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Learn, Engage, and Develop – Project Reflection

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Completing the L.E.A.D. final project was much more difficult than I had previously expected. If I am completely honest, I fully expected to walk through this process with little-to-no effort. As it turns out, my initial assessment was far from the truth. Completing this project required a lot of coordination, effort, and teamwork.

**Project Expectations**. Ideally, I would have liked to have had a big audience to present our photovoice presentation to. Photovoice is a wonderful process for helping people enact change in their communities; change that they identify and that affects them, personally. Considering the many issues that have been identified on the UWT campus, I would have loved to present this information to large group of students in the hope that some of them would be interested in completing a photovoice project of their own.

However, considering the scheduling conflicts that Olivia and I experienced, I think we did the best with what we had. The two of us have been colleagues on Dr. Hershberg’s Community Psychology Research Group since February of 2016, and we work quite well together. Besides just being driven to succeed, I think we are both into equity, so we share the load and responsibilities equally. I did a lot of the outlining and writing for the proposal, while Olivia did the bulk of creating the PowerPoint presentation. She also created the flyer advertising our presentation.

Although we were not able to present to a large group, I do believe we gave a solid presentation, and that we informed our few audience members to the tenets of photovoice. Additionally, we were able to have very fruitful conversations subsequent to the presentation. This is an important highlight, considering that photovoice is not simply about the presentations itself, it is also about the conversations that come about as a result of talking about the systemic issues plaguing your community.

**Leadership**. In order to be a laissez-faire leader, you must have people around you that you can rely on. You need to know that those people are committed and responsible. If you don’t have those types of people on your team, then you cannot afford to be hands-off in your leadership approach. In my case, I was able to be very laissez-faire, because my partner knows what she is doing, and always gets things done.

I feel very grateful to have had the opportunity to work on this with Olivia. She is very bright and committed, and is someone I know I can always count on. Because of this, my leadership mainly came down to doing what I know I am supposed to, and maintaining communication with Olivia. Despite, our other commitments, we always maintained contact with each other, and consistently met to discuss the project.

**Partner Evaluation**. I do believe that if asked, Olivia would agree with my assessment of my leadership. Again, the two of us work very well together, and I believe this may be due in-part to our very similar leadership styles. Olivia knows that she can trust me to do what I say I will do. She has seen this in action, both as a part of this project, as well as during our tenure as research assistants.

Additionally, because Olivia and I are real-life friends, we get along very well, and are always able to talk things out. When we were first deciding what to do for our final project, we came together with a collective list of ideas, and we discussed which ones sounded the best. It did not matter whose idea got chosen, all that mattered was that we agreed. Then, when we started to assign individual tasks, we decided to key in on our individual differences and strengths. Even when deciding how to present our information, we tried to consider each other’s strengths, and level of comfort with the material. This approach worked very much to our benefit, as it allowed us to complete this project efficiently.

**Social Contribution**. It is very hard to say whether or not our presentation will have a lasting effect. Again, had we been able to garner a bigger crowd, I might feel more confident in my assessment. I do believe that we got at least a few people *thinking* about different ways that they may be able to address issues in their communities. Whether or not that encourages them to learn more about photovoice, or even create a photovoice of their own, is far from certain.

Unfortunately, our timing in planning this event was off. There were multiple other events happening around campus that day, not to mention the fact that our presentation occurred towards the end of the quarter when students may be struggling. If I could do it all over again, I would have tried to complete my other L.E.A.D. requirements before the end of the Winter quarter, that way I would have more time to prepare for my final project. I also would have liked to been able to advertise longer, and, potentially have found a bigger room to present in.

I do believe that photovoice can be a great tool for social change, and I have seen students take to the process quite well. Given more ideal circumstances, I believe you can start a movement through photovoice. The idea is to make community members aware of their inherent power, and standing up for what you believe in is often a major part of college life.