

Critical Consciousness and Critical Service-Learning at the Intersection of the Personal and the Structural

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Critical service-learning is often defined in opposition to a more traditional, “charity” approach that does not necessarily seek fundamental changes. Service-learning courses, however, may not quite follow this dichotomy. In an intercultural communication course, students engaged in service-learning that included some elements of both approaches. In this mixed environment, would students reproduce and perpetuate existing oppressive assumptions and relationships, or would they develop critical consciousness? This paper addresses the question by examining student reflections through a phenomenological approach.

Service-learning courses potentially bring many benefits to students. They encourage interactions between diverse populations and cultivate more interpersonal skills, altruism, and cultural sensitivity (e.g., awareness, tolerance, and acceptance) (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Kezar, 2002). Enhancing these qualities, however, does not necessarily lead to social change. Individuals can, for example, accept cultural differences between themselves and community members but fail to question inequalities that stem from structural limitations. Without addressing the problem of power imbalance, therefore, service-learning may unwittingly perpetuate oppressive social structures (Artz, 2001; Cipolle, 2004; King, 2004). In response to this potential pitfall, recent applied learning scholarship has stressed the increasing need for applied learning to play an active role in examining, articulating, and disrupting

power relations (Schwartzman & Henry, 2009) and in promoting democratic community building in increasingly unequal societies (Saltmarsh, Hartley, & Clayton, 2009).

The advocates of critical service-learning have argued that developing critical consciousness is a key to the creation of a just society (Rosenberger, 2000). To develop such a consciousness, one must engage in “critical” service-learning activities that encourage thought and actions geared toward structural changes. Most critical service-learning literature defines “critical service-learning” against a more traditional, “charity” approach that does not necessarily seek such fundamental changes. However, what happens when a service-learning course includes some elements of both approaches? Can it be still transformative, or does it contribute to the continuation of power inequalities? Are “critical” and “charitable” mutually exclusive? This paper seeks to address these questions by examining student reflections through a phenomenological approach.

Phenomenology sees reality as an experience in the relationship between the perceived and the perceiving or experiencing subject (Merleau-Ponty, 1962) and attempts to describe the lifeworld as it appears to the person who is experiencing it (Moran, 2000). Phenomenological inquiry provides a productive lens for this study for at least two reasons. First, by studying phenomena in an open-ended manner, it privileges “the descriptive lived experience to which the person gives consciousness” (Orbe, 2000, p. 607). For the purpose of this study, it encourages examination of how college students make sense of their service-learning experiences and whether and how their written accounts of the experiences demonstrate emerging critical consciousness.

Second, phenomenology pursues subjective meanings of the lifeworld by examining descriptions of and reflections on experiences (van Manen, 1990). However, it is not primarily interested in subjective experiences from particular vantage points. Rather, it seeks to gather examples of possible experiences to understand the range of meanings in the experiences (van Manen, 1990). Thus, although experiences “captured” through written or oral accounts are not identical to the lived experiences themselves, phenomenological inquiry allows for examining written student reflections as a rich site that reveals various meanings that students find in their service-learning experiences.

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CULTIVATING CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS IN SERVICE-LEARNING

Because social problems reside in existing societal practices, cultivation of critical consciousness first requires examination of the practices that are taken for granted. Artz (2001) argued that for service-learning to have potential for triggering social change, students and instructors must “challenge accepted language, discourse, and metaphors that do violence to communities” (p. 241). This means, first of all, recognizing the dominant language and practices that are disempowering to community members even when they appear apolitical or are even meant to be helpful. The realization of potential for change should not be abstractly about societal hegemonic practices but should include reflexivity about our own limited worldviews and privileges and how they situate us differently and often unequally in relation to each other. In short, we must engage in analysis, discussion, and reflection about privileges, assumptions, stereotypes, and prejudices (Mitchell, 2008; Rosenberger, 2000) that affect our relationships with community members.

Second, structural conditions that undergird social problems must be examined. This is a key element that differentiates critical service— itself learning from more traditional service-learning (Artz, 2001; Eby, 1998; Mitchell, 2008). Students must be encouraged to examine the roles of institutions, individuals, groups, histories and even the service itself in perpetuating or transforming the problems. Based on this examination, students should articulate their visions and course of actions to achieve a just society. Toward this end, faculty, students, and community partners must work together in addressing issues and creating service experience. Classroom learning such as readings, discussion, and writing assignments should be used to reflect on the service in the context of larger issues.

Third, critical consciousness reflects authentic, dialogic relationships based on acknowledgment of power difference, mutuality, and deliberate collaborative effort. This type of relationship sharply contrasts with the assumption that the community is a problem to be solved and that students are problem-solvers—an assumption that pervades more traditional service-learning (Artz, 2001; Pompa, 2002). To build more authentic relationships, several kinds of learning are expected of students: learning about the community and people with whom they work; understanding what similarities and differences exist between themselves and the community members and how they affect their interactions; and examining own biases, identity, histories, and experiences of privilege and oppression (Mitchell, 2008).

INTERCULTURAL PARTNERSHIP PROJECT

Over the course of a semester, students in an upper-division intercultural communication course engaged in a service-learning project, Intercultural Partnership, in which they worked with English language learners who resettled in the local community as refugees or immigrants. In two sections of the course over two semesters, 52 students engaged in the service- experience. Of the 52 students, 40 students assisted free English language classes provided by a resettlement agency, and 12 were matched by the agency with refugees to give private sessions at the refugees' homes.

Critical service-learning literature suggests that working in a particular community agency or program is not transformative or effective toward social change because it does not address fundamental community needs (Eby, 1998, Mitchell, 2008). Although working as tutors may be dismissed under this definition as non-transformative, help with language learning is a pressing need of the local community with increasing numbers of immigrants and refugees. Thus, students engaged in the "traditional" service project, but the course integrated ways to encourage critical reflections throughout the semester. For example, in preparation for service-learning, the class discussed two contrasting approaches to service-learning—"charity" and "advocacy"—and the different relationships that result (provider-receiver versus co-equal partners) (Artz, 2001; Cipolle, 2004, Pompa, 2002). Through readings, internet research, films, and guest speakers, students were also encouraged to understand the structural issues that underlie social challenges that community members face (e.g., Artz, 2001; Cipolle, 2004; King, 2004; Mitchell, 2008). They also discussed their past experiences with refugees and immigrants, their assumptions, general stereotypes of refugees and immigrants, what unearned privileges they may have and how the privileges may help or impede their interactions with refugees and immigrants who serve as their intercultural partners (Rosenberger, 2000) before and during their service.

In addition to reflections, representatives of community organizations visited the class and jointly discussed expectations, challenges, and concerns (Mitchell, 2008). I worked along with the students in a classroom setting and visited other sites so that I could engage in conversations with students about their experiences. Three community members who resettled in the city as refugees visited the classes to discuss their experiences.

In short, the students fulfilled roles that are defined as more traditional service-learning, but their classroom component integrated activities that aimed toward cultivation of critical consciousness. In this mixed environment, do students reproduce and perpetuate the exist-

ing oppressive assumptions and relationships due to the nature of the service role they perform? Or are they able to develop some critical consciousness? This study examines whether and how students demonstrate critical consciousness as they describe their service-learning experiences.

METHODOLOGY

TEXTS

Throughout the semester, students were encouraged in class discussions and personal journals to draw from their service-learning. This way, through the structured, ongoing reflections, a deliberate linkage between service and academic study was established (Frey, Barnett, Pollock, Artz, & Murphy, 1996). Toward the end of the semester, their learning and experience were accumulated into an application and reflection paper, which served as the data for this essay. The paper consisted of two parts: 1) an analysis of their intercultural partnership experience, utilizing a theoretical concept covered in the course; and 2) a reflection on their overall learning about intercultural communication, themselves, and their community through a combination of classroom activities and interactions with community members. My analysis particularly focused on the second part because it allowed students to freely describe and reflect on their experience without theory constraints, which, in turn, allowed me to see if and how students were developing critical consciousness. Because the essay was part of the course assignments, special care was taken to ensure that students did not simply praise their service-learning experiences. It was stressed in both oral and written instructions that the depth of their reflection, not their like or dislike of the experience, determines their grade.

Self-reporting may fall short in assessing academic and social values of applied learning, because it may lack validity due to inconsistency and may not be a reliable method to assess behavioral changes (Schwartzman & Henry, 2009). Nonetheless, to determine the value of service-learning, outcome evaluation must reflect student experiences (Oster-Aaland et al., 2004). Critical service-learning ultimately seeks social change, which requires enduring partnerships and commitments by all parties. Although behavioral transformations may not be assessable through self-reports produced at the end of just one semester, seeking social change first requires self-reflexivity and questioning of the dominant, taken-for-granted assumptions and practices. To this end, student self-reports may reveal emerging (or lack of) critical consciousness about power, privileges, biases, and structural inequalities.

ANALYSIS

Phenomenological analysis aims to explicate experiences from participants' perspectives and elucidate their meanings as fully as possible (Kvale, 1996). This is done by staying close to the participants' words and what the words express about their life world. Thematic analysis is useful toward this end, because it enables researchers to use expressed information "in a systematic manner that increases their accuracy or sensitivity in understanding and interpreting [the subjects'] observations about people, events, situations, and organizations" (Boyatzis, 1998, p. 5).

Theme development involved several steps. First, keeping my focus on critical consciousness in mind, I read each essay, noting words and phrases that indicate the student author's learning from the intercultural partnership project. Second, I looked for themes in the words and phrases by using three established criteria: repetition (frequent appearance of particular words and phrases), recurrence (common meanings that are communicated via various articulations), and emphasis (importance communicated through all caps, punctuation, or format such as bold or italics) (Apker, Propp, & Ford, 2005; Kinefuchi & Orbe, 2008; Owen, 1984; Wright & Orbe, 2003).

A colleague who teaches service-learning courses and is familiar with service-learning literature assisted me in this process by reviewing several student essays, using the three criteria. The themes were then compared and contrasted across essays for common themes. Theme generation here followed the repeated process of writing themes, returning to the raw data, and rewriting the themes for maximum differentiation of the units of analysis (Boyatzis, 1998). To strengthen the validity of the analysis, students were asked in the following semester whether the emerging themes reflected their experiences and what suggestions for change they might have. Twelve students provided confirmations or some minor changes to the themes. These student comments, along with the colleague's assistance, served as a way to be true to the phenomenological pursuit of possible meanings in the described service-learning experiences.

CULTIVATING CRITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS: SUCCESSSES AND CHALLENGES

How did the students make sense of their service-learning in which they fulfilled traditional service roles but were encouraged to ask critical questions about their service, community, and themselves? How did their written reflections indicate the presence (or absence) of critical consciousness? While the course adopted activities to cultivate such consciousness, student reflections varied in demonstrating it.

QUESTIONING DOMINANT ASSUMPTIONS AND POWER RELATIONS

A key to critical consciousness is exploration of assumptions, biases, unearned privileges, and power and the linkage between power, knowledge, and identity (Butin, 2005; Mitchell, 2008). Although these issues were extensively taken up in the classroom throughout the semester, the student essays reflected various degrees of engagement with these issues. The most frequent topic of reflection was stereotype and prejudice. About a half of the students raised them as obstacles that their partners face. However, the depth of reflection varied. Some students discussed the issue as a problem of generalized others as reflected in the statements such as: "Every refugee has experienced prejudice one way or another," "People can be ignorant and rude, and "Others already categorize someone by their physical appearance and inability to speak English." In those statements, students brought up stereotype and prejudice as pervasive problems "others" have and as obstacles that foreigners unfortunately go through rather than something that needs to be critically reflected on as manifestations of racialization of immigrants (a topic we took up in class). In this regard, they were able to identify stereotypes and prejudices as problems but at the same time regarded them as inevitable aspects of transnational resettlement experiences.

Some other students, however, reflected on their own stereotypes that they held about the cultures of their partners. A student, for example, commented that she did not realize how deep her stereotypes about Middle Eastern men were and "If I had not been in this intercultural partnership, I would have probably gone the rest of my life with the same stereotypes I have carried thus far about them." Similar observations were made by a student who worked with a Mexican immigrant. These comments illustrate emerging reflexivity about their own biases about cultural others and a move toward unlearning them. Here, biases are not constructed as inevitable obstacles for immigrants but are things that they themselves can work to change.

While the above two groups of students reflected on biased representations of immigrants and refugees as individual problems, several students articulated the roles of larger contexts and institutions in perpetuating marginalization of immigrants and refugees. Some students questioned the lack of support for refugees in their transition to their new life. For example, having witnessed the difficulty of cultural adaptation, a student questioned the applicability of a reductionist oriented theory of newcomer adaptation—a theory covered in class—that stresses the importance of newcomers to engage in communication with the people of the host culture but that does not explore the role of institutions in this process.

If you were a refugee attending the English Language School, you would be in an English-speaking environment for 15 hours a week top. Many cannot even do a half of that, because they have to work. Then you would return to your housing with all of the other refugees and your jobs that require little interaction. I have been amazed at how slow the language learning process is. It has now been two full months that I've been at the English Language School and they don't have the alphabet down. If the refugees take three months to learn the alphabet, how long will it take them to learn to communicate in English? If successful adaptation is dependent upon host communication, what happens if their means of communication in our culture are highly handicapped? Is adaptation likely? What is the accountability on the part of the host society? For the theory to work, something systemic needs to be done to alleviate the handicap.

A few other students pointed out the relationship between dominant racial representations and institutional practices that marginalize immigrants who are subsumed into the representations. They heard from the ESL teachers they aided that the people from countries in Southeast Asia tend to be more "diligent," "hardworking," and "successful" than their counterparts from other places. The students started to question this assessment upon learning through a translator that several South-east Asians in class were living without basic needs such as hot water, and access to working washing machines, and access to medical care for ill family members. Realizing that these problems were not shared until asked through the translator, one student noted the urgent need for "increased communication between refugees and Americans." Another student wrote:

We discussed a lot in class about stereotypes. Everyone stereotypes, and before this class, I did not really think about how deeply it can affect people's lives.... Because of the widespread attitude that Asians are academically successful, many schools do not monitor or even record the dropout rates among Asian Pacific Americans. Some school districts do not realize that the dropout rate of some Asian groups is as high as 50%.... The South Asian immigrants I interacted with in the last 12 weeks clearly do not support the model minority stereotype.... Our society needs to work on a more widespread understanding of cultural identity and more accurate representation of people in the media.

Here, the student points out the negative material implications that “positive” stereotypes can have on the lives of people who are subjected to the stereotypes and acknowledges that this is a pervasive societal problem to be addressed. The advocates of critical service-learning argued that students must investigate the relationship between institutional structures and service recipients if they are to make their service-learning more than “charity” or part of a “band-aid” solution to the social problem (Artz, 2001; Mitchell, 2008; Walker, 2000). Some students, like the one above, began to identify and problematize dominant assumptions about newcomers and resettlement structures.

TOWARD AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIPS

An important component of commitment to social justice is building authentic relationships that are based on acknowledgment of power relations, critical reflection on biases that shape our interactions, and articulating ongoing efforts to act themselves and to engage others in the work (McNally, 2004). Students must be able to “name the ways they are both like and unlike the individuals they work within the service setting, and further how those similarities and differences impact their interactions at the service site and away from the service site” (Mitchell, 2008, p. 59). These relational dynamics were explored in class discussions about readings and small group reflections of service experiences.

Similarities are a topic that about one-third of the students discussed in their papers. For example:

Through talking to Tina and then later Peter, it is amazing to me that we are all on this world placed in totally different situations and environments, but we are all searching for similar things in life. To be happy and succeed at what we do. To get an education and to have nice things in life.... The more I met with my partners, the more I realized how much the same we really are.

Other students echoed this observation, emphasizing how commonalities between them and their partners transcended the differences that initially seemed challenging. Differences were also brought up by students most often in terms of cultural differences that they learned and language barriers that they experienced. In their discussion of cultural differences, the overwhelming tone was appreciation of diversity. Celebrating diversity and discovering commonalities is certainly important for relational development. From a critical perspective that was stressed in class, however, realities of social inequalities must be also

recognized in authentic relationships. A handful of students demonstrated this sensibility. One of them noted:

I was severely impacted by September 11 and the effects that it had on my country.... I really had no desire to “get to know” anyone from that part of the world. I was not very thrilled, to say the least, when I found out that I was going to be meeting someone from Saudi Arabia.... He is a Muslim and I am a conservative Southern Baptist who had never knowingly spoken openly with a Muslim before.... After a couple of meetings, however, it became apparent that our two very different religions actually shared common values.... Even though I began to see that he is a human like me and we share some commonalities, I also noticed that he still face prejudices in America because of the negative stereotypes the majority of Americans have about the Middle East and Muslims. I saw this in my community.... Before it did not bother me but now it does.

In this reflection, the student recognizes both similarities and differences that exist between him and his partner. More important, he acknowledges the fact that the differences are not neutral but place him and his partner into unequal categories.

In addition to naming similarities and differences, another topic that appeared in several reflections is labels. Students most frequently discussed the word “refugee” and its common association with such marginalizing terms as “ignorant,” “helpless,” “suck up welfare.” These labels allow “the people in power—citizens of this town and society—to name them such and categorize them so they may easily discuss their status and articulate opinions about them. These labels are powerful.” A few students noted that sometimes community organizations that work with refugees use these labels and inadvertently marginalize refugees. They found these labels to be, to use one student’s words, “farthest from the truth.” Their regular, personal interactions with refugees, coupled with the power of discourse in class, forced them to pay attention to ways in which seemingly unproblematic labels contribute to unequal relationships. Rather than viewing language as a neutral medium of communication, students here began to see through their service-learning the power it has on *systematically* producing unequal identities and relationships (Butin, 2005).

PUTTING REFLECTION INTO ACTION

Critical service-learning emphasizes transformation. At its best, acquired critical consciousness should propel students to take actions

toward creating a more just society. Although student reflections may not be the most effective tool for assessing behavioral changes, they nevertheless illuminate some significant changes occurring to students at different levels. For some students, this shift was primarily happening within themselves. A student who worked with a man from Cuba noted:

It was a very positive experience to meet the people that I held these stereotypes against and learn about how much they differ from those notions. It has truly made a change in my thinking, in that, I am now continuously, consciously attempting to correct myself when my mind tries to revert back to stereotypes as a way to organize my world.

He and several others stressed the importance of continuing reflexivity and consciously unlearning biases. Although their actions may be personal, primary focus has been shifted to the plight of others (Frey et al., 1996)—an important indicator of developing critical consciousness.

Another group of reflections stressed the importance of effecting changes within personal networks of friends and families. A student who served as a classroom assistant realized that there are many prejudices against immigrants among his acquaintances that he did not notice before he began working with refugees. He discussed his response to this realization:

By staying silent, it is as if I am giving that person permission to be disrespectful around me. When I encounter a negative attitude next time, I want to change that.... Encouraging the proper treatment of people can start by ensuring the proper use of terms when those people are not around.

Here, the student admits his own complicity (inaction) in perpetuating the discourse that marginalizes refugees and immigrants and begins to articulate what changes he wants to implement and to see around him. Similarly, other students stressed the importance of affecting immediate networks:

In the culture I grew up in, we learnt that before you open your mouth, you first have to consider whether it is an improvement over silence. People are afraid to speak to fail. But I think it is more important to think in the way that when we fail to speak, the vacuum is filled by the voices of others, others speaking for us.... As Tatum's reading clearly pointed out, to affect racism and other big issues in the society, we must

consciously deal with it... Talk about it when eating dinner with your family and have the courage to talk when your friend is expressing depreciated opinion about someone from another race. There are many ways to act and react.

I think that we are all personally responsible for what we say, what we believe in, and what we chose to hear and let go. I feel that it is my responsibility as an individual to question people when they talk negative about other races and share my experiences and insights to open their eyes. Each of us can take small steps to address such societal issues around us.

Both reflections underscore the importance everyone's of interpersonal sphere of influence on bringing about social change. They both also point out the everydayness of social change; rather than construing social change as a grandiose event, they articulate it as an accumulation of everyday actions.

Though the two students quoted above focused on transformation in themselves and their social networks, several students wrote about their future service commitment. A number of students expressed their intention to continue their work with refugees. Some of these students indeed continued to work with the same community organizations or the individuals in the following semester. Moreover, a few students started working with community organizations in different capacities; one became a liaison between community organizations that serve immigrants and universities, one joined AmeriCorps, one student continued her commitment of aiding refugee integration into the community by working as an intern for a refugee service organization, and yet another resumed his service with refugees after graduation.

Another way students moved toward action was through providing feedback to their community organizations. For example, two students who worked together in a classroom talked to their volunteer coordinator about ideas to create a social network between college students and new immigrants. A few weeks after the semester, another student wrote to me that he spoke to his church community not simply about providing help to refugees but about the need for unlearning presumptions about them and building relationships.

PROBLEMATIZING AND PROMOTING CRITICAL SERVICE-LEARNING

Adopting a phenomenological lens, this study sought to understand whether and how college students demonstrate critical consciousness

when their service-learning involved components of both critical and traditional approaches. As shown in the preceding section, although critical consciousness emerged in students as a whole, the depth and foci of the consciousness varied. Inaccurate assumptions about immigrants and refugees were variously attributed to others, to themselves, or to the societal structure. In discussing relationships with their partners, some students stressed only similarities, some addressed both similarities and differences, and yet others articulated power and privilege. In translating critical consciousness into action, students wrote about personal change, influencing friends and families, and advocacy in their community. The wide range of learning and meanings revealed in the student essays has implications for the debate about “charity/traditional service-learning” versus “advocacy/critical/social justice service-learning.”

First, traditional service activities such as tutoring and working in soup kitchens have been criticized for their inability to challenge the quality of community agencies and thus are non-transformative (Eby, 1998; Mitchell, 2008). Such activities serve student agendas rather than meeting “real community needs” (Eby, 1998, p. 4). According to the advocates of critical service-learning, therefore, the service project must be collaboratively created by community agencies, instructors, and students to tackle the root problems. This may be an ideal partnership for which service-learning courses need to strive. After all, ownership of a problem creates accountability for building a better community (Block, 2008). On the other hand, there are many pre-identified real, immediate community needs with which college students can assist while using the opportunity for a critical reflection. The students in this intercultural communication course engaged in a traditional service activity, English language tutoring, which non-native speakers of English urgently need. Working with immigrants as a tutor may not be merely a “band-aid” solution to a social problem but an important step toward empowerment.

Analysis of student reflections showed that students can still develop critical consciousness toward social change if classroom activities consciously and persistently address the issue of power and challenge them to reflect on the structure, language, and context of the service and to articulate their visions and actions for a better community. Rather than dismissing traditional service activities as “charity” or non-transformative, it is perhaps more productive to find ways to engender advocacy even while meeting immediate community needs. One may even argue that working in a traditional service setting helps to cultivate critical consciousness, because students can observe and critique the working of community agencies and typical ways in which community needs are addressed. In fact, as shown in the previous section, some students

in the class questioned the dominant adaptation assumptions and how representational discourse is related to distribution of resources. Moreover, the idea of tackling root causes championed in critical service-learning may take different forms depending on the problem. For example, in the case of refugee resettlement, the sociopolitical situations that produce refugees are beyond students, but the students can help to create a more inclusive community through personal and interpersonal transformations and commitments.

Second, it may be difficult and problematic to try to fit the wide range of critical consciousness expressed by students into the binary division between “charity” and “advocacy.” From a strictly critical, social change perspective that emphasizes societal transformation through dismantling root problems, only a handful of the students’ reflections may pass as being critically oriented. However, it may be premature to write off personal and interpersonal changes as self-serving and ineffective toward social change. In problematizing the dominant understanding of “charity” and “social justice” as opposite ends of a continuum and the assumption that social justice is better than charity, Morton (1995) and Foos (1998) proposed a more dialogic approach to this debate. Morton argued that the two orientations should be considered as different paradigms and that experiences within each paradigm may vary from “thin” to “thick.” Moreover, “[a]t the thickest, the paradigms seem to intersect, or at least to complement one another” (Morton, 1995, p. 28). Similarly, Foos (1998) observed that “thick charity includes an element of social change. By the same token, thick social change involves an element of charity, of *personal*, not just social, engagement” (p. 18, emphasis original).

These observations, I argue, allow for a more complex and useful reading of the variety of foci that the students indicated in their reflections. Constructing stereotypes and prejudice as pervasive societal problems may appear critical but may be a “thin” reflection if the reflection stops there, whereas examining their own actions and consciously changing them, while being rendered as personal, is more transformative. In fact, some of the students who continued to work with refugee communities after the semester did so because they established personal relationships with their partners and wanted to continue to help them learn English. This commitment may be classified as “charity,” but it is based on “the radical act of recognizing the worth of every person” (Morton, 1995, p. 24) rooted in the Freirean view of humanism that has immensely inspired critical pedagogy and critical service-learning. Thus, building on the point made by Morton (1995) and Foos (1998), I argue that critical service-learning indeed requires efforts at *both* personal and structural levels and examination of how these two levels of practices intersect.

This intersectional view was evident in some reflections such as the ones that problematized dominant perceptions and representations of refugees or the ones that articulated power differences in relationships. Construction and perpetuation of inequality occur discursively as we name and define social and cultural groups publicly, socially, and institutionally. Thus, as one student noted, “seemingly trivial practices such as naming do have an impact on the way we see each other.” This and similar observations reflected emerging critical orientation through examination of both individual and institutional roles in creating a more just, inclusive community for newcomers.

On the other hand, some reflection essays did not suggest clear emergence of critical consciousness. As discussed in the previous section, for example, some students observed the prejudices that refugees and immigrants face as pervasive societal problems that are unfortunate rather than constructed realities in sociohistorical, political, and economic context. Another group of students emphasized how they are similar to their immigrant partners but were unable to articulate very real power differences that situate them and their partners in asymmetrical relationships. A number of factors (e.g., life experience, background, standpoint) may have contributed to the differences in the depth of reflection. Some students may have been already equipped with the capacity and motive to work with immigrants or harbor passion about community building, while others were not. Some students may have been critical in one area (e.g., race) but not in another (e.g., immigration) due to their particular standpoints. A challenge of critical service-learning is, then, to respond to this student heterogeneity while attempting to move students toward “thicker” engagement with the community personally and structurally.

Some pedagogical and research directions may be useful toward this end. Pedagogically, the preparations for service-learning should include discussions about the relative roles of persons and institutions in both creating and improving social and cultural challenges. The discussions may use a variety of societal issues, contemporary and historical, as examples for demonstrating the interconnectedness of personal and structural factors. This activity should be followed by students’ self-examination of their situatedness (Kinefuchi & Orbe, 2008) (e.g., interested, attached, indifferent, uninformed) in relation to cultural and social others relevant to their service-learning courses and why they occupy the particular locations. Part of this exercise is to encourage students to understand their racial, gender, and class standpoints (Wood, 2005) and how their standpoints may serve as privileges and/or disadvantages in society in generally and in their service-learning specifically. The instructors (and perhaps other classmates), then, can provide suggestions for engaging the aspects that are unexplored or avoided.

For example, students who personally enjoy helping refugees integrate into their community but fail to address institutional limitations may be encouraged to explore how such institutions as laws, policies, media, and education pose challenges to newcomer integration. The students, in turn, may respond to the charge in their next round of examination of their situatedness.

Incorporating this type of multi-step dialogic analysis exercise may also help to advance research of critical service-learning by providing several points to measure student progress. By examining student reflections about their learning through the service-learning, this study showed a range of critical consciousness emergent in the course of the semester. Students signaled their learning by referring to their specific serviced-learning experiences, course readings, and class discussions. However, the study did not evaluate the starting point of the learning. The dialogic analysis exercise allows researchers not only to determine the initial heterogeneity of student readiness in developing or deepening critical consciousness but also to understand how students may be transformed through a combination of classroom learning and service experience and what specifically contributed to the change.

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