



*Anthropology Community Engagement Service Project:
Refugee Cultural Orientation Course Evaluation
and Video Production*

*A Collaboration Between the Anthropology Department (GVSU)
and Bethany Refugee and Immigrant Services (BCS, Grand Rapids)*

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2 ACRONYMS

- Action Research (AR)
- Bethany Christian Services (BCS)
- Community-based Participatory Research (CBPR)
- Engaged Department Initiative (EDI)
- Joint Cultural Orientation Program (JCO)
- Lutheran Social Services of Michigan (LSSM; now called Samaritas)
- Michigan Department of Health and Human Services (MDDHS)
- Office of Refugee and Resettlement (ORR)
- U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS)
- U.S. State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugee, and Migration (BPRM)
- Voluntary Agencies (Volags)

Table of Contents

1	ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
2	ACRONYMS	3
3	EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	7
3.1	Background	7
3.2	Objectives	8
3.3	Summary of Findings and Recommendations	9
3.3.1	JCO Strengths	9
3.3.2	JCO Coordination, Organization and Curriculum	9
3.3.3	Access	9
3.3.4	Communication: Presenter/interpreters Interactions	9
3.3.5	Client Participation	10
3.3.6	Feedback and Surveys	10
3.3.7	Visuals, Presentations, and Video module	10
4	INTRODUCTION: THE SERVICE PROJECT	11
4.1	The Partnership	11
4.2	Connecting Classes and Curriculum	12
4.3	The Focus on Cultural Orientation	13
5	METHODOLOGY	13
5.1	Study Design and Approach	13
5.2	Study Objectives and Outcomes	15
5.2.1	<i>Video Modules</i>	16
5.2.2	<i>Improve the JCO Class</i>	17
5.3	Human Subjects Considerations	20
5.4	The Role of the GVSU Anthropology Classes and Students	21
5.4.1	<i>Learning Atmosphere and Activities</i>	23
5.4.2	<i>Collaboration</i>	23
5.4.3	<i>Transferring processes and tools</i>	24
5.4.4	<i>Insiders and Outsiders</i>	24

5.5	Limitations of the Study	25
6	BACKGROUNDER – A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	28
6.1	What is Cultural Orientation?	28
6.2	Approaches and Models to Cultural Orientation	29
6.3	Challenges to Cultural Orientation	31
6.4	Best Practices for Cultural Orientation	33
7	FINDINGS/RESULTS	35
7.1	Structure and Organization of the class	35
7.2	Access	37
7.3	JCO Curriculum	40
7.4	Staff Roles and the Division of Labor	42
7.5	Delivery and Communication	44
7.5.1	<i>Dynamics of Presenting</i>	44
7.5.2	<i>Interpreters and the Dynamics of Translation</i>	46
7.5.3	<i>Interactions Summary: Working with Each Other</i>	49
7.6	The Role of Caseworkers	49
7.7	Client Participation and the Integration of Cultural Voice	50
7.7.1	<i>Client Feedback</i>	51
7.7.2	<i>Summary of Client Feedback Based on the Poster Survey</i>	53
7.8	Conclusions	55
8	RECOMMENDATIONS AND IMPROVEMENTS	56
8.1	JCO Strengths	56
8.2	JCO Class Coordination	56
8.3	Class Structure, Scheduling and Curriculum	57
8.4	Access	58
8.5	Role of the Caseworker	59
8.6	Communication Interactions Between Presenters, Interpreters and Clients	59

8.7 Clients and Participation: “Voices”	61
8.8 Visuals, PowerPoints and Videos	62
9 CONCLUSIONS: PARTNERSHIP AND SUSTAINABILITY	63
10 REFERENCES	64

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Project Summary (December 2015)	67
Appendix 2: Project Description for Interviews	69
Appendix 3: Interview Question Set (Presenter Sample)	70
Appendix 4: IRB Determination Letter	72

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: ANT 380 Course Flyer	12
Figure 2: Students at Work on the Video Production	15
Figure 3: Parenting Session Video Shoot	16
Figure 4: Connection the Study Process	17
Figure 5: Data Coding and Themes	19
Figure 6: Client Wall Poster Survey	19
Figure 7: Students Shared Project Results at Student Scholars Day	21
Figure 8: Student Collaboration and Learning Atmosphere	22
Figure 9: Community Engagement Connects GVSU and Bethany	23
Figure 10: Creating Spaces for Insider/Outsider Sharing	25
Figure 11: Services Provided	30
Figure 12: Client Childcare Training and Service	38
Figure 13: Students & Faculty Collaborating on the Video Production	39
Figure 14: Students Designing Video Module in Audio-Visual Language Lab	39
Figure 15: Parenting Class Session and Use of Props	41
Figure 16: The Revised PowerPoint Presentations	41
Figure 17: Creating More Visual PP Slides	42
Figure 18: Staff and Students at the JCO	43
Figure 19: Student Observing the JCO	45
Figure 20: Presenter and Clients Interacting	46
Figure 21: Student Interviewing an Interpreter	47
Figure 22: Post-Session Quiz	52
Figure 23: JCO Poster Survey Results	54
Table 1: Client Wall Survey Responses	55
Figure 24: Community Forum Presentation of Findings	63

3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

3.1 Background

An important objective of higher-education institutions is to connect with local communities in mutually beneficial ways.¹ One year ago (May 2015), the Anthropology Department (GVSU) and Bethany Christian Services (BCS) began a partnership. We wanted the partnership to be mutually beneficial to our students and to the Refugee and Immigrant cultural orientation program. We immediately explored multiple ways to collaborate: internships, class projects, service learning, guest speakers in our classes – all would expose students to a meaningful awareness of refugees and their resettlement, as well as to acquiring practical skills and experiences through first-hand interactions with community members. During the Winter 2016 semester, a special topics class on “Community Engagement” would be dedicated to the partnership, designing a service project in which students would assess one of Bethany’s programs: a cultural orientation class held weekly for newly arrived refugees and families. This report is the result of six months of planning, four months of project implementation, including one month of data collection. Student teams from two anthropology courses (ANT 380 and ANT 317) carried out these activities. In collaboration with Bethany’s Justine Kibet and Catherine Bacheldor, and Amy Buxton (Samaritas), the “Joint Cultural Orientation” class and curriculum were undergoing far-reaching revisions and improvements. The Anthropology Department stepped in to help improve the JCO class, offering several student interns and the class service project, which is the subject of this report. Our aim is use the knowledge generated by anthropology and the department resources as assets to assist the community organization in what they do best: refugee cultural orientation and resettlement. Together, we designed a service project with two objectives and two related major outcomes.

The first was to evaluate the JCO program, to document its coordination and organization, the curriculum, and communication dynamics and client interactions. The second objective was to expand access to the class and its impact beyond the classroom, by making videos of the presentations, translated into multiple languages, and distributing them to clients beyond the confines of the face-to face class meetings. After months of activities, conducting fieldwork, analyzing data, and producing several videos of the JCO

¹ U.S Department of State, Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, “University Engagement Toolkit: How campuses are helping refugees (2016). This toolkit provides examples of specific educational institutions, organizations and programs in the United States that assist refugees. Accessed at <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/257067.pdf>

Parenting class, we shared our findings as a draft report and at a “Community Forum” at Bethany, where staff were asked to provide feedback for integration into this Final Report.

During our study, we learned about cultural orientation services and the JCO as “outsiders.” At the same time, we have confidence in an action research methodology that provides cross-fertilization, collaboration, and the co-generation of knowledge for problem-solving. By connecting the pieces across the JCO program, and giving voice to different groups of participants, we anticipate that our study will provide insights useful to those closest to the program, who are the real experts. Thus, the recommendations in this report are preliminary. We leave it up to the experts, the owners of the service, to decide upon the merits of our findings in the short-run, as feasible paths for improving the program and meeting the objectives of cultural orientation. While we expect that several of our ideas may never be practical, other recommendations will become a source of continuing conversations that will reshape future possibilities in the long-run as contexts change.

For those who wish to jump directly to the recommendations, we provide a detailed summary of our key findings in Chapter 7 Findings/Results beginning on page 35, which inform our recommendations for improving the JCO class specifically and the cultural orientation program generally.

3.2 Objectives

The GVSU Anthropology team integrated aspects of an applied social research methodology called action research or community-based participatory research (CBPR).² The use of CBPR allowed us to conduct the JCO service project while engaging with many of the stakeholders and organizers of the JCO program. The service objectives for the project consisted of two products: designing video modules and improving the JCO class. Our recommendations are based on information we collected over a four-month period (Jan-Apr), including a review of cultural orientation programs nationally and interviews with many JCO staff, presenters, and interpreters. Students also produced a video of the Parenting class, dubbed into several languages, in order to help expand client access to information provided by the JCO class. Our approach entailed a joint effort between the two GVSU classes and BCS as planners, researchers, and writers, in order to co-generate findings on the JCO program for mutual benefit to students and to the refugee community. This Final Report contains detailed findings and a full range of recommendations.

² Also called Community-Based Research (CBR), Participatory Action Research (PAR), and Action Research (AR).

3.3 Summary of Findings and Recommendations

3.3.1 JCO Strengths

- The JCO program provides valuable information and services to the refugee immigrant population.
- The translator training program provided by Bethany Christian Services provides extensive training materials and experience for the interpreters.
- BCS, the LSSM, and the JCO program are staffed by individuals who are deeply invested in providing the best possible experience for those they assist.
- The relationship between BCS, LSSM and GRIF is a positive approach to pooling resources.
- JCO is “proactive” in that clients receive an education upon arrival, which helps them adapt to the services, laws and culture of the U.S.

3.3.2 JCO Coordination, Organization and Curriculum

- The potential of a full-time staff member to act as a coordinator and liaison and for all organizations, to monitor progress and adjust the program to meet client service needs
- Connect the JCO planning and resources more directly to the caseworkers’ roles.
- Explore the benefits of more time or funding allocated to the JCO can ensure quality, effectiveness and sustainability.
- Simplify the presentations, adding topics and visuals that focus on immediately needed and practical topics, such as drinking and driving, when to see a doctor, what is Medicaid?, etc.
- Re-configure the class time, integrate more client experiences, simulations, and discussion.
- Present the content in more than one form: videos, handouts/PowerPoint translated into native languages, and booklets of information to increase retention,

3.3.3 Access

- Address transportation challenges heightened by language barriers and/or fear of getting lost, weather, time involved, bus training skills.
- Create childcare option to increase and enhance accessibility, especially for women.

3.3.4 Communication: Presenter/interpreters Interactions

- Ask more questions, using props and nonverbal communication.
- Develop better coordination between presenters and interpreters before class.
- Make adjustments depending on class size, language groups, and client needs.
- Train presenters with interpreters to coordinate communication between the two, such as making speech pauses more effective for interpretation.
- Clients do not get the same interpreter week by week; maintain consistency among familiar faces between interpreters and clients to help facilitate communication.
- Create a set of guidelines for interpretation consistency. Interpreters bring a wealth of experience, a range of techniques, and different styles to the class.

- Reconsider the amount of time interpreters have to accomplish effective translation. They are forced to paraphrase or leave out important information due to lack of time.

3.3.5 Client Participation

- Consider offering formal channels of communication and feedback for clients to follow up on the class and for further questions.
- Strengthen the relationships and feedback between presenters and clients - resulting in the possibility that clients do not feel comfortable asking questions in class.
- Provide food (light snacks and drinks) to align with the cultural practices of many refugees; food is a social tool. In the case of the JCO, providing food may make clients more comfortable, open them up to learning, and serve as an incentive to attend regularly.

3.3.6 Feedback and Surveys

- Continue to gather feedback from everyone, particularly clients and interpreters who work closely with clients, and use these insights to modify and streamline the JCO program.
- Provide client pre-surveys to understand the knowledge they bring; survey former JCO clients as “experts”.
- Plan brief meetings between interpreters and presenters before and/or after the class to discuss expectations and outcomes.

3.3.7 Visuals, Presentations, and Video module

- The PowerPoint is an important part of a presentation. Consider including more interactive and engaging presentations: more pictures, less words. This would help provide cultural examples and illustrations facilitate comprehension and discussion.
- Create videos in multiple languages to expand the impact and availability of information.

Conclusions: These findings and recommendations are preliminary. Our team worked with the agency staff and community members as a collaborative team to address ways to improve the JCO and to build stronger capacities. This Final Report, we anticipate, will stimulate conversations, open up possibilities, and provide helpful solutions, or assist the solutions proposed by the community members.

4 INTRODUCTION: The Service Project

How did the service project and evaluation of the JCO become a key component of our partnership? In this section, we take you through the establishment of the partnership and the initiative to help improve the JCO class and cultural orientation in general.

4.1 The Partnership

In May 2015, the Anthropology Department (GVSU) developed a formal community partnership with Bethany Refugees and Immigration Services. The two organizations have worked together in the past, sporadically, through an internship program. As “partners” the aim of our engagement is to explore each other’s needs and capacities and to formulate a set of actions for a partnership mutually beneficial to both groups, their organizations, resources and constituencies. This collaboration will help build each other’s institutional capacities within the framework of the Engaged Department Initiative grant (<https://www.gvsu.edu/community/engaged-departments-74.htm>).

By participating in the Initiative, the GVSU Anthropology Department can play a larger role in building a stronger civil society around issues on migration, refugees and service delivery at the same time as we help GVSU fulfill its mission of shaping lives, professions, and enriching societies. Our department is committed to making contributions beyond the department through the platform of the EDI to disseminate our experiences to the local community.

One key activity of our planned partnership was to help Bethany Refugee and Immigrant Services to assess and improve their Joint Cultural Orientation class and curriculum offered to refugee clients. The program helps newly arrived refugees adjust to a new life, focusing on habitation and service delivery. The areas of support for our collaboration included: providing cultural information on specific ethnic/national groups; review of the materials, delivery of topics, and structure of the orientation classes; and research on the best practices of such resettlement orientation programs in the field.

4.2 Connecting Classes and Curriculum

This partnership became the inspiration for the ANT 380 course (Winter 2016) with its focus on Community Engagement (taught by Rhoads). The course would involve students in a service project, supplementing current efforts by Bethany to strengthen the JCO program. These efforts included bringing on board staff dedicated to cultural orientation and coordinating the “joint” effort between Bethany and Samaritas (formerly Lutheran Social Services of Michigan, LSSM); running and organizing the three-week long classes by coordinating the roles of the participants (presenters, interpreters, and client/students); and revising the delivery content, specifically the PowerPoint presentations. From the GVSU side, the anthropology class would be the primary vehicle for articulating community engagement with student learning, building upon our long-standing applied approach to learning by requiring a field school or internship experience. We view our curriculum as a “space” for connecting students with the local community, benefiting both mutually through community engagement.

For the current semester, we developed a service project, based on action research. This approach draws on the methodology of community-based participatory research (CBPR). Our approach to CBPR reflects “the partnership of university knowledge and resources with those of the public, private [and Third or not-for-profit] sectors to enrich scholarship, research, and creative activity; enhance

curriculum, teaching and learning; prepare educated, engaged citizens; strengthen democratic values and civic responsibility; address critical societal issues; and contribute to the public good” ([Committee on Institutional Cooperation 2005:2](#)). This aligns with the values of the EDI framework, focusing on deliberative dialogue, sharing and exchange, and respect and reciprocity.

We integrated a second course, ANT 317 (Advanced Cross-Cultural Linguistics) taught by Wroblewski, in order to collect information on aspects of communication and the cross-cultural interpretation of language in the JCO context. Our approach to the project entailed a joint effort between the two GVSU classes and Bethany as planners, researchers, and writers, in order to co-

Figure 1: ANT 380 Course Flyer



**Register now for
ANT 380-01 (30048)
Community Engagement
Winter Semester 2016
MW 4:30-5:45pm, 253 LMH**

Anthropologists have long engaged communities both locally and globally. This is a skills-building course on applied, community engagement, featuring:

- The contribution of applied anthropology to contemporary “real world” issues, such as development, health, food, environment, and immigration
- Cases studies on public and advocacy anthropology
- Class projects involving students in participatory action research in the GR community
- Face-to-face interactions with a Community Partner and local immigrant groups
- Hand-on approaches to qualitative research and methods

Joint Cultural Orientation
BETHANY
Cultural Orientations help introduce some of the most important ideas to new refugees right away so that they are more prepared for their life in the United States.

CONTACT: Professor Russell Rhoads
rhoadsr@gvsu.edu, 616-331-3018, 234 Lake Michigan Hall

Photo (background): Professor Rhoads facilitating training at an NGO in Uganda, 2015

generate findings on the JCO program for mutual benefit to students and the refugee community. Professors and students participated by observing, interviewing, and collecting information on the JCO. We also tried to engage a broad range of community members as participants in the design and implementation. A key outcome of CBPR is the co-generation of knowledge and an end-product aimed to solve a problem, often resulting in capacity-building and in the transformation of social structures of injustice (Greenwood 2012; Hacker 2013). The very act of the evaluation project and research process among refugee stakeholders, we believe, is an engagement that generates new knowledge, possibilities, and agency. In this report, we want to tell a “JCO story” from the perspective of anthropology students and JCO stakeholders.

4.3 The Focus on Cultural Orientation

Cultural orientation is the process of familiarizing refugees to a new culture through acculturation. In this way there is a process where basic needs are met, self-sufficient skills relative to their new home are gained, and knowledge is obtained about cultural life as Americans. In order for refugees to acculturate, they need information about their new home and skills for adapting to relatively new expectations while still being able to maintain their original beliefs and values ([Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982](#)).

While Bethany offers a range of cultural orientation services, one important component is the Joint Cultural Orientation class, presenting weekly in-house instruction to clients on a range of orientation topics, such as parenting, education, social services, etc. The Joint Cultural Orientation (JCO) classes are organized as collaboration between Bethany and Lutheran Social Services of Michigan. The key problems with the class, we learned early on, are barriers to client attendance, format and delivery of information, language and interpretation, the need for more visuals and client participation, restricted access for women having to handle childcare, including transportation, and social pressures limiting their mobility in the public sphere.

5 Methodology

5.1 Study Design and Approach

As indicated above the service project evaluated the JCO program and drew on the methodology of community-based participatory research (CBPR). CBPR engages community members with students and faculty in the course of their academic work. It is collaborative and change-oriented service learning, combining classroom learning with social action (Hofman and Rosing 2006, Rosing et al. 2007). The project is designed

around a collaborative project identified with a community partner, who is involved in the process of designing and implementing the project. This joint effort by GVSU and Bethany – as planners, researchers, and writers – co-generates shared knowledge and mutually beneficial output. This service project will help students deepen their understanding of research methods, become familiar with various forms of applied scholarship, and gain experience with both the processes and issues of collaborative, community-based service.

According to Greenwood and Levin (2006:63),³ this kind of collaborative investigation is defined as social research carried out by a team that encompasses a professional action researcher and the members of an organization, community, or network that are seeking to improve the participant's situation. The authors identify several principles that we tried to integrate into our service project; the approach:

- Is context bound and addresses real-life problems.
- Treats the diversity of experience and capacities within the local group as an opportunity for the enrichment of the research-action process. Invites participants and researchers to co-generate knowledge through collaborative communicative processes in which all participants' contributions are taken seriously.
- Leads to social action, or reflections on action lead to the construction of new meanings and possibilities.
- Measures credibility and validity according to whether actions that arise from it solve problems (workability) and increase participants' control over their own situation.

In other words, using action as an approach to problem-solving can simultaneously affect/transform the very thing it is researching. CBPR has a social goal of liberation for the subjects involved that is inherent in the work. In Greenwood and Levin's words, "the strategy generates knowledge claims for the express purpose of taking action to promote social analysis and democratic social change (Greenwood and Levin 2006:5)"

This methodology was used in our project on the JCO project to, first, help identify the issues and dynamics of resettlement and cultural orientation in the local community. Second, we worked with the agency staff and community members as a collaborative team to address a problem and to build capacities. This will manifest as providing helpful solutions, or assisting the solutions proposed by the community members. Third, our team analyzed the work on a valuable academic level from research cultural orientation

³ Davydd J. Greenwood and Morten Levin. 2006 (2nd ed.) Introduction to Action Research: Social Research for Social Change: Social Research for Social Change. SAGE Publications. See also Stringer's (1999, 2007) seminal work as a beacon to both researchers and practitioners in laying out the methods of action research.

programs and best practices to evaluating the JCO curriculum and classroom dynamics to understanding communication and interpretation issues. Our efforts, though, proved to be an ongoing correction of themselves, learning and adjusting as we went, catering to the desires and needs of the members while empowering the community members to resolve issues on their own. The success of the project and collaboration will depend on how the knowledge, tools and processes become “owned” (sustainable) by Bethany Refugee and Immigrant Services, in accordance with the philosophical approach of action research to promote change, capacity and democracy.

In sum, community-based participatory research aligns with an “action” approach to community engagement because it involves a range of community participants who represent structured community, organizations, informal groups or individual community members. The community collaborates on the design and implementation of research projects. A key objective of this approach is to validate local knowledge and ensure that this knowledge drives the creation of both policy and programs; lived experience is recognized as a source of expertise and “co-learning” (Lerner 2000). Both action research and community-based research, therefore, involve shared management and direction of a research project among the scholars and the subjects of the research (Cunningham and McKinney 2010).

5.2 Study Objectives and Outcomes

The service project addresses the Joint Cultural Orientation program offered to refugee clients by Bethany Refugee and Immigrant Services jointly with Lutheran Social Services



Figure 2: Students at Work on the Video Production

of Michigan. The program helps newly arrived refugees adjust to a new life, focusing on habitation and service delivery. The service objectives for the project consist of two main activities and products: video modules and improving the JCO class.

5.2.1 Video Modules

The video modules were designed as an intervention to address the issue of “accessibility.” The objective is to make the JCO session topics available outside of the actual, physical class meeting. While the JCO session topics include, for example, parenting, home management and safety, U.S. laws, housing, etc., we decided to focus on one topic relevant to women: Parenting. Students video taped the presenter and created a 30 minute video resource, in several language versions, such as Arabic and Swahili. These videos will be available at Bethany for clients’ use, and could be located on-line for off-site viewing. The purpose is to reduce the barriers to accessing cultural orientation resources.



Figure 3: Parenting Session Video Shoot

Student activities included:

- Videotaping two live sessions and a mock session
- Transcribing the presentation text
- Producing a 30 minute video
- Using interpreters to dub the audio of several relevant languages into the video to create several language specific versions of the presentation
- Utilizing the equipment in the Anthropology Department Ethno-Linguistic and Audiovisual Lab

5.2.2 Improve the JCO Class

As a second objective the project assessed the content, delivery and challenges of the JCO classes, including cross-cultural exchanges, communication and interactions, and the translation/interpretation process. Student activities consisted of:

- Interviewing Bethany and Lutheran staff, JCO class presenters and interpreters on the history of the JCO program and challenges faced (e.g., barriers to client participation), and aspects such as delivery methods, content, staffing, modes of participant engagement, translation issues, resources, etc.
- Researching the best practices of cultural orientation programs across the U.S. to learn about other models for delivery and implementation, including the use of video and other visual resources.
- Surveying client/student participants to understand barriers to participation, needs for cultural orientation resources, what clients get out of the classes, suggestions they have for improving the class. In addition, we were interested in investigating how client diversity (nationality, gender, age, refugee history, special needs) affects the orientation success.

The following diagram captures what we did with the “data” in terms of generating findings and analysis, and the dissemination of the results in a shared environment. This process can be viewed as research in “action”:

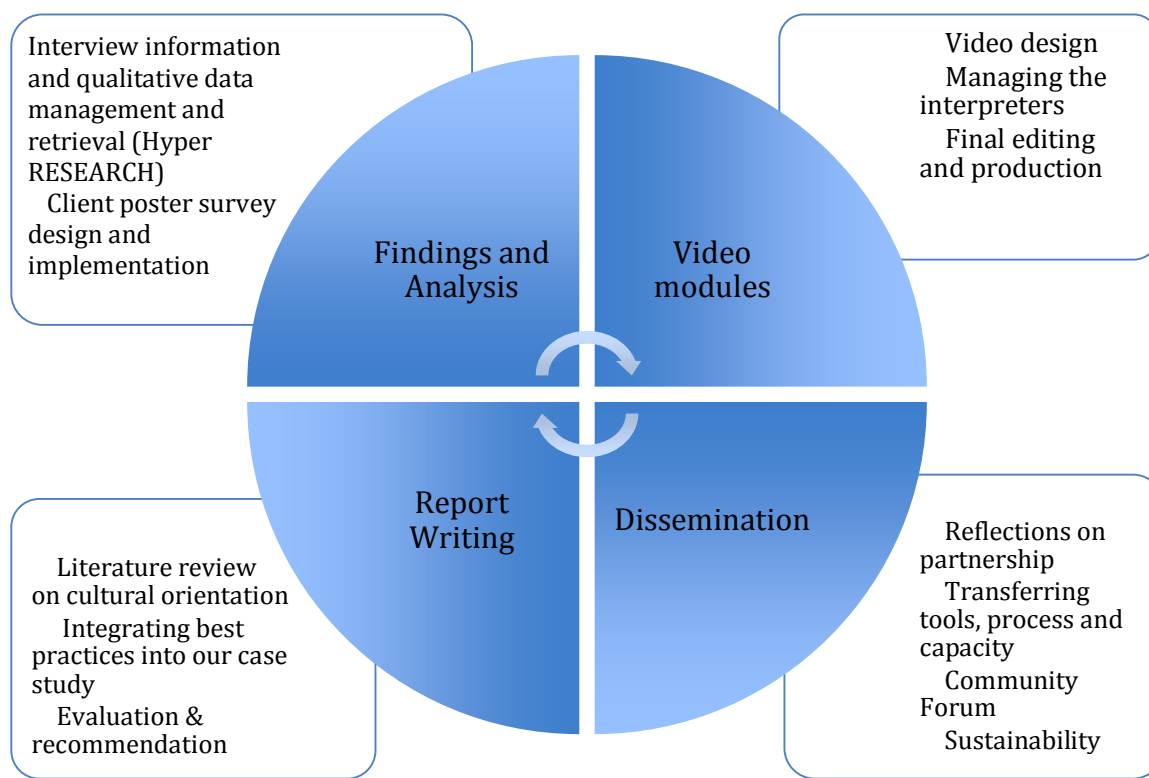


Figure 4: Connection the Study Process

Interview information made up the bulk of the “field data” we collected. We obtained a list of potential interviewees from the Bethany staff. Due to the potential sensitivity of refugee work, we wanted to make sure that our population of informants was “filtered” through Bethany based on their first-hand knowledge of the situation. This affected our sampling strategy. In the end we interviewed 20 individuals, including all the presenters (x6), four interpreters and two former clients who completed the JCO class previously. We provided a handout of project objectives and ethical considerations. We asked subjects to help us by contributing their knowledge and experiences on the JCO. (See Appendix 3 for a sample interview question set). The interviews took from 30 minutes to an hour. Topics of interest were the history of the JCO program and challenges faced (e.g., barriers to client participation), delivery methods, content, staffing, modes of participant engagement, translation issues, resources, etc.

The students made audio recordings of the interviews. These were compiled on the class Google drive and placed on a computer at a secured lab in the Anthropology Department. Students “transcribed” the audio by paraphrasing the interview content, turning information into “data.” The narrative texts were then added to a qualitative data management and analysis program (HyperRESEARCH). Students coded the text thematically (See Code Themes below), and the topical output was summarized for the findings section of this report, in order to identify trends and patterns. Recommendations for improvements are presented at the end of the report and will be shared with Bethany and all stakeholders involved in the project.

HyperRESEARCH Codes/Themes:		
Access for women Access to services Action Research Appeal of JCO Attendance Best Practices Bethany & Lutheran Services Capacity Case Workers Challenges Channels of communication with clients Childcare Class structure and organization Client feedback Client participation and engagement Client's expectations about the JCO	Employment Ethics Follow-up with clients after the presentation Gestures Grants History Housing Improvements Interactions between Interpreters presenters Interpretation dynamics Interpreter training Interpreters on presenters Interview context JCO coordination JCO curriculum	Methods Methods-Interviews Objectives Parenting Presentation Partnership Preparing presentations Presentation dynamics Presenter training Presenters on interpreters Professional background Resources for interpreters Resources for presenters Resources for students Services provided Services provided for client students Staffing Strengths

Communication in the JCO class Community Engagement Connection to JCO Cultural orientation program EDI	JCO history JCO Objectives JCO role Language Barrier Languages Spoken Measuring client learning Methodological approach	Strengths for Clients Student Training Surveys and feedback Training clients Transportation Videos Youth and children
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Figure 5: Data Coding and Themes

In addition to the interviews, we conducted a “Client Wall” poster survey to get anonymous feedback from the clients. The tool relies on the “dot survey” technique often used to survey customers at farmers markets (Lev, Stephenson and Brewer 2007).

Our application of the dot survey represents an innovative approach to giving clients a voice, using an interactive method. We designed the poster in two ways to be interactive and educational: first, clients could contribute feedback on their experiences in the JCO class, and second, the poster acted as a tool for learning and generating more awareness of the issues as client/students were exposed to the “dot” results of the survey, witnessing the patterns of previous responses. The clients were asked the question: “What improvements do you suggest for the JCO class?” Clients were asked to use the dots to identify their responses from among the seven options (see Figure 6). Because we wanted to ensure the suitability of the option categories for the JCO client/students, we asked the Bethany staff to provide feedback, which was incorporated into the survey we used at the JCO.

We used different color dots for the different language groups, and another color for the interpreters who also participated. The interpreter facilitated the activity for clients in respective language groups.

Two issues emerged related to administering the survey. First, the JCO also administered a survey to the clients at

GRAND VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

JCO Student Survey

What improvements do you suggest for the JCO class?

The JCO students have a knowledgeable perspective on the class. We would like to hear from students on ways to improve the class, such as access to the class, the information/services presented, and the delivery of topics/resources. **Thank you for participating!**

Add more suggestions here for improving the class? Post a sticky note below

Which three are most important to you? Place dots on your choices below

- Transportation to and from class
- Childcare during class
- More handouts and a copy of the presentation
- Someone to contact about questions and resources related to the class
- More time for questions and group discussion in class
- Hands-on, practical activities
- Information about discrimination and bias
- Information on LGBT issues
- Information on children adjusting

The Anthropology Department (GVSU) is partnering with the JCO organizers in order to improve the Joint Cultural Orientation class and curriculum. Organizers, presenters, interpreters and JCO clients are participating in the project.

For more information about this survey, contact Russell Rhoads, Anthropology Department, Grand Valley State University, rhoads@gvsu.edu, 616-331-3018

Figure 6: Client Wall Poster Survey

the end of the session. At each of the language group tables interpreters facilitated the paper survey. This may have affected the results of our survey as clients were then lead to the poster “dot” survey. This may have given undue formality to our dot survey as part of the JCO organizers official survey of clients at the culmination of the three-week course. We intended a less structured, casual atmosphere leading to a greater degree of voluntary participation in providing the client feedback. Indeed, it was observed that client/students were hesitant to participate until the interpreters lead the way. Overall, there were a good many deliberations and positive interactions between client/students, interpreters, and the GVSU students who facilitated the survey. Finally, we included a column on the poster where respondents could add remarks and other suggestions for improving the class using sticky notes.

5.3 Human Subjects Considerations

The service project results in outputs for use by Bethany Refugee and Immigration Services to improve their cultural orientation program. The project does not have the objective of scholarly dissemination to generalize beyond the scope of the project with Bethany (See Appendix 4, GVSU HRRC determination letter). The co-principle investigators submitted an application with the project description and outcomes to the GVSU Human Research Review Committee. The Committee determined that the “Improving Refugee Cultural Orientation Curriculum: An Engaged Partnership and Service Project” [876602-1] is an evaluation project and not research (March 17, 2016). At the same time, the project activities involve interactions between GVSU students, Bethany and Lutheran staff, presenters and interpreters, and though minimally, with refugee clients. Therefore, several human-subjects protections were considered as follows:

- Permissions: For the interviews, the project leaders selected the subjects through the oversight of Bethany, which chose the list of subjects based on the closeness of each to the JCO class. We notified the subjects before the interviews about the objectives of the project, and sought voluntary participation as well as oral permissions to record the interviews.
- Bethany’s Role: Bethany Refugee and Immigrant Services consented to the project, participating in its design and implementation. Bethany staff monitored the project activities through communication channels with the GVSU project leaders (mostly Rhoads). Bethany has strict official protocols for protecting their clients, limiting vulnerability to situations that could prove sensitive. Bethany worked with us on the client poster survey to develop a tool with appropriate questions that reflected the experiences of clients with the cultural orientation class topic and cross-cultural communication challenges.

- Student Activities and Preparations: Students observed several JCO class sessions, documenting interactions in the form of written field notes. In-class training was provided to students on methods and interviewing, as well as ethics and human-subjects protocol. Both instructors, Rhoads and Wroblewski, have extensive past experience with research, methods, and community engagement.
- The project “data” consists of the JCO class video files and transcriptions (i.e., Parenting session), and interview audio-tapes, all of which are archived securely. Computers with the data are located in secured Anthropology Department Labs.
- A Photo Release form was made available for photos used in the final report.



Figure 7: Students Shared Project Results at GVSU's Student Scholars Day

5.4 The Role of the GVSU Anthropology Classes and Students

Grand Valley is committed to community-based learning and encourages courses that integrate community engagement activities (GVSU Strategic Plan 2016-2021; <https://www.gvsu.edu/strategicplanning/>). The GVSU Anthropology classes aimed to deepen our community partner with Bethany and the refugee population by integrating the JCO project, particularly the ANT 380, a course designated for community engagement. The ANT 317 incorporated roughly 40% of activity to the service project, connecting students to the video project and transcription, interviewing, and analyzing

communication and linguistic aspects of the fieldwork. Overall, the students provided the passion and working parts for implementing the project.



Figure 8: Student Collaboration and Learning Atmosphere

5.4.1 Learning Atmosphere and Activities

The instructors put into place and facilitated several activities to promote learning:

- Leadership and collaboration training on teamwork
- Interviewing training
- Transcription exercise
- A common G drive acting as a hub of community, resources and products
- A Facebook page for the students from both classes
- Applied anthropology, action research, refugee background, and linguistics readings and class discussion
- Student teams set up for researching the literature, video production, designing and implementing the client survey, and coding the interviews using the computer qualitative data management and retrieval program (HyperRESEARCH)
- Assigned tasks for building the study report and in preparation for the culminating dissemination event, the “Community Forum,” convened on April 21, 2016 at BCS.
- Weekly reflections on the research process, communication, activities, insights and challenges, in order to help the instructors make adjustments as the project unfolded, but more importantly to force students to make connections between assumptions held, experiences encountered, and their training/praxis.

5.4.2 Collaboration

A core principle in this study -both in the classroom and in the community - is collaboration, working with others to create team efforts with new ways of approaching problems. Collaboration is not solely compromise, finding overlapping agreement, or



Figure 9: Community Engagement Connects GVSU and Bethany

agreeing to disagree. Rather, in the context of our study, following Copeland-Carson (2012:111), “Any collaborative work of this nature involves navigating the agendas in territorial issues of diverse institutions and cultures. Remaining humble, admitting what one does not know, acknowledging and highlighting community expert expertise, and understanding local political dynamics are all critical skills. One must position oneself as a neutral convener devoted to expanding opportunity, inclusive of everyone, when working on specifically working on culturally specific projects designed to remove barriers,” such as the JCO service project.

5.4.3 Transferring processes and tools

Learning the language and cultural meanings of others is central to anthropology. We serve as “translators” of both the different professional languages and the perspectives of different stakeholders within professional domains. Our methods and processes, we believe, could serve as new ways to facilitate the management and vision of a program, in the case the JCO, in terms that are understandable to all parties, fostering cross-fertilization of the processes, frameworks and methods that we employed. We tried to translate anthropological concepts and methods into operational terms at key entry points in the JCO study process. We anticipate that our efforts will open up new channels of communication (and strengthen old ones), and open the possibility of new ways of interacting that can become part of new organizational practices after the research project concludes. While these objectives are ambitious, and difficult to measure, following up on the project with continued collaborations will help us better understand the project impact - how Bethany integrated the recommendations to improve the JCO program. One measure of the success of a service project, then, is how it contributes to problem-solving from the “insider’s” viewpoint.

5.4.4 Insiders and Outsiders

According to Greenwood and Levin (2006:93), there are two sets of actors in a community-based participatory project. The insiders” are the owners of the problem, but they are not homogenous, egalitarian, or in any way an ideal group Outsiders are the professional researchers to seek to facilitate a co-learning process aimed at solving local problems Insiders and outsiders are both equal and different.” While an insider-outsider model is too conceptually simplistic to capture the range of dynamic interactions revealed in the JCO program, it helps us understand how the community partner takes “ownership” of the process, frameworks and methods utilized in the project, and integrate them as their own.



Figure 10: Creating Spaces for Insider/Outsider Sharing

5.5 Limitations of the Study

Our recommendations address the question: What is the best way to provide services and to educate people who are new to our culture, in a way that is sensitive to their own culture, their experiences and concerns? We are the first to admit that our findings are limited in spite of efforts we put into place to collaborate and co-generate knowledge and solutions. As Greenwood and Levin (2006: 97) explain, this type of research “is the strategy for orchestrating a variety of techniques and change oriented [methods and processes] in an intentionally designed process of co-generative learning that examines pressing problems, designs action strategies based on the research on the problems, and then implements and evaluates the liberating forms of action that emerge.” The co-generative process is way to capture knowledge from different perspectives of those learning about and participating in refugee cultural orientation. From start to finish, the process wrapped together many stakeholders in the community as well as students from two anthropology classes. In designing a community-based evaluation project, we tried to weave together many strands: the motivation for the project, objectives, procedures, use of technology, interactions, collaborations, outcomes, and plans for future action.

Indeed, in the study findings below, we want to tell the story of the JCO. Certainly, there are stories within stories: the experiences of the staff, presenters, interpreters, and clients - each have their own individual stories that reveal the strengths and challenges of the JCO program. According to Greenwood and Levin (2006: 67), “often action research reports are called ‘mere storytelling’ . . . A great deal is at stake and understanding the stories of individual cases in ways that can and should have powerful general effects. Telling stories is not a contradiction to doing social science. It is fundamental to it.” Indeed, capturing the story of the JCO program was central to our project - particularly to its outcomes and impact.

In this way, we can consider the “credibility” of the project through its outcomes. Credibility is the arguments and the processes necessary for having someone to trust research results. There are two types of credible knowledge. First, internal credibility is a knowledge fundamentally important to the collaborative character of the research process. Both insiders and outsiders agree with the objectives and implementation of the project, and have faith in its problem-solving outcomes. A second kind of credibility involves external judgments - knowledge capable of convincing someone who did not participate in the inquiry that the results are believable. This latter is a challenge, but can be demonstrated through the aims of action research. We believe that only knowledge generated and tested in practice is credible. The most tangible outcome is the workability of the project, solving problems for educating refugee clients on cultural orientation. Finally, we believe that the workable solutions that inform our recommendations come from the stories we gathered. Taken together, these stories suggest the way forward for improving the program and in turn the lives of newly arrived groups from around the world. We take credit for facilitating the storytelling (e.g., interviews) and compiling the ideas, experiences and perspectives. But in the end, the ideas for making significant change, for problem-solving, and for catalyzing a path forward came from the “owners” of the project, the JCO insiders. At the same time, our report represents more the “outsider” point of view, and therefore captures only a “partial” reality. Anthropologists are storytellers; this report represents part of the story.

Clearly, an evaluation project like this one is a complex enterprise. Many specific issues arose during the project implementation and process, from creating channels of communication to empowering partners to measuring problem-solving to sustainability.

- Students may lack the level of preparation required to work with organization cultures and refugee groups.
- Establishing “points of entry” were a challenge. These are important to sustain efforts to align activities and find spaces for conversations and the processing of outcomes.

- Logistical flexibility and frequent use of communication channels are important in this. It was both difficult for students to arrange time in the community outside of official class hours, and to maintain regular communication with the “insiders,” especially face-to-face time.
- Partners like the collaborative plans, have high hopes and want to sustain long-term activities and collaborations. We want to avoid creating expectations that cannot be met. It will be important for us to continue with follow up and create “arenas” for discussion and processing of impacts of the project and its future possibilities.
- Time restrictions: This is a complex project from start to finish, and similar in scope to a summer ethnographic field school. We found that logistics and activities dominated, while we needed more time for processing and discussion.
- Measuring impact: There are challenges to knowing how the project facilitated social change. While key measures are feasibility, workability, and problem-solving, it’s still too early to know if our recommendations will contribute to these. In addition, the “transfer” of research ideas, processes and methods into the Bethany organizational culture, the JCO class and cultural orientation program may end up less than “visible” (assessed as measurable) to both insiders and outsiders. ”
- Assessment and feedback should be planned immediately, perhaps involving the EDI institutional research team. At the same time capturing learning can be accomplished through intentional conversations and creating spaces in the future for processing what happened and its impacts.
- Collaboration must expand beyond key individuals and specific faculty participating in this project. There is a need to involve GVSU and Bethany partners in a sustainable way, expanding the partnership to other refugee service organizations.

6 BACKGROUND – A Review of the Literature

6.1 What is Cultural Orientation?

As stated earlier, “cultural orientation” is the process of familiarizing refugees to a new culture through acculturation, in which basic needs are met, self-sufficient skills relative to their new home gained, and knowledge obtained about cultural life as Americans (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982:5-8). In fact, the need for such a programs arose in order “to help [U.S. refugees] acquire the knowledge, skills, and attitudes needed in early resettlement” (Costello & Bebic, 2006). While cultural orientation is not a new concept, the federal government has funded programs for resettlement for only four decades. The government’s cultural orientation program was created in 1975 because of the growing responsibility to help address the issues of the then-thousands of South Asian refugees who arrived in the U.S. after the fall of their countries’ governments post-Korean War and -Vietnam War (Costello & Bebic, 2006).

In addition, The Refugee Act of 1980 created the Federal Refugee Resettlement Program and the Office of Refugee Resettlement with the aim of providing refugees with the resources needed in order to become employable and economically self-sufficient as well as to assist refugees in the transition to a new culture (Lepore, 2015). A main objective is “to achieve self-sufficiency as soon as possible after arrival” (U.S. Department of State 2016; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services 2013 qtd in Shaw & Poulin, 2015:1099). To achieve this all nine voluntary agencies (VOLAGs) are contracted through the U.S. State Department’s Bureau of Population, Refugee, and Migration (BPRM) to collaborate with other countries in order to provide clients with two cultural orientations.⁴ The cultural orientations are supposed to occur once before pre-departure and one through the voluntary agencies post-arrival.

The BPRM’s annual contract with the VOLAGs requires that “the specific topics and subtopics that resettlement agencies are obligated to cover with refugees” (Morissey, 2016). This document is called the ‘Cooperative Agreement’ and the topics are “decided upon by BPRM, in collaboration with domestic and international resettlement agencies” (Morissey, 2016). In this agreement, each agency must cover these topics for cultural orientation that are defined, and required. The topics consist of the Role of the Local Resettlement Agency, Refugee Status, English, Public Assistance, U.S. Laws, Your New

⁴ VOLAGs refer to any of the nine U.S. private agencies and one state agency that have cooperative agreements with the State Department to provide reception and placement services for refugees arriving in the United States. These agencies provide refugees with a range of services including sponsorship, initial housing, food and clothing, orientation and counseling, as well as job placement, English language training and other social services.

Community, Employment, Health, Budgeting and Personal Finance, Housing, Hygiene, Safety, Cultural Adjustment, Education, and Transportation (U.S. Department of State: Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration, 2016).

These regulations require all cultural orientation programs to cover this information with their clients. While there are typically multiple ways an agency will interface with a client, cultural orientation is delivered primarily through service, information and training programs and direct interactions with caseworkers/managers. The Joint Cultural Orientation (JCO) class and curriculum offered by Bethany Christian Services (BCS) and Samaritas (Lutheran Social Services of Michigan, LSSM) interconnect service, information and training programs through direct face-to-face interactions. The program is a post-arrival orientation that works with clients in the local Grand Rapids area.



6.2 Approaches and Models to Cultural Orientation

The JCO program is one of many similar programs and operations throughout the United States that must follow the regulations of the BPRM. The website “Cultural Orientation Resource Exchange” is recommended for obtaining information on the aforementioned topics in regards to cultural orientation such as resources, curriculum, instruction on how to make one’s own curriculum, as well as resources in various languages. Cultural orientation programs similar to the JCO include the Bilingual Educational Institute (BEI) in Houston, The International Institute of Buffalo in New York, and the Immigrant Services and Connections (ISAC) cooperative program in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.⁵

To illustrate how these programs work, the Bilingual Educational Institute (BEI) is subcontracted to VOLAGs in Houston and provides a variety of services in terms of cultural orientation for refugees. These services include three-hours of presentations, in a

⁵ These agencies are found at: <http://www.bei.edu/>, <http://www.iibuff.org/>, and <http://www.jfcspgh.org/immigrants--refugees/refugee-resettlement.aspx>, respectively.

client's native language on topics like "employment, health care, community organizations, workplace, transportation, housing, crime prevention, consumer issues, education, citizenship, welfare reform, government agencies and finance" (Archer, 1999: 2-3). In addition, workshops are provided involving information on communication styles, adjusting to a new culture, understanding different cultural values, school systems, employers, community services, cultural specific information, and the impact of relationships. The workshops are provided in three hour or one-and-a-half hour segments. As with the local JCO, child care is recognized as a barrier to access, especially for women. At the BEI childcare is provided at the facility.

During the classes and workshops, the BEI offers client information in the form of a resource guide packet, which is given to each refugee in English and in their primary language. These packets include a description of services offered to refugees, eligibility requirements, and contact information. Furthermore, at the beginning and end of these presentations, an assessment is performed, in the forms of a pre- and post-test, over the learned material and quality of instruction. The instructor, too, completes a form to reflect on how the information covered was understood by the clients (Archer, 1999: 4-7).

As for the International Institute of Buffalo, a cultural orientation class on Friday afternoons. These classes are three hours long spanning four weeks. Similar to the local JCO, they are presented using a PowerPoint structure, with the clients separated into language groups and assigned interpreters. The topics covered include health, government, life in America, medical topics, and cultural expectations. In addition, the International Resettlement Institute and case managers provide services to clients for 30 to 90 days after client arrival (International Institute of Buffalo, 2010). These services include employment skills assessment, health screenings, connecting children with local schools and/or daycare, classes involving citizenship and learning English, and orientation involving the local transportation system, American culture, and workplace (International Institute of Buffalo, <http://www.iibuff.org/>)



Figure 11: Services Provided
(<http://www.iibuff.org/>)

The Immigration Services and Connections (ISAC) program is a six-agency collaborative of immigrant- and refugee-serving agencies in the Greater Pittsburgh area, funded by a one million dollar block grant. Each agency has expertise in the populations they serve. It began

after the success of a collaboration between the Baldwin-Whitehall School District and various outside agencies (called Project Liberty) to integrate refugee students and their families into their new community. While this early collaboration was considered a success, efforts were made to expand coordination of services in the community to help refugees get through barriers of language and culture, utilize the gamut of community resources, collaborate with community service providers to build customer-friendly services, provide a structure to strengthen natural support systems, and to face and solve problems collectively as they arose. This was done through workshops for parents, children, and adolescents. While the workshops emphasized how to benefit the most from the educational system, they also included topics like understanding the acculturation process, acculturation conflicts and how to respond to those conflicts. ISAC's structure included the utilization of translators and interpreters, as well as consultations with experts on the topics presented (Lepore, 2015).

Our research confirms that the local JCO shares a structure like these programs. Classes are provided Wednesday mornings in two one-and-a-half hour sessions. These classes provide familiarization on topics such as cleaning, safety, parenting, U.S. Laws, financial literacy, and understanding of medical topics. The clients are evaluated using a quiz after the class. The two cooperating agencies, Bethany Christian Services and Samaritas, offer other services to refugees such as English classes, housing, case management, public transit orientation, employment services, work skills, driver's training, urban farming, childcare certifications, a healing center, medical case management, and translation services.

6.3 Challenges to Cultural Orientation

Yet, despite all these amazing programs that provide a variety of services, it is not surprising that the refugee clients still face challenges. One such challenge derives from changes in services offered to refugees tied to accompanying legal requirements. These programs have changed from a six month program "of language and cultural orientation trainings" in the 1980's to one to five days of brief, intensive orientation. There are also certain requirements that must be met within specific time frames from the moment of the client's arrival in their host country. For example, the importance of housing and personal safety topics must be taught within 5 days after arrival; basic needs and orientation topics must be covered by the settlement agency within 30 days after arrival; and the clients must receive 90 days of case management (Costello & Bebic, 2006).

Another challenge is combating ethnocentric mono-culturalism and cultural encapsulation. Ethnocentric mono-culturalism is the belief that one's own culture beliefs

and values are superior to those of other cultures. Ethnocentrism is the concept that each individual automatically judges everyone else by their own self-reference criteria. Basically we judge people using the cultural ideas ingrained in us without considering looking at others through their beliefs and values. When members of Project Liberty (mentioned above) first began planning cultural orientation programs, they thought in terms most beneficial to individuals of their own cultural, but were not thinking of how to present information in a way that was culturally relevant to the refugees (Lepore, 2015). Once the members confronted this challenge, they were able to create programs that introduced the refugees into their new culture and new community in ways that decreased anxiety, provided a support system, and increased understanding among both the refugees and their new community. This can be considered a communication problem as it is time consuming and difficult to research other cultures thoroughly in order to decide what information is relevant to refugees (and relevancy can vary from group to group, country to country, by gender, age, etc.). The key is to negotiate how to convey information in a way that refugees can understand through their cultural interpretation while still teaching and understanding the differences between the cultures of the refugees and the host culture. The findings section of this report considers how the local JCO class, and cultural orientation in general, meets these objectives.

A review of the literature identifies further challenges facing both refugee clients and service provider agencies. The most common challenges identified are underemployment, sustaining self-sufficiency, food insecurity, insufficient funding, English training programs, better coordination between government and VOLAGs, and issues involving client's learning and understanding in cultural orientation (Campbell & Blain, 1982:5-6; Gunnell et al., 2015:10-11). The levels of challenges experienced are reflected in the fact that after five years after arrival, half of refugees still only know little to no English, only 38% have used cash assistance, and 70% of newly arrived refugees reported having some sort of food insecurity (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2016; Hadley et al., 2007:405-412, qtd from Shaw & Poulin, 2015:1101).

These challenges are not necessarily the fault of the voluntary agencies. In fact, even government programs aimed to teach about access and healthy choices have "conflicting work hours, lack of transportation, lack of childcare, low literacy, cultural differences, and language barriers" that negatively impact refugees in obtaining cultural orientation (Gunnell et al., 2015:483). Other barriers are a lack in skills, "community connection[s]", pre-arrival education and English skills, communication, and transportation (Aday, 2002; Shaw & Poulin, 2015:1101). Clearly, there are obvious limitations when agencies work with refugees and some of these limitations are caused by the lack of skill that some of these refugees have when they come over. These include the effects of culture shock, linguistic isolation, culture clash, non-transferable job skills, refugee trauma, adjusting to a

strange environment, and other acculturation stresses. These can impact and increase the troubles refugees may experience while facing the events and challenges of resettlement (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982:6-7; Benmak & Pedersen, 2003:31-32).

6.4 Best Practices for Cultural Orientation

As this report documents in the Findings section, challenges can negatively impact refugees' access to and capability to learn from cultural orientation. However, there are ways to help to improve cultural orientation programs and in order to solve issues with access to information, time spent accessing information, and understanding information accessed through the cultural orientation programs. Of these efforts, an importance is placed upon evaluating clients' needs. Many organizations that work with refugees seek to discover or evaluate client needs and to provide them with resources aligning with those needs. One shining example is the "Welcome to the United States Guidebook" and DVD, prepared by the Cultural Orientation Resource (COR) Center.⁶ These resources are designed for use by refugees directly. However, organizations may often neglect to gather input from clients, resulting in a missed opportunity for assessing services needs from the refugees' viewpoint. One report suggested that the following topics be included in the needs assessment: housing, jobs, food and nutrition, health, communications, transportation, money/credit, shopping, community resources, emergency measures, taxes, insurance, schools and education, American customs, and manners right and responsibilities; the report also had suggestions for how to conduct the needs assessment (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982:10-11). These assessments can be performed using various methods of analysis by utilizing existing records, key informants, focus groups, a community forum, field survey, interviews, and questionnaires (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982:16-17). The results would optimally affect client learning in a positive manner, as they would then be provided with the most effective services.

Moreover, from reviewing best learning practices used by other organizations in their programs, it was observed that using active learning methods benefits the learning comprehension of refugee adults. This is where "clients are given the opportunity to interact with CO learning points through discussion, activities, games, brainstorming, etc." (Morissey, D. (2016). Clients would be more involved in their learning and are less likely to be bored or prone to distraction during cultural orientation programs/classes. Also, this approach aligns with the Knowledge, Skills, and Attitudes (KSA) model. KSA Training is

⁶ The Cultural Orientation Resource (COR) Center offers on-line resources in multiple languages: English, Arabic, Burmese, Chin, Farsi, Karen, Kinyarwanda, Nepali, Somali and Swahili. See more at: <http://www.culturalorientation.net/resources-for-refugees/welcome-set/welcome-to-the-united-states-guidebook>.

used as a benefit in the application of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. To expand, this is the application of information imparted during the orientation program such as the ability to perform skills learned in orientation, attitude about the new culture, and the understanding of how to balance both the client's primary culture and host culture (Morissey, D. (2016).; Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982:5-7). Clients who learn in this way are able to apply the information that they learn more effectively because each person learns in their own unique way. One intervention study discussed solving this barrier using online video games. The argument is that video games would be easier to better accommodate learning differences involving education, literacy, knowledge of language and or culture among refugees. This can be done through the use of assessment of client's abilities to perform on these topics. Clients would then work on different levels in these modules based on their need (Munaga & Weaver, 2011: 8-31). Active learning methods could also be an option for situations of more intensive case management.

Other studies have looked into extended case management in efforts to improve cultural orientation or to solve issues in cultural orientation. One such study took place at The International Rescue Committee (IRC) office in Salt Lake City. The reasoning for client's lack in gaining self-sufficiency was attributed to a cultural orientation that does not extend for a long enough period of time in which clients were unable to gain appropriate skills. This study recommended extending case management by as much as two years. In the results of the study, after two years of participation, 92% of clients reported that they were doing "good" or "very good" in adjustment to their new lives. This contrasts with results after only 3 months of orientation, in which 19% of clients reported that they were "good" or "very good." With the longer orientation, clients experienced decreases in assistance services used, and improved feelings about adjustment, health, employment, finances, and education (Shaw & Poulin, 2015:1105). In sum, with extended case management, clients were able to learn about the American culture over a longer period of time. They were able to develop skills that showed self-sufficiency and a reduced reliance on assistance services from governmental programs.

Lastly, issues in cultural orientation involve client access. Improving client access to transportation and child-care can make or break the learning experience for refugees. This "can determine success or failure of a program" because refugees do not have the resources for child-care or transportation. Arrangements must be made so that both parents can attend cultural orientation session and training. To solve these issues examples include onsite child-care and child cultural orientation that runs concurrently with the adult cultural orientation, and some form of reliable transportation for clients (Center for Applied Linguistics, 1982:24-25).

7 FINDINGS/RESULTS

This section of the report organizes and synthesizes information about the appeal of the JCO and best practices. In this section, we report on the findings of the service project. The findings are presented on different components or aspects of the JCO class, from its organization and structure to class dynamics and interactions. As the findings below indicate, much is currently working well for the JCO. But conducting a study like this provides insights on how the multiple pieces of the JCO puzzle fit together, how the division of labor works, how communication dynamics function across the different groups of stakeholders and participants, and how the program is coordinated and staffed. Everyone has an important role to play, and valuable experiences and perspectives to contribute to the program and its overall success. However, at times it's difficult "to see the forest for the trees," meaning that when one is too close to a situation it is difficult to step back and see the larger landscape and how things fit together. Below, we consider potential improvements for the JCO as well. A Recommendations chapter concludes with a fuller summary of suggestions for future improvement to the program.

7.1 Structure and Organization of the class

From the interviews, we learned that over the years the JCO has taken many different shapes and forms of organization. Currently, the JCO is slotted as a Wednesday morning class running consecutive weeks with two one and a half hour sessions each day. A presenter explained that the time slot for the class is limited to times that the 'Gathering Place' room is open at GRIF's facility, and that the JCO cannot conflict with the other required client classes and services. There are three weeks of JCO classes, including six topical session modules. One interpreter said she liked the order of the topics, which are important for newly arrived clients and families, particularly finances and laws. Clients are also diverse and have different needs in terms of relevant topics based on gender, age, language skills, economic skills, and psychological trauma. Each person has his or her own history and paths that brought them to Grand Rapids.

While most agree that the information provided in the sessions is valuable to the clients, the current structure and time allotted offers to little exposure to the information and services that clients need. There was little agreement on how to fix the "time" issue, however. One suggestion is that the classes should be simplified, with basic, practical information given on more topics, such as tenant's rights and driver's training. Some suggested that the curriculum should focus on the immediate needs of new clients, although the diversity of the clients means that some arrive more prepared than others. It is difficult to know just what any particular client needs because of the diversity of

experiences that the clients bring into the JCO class. A survey or assessment of client status from case managers would provide this kind of baseline information.

Another staff member told us that the organization of the JCO could be beneficial if more types of clients had access to it: Could it be set up to reach more clients, not only those newly arrived, but also those settlers who have left the initial program activities? Yet, this creates a dilemma from the viewpoint that attendance at the JCO should be required. Required for whom? There seems to be an assumption that the JCO class is a review for clients because they have already had previous “orientations” before arriving in the U.S.

At the same time, people understand that the JCO class is only one component integrated into the cultural orientation program as a whole, complementing other services such as job skills and ESL classes. Many concluded that the JCO organizers are doing their best given the limitations on time, resources, and having to fit the JCO into an array of services offered by cultural orientation. Overall, the sentiment is that the JCO is a program growing in importance and expanding in reach. This report concludes that the organizers do a good job in facilitating that growth.

From what we have learned as “outsiders,” the relationship between the three agencies (Bethany, Lutheran and GRIF) has improved this last year. One presenter observed that communication between Lutheran, Bethany, and GRIF had been a struggle in the past, but in this last year it has become much more consistent, with the result that more and more clients are attending. Many times in the interviews, the efforts of Amy and Catherine were highly commended for the effort they put in. It is clear that communication between the agencies is very important, and if the agencies can find a way to keep the communication going with the departure of Amy and Catherine, then the JCO will continue to improve. We strongly encourage the organizers to hire at least one full-time dedicated staff member tasked with coordinating, organizing, surveying and streamlining the JCO class into the future.

Finally, we asked about the history of the JCO; many of those interviewed are aware that changes have been made over time. Many of the people interviewed did not know much about the history of the JCO. This history should be documented and made available to participants. In this way, the program may be in a better position to assess itself and make informed changes over time. Knowing that history would at least create a collective sense of continuity and consistency in the program.

In the next section, we turn to the issue of access to the JCO class, finding ways that more clients can be reached, particularly women and youth.

7.2 Access

The topic of access is characterized as any barrier that impedes physical attendance and participation to the JCO. The data collected through the interviews shows an interconnecting web of scheduling, communication, transportation and childcare. One bright spot is the location of GRIF. One interpreter remarked that the gathering site for the class is very convenient; clients are able to easily find GRIF because they have other classes there. GRIF is also in an area of Grand Rapids that has a large population of Bethany and Samaritas clients.



Yet, there are many barriers to access. Transportation is a recurring topic. Although the bus skills training is to be completed within the first two weeks of arrival, sometimes clients are in need of using the bus before this happens and are unable to attend the class. It is noteworthy that the client students are given an initial bus pass that lasts for their first 31 days of use. At the same time, many are hesitant to use it due to the language barrier heightening their fear of getting lost, especially during a Michigan winter. According to the interviews, if the individual is of an older generation or has health problems, they would be even less inclined to use the bus. Location of the students housing on the bus line in relation to the class creates another barrier. When a bus ride can take up to an hour or more, students are less likely to attend.

JCO is designed for refugees to attend immediately after arrival. Many families resettling are large with many members and children do not become enrolled in school immediately. This creates a scheduling conflict if both parents are to attend, as the children need care. On top of this, it can take three to six weeks to get set up with DHS. Complicating matters, children are not allowed at JCO because they can be a distraction. In addition, confusion can result as to whether or not they are also allowed at work skills or ESL classes.

One large barrier for job-seeking refugees in the United States is the lack of affordable, culturally-appropriate child care. One presenter succinctly stated “ . . . childcare used to be offered but it’s too expensive.” In families with children under 12, who cannot be left at home unattended, usually the mother stays behind while the father attends the JCO. This creates a disadvantage for the female population with children. Indeed, childcare was a barrier noted by staff and interpreters. Some of them mentioned they would like to work out a childcare option but that there are many barriers for establishing a reliable childcare



Figure 12: Client Childcare Training and Service

system each week. They know that many women are unable to attend because their children are not in school, and traditionally the women/mothers will be the ones at home taking care of the children. But much of what is taught at JCO could be very beneficial to women in their homes.

The Hands Connected program at BCS trains past and present refugee clients to become professional home-

based childcare providers (<https://www.bethany.org/blog/hands-connected-program>). The presenter at the Parenting session referred to the program, which she coordinates. But it is unclear how the program integrates into the JCO, and if newly arrived women use the program services. This program could be ideal for a woman already staying at home with children but wanting to help others and also improve the family's financial situation. The irony is that women unable to attend due to childcare responsibilities will not learn about the childcare program, unless Bethany shares it elsewhere. At any rate, the access barrier for women can be improved when some kind of childcare provider program is coordinated with the JCO.

Scheduling the JCO at one location, as opposed to the past practice of alternating locations, is highlighted as a strength of the current JCO. Often the client/students are overloaded with programs, meetings and appointments the first month or two. We note the success by the practice of interpreters give reminder calls to clients the night before the JCO class. However, with the class being three hours on three different days, there are noticeably less students in attendance as the weeks go on. Many feel the students have conflicting priorities and with the JCO not being required, it gets pushed down the list. Further, if the client finds employment, they will not longer be able to attend.

We learned of the key roles played by the case manager/worker, as one person put it, "the pinnacle of communication and insurer of skills." From bus skills training, language interpretation, and actually driving the students to some appointments, caseworkers have the greatest involvement and impact on success. It is recommended that a procedure is put into place for them to tie the timing of client's arriving to the JCO attendance dates and find a way to help the clients prioritize their schedules, assist with childcare services, and the MDHHS paperwork or school enrollment prior to JCO attendance.



Figure 13: Students and Faculty Collaborating on the Video Production

Communicating with the client/students, offering a weekly reminder, and a printed one page monthly calendar or a notebook would be useful practices as well. The latter would allow the clients to add anything that they have come up or make notes on how long it takes to ride the bus from one place to another to help them with their time management in their new country.



Figure 14: Students Designing the Video Module in the Audio-Visual Language Lab

Staff and interpreters both recognize the role of the weather, and how it can be affect one's movement. One staff member stated, "Transportation is an issue. Weather. Many of the new families are not used to this ice and snow and cold and think they should just stay home." An interpreter points out "Children under 12 cannot be left alone and that creates a problem for leaving. Weather, transportation. We expect them to take the bus and it is cold and it is hell for these people that come from tropical countries."

In sum, the experiences clients encounter during their first month at BCR are critical to getting them off on the right foot. Any small change to improve their access to the JCO and its storehouse of information and resources for clients would go along way. While the barriers to access seem enormous if one looks at the root cause of these difficulties, there are small steps that the organizing agencies can take to improve attendance, especially for women.

Finally, the best efforts may still mean that certain clients cannot attend the JCO. We argue that access can be enhanced by "taking the class to the client/students." In effect, our video production project is a way to expand the reach of the JCO. In addition to the videos, the JCO session information can be distributed in the form of literature/brochures and translated PowerPoint presentations. People who are out of their comfort zone do not learn well, so clients could be given very simple videos and other media translated into their particular languages. Resources can be made available at BCS and Samaritas, and on the Internet as well. The recommendations, we believe, will assist people with access in multiple ways so that clients can get the information even without attending the physical class.

7.3 JCO Curriculum

This section describes findings on the JCO class and curriculum. JCO curriculum covers many different topics, such as U.S. Laws, U.S. Medical coverage, Housing, Parenting, etc. A sample of how-to-do practices include: how to clean, transportation routes, food safety, store locations, washer and dryer use, and financial information such as how to use your card, how to log in online, pay a bill, transfer money, keep track of money in an account, and what happens if you do not pay bills. This study focused on the Parenting presentation, which covers how parenting practices and laws here in the U.S. compare to other places where refugees lived. It covers aspects of family life such as supervision requirements and child abuse (also covered in the U.S. law session). Yet, many of those interviewed expressed concerns that (a) important information is not being covered, like resources for education of all levels (elementary, middle, high school, higher education) and (b) there needs to be a way to integrate children more into the programs, perhaps by

having classes for the children or an after-school program to help them transition more easily into the U.S. society as their parents are being trained to do.

Some interviewees remarked that having an overall picture of which clients will be attending the course would be helpful for presenters, so they could tailor some of the information to better suit the needs of the clients. Bethany has already made progress in this area. Many presenters, interpreters, and staff believe that the recent updates to the PowerPoint presentations will make a difference in learning and engagement. The current effort to revise the PowerPoint slides covers all six session topics. From the perspective of the interviewees, past practices of designing the PowerPoint presentations embraced a certain freedom for the presenter to prepare their slides. Many presenters had PowerPoints handed down to them from previous presenters, and there are cases where presenters created their own. One presenter remarked that “lots of time is spent studying and getting new information” as a requirement for preparing presentations. With the new revisions, one presenter mentioned that they now believe the information is relevant and current.



Figure 15: Parenting Class Session and Use of Props

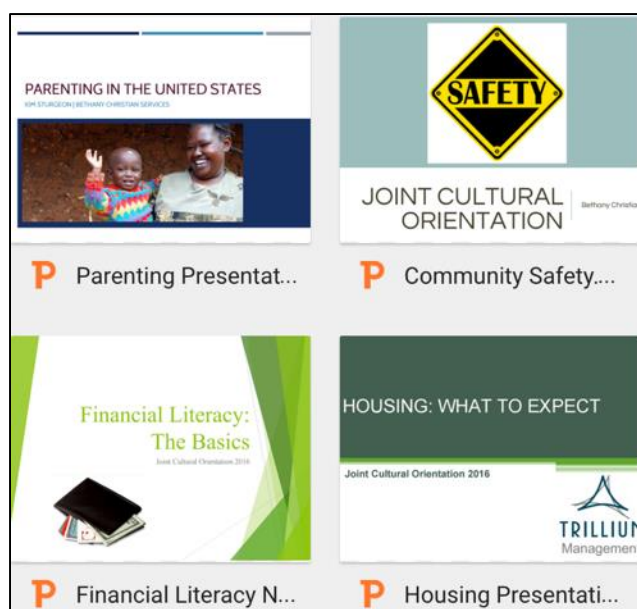


Figure 16: The Revised PowerPoint Presentations

The PowerPoint revisions have served many indirect purposes as well. The revisions generated discussion between staff and presenters on what information is most important and on how it can be delivered in a more visual, interactive way. The process brought presenters together with Bethany staff (Catherine Bacheldor) and an anthropology intern. The revision process created energy and possibilities for new approaches that have gone far beyond the PowerPoint itself. Everyone mentions how they will make changes accordingly, if they know

something dramatic is changing. One interviewee cautioned, though, that the Church World Service (CWS) is the one that sets the expectations and guidelines for the presentations, and this might curtail creativity and the ability to make the presentations locally relevant and suited to our clientele. Conversely, a second interviewee contacted CWS and asked for some core curriculum and some guidelines, and to their surprise, there was very little assistance. As these situations warrant, it would be useful to clarify the role of CWS in terms of revising presentation guidelines.

As it is, due to the time constraints of the current JCO format, only basic topics and information are covered. Someone spoke about how the information presented has to be very condensed when accounting for the interpretation time, which means that each 30 minutes of content takes one hour to deliver. Finally, quite a few presenters and interpreters desired the presentations to be more interactive, with more pictures, and less words. Concern was raised initially about having all the presentations and PowerPoints in English. But we later learned from the interpreters that their translation task benefited because it helped them follow along with the presenter's oral narrative. In a multi-language setting, presenting in English with interpreters makes sense.

At the same time, we suggest that the JCO staff have the PowerPoint translated in other languages for distribution to clients as a follow up to the class. As mentioned above, several interpreters and presenters believe clients would benefit from having the JCO information provided to them in more than one form of media, such as videos, translated booklets, handouts or brochures from the classes, copies of the PowerPoints. This will allow all clients access to information if they forget or are unable to attend the classes.



Figure 17: Creating More Visual PP Slides

7.4 Staff Roles and the Division of Labor

The JCO is not the only cultural training the clients receive; most take other courses/training programs, and get one-on-one cultural training and attention from caseworkers. Whereas the JCO is a kind of one-size-fits all for those with a newly-arrived status, many we talked to think the JCO complements the other services and individualized attention. This section addresses the staff and organizers participating in the JCO. In the interviews we asked presenters, interpreters and staff about their backgrounds, how they got involved in the JCO, the appeal of being involved in the class, etc. We could write up



Figure 18: Staff and Students at the JCO

separate findings on each of these groups and their roles, but here the emphasis is on how the three groups interact and coordinate during their division of labor to bring the JCO to the clients.

The staff agrees that the JCO is a fantastic tool because it is “proactive,” allowing clients time to understand the laws and culture of the United States. The staff is there to help the clients with their transition in the new country. They are passionate about what they do; the staff

working with the JCO class does so because they find pleasure in knowing that they are helping their clients. Not only do the staff help with cultural transition, they also create community connections for the clients. As such, the staff had mostly positive things to say about the work they are doing for the JCO. The sessions on budgeting and U.S. laws were a couple of the class sessions that staff found extremely helpful to clients. These are two areas that tend to have a lot of differences compared to client home countries and the U.S.

According to the data we have collected, one of the main issues is time. There is simply not time allowed in the nine total hours for the clients to receive all the information that may be beneficial to them in their first months in the U.S. Along with time one of the staff mentioned that the classes should focus more on “cultural transitioning.” Many of the clients are coming from extremely different backgrounds to the cultural norms that are set up in the United States and focusing on the differences may help.

It is important to highlight that many of the staff members have cultural background related to resettlement giving them the foundation needed to present or translate information in a way that is most beneficial for the students. Many of the interpreters we interviewed were refugees themselves and want to help other refugees during their transition here in the States. Having this similar background with the clients helps the interpreter connect to the clients making it easier to interpret in a way that will be well received. Most of the interpreters speak at least three languages and attend a short training program with BCS. The interpreters also have a new system where they call the clients the night before the scheduled class, and according to sources, this seems to have increased attendance.

Overall, the JCO is viewed as an extremely beneficial experience for the staff and the clients. The findings show that the topics covered and the passion of the presenters

(another strength being that many are experts from varying fields) make up substantial strengths of the JCO class, especially topics such as budgeting and laws, as these are two of the first things that refugees will need to be concerned with when coming to a new country. Several of the main challenges presented were topical content, culturally appropriate examples, PowerPoint visualizations, coordination among the organizers, and the allotted class time for the staff to make sure the clients understand the information. In sum, everyone agrees that the JCO as it currently stands is a huge asset to clients, and helps them become self-sufficient and productive members of their communities through the information that the JCO provides. As one interviewee explained, “The JCO is good for the refugee community as a way to come together - people for different backgrounds - and see that they are not alone in this process of resettlement.”



7.5 Delivery and Communication

Effective communication involves establishing a dialog between different parties and perspectives is key in uncovering the barriers that may impede progress. In the JCO class, communication is met with cultural and lexical restrictions as the clientele consists of people from diverse backgrounds and of varying knowledge of the English language.

7.5.1 Dynamics of Presenting

The focus for this section is the communication between the presenters and the interpreters, as well as the presenters and the clients. As described earlier, the data show that PowerPoint is an effective mode of presentation. The PowerPoint presentations are written in bullet points specifically for the interpreters to translate and explain to the

clients. Presenters decide on their own what they find important to put in their presentations.

Some presenters demonstrate activities and have the clients mimic to make the lesson interactive. Some of the presentations have more opportunities to be interactive than others. Many presenters use props and are responsible for bringing their own materials for use during their presentation. Presenters also try to add more photos to their PowerPoints as well as use fewer English spoken words. The presentations generally contain about a half hour of information, but it takes an hour to deliver using the interpreters. If the presentations have too much information, clients get lost in the material. Presenters try to simplify their material. It helps to restate the information a few times in different ways. Some slides take longer to explain than others. Presenters note that the presentation never goes the same way twice. There is a need for presenters to be adaptable.

Turning to the Parenting presentation, GVSU students attended and filmed the session, and designed a video production as a JCO intervention project for use beyond the classroom. Students analyzed the videotaped transcription, including pauses and interpretations, nonverbal communication and client interactions. According to the analysis, the use of hand gestures and props are well-received by the clients. Clients also found that it may prove helpful to strengthen the relationship between presenter and interpreter.

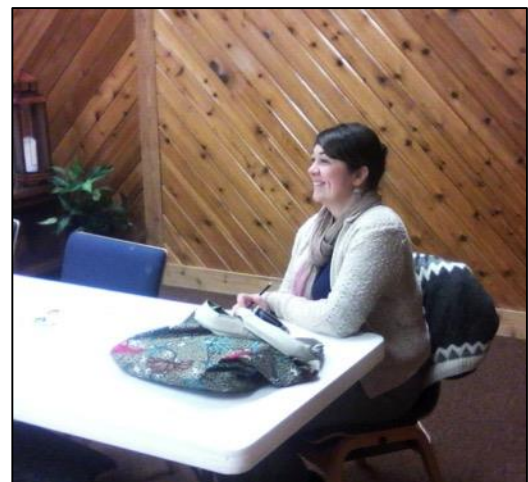


Figure19: Student Observing the JCO

Conversations between the presenter and the audience versus the interpreter and the audience are frequent and overlapping. This produces confusion among students, with voluminous chatter that makes it more difficult for the presenter to continue. This issue of time and communication between presenters and interpreters surfaced as the biggest hindrance to the efficiency of the class.

Clearly, working with interpreters can be challenging for presenters. They are given handouts and resources on how to present with an interpreter, but they are not given special training. They learn from experience. There can be confusion during the presentations with the interpreters all talking at once. In order for the presentations to run smoothly, presenters leave pauses for the interpreters to interpret. Sometimes this can be an issue for presenters. Presenters think it would be beneficial to communicate with the interpreters outside of the class to discuss what would work; this does not



Figure 20: Presenter and Clients Interacting

currently happen. They would also like to hear from caseworkers about client groups' experience and needs so they can tailor their presentations to the groups. It would also help to hear from former clients about their experiences.

Finally, a presenter stated that there is some information overlap in the presentations, and another mentioned that some of the information could be taken out of the JCO and integrated as a part of the language courses to help

streamline how the information is presented to clients. Therefore, we recommend a strategy of careful review of the presentations and revise or cut material, if possible, that is repetitive or deemed as less important at this juncture in the resettlement process. Again, improving presenter-interpreter coordination will open up more time for other topics, more discussion from clients, and other kinds of learning, such as simulations and role-playing. This would open up more time for interactive aspects of the class and there would also be more time for the interpreters and the presenters to speak to the learners.

7.5.2 Interpreters and the Dynamics of Translation

Of course, it is difficult to leave out interpreters when describing presenters and presenting. In its present format, the JCO class employs the use of trained interpreters, to provide the missing link between the clients and their cultural orientation. As such, the interpreters represent arguably the most important role in the JCO class, and their ability to translate effectively is directly correlated with the clients' success in receiving the information.

When ideas are translated into different languages, oftentimes a direct one-to-one translation is not possible because words and concepts hold different meanings entirely cross-culturally and among different languages. For the interpreters, effectively communicating what the presenter is saying to the clients involves a lot of quick and complex decision-making in order to convey the message in the most understandable way relative to the clientele and their respective cultural backgrounds. In several interviews, the interpreters confirmed these dynamics.

Yet, there seems to be a lot of inconsistency in how the various interpreters approach their duties. While some may try to stick as closely to what the presenter is saying, others take liberties in translating based on their own abilities and experience as interpreters, and

may change the presenters' wordings entirely. A recurring theme in the data regarding communication between the interpreters and the presenters is the absence of dialogue between these two parties. Likely because of time constraints but notwithstanding, presenters and interpreters have few interactions with one another outside of the JCO class/presentation.

The interpreters work for Bethany and they are trained and scheduled by Bethany. Perspectives differ when it comes to who is describing the role of the interpreter. If you speak to a staff member from Bethany about the interpreters, they would tell you that the interpreters are great and work really hard to do the best that they can. They would be very proud of the

work performed by the interpreters because they spend a great deal of money on the interpretation program.

They have to pay the interpreters whether clients come or not, so they are using a lot of resources. They are happy with how their interpreters do their job.

Overall, the dynamics of interactions can vary greatly depending on how many people are interacting (whether it be group or one-on-one), individual demographics, and also whose point of view the information is being told from. The data show that the interactions and communication dynamics between the interpreters to clients, and interpreters to presenters, varies greatly person to person. Each interpreter believes that they are doing a great job, but each interpreter does it differently.

Coming from the perspectives of the presenters, the findings show that many presenters are relatively pleased with the interpreters, but some changes could be made. Some presenters started out as an interpreter, so they know how the program works and they know what it's like to be an interpreter. The data show that the presenters who have interpretation experience can be understanding while presenting and can allow for the necessary time for the interpreter to interpret. They know how difficult it can sometimes be to be an interpreter, and they can make necessary adjustments to their presentation depending on the interpreters and clients needs. They can take more time on specific topics that they know the clients have a more difficult time with.



Figure 21: ANT 317 Students Interviewing an Interpreter

Other presenters believe the interpreters tend to take liberties. Sometimes the same interpreter is used many times for the same class, so they are very familiar with the content. The interviews reveal that some presenters think the interpreters translate the information in their own way instead of translating word-for-word. Some presenters believe that the interpreters do things the way they think it should be done instead of following along with the presentation. Some interpreters paraphrase and leave things out.

From the perspective of the interpreters, a common issue is that more time is needed to translate. They are not given enough time in between sentences or points to translate the entire concept, so paraphrasing is the only option. They are sometimes forced to pick out the most important points and leave out the rest because there isn't enough time to explain in detail. But according to the presenters, if they don't continue to talk the presentation could be much longer and go on for hours. It is hard for the presenters to know when to begin again, because without knowing that language, they can't tell if the interpreters and clients are talking about the content or something else. The presenters look around the room and use their best judgment to decide how much time is enough time. The presenters and interpreters both have issues with this topic that are directly correlated.

Some interpreters have a relationship with the clients; others do not. If a certain interpreter actually comes from the same background or culture as the group they are translating to, sometimes they will maintain a relationship because they are in that community. Others keep it strictly professional. Some interpreters aren't interested in keeping a relationship with the clients because they think it will disrupt the client's ability to focus on the presenter. Some clients cling to the interpreters because they know their language, they know their cultural norms, and it is easier to communicate and relate to them. So they cling to them instead of paying attention to the presenter or the content. Clients will rely on the interpreter (or caseworker) instead of going to Bethany when they have questions. So certain interpreters purposefully don't have outside relationships for that reason.

Presenters, staff, interpreters, and clients all agree that the interpreters are greatly needed. They do a necessary job and do it the best that they can. The interpretation success and dynamic varies depending on the individual, but overall, the program wouldn't be able to run without them. Many interpreters love doing the job. They get pleasure from knowing they are helping out people in their community. Many interpreters enjoyed the training and thought it was beneficial, and will be able to use these skills in many other aspects of life. A suggestion from the interpreters is that adjustments should be made each and every time a class is held. The content, presentation method, and question time should be tweaked each time depending on class size, language groups, and

who the presenter is. It would also be beneficial if interpreters could provide feedback to the presenters and vice-versa. They don't get the chance to meet and talk about challenges, but they should.

7.5.3 Interactions Summary: Working with Each Other

Interestingly, while all groups that we interviewed (interpreters, presenters, and staff) have the same or very similar ideas and concerns about the JCO, the interpreters and presenters were more likely to have concrete ideas of what they believe could be changed or improved in the class.

Many presenters and interpreters alike expressed a desire to improve their communication, yet there is not enough time allocated for them to do so. Because the clients speak so many different languages, this means also that there is very little opportunity for communication between the presenters and the clients, which further reinforces the important role of the interpreters. Many times, clients will come to the interpreters with questions and the interpreters will answer the questions themselves in order to conserve time, and sometimes the clients simply do not feel comfortable asking questions in front of the whole JCO class. What this means is that the presenter(s) may be left in the dark as to what questions the clients are asking, and therefore what information needs to be elaborated on or restated.

It is through this data analysis that an obvious conclusion is drawn: presenters and interpreters must communicate more often and more effectively. Although time is indeed an issue for the JCO class, even allowing just ten minutes before and after class for the presenters and interpreters to meet and discuss their issues and ideas would yield a great improvement in streamlining and modifying the presentation to best suit the client's needs.

Finally, we leave you with a quotation from one of the interviews: "What's tricky is that interpreters are only supposed to interpret. If a client has questions about transportation or DHHS, they should go talk to a specialist, but because they have someone they can actually speak their language with, they enjoy going to the interpreter. They are not a staff person, but an interpreter. There is a grey line. Yet, talk to the interpreter, you'll learn a ton."

7.6 The Role of Caseworkers

As was noted earlier, caseworkers play a key role in communication and as a provider of resources and skills. From bus training and actually driving the students to some appointments, they have the greatest involvement and impact on success. It is understood

by all parties that the caseworkers are the ones who let clients know about JCO. Sometimes one of the presenters will bring people to JCO, but in general clients are expected to get to JCO on their own. The problem is that they need training in bus skills and their caseworkers do not always have the time to bus train them, sometimes the interns do it, but if they can't then the clients aren't likely to come, especially if they are not confident with their English, they will be afraid to get lost. Above, we also recommended that caseworkers look at the timing of clients arriving and intended JCO attendance dates, and find a way to help them prioritize, if they have children, the MDHHS paperwork or school enrollment prior to JCO attendance. Interpreters were recently asked to add a procedure to call the clients the day before to remind them about the class, and that seems to have helped improve attendance.

Obtaining housing and learning how to live in an apartment are also key services linked to JCO content. Bethany and Samaritas have put a lot of effort into using the JCO as a platform for preparing clients for housing and household management and safety. While the relationships with the landlords are primary, the caseworkers are probably the most important resource refugees have for successful housing integration.

An argument can be made that doing more to connect the JCO to the caseworkers will greatly improve the success of both. If caseworkers are not invested in the JCO, they will not refer clients and facilitate client attendance. Yet, the JCO can serve as an important resource or tool to help caseworkers do their job. It is hoped that this report puts the JCO on the caseworker map so they can become excited about integrating the JCO to a greater degree into their activities. Similarly, the caseworkers are the frontline interfacing with the clients. As the caseworkers speak the language, they are the ones the clients go to for questions and resources. The caseworkers can use the JCO as an interface, as a way to answer the client questions and to assist the cultural orientation process. The two (caseworkers and the JCO) must work hand-in-hand.

7.7 Client Participation and the Integration of Cultural Voice

This section addresses client participation in the JCO. In a previous section we addressed access and getting to the JCO. Here we examine the client role in the class and after the class, in the way of follow up. Many of our observations derive from JCO class visits, and from interviews with non-clients, which referred to client/student participation in the JCO class. The results of the Client Poster surveys will also be discussed. In this section we look for evidence of how clients are integrated into the learning and feedback process, and what voice they have before, during and after the JCO. Why is the client voice important? Where can it better be amplified to improve learning and cultural orientation? How do the organizers facilitate client feedback?

A good place to begin is with expectations: What do client/students know beforehand and what do they expect from the JCO class? One challenge the JCO organizers face is false expectations about life in the U.S. Many preconceptions are most likely perpetrated through rumors at refugee camps, about the services provided to the refugee community in the U.S. For example, some clients expect help with vehicle acquisition. There are also inconsistencies on what clients have already learned, prior to arrive in Grand Rapids, which may depend on which refugee camp they were stationed in and their path of entry into the U.S. This leads to another consideration: teaching clients based on what they know, what they want to know, and altering content based on what they are learning.

In the class, the evidence of client participation showcases the success of JCO staff, presenters and interpreters in addressing client needs and helping the clients express meaningful experiences and insights. For example, one presenter reports their tactics of fostering client feedback during presentations by rewarding props and other items to clients who voice their concerns. Like many of the JCO facilitators, they have similar methods of creating a comfortable and reliable space for client voices to reach volition. When asked what aspect of being a presenter at the JCO was most rewarding, one presenter replied, “Making students feel comfortable to ease the culture shock.”

The presenter of the Parenting session, we observed, offered effective and promising tactics for generating client involvement and feedback by asking questions throughout her presentation and addressing the assessment quizzes. We also observed that interpreters and students with more English language experience and an out-going level of social comfort play an important role in client voice; specifically, asking and answering questions for other clients.

The data also showcases the power of consistency among familiar faces within the JCO program, particularly in reference to the language interpreters at presentations. When asked about observed interactions of client feedback during presentations, a presenter reports, “Some interpreters have been through the presentation enough times that they already know the answers to client questions and I am comfortable with letting them do that.” Moreover, presenters confide that they do not always ask for feedback but think it would be a good idea to do so with the interpreters present. These remarks highlight the importance of interpreters in client feedback and capturing the client experience.

7.7.1 Client Feedback

The benefits of seeking client feedback are many. Client feedback and follow up involves taking the clients needs, thoughts, and contributions into consideration when planning presentation curriculum, while presenting or interpreting, and while considering the

effectiveness of the JCO. Client feedback can help to shape content provided to be the most relevant and useful for clients, direct agency energies to more helpful and efficient practices, and it can aid presenters and interpreters in knowing both their strong points and areas with room for improvement.

Clients seem to feel more comfortable with interpreters than presenters, speaking to the language barrier that is a challenge refugees must face. Interpreters consistently report positive feedback from clients. There was mention of overt politeness, or answering questions in a positive way because they might aim to please. In order for Bethany and Samaritas to direct their energy in an efficient manner it could be wise to utilize interpreters in order to find out what the clients feel would be specifically useful to learn. For example, according to the interpreter interviews, we learned that clients are more concerned with identifying scammers, or finding out how they can tell who holds legitimate authority in order to better protect themselves. These are challenges because people that may try to take advantage of the refugee community are not necessarily easily identifiable.

One strategy for accessing client voice is the use of surveys. Presenters and interpreters alike expressed overwhelming support for some type of feedback from clients/students, with surveys mentioned several times. But typically there is little follow up between clients and presenters or interpreters. It is generally the responsibility of Bethany and Samaritas caseworkers to follow up with clients. Caseworkers conduct a cultural assimilation survey at the three-month mark. While this is not directly related to the JCO, it is an important survey to take stock of housing, employment and other important concerns.

In any case, a common theme that came up during interviews were the opportunity for a survey or some other type of measured feedback. Some presentations already have small questionnaires or quizzes after the presentation; these tend to be used more as a conversation aid than actual information feedback. This seems to be a good practice, because it reinforces the content while giving clients a chance to get clarification. The room for improvement lies in creating a different survey and keeping track of client responses over time, and across several JCO classes, in order to analyze the data and implement change from the results.

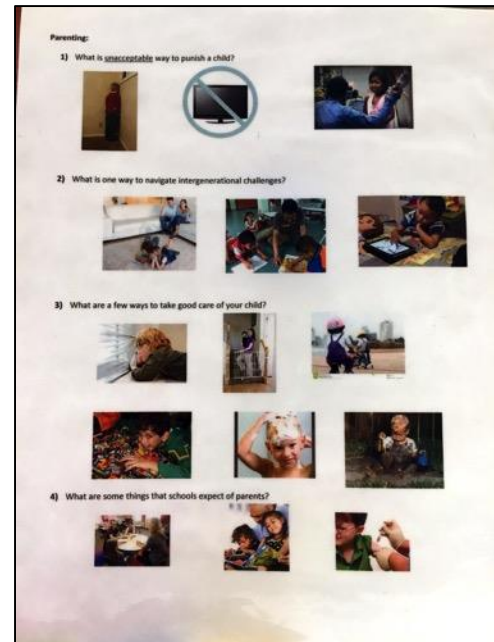


Figure 22: Post-Session Quiz

7.7.2 Summary of Client Feedback Based on the Poster Survey

At the end of a recent JCO class (March 16, 2016), as the last moments of the three-week sessions came to a close, the JCO staff tried something different. They administered a client survey. Client/students at leach language table responded to four questions, collectively, with the assistance of the interpreter. Questions like what did you learn and what did you dislike drew only a minimal response, demonstrating the difficulty of conducting staff-led, onsite surveys. One can see a pattern of classic responses with the clients uncomfortable, though wanting to be appreciative of the services. Client may feel vulnerable should they air any criticisms. On the surveys, we noted that nothing was “disliked,” except that the class was held only once per week.

At the same time, we commend the JCO for initiating a formal tool for gaining client feedback. In fact, some of the client responses shine a light on potential improvements:

- Adding information on an instructional driving class
- Continuation of the class with more variety of topics
- Making space for more conversation
- Serving light snacks and tea

The sessions highlighted in the survey responses as meeting current student needs were on rent information, emergency calls, and rules and regulations of the United States.

At the same JCO class on March 16, after the staff-led survey, clients were instructed to gather around a poster survey, which was designed and prepared by the Anthropology students from our GVSU classes (see Figure 23 below). The poster survey was based on the “dot survey” tool (see Methods section), asking the question: “What improvement do you suggest for the JCO class? The survey asked respondents to prioritize their selections, choosing only three of the seven topics as “most important” to them. A GVSU student was present to help facilitate the survey. Respondents were instructed to place colored dots on topics for improvement. The student gave different colors to individuals from different language groups, thinking that we could compare the responses by language - that perhaps these different groups come with varied experiences and service needs.

Though limited, the results were as follows (See Table 1 below):

- Nineteen total respondents participated in this survey with 11 of them were interpreters.
- The 55 dot responses covered six of the seven categories. The category of information about ‘discrimination and bias’ had no dots.⁷ Overall the top categories included (1) having a video, (2) someone to contact after the JCO classes and (3)

⁷ The graphic we chose for “discrimination” could have influenced this lack of interest among the respondents, or perhaps the interpreters could not provide a cultural clarification of what that meant, or simply that they chose other categories as priorities.

information on children adjusting. Of the 55 responses, nearly half of them were from the interpreters. The interpreters often influenced the responses of others. At one moment, an interpreter hesitated and thought out all the options. Looking closely at the student survey board, they made comments and glanced at the clients. One said “definitely going with this” as they placed their sticker on the need for childcare. In fact, the top categories selected by the interpreters were a) child care during the class, and b) someone to contact after the JCO classes.

- Many spoke of transportation issues. Bus-riding skills were not always covered before the clients actually needed to get somewhere. The interpreters were wondering if there was another option.
- GVSU students observed that “communication” was another issue of conversation: refugees have very busy schedules with all of their appointments. It was mentioned that it would be beneficial to have reminder calendars, perhaps in handout form, and also posted at the cultural orientation programs.
- Respondents had an opportunity to write down suggestions on the poster using a sticky note. As you can see in the Figure, only one individual wrote out a suggestion.

Table 1: Client Wall Survey Responses

Language Group	<i>Someone to Contact</i>	<i>Children Adjusting</i>	<i>Video</i>	<i>Childcare</i>	<i>Hands on Activities</i>	<i>Handouts</i>	<i>Info on bias</i>
Interpreters	6	4	3	6	3	3	0
Bala	1	1	1	0	0	0	0
Hathe	1	3	4	0	2	2	0
Spanish	2	1	1	0	2	0	0
Dai	2	1	1	2	1	2	0
Total	12	10	10	8	8	7	0

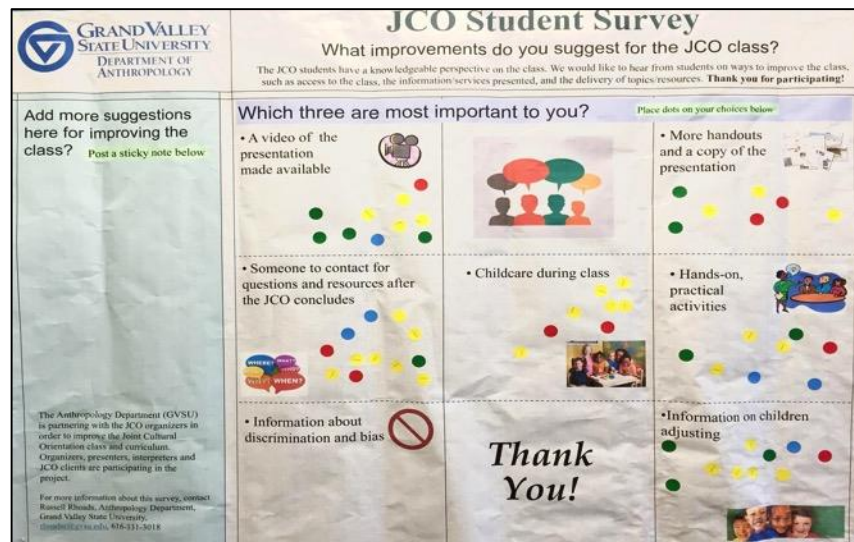


Figure 23: JCO Poster Survey Results

While the poster survey was limited due to the small number of respondents, the results were also problematic, we feel, possibly influenced by the timing of our survey following the staff-led survey, creating a “survey fatigue” among the clients. Perhaps a more casual atmosphere and process would create a relaxed environment and more participation, especially in the panel for hand-written feedback notes. The anthropology students observed that the clients were hesitant to participate. The interpreters stayed close and explained square by square what each category meant. Many heads nodded and extended deliberation took place.

As a tool, we believe the poster survey has several strengths that could be used in the future to gain feedback from the client perspective, and serve as an educational tool as well. The logic behind a poster survey is that everyone can see everyone else’s choices and priorities. Seeing the “results” of a survey before taking a survey can be an important source of group discussion and education. The poster survey is designed to elicit a group response. Overall, we noted that the tool produced positive interactions between clients, translators and even the GVSU students administering the client survey board.

7.8 Conclusions

In this section, we reported on the findings of the service project, highlighting the appeal of the JCO and its best practices. As the findings indicate, the JCO is growing and working well, meeting its objectives. We anticipate, though, that the findings will provide insights into the multiple components of the JCO, its coordination, communication dynamics, interactions across the different groups of stakeholders and participants, the overall larger landscape and how things fit together. Our main conclusion is that the JCO is currently

under strong leadership and serves a key function in the overall JCO program for cultural orientation. As such, the JCO deserves continued support for staffing and resources. We wish to make clear that the findings and recommendations for future change do not suggest that the program is weak or ineffective. On the contrary, it is deserving of improvement as a strong and important program.

8 Recommendations and Improvements

In this final section, we consider potential improvements for the JCO, a fuller set of suggestions compiled from the study findings. We anticipate that these will stimulate conversations, open up possibilities, and provide helpful solutions, or assist the solutions proposed by the community members.

8.1 JCO Strengths

- The JCO program is currently under strong leadership and serves a key function in the overall JCO program for cultural orientation. The program accomplishes what it is intended to do - to provide an overview of important information to recent refugee immigrants.
- As such, the program is deserving of a continued investment of resources, and should be strengthened as a key component contributing to the overall program of refugee cultural orientation.
- The program provides recent refugee immigrants with a large quantity of useful information that is vital to their acclimatization to U.S. society.
- The JCO is conducted for newly arrived clients and is therefore “proactive,” allowing clients an early education for understanding the laws and culture of the U.S.
- Bethany Christian Services (BCS) provides interpreters for all individuals who might require such assistance in their classes. These interpreters are all given extensive training, and many are also former participants in the JCO program, giving them an immediate rapport with current participants.
- BCS, Samaritas, and the JCO program are staffed by individuals who are deeply invested in providing the best possible experience for those they assist, and are very receptive to suggestions and observations.

8.2 JCO Class Coordination

- The JCO deserves continued support for staffing and resources. We strongly encourage the organizers to hire at least one full-time dedicated staff member

tasked with coordinating, organizing, surveying and streamlining the JCO class into the future. The current part-time staff arrangement is insufficient to ensure consistency and sustainability.

- The benefits of more time or funding allocated to the JCO would ensure quality, effectiveness and sustainability (such as acquiring additional grants if possible).
- Diversity across the program is a strength. Encourage more diversity in leadership roles among the organizers of the JCO. We found that refugees may be able to better “connect” and find a voice when interacting with people more like themselves or with other having background experiences as migrants and refugees.
- Several of the presenters and interpreters expressed an interest in getting the entire refugee community involved more actively in the JCO program, such as (1) bringing in people that have gone through the JCO or are experts in the refugee community and have been living in the country for a while to come into the presentations to give their experiences, and (2) opening the JCO course to the entire refugee community, including those that have been in the country for a number of years but may not have received this information when they arrived.

8.3 Class Structure, Scheduling and Curriculum

- We recommend that the JCO be given higher priority, if not become a required component of cultural orientation. The JCO classes are scheduled one per week for three hours. This is due to the limited time slots available at GRIF and other training and class schedules for clients. The JCO is not required; this can cause scheduling conflicts with the classes that are required. We see the value in making the class as much a priority as possible, a resource complementing the individual attention from caseworkers.
- More time should be devoted to the JCO classes. The consensus across the interviews is the lack of time within the current JCO schedule to educate clients on what they need to know. Two solutions are suggested: add more than one class per week and/or re-configure the existing time with new ways of delivering the information to integrate more learning through engagement and simulations.
- The presentations are delivered in English, which on the surface challenges communication between the presenter and the client students. However, given the situation, a multi-language format for the JCO is suitable.
- The PowerPoint format generated discussion between staff and presenters on what information is most important and on how it can be delivered in a more visual, interactive way. We recommend replacing the English text on the PowerPoints with a more visual presentation.
- We appreciate the recent efforts by the JCO staff to revise and improve the PowerPoint presentations. We acknowledge the recent efforts to revise the

PowerPoints in consultation with the presenters. In addition, the PowerPoint revisions need to be modified and revised utilizing feedback from clients or interpreters, as a basis for making the presentation culturally appropriate and for communicating relevant information in the most efficient way. Undertake a review of the specific presentation content to analyze its sensitivity and respect to client cultures (e.g., paternalistic, patronizing attitude).

- Consider the range of topics that the six JCO sessions deliver. Additional topics can be developed, such as tenant's rights, driver's training, youth issues, and cultural transitioning.
- Adjustments should be made for each class session depending upon the size of the class, the language groups represented and the specific presenter/topic. The content should be tweaked accordingly. A brief meeting between the presenter and the JCO staff would be beneficial.
- There are also several interpreters and presenters that believe clients would benefit from having class presentation information provided to them in more than one form of media, such as videos of the presentations, translated papers from the classes, copies of the PowerPoints, and booklets of information about each presentation to give to the clients so they will have something to refer to if they forget information or are unable to attend the classes.
- Overall, several of the main challenges presented in the JCO class content were the range of topics covered, culturally appropriate examples, PowerPoint visualizations, coordination among the organizers, and the allotted class time for the staff to make sure the clients understand the information.

8.4 Access

- Transportation challenges are heightened by the language barrier/fear of getting lost, weather, time involved, bus skills.
- The location of GRIF as a gathering site for the class is very convenient; clients are able to easily find GRIF because they have other classes there. GRIF is also in an area of Grand Rapids that has a large population of Bethany and Samaritas clients.
- While the logistics of childcare are daunting it would be beneficial to explore any options to provide a time that parents can have free from children to attend JCO. Integrate the childcare provider program into the JCO.
- Weather cannot be controlled, of course, but we can develop a strategy to utilize mass media versions of the information (brochure, pamphlet, video, etc.) that clients could have access to if they are unable to attend the classes.
- It is understood by all parties that the caseworkers are the ones who can most promote the JCO to clients. We learned that caseworkers have recently asked the

interpreters to call the clients the day before to remind them about the class, and that seems to have helped improve attendance.

8.5 Role of the Caseworker

- Caseworkers and the JCO staff must work hand-in-hand. Caseworkers are probably the most important resource refugees have to success and integration. The caseworker plays a key role in orienting the clients' services. They are at the frontline interfacing with the clients. As the caseworkers speak the language, they are the ones the clients go to for questions and resources. The caseworkers can use the JCO as an interface, as a way to answer the client questions and to assist the cultural orientation process.
- Caseworkers' role in providing resources, from bus skills and driving the students to some appointments, puts them in a position of the greatest involvement and impact on success. It is recommended that they look at the timing of clients arriving and JCO dates and find a way to help clients attend by prioritizing enrollment.
- Caseworkers and JCO staff can offer a schedule to clients/students so they know the topics covered each week. This might take the form of a weekly reminder or printed one page monthly calendar given out by the caseworker where the appointments could be written in. This would allow the student to add anything that they have come up or make notes on how long it takes to ride the bus from one place to another to help them with their time management in their new country.
- Caseworkers need more help. They are stretched so far that typically they are unable to perform the required VOLAG assessments or bus training their clients for getting them to the JCO. Caseworkers are the lifeline for their clients but when their services cannot be performed or the quality is dampened due to workload, the clients - and the JCO - will suffer.
- It is anticipated that this report will put the JCO on the map so the caseworkers can get excited about integrating the JCO into their activities. The JCO can assist them as a resource.

8.6 Communication Interactions Between Presenters, Interpreters and Clients

Presenters:

- Presentations need more preparation on the background of the clients, and their culture and circumstances. This can help the presenter make adjustment and tailor the presentation content and delivery to client needs. This makes pre-tailoring presentations to particular populations difficult.

- Monitoring of student learning can help measure the impact of the class and in turn adjust the content to client needs. Because of the short amount of time participants are in class and the minimal feedback from participants regarding their learning, the program cannot be sure if the classes are as effective as is assumed. There is a need for presenters to be adaptable.
- Interpreters receive training, but presenters receive little, if any, training on how to work with interpreters. Training would help coordinate communication, such as leaving enough pause time for interpreters to do their work, and for client questions to be processed.

Interpreters:

- The interpreters represent arguably the most important role in the JCO class, and their ability to translate effectively is directly correlated with the clients' success in receiving the information.
- Interpreters should have a standardized set of guidelines to follow or stick to a similar style to bring more consistency. At the same time that the program establishes a common approach or framework for translating, it is important to allow interpreters to use their own strategies, based on their training and experiences, in order to best adjust communication for the group at hand.
- Clients do not get the same interpreter week by week at the JCO. Maintaining consistency among familiar faces between interpreters and clients may facilitate communication.
- Because there are so many interpreters, they typically sit facing the presenter along with the participants. This leads to an informal rapport between participants and translators, which may make it more difficult for the presenter to cover all of the material equally.
- More time is needed for the interpreters to fully explain the content to the clients. Most of the time the interpreters are forced to paraphrase or leave out important details due to lack of time.
- The JCO staff should discuss with interpreters which information is difficult/easy to translate; possibly some presenter phrasing can be changed to help with ease of translation.

Feedback and Coordination:

- Presenters and interpreters must communicate more often and more effectively. They should have time to meet before and/or after the class to discuss expectations and outcomes. Although time is indeed an issue for the JCO class, even allowing just ten minutes before and after class for the presenters and interpreters to meet and discuss their issues and ideas would yield a great improvement in streamlining and modifying the presentation to best suit the client's needs.

- After class meeting, there needs to be follow-up for planning and collaboration between the presenters and interpreters.
- Continue to gather feedback from everyone (particularly clients and interpreters who work closely with clients) and use these insights to modify and streamline the JCO. Implement surveys or meeting times to disseminate information among the different group of people involved in the JCO program.

8.7 Clients and Participation: “Voices”

- Client feedback can help to shape content provided to be the most relevant and useful for clients, direct agency energies to more helpful and efficient practices, and it can aid presenters and interpreters in knowing both their strong points and areas with room for improvement. There is little relationship and feedback between presenters and clients - resulting in the possibility that clients do not feel comfortable with asking the presenter questions, even through the interpreter.
- Facilitators and JCO staff can benefit from client feedback, collected through observational analysis and measured feedback such as surveys. Currently, other than the “quiz,” no formal channels exist for participants to follow up the classes with further questions. The room for improvement lies in creating a survey and keeping track of client responses over time, and across several JCO classes, in order to analyze the data and implement change from the results. Using client feedback to direct and redesign the content presented is a good strategy. Make surveys at end of class more of an empirical record.
- Implement a tool similar to the client poster survey regularly. If it is available at each class session, clients can become familiar and comfortable with it as a means of feedback. It also can serve as an educational tool. The logic behind a poster survey is that seeing the “results” of a survey before participating can be an important source of group discussion and education.
- Use former clients as “experts”; follow up with these individuals to learn about the JCO strengths, shortcomings, and other beneficial info on adjustment.
- Allow more time for clients to converse and ask questions. Processing information collectively is a key means of learning.
- Providing food (light snacks and drinks) aligns with the cultural practices of many refugees; food is a social tool. In the case of the JCO, providing food may make clients more comfortable, open them up to the learning, and serve as an incentive to attend regularly.

8.8 Visuals, PowerPoints and Videos

- As indicated above, the PowerPoint is an important part of a presentation. Correctly position and project to ensure it is visible to everyone.
- Visuals are very important which should replace English text to a greater degree. More interactive presentations: more pictures, less words. Makes presentations more engaging. Helps to provide cultural examples and illustrations facilitate comprehension and discussion.
- Provide alternative routes of information access for those who cannot attend class, such as videos. Brochures and handouts on the session topics will allow clients to refer back to information they may not have retained, or such info tools can be available for those who could not attend the JCO class.

Videos:

Video produced on each JCO session can be created to give clients access to class information. Clients can watch the video online if they are unable to attend the class, or as something to refer back to as follow up. We recommend that all JCO presentations should be done in video and put onto a DVD, distributed to clients for use and reference (i.e. take-home JCO classes).

Challenges:

- Everyone may not have access to internet to watch the videos
- Not everyone learns well from watching a video
- Less interactive than the actual class
- Difficult to know if the clients are actually utilizing the video

In sum, the GVSU Anthropology team used an action research methodology to conduct the JCO service project, leading us to engage with many of the stakeholders and organizers of the JCO program. We worked with the agency staff and community members as a collaborative team to address ways to improve the JCO and to build stronger capacities. In addition to the data we collected from stakeholders, the anthropology team analyzed resources at a valuable academic level, reviewing models, studies, and approaches to cultural orientation programs and using these best practices to evaluate the BCS/Samaritas JCO curriculum and classroom dynamics. Our main conclusion is that the JCO is currently under strong leadership and serves a key function in the overall JCO program for cultural orientation. As such, these findings and recommendations are preliminary, offering evidence-based suggestions for improving the program.

9 Conclusions: Partnership and Sustainability

The report findings and recommendations, we anticipate, will stimulate conversations, open up possibilities, and provide helpful solutions, or assist the solutions proposed by the community members. One such platform for discussion was the recent Community Forum (April 21, 2016), in which anthropology students presented a summary of the preliminary findings to Bethany staff. GVSU is committed to giving visibility to our efforts collaborative efforts as a way to promote student learning and refugee service provision in the local community.⁸ We suggest that future events be planned to further discussions and catalyze the possibilities for feasible and meaning change in the JCO program.

The success of the project collaboration and recommendations will depend on how the knowledge, tools and processes become “owned” in useful, feasible ways by Bethany Refugee and Immigrant Services and by others such as Samaritas. This Report is one step of many in the process of problem-solving, involving conversations on how “findings” can become the reality that improves cultural orientation. The process is an ongoing correction of itself, learning and adjusting as ideas are discussed, changed, made feasible and brought into practice, serving the desires and needs of all stakeholders in accordance with the philosophical approach of action research to promote change, capacity and democracy.

Figure 24: Community Forum Presentation of Findings



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Appendix 1: Project Summary (December 2015)

Winter 2016 Anthropology Course Service Project: Community Engagement and Refugee Cultural Orientation

Project Background and Rationale: The Anthropology Department is participating in the GVSU Engaged Department Initiative (<https://www.gvsu.edu/community/engaged-departments-74.htm>). The EDI project is the inspiration for the ANT 380 course (Winter 2016) with its focus on Community Engagement (and applied anthropology), taught by Rhoads. Adding a student project to the course allows for student learning objectives to align with the initiative and further strengthens the Bethany-GVSU partnership. The platform for linking the course with Bethany will be a small action research project. The project will also involve students from a second course ANT 317 (Advanced Cross-Cultural Linguistics) taught by Wroblewski.

The Class Service Project:

- The project entails aspects of “action research” in that activities are designed around a collaborative project identified with a community partner, who is involved in the process of designing and implementing the project. This joint effort by GVSU and Bethany – as planners, researchers, and writers – co-generates shared knowledge and mutually beneficial output. This service project will help students deepen their understanding of research methods, become familiar with various forms of applied scholarship, and gain experience with both the processes and issues of collaborative, community-based service.
- The project is one part of the content and instruction of the two courses. We expect that on-site “fieldwork” will take place over 4 weeks as part of the course activities. Planning/logistics and data analysis/report writing will be sandwiched around that and will add other period events to the course calendar. The instructors, particularly Rhoads, will be in contact with the staff at Bethany over the entire semester, in some capacity.

The Cultural Orientation Program Overview:

- The project will address the Cultural Orientation program offered by Bethany Refugee and Immigrant Services to refugee clients. The program helps newly arrived refugees adjust to a new life, focusing on habitation and service delivery. The areas of support for a collaboration include: providing cultural information on specific ethnic/national groups; review of the materials, delivery of topics, and structure of the orientation; research on the best practices of such resettlement orientation programs in the field.
- One important component of the program is the Joint Cultural Orientation class, presenting weekly in-house instruction to clients on a range of orientation topics, such as parenting, education, social services, etc. The Joint Cultural Orientation (JCO) classes are organized as a collaboration between Bethany and Lutheran Social Services of Michigan. The key problems with the class are barriers to client participation (attendance), particularly for women having to handle childcare, transportation, or social pressures and limited autonomy in the public sphere.

- The Project Objectives: The service objectives consist of two main activities and products:
 1. *Video Modules:* Create video resource modules on one specific orientation topic (e.g., parenting, home management and safety, youth and gender issues), dubbed in several languages selected as relevant to client families. These videos will be available at Bethany for clients' use, and could also be located on-line for off-site viewing. The purpose is to reduce the barriers to access to cultural orientation resources.
 2. *Improve the JCO Class:* Assess the content, delivery and challenges of the Joint Cultural Orientation classes, including cross-cultural exchanges, communication interactions, and the translation/ interpretation process.

- Student/Course Activities: Two sets of students will participate in this project during the Winter 2016 semester: ANT 380 "Community Engagement" (Rhoads) and ANT 317 "Advanced Cross-Cultural Linguistics" (Wroblewski), totaling about 25 students. The time students spend on the project will comprise about a third to a half of class activities.
 1. *Video Modules:*
 - Videotape a specific class session, focusing on the presenters
 - Transcribe the presentation text
 - Dub audio of several relevant languages into the video to create several language specific versions of the presentation. The audio transcript would be collected from (compensated) interpreters.
 - Equipment will be used in the Anthropology Department Ethno-Linguistic Lab.
 2. *Improve the JCO Class:*
 - Interview Bethany staff and JCO class presenters on the history of the JCO program and challenges faced (e.g., barriers to client participation), and aspects such as delivery methods, content, staffing, modes of participant engagement, translation issues, resources, etc.
 - Research the best practices of cultural orientation programs across the U.S. to learn about other models for delivery and implementation, including the use of video and other visual resources.
 - Survey (or FG?) client participants to understand barriers to participation, access to cultural orientation resources, what clients get out of the classes, how client diversity (nationality, gender, age, refugee history, special needs) affect the orientation success?

- Key Outputs:
 1. Preliminary Report and Recommendations on the JCO class and its improvement, for internal dissemination to Bethany for their review of the preliminary results
 2. Video modules (several language versions) of one JCO class topic
 3. Final Report and video launch event with GVSU faculty and students and Bethany personnel.
 - 4.

Appendix 2: Project Description for Interviews

The GVSU/Bethany Service Project: The Anthropology Department (GVSU) is partnering with the Bethany Refugees and Immigration Services, in order to assess and improve the Joint Cultural Orientation class and curriculum. The project will address the Cultural Orientation program offered to refugee clients. The program helps newly arrived refugees adjust to a new life, focusing on habitation and service delivery. The areas of support for a collaboration include: providing cultural information on specific ethnic/national groups; review of the materials, delivery of topics, and structure of the orientation classes; research on the best practices of such resettlement orientation programs in the field.

The project entails a joint effort by GVSU and Bethany – as planners, researchers, and writers – co-generating findings on the JCO for mutual benefit to students and the refugee community. Professors and students will be participating by observing, interviewing, and collecting information on the JCO.

Interviews: This project counts on the cooperation of people like you. We ask that you help us by contributing your knowledge and experiences on the JCO. One way to do this is to participate in an interview. We expect that interviews will take about 30 minutes and questions will be the same used in all the interviews. Topics of interest are the history of the JCO program and challenges faced (e.g., barriers to client participation), delivery methods, content, staffing, modes of participant engagement, translation issues, resources, etc. We will arrange an interview time and place at your convenience during the month of February.

The interview information will be compiled in a secured computer at GVSU, and used to identify trends and patterns. Recommendations for improvements will be submitted in a report to Bethany.

Permissions: The project seeks the voluntary participation of people to be interviewed. If you choose to participate, student interviewers will ask for your consent to be interviewed. You have the right to ask questions at any time about your participation in the project. The study is designed to protect the identity of those who participate. Interview audio recordings will require your permission. Information from these recordings will be archived securely at GVSU. In-class training will be provided to students on methods and interviewing, as well as ethics and human-subjects protocol. Both instructors, Rhoads and Wroblewski, have extensive past experience with research, methods, and community engagement.

Project Team Leaders: **GVSU:** Russell Rhoads (rhoadsr@gvsu.edu; 616-331-3018) and Michael Wroblewski (wroblewm@gvsu.edu, 616-331-8931); **Bethany Refugee and Immigration Services:** Justine Kibet (jkibet@bethany.org; 616-965-8073) and Catherine Bacheldor (cbacheldor@bethany.org; 616-965-8069)

Appendix 3: Interview Question Set (Presenter Sample)

Anthropology Service Project: Community Engagement and Refugee Cultural Orientation

Presenters

#:

DATE:

RESPONDENT NAME:

GENDER:

LOCATION:

INTERVIEWER NAMES:

SPECIAL CONTEXT INFO (remarks on the interview situation, methods, challenges, etc.):

CHECKLIST:

- ☐ Subject's contact info
- ☐ Interview guide and project cover handout
- ☐ Notebook and pen
- ☐ Audio recorder (pre-tested and primed with basic interview info)
- ☐ Permission to record obtained. Start recorder
- ☐

Intro Questions

1. Let me tell you more about this class service project, and about your participation.
2. Let's begin with you. . . . Where are you from?
3. What's your position here at _____? (How long have you worked in this position?)
4. What attracted you to teaching the JCO class? (What is the importance of JCO, to you? Training?)
5. Since you've been presenting, what changes have taken place to the JCO class?

Turning to the presentations

6. How much time is spent preparing for a JCO class? (What is your preferred presentation style?)
7. What goes into creating a JCO presentation? (What resources are available to presenters?)
8. How is Bethany involved in creating the content? (How often are they updated?)
9. Overall, what are the strengths of JCO class? (What are the most rewarding aspects of the job?, What do you feel works well while presenting?)

In working with the Interpreters,

10. How do you see your role in working with interpreters?
 - a. What is your relationship with interpreters like?
 - b. Do you receive training/tips on how to present with an interpreter?
 - c. How do you work with the interpreters to ensure clients get the most out of the presentations?

11. Has Bethany surveyed the presenters and interpreters in the past? (How often do you discuss best practices, work with interpreters? How often do presenters and staff meet to discuss and reflect?)

Turning to the clients . . .

12. How do refugee/clients know about the JCO, and what to expect? (How are clients chosen to attend? What makes them eligible?)
13. How do you follow up with clients after the presentations? (How do they request extra help? How do you know what the clients learned, or what info they retained, or what further questions they might have? What is the role and effectiveness of the post-quizzes?)

Challenges and Improvements

14. What, in your opinion, is the greatest challenge for JCO? (Other challenges?)
15. What are the challenges regarding the communication of information during the class?
16. What is the one biggest improvement that should be made to the JCO? (What kinds of client suggestions been used?)

Questions for us?

Thank you for your time and insights on the JCO.

Appendix 4: IRB Determination Letter



DATE: March 17, 2016

TO: Russell Rhoads, PhD
FROM: Grand Valley State University Human Research Review Committee
STUDY TITLE: [876602-1] Improving Refugee Cultural Orientation Curriculum: An Engaged Partnership and Service Project

REFERENCE #:
SUBMISSION TYPE: New Project

ACTION: NOT RESEARCH
EFFECTIVE DATE: March 17, 2016
REVIEW TYPE: Administrative Review

Thank you for your submission of materials for your planned research study. After consultation with the PI for this study, it has been determined that this project:

DOES NOT meet the definition of covered human subjects research* according to current federal regulations because there is no current intention to generalize findings beyond the assessment and improvement of the JCO program at Bethany Christian Services. We have discussed and confirmed that the comparison of curriculum mentioned in the proposal will be conducted as a literature review and does not include an interaction or intervention with research participants or the use of their private identifiable information. The project, therefore, *DOES NOT* require further review and approval by the HRRC.

Plans to expand the current objective or scope of this program evaluation into covered research activities should be submitted as a new project to the HRRC for review and determination before proceeding.

If you have any questions, please contact the Research Protections Program at (616) 331-3197 or rpp@gvsu.edu. The office observes all university holidays, and does not process applications during exam week or between academic terms. Please include your study title and reference number in all correspondence with our office.

*Research is a systematic investigation, including research development, testing and evaluation, designed to develop or contribute to generalizable knowledge (45 CFR 46.102 (d)).

Human subject means a living individual about whom an investigator (whether professional or student) conducting research obtains: data through intervention or interaction with the individual, or identifiable private information (45 CFR 46.102 (f)).

Scholarly activities that are not covered under the Code of Federal Regulations should not be described or referred to as *research* in materials to participants, sponsors or in dissemination of findings.