



Service-Learning as a Counter-Hegemonic Practice

Evidence Pro and Con

By Susan Cípolle

Introduction

Service-learning is a wide-spread educational strategy in K-16 education. Currently 64% of all public schools and 83% of public high schools have community service. Half of all public schools have service-learning programs (Billig, 2000). Service-learning programs benefit from the support of both Republican and Democratic political leaders, conservatives and liberals, and business and activists, all who find common ground in the concept of service to the community.

Educators and legislators see service-learning as a way to improve the community and invigorate the classroom, respond to needs in the community, build self esteem, and develop higher-order thinking skills (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996). Service-learning has ample federal funding

and a national structure through the Corporation of National and Community Service (CNS) to support its implementation.

The President's 2003 proposed budget for CNS was \$1.035 billion which reflected a 40% increase from the previous year (CNS, 2002). The W. K. Kellogg Foundation conducted a four-year \$13 million national research project which included the National Commission on Service-Learning, chaired by former United States Senator John Glenn and the Learning-in-Deed initiative to broaden the use of service-learning, promote quality service-learning practice, and to institutionalize its use across the country (Education Commission of the States & Learning-in-Deed [ECS/LID], 2002, p. 11).

However, the question remains: What impact does service-learning methodology create?

Researchers have proclaimed the many benefits of service-learning in terms of student empowerment, but does it have the power to create a counter-hegemony that provides an alternative worldview to transform society? In this literature review, I will examine the effectiveness and limitations of service-learning practices and present recommendations to move service-learning outcomes from individual student empowerment to social transformation.

The method for gathering the literature was a cross-reference of related educational issues: service-learning, social

justice, multicultural education, and citizenship education. Although the opinions and analyses presented in the literature are varied, both supporters and critics concur that service-learning has the potential to be a powerful tool for transformative social change.

Key Terms

As a preface to the discussion of service-learning as a counter-hegemonic practice in educational institutions, it is necessary to define key terms.

The term "service-learning" was first defined in the National and Community Service Act of 1990 as a method under which students or participants learn and develop through active participation in thoughtfully organized service that:

- ◆ is conducted in and meets the needs of a community, is coordinated with an elementary school, secondary school, institution of higher education, or community service program, and with the community; and helps foster civic responsibility; and

- ◆ is integrated into and enhances the academic curriculum of the students, or the educational components of the community service program in which the participants are enrolled; and provides structured time for the students

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The photographs appearing with the article depict students in service-learning projects in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota.

or participants to reflect on the service experience. (Pearson, 2002, p. 5)

The National Commission on Service-Learning defines service-learning as “a teaching and learning approach that integrates community service with academic study to enrich learning, teach civic responsibility, and strengthen communities” (ECS/LID, p. 9). While there are many definitions of service-learning, Billig (2000) concludes there is a general consensus of the major components: active participation, thoughtfully organized experiences, focus on community needs and school/community coordination, academic curriculum integration, structured time for reflection, opportunities for application of skills and knowledge, extended learning opportunities, and development of a sense of caring for others. Many articles “trace its roots to the writings of John Dewey and Jean Piaget, and some even go back as far as Alexis de Tocqueville” (Billig, ¶10).

Service-learning, also called community-based learning, is often confused with community service and volunteerism. The National Commission on Service-Learning maintains the most distinguishable difference between service-learning and community service is the “strong curricular connections and ongoing opportunities for students to reflect upon service experiences” (ECS/LID, p. 9). Andrew Furco (cited in Billig) clarifies this difference by pointing out that service-learning is intentionally designed “to equally benefit the provider and the recipient of the service as well as to ensure equal focus on both the service being provided and the learning that is occurring” (¶ 13).

Hegemony as defined by Peter McLaren (1998) “refers to the maintenance of domination not by sheer exercise of force *but primarily through consensual social practices, social forms, and social structures produced in specific sites such as the church, the state, the school, the mass media, the political system and the family*” (p. 177). McLaren further explains that “the dominant culture presents a ‘common’ worldview, disguising relations of power and privilege through organs of mass media and state apparatus such as schools” (p. 179).

We are constantly bombarded by myths and values which inhibit us from seeing the role of power, privilege, and domination. The media, politicians, and schools project many myths such as equality of all, the poor are to blame for their situation and everyone has an equal chance in America.

Since schools are a component of the social structure in civil society that instills the dominant view, it is fitting that Carnoy

(1989) poses the question “Can schools become the agent of counter-hegemony — of a change in dominant culture?” Carnoy defines the term stating:

Gramsci developed the concept of ‘counter-hegemony’ to describe the process of building a revolutionary culture rooted in existing subordinate culture shaped and extended through a revolutionary political party. The aim of that party, as Gramsci says was to develop an alternative to dominant-class capitalist values and norms, and, on the basis of that revolutionary culture, to overthrow the capitalist state. (p. 16)

Using Gramsci’s theory on hegemony and counter-hegemony, several authors posit that institutions of civil society such as schools and churches play an important role in developing an alternative worldview

(Mayo, 1999; Allman, 2001; McLaren, 1998). The role of teachers as transformative intellectuals is essential in this endeavor.

Henry Giroux (1989) supports Gramsci in “viewing intellectuals as not elaborators of dominant culture but also as a vital fundamental social and political force in a counterhegemonic struggle” (p. 135). The educator/leader can assist students in moving from a commonly held view of the world (common sense) to a critical view of reality (good sense) through problem-posing and dialectical thinking (Allman; Mayo). Schools then become sites of contestation of the status quo and the terrain for Gramsci’s war of position against the dominant culture.

Michael Apple (1989) also contends, “There are counterhegemonic movements now being built within education itself . . .



Students hold a car-wash as part of fund-raising for a service-learning project.





Students participate in a forum on groundwater issues.

to support the democratization of curriculum and teaching and a rededication to the equalization of access and outcomes in schooling” (p. 48). Shor believes that change-agency “can take place at work, at home, in school, and in the community, wherever people take responsibility for rethinking and changing the conditions they are in” (p. 190).

Strengths of Service-Learning

“Service-learning has an extraordinary potential to engage young people in experiences involving explorations of community and self, critical thinking, democratic activities, and the pursuit of a more just and humane world” (Clause & Ogden, 1999, p. 70.)

Service-learning is a learning strategy in which students have leadership roles in thoughtfully organized service experiences that meet real needs in the community. The service is integrated into the students academic studies with structured time to research, reflect, discuss, and connect their experiences to their learning and their world view.

The goals and mandates for education have never been broader or more varied: academic performance, personal growth and wellness, character education, civic education, state and national standards, environmental education, multicultural education, and career education. Teachers are striving to integrate technology, higher-order thinking skills, and multiple intelligences into their curriculum.

The strength of service-learning is that

it is a powerful strategy which incorporates best practices of brain-based research for effective instruction and it is a vehicle to achieve a wide range of educational goals and outcomes. In reviewing the literature and research, it became apparent the goals of many current pedagogical theories were complementary and that service-learning could fulfill their vision.

In examining these concepts I will present the pedagogical underpinnings of service-learning as an instructional tool followed by a review of the literature concerning service-learning as an application of critical pedagogy. I will review the connection of service-learning to radical education, empowering education, multicultural education, education for social justice, and civic education. The last segment of this section will present impact data from 1990-1999 compiled for RMC Research Corporation.

Service-learning is grounded in how learning occurs. For learning to occur it must be connected to students’ lives and be based in real-life experiences. Learning is best conducted through experiential and student-centered activities with cooperative effort in an atmosphere of trust and support.

The activities should be challenging, yet success-oriented and should build self-esteem and empower the students. In service-learning the evaluation is reality feedback. The use of problem-based instruction builds higher-order thinking skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and creativity. The goal of reflection and critical discussions is to develop awareness of values and responsibility and to foster appreciation for cultural diversity.

Radical Education

In reading about Giroux’s (1992) theory of radical education, service-learning would appear to accomplish the goals of his agenda. Although the literature did not provide examples of practice in radical education, beginning with a hypothetical application will inform the reader as to the potential benefits. “Radical education is interdisciplinary in nature, it questions the fundamental categories of all disciplines and it has a public mission of making society more democratic” (p. 14). It joins theory with praxis and empowers students to think and act critically. He asserts that learning has to be meaningful to students before it can be critical.

Giroux presents John Dewey’s distinction of “education as a function of society” which uncritically serves and reproduces the existing society and “society as a function of education” which challenges the social order to develop and advance democratic imperative” (p. 25). Additionally, he contends that “The teaching profession alone has the primary responsibility to educate critical citizens . . . Educators have a public responsibility that by its very nature involves them in the struggle for democracy” (p. 21).

Giroux challenges teachers to be reflective about “political and moral referents for the authority they assume in teaching particular forms of knowledge, taking a stand against forms of oppression, and treating students as if they ought also to be concerned about the issues of social justice and political action” (Giroux, 1989, p. 139). In his critic of educators, Giroux claims that radical educators:

have failed to construct a programmatic discourse for providing students with the knowledge, skills, and values they will need to exercise the civic courage, compassion, and leadership necessary to find their own voices while learning how to both understand and connect such voices to the exercise of social responsibility and civic courage. (p. 131)

Service-learning can provide the vehicle to achieve his charge to “find new ways to get involved with the communities in which they live and teach, to make a difference to the community” (p. 140) and build a pedagogy based in experiential learning.

Empowering Education

As a methodology of empowering education, Claus and Ogden (1999) use Ira Shor’s (1992) framework from *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change* to demonstrate that

Table 1
What does Service-Learning for Social Justice Look Like?

<i>Social Justice Education Characteristics</i>	<i>Examples in Service-Learning Practice</i>
Student-centered	Students are involved in choosing the issue of concern and asked to explain how this issue connects with their own lives.
Collaborative	Students collaborate with their classmates, others in school and, most important, service recipients, in the design and conduct of the service-learning project.
Experiential	Students are actively engaged in community needs assessment, research and project development, as well as service activities in the school and/or community.
Intellectual	Students seek out a variety of sources with multiple perspectives as they study and analyze the issue they have chosen. They use subject-matter skills and knowledge to plan and carry out their service-learning project.
Analytical	Students examine the root causes of the problem they are addressing. They consider whose voices have been excluded and what their own role is in relation to the problem.
Multicultural	Students adopt an inclusive approach to the problem they are addressing, in terms of understanding the issue from diverse perspectives and also in terms of whom they involve and how they work together on the problem.
Value-based	Students acknowledge the controversial nature of the problem they are addressing. They examine and discuss the values involved.
Activist	Students engage in direct actions, as well as advocacy aimed at creating a more socially just society.

Note. From "...And justice for all' Community service-learning for social justice," by R. Wade, 2001, Education Commission of the States Issue Paper, p. 3. Copyright 2001 by the Education Commission of the States (ESC). Reprinted with permission.

service learning is not simply a pedagogical innovation rooted in the principles of experiential education and an interest in helping people and organizations in need. It also has the potential to become a transformative social movement, but this will only be realized if we view it as such. (Claus & Ogden, p. 69)

The key concepts include situated-learning, dialogic discourse, teachers as problem-posers, critical thought and consciousness, and activist learning. Situated-learning is based in students lives, interest, and concerns. Students take the lead in selecting issues that concern them and the curriculum evolves through student and teacher negotiation rather than a traditional textbook and teacher-driven curriculum.

Dialogic discourse is a democratic, participatory process to define the construction of knowledge and the nature of the service activity. Teachers as problem posers address the role of teacher as a facilitator to student discovery. By generating questions teachers guide the students as they critically analyze the world around them. As an outcome of reflection, dialogic discourse, and problem-posing, students' consciousness is raised and they become critical in their analyses. This critical thought and consciousness opens the path to guide the service in ways that can be transformative rather than adaptive.

Finally, activist learning challenges the students to not only investigate the past, but to create a vision of a more just world and actively work to create it. Students must connect their critical reflection to social action in order to become change-agents. Shor (1992) states "Activist learning is oriented to change-agency. Change agency in this pedagogy means learning and acting for the democratic transformation of self and society" (Shor, p. 190). Claus and Ogden conclude that service-learning "should be centered, from the outset around the pursuit of constructive change. Questioning dialogue, reflection, and action should all be framed by the purpose of achieving meaningful reform" (p. 73).

Multicultural Education

To review the potential impact of service-learning on multicultural education in K-16 education, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation designed a project to study and document effective strategies for understanding race and cultural diversity which concluded "that service-learning is a viable strategy for addressing issues of race and cultures for a number of reasons" (Weah, Simmons & Hall, 2000, ¶ 8).

Service-learning is experiential and engaging to students, and its structure provides opportunities for reflection, as well as opportunities to practice respect for diversity. Service-learning also provides opportunities for all people in a com-

munity to participate in the solution, unlike other approaches that address issues of diversity (Weah et al.). Carolyn O'Grady (2000) connects service-learning and multicultural education through their many similarities. Advocates for both believe that schools are failing and there is a need for change in the curriculum and culture to create a more powerful, authentic learning experience. There is a strong reflection-action dialectic with emphasis on praxis for personal growth and social change. There is a strong belief that "each one of us can make a difference in creating a more just and equitable democratic nation" (p. 13).

Social Justice Education

Closely related to multicultural education is educating for social justice. "It is difficult to use service-learning without an awareness of social justice issues" (Warren, 1998, p. 134). This experiential learning is important because it puts the students' experiences at the center of learning but it can be difficult for students to face the discomfort that comes from challenging previously held beliefs regarding issues of power, class, and race.

With a supportive community, the teacher can guide the students in reflection and introduce the conceptual difference between social service and social change. "Service-learning can enhance a student's commitment to social justice" (p.

135). Rahima Wade (2001) summarized the essential characteristics of educating for justice and illustrated what they would look like in a quality service-learning practice (See Table 1).

Civic Education

"Engaged citizenship or civic education can be a profound outcome of service-learning" (Battistani, 1996, p. 86). As Giroux and McLaren (1989) express in the introduction to *Critical Pedagogy, the State and Cultural Struggle*, the mission of education should be democratic and civic engagement which will result in a new vision of the future to extend civil rights and fight for justice. "Critical educators have a historic opportunity to reclaim the importance of public schooling as a basis for critical citizenship, civic responsibility and democratic public life" (p. xxv).

Giroux and McLaren contend that "such a pedagogy provides the foundation for developing curricula and pedagogical models" (p. xxiv). Several authors make the connection between service-learning and engaged citizenship or democratic education.

"Democratic education, education for social justice and community service — all are as much a philosophy as a strategy . . . They also share a common goal of developing citizens who have the skills, knowledge, and will to participate in their communities and build a better world." (Wade, 2001, ¶ 2)

Battistani describes the benefits of linking civic education with service-learning. He believes that students can begin to redefine what citizenship means. Young people usually regard politics as "dirty" and ineffective. Through civic engagement in service-learning they develop a broader definition of what citizenship means. They find the concept of themselves as citizens—previously lost or never developed.

Through engaged citizenship they explore the issues of diversity and see citizenship in a pluralistic society. It can also develop their critical thinking skills and their experiences in the community force them to question their assumptions regarding society and justice (p. 94). Battistani also discusses the benefit of improved communication skills. Students need to speak effectively and persuasively in representing their views as well as listen and hear what others say in order to understand multiple perspectives.

For service-learning to accomplish the goals of civic education, the program outcomes and implementation must be intentionally designed for the education of democratic citizens (Battistani). Simmons and Roberts-Weah (2000) connect society's expectation of universities to graduate students "who are knowledgeable, skilled, and critical thinkers and who can effectively live and work in a growing ethnic and culturally diverse society" (p. 189). Educators need to teach students to think, identify social needs, and work to solve that need. This requires students with leadership and

democratic citizenship. They propose service-learning and social reconstructionism as "effective pedagogies for teaching students about social action, citizenship, and social responsibility" (p. 190).

Teacher Education

Research shows that service-learning can be a valuable component of teacher education programs in preparing primarily white middle-class preservice teachers for the multicultural setting in which they will be teaching. Community-based learning "created spaces to destabilize preservice teacher's prior assumptions about 'other people's children' and the communities from which they come" (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2000, p. 33).

By expanding field experiences for preservice teachers to include service-learning "teachers came to realize and rethink their standards for 'normal behavior'" (p. 33) and were able to form personal relations with people from other groups. Drawing from essays and interviews, Marilynne Boyle-Baise and Christine Sleeter found that the majority of white preservice teachers hold a deficit view of youth of color and of those living in poverty because they had little prior experience with these populations. In one semester, their attitude shifted to a "position of respect" and their perceptions of the parents softened. Although this experience opened the door to reexamine preconceived notions of racism and classism, it did not result in a deep recognition of the systemic inequality (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter). In a study of 65 preservice teachers Boyle-Baise (1998) found that

Community service learning can support multicultural teacher education to the extent that it provides experiences with cultural diversity and poverty, affords opportunities to gain respect for diverse people, motivates interrogations of inequality, and supports commitments to teaching a wide range of students. (p. 52)

The data show that there was an increased tolerance and willingness to work in culturally diverse settings. However Boyle-Baise states that service learning could be problematic by fostering a paternalistic or non-critical multicultural view that "we are all the same" and found that preservice teachers were not inclined to question social inequality.

Boyle-Baise submits that the preservice teachers were either not prepared well enough, not ready to be critical of the situation or were not critically guided enough in their reflection (p. 58). Langseth (2000) is not surprised by and understands students' lack of understanding social is-



Students pose with a "peace pole" installed as part of a landscaping restoration project in the Minnehaha Watershed District.

sues, diversity, generalizations, and stereotyping. He suggests in a culture that is void of political discourse student consciousness is undeveloped and service-learning provides an ideal environment for student development in this area.

In another study of 21 students in teacher education, Vadeboncoeur, Aguilera and LeCompte (1996) found that "by the end of the semester, most students attributed social problems to social structural factors and institutional patterns of differential treatment rather than to individual characteristics or personality traits" (p. 195). Some students changed their ideas about racism from believing it was taught or learned to that it is an institutional phenomenon.

There were also changed perspectives on why students fail to succeed including unfair school practices such as funding and tracking of students (Vadeboncoeur et al.). Although student results varied, the studies show service-learning with adequate preparation and guided critical reflection can provide the practical application for multicultural teacher education programs.

Research on Impact Results

RMC Research Corporation published a compilation of evidence from service-learning research from 1990-1999. The data demonstrated service-learning's impact on students, schools and communities. The Education Commission of the States presented this summary on students' personal and social development, youth civic responsibility and citizenship, academic learning, and career exploration and aspirations. The results include the following:

- ◆ Service-learning helps students acquire academic skills and knowledge.
- ◆ Students are more engaged in their studies and more motivated to learn.
- ◆ Student attendance improves.
- ◆ Students become more knowledgeable and realistic about careers.
- ◆ Teachers and students have greater respect for each other.
- ◆ School climate improves.
- ◆ Service-learning leads to discussions of teaching and learning and best ways for students to learn.
- ◆ Students are less likely to engage in risky behaviors.
- ◆ Service-learning has a positive effect on students' interpersonal development and the ability to relate to culturally diverse groups.



Students and faculty dig as part of the landscape restoration project.

- ◆ Service-learning helps develop student's sense of civic and social responsibility as well as their citizenship skills.
- ◆ Service-learning leads to more positive perceptions of school and youth by community members. (Billig quoted in ECS, 2000, p. 4)

Billig's (2000) analysis of the research further concluded that the quality of the program mediated the outcomes. To achieve robust student outcomes, the program needs to include: a high degree of student responsibility, student autonomy in decision-making and problem-solving, student choice in selection and implementation of the service activity, direct contact with service recipient for some duration, and high quality reflection that connects the experience with content, skills, and values.

Having these characteristics are "sufficient to lead to a variety of personal development outcomes . . . but are not sufficient to produce other outcomes" (§ 31). Intentionality in design and an explicit connection to the desired outcome are necessary to achieve, for example, stronger academic outcomes or to achieve stronger civic responsibility outcomes.

In summary, I contend that the various approaches described above are all examples of critical pedagogy and as such have the potential to create a counter-hegemony and engender transformative social change. Critical pedagogy is an approach to education that empowers students to change the world.

Inherent in the idea of changing the world, is the ability to see reality as it is and to critically analyze why. This is accomplished by enlightened teachers guiding students in a process of discovery, reflection, and action in order to create a society based on freedom, equality, and justice. In this approach, teachers use strategies that excite students and make them co-developers and active participants in the learning process.

In an environment that is democratic, multicultural, and grounded in mutual trust, teachers and students use critical inquiry to examine assumptions, beliefs, and perceptions. The process entails posing a problem, researching the issues, reflecting on the causes and effects, and then thoughtfully acting upon the new understanding of the situation. However, without a vehicle for action, such as service-learning provides, the theories and goals of the various pedagogical approaches are never realized and become *verbalism*.

When a word is deprived of its dimension of action, reflection automatically suffers as well; and the word is changed into idle chatter, into *verbalism*, into an alienated and alienating "blah." It becomes an empty word, one which cannot denounce the world, for denunciation is impossible without a commitment to transform, and there is no transformation without action. (Freire, 1993, p. 87)

I assert that service-learning is an application of critical pedagogy theory and a counter-hegemonic practice. From a

Freirean perspective, service-learning is a strategy that guides students in the “unveiling of world” and connects reflection and action in a praxis for social transformation and in so doing creates a counter-hegemony.

The Limitations of Service Learning

Although service-learning may seem like the panacea to the defects of the educational system and a remedy for social ills, skeptics contend that service-learning rather than creating a counter-hegemony perpetuates the reproductive role of education and results in “a kind of charity, at best, and voyeurism and exploitation at worst” (Vadeboncoeur et al., 1996, p. 191).

The deficiencies of service-learning programs are that most projects are “feel-good” in nature, don’t have real need at the core, or address difficult issues at the societal level. The short-term commitment combined with the limitations of white, middle-class teachers without a critical multicultural knowledge of diverse population results in projects that rarely go beyond direct service to individuals (Wade, 2000). The literature reflects a broad range of misgiving as to service-learning’s capacity to create social change.

Several authors have pinpointed the weakness inherent in the teacher’s vision or lack thereof in designing service-learning activities and the multiple, often conflicting goals of service-learning. Others are

critical of the implementation directly questioning relations of power, inadequate preparation, and deficiencies in critical reflection to raise the naive consciousness of service-learners.

Conflicting goals and vision of service-learning programs

Kahne and Westheimer (1996) pose these questions: What are the goals of the program? Whose values are being promoted? Whose needs are being met? Weah et al. (2000) want to know who is doing what to whom and for what reason? The answers to these questions are diverse and depending on the vision and emphasis of the program the outcomes serve to reinforce the status quo.

Kahne and Westheimer found in a year-long study that “various ideological, political and social goals can be promoted by service learning activities in schools” (§ 8) such as civic duty, authentic learning experiences, reflection on social concern, importance of compassion or analytical and academic skills. They also warn that “rather than assume, erroneously, that all educators share the same vision, we think it is better to be explicit about the numerous and different visions that drive the creation and implementation of service-learning activities in schools” (§ 48).

With support from politicians on both side of the aisle, strong federal funding, and an emphasis on citizenship, the political nature of service-learning cannot be ignored.

“Although much of the language describing service-learning appears to be politically neutral, it is vital to remember that service-learning is as politically laden as any other educational approach” (O’Grady, 2000, p. 8). The choice of service-learning activities, the nature of involvement, and critical inquiry all have political dimensions (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996).

Developing citizens has different meanings ranging from civic duty to help those less fortunate in the community to engaged citizens questioning the status quo for social reconstruction. Service-learning “is often used to back a conservative political agenda that denies a role for government” (Kahne & Westheimer, ¶ 30).

Republican leaders often see volunteerism as a way to shift social programs from the federal and state levels to citizens and local service agencies. If service-learning is conducted without critical examination of the causes that make it necessary, “George Bush’s ‘thousand points of light,’ might also promote a thousand points of the status quo” (§ 30). When service-learning and citizenship education are seen in an altruist sense of charity and giving back to the community, the act loses its potential to become transformative and counter-hegemonic.

The charitable element of service poses several problematic critiques to the notion of service-learning as a counter-hegemonic practice. “Unfortunately even in community service-learning courses, the notion of caring is often perceived only as an individual concern for the ‘unfortunate’ and ‘underprivileged’, and this does little to confront the institutionalized nature of inequity” (Nieto, 2000, p. xi). Weah et al. disparage the “missionary ideology” that is pervasive in current service-learning practices and are concerned that service-learning has evolved into a white-dominated movement, driven by missionary zeal.

The most common reasons students give to be engaged in service-learning are to help others, feel personal satisfaction, to improve the community and to improve the society as a whole. This approach promotes a paternalistic, “better than thou” attitude, reinforces preconceived stereotypes, and precludes the need for social change (Boyle-Baise, 1998). “This kind of service runs the risk of being understood as a kind of noblesse oblige — a private act of kindness performed by the privileged” (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996, ¶ 32).

The “do-gooding” in service-learning can foster a paternalistic or charitable orientation among students.” (Wade, 2001; Sleeter, 2000). When students from the dominant culture participate in service-



High school freshmen participating in a science shelter project.

learning with charity as the goal, they can see themselves as better and cling to their racist, sexist, or classist assumptions (Wade, Boyle-Baise, & O'Grady, cited in Wade 2001).

The term charity implies a "detached beneficence that come from privilege" (O'Grady, 2000, p. ix). O'Grady first dismissed service-learning as a "nice way for well-intentioned White people to feel good about "helping" others" (p. 2). Ill-prepared, privileged university students who see service-learning as good deeds being done in impoverished, marginalized communities maintain this missionary view.

When the intent is on "good cause" as opposed to good results, the voices and talents of those being served are ignored (Weah et al.). It also creates Freire's false generosity where "students indirectly supports the needy situation as a mechanism to provide students with an opportunity to 'to do good'" (Maybach, 2000, p. 226) as opposed true generosity which works to eliminate the need.

Densmore (2000) adds another dimension to the political and charitable nature of service-learning. She asserts that with the current rise of social problems: homelessness, poverty, decline in real wages, unemployment, and underemployment, many of the service-learning projects "respond to various malfunctionings of our political and economic system" (p. 49). Instead of the government addressing these serious social needs, it is laying off employees and cutting programs.

Service-learning with its "stop-gap measure to bail out the impoverished" results in delivering social services as an alternative to government programs and often replaces public sector workers. However, "rather than being guided primarily by altruism as is typically implied, . . . volunteerism is often driven by the imperative to ease the social crises" (p. 50).

The idea that problems should be solved locally, creates an "ideology of self-help" and American "rugged individualism" which "suggests that people can solve their own problems without addressing institutionalized economic injustices (low wages, poverty)" (p. 51). Densmore's review of the aim and practice of service-learning gives strong evidence against the notion that service-learning is counterhegemonic.

Historically, community service has been aimed more at easing social tensions than at analyzing or eliminating the underlying causes of social antagonisms. Today many service-learning programs are oriented toward helping individuals and groups accommodate themselves to



Students working at a food shelter project.

current economic and political realities, rather than designing and constructing new possibilities for social progress. Conceived in these terms, service learning tends to reinforce basic inequalities and, at best, to postpone explosive social conflict. (p. 54)

In answering whose needs are being met, the consensus of literature is that in most cases service-learning is meeting the needs of the students engaged in service-learning. Shumer's (1996) analysis of the National Service-Learning Clearinghouse data found that "service-learning is most commonly perceived as a methodology for enhancing the personal growth of service providers, especially in areas of self-esteem and social responsibility" (p. 215).

Most service-learning has an intentional focus on the academic growth of the students and emphasizes student-centered interactive experiential education (O'Grady, 2000). The Corporation for National Service's student-only focus is solely interested in student involvement, their reflections, and student outcomes. Most research on the effectiveness of service-learning projects only examines student growth. Few programs investigate the needs of the individuals being served, or have a built-in accountability of the effects of the service (Maybach, 1996).

Implementation Deficiencies

There are two elementary flaws in the implementation of service-learning projects. First, the short-term nature of most projects often does more harm that good and fails to make the connection that can lead to change (Erikson & O'Connor, 2000) and supports the continuity of stereotypes (Boyle-Baise, 1998). In addition

to short-term needs of the project, service-learning should address the barriers that keep individuals marginalized (Maybach, 1996). In order to do this, the service projects should focus on the root causes of need and the effects of service project on the recipients (Weah et al., 2000).

The second flaw is in the service terminology. More equitable nomenclature should be developed. The word service suggests inequality, a ticket for salvation for the dominant class, and as a consequence does "for" instead of doing "with" (Rosenberger, 2000). The concept of service, is problematic.

On one hand, engaging in service to one's community can be regarded as a form of community empowerment. . . . On the other hand, the notion of service fits within the mainstream perspective, and can reinforce the idea that the subordinate culture needs to be fixed, rather than understood as a source of strength. (Sleeter, 2000, p. 267)

Maybach suggests using the term "service learners" to refer to both the provider and the recipient or "partners in service" to convey the cooperative relation of both entities.

Of a more consequential nature, the literature highlights two fundamental deficiencies in the implementation of service-learning which impedes creating a counterhegemony. The lack of equity in relationships which results in continued oppression and domination, and the inadequacy of reflection and critical thinking to raise students' consciousness.

There is considerable reference to reciprocity and mutuality in service-learning literature, but critics often question



Students plant flowers as part of the landscape restoration project.

“whether service learning is yet another way that those who have power and privilege, even if only by education, name the problems and the solutions for the less privileged” (Rosenberger, 2000, p. 24). When reciprocity, mutuality and diversity are not addressed it results in domination and oppression (Langseth, 2000).

Students “do not intentionally set out to exploit others for their own purpose of growth. Oppression can be manifested in both passive and active forms The inequity in the relationships are symptoms of the systemic oppression in society” (Maybach, 1996, p. 230).

Students need to recognize the issue of power and their own privilege (Vadeboncoeur et al., 1996) to begin to build equal relationships with those served. If not, one is clearly in a subordinate role thus perpetuating domination (Maybach). Teachers must help students see the reciprocity and mutual benefit in service-learning “whereby they become both the server and the recipient of service” (Weah et al., ¶ 18). The students need to acknowledge their service partners as equals in providing service. All need to be equally concerned with the growth of service provider and recipient (Maybach).

There needs to be courageous leadership with loyalty to the community, a commitment for continual progress in building better relationships, and high-trust, high-investment relationships to create lasting change (Langseth). Maybach sub-

mits the key is mutual empowerment of people and a reexamination of the service-learning paradigm to include the perspectives of those receiving service. “Oppressed groups should be understood in terms of cultural and community strengths and resources . . . the source of memory, strength, and resilience and need to be understood as assets on which to build rather than a problem to fix” (Sleeter, 2000, p. 266).

With inadequate preparation and a lack of critical reflection, service activities accomplish little in creating a consciousness able to combat injustices or the underlying causes social and economic inequity. Students are often unprepared for the service-learning experience on several levels. They lack knowledge about the population they are serving, an understanding of their own racial and ethnic identity, and insight on institutional racism, sexism, and classism.

Martin and Wheeler (2000) believe “Nothing is more insulting in a multicultural community placement than poorly prepared, culturally uninformed service learners, who descend on a community armed only with stereotypes” (p. 136). Students need significant knowledge about the people with whom they are working and an understanding of historical, current and power dynamics (Langseth).

“Service learning without a focused attention to the complexity of racial and cultural difference can reinforce dominant hegemonic cultural ideology” (Nieto, 2000, p. xiv). Often colleges and universities place

students in the community with little opportunity for preparation or reflection, “thinking that service alone will make them active citizens” (Battistani, 1996, ¶ 2).

During and after the service activity the teacher’s ability to guide the students in constructing a critical view of reality is hampered by the dominant culture’s hegemony which is pervasively accepted as true. Most students and teachers believe the tenets of our democracy that state life, liberty, and happiness are inalienable rights for all. In reality “the structure of the system offers position of privilege to wealthy and white and denies others the privilege of sharing in the wealth and status” (Rosenberger, 2000, p. 28).

Most students accept the hegemonic belief that all people with few exceptions are rewarded on the basis of merit and they do not have the lenses for “perceiving the institutional and systemic racism that belie the claims of meritocracy and equal opportunity” (Berlalk & Moyenda, 2001, p. 94). Those under thirty years of age have only lived in an age when job and housing discrimination is illegal and think that the only remaining form of discrimination is that of affirmative action (Berlalk & Moyenda).

Students have difficulty seeing that the “social system rather than being fair and open is run by those with power who have rigged the system in their favor. Historically as well as today institutional racism is the result” (Sleeter, 2000, p. 266). Many US Americans also have difficulty recognizing and critically examining social class stratification (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2000, p. 46). Issues of class are so invisible to the public in general, they are usually reconfigured as ethnic and cultural issues (Aronowitz cited in Sleeter, p. 273).

Even when students are presented with conflicting experiences and facts, it is difficult to synthesize and internalize an alternative worldview. “Debunking stereotypes tended to be partial, stalled by the notion of cultural deficiency” (Boyle-Baise, 1998, p. 55).

In a study of preservice teachers it was difficult to get them to see the marginalized communities in the context of larger power struggles. Some white preservice teachers saw themselves as “saviors” and the only positive role models for the children. A few preservice teachers maintained a deficit view of children (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2000, p. 46) and in essays, the students’ descriptors for consciousness-raising, “getting exposed” “becoming aware,” “accepting cultural diversity” reflected minimal growth toward a critical understanding of reality (Boyle-Baise).

In another study of preservice teachers, Vadeboncoeur et al. (1996) found that most students had little experience critically thinking and explaining their opinion in a public forum. Concurring with others, they write that students had a tendency to rely on the authority of their experience. "When confronted by evidence counter to their personal histories, they used their lived experience to argue against positions presented in class and against the legitimacy of other forms of knowledge" (Vadeboncoeur et al., p. 194).

This presents a dilemma for teachers who attempt to use an authentic educational process that requires connecting learning to personal experiences. Teachers have difficulty supporting students and at the same time engendering a critical self-reflection of their misperceptions and biases (Vadeboncoeur et al.).

As Kahne and Westheimer (1996) explain if students are to become "critical thinkers, students must be able to consider arguments that justify conclusions that conflict with their own predispositions and self-interest" (¶ 45) and come to conclusions that may conflict with their previously held beliefs and self-interest. If the service activity does not include critical analysis it may reinforce previously held beliefs and stereotypes and do little for social transformation. Teachers need to increase their efforts to help student "move beyond their stereotypical notion of difference to an understanding of the structural and deep-seated inequities in our society" (Nieto, 2000, p. xi).

In summarizing the limitations of service-learning practices, I discern three main deficiencies: (a) There is a lack of focused vision in the intent and outcomes of the program; (b) The server/recipients' relations perpetuate domination and oppression by ignoring the reciprocal and mutual benefit of the service program; and (c) The inability to reach a critical consciousness is due to inadequate student preparation and a lack of critical reflection and analysis.

Analysis

Given the potential for service-learning to promote a counter-hegemony and having presented examples of deficient practices, we must now examine the literature that demonstrates the path for realizing its potential as a transformative practice. Paula Allman's (2001) vision advocates for all to be involved politically and socially in the community and wider society.

Developing critical thinking and educating about the possibility of change will foster a commitment to transform society

into a collective body that promotes the realization of our full human potential. "It is not enough in service programs to acknowledge that social problems exist. We need to go further to reflect on the sources of these problems and to build the skills and perspectives required for engaging in reform" (Claus & Ogden, 1999, p. 91).

Maybach (1996) acknowledges that although service-learning cannot turn society into a caring, loving world, "with a new vision of service through cooperation rather than domination, . . . [service-learning is] a powerful tool with the potential to help all members of society realize their own strengths and weaknesses as well as identify the abilities of others" (p. 235). Carnoy (1989) highlights the need to reconcile the contradictory aims of education.

On one hand, it must socialize citizens and train labor for capitalist production. Part of socialization is to make the inequalities, injustices and hierarchies of capitalist production appear as natural consequences of economic and social life and to promote capitalism as the most efficient and just of all economic systems....On the other hand schools in America have also been charged with inculcating children with democratic ideals and with responding to demands on the state for equalizing access to material goods and services, particularly education itself. (p. 4)

If service-learning is to fulfill its potential as a counter-hegemonic transformative practice, we need clear and comprehensive objectives that move students beyond feeling badly and toward understanding the issues related to imbalances of power. This entails a need for ongoing dialogue, and a continuous improvement of programs for collaboration, reciprocity, and diversity (Erickson & O'Connor, 2000).

"Educators [need to] seek out projects that are counter-hegemonic and work to ameliorate situations of social injustice" (Masucci & Renner, 2001, p. 5) and are intentionally focused on social justice. There is a growing need to clarify the ideological perspectives that underlay service-learning programs (Kahne & Westheimer, 1996). The goals must center on responsiveness to real community needs, be realistic, and reciprocal (Boyle-Baise & Sleeter, 2000) and we must be intentionally strategic about the program choices we make (Langseth, 2000). With a wide range of potential educational, personal, and societal benefits in service-learning practices, we must be intentional in the design of service-learning programs to achieve our desired outcome (Rhoads, 1998; Battistanti, 1996).

Several authors call for a new framework for service learning to ensure that the theoretical foundations and critical components of a service-learning pedagogy are incorporated. Service has always been with us in this country, and it is time "to invent new models and create new ways of thinking about service that will demonstrate democracy at its core. This means working together to find ways for everyone to be responsible, productive, and empowered" (Weah et al., 2000, ¶ 19).

Masucci and Renner (2001) use the term "critical service-learning" to describe a framework that incorporates (a) social theory in both the written word and lived experiences; (b) action that includes dialog with partnership organizations; (c) critical reflection to integrate and contextualizes the experience; (d) development of teachers' and students' critical thinking skills; and e) an environment of tolerance and respect rather than paternalism charity or pity.

Maybach (1996) also seeks an alternative service-learning model to enhance the exploration of issues of oppression, individual voice, empowerment, and social justice which includes interactive reflection and dialogue, accountability for growth of all individuals, inclusive approach to roles and terminology of providers and recipients.

Erickson and O'Connor (2000) promote Cook's Contact Theory as a vehicle for service-learning to create greater personal and social understanding between diverse individuals with face-to face contact. It includes pursuit of common goals, equal status, long-term contact that contradicts stereotypes, and social norms that favor contact. Densmore (2000) submits that teachers need to understand what full democracy means and realize for full participation they need to change how and what they teach about the systemic nature of social inequality.

Rosenberger (2000) uses a Freirean lens to examine service-learning as a pedagogy of possibility and provides educators with approaches to address the cited limitations of service-learning. Praxis, "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (Freire quoted in Rosenberger, p. 30) is at the heart of Freire's methodology and the goal of critical service-learning.

The challenge for service-learning is to be transformative and liberatory in its action and move beyond immediate needs. She suggests that service-learners embrace Freire's view of reality as dynamic and created, not static. Teachers should problematize existing reality and social structures in their classes rather than

making marginalized people the object of analysis. Being aware of the pitfall of false generosity, service-learners should seek to end the need for generosity.

Being in solidarity with the people is a means of maintaining a balance of power between the teachers, students, and the community members being served. All must be active subjects in a critical analysis of the world and the transformative action. This requires analyzing all positions of power and control that results in the privileged relinquishing their power. The concept of student conscientization, "achieving a deeper awareness both of the socio-cultural reality that shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality" (Freire quoted in Rosenberger, p. 35) is probably the most challenging component of this educational process. It entails perceiving one's place in reality, one's capability as an agent of change, and calls into question values which were never previously questioned.

Freire offers two methods to help guide students to this awareness — dialogue and problem-posing. Problem-posing opens up mental constructs that create limitations on people's ability to see reality clearly. By presenting reality as a problem, it exposes and questions presuppositions, and allows students to see the injustices that must be overcome. By incorporating Freire's methodology, service-learning can participate in the unveiling and problematizing the current reality of inequity, oppression, and domination.

Critical multiculturalism or social reconstructionist multicultural education can provide the theoretical foundation that is lacking in service-learning and render it a counter-hegemonic practice for social change. Making multicultural education a high priority in service-learning programs is essential to creating a participatory process with ongoing personal and professional growth (Langseth, 2000).

Multicultural education, like service-learning means many different things to different people. It ranges from teaching about customs and traditions, to reducing discrimination, and appreciating cultural pluralism, but none of these address institutional racism (Densmore, 2000; Rhoads, 1998). Critical multiculturalism is transformative in nature because its goal is to become knowledgeable about social, economic and political forces that have shaped society with an emancipatory mission (Rhoads).

O'Grady (2000) proposes combining service-learning with critical multiculturalism as a pedagogy with the power to be transformative and create social change.

"The academic rigor of multicultural education in tandem with service learning requires students to examine taken-for-granted assumptions and to think critically and comprehensively about human issues that are basic to the quality of human life" (p. xiv). She highlights the mutual and additive benefit of this combination.

Service-learning can help multicultural education reconnect to the communities, using schooling to shape a future America that is more equal, democratic and just, and practice what we preach actualizing the dialectic of theory and action (p. 15). "Multicultural education can provide a vehicle to connect service-learning to an explicitly political stance regarding social justice, provides theory and practice to anti-racist anti-oppressive ideology, and thus expand the practice of service-learning beyond 'doing good'" (p. 16).

Acknowledging that "Each is incomplete without the other if we wish our students to learn to be responsive to the demands of community in a diverse and democratic nation" (p 278), O'Grady warns that "Without the theoretical underpinnings provided by multicultural education, service-learning can too easily reinforce oppressive outcomes. It can perpetuate racist, sexist, or classist assumptions about others and reinforce a colonialist mentality of superiority" (p. 12).

Conclusion

After a thorough examination of the literature, I conclude that service-learning can be a counter-hegemonic practice to affect social transformation. I offer California State University Monterey Bay (CSUMB) as an example of effective implementation of service-learning. This educational institution is committed to creating "self-reflective, culturally aware, and responsive community participants through reciprocal service and learning" (Alexander et al., 1998 quoted in Rice & Pollack, 2000, p. 115).

CSUMB has developed a curriculum of critical service learning pedagogy whose goal is "the creation of more just and equitable communities" (p. 116). The university was created in 1994 and was intentionally designed to address the needs of 21st century students. At the core of their curriculum is social reconstructionist multiculturalism, emphasizing teaching about social injustice and the systems of power, privilege, and oppression that maintain social inequity" (p. 118) and service-learning is a central element of their program.

The administration, faculty, and com-

munity members collaboratively developed the mission of the school. Teachers are hired who share the values and are committed to its mission — compassion, diversity, justice, and social responsibility. Before students participate in service, ample preparation time is devoted for them to become reflective, explore assumptions, and understand societal patterns of power, privilege, and oppression.

Students also examine how their identity shapes their worldviews and how systems of oppression impact communities. This critical reflection leads to investigations of ways that oppression is perpetuated by community service and their role as privileged and equal partners. They reflect not only about the perspectives of those with whom they work, but also about themselves. There is pedagogical support for teachers and faculty development programs as well as community partnership development.

The community staff with whom students work have an awareness of themselves, the dynamics of oppression, and how it plays out in the community. They work with organizations that are addressing systemic issues. Community staff members are regarded as co-teachers and are valuable resources to the university (Rice & Pollack).

In conclusion, I believe that service-learning practitioners need to recognize the weaknesses of current practice and intentionally design a service-learning program with both a critical multicultural foundation and refined practices to maximize its potential for social transformation. I would submit that in addition to the generally accepted characteristics of quality service learning programs, there are additional requirements for a service-learning program to be counter-hegemonic and achieve this goal. There must be:

- (1) a common mission and shared vision of education for civic engagement and social justice.
- (2) critical multicultural education as a foundation of the program.
- (3) critical reflection before, during, and after the service-learning experience.
- (4) quality community partnerships committed to social justice where all parties are the subject of praxis.
- (5) a faculty development program that creates a practice-based model for incorporating service-learning and critical multiculturalism into the curriculum.

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