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Discovering The Potential Of Service Learning In Perugia, Italy: An Evaluation Of The Umbra Institute's La Famiglia Italiana Project

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DISCOVERING THE POTENTIAL OF SERVICE LEARNING IN PERUGIA, ITALY: AN EVALUATION OF THE UMBRA INSTITUTE'S LA FAMIGLIA ITALIANA PROJECT

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Abstract

Today, American study abroad programs are increasingly shifting their focus to students' community engagement efforts, one approach of which is service learning (Stone, 2008). Service learning principles and approach, however, are not always quickly and easily transported into other cultures. As an American pedagogical export, service learning in the study abroad context has the potential to overlook essential factors such as reciprocity, sustainability, and evaluation of student, faculty, and community partner experiences. This type of learning remains unexplored territory in many countries including Italy (Tosi, 2000). As the only American study abroad program of its kind in Perugia, Italy, The Umbra Institute provided an ideal case study to research the integration of service learning into a local Italian community. The following research explores how The Umbra Institute service learning program entitled *La Famiglia Italiana* Project (The Italian Family Project) can best meet the needs and expectations of American college students and Italian family community partners while preserving partner reciprocity and program sustainability.

The findings are comprised of results from four research groups. Group 1 consists of past Italian family participant phone and in-person interviews; Group 2 includes data from past Umbra Institute student participant electronic evaluations; Group 3 contains current student and Italian family participant in-person interviews; Group 4 consists of in-person interviews with The Umbra Institute faculty and staff member responsible for the La Famiglia Italiana Project. The research reveals that initial program expectations were higher for students than Italian families; the language was less of a hindrance for families than for students; students preferred more guidance before and during the program, while families preferred more guidance before or during the first meeting; and nearly all participants would recommend the program and identified educational value regardless of perceived challenges or unmet expectations.

I. Introduction

Italy is the country famous for *la dolce vita*, the sweet life. It offers a breathtaking backdrop to study classical art, music, architecture, and more. According to the 2010 Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange, Italy ranks as the second most popular study abroad destination for U.S. college students (Institute of International Education, 2010). However, in recent years Italy has seen more than an 11 percent drop in American study abroad student enrollment as increasing numbers of students are choosing to study in less traditional locations. Researchers in the field attribute this shift to students seeking opportunities in more affordable destinations that can offer a range of fields and accommodate to the needs of a growing and diverse study abroad population (Institute of International Education, 2010).

The original rationale for American students gaining international experience was developed in the early 20th century to promote world peace and international understanding (Bolk, 2010). The field of International Education has recently seen a revival of community engagement in study abroad programs (Tomlinson-Clarke & Clarke, 2010; Stone, 2008). Only in the past few years have leaders in American government, education, and business begun to recognize the exponential value that students gain from studying abroad (Stone, 2008; Pritzker & McBride, 2009). This public attention has reignited a desire for American academic institutions to create global citizens who are culturally aware, have a global perspective, and are internationally knowledgeable in the interconnected world we know today (Bolk, 2010).

Public attention on creating global citizens and the 1990's rapid internationalization in study abroad came with a price. Growing concerns spread over the decline in program quality and the ability of community engagement efforts to truly serve local communities (Stone, 2008; Woolf, 2005). Despite these setbacks, study abroad programs are once again focusing on academic rigor as well as community engagement. Institutions are making increased efforts to provide opportunities that factor in students' main motivations for studying abroad, which

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include a desire for cross-cultural experience, to learn a foreign language, to live and make acquaintances in a new country, to travel, to improve career prospects, and to study certain subject matter (American Council on Education et al., 2009). Service learning in the study abroad context has the potential to achieve all of these goals and others when structured in a meaningful, transformative educational setting (Crabtree, 2008).

The concept of synchronizing academic coursework with community service is relatively new in Italy, but it has been a continuous presence at The Umbra Institute in Perugia, Italy. Founded in 1999, The Umbra Institute represents the only American institution in this small university hilltop town. It provides a liberal arts education and a diverse set of engaging co- and extra-curricular activities with an emphasis on service learning. Each year, The Umbra Institute hosts approximately 600 students from more than 100 American colleges and universities during the fall, spring, and summer semesters.

The institution has developed a variety of curricular initiatives and projects with the goal of encouraging students to step out of the study abroad 'bubble' and become engaged in a different culture. There are three main models of community engagement within the General Studies curriculum, one of which has a service learning component integrated into an existing course. The institution defines service learning as,

> "[Service learning is] a type of community engagement that combines community service with traditional academic work in the classroom. The integration of these two components allows students to directly apply academic knowledge, skills, and awareness while collaborating with a local community partner. Service learning goals include achieving service reciprocity, program sustainability, and incorporating student reflection in the academic course" (Umbra Institute, 2011).

As the only institution offering such programming, service learning is a concept gradually becoming recognized and understood by several Perugia community members. However, it has often been a challenge for the institution to convince prospective community partners of the benefit rather than the burden of collaboration. Regardless, The Umbra Institute has continued to

dedicate its energy towards helping students break through the superficial barrier that often separates study abroad students from host communities.

The Umbra Institute has never formally recorded needs assessments or final evaluations of its service learning programs. The main evaluation technique has been brief, informal verbal conversations with the community partners before and at the end of the programs. This casual approach was seen as less of a burden on the community partners for its brevity. As a result, the institution was only capable of loosely piecing together what students' contributions to the community partners were and how satisfied students and community partners were with the collaboration and support from The Umbra Institute.

The goal of my practicum with The Umbra Institute was to find ways to overcome this challenge and bridge the existing disconnects between the academic programming and community engagement efforts. This ultimately became the foundation for my research question. The research question is: How can The Umbra Institute service learning program entitled *La Famiglia Italiana* Project (The Italian Family Project) best meet the needs and expectations of American college students and Italian family community partners while preserving partner reciprocity and program sustainability.

La Famiglia Italiana Project Overview

La Famiglia Italiana Project is a service learning program integrated into the Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends course. It was developed three years ago by the Associate Director for Academic Community Engagement, Service Learning, and Internships along with the former course professor. Since its inception, minor structural and organizational changes have been made mainly due to the project's acquisition by the new, current professor. However, the main philosophy and approach have remained the same.

Students enrolled in the course apply to the program by answering short essay questions based on previous Italian language studies, prior cross-cultural experiences, and an explanation

of why they would like to participate. There are no language level prerequisites to apply and program participation is a substitute for the traditional course term paper. Next, students are selected, paired up, and assigned to an Italian family. Families are found through the Associate Director's and the professor of the Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends course's pool of contacts, both professional and personal. The number of families available determines how many students can participate in the program that runs during the fall and spring semester.

Student pairs spend one to two hours weekly, for approximately 10 weeks in total, with an Italian family who has children ranging from toddler to university-age. An Umbra Institute staff member accompanies the students to the Italian family's home for the initial meeting to introduce participants and to explain the nature of the program. The subsequent meetings are scheduled and structured collaboratively by the host Italian family and the students. During the meetings, the American students discuss, observe, and participate in Italian culture. Students are required to focus on up to four main course themes from the perspective of a family living in Perugia with guidance from the course professor. Course themes include but are not limited to Italian politics, family, religion, languages and dialects, regionalism, immigration, and the unification and Americanization of Italy. In exchange, the Italian families practice their English and learn about American culture.

At the end of the semester, students prepare and present twice about their interactions with the Italian family and the connections they found to their chosen themes. The first presentation is given to the Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends class where all students discuss the participants' experiences and observations in an open and informal setting. The second, more formal presentation is given during the Special Events Week held at a local house museum alongside other community engagement and course-related presentations. The Italian families are invited to attend the second presentation, which also often acts as a final

meeting between the Italian families and students.

In the past three years, a total of 14 different Perugia families and 30 past Umbra Institute students have participated in the program. All 14 families participated for one semester, with the exception of one that participated for two semesters. Brief, informal verbal follow-ups and requests for written comments have been used in the past to evaluate the families' experiences, neither of which yielded high return rates or significant findings. No formal student program evaluations have been previously used.

Preliminary Research Observations

As the Community Engagement and Student Services Assistant Intern, I worked closely with the Associate Director for Academic Community Engagement, Service Learning, and Internships to organize and enhance co- and extra-curricular events, new course initiatives, and community engagement programming. This required me to interact frequently with The Umbra Institute staff, faculty, and students as well as community partners to coordinate and evaluate programs operations. In the fall of 2010, I became involved with La Famiglia Italiana Project when I participated in the student selection process with the Associate Director and the professor of the Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends course. I also observed the initial meeting between a family and the paired student participants. In Spring 2011, I was responsible for the initial meeting introductions.

I discovered many of the student applicants wanted to participate in the program because they were unable to choose a home-stay housing option and this was the closest alternative to living with an Italian family. Based on my observations of the Fall 2010 student presentations during the Special Events Week, along with the Associate Director's observations over the past three years, the main insight students gain from La Famiglia Italiana Project is the traditional nature of the modern Italian family and a highly valued cultural part of Italian society is food. When I casually spoke with the Fall 2010 student participants, I was informed that one pair

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would often sit in the living room with the mother and the child(ren) and were treated as guests rather than interacting with family members during their daily routines. It was unclear if this was a miscommunication of La Famiglia Italiana Project's goals for both the students and the Italian families, due to cultural or linguistic differences, or came from a lack of direct connection to course themes. La Famiglia Italiana Project appeared stagnant and needed to be reevaluated to ensure program sustainability, that it remained mutually beneficial, and that realistic expectations were being established. International service learning and study abroad programs, particularly in Italy or those involving families as community partners, will be interested in the research findings.

II. Literature Review

In this review, scholarship is examined on the historical exportation of service learning abroad, viewpoints on evaluations and intercultural communication within the service learning framework, and the Italian cultural values associated with the family. Conceptual frameworks situated in the research include: Edward Hall's High and Low Context Framework, and Dr. Geert Hofstede's and Fons Trompenaar's cultural dimensions, John Dewey's philosophy of education and democracy, and intergenerational learning. Furthermore, best practices for international service learning, associated outcomes for community partner and student participants, gaps in existing scholarly work, and the literature's influence on the present research are identified.

Service and Learning

Whether or not there is a hyphen between the words "service" and "learning" only skims the surface of the variety of definitions and approaches to service learning. An important starting point for this investigation is to define the term itself. According to the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse, service learning is, "A teaching and learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities" (National Service-Learning

Clearinghouse, 2011). Woolf (2005) details the importance of the community partner in need

and participant reflection, stating it as, "An academic program based on engagement with

underserved groups or organizations and projects focused on issues of the common good;

structured reflections on service-related and discipline-specific concerns; and respect for the

needs and interests of the community partner" (p. 28). Tomlinson-Clarke and Clarke (2010)

carry the service learning definition abroad by emphasizing the multi-dimensional cultural

immersion experience, "[Service learning is] direct cross-cultural contact occurring through

work with a community in which individuals are involved in the social, political, cultural, and

environmental aspects of that community" (p. 167). It is evident from the literature that the

emphasis may be on reflection, the type and needs of community partner, or gaining a sense of

civic responsibility, but all are categorized under the umbrella term of service learning.

In contrast to the previous literature's attempt to define service learning, a wealth of

literature exists that argues against constraining definitions because of their inability to capture

the context-specific cultural, social, political, and economic environment. They argue that

American service learning models' terminology, design, and stated outcomes cannot always be

directly applied outside of the United States (Woolf, 2005; Iverson & Espenschied-Reilly, 2010;

Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009). Iverson and Espenschied-Reilly (2010) find that, "The

quest for definitional certainty has the potential to constrain rather than foster emergent

practices…to overemphasize the legitimacy of particular modes of enacting service-learning is to

normalize and stigmatize alternative modes and potentially produce yet another doctrinal

methodology" (p. 11). Woolf (2005) best articulates the concern that service learning as an

American pedagogy, often becoming little more than institutional service learning and its

credibility lost in its exportation. He states, "Definitions need to reach beyond worthy but

vaguely humanitarian and idealistic notions of empathy between nations and cultures. Ill-

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prepared attempts to merge service learning into the international education curriculum may risk the broader credibility of both endeavors" (p. 28). Other perceived problems with international service learning include the exploitation of community members for student learning and concern that the connection between what is happening in the classroom and what is happening in the community is insubstantial (Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009).

Many attribute service learning's pedagogical origins to the United States, despite a lack of uniformity in programming, institutional types, and resources in existence today (Iverson & Espenschied-Reilly, 2010; Illich, 1968). Service learning's spread around the world began in the mid-1960s and reached a level of rapid expansion in the 1990s. Throughout its history, service learning has been met by both strong positive and negative responses (Hatcher & Erasmus, 2008; Iverson & Espenschied-Reilly, 2010; Pritzker & McBride, 2009). At the heart of the critique of the international expansion of service learning is that curricular approaches have not taken precautions to avoid repeatedly exporting irrelevant or inappropriate western, particularly American, ideas and methodologies into local host cultures (Illich, 1968; Woolf, 2005). As a result, many are skeptical of its benefits and are afraid of losing their cultural identity to Americanized ideals of development and service (Illich, 1968; Kiely, 2004; Woolf, 2005). Woolf (2005), along with Stoecker et al. (2009), strongly emphasize the importance of recognizing the voices of community members in opposition of service learning's international sprawl to accurately gauge its perceived value. On the other hand, many view international service learning as the key to breaking down social barriers and creating bonds between individuals and local communities (Hatcher & Erasmus, 2008; Iverson & Espenschied-Reilly, 2010).

To remedy the debate of constraining definitions and ethnocentrism in international service learning, a type of localization is recommended when introducing new pedagogies into a

culture (Iverson & Espenschied-Reilly, 2010, Crabtree, 2008). When the philosophy, principles, and practices of service learning curriculum are personalized, research shows it can better reflect and serve the local cultural context and learning exchanges (Iverson & Espenschied-Reilly, 2010). The key element of localization is the development of a common, local terminology. In order to facilitate the pedagogical localization of the terminology, Crabtree (2008) suggests international educators have a basic proficiency in cross-cultural psychology and communication. The approach has begun to shift from passivity in which cross-cultural adjustment and awareness were believed to autonomously develop to one that acknowledges how many intercultural immersion variables such as individuals' language learning abilities, predispositions, and attitudes and host country characteristics can greatly influence the learning experience (Crabtree, 2008). International service learning efforts should continue to address the needed shift from passive to active learners in both student and community partner participants.

Learning Theory

Next, assumptions about the learning in international service learning are reexamined. The field of International Education can no longer assume that service learning is relevant to everyone and everywhere; this would jeopardize the needed exploration of culture's role on service learning and its participants (Iverson & Espenschied-Reilly, 2010). John Dewey, an important figure in the mid-19th century for his education philosophy and pedagogy of community service learning, advocated for experiential learning and reflective activity grounded in academic coursework to enhance motivation, understanding, and critical citizenship (Posner, 1995). Just as no two individuals interpret an experience in the exact same way, Dewey noted that education, like with all living things, is a process of experiencing; not all experiences are equally or genuinely educative (Dewey, 1916). Dewey defined high-quality learning as experiences that contribute to the healthy growth of further experience. The highest quality experiences are those that help individuals become increasingly autonomous and intelligent in

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guiding their own future educative experiences (Posner, 1995; Ehlrich, 1997). In the case of service learning, the learners are both the students and the community partners. The challenge lies in ensuring a high-quality, or educative, experience for both of these learners.

According to Dewey's philosophy of education, the quality of the personal experiences within the curriculum is more important than how the curriculum is organized or whether it is mainly academic, vocational, or social. He writes, "Any experience, however, trivial in its first appearance, is capable of assuming an indefinite richness of significance by extending its range of perceived connections" (Dewey, 1916, p. 322). In theory, service learning has the potential to be a high-quality educative experience for participants. Although there is minimal literature on the long-term impact, it is suggested that participants may find a deeper understanding and make important connections during and also after a service learning program has ended (Sandy & Meyer, 2009; Paríolá & Paríolá, 2008).

Dewey also believed that learning was a communicative process and the goal of education was democracy (Cooks & Scharrer, 2006; Ehlrich, 1997). Most importantly, he noted that education for democracy requires a community of learning in which members learn together and from one another. An education system, he wrote, should not be based solely on personal or professional aims, but should be integrated into the ultimate aim of education for democracy (Ehlrich, 1997). One manner that education for democracy could be accomplished was believed to be through effective communication among citizens (Ehlrich, 1997).

Written on the general principles of learning, King's (2003) work solidifies Dewey's philosophy of learning occurring among each other while succinctly highlighting existing literature's main learning principles. She writes,

"Learning is done by individuals who are intrinsically tied to others as social beings…Learning is enhanced by taking place in the context of a compelling situation that balances challenge and opportunity…Learning requires frequent feedback if it is to be sustained, practice if it is to be nourished, and opportunities to use what has been

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learned…Much learning takes place informally and incidentally, beyond explicit teaching in the classroom [and] active social and community involvements…learning involves the ability of individuals to monitor their own learning…" (pp. 260-261).

Both Dewey (1916) and King (2003) note the importance of reflection to better understand one's own learning and how the organic and social nature of experiential learning connects individuals and is bigger than one's own isolated goals. However, the theories by King and Dewey should be pushed further by asking education for democracy to also extend to education for effective intercultural communication among global citizens.

Service Learning Outcomes, Goals, and Evaluations

There is a wealth of literature discussing the evaluation of domestic service learning programs in higher education. Numerous tools such as questionnaires, surveys, journals, and exit interviews have been used to conduct evaluations of past programs. These assessments function as final evaluations as they are most commonly implemented at the end of a program rather than at the beginning or midway point (Seifer & Connors, 2007; Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009; Honeycutt, 2002).

Evaluation terminology, just as in defining service learning, is also critiqued for its inexact terms for learning outcomes. The main objectives of international service learning programs resemble those of international education, including increased intercultural competence, global awareness, development of human values, building of intercultural understanding and communication, enhancement of civic mindedness and leadership skills, language skills, appreciation of cultural difference, tolerance for ambiguity, and experiential understanding of complex global problems (Cooks & Scharrer, 2006; Sandy & Meyer, 2009; Bolk, 2010; Crabtree, 2008). "Students themselves are quick to recognize the value of service-learning experiences; they consistently report that such programs have changed their attitudes toward the people and communities they have served and made them more prone to pursue other service opportunities" (Paríolá & Paríolá, 2008). This is a small sample from the much larger pool of

perceived outcomes of service learning that are commonly defined under the umbrella term of global citizenship.

Researchers have found that group status, gender, country of origin, predispositions, attitudes, and characteristics of the host country all impact the learning outcomes of intercultural experiences (Crabtree, 2008; Iverson & Espenschied-Reilly, 2010). This may explain the varying levels of emphases on the community's or the student's experience and whether the focus is on the service, the learning, or both. However, evaluations appear to focus most frequently on how students perceive and evaluate service learning programs while ignoring those of the community partner (Cooks & Scharrer, 2006; Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009).

In addition to learning outcomes, reflection is a crucial element in the evaluation of service learning. Iverson and Espenschied-Reilly (2010) suggest that educators identify and reflect upon the normative beliefs that are imbedded in their interpretations and acknowledge any cultural differences and biases rooted in individual, institutional, or programmatic assumptions. Participants and community partners could employ a similar type of reflection. Crabtree (2008) believes that if cultural reciprocity can be achieved, so too can mutuality, respect, and cultural humility. This reflective approach illustrates how different interpretations or expectations can be processed to prevent biases from effecting evaluations.

Some researchers have proposed less conventional approaches to service learning assessments. According to Sandy and Meyer (2009), service learning is a social process of learning and should be assessed with a social approach. They propose a practical approach to addressing the challenge of broadening students' perspective from a narrow, ethnocentric one to one that is more globally aware and globally sensitive,

> "In order to ensure that personal contact between the students and the community remains positive, it is essential to note the importance of prior cultural awareness and appreciation for the culture's standards of behavior and norms...the host community is

more likely to accommodate the students and to make efforts at reciprocating cultural interest and sensitivity" (p. 24).

A theme of cultural understanding and localization in service learning is again advocated for in order to gain the most from collaboration. Their major weakness is the lack of suggested tools to use with this social approach and it fails to address the evaluation of the host community partners' global awareness and sensitivity development.

Community Partner Evaluations

It may seem apparent to evaluate both sides of a reciprocal relationship. However, the general bias has favored research attention on the service and learning outcomes of student participants (Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009). According to Cruz and Giles (2000), there are only a handful of studies that look specifically at community impact and community perceptions of service learning. Service learning reporting is done most often from within the academic institution rather than from the community partners' perspective. Stoecker et al. (2009) found that past studies have rarely asked the community partner to help define what the community impact should be. As a result, the community's voice is often left unheard and one can only speculate as to whom the service learning is serving and how.

One theme found in service learning program evaluations appears to be communication problems between community partners and the academic institutions (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009). Stoecker et al. (2009) found that community partners do not always understand that service learning is connected to course content, learning objectives, and a grading system. They write,

> "By not knowing what service learning does to the communities it purports to serve, we risk creating unintended side effects that exacerbate, rather than alleviate, the problems those communities suffer from. Furthermore, as academics, we risk burning bridges rather than building them if the communities decide our students are doing more harm than good, or are more trouble than they are worth" (Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009, p. 7)

Service learning is a dialectical process, as Dewey alluded to, meaning the feedback process

needs to be dialectical as well (Cruz & Giles, 2000; Stoecker, Tryon, & Hilgendorf, 2009;

Dewey, 1916). The transparency in service learning programming may improve communication

between parties and ultimately lead to higher rates of satisfaction.

Family as a Community Partner

In 2009, the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education published an article entitled,

"The Impact of Learning as a Family: A Model for the 21st Century" in which the pedagogy of

intergenerational learning was examined. They found that learning together as a family or

between generations has the potential to impact all family members. Research shows that an

intergenerational pedagogical approach promotes the family as,

> "A learning environment, [that] builds on home culture and experience, encourages
> participatory learning, promotes family relationships as supporting well-being and
> readiness to learn, promotes a culture of aspirations in adults and children, and provides
> opportunities to build confidence to try out new skills and ideas." (National Institute of
> Adult Continuing Education, 2009, p. 5).

Intergenerational learning is a type of learning that intentionally involves two or more

generations with the aim of producing additional or different benefits to those from single

generation activities (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2009). It involves

different generations who learn from one another and/or together with a tutor. Depending on the

aims of the activity, it may or may not involve members of the same family. The National

Institute of Adult Continuing Education (2009) interviewed families involved in this type of

active learning and found a broad range of common outcomes, including gains in confidence,

development of new skills, improved communication, changed behaviors and changed

relationships with the family and community.

Past research has evaluated a variety of programs involving learning as a family. However,

the programs were related to approaches that do not directly correspond to service learning.

Despite this limitation, it can be concluded that whichever evaluation method is used, learning

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reciprocity within the family is highly likely (National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2009). It remains that intergenerational learning theory, whether within the same family or not, provides a rich learning environment. This theory has yet to be researched in an international service learning context where the family members are the community partners.

Reciprocity

We now refer back to the advice given by Crabtree (2008) to localize terminology and pedagogical approaches to the community where the service learning occurs. The potential for effective communication between Italians and Americans will be examined along with how it may impact service learning programs in Italy. The analysis contains literature on Edward Hall's High and Low Context Framework, Dr. Geert Hofstede's and Fons Trompenaar's cultural dimensions, the Italian value of volunteerism, and the growing emphasis on the use of the English language in Italy.

Intercultural Communication in Italy

According to Edward Hall's High and Low Context Framework, Italian culture would be categorized as high context. Based on Hall's framework, Halverson (1993) highlights five dimensions of culture most relevant to interactions in multicultural environments. They include association, interaction, territoriality, temporality, and learning. The following descriptions of these five dimensions reaffirm that Italian culture is considered high context in that communication requires more time as trust, friendships and family relationships, personal needs, and other factors are considered first (Tirmizi, 2008, p. 31).

In the association dimension, high context relationships in Italy, "Depend on trust, build up slowly, and are stable. One distinguishes between people inside and people outside one's circle. How things get done depends on relationships with people and attention to group process. One's identity is rooted in groups [family, culture, and work]" (Tirimizi, 2008, p. 32). Under the interaction dimension, the most applicable part regarding Italian culture is that verbal messages

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are indirect; one talks around the point and embellishes it, and communication is seen as an art form where disagreements are personalized, and nonverbal elements [gestures] are used frequently. For territoriality in Italy, space is communal (Tirmizi, p. 32). Italians' notion of temporality is high context in that time is not easily scheduled and change is slow as things are rooted in the past. Lastly, the learning dimension often expresses itself in Italy as, "…first observing others as they model or demonstrate [a new skill] and then practicing" (Tirmizi, p. 33).

Grounded in Dr Geert Hofstede's and Fons Trompenaar's cultural dimensions, Borger (2001) identifies the cultural nuances within the Italian family setting. According to Borger (2001), the greatest cultural difference between the United States and Italy is based on the uncertainty avoidance dimension, meaning the extent to which people feel threatened by uncertain and unknown situations. Italy is a very old country that has survived many wars, political turmoil, and economic changes. These changes have influenced Italians over the years and may be responsible for them maintaining a level of fear of the unknown. An example of this fear is that unacquainted guests will generally not be invited into an Italian home until a strong bond of trust has been built first.

One of Trompenaar's principle cultural dimensions is individualism versus collectivism. While being an individualistic country, Italy is more a collective society than the United States (Borger, 2001). Italians will take care of themselves and their immediate family first and foremost. Italians also rank themselves as more affective than Americans do. This indicates that they are more likely to express their thoughts and feelings, emotions flow easily, touching and gestures are common, and statements are dramatic and fluent. Italy is also a fairly diffuse culture when compared with the United States. Italians keep their distance from unknown others and relationships are slower to develop. Their diffuse nature is evident in the time they require to get to know someone new and to observe them before welcoming the newcomer into one's inner

circle. Furthermore, *la bella figura* (the beautiful figure) is an infamous term used to describe Italians' preoccupation with the preservation of their appearances in public. Making a good impression and saving personal face are constant concerns that go above and beyond clothing fashion and seeps into family life (Severgnini, 2007).

The family is the backbone of the Italian culture. The main investment for Italian families is the home; as a result, they put extra care into maintaining it and keeping it extremely neat and orderly. In La Bella Figura, Beppe Severgnini's book written on the Italian societal complexes and cultural nuances, the Italian living room is described as the "political and geographical hub of the Italian home" (Severgnini, 2007, p. 62). Severgnini (2007) writes, "It [the living room] is the place where the family talks about everything all the time, from births to weddings, schools, vacations, expenses and things to purchase. Children's education begins – around a table laid for dinner" (Severgnini, p. 63). Furthermore, the Italian family is described as a form of insurance coverage, an employment agency, a market where everything is given away and haggled over, a restaurant, a news service, an infirmary, and a residential care home. Although Severgnini writes in jest, the underlying message is clear; Italian life revolves around the family, strengthening the relationships in the tight-knit familial unit, which consequently makes it more difficult to introduce a stranger into the home.

Italian Values on Volunteerism
The only literature uncovered on Italian participation in community engagement refers to volunteerism in Italy. The few research findings still offer valuable insight into the possible expectations of Italian families in La Famiglia Italiana Project. Formal volunteering in Italy is a fairly new social phenomenon and is less common than in the United States. The term "volunteer" gained popularity in the 1980s when it meant an Italian person who chose to avoid being called for military duty (Ascoli & Cnaan, 1997). Comparing work by Borger (2001), it again remains a less common idea to help strangers, or people that are not relatives, close

friends, or neighbors (Ascoli & Cnaan, 1997). Italian volunteers tend to be middle class and

involved in more than one community engagement project or program. The early 1990s showed

that more men volunteered than women and they came from average-to-high levels of education,

and from north and central Italy. The activities favored by volunteers include taking care of the

elderly, caring for the handicapped, giving blood, and caring for the sick (Ascoli & Cnaan,

1997).

The English Language

In the past 60 years, Italy and many other European countries have shared in increased

mobility, exchanges, and growing globalization of the economy and communications (Tosi,

2000). These trends have had a major impact on all European languages, but in Italy, the effects

have been rather unique. One result was the spread of a national language. With a common

language rather than the use of dialects, Italians overcame historical diversity and formed a

national community (Pulcini, 1997; "A language Italy," 2000). The widespread use of dialects

created a much greater need for the new national language to be taught before foreign languages.

The majority of the adult population today is still comfortable with their bilingualism, switching

from the national language to the local dialect on a daily basis (Tosi, 2000).

In addition to the evolution of the Italian language, an Americanization of many Italian

consumer goods, social behaviors, and priorities occurred, including the spread of English after

World War II. Still today a high number of, "English borrowings in Italian are found in the

spoken and written mass-media, in popular literature, in the fields of sport, music, entertainment,

business, commerce, and technologies" (Pulcini, 1997, p. 79). Other main factors responsible for

the English language transitioning into a new priority in Italy is its use by many government,

commercial, and scientific organizations and American commodities are now available to more

sectors of society (Pulcini, 1997).

Despite difficulty locating accurate data on Europeans' English-speaking abilities,

Italians maintain a widespread perception that they are behind the other countries ("A language Italy," 2000). As people communicate more than ever with other European countries, Italy feels more pressure to catch up. The nation is described as, "racing to learn English, the common language of a united Europe and the lingua franca of the Internet" ("A language Italy," 2000). Pulcini (1997) writes that the traditional teacher-centered language teaching models for classical language instruction, such as the translation of written literary work and very little practice speaking, has slowly been abandoned but has left generational language proficiency gaps. English is widely studied in universities as a part of Modern Languages degree programs and more than 85 percent of the country's high school students now take English ("A language Italy," 2000). The adult population, meanwhile, have more ground to cover.

English has an international dimension and can travel easily across borders without physical or cultural contact being necessary. For example, business has motivated many Italians to reach English language competency, as many companies have begun to pay for employee lessons ("A language Italy," 2000). With the majority of the world speaking English, Italians understand the importance of learning the language, but not all have the opportunity, time, or drive to reach a level of fluency; it is also often seen as an elitist skill or luxury (Pulcini, 1997). From the literature, we can gather that the service of speaking English with the Italian families maintains societal value and is emphasized in schools, business, and success (Tosi, 2000).

Gaps in the Literature

Currently, there is little literature addressing the tendency of service learning to overlook the voice of the community partner. Thus far the field of International Education has focused too intently on students' learning and evaluation. Lewin (2009) captures the core of this discussion, "Designing programs that place the community first, rather than the student, is paradoxically the most effective way to realize the development of students intellectually, morally and civically." International service learning research needs to redirect its focus on evaluating the whole picture,

meaning all participants including faculty, students, and community partners. This would help to better understand the community culture and students' role in a particular study abroad context. According to Cooks and Sharrer (2006), evaluations should move beyond a single measurement to a multifaceted approach in which the learning process, outcomes, and service, are factored in.

There is also a general absence of information about the impact of cross-cultural communication on creating and utilizing evaluations as an effective tool, particularly in Italian culture. A call for further research on how institutions can, "...nurture long-term community partnerships, and integrate service-learning into the administrative structures and policies of the institution as well as the broader curriculum [abroad]..." should to be made (Seifer & Connors, 2007, p. 7). As reiterated by Crabtree (2008), Woolf (2005), and Iverson and Espenschied-Reilly (2010), more studies must be done on the impact of cross-cultural encounters on host communities, in particular on families, how best to ask for host community members' perspective on these encounters, and the long-term impact of international service learning on participants and host community members. The large gap demonstrates how American academics are potentially continuing to export service learning to communities abroad without first developing field-based research on best practices, fully understanding community partners' interpretations and expectations, and exploring intercultural communication's role in the interactions.

IV. Research Design

Information gathered during my practicum and from the literature review guided the research design to better understand how to meet American college students' and Italian family community partners' needs and program expectations while preserving partner reciprocity and program sustainability. Just as service learning is a dialectic process, dialectic data collection methods were chosen. These included in-person and phone interviews, participant-observation,

and electronic evaluations. The research design was qualitative in nature and contained four main research groups. This provided short-term, cross-cultural data from community partner and student participant as well as institutional perspectives. Short-term results are defined as those that present themselves during or shortly after the semester of participation. Group 1 was phone and in-person interviews with past Italian family participants; Group 2 was an electronic evaluation administered to past Umbra Institute student participants; Group 3 was in-person interviews with current student and Italian family participants; Group 4 was in-person interviews with the two Umbra Institute faculty and staff members responsible for the La Famiglia Italiana Project. In-person interviews refer to face-to-face contact at a location agreed upon by the research group participant. All research questions, consent forms, and Group 2 introduction and reminder emails can be found in the Appendix.

The research questions were designed to capture data on demographics, typical meetings, and program expectations. Group 1 family demographic questions included age, family origins, length of time in Perugia, and which family member interacted the most with the student pair. Group 2 and Group 3 demographic questions mirrored the La Famiglia Italiana Project application by asking for past intercultural experiences to illuminate how previous experience may have be related to the need for support. The Group 1, Group 2, and Group 3 question asking for a description of a typical meeting functioned as a comparative tool between corresponding student and Italian family responses. It was also designed to highlight the types of activities, discussions, locations, and participant roles that sustain successful meetings. Questions for all four groups regarding program expectations were used to gather useful feedback for possible future programming changes. Group 4 interview questions were directed towards understanding an institutional perspective on program development, program sustainability within the course, and service reciprocity.

The Umbra Institute gave me full permission to conduct this research involving the aforesaid four groups. I was given the contact information for the past 14 family participants and 30 past Umbra Institute student participants along with the new family and two new student participants for the Spring 2011 semester. Consent forms were used to inform participants of their right to withdraw from the research at any time, that only their first name would be used to identify them unless an alternative name is requested, that the final Capstone Paper would be made available upon request, and it supplied them with my contact information should they have had any questions or concerns. Although I was granted permission in the consent form to audio record the interviews for transcribing and translating, no such recordings were used. All participants may have indirectly benefited from their participation by helping The Umbra Institute improve La Famiglia Italiana Project for future students and Italian families. They were in no way judged, graded, or given any monetary compensation, nor should they have felt external pressure to participate in this research study.

Group 1: Each of the 14 past family participants was contacted by phone. The initial phone contact began with an introduction of who I was, my role at The Umbra Institute, and that the phone call was in regards to their participation in La Famiglia Italiana Project. When given permission to continue, the purpose of the study was explained, what their role in the research would be, the consent form was read aloud, and a meeting time was arranged for their signature on the consent form (See Appendix F). Since the consent forms were read over the phone, they were shorter in length than the English version but contained the same general information.

In order to accommodate the families' needs, they were asked for their preference to either meet in-person for the interview, to complete the 16 questions over the phone, or have the interview questions emailed to them (See Appendix A). Eight out of the 14 families completed the interview for a return rate of 57% (n=8 out of 14). Seven of the eight families requested

phone interviews and one requested an in-person interview. Of the remaining six families, one was unreachable; four did not agree to be interviewed; one requested an email containing the questions of which was not returned. Due to time constraints, only the family member who had the most frequent interaction with The Umbra Institute students was interviewed. The phone interviews generally lasted 15 minutes. Upon request, the language used for the phone interviews was Italian. The in-person interview lasted approximately 30 minutes and was conducted in English upon request. All responses were recorded using pen and paper. The only in-person contact with the seven families interviewed over the phone was to collect signatures for the consent forms.

Group 2: The 30 past Umbra Institute student participants were emailed on February 17, 2011 with an invitation to partake in the electronic evaluation regarding their experience with La Famiglia Italiana Project (See Appendix G). The email contained an introduction of who I was and my role at The Umbra Institute. A written consent form was included at the end of the email explaining that by completing the electronic evaluation, they were giving consent. A hyperlink was included to take them directly to the electronic evaluation using www.freesurveyonline.com. Students were given a total of 10 days to complete the 19-question evaluation from the date of the first email (See Appendix B). After five days on February 22, 2011, a reminder email was sent out thanking those who had already participated and reminding those that had not about the importance of their contribution and the deadline to complete it (See Appendix H).

Of the 30 electronic evaluations emailed out, three were returned with sending errors due to expired email addresses. Of the remaining 27 electronic evaluation recipients, nine submitted responses, a 33% (n=9 out of 27) return rate. The electronic evaluation and emails were sent in English and took approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Group 3: Individual in-person interviews with the current Italian family member and the two Umbra Institute student participants were conducted at The Umbra Institute. Each read and signed the English version of the consent form. The individual interviews had a 100% return rate (n=3 out of 3) and lasted approximately 20 minutes. The current student participant interviews contained seven questions; the current Italian family participant interview contained 11 questions (See Appendix C). English was the language spoken with the current student participants and a combination of Italian and English was used with the current family participant, as she was fluent in English. Responses were recorded using pen and paper.

Participant-observer notes were taken based on my experience during the first meeting of the Spring 2011 semester on February 8, 2011 between the two new student participants and the Italian family. It was my responsibility to introduce the participants and provide an overview of La Famiglia Italiana Project. English was used to communicate with the students, English and Italian were used with the father and the daughter, and Italian was used with the mother. Research notes were recorded one hour after the meeting occurred.

Group 4: The Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends professor and the Associate Director for Academic Community Engagement, Service Learning and Internships were individually interviewed in-person at The Umbra Institute. Group 4 interviews contained open-ended questions to gather information on La Famiglia Italiana Project's history and the institutional philosophy and pedagogical approach. The in-person interviews lasted approximately 45 minutes and were conducted in English. Both are non-native, fluent English speakers. Responses were recorded using pen and paper.

Limitations of the Research

The main limitations of the research included a lack of Group 1 in-person interviews, which tended to yield more detailed, thorough responses than phone interviews. The research also lacked responses to the Group 2 electronic evaluation. Had a higher return rate been

achieved, more direct connections could have been made between specific Italian families' and the corresponding student participants' experiences. Another limitation of the data gathered is my level of access as an insider to the past Italian family participants. I had no previous contact with the families prior to the initial interview phone call. A strong effort was made to evaluate the program using a multifaceted approach in which sensitivity for participants and cross-cultural communication barriers were considered. However, the high context nature of Italians may have impacted their willingness to participate and share experiences, as I am neither a native Italian nor a native Italian speaker. Furthermore, the technique of writing and translating the interviews while speaking over the phone may have negatively affected the accuracy and completeness of the recorded responses.

V. Presentation of the Data

Data collected from each of the four research groups is provided below.

Group 1: Past Italian Family Participants

A total of eight past Italian family participants completed the Group 1 interview. The questions in these interviews were mainly open-ended, making it possible to have more than one answer for particular questions. According to the eight responses to Question #1c, the family member(s) that interacted the most with The Umbra Institute students were the oldest daughters, ages 18 to 19, who also had other siblings (n=3) and mothers whose children were present for some of the meetings (n=3). The others included a father (n=1) and a daughter whose mother sometimes participated (n=1). There were a total of eight responses on how the families had heard of La Famiglia Italiana Project (Question #2b). Results indicated a variety of means including through a friend with no direct association at The Umbra Institute (n=2), the professor of the Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends course (n=1), from a past family participant (n=1), and most commonly through one of the children's English language teacher (n=3) or through a person directly associated with The Umbra Institute (n=3). The 16 responses

to the reasons for participation in the program (Question #2c) included that it would be an interesting and worthwhile experience (n=5), to learn about another's culture or meet someone from another country (n=3), to improve their English language skills (n=3), to have a language exchange (n=1), to know American culture (n=1), wanting to benefit their children (n=1), and for curiosity (n=1).

Question #3 addressed program expectations prior to the first meeting with the student participants. The eight responses included that it would be a cultural exchange (n=3), that they did not have expectations (n=2), that they would learn more about American culture (n=1), and that they did not expect the American students to do the minimum amount of work [effort to interact with the family; prepare and ask questions] required (n=1). The first meeting when an Umbra Institute staff member accompanied the students was declared in six of the eight interviews as the moment when the families gained a better understanding, or understood for the first time, exactly what the program was and what their role was as the host.

In response to Question #5 on La Famiglia Italiana Project meeting, not meeting, or exceeding initial expectations, it became clear that it met the vast majority of the families' expectations with 87% (n=7 out of 8) responding that the program met their initial expectations and 13% (n=1 out of 8) responding that it did not. No one responded that it exceeded his or her initial expectations (n=0 out of 8). One family said the program met their initial expectations only in regards to the language practice as the students were not interested and did the minimum work possible. Another family said the relationships with the students were not so deep but deeper than expected.

When asked to describe a typical meeting (Question #4), the eight families' responses ranged not only across families but also throughout the program. The most frequent responses described conversations and interactions involving food such as cooking and/or eating dinner

together at the family's home, talking over tea and cookies, or going into the center for a coffee (n=4) while some specified that the interactions with food were related to relevant holidays, local events, or were a part of the families' regional heritage (n=3). Other answers included the mother showing the students her workplace (n=1) while another mother said the students would do all the normal activities with the family which included playing with the daughters, going shopping, taking a walk, or going to the daughters' dance classes (n=1).

Question #6 and Question #7 focused on perceptions of support by The Umbra Institute for a total of 21 responses to Question #6 and seven responses to Question #7. Question #6 addressed how supported by The Umbra Institute did the families feel before, during, and after La Famiglia Italiana Project. No family said they felt unsupported; five simply said they felt supported. Feelings of support came from receiving a phone call or an email during the program to see how everything was going (n=5 out of 23), the initial meeting with a representative from The Umbra Institute who clarified the program and answered questions (n=4 out of 23), and by receiving an invitation and by attending the final student presentation (n=4 out of 23). Others responses indicated that some did not need help during the program because they coordinated everything with the students but felt they could have contacted The Umbra Institute if necessary (n=3 out of 23).

When asked what would have helped families feel more supported and/or prepared for the La Famiglia Italiana Project (Question #7), five of the seven responded "nothing" because there were no problems, one out of seven would have liked more information about the program before the first meeting, and one out of seven would have liked more information about their role as the host because if she had known the students were doing a research project, she could have helped them more. One explained that the institution had contacted them by phone asking the family to write a few sentences about their feelings and experience, but they forgot to do this.

Question #8 focused on perceptions of the students', individual family members', and the family as a unit's learning based on participation in La Famiglia Italiana Project. Families perceived that the students learned most about Italian culture and Italian people while improving their Italian language skills (n=10 out of 15), were not really sure what the students learned (n=3 out of 15), or that the students did not improve their Italian (n=2 out of 15). For a total of 13 responses, individual family members said they learned from the opportunity to practice and improve their English language skills (n= 6), had learned about another culture (n=2), had learned specifically about American culture (n=2), gained a better understanding of their own family and Italian culture better from explaining it to a foreigner (n=1), that it gave their daughter someone to play with (n=1), and that they practiced their English very little during the program (n=1).

Next, the interview focus shifted to intercultural communication and language. When asked about the overall experience of interpersonally interacting with American students (Question #9), the following eight responses were given: the family liked the experience with La Famiglia Italiana Project and would participate again (n=2); it was helpful interacting with native English speakers (n=2); they enjoyed the cultural exchange experience (n=2), it was a good opportunity but not much help and should be more organized in the future (n=1); they already knew other Americans so it was not a new experience, but that the family enjoyed it nonetheless (n=1). Question #10 provided 20 varied responses regarding what ways the language influenced interactions with the students. Respondents said the language was not a problem for the family (n=5 out of 13); the language was not a problem for students (n=4 out of 13); the language was a problem for students (n=4 out of 13). To supplement Question #10, families were asked what language was used most frequently. Responses were that English was spoken more often (n=5

out of 8) or that it was an even balance between English and Italian (n=3 out of 8); three families

added that they found it helpful when they corrected each other when speaking.

The remaining six interview questions involved presentation attendance, overall

impressions and suggestions to improve La Famiglia Italiana Project. Seventy-five percent of

the eight families (n=6 out of 8) attended the student presentations (Questions #11). Of the 25%

(n=2 out of 8) that did not attend, they indicated that work prevented them from attending. Five

of the six families in attendance said they liked the presentation; one elaborated, stating that the

presentation was really simple and rather than the students just reciting a list of things they did

with the family, it would have been more interesting if they gave their impressions of the family.

For a total of seven responses to Question #12, the perceived long-term benefits of

participating in La Famiglia Italiana Project would be thinking about cultures in a new way

(n=2), exposure to the English Language (n=2), being more informed about American culture

(n=2), or developing good relationships with the students of which they have continued for a

year (n=1). Seventy-five percent (n=6 out of 8) of families reported that La Famiglia Italiana

Project directly increased their likelihood of participating in other cultural exchange programs in

the future (Question #13); 13% (n=1 out of 8) responded 'Maybe', and 13% (n=1 out of 8) said

'No' but if she had the opportunity to do it again she would. Of the six families that responded

'Yes' to Question #13, two indicated that they had wanted to participate in La Famiglia Italiana

Project again, but were unable to due to scheduling conflicts; the family that had already

participated twice said they would be willing to do it again if scheduling allowed.

Lastly, families were asked if they would recommend the program to other Italian

families (Question #14). Seven out of eight families responded "Yes". The eighth also

responded "Yes" but only if "it was organized better next time". Suggestions to improve La

Famiglia Italiana Project were as follows (Question #15): it was helpful when students had

prepared questions and/or ideas of things to do in advance (n=1 out of 6); having the family

know what to do or say in the meetings (n=1 out of 6); having a gathering between participating

families to exchange ideas and share about how the project was going (n=1 out of 6); knowing

about students' research and focus on certain course themes in an effort to help lead

conversations around them (n=3 out of 6). The last suggestion corresponds with the vast

majority of the negative responses to the interview questions. One family member, a mother,

expressed that she was not expecting the American students to do the minimum amount of work

required. She said, "It [the meetings] was very superficial." It would have helped to know the

program objectives first to organize the meetings better. She also proposed to do something on

weekends, "but the students were always traveling outside of Italy". No family asked questions

when given the opportunity at the end of the interview (Question #16).

Group 2: Past Student Participants

A total of nine past student participants completed the Group 2 electronic evaluation.

The evaluation contained open-ended, multiple choice, and likert-scale questions, with the

possibility of having more than one answer only for the open-ended questions. Reasons for

participation in La Famiglia Italiana Project (Question #2) and students' past intercultural

experiences (Question #3) can be seen in Table 1 and Table 2 respectively below.

Reasons for Student Participation	# of Students
Positive Program Reputation	1
Italian Major	1
Academic Credit	1
Wanted Home-Cooked Meal	1
Offer English Language Services	1
Cultural Immersion	2
Meet and Know Italian Family	5

Table 1

Past Intercultural Experience	# of Students
None	1
Studied Abroad	1
Have Family in Italy	1
Hosted International Student or Au Pair	1

Lived Abroad	1
Home Stay in Italy	1
Traveled	3
Traveled to Italy	3
Studied Italian Language/Italian Major	4

Table 2

Initial program expectations (Question #4) contained 14 responses, which included wanting to learn about the Italian lifestyle (n=3), to eat good food (n=2), to get to know the whole family (n=2), to be welcomed into a family (n=1), to share about American life (n=1), for a language exchange (n=1), to speak Italian (n=1), for a cross-cultural exchange (n=1), to get to know Perugia (n=1), and to take part in the family's life (n=1). Two participants wrote that they were disappointed because they did not get to know the whole Italian family nor did they get a unique glimpse into their [the Italian family members'] lives.

Typical meetings (Question #5) for 56% (n=4 out of 9) of evaluation respondents involved sitting and talking for one to two hours mainly in the living room of the family's home. A common response was,

> "It was much more formal than I had expected. I thought we would be cooking with them, and doing hands on learning. Every visit was wonderful, however it was sometimes awkward and uncomfortable because it was always in the formal living room and Marina [the mother] had prepared something to try, and then we would talk for around two hours and then leave. It was almost interview style. I enjoyed it, but I had hoped for more of an immersion into the family rather than staying at guest status. I don't really think that we have enough time for that though only meeting once or twice a week."

An example of a more interactive experience was,

> "Me and my other American partner would usually just meet our family at their home and talk, or meet with the daughter who was 17 years old, in town, and talk in both Italian and English. We met for coffee, to go rock climbing, and for an extended family gathering."

According to the evaluation, students expressed more difficulty with the Italian language than the families reported with the English language (Question #6). One-third (n=3 out of 9) of respondents had a positive experience speaking Italian, stating that their host family's home was

a safe and non-judgmental space to practice language skills and was helped by the family's

motivation to learn English. Two-thirds (n=6 out of 9) of respondents stated insecurities or

difficulties with the language for either themselves or their student partner. For example,

> "Luckily I was at the level of Italian I was because our family refused to speak English; I did not mind as much, because I could understand and communicate; I know this was very difficult for my partner because she felt left out of most conversations even though I was always trying to play the translator."

> "It completely influenced the interactions. My Italian was not the best and because of that we spoke in English quite a bit and the daughter was quite fluent in English would be our translator at the dinner table. I would attempt to speak Italian but mostly the long conversations were in English."

In Figure 1, the results of how the Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends course

encouraged the exploration of course themes during the meetings with the Italian families are
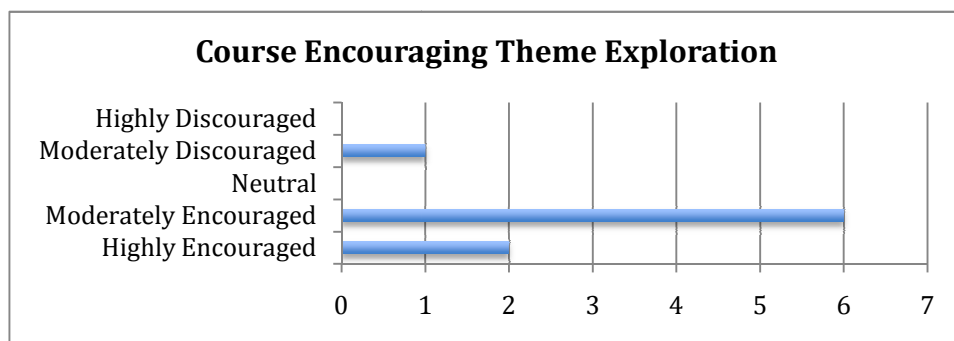
displayed (Question #7).

Figure 1

A total of 15 responses were given for Question #8 on if and what skills students

developed or improved upon as a direct result of participating in La Famiglia Italiana Project.

Results included improving Italian language skills (n=4), improving conversation or

communication skills (n=2) of which one could not say whether it was directly connected to La

Famiglia Italiana Project or not, gaining a better cultural understanding (n=2), learning the local

Perugia dialect (n=1), learning how to "truly listen" (n=1), developing the skill of questioning

(n=1), increasing desire to know and learn more (n=1), improving non-verbal communication

skills (n=1), improving the ability to articulate modern America and what it means to be an America (n=1), and improving public speaking skills due to the final presentation (n=1).

Based on the students' perceptions of the overall experience of interacting with an Italian family (Question #9), 78% (n=7 out of 9) said they really liked or loved their experience with La Famiglia Italiana Project because of the connection they made with the family and learning about Italian culture. Others were disappointed because the families were uninterested in the program (n=2). One wrote that they felt awkward and started to dread it towards the end of the project. Figure 2 below represents the likelihood of respondents' recommending La Famiglia Italiana Project (Question #10). Two-thirds (n= 6 out of 9) answered that they were highly likely to recommend the program.
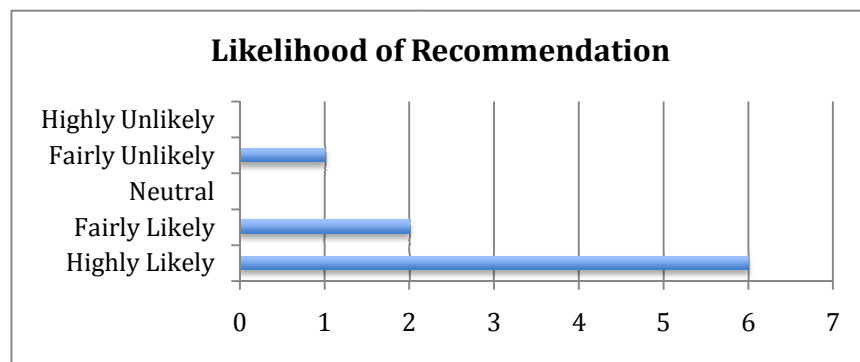

Figure 2

Figure 3 below represents a total of nine student respondents' feelings of support before, during, and after the program (Question #11). When asked what would have helped them feel more supported by The Umbra Institute (Question #12), data indicated having more weekly meetings or check-ins with the professor (n=4).

"Possibly weekly or bi-weekly meetings after class for a few minutes with the other students that were participating in the family project and the teacher to see if the direction we were headed in as far as how we were meeting with our family and the awkwardness of the first few meetings was normal. Which would have then helped guide us into a more set way to present our project to both the class and the community."

Other responses included having some background information about the family because they lacked preparation beforehand (n=2), nothing (n=3), or knowing more Italian (n=1).
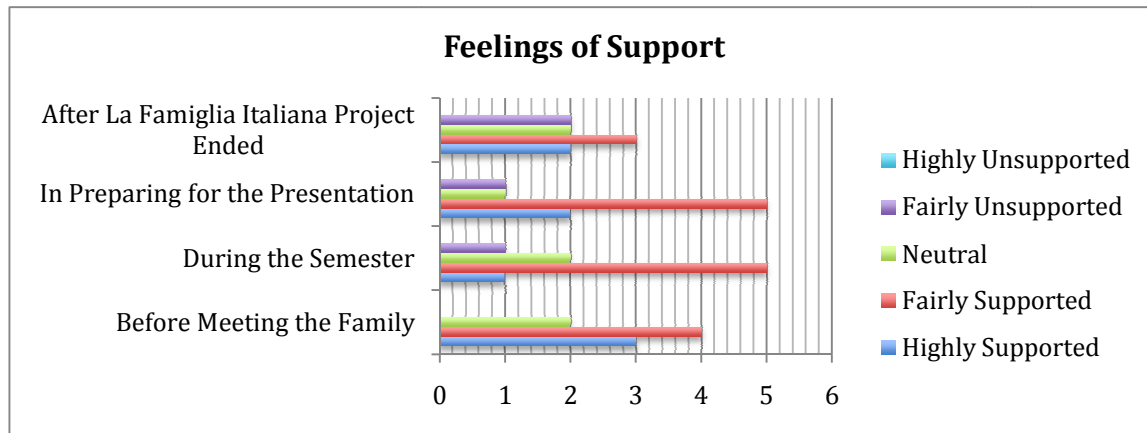

Feelings of Support

Legend:
- Highly Unsupported
- Fairly Unsupported
- Neutral
- Fairly Supported
- Highly Supported

Categories (y-axis):
- After La Famiglia Italiana Project Ended
- In Preparing for the Presentation
- During the Semester
- Before Meeting the Family

Figure 3

Data gathered from Question #13 identified that 89% (n=8 out of 9) felt the program contributed to the learning of the family members by helping them improve their English language skills (n=4), to better understand American culture (=2), to learn American cooking recipes (n=1), or offered a form of friendship (n=1). One student was unsure of how they had contributed to the family's learning, as the family did not want to learn about American culture or English (n=1).

The influence of the final presentation on different aspects of the program (Question #14) are shown below in Figure 4 of which students felt highly or moderately benefitted their experience in developing relationships with the Italian family (n=4 out of 9), in connecting themes from the course (n=4 out of 9), and with La Famiglia Italiana Project as a whole (n=5 out of 9). The Italian family attendance at the final presentation (Question #15) indicated that two-thirds (n=6 out of 9) of the families were present and one-third was not (n=3 out of 9).
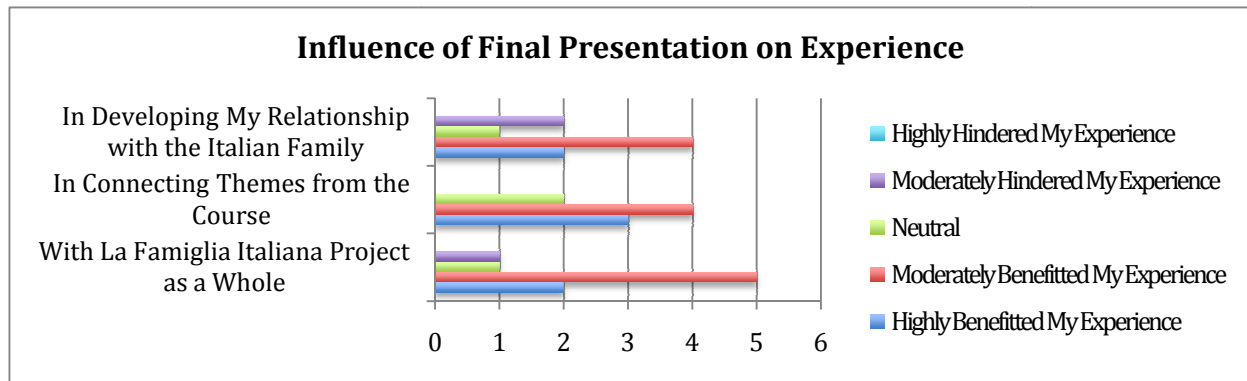
Influence of Final Presentation on Experience

Legend:
- Highly Hindered My Experience
- Moderately Hindered My Experience
- Neutral
- Moderately Benefitted My Experience
- Highly Benefitted My Experience

Categories:
- In Developing My Relationship with the Italian Family
- In Connecting Themes from the Course
- With La Famiglia Italiana Project as a Whole

(Horizontal axis: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6)

Figure 4

Question #16 responses to La Famiglia Italiana Project changing and/or confirming

respondents' attitudes toward the people and community of Perugia yielded mixed results.

Students answered that it helped them understand and feel a part of Perugia because they

interacted with people from the community and heard their opinions (n=4 out of 9). One wrote,

> "I don't think it confirmed or changed my attitudes towards the community of Perugia.
> Perugia seen through the eyes of an American student studying abroad can be limited to
> what's seen at night- I never felt like that was representative of Perugia. After the
> experience I felt more connected with the true community and came to know them as a
> diverse and accepting group."

Others wrote that the experience did not change their attitudes or beliefs because it was always

positive (n=4 out of 9). The last one explained that the family was originally from Naples and as

a result they had learned more about *Napolitano* traditions than *Perugino* traditions (n=1).

Figure 5 represents the high likelihood of respondents participating in service learning in

the future as a direct result of participation in the program (Question #17).

Likelihood of Future Service Learning Participation

Categories:
- Highly Unlikely
- Fairly Unlikely
- Neutral
- Fairly Likely
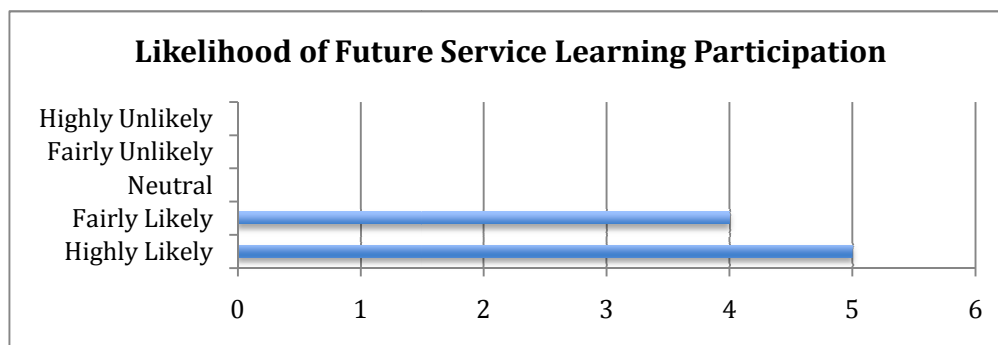- Highly Likely

(Horizontal axis: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6)

Figure 5

Figure 6 represents how the program mainly met most or all of respondents' initial expectations.
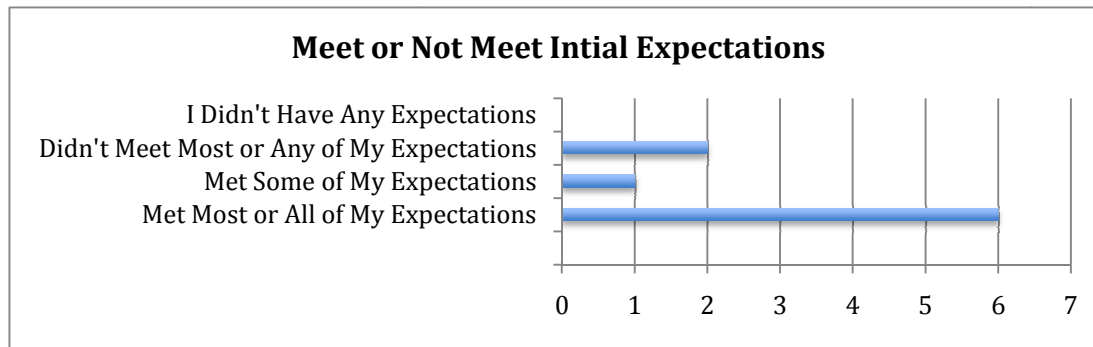
Figure 6

A total of seven suggestions for improvement were provided (Question #19). Three suggested giving students a better idea of what the project would be, expectations, and what students are supposed to accomplish from the beginning (n=3 out of 7); Two wrote that families and students should be paired better, meaning The Umbra Institute should require an appropriate language level depending on the paired participants (n=2 out of 7); the remaining were,

> "…work with families more to encourage them to invite be more comfortable about the Americans and to invite them into daily activities rather than just talk about their daily activities"

> "Some sort of icebreaker, if you will, would be beneficial. We only have so much time to talk and the initial meetings were not as productive as they could have been due to awkwardness. Also I don't like the final presentation. I felt I was forced to reduce my family to stereotypes and case studies. I saw my family as individuals and felt uncomfortable portraying them as such."

Group 3: Current Italian Family and Student Participants

The following data from these interviews was collected in March 2011 during the Spring 2011 semester and began with the two current student participants, Molly and Lauren. In response to Question #1b on the reason(s) for applying to La Famiglia Italiana Project, both students expressed a desire to become active and immerse themselves in the Italian culture outside of the classroom, especially in a family setting; Lauren specifically mentioned wanting to step out of the "American bubble". When asked about past intercultural experiences (Question #1c), both students identified that the semester at The Umbra Institute was their first time studying Italian. Both have extensive backgrounds working in community outreach programs;

Lauren has domestic experience and Molly has international experience. Studying in Italy was Lauren's first time outside of the United States, while Molly had spent seven years studying Spanish and had traveled to South America.

Initial expectations of the program (Question #2) were spending time with the family and observing (n=2) and actively taking a part in family activities, helping cook, and having casual conversations (n=1). Molly explained that she was not completely sure what the program was going into it. According to both students' accounts, a typical meeting with the family (Question #3) meant sitting in the living room where the mother always offered them something she had made to eat and drink. They would talk about "whatever came up" such as relevant festivals and holidays including *Carnivale,* and would cook related dishes, which usually generated more conversation on food, American and Italian recipes, and holiday traditions. In addition, Paola, the 24-year-old daughter of the family, sometimes had her boyfriend or Italian friends over.

An impromptu interview question regarding the influence of language on their interactions revealed that both students intended to incorporate more specific conversations into the next meetings with the family. Both students explained that the language was not a major problem and that Paola's father always tried to understand their English; however, his English language skills were limited as were their Italian language skills. The students reported trying their best to listen and understand the conversations in Italian, but Paola translated the majority of the conversations.

When asked about support from The Umbra Institute, the following response was given (Question #4),

> "I expected more direction from Antonella [Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends course professor]. Antonella is just opening up now about what is expected, that we need to dig deeper into the themes. Knowing the expectations from the beginning would have been better and I'd be less stressed out now. Not that it was a problem but knowing the family information before also would have been nice."

The other student said she was aware their situation was different [from past student participants] because Paola interns at The Umbra Institute. Molly said she did not have a formal support feeling, but would feel comfortable asking someone at The Umbra Institute if needed. She said she felt it would have been better to know the family dynamics first, if there were kids, and how old they were.

When asked in what ways have they been able to apply Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends course material and lectures to their interactions with the Italian family (Question #5), Molly said the course prepared her well for the conversations. She said she tried to think of conversation topics beforehand because without it, the meetings could be awkward. Lauren enjoyed seeing the connections between what they were learning in class and what they would see in the family. She said,

> "Last week we tried to structure it but the family didn't really seem to want that and steered us into other discussions which didn't work well."

Lauren also expressed some discomfort about the Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends course professor's request that they discuss Catholicism and gender relations with the family because she did not know them well enough to ask private questions such as education levels and housework.

At the mid-semester point, the students were asked if they would recommend La Famiglia Italiana Project to future students (Question #6) and for suggestions to improve the program (Question #7). Both students recognized La Famiglia Italiana Project as a unique opportunity; Lauren responded that she would have liked it more if expectations had been made more clear from the beginning because she felt more stressed now seeing they needed to ask specific theme questions without being "awkward". Molly suggested check-ins between the students and the course professor about the academic work sooner and that students should

practice speaking more Italian prior to meeting the families. They both said with Paola's help, the language was not a problem, but they would have liked to know the Italian language better.

The Group 3 family participant interview with Paola, the daughter, revealed that the family is originally from Naples (Question #1a). The father and Paola have the most frequent interaction with The Umbra Institute students (Question #1c). The family became aware of the program because Paola interns at The Umbra Institute (Question #2). When asked for what reasons they had decided to participate (Question #3), Paola responded that the family liked to speak with foreigners, the father was studying English at his office, and both parents were happy to host students.

In response to an inquiry about initial program expectations (Question #4), Paola explained that the students' Italian language levels were lower and as a result, she knew she would be helping translate for them. However, she had expected the students to be more enthusiastic and proactive seeing that they had applied to the program. The La Famiglia Italiana Project had not yet met Paola's expectations as of the mid-semester point (Question #5) because she had expected to do more outside of the house such as going to the market for shopping and showing the students things outside of the historic center where family life in Perugia really is.

The typical meeting description (Question #6) provided by Paola revealed that they mainly spoke in English for her father to practice while her brother and mother listened because they do not speak English. In terms of language's influence on interactions (Question #7), Paola explained that the students understood very little Italian and as a result, she translated for them, feeling this help was crucial for communication during the meetings. Paola believed the students were at a basic Italian language level in which they should able to play, joke, and try to speak in Italian. However, she felt that the students were not trying in the meetings because she would always translate for them. For Paola, more important than the language level is the motivation

and willingness to try. Furthermore, her father preferred to speak in English but did not want to hurt the students' opportunity to practice Italian.

In response to feelings about the overall experience of interpersonally interacting with American students (Question #8), Paola felt that it was a great idea because the Italian family's home is a context that they never would have seen and that it would have been difficult to interact with a family, something "really Italian", on their own. In regards to feelings of support from The Umbra Institute (Question #9), Paola felt extremely comfortable and knew Americans very well because she interns at an American institution and has lived in the United States before. She said what would have made her feel more supported (Question #10) was clarification for her father about which language to be speaking in. This would prevent him, "from hurting the students' opportunity to practice Italian even though he would prefer to speak in English". When asked if she would recommend the program (Question #11), Paola responded 'Yes' and suggested students be paired with families with younger children to see other Italian cultures.

Participant-observer notes from the first hour of the first meeting with the students and the Italian family revealed that the American students directed their conversation mainly to Paola and myself in English without trying to translate first. They spoke in English at a fast pace and often waited for us to translate to Paola's parents in Italian. The students and the family members exchanged phone numbers to keep in contact about meeting times. The mother prepared mini pizzas, which led to a discussion on American and Italian food. Everyone stayed mainly in the living/dining room after a tour of the apartment. There were moments of silence in the conversation, but Paola stepped in when there were long pauses.

Group 4: Umbra Institute Faculty and Staff

Both the professor of the Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends course and the Associate Director for Academic Community Engagement, Service Learning, and Internships

described similar initial expectations for the program (Question #2), which included a language and culture learning opportunity for families and students that was mutually beneficial. The professor stated that students intentionally have more control over the meetings than the families because if families were completely aware of the students' research, the program would lose its spontaneity. She said, "Even the way students are hosted has to be something cultural".

In response to how La Famiglia Italiana Project has changed and adapted since its inception (Question #3), it was explained that the current professor adjusted the program to be more academically structured by having students examine themes and incorporate them into the final presentations. The Associate Director and the professor found students needed the structure to gain the most from the experience without limiting it since past students were presenting solely on "making pancakes and having a great time". The Associate Director added that the willingness of the students to share their experiences with the professor could impact the learning experience. When asked about the challenges the La Famiglia Italiana Project has faced (Question #5), both expressed not having enough time to implement a practice or routine for program evaluation but feel it would be useful. The Associate Director and the professor had originally asked for feedback, but felt it was "nagging", "dry", and a "burden". The professor said,

> "I am so focused on the students that I am not too concerned about the families. They already know how much I appreciate them."

> "Italians don't have a self-assessment attitude built into them. We always have new families because it has to be the first time for students and families. Otherwise the families have expectations and compare students."

Both identified that one of the biggest challenges has been pushing the program past "fun" and the living room conversation to better integrate students into the culture.

Question #6 asked the Associate Director and the professor about their impressions of the Italian families' and student participants' experiences throughout the semester. The Associate

Director said she was not entirely sure as she goes to the first meeting and the presentations but "lacks experience in the middle". The professor explained that she would meet with students once a week before the public presentations to work on their draft and give them feedback.

When asked about personal efforts made to support the students and families before, during, and after the program (Question #7), both explained that beforehand they work to find the families. The professor said she works almost exclusively with the students and has small talks with them at the end of class to see what their first impressions were and gets them ready for the presentations. During the semester, she does not have contact with the interested families after finding them, but that her instincts are usually right because they are generally curious about other cultures. She prefers to stay back and not get too involved with the families whether or not she has a personal relationship with them. The Associate Director talks with the families beforehand to give them a real understanding of the program, what they can get out of it, and tries to be a facilitator at the first meeting.

When asked about what would make La Famiglia Italiana Project stronger (Question #8), the Associate Director felt it would be better to work on preparing the families and to have a renewable source of families ahead of time. She suggested preparing a brochure or handout for the families explaining the program as they had originally done but no longer do. The presentations have repeated themselves and for this reason she feels it would be nice to see some changes in the presentation format. Also, she would like to have moments of check-in with families and students for interpersonal reasons. The professor said it would be nice to know the families more beforehand but that would involve risking the research work. She also would like to create more awareness in students that the project is serious and requires experience and awareness. She also believed it is best when there are no less than two families each semester to have a comparison for her students to learn from.

In response to what dynamics have worked the best in the past in terms of students and families (Question #9), both said that personalities greatly impact or are most important when it comes to willingness to communicate and share. The Associate Director believed that the age of the children also greatly influences the interactions and has found that 18 to 19 year olds may be better than younger teenagers. She said fathers are often least engaged while mothers of younger children who want to learn English see the cultural value and are more at ease and relaxed for the students. Furthermore, two introverted students do not work well. The professor believes that if people are willing to communicate, the language does not count at all. She has been amazed by the exchange of information in one particular case where the family did not speak English and the students did not speak Italian. Students, she said, can improve even their beginner level Italian.

Lastly, the two were asked about final presentations and the future of the program (Question #10). The Associate Director believed there was room for improvement in the presentations by helping students look at their experiences from a different perspective and to make them more engaging. The professor said that when students made it their priority during the presentations to express their gratitude for the family, it did not work well; the presentations are more of a framework to work from when exploring course themes. Both would like to see the program evolve and grow and feel it has given students a unique opportunity to connect with a family and the community while also creating a stronger identity for The Umbra Institute.

VII. Analysis of Data

Several trends emerged from the data regarding reciprocal service and learning, family recruitment, initial student and family participant expectations, intercultural dynamics, and final presentation preparation. The research findings supported the literature available by suggesting that La Famiglia Italiana Project is achieving service learning's goals of breaking down social barriers and creating bonds between individuals and the local community. This can be seen in

program participants' responses to learning about Italian and American culture, practicing language skills with native speakers, and connecting students and families who would otherwise be unlikely to interact on an interpersonal level. Research has also shown that La Famiglia Italiana Project is a high-quality program; it can be linked to creating and/or increasing student and family participants' desire to continue serving in future community engagement opportunities. This assessment is supported by Dewey's education for democracy theory which defines high-quality learning as experiences that contribute to the healthy growth of further experience and those that help individuals become increasingly autonomous and intelligent in guiding their own future educative experiences (Dewey, 1916; Posner, 1995; Ehlrich, 1997).

The method of recruiting Italian families is incredibly important not only for ensuring a sustainable number of families, but also for being granted access into the Italian family home. Family participants reported learning about the La Famiglia Italiana Project through personal associations most commonly linked to their child's English language teacher or the Associate Director or the Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends professor. Italy's diffuse, collectivist culture with a higher uncertainty avoidance may explain why these trusted, reliable associations were found to be the main contact in successfully recruited families (Borger, 2001).

The Italian families with children in their late teenage years to early twenties were shown to have positive intercultural communication dynamics as this age group was able translate and facilitate conversations with other family members who may not understand English. Families with younger children worked best when the children were regularly involved in the meetings, had some knowledge of the English language, and had previous intercultural experiences. Students' prior intercultural experiences were not predictors of positive dynamics with the families, rather mutual interest in the program by both students and families and immersion in the families' daily lives were. As literature by Dewey (1916) and King (2003) implied, mutual

interest and environmental stimulation creates an enhanced learning community by occurring in the context of a compelling situation that balances challenge and opportunity.

Based on initial expectations, students had higher expectations of being integrated into the families' lives by meeting and developing profound relationships with multiple family members. As shown in the limited research on intergenerational learning, the potential for learning among families increases if it is achieved together. According to Group 2 findings, this theory may also apply to those outside of the immediate family circle, as meeting other family members or friends was also rewarding and interesting for the students. As La Bella Figura indicated, it can be difficult to penetrate Italian family life and move beyond the role of guest in the living room (Severgnini, 2007). The research showed that the Italian families generally expected the program to be a linguistic and cultural exchange rather than an opportunity to create strong ties with the American students.

Data on support revealed that students would have preferred a more detailed description of the program, their responsibilities as researchers, and information about the family they would be paired with prior to the first meeting. During the semester, students would have preferred more frequent check-ins with the professor for guidance on how best to explore course themes and avoid overstepping boundaries, feeling uncomfortable, and/or overcoming language barriers. Families needed less support during the program but would have preferred more information regarding the objectives of the meetings and a description of their role as the cultural host. The Umbra Institute staff member's presence at the initial meeting was described in nearly all family participant interviews as a perceived form of support. Families reported that they felt they could have contacted The Umbra Institute at any time, but did not do so because there were no issues.

La Famiglia Italiana Project appears to offer several forms of reciprocity according to the data, which includes exposure to the Italian or English language and another culture. The

findings suggested that the families had an easier time accommodating to the students' beginner Italian language level, than it was for the students to practice Italian. The final presentations were received positively by nearly all families and students. A few students, families, and the Associate Director felt the presentations could have gone further in exploring course themes without reducing the families to stereotypes or only sharing about the "fun" activities.

Regarding families' explicit knowledge of the student research project, the data indicated that Italian family and student participants believed the program could be improved if the families were informed about the students' objectives. The benefit of exposing the themes to families as seen in the Group 1 and Group 2 findings was that the families were able to better tailor conversations and activities to those themes. However, this philosophy conflicts with the Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends course professor's belief that the spontaneity and authenticity of the meetings would be scarified if the families were completely informed of the students' research. The risk of not informing the families is that The Umbra Institute may be perceived as exploiting community members for student learning. Furthermore, the family that participated twice in the La Famiglia Italiana Project believed that both experiences were enriching and unique. This is a positive indication that families who participate more than once would continue to benefit from interaction with students.

VIII. Discussion and Recommendations

The Umbra Institute service learning program entitled La Famiglia Italiana Project can better meet the needs and expectations of American college students and Italian family community partners while preserving partner reciprocity and program sustainability in a variety of ways. Transparency is key to the success of the program. Family and student participants should understand the purpose of the program, the necessary level of commitment, the student research project, and all participants should make efforts to incorporate a variety of people, locations, even within the home, and activities into the meetings.

Based on participant-observer notes and past and current student responses, discussing cross-cultural communication strategies with the professor and amongst other student participants may help generate a support network where together, students can investigate what it means to effectively communicate cross-culturally with Italians. With the professor's communication guidance and the collaborative work between families on the course themes, students may no longer rely on stereotypes to present their investigative research. Furthermore, presentations could delve deeper into the course themes and become less stagnant from semester to semester. There is no indication that a language requirement needs to be implemented for either student or Italian family applicants.

Consistent, structured evaluations and reflections would aid the success of service and sustainability of La Famiglia Italiana Project. It is highly recommended that the person who accompanies the students on their first meeting with the family also does a similar final evaluation each semester because they are familiar with the family and will have already gained a certain level of social access. As seen in the literature, reflection is an important support structure and crucial element of service learning. La Famiglia Italiana Project lacked any evidence of personal reflection leaving participants without the opportunity to understand the attitudes, skills, and awareness they had developed.

Although both student and Italian family participants felt the program met their expectations, La Famiglia Italiana Project could do more to address the disconnect in initial expectations. One method mentioned earlier by the Associate Director is to provide an informational brochure to families, and also to students. According to the research data, the brochure could be best utilized if it contained a list of sample activities that encourage families and students to think beyond the formal living room conversation, to steer away from discussions and activities revolving solely around food, and most importantly to explain the program goals

and their role as cultural informants. Students may need to meet more frequently with family members to reach a level of intimacy that allows them to explore course themes and move beyond the living room, an interaction that mirrors more of a home-stay than a weekly visit.

The following findings will be presented to The Umbra Institute during the summer semester. Beginning in the fall of 2011, changes and further research may begin. The Umbra Institute should examine the ethics of service learning programming where complete disclosure of students' research is and is not used to assess the impact it has on the quality of data gathered. Further research would also help in determining if directing recruitment towards English language classes would yield a higher number of interested Italian families and enrich the classroom learning experience. Comparative work between families that participate for the first time and those that participate multiple times was limited, but should also be continued.

The main weakness of this research is the lack of in-person interviews, which are well suited for gathering this type of narrative data as they yield fuller, richer responses. In-person contact would also help localize The Umbra Institute's efforts to connect face-to-face with the families as a final thank you and show respect for their time and invaluable suggestions. During the research process, it was learned not to assume that Italian families would invite a researcher into their home for the program evaluation. As a result of this false assumption, the original research methodology of only in-person interviews with past family participants was drastically altered as the majority preferred phone interviews.

The International Education field can see that students and families still felt the service learning experience was valuable despite challenges or frustrations. With more frequent student and professor meetings, clearly defined and printed program descriptions and expectations for families and students, and opening up the course research to include the families' help may provide a more enriching environment with longer lasting benefits. It is important that we, as

international educators and researchers, are reminded to continue localizing service learning

efforts in an international study abroad context to account for all participant expectations,

reflection, and evaluation.

Appendix A: Group 1 Interview Questions
Past Italian Family In-Person/Phone Interview Questions
1) Demographics
   a. Where is your family originally from? How long has your family lived in Perugia?
   b. How old were your children at that time of La Famiglia Italiana Project? Are they male or female?
   c. Who interacted most with The Umbra Institute students?

   Le Caratteristiche Demografiche
   a. Da dove viene la vostra famiglia? Per quanto tempo siete rimasti a Perugia?
   b. Quanti anni avevano i vostri figli in quel periodo del Progetto? Sono maschi o femine?
   c. Chi ha comunicato di piú con gli studenti dall'Umbra Institute?

2) Program Participation
   a. When did your family participate in La Famiglia Italian Project?
   b. How did you hear about La Famiglia Italian Project?
   c. For what reasons did you decide to participate in La Famiglia Italiana Project?

   La Partecipazione nel Programma
   a. Quando la vostra famiglia ha partecipato al Progetto Famiglia Italiana?
   b. Come siete venuti a conoscenza del Progetto Famiglia Italiana?
   c. Per quali ragioni avete deciso di partecipare al Progetto?

3) Based on your initial understanding of the program, what were your expectations of La Famiglia Italiana Project?

   Considerando l'impressione iniziale del Progetto, quali erano le vostre aspettative?

4) Please describe, in as much detail as possible, a typical meeting with The Umbra Institute students.

   Per piacere, descrivete un incontro tipico con gli studenti dell'Umbra Institute col maggior numero di dettagli possibili.

5) How did La Famiglia Italiana Project meet/not meet/exceed those expectations?

   Il Progetto ha soddisfatto o meno tutte delle vostre aspettative o é andato <u>oltre</u> le vostre aspettative?

6) How supported by The Umbra Institute did you feel before, during, and after La Famiglia Italiana Project?

   Siete stati incorraggiati dall'Umbra Institute prima, durante, e dopo il Progetto? Se sí, in che modo?

7) What would have helped you feel more supported and/or prepared for the experience with La Famiglia Italiana Project?

Cosa sarebbe stato d'aiuto per farvi sentire piú incorraggiati e/o preparati all'esperienza con il Progetto?

8) If and how do you feel your participation in La Famiglia Italiana Project contributed to:
   a. Each Umbra Institute student's learning (ie. Italian language skills, awareness and understanding of Italian culture)?
   b. Each individual family member's learnings (ie. English language skills, awareness and understanding of American culture or the students' culture(s)?
   c. Your family as a whole?

   Se e come la vostra partecipazione al Progetto ha contribuito a:
   a. L'apprendimento di ogni studente dell'Umbra Institute?
   b. L'apprendimento di ogni persona della vostra famiglia?
   c. La vostra famiglia in generale?

9) Looking back, how do you feel about the overall experience of interpersonally interacting with American students?

Che ne pensate adesso di questa esperienza interpersonale con gli studenti americani?

10) In what ways did the language influence your interactions with the students from The Umbra Institute?

In che modo la lingua ha influito nell'interazione con gli studenti dell'Umbra Institute?

11) Did you attend The Umbra Institute student presentations? If so, what were your impressions of the presentations?

Eravate presenti alla presentazione degli studenti all'Umbra Institute? Se sí, quali sono state le vostre impressioni?

12) Have you felt any long-term benefits from participating in La Famiglia Italiana Project? If so, what were they?

Avete tratto vantaggio nel participare al Progetto? Se sí, quali erano?

13) How much do you feel La Famiglia Italiana Project has directly increased your likelihood of participating in other cultural exchange programs in the future?

Pensate che il Progetto abbia aumentato in voi la possibilitá di partecipare ad un altro programma di scambi culturali in futuro?

14) Would you recommend participating in the La Famiglia Italiana Project to other families? Why?

Consigliereste ad altre famiglie di partecipare al Progetto? Perché?

15) Please provide any suggestion(s) to improve La Famiglia Italiana Project.

Per piacere, potreste darmi qualche suggerimento per migliorare il Progetto.

16) Do you have any questions per me?

Vorreste farmi altre domande?

Appendix B: Group 2 Electronic Evaluation Questions

Past Student Participant Electronic Evaluation Questions

1) Please write your first name and the semester and year you participated in La Famiglia Italiana Project.

2) For what reasons did you apply to participate in La Famiglia Italiana Project?

3) Please briefly list intercultural communication, Italian language, travel abroad, and/or home stay experience(s) you had prior to participating in La Famiglia Italiana Project?

4) Based on your initial understanding of La Famiglia Italiana Project, please write your initial expectation of it.

5) In as much detail as possible, please describe a typical meeting with the Italian family.

6) In what ways did the Italian language influence your interactions with the Italian family?

7) How much did the Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends course encourage the exploration of course themes during your meetings with the Italian family?
   - Highly Encouraged
   - Moderately Encouraged
   - Neutral
   - Moderately Discouraged
   - Highly Discouraged

8) What, if any, skills, did you develop or improve upon as a direct result of participating in La Famiglia Italiana Project?

9) How did you find the overall experience of interacting with an Italian family and why?

10) How likely would you be to recommend participating in the La Famiglia Italiana Project to prospective student?
   - Highly Likely
   - Fairly Likely
   - Neutral
   - Fairly Unlikely
   - Highly Unlikely

11) How supported did you feel before, during, and after La Famiglia Italiana Project by the Contemporary Italy professor and The Umbra Institute? Scale of 1-5
   1=Highly Supported 2=Fairly Supported 3=Neutral 4=Fairly Unsupported 5=Highly Unsupported
   - Before Meeting the Family
   - During the Semester
   - In Preparing for the Presentation
   - After La Famiglia Italiana Project Ended

12) What may have helped you feel more supported and/or prepared for the experience with La

Famiglia Italiana Project?

13) If and how do you feel your work contributed to the Italian family you interacted with (ie. English language practice or gaining a clearer understanding of American Culture)?

14) How did the final presentation assignment and delivery influence your experience in regards to the following? Scale of 1-5
1=Highly Benefited My Experience 2=• Moderately Benefited My Experience 3=Neutral 4= Moderately Hindered My Experience 5= Highly Hindered My Experience
    With La Famiglia Italiana Project as a Whole
    In Connecting Themes from the Contemporary Italy Course
    In Developing My Relationship with the Italian Family

15) Did the Italian family attend your presentation?
    Yes No

16) In what ways did your experience with La Famiglia Italiana Project change and/or confirm your attitudes toward the people and community of Perugia?

17) What is your likelihood of participating in other service learning, community engagement, and/or volunteer programs as a direct result of La Famiglia Italiana Project?
    Highly Likely
    Fairly Likely
    Neutral
    Fairly Unlikely
    Highly Unlikely

18) Did La Famiglia Italiana Project meet or not meet your initial expectations?
    Met all or most of my expectation
    Met some of my expectations
    Didn't meet most or any of my expectations
    I didn't have any expectations

19) Please provide any other suggestion(s) to improve La Famiglia Italiana Project for future students and families.

Appendix C: Group 3 Interview Questions
Current Student Participants and Current Italian Family In-Person Interview Questions

Current Student Participants Interview Questions
1) a. First name
    b. For what reasons did you apply to participate in La Famiglia Italiana Project?
    c. Please briefly list past intercultural communication, Italian language, travel abroad, and/or home stay experience(s) you had prior to participating in La Famiglia Italiana Project?

2) Based on your initial understanding of the program, what were your expectations of La Famiglia Italiana Project?

3) Please describe, in as much detail as possible, a typical meeting with the Italian family.

4) How supported by The Umbra Institute did you feel before and now during La Famiglia Italiana Project

5) In what ways have you been able to apply Contemporary Italy- Culture and Society course material and lectures to your interactions with the Italian family?

6) At this point, would you recommend participating in the La Famiglia Italiana Project to other students? Why?

7) Please provide any suggestion(s) to improve La Famiglia Italiana Project.

Current Italian Family Interview Questions
1) Demographics
    a. Where is your family originally from? How long has your family lived in Perugia?
    b. How old are your children now? Are they male or female?
    c. Who interacts most with The Umbra Institute students?

    a. Da dove viene la vostra famiglia? Per quanto tempo siete rimasti a Perugia?
    b. Quanti anni hanno i vostri figli? Sono maschi o femine?
    c. Chi comunica di piú con gli studenti dall'Umbra Institute?

2) How did you hear about La Famiglia Italian Project?

    Come siete venuti a conoscenza del Progetto Famiglia Italiana?

3) For what reasons did you decide to participate in La Famiglia Italiana Project?

    Per quali ragioni avete deciso di partecipare al Progetto?

4) Based on your initial understanding of the program, what were your expectations of La Famiglia Italiana Project?

    Considerando l'impressione iniziale del Progetto, quali erano le vostre aspettative?

5) At this point, how has La Famiglia Italiana Project met, not met, or exceeded those expectations?

   A questo punto il Progetto ha soddisfatto o meno tutte delle vostre aspettative o é andato <u>oltre</u> le vostre aspettative?

6) Please describe, in as much detail as possible, a typical meeting with The Umbra Institute students.

   Per piacere, descrivete un incontro tipico con gli studenti dell'Umbra Institute col maggior numero di dettagli possibili.

7) In what ways does the language influence your interactions with the students from The Umbra Institute?

   In che modo la lingua influisce nell'interazione con gli studenti dell'Umbra Institute?

8) How do you feel about the overall experience of interpersonally interacting with American students?

   Che ne pensate di questa esperienza interpersonale con gli studenti americani?

9) How supported by The Umbra Institute did you feel before La Famiglia Italiana Project? How supported by The Umbra Institute do you feel now?

   Siete stati incorraggiati dall'Umbra Institute prima del Progetto? Se sí, in che modo? Siete incorraggiati dall'Umbra Institute adesso? Se sí, in che modo?

10) What would have helped you feel more supported and/or prepared for the experience with La Famiglia Italiana Project?

   Cosa sarebbe stato d'aiuto per farvi sentire piú incorraggiati e/o preparati all'esperienza con il Progetto?

11) At this point, would you recommend participating in the La Famiglia Italiana Project to other families? Why?

   A questo punto consigliereste ad altre famiglie di partecipare al Progetto? Perché?

Appendix D: Group 4 Interview Questions
Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends Professor and the Associate Director for Academic Community Engagement, Service Learning, and Internships In-Person Interview Questions

1) Why did you originally create and/or work on La Famiglia Italiana Project?

2) What were your initial expectations for the program in terms of students, the Italian families, and the Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends course?

3) How has La Famiglia Italiana Project changed and adapted since its inception?

4) What have you found to be the greatest benefits/advantages of the program for the families, the students, and on the community of Perugia?

5) What have been some of the challenges La Famiglia Italiana Project has faced?

6) What are you impressions of the experiences of the Italian families and the student participants?

7) How has The Umbra Institute supported the students and families before, during, and after La Famiglia Italiana Project?

8) What, if anything, do you feel would make La Famiglia Italiana Project stronger (ie. academically, culturally, interpersonally)?

9) In your opinion, what dynamics have worked the best in the past in terms of students and the families? What types of interactions offer the most immersion?

10) What do you see for the future of La Famiglia Italiana Project at The Umbra Institute?

Appendix E: Consent Form- English Version

La Famiglia Italiana Project
In-Person Interview Informed Consent Form

You are invited to participate in an interview evaluation that is being conducted by Julie Falk, The Umbra Institute Graduate intern and masters student at SIT Graduate Institute. The purpose of this evaluation interview is to determine the main motivations, expectations, and learning outcomes of The Umbra Institute's La Famiglia Italiana Project participants. The research findings from past and current Italian family participants, past and current Umbra Institute student participants, the Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends professor, and the Associate Director for Academic Community Engagement, Service Learning and Internships will be compiled for Julie Falk's masters degree thesis and ultimately to improve the program for future participants.

The in-person interviews will last approximately 15 to 30 minutes and will be audio taped for transcribing and translating purposes only.

If you agree to take part in the interview, only your first name will be used, unless otherwise specified. There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this interview and will be completed only by participants who are 18 years of age or older. Participation is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate and withdraw at any time. In addition, you may request to receive an electronic copy of the final research thesis.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, you may contact Julie Falk at +39 393 20 87 520 or at jfalk@umbra-institute.com.

If you agree to participate in the interview, please sign below:

Participant signature _____ Date _____

Participant name (printed) _____ Date _____

Thank You,
Julie Falk

Appendix F: Consent Form- Italian Version

La Famiglia Italiana Project
La Liberatoria per le Interviste di Persona o al Telefono

Lei é invitato a partecipare in quest'intervista per questo progetto di ricerca, che si chiama 'La Scoperta del Potenziale di Service Learning a Perugia, Italia: Una valuazione del Progetto Famiglia Italiana all'Umbra Institute". É il tema principale del lavoro di tesi di Julie Falk, una studentessa al SIT Graduate Institute a Brattleboro, VT. Le interviste serviranno ad analizzare le percezioni, le aspettative ed i vantaggi che porteranno o meno ad un progresso di questo progetto. La valutazione includerá prospettive ed opinioni delle famiglie italiane e dei partecipanti dell'Umbra Institute.

I risulti di questa ricerca sulle esperienze dei partecipanti dal passato ed adesso, gli studenti partecipanti dal passato ed ora, e la professoressa del corso Contemporary Italy- Culture, Society, and Trends e l'Associate Director for Academic Community Engagement, Service Learning and Internships saranno compilate per migliorare il programma per i partecipanti nel futuro.

Con la mia firma, confermo di capire tutto ció che segue:
* Ho 18 anni o piú.
* La mia partecipazione é volontaria.
* Posso interrompere la mia partecipazione in qualsiasi momento.
* La ricerca completa sará disponibilé su richiesta.
* La mia conversazione puó essere registrata per trascrivere e tradurre.
* Il mio nome (non il cognome) potrá essere usato durante la ricerca, a meno che non sia specificato diversamente.
* Posso contattare Julie Falk per domande o chiarimenti in qualsiasi momento
    jfalk@umbra-institute.com
    +39 393 20 87 520

Se Lei é d'accordo a partecipare in quest'intervista, per piacere firmare sotto:

Firma del Participante _____ Data _____

Nome (scritto) _____ Data _____

Grazie mille,
Julie Falk

Appendix G: Electronic Evaluation Introduction Email
Hello Past 'La Famiglia Italiana Project' Participants,

My name is Julie Falk and I am the Graduate Intern at The Umbra Institute. For my thesis work, I am evaluating La Famiglia Italiana Project and would be **extremely** grateful to collect your responses to 19 short answer, multiple choice, and ordinal scale questions. It is **crucial** we collect your input in order to improve future students' and families' experiences. It should take only 15 minutes to complete.

Follow the link below to freeonlinesurveys.com. Please complete the survey by **Sunday, February 27**!

http://freeonlinesurveys.com/rendersurvey.asp?sid=ag1wt085wlblh37872712

Thank you!!!
Julie Falk
See below for the consent form:

Consent Form
La Famiglia Italiana Project
Electronic Student Evaluation Questionnaire

You are invited to participate in an electronic evaluation that is being conducted by Julie Falk, The Umbra Institute Graduate intern and masters student at SIT Graduate Institute. The purpose of this evaluation questionnaire is to determine the main motivations, expectations, and learning outcomes of The Umbra Institute's La Famiglia Italiana Project participants. The research findings from both past and current Italian family participants and past and current Umbra Institute student participants will be compiled for Julie Falk's masters degree thesis and for the betterment of the Project for future participants.

⬚The electronic student evaluation questionnaire will last approximately 15 to 20 minutes and contains 19 short answer, multiple choice, and ordinal scale questions. ⬚
If you agree to take part in the study, only your first name will be requested, unless otherwise specified. There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time. In addition, you may request to receive an electronic copy of the final research thesis.
⬚
If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, you may contact Julie Falk at +39 393 20 87 520 or jfalk@umbra-institute.com.

By completing and submitting the electronic student evaluation questionnaire, I confirm that I understand the preceding content.
Sincerely,
Julie Falk

Appendix H: Electronic Evaluation Reminder Email
Hello and a huge thank you to those of you that have already filled out the online evaluation for La Famiglia Italiana Project! Your input is greatly appreciated!

If you haven't filled it out yet, PLEASE take 15 minutes to answer the 19 questions by Sunday, February 27 at:

http://freeonlinesurveys.com/rendersurvey.asp?sid=ag1wt085wlblh37872712

The original email and consent form are below if you haven't had a chance to read it yet.

Grazie mille!
Julie Falk

Hello Past 'La Famiglia Italiana Project' Participants,

My name is Julie Falk and I am the Graduate Intern at The Umbra Institute. For my thesis work, I am evaluating La Famiglia Italiana Project and would be **extremely** grateful to collect your responses to 19 short answer, multiple choice, and ordinal scale questions. It is **crucial** we collect your input in order to improve future students' and families' experiences. It should take only 15 minutes to complete.

Follow the link below to freeonlinesurveys.com. Please complete the survey by **Sunday, February 27**!

http://freeonlinesurveys.com/rendersurvey.asp?sid=ag1wt085wlblh37872712

Thank you!!!
Julie Falk

See below for the consent form:
<div align="center">

Consent Form
La Famiglia Italiana Project
Electronic Student Evaluation Questionnaire

</div>

You are invited to participate in an electronic evaluation that is being conducted by Julie Falk, The Umbra Institute Graduate intern and masters student at SIT Graduate Institute. The purpose of this evaluation questionnaire is to determine the main motivations, expectations, and learning outcomes of The Umbra Institute's La Famiglia Italiana Project participants. The research findings from both past and current Italian family participants and past and current Umbra Institute student participants will be compiled for Julie Falk's masters degree thesis and for the betterment of the Project for future participants.

The electronic student evaluation questionnaire will last approximately 15 to 20 minutes and contains 19 short answer, multiple choice, and ordinal scale questions.
If you agree to take part in the study, only your first name will be requested, unless otherwise

specified. There are no foreseeable risks to participation in this study. Participation in this study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate, and you may withdraw at any time. In addition, you may request to receive an electronic copy of the final research thesis.
⍰
If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, you may contact Julie Falk at +39 393 20 87 520 or jfalk@umbra-institute.com.

By completing and submitting the electronic student evaluation questionnaire, I confirm that I understand the preceding content.

Sincerely,
Julie Falk

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