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SOC 103

Reflection Questions

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**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.

I saw how hard it is for migrant and refugee families to have the same access and opportunities as us without community programs like the ChiEAC. We are privileged enough where we are not questioned for why we are here or why we are trying to get an education. It shows the inequality of our education system, and how we as a society need to reframe our minds in order to give equal opportunity for everyone. Education, like many other things, is driven by money, so if people do not have the money or resources to access an education, then they will most likely not receive it. Making things more easily accessible for migrant and refugee families will at least give them more of an opportunity to have an education and strive to reach the basic educational resources. We have to understand too that these families may have almost nothing to give in order to access these educational resources, so we should initially offer these resources to them with as little restrictions as possible. That also means that we will need to make sure we allocate resources for these families, but with community participation, it is not an impossible task.

1. 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?

Until this class, I had never really participated in supporting mutual aid and grassroot organizations. I have donated clothes to places like GoodWill and the Salvation Army, or I have given spare change to foundations when I go shopping, but nothing really that is in my community. It felt more rewarding to be part of a community program because I got to see, or at least know, the impact that I was making almost immediately. My involvement made me want to encourage others to join in as well, because while it is good to donate things to the Salvation Army or give money to cancer research, contributing to community programs can impact people much faster, and in a more timely fashion.

1. 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?

Study 2 resonated with me the most because it was interesting to think about what public perception on higher education is. I think it is important to get a college education, but the expense of it all makes it difficult to pursue. My college journey has been anything but smooth too, and it makes me wonder if this is the right path for me. However, with the heavy emphasis on having a college degree and higher education, it almost feels like this is something that I need to succeed. Even though there are many successful people in the world who do not have college degrees, I feel like mainstream society will think less of me for not having a college education–unless I become largely successful and prove them wrong. Changing our perception of having a college education will help take the pressure off of individuals that feel like they need to go to college. It is okay to explore different avenues and see what path best suits you. It will be integral that the community and those closest to you support your journey, but the emphasis on having a college education should change. Yes, it is good to have a degree, but it should not be an expectation in order to succeed.

1. 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?

When community organizations are able to offer access to job searching, educational access, and technology, it makes many lives a lot easier. Especially those in low-income situations, lack of access to these essential things makes it hard to succeed in everyday life. Technology is everywhere now, and without access to it, it is almost as if you are cut off from the world. Job searches and educational resources are largely on technology now, so all of these things are interconnected. It will cost a lot of money for community organizations to find these resources for people who do not have easy access to them. Getting computers alone will be a lot of wrong, but hiring people such as advisors for job resources or tutors for schooling costs money as well. However, the most rewarding thing from spending all that money will be seeing the success and increased accessibility that individuals will have. It is an intangible reward, but one that can be the most gratifying.

1. 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?

I hope to always be a person who can make a difference and impact a person’s life in some way. That is one of, if not the main, goal that I have for myself in life. In anything I do, I want to make a difference, and so I realize that no action or contribution is too small in order to help someone. Sometimes it may not feel like a lot, but whatever I do and whatever I give can always be an impact for someone. Even if I have nothing to give, I hope I can always exemplify kindness and encourage others to do the same so that we can foster a future where everyone will prosper.