



University of Nebraska Omaha
DigitalCommons@UNO

Higher Education

Service Learning

5-1998

In the Service of Citizenship: A Study of Student Involvement in Community Service

Robert A. Rhoads
Michigan State University

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slcehighered>

 Part of the [Service Learning Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Rhoads, Robert A., "In the Service of Citizenship: A Study of Student Involvement in Community Service" (1998). *Higher Education*. Paper 83.
<http://digitalcommons.unomaha.edu/slcehighered/83>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Service Learning at DigitalCommons@UNO. It has been accepted for inclusion in Higher Education by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UNO. For more information, please contact unodigitalcommons@unomaha.edu.



In the Service of Citizenship

A Study of Student Involvement in Community Service

Introduction

I learn more through my volunteer work than I ever do in any of my classes at school. Talking to people from diverse backgrounds provides so much insight that people just can't imagine. I study all these different theories in political science and sociology, but until you get a chance to see how the social world influences people's everyday lives, it just doesn't have that much meaning.

I have been involved in volunteer work ever since I was in high school, and I'll probably continue to do stuff like Habitat [for Humanity] until I'm old and gray. I get a lot out of working to serve others, and it's a good feeling to know that I have helped someone even if it's in some small way. It helps me to cherish people more and understand what life is all about.

The preceding comments are from college students who discussed their involvement in community service and the meaning they derive from such activities. Both of these students give voice to a form of learning that may be termed "citizenship education" in that a concern for the social good lies at the heart of the educational experience (Delve, Mintz, & Stewart, 1990). These students are reflective of others described throughout this article who through participation in community service explore their own identities and what it means to contribute to something larger than their individual lives.

In recent years, the role of higher education as a source of citizenship preparation has come to the forefront. In this regard, higher education reflects a rising tide of concern for national service and the common

Robert A. Rhoads is assistant professor in the Department of Educational Administration, Michigan State University

The Journal of Higher Education, Vol. 69, No. 3 (May/June 1998)
Copyright © 1998 by Ohio State University Press

good, as programs such as AmeriCorps, Learn and Serve America, Habitat for Humanity, and Big Brothers and Big Sisters have evoked our most prominent leaders as well as citizens across the country to commit themselves to the service of others. The influence this national movement has had on the academy is most apparent in the growth of organizations such as Campus Compact and Campus Outreach Opportunity League (COOL) whose memberships and influence increased dramatically in the early 1990s (Markus, Howard, & King, 1993). Professional organizations associated with the academic enterprise also have added fuel to the growing concern over social responsibility and citizenship. For example, in 1997 the call for proposals from the American Association for Higher Education Conference on Faculty Roles and Rewards specifically identified an interest in how community service and service learning contribute to a more engaged faculty. The 1996 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association was organized around the theme of "Research for Education in a Democratic Society," and at the 1995 American College Personnel Association Annual Convention, one of the keynote speakers, Dr. Robert Coles, addressed the issue of moral education when he called for greater commitment to service learning and community service.

Although it is hard to argue with calls to foster social responsibility among our students, our future leaders, there also is a tremendous need for clarification. With this said, the following key questions offer a guide for addressing some of the confusion revolving around community service: (1) Are community service and service learning interchangeable concepts or are there important differences? (2) What is the role of community service in engaging students as democratic citizens in a culturally diverse society? (3) Are there variations in the structure of service activities which produce different experiences for students? The first question is examined as I explore the relevant literature on community service and service learning. The second and third questions are addressed primarily through discussions of the theoretical perspective, findings, and implications. Thus, the latter two questions form the heart of the theoretical and empirical analysis offered throughout this article. In weaving theoretical and empirical work together to address these questions, I follow the tradition of critical theory and support the argument that all research is theoretically rooted: Sometimes the perspective of the author is spelled out (as in this case), while at other times it must be interpreted based on the assumptions undergirding the work (Tierney & Rhoads, 1993). This is by no means a rejection of empiricism in favor of theory, but instead should be understood as an effort to bridge the gap separating the two.

Community Service and Service Learning

Over recent years there has been an incredible growth in attention paid to community service and service learning (Jacoby & Associates, 1996; Kendall, 1990; Kraft, 1996; Kraft & Swadener, 1994; Rhoads, 1997; Waterman, 1997; Zlotkowski, 1995). The increasing interest in service reflects to a large degree a concern that institutions of higher education be more responsive to society and that higher learning in general ought to have greater relevance to public life (Boyer 1987, 1994; Study Group 1984; Wingspread Group, 1993). A convincing argument could be made that for American colleges and universities a commitment to service "is a movement whose time has come" (Rhoads & Howard, 1998, p. 1).

The issue to be addressed in this brief review of the literature concerns distinguishing community service from service learning. The primary difference between these two concepts is the direct connection service learning has to the academic mission. Typically, service learning includes student participation in community service but with additional learning objectives often associated with a student's program of study. For example, a student majoring in social work may participate in service activities at a local homeless shelter in conjunction with a course of study on urban poverty. Specific activities designed to assist the student in processing his or her experience are included as part of the service learning project. The student, for example, may be expected to write a reflective paper describing the experience and/or there may be small-group interactions among students involved in similar kinds of experiences. The learning objective might be to help students interpret social and economic policies through a more advanced understanding of the lived experiences of homeless citizens. Seen in this light, service learning seeks to connect community service experiences with tangible learning outcomes. Assessing such outcomes becomes a central concern of research and evaluation (Boss, 1994; Giles & Eyler, 1994).

Although service learning often is specifically tied to classroom-related community service in which concrete learning objectives exist, some writers suggest that student involvement in community service may be tied to out-of-class learning objectives and thus constitute a form of service learning as well (Jacoby & Associates, 1996; Rhoads, 1997). From this perspective, student affairs professionals who involve students in community service activities may engage in the practice of service learning when there are clearly articulated strategies designed to bridge experiential and developmental learning. The confusion between "class-related" versus "out-of-class-related" service learning led Rhoads and

Howard (1998) to adopt the term “academic service learning” to distinguish the formal curriculum (largely faculty initiated) from the informal curriculum (largely student affairs initiated). Howard (1998), for example, defined academic service learning as “a pedagogical model that intentionally integrates academic learning and relevant community service” (p. 22). For Howard there are four components of academic service learning. First, it is a pedagogical model and is therefore to be understood as a teaching methodology. Second, academic service learning is intentional; that is, there are specific goals and objectives tying the service experience to course work. Third, there is integration between experiential and academic learning. And finally, the service experience must be relevant to the course of study. As Howard explains, “Serving in a soup kitchen is relevant for a course on social issues, but probably not for a course on civil engineering” (p. 22).

From an educational standpoint, it makes sense to link community service activities with intentional learning objectives whenever possible. Obviously, when student participation in community service can be connected to specific learning activities involving reflection, group interaction, writing, and so on, the experience is likely to have a greater impact on student learning and move into the realm of service learning (Cooper, 1998; Eyster, Giles, & Schmiede, 1996).

In addition to varying degrees of connection community service may have to academic learning objectives, there are also differing opinions on which goals of higher education service ought to address. Whereas Howard stresses the role of service as a pedagogical model used to assist in course-related learning, others see service (community service and service learning) as a key strategy for fostering citizenship (Harkavy & Benson, 1998; Mendel-Reyes, 1998; Rhoads, 1998). This vision of community service and service learning is captured most pointedly in the philosophical work of John Dewey, in which education is fundamentally linked to the social good and what it means to exist in relation to others.

Theoretical Perspective: Dewey, Mead, and Gilligan

This article is grounded in the philosophical work of John Dewey and his contention that education has a vital role to play in a democratic society. In his classic work *Democracy and Education*, Dewey argued that a democratic society demands a type of relational living in which one’s decisions and actions must be made with regard to their effect on others. “A democracy is more than a form of government; it is primarily a mode of associated living, of conjoint communicated experience. The extension in

space of the number of individuals who participate in an interest so that each has to refer his own action to that of others, and to consider the action of others to give point and direction to his own" (1916, p. 93). Dewey's vision of democracy challenges all citizens to take part in a form of decision making that balances the interests of oneself with those of others. Democracy seen in this light demands that individuals understand the lives and experiences of other members of a society. How else can we weigh the effect of our actions if others remain distant and unknown?

Implied throughout Dewey's conception of democracy is an ethic-of-care philosophy akin to the work of feminist scholars such as Gilligan (1982) and Young (1990), in which caring for others forms a core component of identity (often discussed as the "relational self"). This is conveyed in Dewey's view of liberty: "Liberty is that secure release and fulfillment of personal potentialities which take place only in rich and manifold association with others" (1927, p. 150). Recent political theorists such as Battistoni (1985) also have recognized the importance of developing relational understandings of social life. For example, Battistoni supported Tocqueville's (1945) claim that American democracy is dependent upon "the reciprocal influence of men upon one another" (p. 117). For Battistoni, reciprocal influence is fostered through participatory forms of education, which he claimed are more likely to foster citizens who see themselves as active participants in the political process. Similarly, in discussing the relationship between citizenship and education, Barber argued that citizens must recognize their dependence upon one another and that "our identity is forged through a dialectical relationship with others" (1992, p. 4). Barber calls attention to the idea that citizenship is fundamentally tied to identity. Mead and Gilligan provide additional insight into the connection between citizenship and identity through their respective concepts of the "social self" and the "relational self."

Mead's (1934) idea of the social self derives in part from James (1890) and Cooley (1902), who both suggested that an individual's self-conception derives from the responses of others mirrored back to the individual. Mead argued that the self forms out of the interaction between the "I" and the "me." The "I" is the individual acting out some sort of behavior; the individual doing something such as talking, listening, interacting with others, expressing an idea. The "me" relates to the sense one has about the "I" who is acting out a behavior or set of behaviors. The sense we develop about the "I" derives from the interpretations we suspect that others have of us. We cannot develop an initial sense about ourselves without the help of others, who provide feedback and interact with the behaving "I." Through the imagined thoughts of others, we envision ourselves as a "me" as we become the object of our own thoughts.

According to Mead, an individual cannot develop a sense of self without the interactive context of a social group or a community. Therefore, the other, either the particularized or generalized other, is essential to the development of the self.

Feminist theorists such as Gilligan also have developed a conception of the self strongly rooted in otherness. Gilligan (1979, 1982) was one of the first theorists to point out that women often make moral decisions based on a sense of connection with others. She argued that women's moral decision making reflected a fundamental identity difference based on gender. Whereas men tend to seek autonomy and make moral decisions founded on abstract principles such as justice, women, in general, seek connectedness and weigh moral decisions based on maintaining or building relationships.

As a result of early child-parent interactions and ongoing gender socialization (which arguably begins at birth), relationships become central to the social world of women (Chodorow, 1974, 1978). For men, the relational quality of social life is often displaced by a strong sense of individualism. The other is fundamentally a part of women's experience and kept at somewhat of a distance for men. The development of the self for females may be characterized by connectedness. Male development may be characterized by individuation. These general patterns (which obviously vary in degree from one individual to the next) have significant implications for how males and females relate to others and how they understand themselves in the context of the social world.

Based in part on early feminist work, various scholars have argued that regardless of gender differences, society is likely to benefit when its members develop a commitment to caring (Larrabee, 1993; Noddings, 1984, 1992, 1995; Oliner & Oliner, 1995). This is poignantly noted by Sampson (1989), who argued,

The feminist perspective should no longer be understood as developing a psychology of women but, I believe, is better seen as developing a psychology of humanity tomorrow. The real issue, therefore, does not involve gender differences per se, as much as it speaks to an emerging theory of the person that is appropriate to the newly emerging shape of a globally linked world system. (p. 920)

Of course, Sampson's point about the "globally linked world" reminds us of an earlier issue raised in this article concerning how cultural diversity might influence citizenship education (recall key question Number 2: What is the role of community service in engaging students as democratic citizens in a culturally diverse society?). Arguably, as a society grows increasingly diverse, communications are likely to become more

challenging. Cultural differences, though they may be understood as a source of community for learning and sharing among citizens (Tierney, 1993), nonetheless pose a significant challenge to social interaction and an individual's ability to connect with the other, who, in the case of a heterogeneous society, is likely to be a diverse other.

Woven together, Dewey, Mead, and Gilligan, among others, provide insight into how citizenship education might encompass learning about the self, the other, and the larger society in which one exists. The "caring self" is the term I use to capture the synthesis of their work. The caring self is intended to convey the idea of a socially oriented sense of self founded on an ethic of care and a commitment to the social good. Furthermore, it is reasonable to assume that community service, with its focus on caring for others, would offer excellent settings to explore the development of the caring self. But is this the case, and if so, in what kinds of service contexts are the qualities associated with the caring self likely to be forged?

This brings me to the crux of my argument and what I intend to shed light on through a study of student involvement in community service. Arguably, unless individuals have a deep sense of caring for others, it is less likely that they will engage in interactions with diverse others in a meaningful way. Caring may be seen as the solution to the challenge presented by a postmodern society characterized by difference. In essence, I contend that fostering a deep commitment to caring is the postmodern developmental dilemma all of education faces, including higher education. If we are to promote democratic citizenship in these challenging times, then we must foster in our citizens a commitment to caring. Higher education has a major part to play in this process, and involving students in community service may be one vehicle for meeting this challenge. The question that needs to be asked then, is, How and in what kinds of community service settings is caring to be fostered? Before addressing this question through a discussion of the findings, I first clarify the methodology used in conducting the study.

Methodology

The primary goal of this article is to advance understanding of community service as a strategy for citizenship education. Through a qualitative study of college students involved in community service, I shed light on various facets of the service context that may be most beneficial to challenging students as caring citizens. The focus is not on student learning per se; instead, I target the kind of meaning students construct about their service encounters as a means to identify important aspects of com-

munity service associated with caring. I need to be clear here. This article does not attempt to assess developmental change by examining student involvement in community service. Although such a strategy is important and falls in line with the tradition of student outcomes research (Astin, 1979, 1993; Feldman & Newcomb, 1970; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991), this article takes more of a phenomenological direction in which the essence of community service is the primary concern. Hence, the kind of experiences students describe are important in this study, not as learning outcomes, but as indications of the nature of the service context.

The data for this article were derived from research and participation in community service projects conducted in conjunction with three universities: Pennsylvania State University, the University of South Carolina, and Michigan State University. Community service projects ranged from week-long intensive experiences requiring travel to distant out-of-state communities to ongoing student service projects in the local communities or states in which these universities are situated. I participated as a volunteer in many of the service projects described throughout this article. My role ranged from a staff supervisor in a few cases to that of a graduate student volunteer with limited responsibility in other instances. In every case, my primary role was as a volunteer and not as a researcher; the data I collected was more of an outgrowth of the community service experience and was not the central objective. The comments here are not meant to shortchange the research strategy employed, but instead are intended to clarify for the reader the context of my interactions and involvement with the student volunteers. In fact, my role as a volunteer may actually add strength to the naturalistic strategies used in collecting data as I was able to engage in ongoing and meaningful dialogue with the research participants (Denzin, 1989).

Based on the methodological strategies associated with naturalistic inquiry, data were collected using a variety of techniques, including formal and informal interviews, surveys, participant observation, and document analysis (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The principal documents used as a source of data were journals students were asked to keep as part of their community service experience. The use of multiple data collection techniques provides a degree of triangulation and offers the researcher an opportunity to confirm or reject tentative interpretations (Denzin, 1989).

The early phase of the study was conducted in conjunction with Pennsylvania State University and the data obtained was part of a formal evaluation of community service activities by students. This phase of the project involved surveys of students' experiences and was considered program evaluation and as such did not require human subject approval at Penn State. The second phase, which primarily involved interviews and observations, necessitated gaining human subject approval. Students

were informed of the study and given the opportunity to participate or decline. It was during this phase of the study that student journals were used, but only with student approval.

During the six-year period (1991–1996) in which data were collected, 108 students participated in interviews, 66 students completed open-ended surveys, and more than 200 students were observed at various project sites in which participant observation was central. Approximately 90% of the students involved in the community service projects were undergraduates, and about 10% were graduate students. The vast majority (approximately 80%) of the undergraduates were traditional-age students in the range of 18 to 24 years old. Females represented approximately 60% of the sample, and in terms of race, the majority were Caucasian (roughly 85%), with African Americans constituting the largest minority group—about 8 to 10% of the overall group.

Interview transcripts (from both formal and informal interviews), open-ended surveys, field notes from participant observation, student journals, and documents collected in conjunction with various service projects form the entire data base for the study. Once collected, the data were read repeatedly in an effort to identify important and relevant themes. The process followed the kind of analytical strategy stressed in the work of cultural anthropologists and interpretivists (Geertz, 1973; Rosaldo, 1989). Specifically, themes were identified based on their contextual significance and relevance to the overall goal of the project: *to better understand the context of community service and how such activities might challenge students' understandings of citizenship and the social good*. In a procedure described by Lincoln and Guba (1985) as “member checks,” themes and interpretations were shared with several students as part of a process to obtain feedback and incorporate student reactions into the final manuscripts.

Based on the data analysis, several themes were identified. Three of those themes—students' explorations of the self, understandings of others, and views of the social good—form the basis for this article. Other issues, such as “student motivation” for getting involved in community service and “attitudes toward community service,” are examples of additional themes that emerged from the data analysis but are peripheral to this article and thus are not discussed in any substantive way.

Findings

In keeping with the theoretical concern of democratic citizenship and fostering more caring selves, the findings are organized around three general concerns suggested by students in discussing their participation in community service: self-exploration, understanding others, and the

social good. These themes are highly interactive and, in general, students' exploration in all of these areas contributes to understanding what I describe as the caring self.

Self-Exploration

Participation in community service is an educational activity that lends itself to identity clarification. For example, a student who was part of an intensive week-long community service project in South Carolina talked about identity issues and her participation in the project: "I'm kind of in a search for my own identity, and this trip is part of that search. I just don't know quite who I am yet. I'm struggling to figure it all out. These kinds of experiences help. I'm most genuine in these kinds of settings." Another student added, "Getting involved in community service helps me to get back in touch with who I really am. It reminds me that I have more to live for than merely myself." A third student offered the following comments:

I've always done service work. During my freshman year at USC [University of South Carolina] I worked on the City Year project and the Serv-a-thon. I believe service is an important part of leadership. It's important to give back to the community. The last four weeks I've been totally into myself, like running for vice president of the student body. I signed up for this project because I wanted to get outside myself for awhile.

This student saw the service project as an opportunity to connect with others and in her words "get outside" of herself. For her, the service project offered a chance to become more other-focused and to contribute to her community.

A second student described her involvement in community service as part of a journey to better understand herself: "My work as a volunteer has really helped me to see that I have so much more to understand about myself in order to grow. I'm still on the journey and have a long way to go." And a third student discussed what he learned about himself: "I got involved in volunteerism because I wanted to learn more about myself. I've learned how to love a wide range of people despite differences between us. I've learned not to be judgmental." A fourth offered insight into the kind of soul searching students often go through as a result of service work:

Sometimes I feel like I'm only fooling myself and that I'm really only into service so that I can help myself. I list this stuff on my resume and I feel guilty because I know it will help me get a teaching job. Is that why I do this? I know it makes me feel better about what I do in my spare time, but who am I really serving?

This student recognized, like others, the positive returns of service, not only in terms of experience helpful for landing employment, but for the feelings reflected back to the self.

Self-exploration through community service often involved a kind of self-interrogation that helped students to think more seriously about their lives. Listen to the following student as she recalled her volunteer work with troubled youth:

I got involved in a lot of self-esteem work, primarily with teenagers. It helped me to think more seriously about my understanding of myself and how others think of me. I began to wonder about what kind of person I was and was going to be. I began to ask questions of myself: "Am I too judgmental? Am I open to others? Am I sensitive to how other people see the world?"

Once again, the role of community service in challenging one's sense of self is clear. Equally clear is how one's sense of self is tied to the social context and the views others hold of us.

Understanding Others

A significant learning experience associated with community service was the opportunity to better understand the lives students worked to serve. Students were able to put faces and names with the alarming statistics and endless policy debates about homelessness as well as rural and urban poverty. As one student explained,

Expressing what it has meant to me to actually have the chance to engage in conversations with people who used to be total strangers is next to impossible. It has been eye opening. My understanding of homeless people was based on what I'd see on the news, in magazines, or on TV shows. They were not real people and I could easily turn my back on them and the problem in general.

Similar comments were offered by Penn State and Michigan State students involved in community service projects working with homeless citizens in DC, Louisville, and New York City:

Every homeless person has a name, a story.

They just want to be recognized and treated as human beings. There are names behind the statistics.

Working with the people of the streets has transformed "those people" into real faces, real lives, and real friends. I can no longer confront the issue without seeing the faces of my new friends. This has an incredible effect on my impetus to help.

All the statistics about homeless people and the stories of people freezing to death in the winter never really sunk in until I made friends with Harry and Reggie. There are faces now.

Students who worked in rural areas with low-income families also derived benefit from personal interactions with those they worked to serve. One student commented on the general outcomes associated with having personal interactions in service settings: "The whole experience helps you to see that others are real people and have real problems and yet can come together to help one another. . . . When you work with the people on their houses or in their back yard it adds to the experience. You get a chance to know the people. You have a face or a personality to go with the work." A second student stated, "The fact that we were able to interact a great deal with the people in the community added so much to the overall experience. I've done volunteer work in the past where I never really got the chance to meet with the people who I was actually trying to help." A third student, who participated in a week-long service project in a low-income rural area, added, "This week has taught me so much about other people and the problems they face in life. You can read about growing up poor, but getting to share a conversation with someone who has overcome so much during their lifetime is quite a different matter. . . . It's made me much less judgmental of others and their place in life."

A common point made by students was the fact that community service work with people of diverse cultural backgrounds forced students to confront generalizations they had of the other. For example, students talked about various stereotypes they held about poor people and how such stereotypes were erased as a result of their service work. Several students noted how surprised they were to find so many intelligent and educated people without jobs or places to live. One student maintained that the only accurate stereotype relates to the amount of bad luck that most homeless people have experienced. A second added, "I learned that all people are innately afraid and that no one deserves to be without a voice and a safe place and that stereotypes can be more damaging than can be fathomed." A third student talked about how his preconceptions about homeless people had been shattered through his interactions with them. As he explained, "This experience gave my beliefs and convictions about the homeless a personal basis that I'll never forget."

Many of the preconceptions students had about the poor were rooted in their limited experience with cultural diversity. Although socioeconomic factors were the primary source of difference between students and community members, race was another factor. Interactions with a variety of low-income individuals and families often challenged students' conceptions of the diverse other. Because the vast majority of the student volunteers were Caucasians and many of the community members served by the students were African Americans, a number of racial issues emerged from time to time. A Penn State sophomore talked about the dif-

ference she felt between herself and the large number of homeless African Americans she encountered during her volunteer work in DC: “I definitely felt a major barrier between Blacks and Whites in this country. There were times working in the soup kitchens where I felt very uncomfortable.” A college junior studying mathematics commented on a similar feeling: “It was an experience for me simply to be placed in the awkward environment of walking around in predominantly African American, poor neighborhoods. I want to remember that feeling of insecurity. It reminds me of the vast differences between races in our society.”

Often, issues of race and class blended together and challenged students’ prejudices in a multifaceted way. Listen to the following two students discuss their experiences:

There is something that I’m not proud of and I always considered myself open-minded and not prejudiced, but when I worked at Sharon’s house [Sharon is an African American woman who needed repairs done to her home] it reminded me that some of my previous thinking about the poor had been based on stereotypes. I mean I’ve always kind of thought in the back of my mind that people become poor or destitute because they are not motivated or not as intelligent. But Sharon has a master’s degree and is very articulate. I see now that there may be many causes or barriers that people face that can limit them. It was an eye opener and I see now that I was carrying this misconception about them being to blame for their plight.

Meeting homeless people and talking with them taught me that some of my stereotypes about the poor, about Blacks, have been rooted in my own life of White, middle-class privilege. I have never had to work that hard to get a college education, for example, yet I’ve bought into the idea that others who have less than me are somehow lazy because they are poor. Heck, they may have worked twice as hard as I have. I’ve never really had my views of the poor challenged until this experience working with homeless people.

The generalizations and stereotypes to which students referred were seen by several as the by-product of the media. As one student, a senior in geography, pointed out, “I learned that my perceptions of poverty, crime, and homelessness are influenced and perhaps shaped by misconstrued images that I see on television.” Another student also talked about how television had played a major role in how she had come to envision African Americans. She pointed out that in her rural Pennsylvania community, “there wasn’t a single African American family. I never even met an African American until I attended college.”

The Social Good

As one might expect, given the context of caring for others, issues related to the social good often surfaced. Community service is ripe for such discussions and offers a context conducive to serious thought about

the larger social body. One student offered an example of the kind of serious thought that may evolve from community service work:

There are a lot of people in this country who need help to make ends meet. You can choose to help them or you can turn your back on them. I want to help people, and I want those who choose not to help to know that there are consequences for walking away. There are children who will go hungry and people who will be living in the streets. I cannot live with that on my conscience.

For this student, the social good suggests a world in which no one starves or goes homeless. Giving up some of his own time and energy to help others “make it” is in line with his vision of social responsibility.

Other students offered similar remarks about the social good. For example, one student commented, “Intellectual exploration has been rewarding but also suffocating at times and so I find the desire to commit myself to experiential work. I found one way could be by working in a homeless shelter and understanding social issues from a political standpoint as well as from the perspective of those living and breathing poverty.”

For another student, the common good included the role of education in assisting the poor. He saw service as important, but there were deeper issues underlying poverty. He explained,

Service activities are important, but we also have to help teach people how to fish. You just can't give people food or build houses for them without also helping them develop the skills to take care of their own lives and their own families. . . . Part of my goal is to help others to develop their own abilities so that they can lead productive lives.

This student alludes to the idea that simply providing “bandages,” though important and necessary, may not heal deeper wounds. In this case, the student highlights how sometimes the problems rest with the poor and their limited skills.

Other students also concerned with the deeper roots of economic inequities chose to focus on social structure instead of individuals as part of their effort to make sense of the social good. For example, one student saw community service as a stepping stone to larger work for social change: “I need to be in community with people who are interested in radical social change. Together we can work and witness all kinds of changes, and perhaps come closer to finding some answers.” Another student alluded to the structural aspects of poverty as she discussed her learning experiences:

Community service is something that I think everybody should get involved doing. You see a different side of our country when you see some of the struggles the poor face. You begin to understand the barriers to their economic situation and why it is so hard to get out of poverty. I talked to this one woman, and she explained to me how expensive day care is for her children and that in order for her to take a job she needs to make at least eight to ten dollars an hour. And no one will pay her that.

For the preceding student, community service experience helped her identify a structural problem that limits low-income workers—the lack of affordable day care.

Not everyone who participated in this study saw service as necessarily a positive force for improving society. Listen to the following student take issue with some of the general comments he heard about the positive aspects of service:

To be honest, and it's hard to say this around all these "do gooders," I'm not sure all this volunteer stuff really does a whole lot of good. I know, I'm one of those volunteers too. But I keep asking myself a bunch of questions: "Am I doing this to help the homeless or am I doing this to help myself? Who really benefits?" Maybe I'm being too skeptical, but I think most of the students here are like me but won't admit it. It makes them feel good to help feed someone, and that way they can go back to living their happy little lives without feeling too guilty.

Despite the biting cynicism of the preceding student's comments, he makes an important point that turns our attention back to the theoretical thrust of this article: The idea that one often develops positive feelings about oneself as a result of involvement in service reminds us that our sense of self indeed is tied to others. When warm feelings are shared with a student engaged in service, then logically, that student may see him or herself in a more favorable manner. The interactional context is one reason why community service is so critical to forging more caring selves. Through acts designed to serve others, students learn to feel better about themselves. At the same time, their relationship to others and to the larger social body is strengthened. Hopefully, reaching out becomes a way of life and the diversity that offers the potential to divide one from another becomes instead a source of sharing. This is the essence of the caring self.

Implications for Structuring Community Service

As noted earlier, this study was phenomenological in nature. The study did not seek to determine whether students become more caring citizens as

a result of their service. Instead, by approaching the subject phenomenologically, I was able to identify aspects of the community service context that might contribute to students' considerations of the self, others, and the social good. The underlying assumption of course is that such considerations are likely to contribute positively to one's ongoing development as a caring citizen. Thus, in thinking about the implications of the findings I was able to identify three structural components of community service that appear to be critical to advancing citizenship as defined in this article. These key components are *mutuality*, *reflection*, and *personalization*.

There are two aspects of mutuality I stress: One aspect relates to a recognition that both parties—the so called “doers” and the “done to,” in Radest's (1993) terms—benefit from the service encounter. Students involved in service receive incredible rewards for their work in the form of personal satisfaction. And, if their work is effective, community members also receive rewards in the form of a service provided. Thus, one might say that the experience is mutual.

The gifts that students receive through their community service offerings are not without complications. Students frequently expressed a degree of guilt for feeling good about themselves as a result of their service to others. A line from the great American poet, Delmore Schwartz, comes to mind here: “Nothing is given which is not taken.” Taking or “receiving” the gifts offered by community members is something students engaged in service must learn to do. In fact, effective leadership training for students ought to prepare them to be recipients of the rewards of service. “In giving, one must learn to receive,” noted one student who worked with homeless citizens in Washington, DC.

The second aspect of mutuality relates to the structure of the relationship between service providers and community members who may receive a specific service. Too often we are guilty of determining the needs of those to be served with little to no involvement on their part. For community service to be most effective for the development of caring citizens, then, the planning of such activities ought to include those to be served in an equal and empowering manner. After all, Dewey's conception of democracy entails each person taking others into consideration when making decisions affecting the public realm.

A second key to making community service most effective for citizenship development is the inclusion of reflection as part of the service work. By the term “reflection” I refer to activities designed to help students process their service experiences in a manner involving serious thought. Small-group discussions and writing assignments are common tools used to foster student reflection. As is noted earlier in this article, community service that incorporates reflection moves closer to what is

typically considered service learning in that the reflective activity helps to link service to an educational outcome.

Several of the service projects observed through this study did not involve structured reflection and the students' experiences suffered. One example occurred in New York City, where a young woman became so intimidated by her interactions with a homeless man who screamed profanities at her that she vowed to never again work with the homeless. The project she worked on was led entirely by students and there was no opportunity for guided reflection. In interviewing this student, I was left to ponder how her reaction might have been different had she been able to interact with an experienced facilitator. Would she have been able to work through her feelings and perhaps take something positive from the traumatic encounter?

Other examples from this study reveal the power of reflection. Recently, I accompanied a group of 23 students from Michigan State University to Merida in the Yucatan where we worked at a Salvation Army shelter for children, a low-income health facility, and a women's resource center. As part of helping MSU students process their experiences, staff volunteers facilitated reflection groups each evening after students returned from their work sites. At the end of the week, we evaluated the project and consistently students described the reflection activities as one of the highlights of their cross-cultural experience (despite the "educational" overtones such activities carried!).

Perhaps the most significant aspect of community service that I found to contribute to caring is what may be called the personalization of service. For community service to be challenging to a student's sense of self, it seems most beneficial for service to involve opportunities for meaningful interaction with those individuals to be served. Time and time again students discussed how significant it was for them to have the opportunity to interact with individuals and families on a personal basis.

Conclusion

The challenge of education to foster caring citizens has taken on enormous proportion in contemporary society as the struggle between individualism and social responsibility has taken on new meaning (Bellah, Sullivan, Swidler, & Tipton, 1985; Coles, 1993; Palmer, 1993; Parks Daloz, Keen, Keen, & Daloz Parks, 1996; Wuthnow, 1991, 1995). Community service is one option educators can select to enhance the development of citizens concerned with the social good. Caring is central to the effectiveness of community service, and thus students are challenged to give serious thought to what it means to care as they struggle to eval-

uate their commitment to the lives of others. Because the relationship between individuals and their obligation to one another is a cornerstone of democracy, community service may be seen to contribute to citizenship in a democratic society.

The students in this study highlight how cultural diversity poses additional challenges to one's development as a caring citizen. They described how community service often is an interaction between diverse others. This is the essence of Radest's (1993) argument when he maintained that community service may be seen as an "encounter with strangers" in which the challenge of service is that we each learn from the other and we each give as well as receive. From this perspective, community service represents a dialogical encounter with diverse others and serves as a bridge to build communal ties. Thus, community service offers one vehicle for preparing students to communicate in a culturally diverse world.

Finally, because service encourages students to see themselves as intimately connected to the other, a learning context is created in which the caring self is more likely to emerge. Fostering a sense of self grounded in an ethic of care is one of the central challenges of education and becomes increasingly important as our society grows more diverse. By fostering an ethic of care, higher education encourages the sense of otherness needed for democracy to survive and, indeed, thrive in a complex and fragmented social world.

References

- Astin, A. W. (1979). *Four critical years: Effects of college on beliefs, attitudes and knowledge*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Astin, A. W. (1993). *What matters in college?: Four critical years revisited*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Barber, B. (1992). *An aristocracy of everyone: The politics of education and the future of America*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Battistoni, R. (1985). *Public schooling and the education of democratic citizens*. Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi.
- Bellah, R. N., Sullivan, W. M., Swidler, A., & Tipton, S. M. (1985). *Habits of the heart: Individualism and commitment in American life*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Boss, J. A. (1994). The effect of community service work on the moral development of college ethics students. *Journal of Moral Education*, 23(2), 183–198.
- Boyer, E. L. (1987). *College: The undergraduate experience in America*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Boyer, E. L. (1994, March 9). Creating the new American college. *Chronicle of Higher Education*, p. A 48.

- Chodorow, N. (1974). Family structure and feminine personality. In M. Rosaldo & L. Lamphere (Eds.), *Women, culture and society* (pp. 43–66). Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Chodorow, N. (1978). *The reproduction of mothering: Psychoanalysis and the sociology of gender*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Coles, R. (1993). *The call of service: A witness to idealism*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Cooley, C. H. (1902). *Human nature and the social order*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Cooper, D. (1998). Reading, writing, and reflection. In R. A. Rhoads & J. P. F. Howard (Eds.), *Academic service learning: A pedagogy of action and reflection*. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 73 (pp. 47–56). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Delve, C. I., Mintz, S. D., & Stewart, G. M. (1990). *Community service as values education*. New Directions for Student Services, no. 50. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Denzin, N. (1989). *The research act* (3rd ed.). New York: Prentice-Hall.
- Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education*. New York: Macmillan.
- Dewey, J. (1927). *The public and its problems*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Eyler, J., Giles, D. E., & Schmiede, A. (1996). *A practitioner's guide to reflection in service-learning: Student voices and reflections*. Washington, DC: Corporation for National Service.
- Feldman, K. A., & Newcomb, T. M. (1970). *The impact of college on students*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. New York: Basic Books.
- Giles, D. E., Jr., & Eyler, J. (1994). The impact of a college community service laboratory on students' personal, social, and cognitive outcomes. *Journal of Adolescence*, 17, 327–339.
- Gilligan, C. (1979). Woman's place in man's life cycle. *Harvard Educational Review*, 9(4), 431–446.
- Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice: Psychological theory and women's development*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Harkavy, I., & Benson, L. (1998). De-Platonizing and democratizing education as the bases of service learning. In R. A. Rhoads & J. P. F. Howard (Eds.), *Academic service learning: A pedagogy of action and reflection*. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 73 (pp. 11–20). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Howard, J. P. F. (1998). Academic service learning: A counternormative pedagogy. In R. A. Rhoads & J. P. F. Howard (Eds.), *Academic service learning: A pedagogy of action and reflection*. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 73 (pp. 21–29). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Jacoby, B., & Associates. (Eds.). (1996). *Service-learning in higher education: Concepts and practices*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- James, W. (1890). *Principles of psychology* (Vol. 1). New York: Holt.
- Kendall, J. C. (Ed.). (1990). *Combining service and learning: A resource book for community and public service* (Vol. 1). Raleigh, NC: National Society for Experiential Education.
- Kraft, R. J. (1996). Service learning. *Education and Urban Society*, 28(2), 131–159.

- Kraft, R. J., & Swadener M. (Eds.). (1994). *Building community: Service learning in the academic disciplines*. Denver: Colorado Campus Compact.
- Larrabee, M. J. (Ed.). (1993). *An ethic of care: Feminist and interdisciplinary perspectives*. New York: Routledge.
- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Beverly Hills: Sage.
- Markus, G. B., Howard, J. P. F., & King, D. C. (1993). Integrating community service and classroom instruction enhances learning: Results from an experiment. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 15(4), 410–419.
- Mead, G. H. (1934). *Mind, self, & society* (Charles W. Morris, Ed.). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Mendel-Reyes, M. (1998). A pedagogy for citizenship: Service learning and democratic education. In R. A. Rhoads & J. P. F. Howard (Eds.), *Academic service learning: A pedagogy of action and reflection*. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 73 (pp. 31–38). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Noddings, N. (1992). *The challenge to care in schools: An alternative approach to education*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Noddings, N. (1995). Teaching themes of care. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 76(9), 675–679.
- Oliner, P. M., & Oliner, S. P. (1995). *Toward a caring society: Ideas into action*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Palmer, P. (1993). *To know as we are known: Education as a spiritual journey*. San Francisco: Harper.
- Parks Daloz, S., Keen, C. H., Keen, J. P., & Daloz Parks, L. A. (1996). *Common fire: Lives of commitment in a complex world*. Boston: Beacon Press.
- Pascarella, E. T., & Terenzini, P. T. (1991). *How college affects students: Findings and insights from twenty years of research*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Radest, H. (1993). *Community service: Encounter with strangers*. Westport, CT: Praeger.
- Rhoads, R. A. (1997). *Community service and higher learning: Explorations of the caring self*. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Rhoads, R. A. (1998). Critical multiculturalism and service learning. In R. A. Rhoads & J. P. F. Howard (Eds.), *Academic service learning: A pedagogy of action and reflection*. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 73 (pp. 39–46). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Rhoads, R. A., & Howard, J. P. F. (1998). *Academic service learning: A pedagogy of action and reflection*. New Directions for Teaching and Learning, no. 73. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Rosaldo, R. (1989). *Culture & truth: The remaking of social analysis*. Boston: Beacon.
- Sampson, E. E. (1989). The challenge of social change for psychology: Globalization and psychology's theory of the person. *American Psychologist*, 44(6), 914–921.
- Study Group on the Conditions of Excellence in American Higher Education. (1984). *Involvement in learning*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Education.

- Tierney, W. G. (1993). *Building communities of difference: Higher education in the 21st century*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.
- Tierney, W. G., & Rhoads, R. A. (1993). Postmodernism and critical theory in higher education: Implications for research and practice. In J. C. Smart (Ed.), *Higher education: Handbook of theory and research* (pp. 308–343). New York: Agathon.
- Tocqueville, A., de (1945). *Democracy in America*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.
- Waterman, A. S. (Ed.). (1997). *Service learning: Applications from the research*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Wingspread Group on Higher Education. (1993). *An American imperative: Higher expectations for higher education*. Racine, WI: Johnson Foundation.
- Wuthnow, R. (1991). *Acts of compassion: Caring for others and helping ourselves*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Wuthnow, R. (1995). *Learning to care: Elementary kindness in an age of indifference*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Young, I. M. (1990). The ideal of community and the politics of difference. In Linda J. Nicholson (Ed.), *Feminism/postmodernism* (pp. 300–323). New York: Routledge.
- Zlotkowski, E. (1995). Does service learning have a future? *Michigan Journal of Community Service Learning*, 2(1), 123–133.
-