on the importance of community in the role of helping others to have a meaningful and personal solution to their hardships. A strength I see with this work is people being

able to relate to one another and share similar experiences. This is helpful because it provides people with a more personalized approach to things and eliminates stress and mental anguish in their difficult situations. Knowing that the person helping you can actually understand or even relate to the things you're going through is relieving.

5. Looking back at your time with ChiEAC, how do you think this experience shaped your personal goals, sense of purpose, or vision for the future? What skills or perspectives do you hope to carry forward—and how do you hope to keep supporting others?

This experience made me realize that providing support and aid to others in need is more simple than I originally thought. Sometimes I felt as if the hardships many people face were just too difficult for me to address or help with. But even small things are impactful and with that in mind, I hope to continue to help others in any way I can. My vision for the future is for more people and the younger generations to be educated on what they can do to help the people around them and that it will alleviate the overall burden of the community.