

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY



Office of Service-Learning

CREATING HUMAN - CENTERED
PROGRESS IN THE
CLASSROOM & COMMUNITY

STUDENT HANDBOOK



The Office of Service-Learning was established in February 2010. Since then, students have taken part in a diverse selection of service-learning courses across most academic departments. The program connects students and faculty with community partners through constructive service-learning projects that strengthen the Kalamazoo community.

CONTENTS



About the Office

Empathy & Privilege

Cultural Myth Busting

Classes & Projects

Reflection

This handbook will introduce you to the Office of Service-Learning. Your professors will guide you through expectations and classroom concepts for your specific course, but this handbook will help you understand the overarching vision of our program. Use the Table of Contents on the next page to navigate the content.

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ABOUT SERVICE-LEARNING

WHAT ARE SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES?

Service-learning courses enhance learning by connecting academic coursework to hands-on community service experiences outside of the traditional classroom. In addition to learning about academic subject matter, research-based service projects will allow you to gain a deeper understanding of your community and yourself. You will work to find solutions to social injustices and other problems that have been identified in the community. Service-learning courses blend **MEANINGFUL COMMUNITY SERVICE** and **CRITICAL REFLECTION** to create human-centered progress in the Kalamazoo area.



Service - learning courses are available in academic areas such as:

Accounting	Economics	Political Science
Anthropology	Education	Psychology
Biology	Engineering	Social Work
Business	English	Spanish
	Mathematics	



MISSION OF THE WMU OFFICE OF SERVICE-LEARNING:

The Office of Service-Learning seeks to connect and engage students, faculty, and the community in projects that intentionally redistribute power, create egalitarian partnerships, and generate deeper learning and civic engagement to benefit the greater community.

What's the difference between service-learning and volunteering?

During a volunteer project, service is the objective - learning is a secondary bonus. In contrast, learning is the primary objective for service-learning projects. Built into service-learning courses is critical reflection of the service experience, which empowers you to make the most positive impact in your community. The focus on **learning** and **reflection** distinguishes service-learning from traditional volunteer enterprises.

Credit is for learning, not service.

Example of Volunteering:

If students collect trash from an urban streambed, they are providing valued service to the community as volunteers.

VS

Example of Service Learning:

If students collect trash from an urban streambed, analyze their findings to determine possible sources of pollution, and share the results with neighborhood residents, they are engaging in service-learning.

FUTURE-ORIENTED COURSES

CREATING PREPARED PROFESSIONALS, ENGAGED CITIZENS

Gaining “real world” experience is imperative to your success after graduation. Most employers seek graduates with experience outside of the classroom. Service-learning courses give you the opportunity to gain that experience, while putting your academic lessons into action and serving your community. The products of service-learning projects can often be used for professional resumes or portfolios. Additionally, service-learning projects help you develop advanced communication, leadership, problem-solving, and other valuable skills for the workplace and beyond.



“[Service-learning] taught me how significant service to the community is by learning to bridge the gap not only between what’s taught in the classroom through the application of service, but bridging the gap between ourselves and our society as a whole.”

2013 “Excellence in Service-Learning” Award Winner & WMU Alumni — Rasheeda Jenkins

STUDENT BENEFITS

- ▢ Increases employability and professional readiness
- ▢ Enhances critical thinking skills
- ▢ Provides professional networking opportunities
- ▢ Strengthens communication and leadership competencies
- ▢ Teaches cultural sensitivity
- ▢ Connects values with actions

CRITERIA FOR SERVICE-LEARNING COURSES

Mutually beneficial partnership between the community and WMU

Course academic objectives applied during 15+ hours of service

SERVICE-LEARNING

Critical reflection of experience increases student learning and community progress

- ▢ **MUST PROVIDE AT LEAST 15 HOURS OF SERVICE**
- ▢ **SERVICE MUST ENHANCE THE UNDERSTANDING OF COURSE LEARNING OBJECTIVES AND TARGET A COMMUNITY-IDENTIFIED NEED**
- ▢ **PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN COMMUNITY PARTNERS AND WMU MUST BE RECIPROCAL IN BENEFIT**
- ▢ **MUST INCLUDE CRITICAL REFLECTION OF EXPERIENCE**

Service-learning provides students with the opportunity to identify and dissect biases and stereotypes that affect the community. Courses encourage lifelong civic engagement and social responsibility, while decreasing the effects of cultural and political apathy.

PRACTICING PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

Effective communication with community partners is one of the skills you will practice during your service-learning course that will translate into improved professional readiness. Communication allows all involved parties to understand the expectations, which — in turn — provides a valuable foundation for successful professional relationships, personal growth, and workplace results. Practice professionalism in your communication and your positive outlook to tasks that may extend beyond your comfort zone, so as to prepare yourself for a successful future after graduation, beyond the borders of WMU’s campus.

SEVEN C’S OF EXCELLENT PROFESSIONAL COMMUNICATION

- 1. **CLARITY** STATE YOUR MESSAGE CLEARLY WHENEVER YOU COMMUNICATE WITH A COMMUNITY PARTNER.
- 2. **CONCISE** KEEP YOUR MESSAGE SIMPLE. AVOID UNNECESSARY FACTS.
- 3. **CORRECT** USE ACCURATE FACTS, AND PROPER GRAMMAR AND SPELLING IN ORDER TO PREVENT CONFUSION AND MISCOMMUNICATION.
- 4. **COMPLETE** ANTICIPATE AND CONVEY ALL OF THE FACTS THE RECEIVER OF YOUR MESSAGE WILL NEED. SEND COMPLETE E-MAIL MESSAGE’S SO COMMUNITY PARTNER’S DO NOT HAVE TO RESPOND WITH REQUESTS FOR MORE INFORMATION.
- 5. **CONSIDERATION** CONSIDER THE PROFESSIONAL AUDIENCE AND WRITE USING APPROPRIATE LANGUAGE CHOICES. YOUR BEHAVIOR REFLECTS ON YOURSELF AND THE UNIVERSITY.
- 6. **CONCRETE** BE DEFINITE, SPECIFIC, AND RELIABLE. FOLLOW THROUGH WITH WHAT YOU SAY YOU WILL DO. IF YOU SET EXPECTATIONS, ALWAYS PRODUCE RESULTS. THIS IS A PROFESSIONAL TRIAL RUN.
- 7. **COURTESY** THINK ABOUT THE VIEWPOINT AND EXPERIENCES OF THE RECEIVER OF YOUR MESSAGE AND COMMUNICATE RESPECTFULLY. COMMUNITY PARTNERS MAKE OUR ENTIRE PROGRAM POSSIBLE, SO TREAT THEM WITH RESPECT IN EVERY CONVERSATION OR EMAIL.

BY THE NUMBERS



TOTAL NUMBER OF
WMU STUDENTS:
23,914

TOTAL NUMBER OF HOURS
SERVED IN THE COMMUNITY BY
SERVICE-LEARNING STUDENTS:
26,870

*All figures are from 2014.

TOTAL NUMBER OF
SERVICE-LEARNING STUDENTS:
6,507



REDISTRIBUTION OF ROLES

The transformative power of service-learning is derived from the redistribution of conventional teacher/student roles. Diverse groups are brought together in collaborative service partnerships, which promote the sharing of experiences and skills. All parties—students, faculty, and community partners—mutually serve, teach, and learn.

FOCUS ON PERSONAL GROWTH

By serving others and making connections within the diverse community, students learn the value of community engagement and social responsibility. Service-learning students benefit from academic, ethical, and personal growth, which in turn promotes an active approach to learning and serving that lasts a lifetime.

TRANSFORMATION OF KNOWLEDGE INTO ACTION

Service-learning experiences instill a life-long commitment to social responsibility and community engagement in students. The courses align with the WMU’s vision as a LEARNER-CENTERED, DISCOVERY DRIVEN, and GLOBALLY ENGAGED institution of higher education.



“Service-learning gave me an opportunity to find a passion for a career choice. I was given a wonderful experience to grow within myself and to become more comfortable.”

-Caitlin Hicks,
Social Work Major



EMPATHY & PRIVILEGE

LEARNING ABOUT YOURSELF, THE WORLD AROUND YOU, AND THE NEED FOR CIVIC RESPONSIBILITY

Service-learning courses focus on academic, professional, personal, and community growth. You will also learn broader life lessons, which will prepare you to become constructive citizens in the community long after graduation. Through safe immersion in the community, you will develop a deeper understanding of oppression, inequality, and other social injustices. In doing so, you will acquire the tools needed to help solve problems, understand our complex society, and build a stronger community.



Inspire change in our community and society by appealing to possibilities, rather than improbabilities or failures of the past.

Some challenging topics discussed during our courses include

- | | | |
|--------------------------|----------------|-----------------|
| Civic Responsibility | Empathy | Power |
| Community Engagement | Inequality | Privilege |
| Cultural Deprivation | Mental Illness | Professionalism |
| Discrimination Diversity | Poverty | Racism |
| Social Mobility | | Social Justice |

TWO COMPONENTS OF MEANINGFUL CULTURAL EDUCATION

1. OPEN-MINDED COMMUNICATION

To combat discrimination we must talk about inequality and other challenging social issues. At times, these topics will be uncomfortable, but engaging in these uncomfortable conversations is important and necessary.

Insight into experiences and perspectives from marginalized populations within the community will provide insight into diverse backgrounds.

Work to set aside pre-conceived patterns of thinking during these conversations. Open-minded communication allows an enhanced level of self-awareness and connection to the community.

2. CRITICAL THINKING & REFLECTION

Instead of training to imitate pre-existing practices, you will critically examine your environment and identify creative new solutions to problems. Critical thinking is unrestricted during service-learning. Given the freedom to think for yourself, you will work to find creative solutions to community problems. Critical reflection is more than just a simple assessment of your experience; it is a method of thinking that leads to personal development. You will refine the skills of critical thinking and reflection which will allow you to approach academic, professional, and personal situations with increased mindfulness.



Privilege is the existence of unearned rights, advantages, and/or opportunities afforded to only certain groups of people in society.



HOW SHOULD YOU RESPOND TO A PERSON WHO HAS SHARED A PAINFUL EXPERIENCE WITH YOU?

Just be REAL. When someone shares a painful experience, you will not always be able to fix the situation for them or take away all of the pain, but you can always listen, support, and open yourself up to learning. To respond with something like: “I don’t know what to say, but I am here to help you in any way I can,” is a good response. Your response might not be

WHAT’S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN EMPATHY AND SYMPATHY?

Empathy creates connection, while *sympathy* drives disconnection.

If you climbed into a hole to help a person trapped down there, you would be showing empathy.

If you peered down into the hole without doing anything to help that person, you would be showing sympathy.

To acknowledge a situation as not good for a person with a thought like, “Wow, that’s too bad,” without further active engagement displays sympathy.

an end-all solution to the problem, but acting with empathy can be an agent in the solution. If nothing else, your response can promote trust in the relationship. Know that the person chose to share the experience with you because they trust you with something important to them.

EMPATHETIC, CONSTRUCTIVE RESPONSES DO NOT START LIKE THIS:

“Well, at least. . .”

Do not try to create a silver lining for something that is painful for someone else - doing so creates a disconnect rather than solving the problem.

An example of a **bad** response to a parent sharing that their child has cancer would be:

“Well, at least you have a job with medical insurance to pay for the treatments.”

Instead, try:

“I’m so sorry that your family has to go through this. You won’t have to do it alone. I’ll be here for you through it all.”

An example of a **bad** response to someone sharing that they have lost a grandparent is:

“Well, at least they had a long life.”

Try this instead:

“Well, it’s always hard. I’m sorry for your loss. If you want or need someone to talk to, I am here for you.”

“I worked for everything I have. You should just work harder, too.”

Finger-pointing is not constructive, especially since you do not know all

FOUR QUALITIES OF EMPATHY:

CONSIDERATION OF A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE

ALWAYS AVOID JUDGMENT

RECOGNITION OF THE EMOTION OF OTHERS

SUPPORT THROUGH POSITIVE COMMUNICATIONS AND ACTIONS

the factors involved in the situation. You worked hard to get where you are, but someone else may not have the privilege to begin at the same starting point as you. What if a person was attending college when they developed a chronic illness? In that case, they might be giving every effort just to survive and keep up with medical bills. Without those burdens, maybe they

would have graduated and found a higher paying job, so as to not rely on government assistance. This kind of language is telling the person to simply tough it out, which can be very damaging for a person dealing with a complex issue, such as mental illness. By insinuating that all pain is a choice, you are not taking into consideration all of the factors involved. Responses like this are a variation of the insensitive sentiment of: *“It’s not my problem.”*



“High school is hard for everyone.”

Statements like this are a common response to the bullying and other struggles faced by the LGBTQ community, and they have to stop. Down-playing a person’s experience assumes that the isolation, confusion, and discrimination they face is the only hardship they have to face. The reality is, an individual who exists as a minority in regards to their sexual orientation or gender identity still has to deal with the everyday hardships of the world - bullying may not be the worst of it. What if a transgender person is also dealing with a terminally ill parent, or a learning disability? Try to listen to their pain rather than down-playing or ignoring their pain.

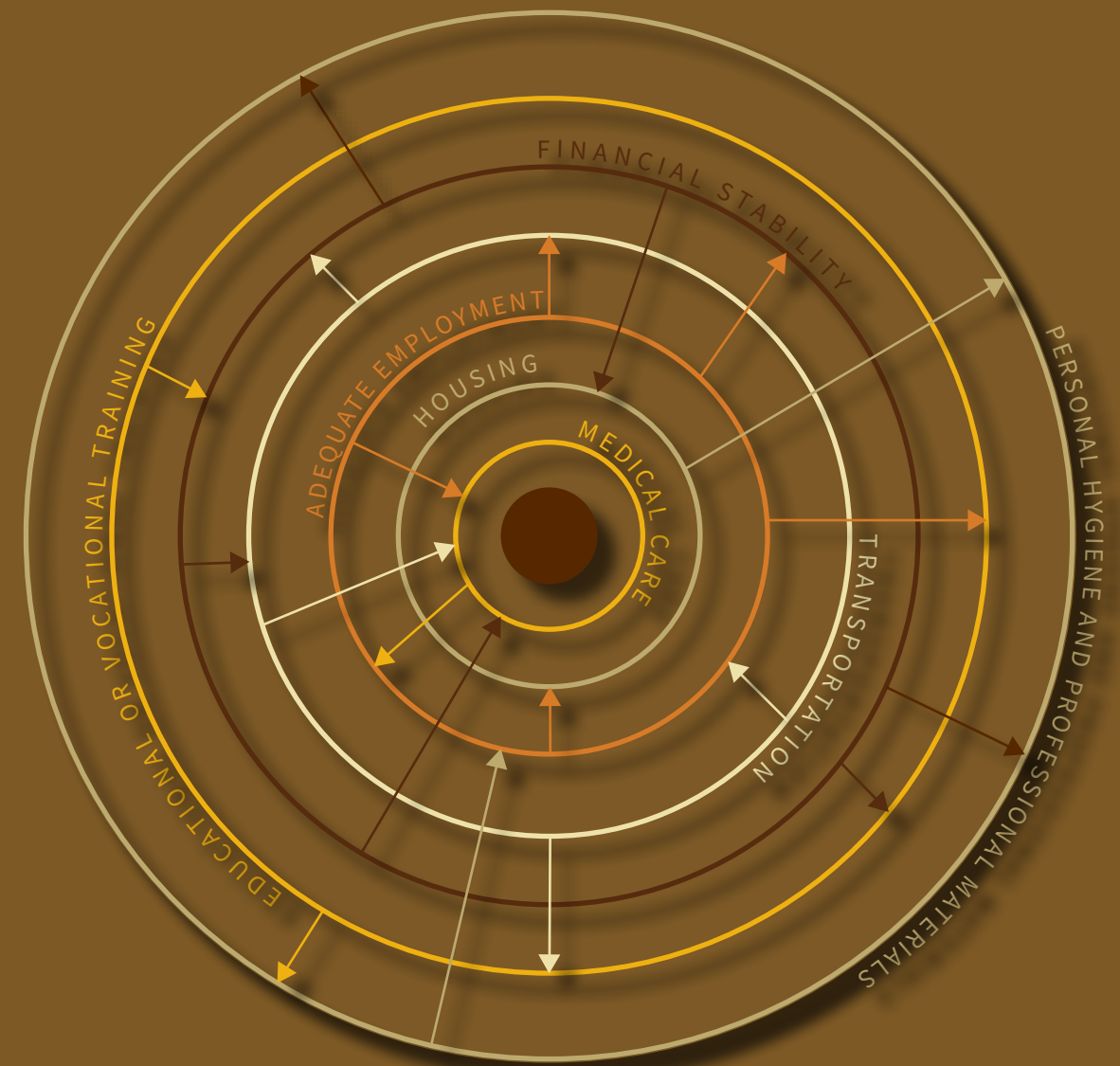
“All lives matter.”

When a person says “black lives matter,” there is an implied “too” at the end of that phrase. Jonathan Cunningham contributes a quote in Macklemore’s controversial song “White Privilege II” stating:

“Black Lives Matter, to use an analogy, is like if there was a subdivision and a house was on fire. The fire department wouldn’t show up and start putting water on all the houses because all houses matter. They would show up, and they would turn their water on the house that was burning because that’s the house that needs the help the most.”

Yes - all lives **do** matter, but a group of our fellow Americans is hurting especially bad right now, and that has to be addressed in order to move closer to a united nation.

BARRIERS TO ACCESS



Being “privileged” does not mean you have had everything easy - it means that, in certain aspects of life, you have benefited from advantages not available to some. Realize others might have to work harder to reach the same achievements.

Such difficulties exist in larger endeavors like completing a college degree or owning a home, and for the smaller ones, such as finding a meal on a given day. Achievement may not be easy for privileged individuals or impossible for less privileged individuals, but the processes and experiences are different for everyone.

UNDERSTANDING PRIVILEGE

Various types of privilege affect our society—not just privilege related to skin color.

Privilege, or lack thereof, is experienced on a spectrum with the possibility of multiple combinations and degrees of impact. Service-learning teaches students to realize the magnitude to which they are privileged, so they can better connect with our diverse community.

RACE

Racism is NOT just about prejudice; it is the “encompassing economic, political, social, cultural structures, actions, and beliefs that perpetuate an unequal distribution of privileges, resources, and power” (Hilliard, 1992). For white people, experiences with discrimination are rare and often avoidable, which is not the case for people of other races. Caucasians often take for granted the fact that their racial image is displayed in the media and their heritage is told in the history books. There are disproportionate incarceration rates for people of color in the U.S., and the socioeconomic impact of race makes social mobility harder.

CLASS

The “Land of Opportunity” actually has less economic mobility than most developed nations, including Canada and Germany. According to a Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago study, the U.S. is “one of the least mobile countries.” People born

into poverty have a much harder time climbing the social class ladder to reach financial stability than people born into higher classes.

GENDER

“In virtually every American industry, men earn substantially more than women of the same race,” according to a 2014 Institute for Women’s Equality Policy Research study of 116 full-time work industries. On average, female workers earn 91 cents for every \$1 men make performing the same work. On a larger scale, \$100,000 male salary, women lose out on \$9,000 per year.

The gender wage gap is magnified even more by the race earnings gap for women of color.

GENDER IDENTITY

Gender is more complex than female/male labels. Bullying and discrimination based on gender identity punishes people

for being themselves. We must create a more inclusive climate.

ABILITY

People of all races, genders, and classes can experience the burdens and stigmas of mental illness, physical disability, learning disability, or other health impediments. If you are able-bodied, you likely do not have to face the daily inconvenience of needing expensive healthcare treatment, handicap accessibility, translator services, or other accommodations. In addition to tangible setbacks and feelings of isolation, ability-related disadvantages can be especially challenging for people who lack other privileges, such as class. If a person is born poor in a rural area without a hospital, they might not have access to the same level of medical treatment as those of a higher social class.

SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Society encourages individuality... to a point. The LGBTQ community faces systematic inequality, despite non-discrimination laws.

Marriage equality is now the law of

the land, but we must continue to work towards equality for all.

RELIGION

Despite freedom of religion in the U.S., many Americans still face religious discrimination. People practicing non-majority religions, such as Islam, face harassment, abuse, and unfair treatment.

EDUCATION

While education isn’t required to become a successful citizen, it increases long-term earning potential and employment opportunities. In addition to the direct economic benefits, education affords people with increased cultural awareness and other lifelong advantages.

External barriers to educational achievement include financial limitations, lack of academic preparation and family support, language barriers, learning disabilities, physical disabilities, and more.

CITIZENSHIP

Many non-U.S. citizens cannot obtain an education, receive medical care, vote, utilize an established banking system, or practice the religion freely.

TWO METHODS YOU CAN USE TO HAVE A CONSTRUCTIVE CONVERSATION ABOUT PRIVILEGE

METHOD ONE

Learn to approach the topic of privilege without putting up defenses. The only way to transform the system is to approach conversations about inequality with an open mind. Instead of becoming defensive, leaving the conversation as soon as it becomes uncomfortable, or trying to prove that you are more or less privileged than others, listen to people as they share their experiences. If someone shares their personal experience with racism, remember it is not about you or whether you are a good/bad/racist/not racist person. Rather, it is about a hardship the person faced and the fact that they trusted you enough to share their experience.

METHOD TWO

Every person is born with advantages related to certain privileges and disadvantages related to the lack of certain privileges.

This is not to say that you should feel guilty about your privileges, rather it is important you recognize that not every individual has the same experience in life as you. You must learn to manage feelings of guilt or shame because it is what you do with your privilege that really matters. You cannot control the past or what privileges you were born with, but you can be a part of the change to dismantle inequality in the future.



THE OFFICE OF SERVICE - LEARNING IS DEDICATED TO CREATING A STRONGER AND MORE INCLUSIVE COMMUNITY.

As an emerging class of community leaders, service-learning students are trained to recognize and reduce tensions among cultures, generations, and other groups within our society.



CULTURAL MYTH BUSTING

Stereotypes and biases are all around us—sometimes so much so that we don't even realize they're present. It's important to be aware of cultural stereotypes and biases, so that they don't influence your interactions with others or stand in the way of positive progress in the community. The following section addresses some common cultural myths that could pertain to your service-learning experience.



DISTINCTIONS TO IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING

RACISM IS A BELIEF THAT CERTAIN GROUPS OF PEOPLE ARE INFERIOR TO OTHERS BASED ON RACIAL CLASSIFICATION.

PREJUDICE IS A JUDGMENT ABOUT AN ENTIRE GROUP OF PEOPLE BASED SOLELY ON THEIR MEMBERSHIP IN THAT GROUP.

DISCRIMINATION IS DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT OF A PERSON OR GROUP OF PEOPLE BASED SOLELY ON THEIR MEMBERSHIP IN A GROUP.

HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

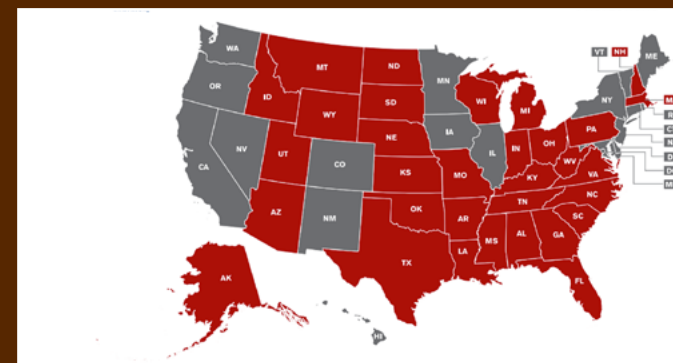
2015 data from census.gov shows that 35% of Kalamazoo city residents live below the poverty line, which ranks just below Flint - the second in the nation with a rate of 41.2%.

GENDER & SEXUALITY

2015 census.gov data also shows Kalamazoo County is also second in the state in regards to the percentage of same-sex households.

RACE

The city of Kalamazoo has the highest rate of racial diversity within Kalamazoo County. Nearly 40% of citizens of the city of Kalamazoo identify as a race other than white, according to 2015 census data.



DID YOU KNOW THAT IT IS STILL LEGAL FOR EMPLOYERS TO DISCRIMINATE AGAINST THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY IN MANY STATES, INCLUDING MICHIGAN? Can you imagine losing your livelihood for the simple reason that you are living authentically as yourself? According to the Human Rights Campaign, in more than half the states "employees lack explicit workplace protections on the basis of sexual orientation, and those same employment protections based on gender identity in 32 states."

COMMUNITY VOICE: RACE, POWER, AND PRIVILEGE

IN THIS INTERVIEW, WALTER MALONE TALKS ABOUT THE EFFECTS OF RACE, POWER, AND PRIVILEGE ON HIS LIFE, AS WELL AS IN SOCIETY. HE ALSO PROVIDES INSIGHT INTO SOME DAMAGING MYTHS ABOUT THE TOPICS.



CLICK THE PHOTO
TO WATCH AN INTERVIEW WITH WALTER

MYTH vs. FACT : RACE, POWER, & PRIVILEGE

➔ **MYTH:** *Privilege does not exist - it is just a politically motivated fabrication.*

FACT:

Privilege is deeply entrenched in our society, resulting in a widespread effect on equality within our community. Privileges such as education and social class can be lost or gained, but many forms, such as race or sexual orientation, are permanent. In order to improve overall equality in our nation, we must acknowledge the existence of all forms of privilege.

➔ **MYTH:** *I do not have any privilege.*

FACT:

Do you benefit from any powers others may not have access to? Do you have the ability to learn at a collegiate academic level? Do you have access to enough food and water? Do you feel safe from harassment related to your religion, gender, race, or sexual identity? All people are affected by privilege to some degree. Being privileged does not mean everything has been easy for you - it means that some things have been less difficult for you than they might have been for other people.

➔ **MYTH:** *Only privileged people have the power to succeed.*

FACT:

"Access to privilege doesn't determine one's outcomes, but it is definitely an asset that makes it more likely that whatever talent, ability, and aspirations a person with privilege has will result in something positive for them," said famous American activist Peggy McIntosh.

➔ **MYTH:** *Privileged people are unappreciative, arrogant, and look down upon those with less privilege.*

FACT:

Privilege does not mean a person is arrogant or has a condescending attitude toward others - it can be used to enact positive change. How a person uses their privilege makes all the difference.

COMMUNITY VOICE: HOMELESSNESS

IN THIS INTERVIEW, CODY DEKKER DISCUSSES HIS FAMILY'S EXPERIENCE WITH HOMELESSNESS, PERSONAL BATTLE WITH SUBSTANCE ADDICTION, AND SOCIAL JUSTICE WORK AS THE COFOUNDER OF KALAMAZOO4JUSTICE.



CLICK THE PHOTO
TO LISTEN TO AN INTERVIEW WITH CODY

MYTH vs. FACT : HOMELESSNESS

→ **MYTH:** *All homeless individuals are unemployed and do not want to work.*

FACT:

A 2002 study conducted by the Urban Institute found that around 45% of homeless adults in the U.S. had worked within the past 30 days, which does not include “under the table” work.

→ **MYTH:** *Homeless people are lazy, substance addicts, or mentally ill.*

FACT:

Substance addiction and mental illness may be factors in homelessness, but are rarely the sole cause. Job loss, home foreclosure, and medical costs are some common causes.

→ **MYTH:** *All homeless people only live on the streets or in shelters.*

FACT:

People who live in their cars are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. At least 30% of homeless people live in cars.

→ **MYTH:** *Homelessness is usually long term.*

FACT:

Half the people who enter a shelter leave within 30 days. Short-term homelessness—that is, those homeless for less than a year—increased after the 2008 economic crisis.

COMMUNITY VOICE: SEXUALITY

IN THIS INTERVIEW, SHANNON ADDRESSES SOME MYTHS ABOUT SEXUALITY AND TALKS ABOUT DISCRIMINATION IN SOCIETY AS WELL AS CHALLENGES FACED AS A MEMBER OF THE LGBTQ COMMUNITY.



**CLICK THE PHOTO
TO WATCH AN INTERVIEW WITH SHANNON**

MYTH vs. FACT : SEXUALITY

➔ **MYTH:** *Sexual orientation is a choice.*

FACT:

Sexual orientation is **not** a choice. Just as heterosexual people cannot choose who they are attracted to or who they love, members of the LGBTQ community cannot choose their sexuality either.

➔ **MYTH:** *The LGBTQ population in the United States does not have the same economic struggles as the rest of the population.*

FACT:

On television, LGBTQ people are often portrayed as living in classy urban homes without any financial struggles; however, people can experience poverty no matter their sexual orientation.

According to a study by the Williams Institute of UCLA, 29% of the LGBTQ community (2.4 million adults) faced struggles in finding enough money to buy food. Also, 40% of the homeless youth population is made up by LGBTQ people, who have often been kicked out of their homes due to their sexual orientation presenting these community members with a distinct economic disadvantage as they grow up.

Interestingly, the LGBTQ community is **less likely** to use government aid.

➔ **MYTH:** *There is such a thing as a gay lifestyle.*

FACT:

When people perpetuate the untruth that such a thing as a “gay lifestyle” exists, they are often alluding to deviant sexual behavior. As monogamous and sexually promiscuous heterosexual people exist, the same diversity is reflected within the LGBTQ community.

COMMUNITY VOICE: GENDER IDENTITY

IN THIS INTERVIEW, DAVISON SHARES HER EXPERIENCE AS A TRANSGENDER WOMAN, ADDRESSES COMMON MYTHS ABOUT TRANS* INDIVIDUALS, AND EXPLAINS SOME INEQUALITIES THAT EXIST IN SOCIETY TODAY.



CLICK THE PHOTO
TO WATCH AN INTERVIEW WITH DAVISON

MYTH vs. FACT : GENDER IDENTITY

MYTH: *Transgender people are confused about what they want and who they are.*

FACT:

Just because they face an authentic difference between their gender identity and the sex they were assigned at birth does not mean that transgender people are uncertain about what they want or their true identity. Children as young as three communicate about being born in the “wrong body” for their gender. It can be confusing in an unsupportive society filled with traditional gender roles.

As stated by The Center for Equality, “Many transgender people have experiences of feeling defective or wrong. This is a social problem, not a gender identity problem.”

MYTH: *All transgender people are gay.*

FACT:

We often use the acronym “LGBTQ” when talking about the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities. The first three letters of the acronym relate to sexual orientation, or a person’s physical, romantic, or emotional attraction to other people. The “T” relates to gender identity, or which — if any — gender a person associates with.

Sexual orientation and gender identity are separate. A transgender person can have any sexual orientation. For example, a person who transitioned from a female to a male would be considered gay if he were attracted to males, or straight if he were attracted to females.

MYTH: *Transgender people using the bathroom that corresponds with their gender identity will increase instances of sexual assault.*

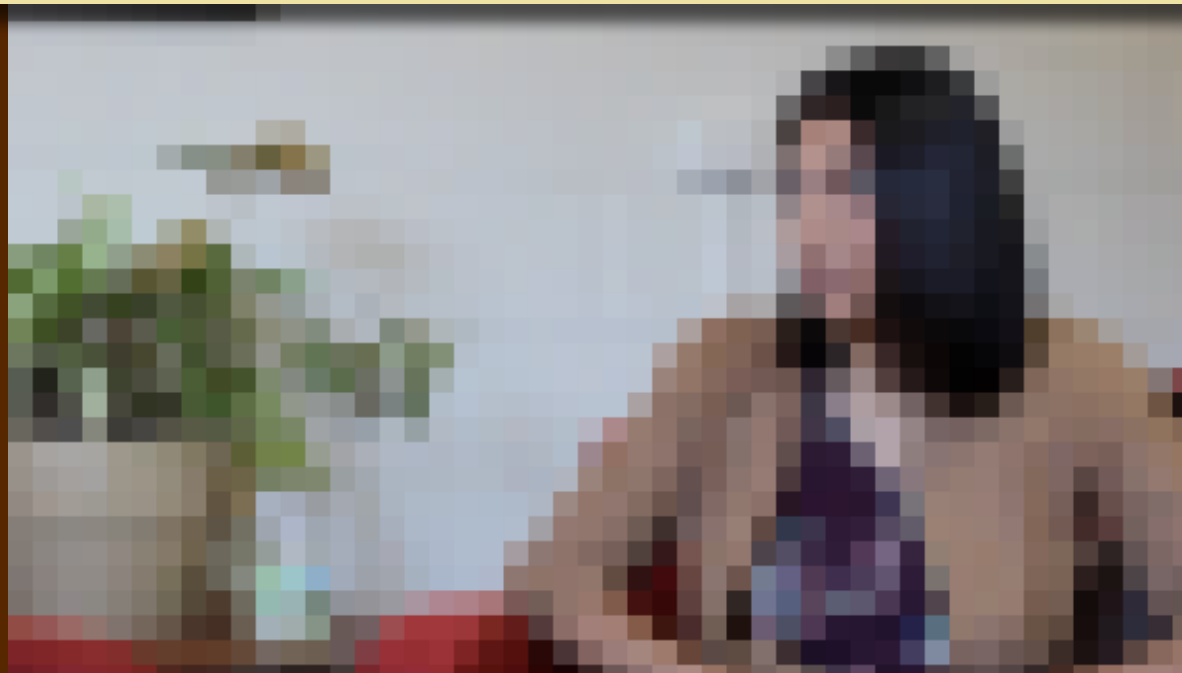
FACT:

Before the controversial “bathroom bills” came out, transgender individuals used the bathroom consistent with their gender identity for years with no statistics to back up the allegation that people are attacked by transgender people in the bathroom.

On the contrary, forcing transgender people out of the bathrooms that match their gender actually makes them more vulnerable to attacks.

COMMUNITY VOICE: IMMIGRATION

IN THIS INTERVIEW, EVELIN DISCUSSES
HER EXPERIENCES AND DISPELS COMMON MYTHS
ABOUT IMMIGRATION IN THE UNITED STATES.



CLICK THE PHOTO
TO LISTEN TO AN INTERVIEW WITH EVELIN

MYTH vs. FACT : IMMIGRATION

→ **MYTH:** *There are more immigrants in the United States now than ever before.*

FACT:

According to the Pew Research Center and the Migration Policy Institute, “as a percentage of the U.S. population, the historic high actually came in 1890 when the foreign-born constituted nearly 15% of the population.”

→ **MYTH:** *Immigrants take jobs from Americans and negatively affect our economy.*

FACT:

According to the Immigration Policy Center, immigrants have very little effect on the employment rates for citizens. Due to increased access to higher education and an aging overall population, very few citizens are “willing or available to take low-paying jobs” that immigrants want. Our economy benefits from their work and tax contributions.

→ **MYTH:** *Undocumented immigrants in the United States don’t pay any taxes, but still receive the same benefits.*

FACT:

Undocumented immigrants still pay sales tax just like the rest of us on purchases of gas, groceries, or appliances. Undocumented immigrants have paid \$13 billion in payroll taxes for benefits they will never get since they do not qualify for food stamps or welfare (Social Security Administration).

COMMUNITY VOICE: GENDER

IN THIS INTERVIEW, WMU SOCIAL WORK INSTRUCTOR DAN RENSTROM ADDRESSES COMMON MYTHS ABOUT GENDER INEQUALITY IN THE UNITED STATES.



CLICK THE PHOTO
TO LISTEN TO AN INTERVIEW WITH DAN

MYTH vs. FACT : GENDER

→ **MYTH:**

In reference to the gender wage gap, women only make less because they are so focused on raising families. If they did not take time off to have children, they would make as much as men do.

FACT:

If the wage gap in question existed exclusively for women with children or mothers during their caregiving years, perhaps this argument would be worth consideration, however, women are paid less before having kids, after having kids, and even if they do not have kids at all.

According to a study conducted by the American Association of University Women, men have higher starting salaries than woman even when they are entering the same fields and with the same college majors (“Graduating to a Pay Gap: The Earnings of Women and Men One Year After College Graduation”).

This trend continues throughout women’s careers, even if they do not have children. Thus, the gender wage gap is a proven institutional issue, rather than a circumstantial issue.

→ **MYTH:**

Men only do the more “masculine” jobs that require more hard work and dedication, while women only do less demanding “feminine” jobs and stay at home with their kids.

FACT:

Rates of men and women with “traditional” masculine and feminine careers, respectively, have decreased. More men are becoming nurses, medical techs, and social workers, while more women are becoming doctors, engineers, and top-level managers.

According to a 2016 study by economists Francine D. Blau and Lawrence M. Kahn, “Women overall now obtain more education than men and have almost as much work experience. Women moved from clerical to managerial jobs.” (“The Gender Wage Gap: Extent, Trends, and Explanations”).

COMMUNITY VOICE: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

IN THIS INTERVIEW, SOPHIA DISCUSSES
HER EXPERIENCES OF BEING IN AN ABUSIVE RELATIONSHIP.



CLICK THE PHOTO
TO WATCH AN INTERVIEW WITH SOPHIA

MYTH vs. FACT : DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

→ **MYTH:** *An individual should simply leave an abusive relationship.*

FACT:

It is often easy to think that people should just remove themselves from the situation to protect their safety, but it is not that simple. Many factors make it difficult for victims to leave in some cases, such as financial instability, child custody, shame, fear of retaliation, or lack of outside support systems. According to the National Domestic Violence Hotline, it takes an average of seven times for the victim to leave before they can finally escape his/her abuser for good.

→ **MYTH:** *Alcohol, substance abuse, stress, and mental illness cause domestic violence.*

FACT:

While there is no excuse to justify domestic abuse, there are factors that can increase the chance of a situation becoming violent.

The aggressors' personal histories come into question (e.g., if they were raised in a home that predisposed them to abusive situations, or if they were victims of abuse). It should be noted that an intent to harm can already be present in the abuser's mind before the influence of drugs and alcohol. These substances can lower the ability to make good decisions which could increase the possibility of physical or emotional abuse.

→ **MYTH:** *Domestic violence only happens to women.*

FACT:

While 92% of the people abused in the home are women (according to statistics made available by psychcentral.com), men, children, and elderly people can also be victims of domestic abuse. Some people have pointed to the higher rates of abused females as a method for demonizing men and discounting abuses perpetrated by women, that is not the truth. Men are abused too, but there is lower rates of lethality and injury. For every one male hospitalized due to domestic violence, 46 females are hospitalized (National Organization for Men Against Sexism).

COMMUNITY VOICE: MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION

IN THIS INTERVIEW, SHAREÉ SHARES HER EXPERIENCES
AND ADDRESSES COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS SURROUNDING
MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION.



CLICK THE PHOTO
TO WATCH AN INTERVIEW WITH SHAREÉ

MYTH vs. FACT : MENTAL HEALTH & ADDICTION

MYTH: *People with anxiety and depression should just “get over it, toughen up, and be happy.” It’s all in their heads, so they just need to be stronger and stop feeling sorry for themselves.*

FACT:

For people with anxiety, depression, and other mental illnesses it is not a matter of “getting over it” and “toughening up.” Mental illness is not a personal weakness.

People cannot “snap out of it” any more than someone can “snap out” of diabetes, cancer, or other medical problems. The belief that mental illnesses are not real illnesses perpetuates a damaging stigma.

MYTH: *Mental illness is rare.*

FACT:

Approximately 1 in 5 adults in the U.S. — or 43.8 million people — experience mental illness in a given year, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness. If you are battling mental illness, you are not alone.

MYTH: *Addiction is just a personal weakness.*

FACT:

It may be easy to blame the individual who suffers from an addiction, and it is also unfair because they may have little control over their behavior, or even a predisposition to addictive tendencies.

According to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, among the 20.2 million adults in the U.S. who have experienced substance abuse, more than 50% had a co-occurring mental illness.

COMMUNITY VOICE: PRISON

IN THIS INTERVIEW, “JOHN” SHARES HIS EXPERIENCES AND ADDRESSES THE TRAPPINGS OF THE LEGAL SYSTEM.



CLICK THE PHOTO
TO WATCH AN INTERVIEW WITH “JOHN”

MYTH vs. FACT : PRISON

→ **MYTH:** *The criminal justice system prosecutes all people equally, regardless of factors such as race and economic status.*

FACT:

The American Civil Liberties Union reports that one in three black men will be incarcerated during their lifetime. To compare, the rate at which Latino males can expect to be incarcerated during their lifetime is one in six, and for white males the figure is one in 17.

The poor have also been shown to be arrested at higher rates, as well as more likely to be convicted and sentenced to prison.

→ **MYTH:** *“White-collar crimes” do not do as much damage to society, and are punished by the system when they occur.*

FACT:

White-collar crimes take far more dollars from society than all FBI-indexed crimes combined. Criminals responsible for white-collar crimes are rarely arrested or charged, and when prosecuted and convicted, their sentences are either suspended or very light when judged by the cost their crimes have imposed on society (“...And the Poor Get Prison” by Jeffery Reiman).

→ **MYTH:** *The criminal justice system acts to sift out the innocent from the guilty.*

FACT:

The criminal justice system acts not only to sieve out the guilty, but has specific systems in place which serve to sift out not just the guilty, but specifically the *guilty poor*.

Of the approximately 733,000 people held in local jails at this time, 3/5 have not been convicted and are there because they cannot afford to post even a small bail while they await the processing of their case (“The Poor Get Prison” by Dolan & Carr).

COMMUNITY VOICE: HUMAN TRAFFICKING

IN THIS INTERVIEW, ANALISE SHARES HER EXPERIENCES AND ADDRESSES COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS REGARDING HUMAN TRAFFICKING.



CLICK THE PHOTO
TO LISTEN TO AN INTERVIEW WITH ANALISE

MYTH vs. FACT : HUMAN TRAFFICKING

→ **MYTH:** *Human trafficking does not happen in the United States.*

FACT:

The Global Slavery Index 2018 estimates that on any given day in 2016 there were more than 400,000 people living in conditions of modern slavery in the United States, which equates to 1.3 victims for every thousand in the country. This statistic includes both commercial sex and labor exploitation.

→ **MYTH:** *Traffickers target victims they don't know.*

FACT:

According to the Polaris Project, many survivors have been trafficked by romantic partners, including spouses, and by family members, including parents. While some traffickers use force, others use psychological means such as tricking, defrauding, manipulating or threatening victims.

→ **MYTH:** *Only adult women are sex trafficked.*

FACT:

The International Labour Organization estimates that there are 40.3 million victims of human trafficking globally. Of this number, at least 25% are children. According to estimations in a study by ECPAT-USA, half of sex trafficking victims and survivors are male. Advocates believe this percentage may be even higher but that male victims are far less likely to be identified. LGBTQ boys and young men are seen as particularly vulnerable to trafficking.

EXAMPLES OF SERVICE - LEARNING COURSES

ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROJECT AT FORT ST. JOSEPH (ANTH 4900)

Fort St. Joseph is among the most important Colonial outposts in the Great Lakes region. WMU conducts its annual archaeological field school at the site, in partnership with the city of Niles, Fort St. Joseph Museum, and Support the Fort. This project has netted +100,000 artifacts. Students gain hands-on experience at the dig site and run summer camps that allow the public to view ongoing excavations. At the close of field season, students host the "Community Days" event, which attracts 2,000 visitors annually.

INTRODUCTION TO ENGINEERING DESIGN (ENGR 1001)

In collaboration with Kalamazoo Public Schools and the Michigan Department of Transportation, first-year civil and construction engineering students work to make walking and biking to school safe for local schoolchildren. Students apply transportation engineering principles, as they identify barriers to safe travel. They complete a walking tour of the surrounding neighborhood and interview residents and public school faculty members. Upon completion of the assessment, students present a remediation plan to city engineers, county officials, school administrators, and members of the school board.

SAFE ROUTES TO SCHOOL PROJECT

This project promotes regular physical activity and good health for school children by making it safe for them to walk and bike to school. It also helps to ease traffic jams, reduce air pollution, unite neighborhoods, and create a positive learning environment.

PROJECT LEADERSHIP (MGMT 4010)

Working with a local business or nonprofit, students conduct feasibility studies for business ideas and determine the plausibility of proposals by researching a client's strengths and weakness, soliciting stakeholder input, and creating a marketing plan. This offers students practical application of course objectives by showing them motivational frameworks available to leaders.

BUILDING BIKES, BUILDING COMMUNITIES

The Office of Service - Learning partners with the WMU Office of Sustainability for the Building Bikes, Building Community project. Children from Lakeside Academy are nominated to receive a new bicycle for making a difference in their community. WMU students work with the children to assemble the bikes.

"The students from Lakeside Academy were very engaged in the activity and loved hearing our stories about college," shared WMU student Heather Kunath. "They shared with us their dreams and hopes for the future. As they learned from me, I also learned a great deal from them."



SPANISH SERVICE OR INTERNSHIP (SPAN 4400)

During this advanced language course, WMU students partner with community organizations, such as Kalamazoo Public Schools and the Hispanic American Council. Students improve their language skills through immersion in the local Hispanic community. Service projects include tutoring local students, coordinating after-school bilingual club activities, participating in parent outreach efforts, and serving as interpreters for parent-teacher conferences.

SOCIAL WORK CONCEPTS IN GROUP, COMMUNITY, AND ORGANIZATION (SWRK 3510)

This course introduces students to human behavior as it relates to small group processes, formal organizations, and community dynamics. The impact of race, sex, and age is considered in relation to groups, organizations, and communities. Students apply these concepts in the real world through projects work with various community partners, including the Kalamazoo Public Schools Alternative Learning Program, the Lakeside Academy, and the Human Beyond Boxes Program. One class organized the Rainbow Run 5K on campus to benefit the LGBTQ community. The race raised more than \$2,000 in 2016.

TIME FOR REFLECTION

COURSE ASSESSMENT

Upon completion of your service-learning course, you will be asked to complete an assessment of your experience. The purpose of this assessment is to gauge your learning and personal growth, as well as help us to improve the Office of Service-Learning program for future successes involving our students, university, community partners, and larger society.



LOOKING BACK WITH THE INTENTION TO MOVE FORWARD

Throughout your course and upon completion of your project(s) you will be asked to reflect on your experience. As you will remember, reflection is one of the crucial components of service-learning. The importance of looking back at the experience is derived from the intent to move forward in the future. Reflection will allow you to process your experience and better apply it to future situations. Reflection activities range from presentations to journal entries and more. Your professor will guide you through the specific requirements for your class. However, it is important to remember that no matter the specific types of reflection activities that you are assigned, they all strive to achieve the same goal: to help you connect the service activities to your course content and life beyond the class.

“My service-learning experience provided me with an opportunity to volunteer, create lasting friendships and work with new organizations within my surrounding community. I am grateful for this opportunity I have had and look forward to the next opportunity.”

- YASMINE FORD, SOCIAL WORK MAJOR

FIVE TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL SERVICE - LEARNING EXPERIENCE

ONE:

Learn about your partner organization before the project begins.

TWO:

Be accountable and punctual.

THREE:

Keep an open mind.

FOUR:

Respect the perspectives and experiences of others.

FIVE:

Ask a lot of questions.



SERVE, LEARN, & GROW

*Come with an open heart to serve;
come with an open mind to learn and reflect;
come ready to make positive progress in our community.*

I HEAR & I FORGET

I SEE & I REMEMBER

I DO & I UNDERSTAND

