Traditional vs. Critical Service-Learning: Engaging the Literature to Differentiate Two Models

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There is an emerging body of literature advocating a "critical" approach to community service learning with an explicit social justice aim. A social change orientation, working to redistribute power, and developing authentic relationships are most often cited in the literature as points of departure from traditional service-learning. This literature review unpacks these distinguishing elements.

A growing segment of the service-learning literature in higher education assumes that community service linked to classroom learning is inherently connected to concerns of social justice (Delve, Mintz, & Stewart, 1990; Jacoby, 1996; Rosenberger, 2000; Wade, 2000; 2001; Warren, 1998). At the same time, there is an emerging body of literature arguing that the traditional service-learning approach is not enough (Brown, 2001; Butin, 2005; Cipolle, 2004; Marullo, 1999; Robinson 2000a, 2000b; Walker, 2000). This literature advocates a "critical" approach to community service learning with an explicit aim toward social justice.

Referencing the service-learning literature, I unpack the elements that distinguish a critical service-learning pedagogy. In reviewing the literature, I was challenged by an unspoken debate that seemed to divide service-learning into two camps—a traditional approach that emphasizes service without attention to systems of inequality, and a critical approach that is unapologetic in its aim to dismantle structures of injustice. The three elements most often cited in the literature as points of departure in the two approaches are working to redistribute power amongst all participants in the service-learning relationship, developing authentic relationships in the classroom and in the community, and working from a social change perspective. I wanted to understand and make clear the differences in these approaches and what they might look like in practice. How might the curriculum, experiences, and outcomes of a critical service-learning course differ from a traditional service-learning course?

The critical approach re-imagines the roles of community members, students, and faculty in the service-learning experience. The goal, ultimately, is to deconstruct systems of power so the need for service and the inequalities that create and sustain them are dismantled. This article uses perspectives from the literature to uncover and explicate the meaning of a critical service-learning view. In discussing each of the three distinguishing elements of the critical service-learning approach, I examine the classroom and community components.

Traditional vs. Critical Service-Learning

Community service learning "serves as a vehicle for connecting students and institutions to their communities and the larger social good, while at the same time instilling in students the values of community and social responsibility" (Neururer & Rhoads, 1998, p. 321). Because service-learning as a pedagogy and practice varies greatly across educators and institutions, it is difficult to create a definition that elicits consensus amongst practitioners (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002; Butin, 2005; Kendall, 1990; Liu, 1995; Varlotta, 1997a). However, I use the terms service-learning and community service learning to define a community service action tied to learning goals and ongoing reflection about the experience (Jacoby, 1996). The learning in service-learning results from the connections students make between their community experiences and course themes (Zivi, 1997). Through their community service, students become active learners, bringing skills and information from community work and integrating them with the theory and curriculum of the classroom to produce new knowledge. At the same time, students' classroom learning informs their service in the community.

Research heralds traditional service-learning programs for their transformative nature—producing students who are more tolerant, altruistic, and culturally aware; who have stronger leadership and communication skills; and who (albeit marginally) earn higher grade point averages and have stronger crit-

ical thinking skills than their non-service-learning counterparts (Astin & Sax, 1998; Densmore, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kezar, 2002; Markus, Howard, & King, 1993). Due largely to this evidence, service-learning has emerged on college and university campuses as an effective practice to enhance student learning and development. But some authors assert that, "to suggest that all forms of community service equally develop an ethic of care, a flowering of a mature identity, and advance our understanding of community is misleading" (Neururer & Rhoads, 1998, p. 329).

There are examples in the literature where community service learning is criticized, labeled as charity or "forced volunteerism," critiqued for reinforcing established hierarchies, and deemed paternalistic (Boyle-Baise, 1998; Cooks, Scharrer & Paredes, 2004; Cruz, 1990; Forbes, Garber, Kensinger, & Slagter, 1999; Ginwright & Cammarota, 2002; Levinson, 1990; McBride, Brav, Menon, & Sherraden, 2006; Pompa, 2002; Sleeter, 2000). Pompa (2002) explains her reservation:

> Unless facilitated with great care and consciousness, "service" can unwittingly become an exercise in patronization. In a society replete with hierarchical structures and patriarchal philosophies, service-learning's potential danger is for it to become the very thing it seeks to eschew. (p. 68)

Robinson (2000a) concurs, boldly stating that service-learning as a depoliticized practice becomes a "glorified welfare system" (p. 607). Without the exercise of care and consciousness, drawing attention to root causes of social problems, and involving students in actions and initiatives addressing root causes, service-learning may have no impact beyond students' good feelings. In fact, a service-learning experience that does not pay attention to those issues and concerns may involve students in the community in a way that perpetuates inequality and reinforces an "us-them" dichotomy. Further, such interpretations of service-learning (ironically) serve to mobilize and bolster privileged students to participate in and embrace systems of privilege (Brown, 2001), preserve already unjust social structures (Roschelle, Turpin, & Elias, 2000), and may act to "normalize and civilize the radical tendencies" of our constituent communities, students, and ourselves (Robinson, 2000b, p.146).

Ginwright and Cammarota (2002) critique service-learning, advocating a social justice approach instead:

> Unlike "service learning," where youth learn through participation in community service projects, social awareness places an emphasis on community problem solving through critical thinking that raises questions about the roots of social inequality. For example, a service learning approach might encourage youth to participate in a service activity that provides homeless families with food, while social awareness encourages youth to examine and influence political and economic decisions that make homelessness possible in the first place. Reflected in this example is a critical understanding of how systems and institutions sustain homelessness. Through an analysis of their communities, youth develop a deep sense of how institutions could better serve their own communities and initiate strategies to make these institutions responsive to their needs. (p. 90)

While I agree with Neururer and Rhoads (1998) that it would be misleading to suggest that all service-learning experiences encourage the type of critical analysis suggested by Ginwright and Cammarota, I believe it is equally misleading to suggest that no service-learning class or program encourages the in-depth analysis or approach to community problem-solving that Ginwright and Cammarota name social awareness. In the service-learning field, the approaches labeled as "service learning" and "social awareness" by Ginwright and Cammarota might be labeled as *traditional* and *critical* service-learning.

The concept of critical service-learning first appears in Robert Rhoads's (1997) exploration of "critical community service." Rice and Pollack (2000) and Rosenberger (2000) employed the term "critical service learning" to describe academic service-learning experiences with a social justice orientation. This explicit aim toward social justice challenges traditional perceptions of service "as meeting individual needs but not usually as political action intended to transform structural inequalities" (Rosenberger, p. 29). A recent study by Wang and Rodgers (2006) shows that a social justice approach to service-learning results in more complex thinking and reasoning skills than traditional service-learning courses. A critical approach embraces the political nature of service and seeks social justice over more traditional views of citizenship. This progressive pedagogical orientation requires educators to focus on social responsibility and critical community issues. Service-learning, then, becomes "a problem-solving instrument of social and political reform" (Fenwick, 2001, p. 6).

Critical service-learning programs encourage students to see themselves as agents of social change, and use the experience of service to address and respond to injustice in communities. Rahima Wade (2000) terms this perspective "service for an ideal" as opposed to "service to an individual" (p. 97). Boyle-Baise (2007) labels this "service for critical con-

sciousness." Marullo (1999) considers service-learning a revolutionary pedagogy because of its potential for social change. Service-learning, he suggests:

> If implemented properly, should be critical of the status quo and should ultimately challenge unjust structures and oppressive institutional operations. It is the analytical component of service-learning that gives it revolutionary potential, because it is precisely this component that will reveal the systemic, social nature of inequality, injustice, and oppression. Service-learning is also revolutionary to the extent that it creates a partnership for change among community and university actors. Once the sources of social problems are seen to reside in the social and political systems that so lavishly reward the few at the expense of the many, it becomes obvious that such systems require change. It is in the ensuing step, advocating for change and assisting students to acquire the knowledge and skills to become agents of change, that the revolutionary potential becomes real. In this sense, service-learning provides an opportunity for institutionalizing on college campuses activism committed to social justice. (p. 22)

To actualize the potential, Boyle-Baise (2007), Wade (2000), and Marullo (1999) see that critical service-learning must emphasize the skills, knowledge, and experiences required of students to not only participate in communities, but to transform them as engaged and active citizens. Critical service-learning must focus on creating true community-university partnerships where community issues and concerns are as important (in planning, implementation, and evaluation) as student learning and development (Brown, 2001). Critical service-learning must embrace the "progressive and liberal agenda" that undergirds its practice (Butin, 2006, p. 58) and serves as the foundation for service-learning pedagogy (Brown, 2001). The work to realize the potential of this pedagogy and avoid paternalism demands a social change orientation, working to redistribute power, and developing authentic relationships as central to the classroom and community experience (see Figure 1).

A Social Change Orientation

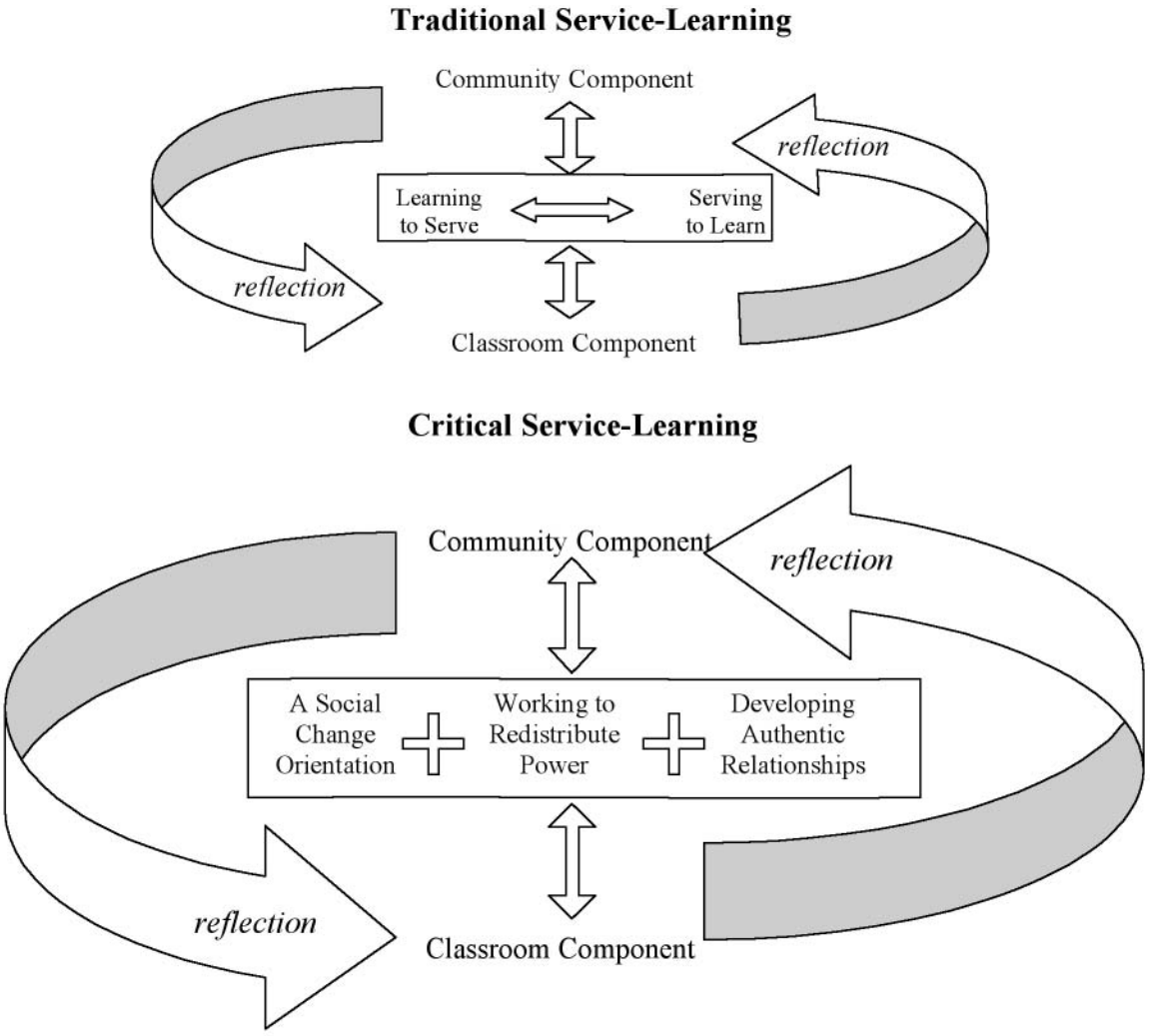
Student development and community change often are viewed as mutually exclusive. Traditional interpretations of service-learning tend to emphasize students, focusing on "preprofessional" experiences (viewing service much like an internship or practicum), and the personal or social development of students (mostly attitudes toward leadership, altruism, and sometimes thoughts or feelings about the people served in the community). "Rarely do students in service-learning programs consider whether some injustice has created the need for service in the first place" (Wade, 2001, p. 1). Programs that might put more emphasis on social change may be characterized or dismissed as activism, or deemed inappropriate or too political for classroom learning. Wade posits that the practicality of traditional service-learning (service to individuals) versus critical service-learning (service for an ideal) may explain the prominence of service-learning programs that emphasize student outcomes over community change:

> In general, service for an ideal is more compelling to me because of its potential power to effect change for more people. However, in practice, service to individuals is more accessible and easier to facilitate with a given group of students over a short time (e.g., a semester). (p. 98)

In service-learning programs that do not take a critical approach, the emphasis of the service experience is to find the students some opportunity to do good work that will benefit a service agency, and provide the students with an opportunity to reflect upon the work they are doing and perhaps upon their own assumptions and stereotypes about the individuals with whom they serve. This type of service-learning approach requires "foregrounding issues of identity and difference as a way of helping students alter their personal and world views and preparing students with new ideas and skills that can help them understand and work across differences" (Chesler & Vasques Scalera, 2000, p. 19). Chesler (1995), Eby (1998), Ginwright and Cammarota (2002), and Robinson (2000a; 2000b) all caution that these types of service programs, while beneficial for the students in service roles and providing much needed service in communities, do not lead to any transformation in the community and certainly do not tap into the revolutionary potential that Marullo (1999) envisions. Mark Chesler (1995) explains:

> Service-learning does not necessarily lead to improved service, and it certainly does not necessarily lead to social change. As students fit into prescribed agency roles for their service work they typically do not challenge the nature and operations or quality of these agencies and their activities. As we do service that primarily reacts to problems—problems of inadequate education, of under-staffed and under-financed health care, of inadequate garbage collection service, of failing correctional institutions—our service does not focus on challenging or directing attention to changing the causes of these problems. (p. 139)

Figure 1.
Traditional vs. Critical Service-Learning



While individual change and student development are desired outcomes of traditional and critical service-learning, critical service-learning pedagogy balances the student outcomes with an emphasis on social change. This requires rethinking the types of service activities in which students are engaged, as well as organizing projects and assignments that challenge students to investigate and understand the root causes of social problems and the courses of action necessary to challenge and change the structures that perpetuate those problems.

Social change efforts "[address] tremendous inequalities and fundamental social challenges by creating structures and conditions that promote equality, autonomy, cooperation, and sustainability" (Langseth & Troppe, 1997, p. 37). Service-learning practitioners who want to move toward critical service-learning must find ways to organize community projects and work that will allow service-learners to critically analyze their work in the community. Educators using a critical service-learning pedagogy must support students in understanding the consequences of service alongside the possibilities—the ways service can make a difference as well as those ways it can perpetuate systems of inequality. O'Grady (2000) reminds us, "Responding to individual human needs is important, but if the social policies that create these needs is not also understood and addressed, then the cycle of dependence remains" (p. 13).

Rhoads (1998) offers some of the "big questions" that guide a critical service-learning approach: "Why do we have significant economic gaps between different racial groups? Why do women continue to face economic and social inequities? Why does the richest country on earth

have such a serious problem with homelessness?" (p. 45). If service-learning programs aren't asking these questions or encouraging students to investigate the links between "those served" and institutional structures and policies, service-learning students may never move beyond "band-aid" service and toward action geared to the eradication of the cycles of dependence and oppression (Levinson, 1990; O'Grady, 2000; Walker, 2000).

Critical service-learning pedagogy fosters a critical consciousness, allowing students to combine action and reflection in classroom and community to examine both the historical precedents of the social problems addressed in their service placements and the impact of their personal action/inaction in maintaining and transforming those problems. This analysis allows students to connect their own lives to the lives of those with whom they work in their service experiences. Further, a critical service-learning approach allows students to become aware of the systemic and institutionalized nature of oppression. The action/reflection dynamic of a critical service-learning pedagogy encourages contemplation on both personal and institutional contributions to social problems and measures that may lead to social change (Marullo, 1999; Rice & Pollack, 2000). This praxis brings to light the political nature of a pedagogy aimed to address and contribute to dismantling structural inequality.

> Community service that is seen as part of an action/reflection dynamic that contributes to social change is dangerous in that it fosters a desire to alter the social and economic structure of our society. It is political because it questions how power is distributed and the connection between power and economics. (Rhoads, 1997, p. 201)

Chesler and Vasques Scalera (2000) argue, "programs focused on social change involve students more directly in mobilizing to challenge racist and sexist structures in community agencies and in the allocation of scarce social resources, and advocate for the construction of community-oriented policies and programs" (p. 19). Through a critical service-learning approach, students can look ahead and consider the kind of work, beyond those service efforts already in place, that might ameliorate or transform social problems and lead to sustainable change (Wade, 2001).

The Community Component

"We are neglecting activities that address the structural roots of problems," Robinson (2000b, p.145) warns. The service work most service-learners participate in—e.g., tutoring, soup kitchens, afterschool enrichment programs—are shaped for the benefit of the students, reflecting "the skills, schedules, interests, and learning agenda of the students in service-learning rather than to meet real community needs" (Eby, 1998, p. 4). In this way, the needs of service-learning students often take precedence over community issues and concerns, and the service work performed is less than transformative.

Involving students in social change oriented service work is more difficult. Practitioners may need to work outside traditional non-profits and community-based organizations to partner with groups actively working to change systems and structures (in contrast to "simply" offering services). Social change oriented service is more political than traditional notions of service and therefore may be subject to criticism from those who fear the practice attempts to indoctrinate rather than teach (Butin, 2006; Robinson, 2000a; 2000b). The types of service experiences that allow students to consider social change and transformation may not bring immediate results and, therefore, may not offer the type of gratification that students involved in more traditional service-learning classes experience when the painting is completed, homeless person is fed, or child has finished the art project. Social change oriented service takes time. Social justice will never be achieved in a single semester nor systems dismantled in the two- to four-hour weekly commitment representative of many traditional models of service-learning.

Forbes et al. (1999) are clear about the goals they desire through a critical service-learning approach:

> We want…to empower students to see themselves as agents capable of acting together with others to build coalitions, foster public awareness, and create social change. Our goal is to avoid the trap of the cultural safari, instead discussing and demonstrating the tools the students will require to pursue the objectives they set forth within the engaged parameters of their own diverse lives and concerns. At the very least, this should short-circuit the stance of charitable pity that traditional volunteerism often produces. (p. 167)

Merely assigning students to work in a particular agency or program is not enough; faculty, students, and staff must all be involved in a dialectic and responsive process that encourages analysis and action to address issues and problems facing communities. Instead of seeing the community agency as "a highly innovative textbook" (Brown, 2001, p. 16) or community members as "passive beneficiaries" (Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2000, p. 767) in the service-learning relationship, a critical service-

learning pedagogy engages community partners actively to create and define the service-learning experience. Marullo and Edwards (2000) offer principles that should guide a service-learning approach with aims of social justice. In particular, the contention that "the resources of the community should be developed and expanded as a top priority (taking precedence over the enrichment or gains experienced by the volunteers)" speaks to a service experience with a social change orientation (Marullo & Edwards, 2000, p. 907).

The Classroom Component

A critical service-learning pedagogy asks students to use what is happening in the classroom—the readings, discussion, writing assignments and other activities—to reflect on their service in the context of larger social issues. "Such a vision is compatible with liberatory forms of pedagogy in which a goal of education is to challenge students to become knowledgeable of the social, political, and economic forces that have shaped their lives and the lives of others" (Rhoads, 1998, p. 41).

Students must be encouraged to reflect on the structural causes and concerns that necessitate their service (Eby, 1998; Roschelle et al., 2000). Marullo and Edwards (2000) caution, "If students' causal explanation of a social problem such as poverty, illiteracy, or homelessness points to flaws or weaknesses in individuals' characteristics, it is quite likely that they have missed entirely the social justice dimension of the problem" (p. 903). Dialogue, reflections, and writing assignments can encourage the analysis that allows students to understand real world concerns and the systemic causes behind them. Additionally, incorporating community knowledge through, for example, including presentations or co-teaching by community members involved in the service-learning partnership, can provide "insider" information about community needs and concerns and make linkages to root causes that may be more difficult for faculty and students who enjoy a more privileged status.

A discussion of whether the language of community "needs" implies community deficits and reifies structures of inequality is inevitable in a critical service-learning pedagogy. Acknowledging community needs, problems, and/or issues does not necessarily imply deficits or deficiency, but rather concerns, issues, and resources that can be addressed through the service-learning relationship. This problem of language is a challenge addressed in the literature but not resolved. For example, though Brown (2001) challenges that framing community issues as needs "suggests that it is a community's own fault or inadequacy that has created the need being addressed" (p. 15), she continues to invoke the construction of community need throughout the monograph. We need to reconstruct "need" as a term that invokes structural and systemic problems without blaming individual communities. A critical service-learning pedagogy brings attention to social change through dispelling myths of deficiency while acknowledging how systems of inequality function in our society. We must help students understand that inadequate teaching and learning resources, a lack of affordable housing, redressing laws that unfairly criminalize homelessness, the absence of accessible and available childcare, and the unfair distribution of government resources (e.g., policing, garbage collection, public green space, among many others) are compelling community *needs* and there is no blame or shame in acknowledging them as such.

Course readings can also reflect a social change orientation. "Required readings help students examine theoretical perspectives…and evaluate whether they adequately reflect the reality of the disenfranchised individuals with whom they work" (Roschelle et al., 2000, p. 841). Readings can often invoke voices or experiences not heard or realized in service, and raise questions and inspire dialogue that can lead to deeper understanding. The readings and concepts covered in a critical service-learning course should bring attention to issues of social justice and concepts of privilege and oppression.

Service, itself, is a concept steeped in issues of identity and privilege which must be wrestled with for students to be effective in their service work. A critical service-learning program is intentional in its social change orientation and in its aim toward a more just and caring society; part of that intentionality is demonstrated in the concepts with which students engage in classroom discussions, readings, and writing assignments.

Capstone experiences can bring attention to social change through a service-learning experience. They can be a culminating research project that allows students to analyze, propose, and implement a strategy to address a community concern. Capstone experiences are most effective when students' service involves collaborations with community members and responds to community-identified concerns. From mistakes and successes, students come to understand the process of community change (Mitchell, 2007).

Bickford and Reynolds (2002) argue that the framing of service-learning projects and activities in the classroom "impacts both what our students do and how they understand it (i.e., whether it contributes to 'change' or just 'helps' someone). The frameworks within which we think of our work are

not 'irrelevant'" (p. 241). A social change orientation allows critical service-learning programs to look beyond immediate challenges to more comprehensive issues of our communities (Téllez, 2000). A critical service-learning pedagogy moves beyond simply doing service in connection to a course's academic content to challenging students to articulate their own visions for a more just society and investigate and contemplate actions that propel society toward those visions.

Working to Redistribute Power

Traditional service-learning programs seldom acknowledge the power differences inherent in service-learning experiences. Lori Pompa (2002) discusses the undergirding power issues in the traditional service-learning approach:

> If I "do for" you, "serve" you, "give to" you—that creates a connection in which I have the resources, the abilities, the power, and you are on the receiving end. It can be—while benign in intent—ironically disempowering to the receiver, granting further power to the giver. Without meaning to, this process replicates the "have-have not" paradigm that underlies many social problems. (p. 68)

An aspect of the service-learning experience that practitioners cannot escape or diminish is that students engaged in service-learning will undoubtedly have greater societal privilege than those whom they encounter at their service placements. Whether it be race, class, age, ability, or education level, and in some cases the privilege of time (which may also manifest as class privilege), students in some way (or in all of these ways) have more power than the constituents in the service agencies where they work. "Service, because it involves the experience of social inequalities and crossings of the very borders that sustain and reproduce them, facilitates musings on alternative worlds; on utopias, not as practical realities, but as visions propelling social change" (Taylor, 2002, p. 53). While some practitioners point to an "encounter with difference" as an aspect of the service-learning experience that leads to the development and change desired (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996; Rhoads, 1997), we must be cautious in asking students to engage in these experiences without challenging unjust structures that create differences. Cynthia Rosenberger (2000) contends, "the development of critical service learning, whose goal is to contribute to the creation of a just and equitable society, demands that we become critically conscious of the issues of power and privilege in service learning relationships" (p. 34).

The ways in which service-learning programs are traditionally structured, Cooks et al. (2004) argue, lead to a socially constructed image of a community in need of repair, with students armed and prepared to "fix" what is wrong. Simply by choosing which agencies will be "served" and how and when students will enter the service experience to complete certain tasks or meet certain objectives allows power to be retained firmly in the grasp of the instructor and students. From this place, we determine "who or what needs to be 'fixed', to what standard, and who should be in charge of fixing the problem" (Cooks et al., p. 45). Service-learning faculty, who wish to incorporate a critical approach, must recognize and problematize issues of power in the service experience. Warren (1998) challenges, "Looking at diversity alone is not enough to truly examine social justice issues. Diversity often implies different but equal, while social justice education recognizes that some social groups in our society have greater access to social power" (p. 136). Too often, the "difference" experienced in the service setting is reduced to issues of diversity. This action serves to essentialize and reinforce the dichotomies of "us" and "them," reproducing the hierarchies critical service-learning seeks to undo.

Butin (2003) introduces a "postructuralist perspective" of service-learning as a way to investigate our collusion with systems of injustice and viewing service-learning as "a site of identity construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction" (p. 1684). "Specifically," he writes, "a poststructuralist perspective suggests that in positioning ourselves as tutors who give back to the community, we are necessarily involved in asymmetrical and static power relations" (p. 1684). A critical service-learning pedagogy names the differential access to power experienced by students, faculty, and community members, and encourages analysis, dialogue, and discussion of those power dynamics. Without looking at access to social power and the role of power (or the lack of power) in determining who receives service as well as what services are provided, the potential of using service-learning as a pedagogy that brings society closer to justice is forfeited.

Illuminating issues of power in the service-learning experience is not easy. It requires confronting assumptions and stereotypes, owning unearned privilege, and facing inequality and oppression as something real and omnipresent. Densmore (2000) supports a curricular approach that explores in-depth both the historical and current relationships between social groups that leads to and reinforces hierarchies of difference in society. Rosenberger (2000) seems unsure whether service-learning practitioners are prepared to embark upon this challenge when she asks:

> Is service learning willing to participate in the unveiling and problematizing of the present reality of our society and to respond to the difficult, complex issues of inequity, oppression, and domination? Is service learning willing to make less-privileged people subjects and not objects? (p. 32)

Hayes and Cuban (1997) introduce "border pedagogy" as a means to enable individuals to think more deeply about power relations and their experiences with privilege and oppression. "Border crossing serves as a metaphor for how people might gain a more critical perspective on the forms of domination inherent in their own histories, knowledge, and practices, and learn to value alternative forms of knowledge" (Hayes & Cuban, p. 75).

The very real power differentials in service-learning relationships must be exposed in order to be critically analyzed and possibly changed (Varlotta, 1997b). Butin (2005) concurs, understanding service-learning pedagogy as "fundamentally an attempt to reframe relations of power" (p. x). A critical service-learning pedagogy not only acknowledges the imbalance of power in the service relationship, but seeks to challenge the imbalance and redistribute power through the ways that service-learning experiences are both planned and implemented. To do so, everyone's perspective, especially those of community members to whom power is potentially redistributed, "must be accounted for and eventually integrated into the service experience" (Varlotta, 1997b, p. 38).

The Community Component

Service-learning has already been called on for its tendency to privilege the needs of students above those of community members (Brown, 2001; Eby, 1998). A critical service-learning experience seeks mutual benefit for all parties in the experience. Ward and Wolf-Wendel (2000) challenge us to view service-learning as a "focus in on *us*" (p. 769, emphasis added), recognizing that the problems being addressed through service-learning impact all of us as a community.

In developing a service-learning experience, stakeholders consider the complementary relationship between the service activity, course content, community needs, and student outcomes. To challenge the distribution of (and work to redistribute) power, critical service-learning experiences empower community residents "to do as much of the work as its resources allow" (Marullo & Edwards, 2000, p. 907). The service experience in a critical service-learning pedagogy need not mimic traditional paradigms of service. Students and faculty can work alongside community members, political advocacy, and direct protest (especially as actions determined by the community to best serve community needs) can be viewed as service, and campus resources can be allocated to address community needs (e.g., providing community access to the campus library, involving analysts from institutional research in completing a community needs assessment, operating a soup kitchen from a university dining hall). Additionally, long-term partnerships that begin before and last beyond the semester and provide opportunities for continuity avoid the "turn-over" typical in traditional service-learning (Brown, 2001). These actions probably do not go far enough to dismantle the oppressive hierarchies defining the server-served dichotomy, but may provide enough challenge to the usual service relationship to allow ourselves, our students, and community members to question the distribution of power.

The Classroom Component

In the classroom, critical service-learning experiences look to knowledge from community members, the curriculum, and the students themselves. "Service-learning challenges our static notions of teaching and learning, decenters our claim to the labels of 'students' and 'teachers,' and exposes and explores the linkages between power, knowledge, and identity" (Butin, 2005, pp. vii-viii). Through classroom experiences, questioning the distribution of power can be facilitated through readings, reflective writing, experiential activities, and classroom discussions. These experiences recognize that knowledge and understanding are developed in many different ways.

Discussions about biases, unearned privilege, and power must figure prominently in service-learning classrooms (Green, 2001; Nieto, 2000; Roschelle et al., 2000; Rosenberger, 2000). A critical service-learning pedagogy encourages analysis and dialogue that allows students to identify and challenge unequal distributions of power that create the need for service. The border pedagogy that Hayes and Cuban (1997) advocate may create the openness and acceptance of "alternative knowledge" needed to create an inclusive service-learning experience where stakeholders can share power and challenge traditional power relationships.

> Crossing borders of knowledge, and entering into "borderlands," where existing patterns of thought, relationship, and identity are called into question and juxtaposed with alternative ways of knowing and being, provides the opportunity for creative and oppositional reconstructions of self, knowledge, and culture… (p. 75)

How power relationships are produced and reproduced should be ongoingly observed and critiqued, with a consciousness geared toward reconfiguring power relationships to reverse current (and expected) hierarchies in traditional service practice. Recognizing the knowledge of (and in) the community by insuring community input is reflected in the curriculum is important (Brown, 2001; Cipolle, 2004). This may be accomplished by bringing community members into the service-learning classroom through curriculum development or teaching roles, having faculty members engaged in the service experience alongside students, or "reversing" the service-learning structure by having classes in the community.

Reconfiguring the traditional classroom is another way to encourage the redistribution of power. Disrupting the banking dynamic that is supported by a classroom configuration with a teacher in the front and the students in rows can be challenged by having all class participants (faculty included) sitting in a circle. Holding classes in lounge environments (where comfortable chairs or couches replace more formal student desks) is another way to challenge the dynamic. A change in the learning environment can introduce students to the possibility that learning occurs in multiple locations. Students and community members may also share facilitation of the class with faculty members, and students (and community members) can provide input into the construction of the syllabus or the topics addressed in the classroom. These actions can help redefine the meaning of teachers and learners (Schultz, 2006). Creating a "professorless" environment where students and/or community members participate in reflection without the pressure or influence of a faculty member's presence can also shift the power dynamic and raise questions about knowledge, power, and identity (Addes & Keene, 2006).

Marullo and Edwards (2000) suggest that community members should benefit from the skill development ("problem solving, critical thinking, organizational know-how, and communication skills") afforded to many students in service-learning programs (p. 907). Shouldn't (and couldn't) a critical service-learning pedagogy fully integrate community members into the service-learning experience? The distribution of power in this dynamic could be questioned and reconfigured as every participant in the service-learning relationship viewed themselves as a part of the community working for change, as a student in the classroom seeking to build skills for community development, and as a conveyor of knowledge—a teacher—with valid and powerful ideas, experiences, and perspectives to share.

Developing Authentic Relationships

> Developing genuine partnerships among educators and their students, and people and organizations situated in "the community," is critical to the learning process and to working toward social justice…the relationship should be considered as both a means to social justice and a product of a more just society. (Koliba, O'Meara, & Seidel, 2000, p. 27)

Rosenberger (2000) notes, "much of the service learning literature shares a commitment to building mutual relationships and to letting members of the community identify the need. What is missing, however, is an approach for creating such relationships" (p. 37). The focus on developing authentic relationships, relationships based on connection, is an important element of a critical service-learning pedagogy. Critical service-learning demands we recognize the differences in service relationships, but as Collins (2000) reminds us, "most relationships across difference are squarely rooted in relations of domination and subordination, we have much less experience relating to people as different but equal" (p. 459). Instead, we must learn to see our differences as "categories of connection," places from which to analyze power, build coalitions, and develop empathy (Collins, 2000).

Relationships based on connection recognize and work with difference. Connection challenges the self-other binary and emphasizes reciprocity and interdependence. Common goals and shared understanding create mutuality, respect, and trust leading to authenticity. Reciprocity in the service-learning experience seeks to create an environment where all learn from and teach one another (Kendall, 1990). This emphasizes a collaborative relationship and seeks to involve all parties equally in the creation of service-learning experiences (Rhoads, 1997).

"In most service-learning situations, relationships are clearly based on difference: I'm homeless; you're not" (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002, p. 237). This position makes it challenging to form a relationship based on connection, because the express purpose of interaction is centered on the differences between the service-learning student and the community served. Varlotta (1997b) cautions, "unless service-learners explicitly theorize the complex relationships between and among servers and servees, one group is likely to become subordinate to the other" (p. 18).

Critical service-learning experiences must pay special attention to how relationships are developed and maintained in the service experience. The challenge is to create relationships that neither

ignore the realities of social inequality in our society nor attempt to artificially homogenize all people in the service-learning experience (Bickford & Reynolds, 2002). Varlotta (1997b) warns:

> If students participating in a service-learning experience are instructed to look constantly for the things that make them like the people they are serving, then artificial homogenization is likely to result. While it is sure to be the case that college students enrolled in service-learning courses have something in common with servees, I believe it is dangerous, condescending, and offensive to suggest that they can put themselves in the place of a homeless person, a run-away teen, a battered woman, etc. Is it possible after serving at these types of "safe-haven" shelters for college students to understand what it is like to be homeless or victimized by family violence? Though students might improve their understanding of homelessness, domestic violence, and teenage street life especially if they reflect critically upon these social problems and contextualize the specific situations at play, it is still unlikely, in my opinion, to claim that service-learning allows them to "know" what it is like to be homeless, abused, etc. (p. 80)

Students cannot enter the service-learning experience with the false understanding that they are "just like" the community served. In theorizing complex relationships, students must be able to name the ways they are both like and unlike the individuals they work with in the service setting, and further how those similarities and differences impact their interactions at the service site and (should this chance meeting occur) away from the service site. This is not to say, however, that students cannot build effective, authentic relationships with community members based on connection. As Varlotta (1997b) acknowledges, service learners may indeed have something in common with "those served." Students in service-learning experiences might use those commonalities to forge relationships with community members, and over time, through the experience of sharing their lives, authentic relationships may develop.

Some service-learning practitioners view dialogic engagement as critical to the development of authentic relationships with community members (Jones & Hill, 2001; Levinson, 1990; Pompa, 2002). Pompa sees dialogic engagement as both verbal exchange and as the experience of "being together." Levinson explains:

> *Engagement* implies intensity…Programs that engage students demand not only that students use their hearts (e.g., sympathize or empathize with clients); they also insist that students understand intellectually the "broad social dynamics" underlying the situations of the people they serve (the plight of the elderly, causes of poverty, racism, etc.). Engagement programs require more commitment from their students than just fulfilling the required number of hours. (p. 69, emphasis in original)

This mandate from Levinson (1990) further clarifies the interlocking elements of a critical service-learning pedagogy. Authentic relationships demand attention to social change and understanding the root causes of social problems. Authentic relationships also demand an analysis of power and a reconfiguring of power in the service relationship. Taylor (2002) and Varlotta (1997b) might also argue that authentic relationships demand a new metaphor for service, one that replaces our notions of service with notions of community in which all people understand and embrace our connectedness and interdependence. Remen (2000) indicates agreement with this approach as she defines service as "belonging." She sees service as "a relationship between equals," or "a relationship between people who bring the full resources of their combined humanity to the table and share them generously" (p. 198). A critical service-learning pedagogy asks everyone to approach the service-learning relationship with authenticity. In this process, we would develop a shared agenda, acknowledge the power relations implicit in our interactions, and recognize the complexity of identity—understanding that our relationship within the service-learning context is further complicated by societal expectations.[1]

The Community Component

The service-learning relationship is inherently complex because of the myriad roles the pedagogy requires of students and community members. For students, this requires them to move between student and teacher roles throughout the service experience (sometimes playing both roles simultaneously). A student may be placed in a particular service experience for the skills she can bring to the agency and asked to teach or train various community members elements of that skill (e.g., a student working in a computer facility for a job training program). At the same time, that student is expected to make observations and to analyze and understand the systemic and institutional forces that make their service necessary in today's society. Community members, on the other hand, might be asked to move between roles of student and teacher, supervisor, and person in need. As a student, the community member may be the person learning about computers from the service-learner at the job-training program, and as the person in need, that community member may also be (or feel)

expected to show gratitude and appreciation for the service being provided. As a supervisor, the community member may be in a position of providing direction to the service-learner, telling the individual (or several individuals) where to go, what to do, and how to do specific tasks. As supervisors, community members are sometimes asked to provide orientation and job training, verify service hours, and meet with students to give feedback and assess the students' service. Finally, as teacher, we sometimes ask community members to be their most vulnerable. The service-learning experience asks that community members teach us (and/or our students) what it means to be in their particular circumstance (be it homeless, "at-risk", elderly, or illiterate).

Preparation for the service experience and the varied roles students and community members will be challenged to fill must be clearly conveyed in a critical service-learning pedagogy. All participants must be informed and willing to engage in these service relationships if authenticity is to be developed. Susan Cipolle (2004) warns that "students are often unprepared for the service learning experience" and points specifically to a lack of knowledge or understanding about the people served as a factor of student unpreparedness (p. 20). In my experience, students involved in service-learning either have not had the opportunity nor taken the time to explore the communities that surround the college or university campus. It is important to provide that opportunity for students, to give them a chance to learn about and understand the community in which they will be working. But, this lack of knowledge is also true for the service site. Service agencies are often unprepared for service-learning with unclear expectations for students' service and time, with limited understanding of what service-learning is, and (sometimes) without an accurate understanding of the history, knowledge, skills, and experiences of the students coming to serve. We do the students and the service agency a disservice by asking students to show up for service with little to no information about the mission and work of that agency. We do community partners a disservice by not appropriately preparing them for the service-learning relationship. Because developing authentic relationships is a desired goal of a critical service-learning pedagogy, appropriate preparation for the relationship is extremely important.

Levinson's (1990) directive for engagement beyond service hours means that opportunities for stakeholders in the service-learning relationship to interact beyond the service work are important. Formal and informal meetings between students, faculty, and community members offer possibilities for dialogue and coalition building.

Authenticity necessitates good communication between campus and community partners. This begins with appropriate preparation for the relationship, and continues with ongoing dialogue to provide opportunities to share information, exchange feedback, and evaluate the partnership. Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, & Donohue (2003) stress that all members in a campus-community collaboration "work to be effective talkers and good listeners" (p. 55). They suggest avoiding academic jargon and slang, co-developing ground rules, and working to ensure stakeholders have equal voice "including those people who, because of age or social status, are not used to contributing equally to a discussion or being listened to" as strategies for effective communication (Strand et al., p. 55).

The problem of continuity, discussed earlier, is another important consideration of authenticity in relationships. Authenticity is not achieved in a semester, so an ongoing partnership and prolonged engagement in service are integral to achieving this desired outcome. By prolonged engagement in service, I mean a service opportunity that is ongoing, where students are regularly engaged and involved in the projects and work of the service agency. This service should be meaningful, providing the student with work that captures their passion or interest and affording the agency necessary and important contributions to its purpose. The agency should be able (and feel comfortable) to depend on regular involvement from campus partners (students, faculty, staff or others). The opportunity to continue and expand their service work at the agency should be available to students as the skills and knowledge these students develop can continue to benefit the agency and provide new service-learners with peer models. An expanding role with the service site can also provide students with more and greater skills that may assist them in applying their academic disciplines in service work or in developing passions or interests that lead to career options or lifelong involvement in service.

The agency also benefits from sustained service engagement. Programs and projects benefit from experienced leadership. New service-learning students can be trained and oriented by a fellow student, saving community partner time and resources. Constituents of community agencies see a familiar face time and again which can make it easier and more comfortable when new students are introduced into service roles. Experienced volunteers also transition easily into staff roles of community agencies. As relationships are developed, skills are learned, and commitment to the work is evident, students become valuable resources to the agency.

Long-term partnerships, where faculty and higher education institutions are engaged with the community, should be the goal of critical service-learning. A commitment to community development that is sustained and maintained benefits all stakeholders in a critical service-learning experience and goes a long way toward developing authenticity (Marullo & Edwards, 2000). A campus commitment to partnership can funnel financial resources into a community, generate interest in and attention to issues facing the community, and break down town-gown barriers. Further, a long-term partnership builds knowledge as the institution becomes more invested and involved in the community. This benefits the service-learning relationship as campus and community work together to define and develop critical service-learning experiences that effectively respond to community needs by utilizing the experience, expertise, and resources of the community, departments (programs or schools), faculty, university staff, and students. Campuses and communities can do more, through developed and authentic partnerships where trust is built and agendas shared, to implement programs, policies, and interventions that address root causes, transform communities, and lead to sustainable change.

The Classroom Component

In the critical service-learning classroom, developing authentic faculty and student relationships provides a model for engagement in the community. This is achieved by a commitment to dialogue, developing self-awareness, critical reflection, and building solidarity.

Authenticity in relationships is dependent on dialogue and connection. Sustained and meaningful faculty and student exchanges are necessary to engage "in a critical analysis of the world" (Cipolle, 2004, p. 22) that connects to personal histories, multiple perspectives, and sociological and historical material (Zúñiga, 1998). Dialogue includes opportunities for formal and informal interaction, honoring conversations during breaks and before and after class as effective spaces for relationship building (Cranton, 2006). Extended conversations "about subject matter in a way that builds an improved and shared understanding of ideas or topics" is an element of authentic pedagogy (Newmann, Marks, & Gamoran, 1996, p. 289). Zúñiga recommends a blend of content and process—a facilitation that deals strategically with disciplinary knowledge and behavioral outcomes—to begin and sustain meaningful faculty-student dialogue.

Self-awareness is an important feature of authenticity (Cranton, 2006; Glatthorn, 1975). To be authentic we must acknowledge who we are and the biases that shape our interactions. Exploring identity, personal histories, and experiences of privilege and oppression are important to engage effectively and authentically. Experiential activities, simulation exercises, and personal reflection can facilitate self-awareness exploration (Cranton; Zúñiga, 1998). Cranton suggests an autobiography exercise where participants develop a narrative shared with others. The participation of facilitators and/or instructors in these self-awareness exercises is especially important as authentic relationships must be fostered amongst all participants in the classroom (Cranton; Glatthorn, 1975).

Critical reflection is central to transformative learning and service-learning practice (Cranton, 2006; Jacoby, 1996), and may contribute to authentic relationships in the classroom. Engaging in critical reflection requires questioning assumptions and values, and paying attention to the impacts and implications of our community work. While journaling is often used to encourage critical reflection, Popok (2007) goes further, recommending that students share their writing in front of an audience to receive and respond to feedback. This exchange develops authenticity through vulnerability and trust-building. This exercise also creates a space for students to be challenged, question their ideas, and integrate new perspectives into their thinking. Glatthorn's (1975) notion of growth as a process of self-discovery is especially important to critical reflection. The classroom must be designed to create space for students to discover their opinions and commitments to the concerns raised through a critical service-learning experience.

Radest (1993) encourages building solidarity, a concept central to authenticity. Solidarity extends beyond the service relationship to a broader commitment to social justice; it reflects what is possible once the service-learning course ends. Cipolle (2004) and Sheffield (2005) express a need for solidarity as an outcome of service-learning. "It develops in the student not simply emotional readiness, but a cognitive/imaginative readiness" to engage in future action for social change (Sheffield, p. 49). Walker (2000) assigns an action plan at the end of the service-learning course to build this readiness in students. Students develop an advocacy campaign based on their service experience and research and are able, then, to figure out ways to act on their own and engage others in the work. Expressions of solidarity represent a dimension of authenticity because they demonstrate that we will continue to work for social change and social justice once the service-learning experience has concluded. It is the recognition that the social problems and structural inequalities that create and maintain those problems belong to all of us and

require all of us for change to occur.

Service-learning, Rhoads (1997) contends, is an experience "that brings students into a direct and significant relationship with others, and thus challenges students to consider a variety of significant issues about the self, such as a code to live by" (p. 36). The critical service-learning experience forged with authentic relationships, challenges students to confront stereotypes and generalizations and leads to the development of a more caring self (Rhoads). Through these relationships, service-learning practitioners hope that students will feel compelled to pursue further action on the issues they encounter in the service experience. At the same time, however, Bickford and Reynolds (2002) remind us, "Avoiding superficial encounters begins with the recognition, already in place among service-learning advocates, that one assignment, one semester, is not enough" (p. 234). Authentic relationships depend on a commitment to one another that extends beyond the last day of class.

Conclusion

In this review of a critical service-learning pedagogy, I have indicated that a social change orientation, working to redistribute power, and developing authentic relationships are the elements most cited in the literature to differentiate the practice from traditional service-learning models. Pompa (2002) summarizes the critical service-learning approach as "becoming conscientious of and able to critique social systems, motivating participants to analyze what they experience, while inspiring them to take action and make change" (p. 75). Marullo (1999) predicts that a critical service-learning pedagogy will produce future activists and leaders committed to social justice. Critical service-learning advocates see the potential to transform generations and ultimately society through carefully implemented service-learning experiences.

While the intentionality of a critical service-learning approach may be difficult to implement within the borders of institutions and a society that do not necessarily invite social change, the promise of this approach and the ethical obligations of the pedagogy require this be the next direction of service-learning programs. Schulz (2007) reminds us that "social justice cannot activate itself. Rather, it takes the concerted effort of interdependent stakeholders (community members, students, and instructors) to transform social justice theory into service-learning practice" (p. 34). Developing experiences with greater attention to equality and shared power between all participants in the service experience and challenging students to analyze the interplay of power, privilege, and oppression at the service placement and in their experience in that placement will ensure that a critical service-learning pedagogy questions and problematizes the status quo.

Notes

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