

SOC 200: CULTIVATING EMPATHY

HABILIDADES (SKILLS)

- Empathy
- Making genuine connections
- Recognizing social injustices in your own backyard

TAREA (ASSIGNMENT)

In many ways, Durango, Colorado is an ideal community. Located in the majestic San Juan Mountains, Durango is 25 minutes from a ski resort and is situated adjacent to hundreds of hiking and biking trails. Living in Durango lends itself hunting, camping, attending world-class concerts, and getting involved in progressive social movements. There's quite literally a little bit of something for everyone in Durango. But living in Durango comes with a steep entry fee. The median home in Durango is \$464,843, compared to a median price of \$200,000 in the broader United States. And yet, median household income in Durango is only \$53,621, compared to \$63,179 for the rest of the country. As you can imagine, or personally understand, living in Durango can be quite stressful and for some, it is simply too much. Put simply, living in the shadow of affluence is difficult.

The social strain of living in a wealthy community with relatively few well-paying jobs helps explain why so many people end up living on the streets in La Plata County. It also explains, in large part, why [suicide rates are so high](#) in the county. With this in mind, [Manna Soup Kitchen](#) has been serving meals to Durango's at-risk communities since 1985. The kitchen's goal is to "help our clients gain greater self-sufficiency through our expanded programs and services."

For this assignment, you are required to attend at least one of Manna's lunches or dinners. Their schedule is linked to our course website and provides multiple opportunities during the week to partake in the kitchen's activities. I recommend doing this assignment in late February or March. Ann Morse, who is the director of Manna, will be visiting our class in early February, and thus, your experience at Manna will be more enriching if you go after she talks with us.

After you eat at Manna, please write a 3 page reflection on your experience. To aid you in your reflection, here are a few questions to consider:

Prior to attending Manna:

- How do you feel about going to Manna?
- How much do you know about homelessness and poverty? How can you find out more?
- How might simply attending a meal at Manna tie into a greater purpose for your life? What is your greater purpose for living?

While you are at Manna:

- Has anything surprised you in your service thus far?
- Who are some people that you have met that stick in your mind? Why do you remember them over others?

- Has anything been uncomfortable for you thus far?
- What has been your most challenging moment here? What made it challenging?

After attending Manna:

- Do you feel any differently about political or social aspects of our community? If so, why?
- How has this experience affected your life? Do you think it has caused a change in you at all? How?
- Has your sense of community changed since visiting Manna? Who do you consider a "part of your community?"
- Are you moved to make any more changes on behalf of those who are homeless or in poverty? If so, why? If not, why?

EVALUACIÓN (ASSESSMENT)

- Attends at least one lunch or dinner at Manna: 40%
- Thoughtful reflection: 60%